Australians at War Film Archive

Archibald Taylor (Arch) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:34 **Okay thanks Arch. Okay Arch, thanks for today. If we could start as we discussed just with an overview of your life, where you were born etc.**

I was born on the twenty-eighth of January 1922 in Wodonga, Victoria.

And where did you grow up?

01:00 Oh my father was transferred from Wodonga to Sydney when I was about two weeks old and we settled in Hunters Hill. My father was in the Supreme Court. Had a very senior position, he was the Master of Lunacy. In the Master of Lunacy's Department. And he was a very well educated man. And I'm one of three boys and one elder sister.

01:30 Then I joined the army. Well before I joined the army I'll tell you about the sisters. The, I'm getting tongue-tied now. My brother was a sailor, the, one brother was in the air force and I was in the army, I was the youngest. I joined the army when I was seventeen years of age. In the 36th Battalion Militia and was unable

02:00 to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. I joined in September 1939 and I couldn't get into the AIF because I was too young. And I didn't even shave so they threw me out. So I waited til June 1940 til I's eighteen and then I joined the AIF at Sydney Showground. There was no equipment available so we were called what they called day boys. And we were sent at home and we had to report to the

02:30 local oval to learn military drill until such time as we could get rifles and uniform. And ultimately I was transferred from the day boys to the 2/18th Battalion at Wallgrove. Where we began our preliminary training. And from Wallgrove the battalion was moved across to Bathurst. And there we, I joined the brigade headquarters.

03:00 22nd Brigade Headquarters and joined an anti-tank company called the 22nd Anti-Tank Company. They had two pounder anti-tank guns. In fact they didn't have any guns. Allegedly they had a two pounder, we had the dashboard of an old motor car with an axle and a clothes prop sticking out the back. And that was our gun that we did our anti-tank training on. The [2/] 18th, 19th and 20th

03:30 Battalion[s] were part of the 22nd Brigade and they sailed off to Malaya. And then another brigade came in. 26th, 29th and 30th Battalion[s] and they sailed off to Malaya and left us behind. And ultimately we were moved to Wallgrove Camp where we merged with the 23rd Brigade and became the 17th Anti-Tank Battery. And in September 1941 we had all that time from 1940 to

04:00 1941 training. And being very despondent because we weren't, we thought we were going to the Middle East. And eventually we were issued with four, after we combined with the 23rd Brigade they called the, they called the two anti-tank companies; they called it the 17th Anti-Tank Battery. There were approximately two hundred men in the combination of the two anti-tank companies making the 17th Anti-Tank Battery.

04:30 We were then in September, we were sent to Rabaul. We had four anti-tank guns painted yellow, two pounders, and sixteen half charged rounds of ammunition which we expended before the Japanese came into the war. So being all trained infantrymen, of course we had nothing else to do. But when the Japanese did come we were allotted to infantry companies because we were trained infantrymen as well. However from the September up

05:00 'til January, from September '41 up til January '42 when the Japanese invaded Rabaul we had no training outside of the town. We were, we had no idea what the jungle was, we'd never been in the jungle. Our training consisted of marching up and down the main road in Rabaul and maybe over the hill and down to the beach. There was no training

05:30 whatsoever. We had no anti-tank guns. And at that stage we were not allotted to any particular infantry Company until the Japanese invaded. That was on the twenty-third of January 1942. I was allotted to

Don Company on Taliligap Ridge. I was not on the beach. And after the wounded position to overlook

06:00 the harbour, and we saw the Japanese fleet come in. With about two or three aircraft carriers and about twenty-six other ships and there we were with a force of about maybe twelve to fifteen hundred. I don't know the exact number because I was just a private in, well gunner in the army and I didn't go counting the ships. I just saw this fantastic flotilla and hundreds of aeroplanes come in. And they were flying around like mosquitoes. Dive bombing and dropping

06:30 bombs and machine gunning the troops or anything they could see. In any case we fought on Taliligap Ridge for a while. The beach defenders had to move away. They landed twenty-five thousand troops at about dawn on the 23rd of January. And the beach defence was very, they couldn't hold them back. So they retreated back into the bush up to the first or second ridge. And there the

07:00 Japanese were approaching us. We, that was my initial contact with the Japanese. From Talili… just south of Taliligap Ridge. Just laying behind a coconut tree and firing as many shots as I could. I eventually withdrew to Company Headquarters and Captain Travers from Victoria said, wanted to know if anybody could ride a motorbike. Because they could hear behind us about a mile and a half away, they could hear a lot of firing going on where C Company

07:30 was holding the upper drome. And he wanted to know how C Company was going. And my lot was to, as a dispatch rider, I became a dispatch rider then. I handed my rifle to someone and I got a .45 [revolver]. So I got on the motorbike, a Lee Enfield, a Royal Lee Enfield motorbike and off I went. And I was half way across to the 'drome and there were a line of Japanese across the road on either side of the road as well. And when they

08:00 saw me coming, they waved to me thinking I was some of the Japanese that had come up from that side of the island. So I put my head over the handlebars and drove right through them. And it wasn't til I went past that they all turned around and fired at me. But they missed me because I was, and I got to the upper drome. And C Company, I was there about ten thirty, eleven in the morning. And there was, to me there was no evidence of C Company being there at all. I knew where their headquarters was but there was no one there. C Company had gone.

08:30 So I went up and down the drome and had a look all round. There were logs across the drome. And I went up this side and down the other side. And then a Japanese Zero fighter spotted me on the motorbike. And he made a pass at me and I could see the bullets going along side where I was riding the bike. I could look down and see these bullets hitting the ground. So I turned to the right and went across the drome. And I thought, "I'll try the other side." And I saw him and I could see his helmet and see his face

09:00 and he was grinning. He was only telephone height. So he turned around then to make another run at me. And as he made his run and as he straightened up of course I swerved off to the left. And he couldn't swerve; alter his plane quickly as I could alter my motorbike. And he made five passes at me and missed me. And in the end I ran my motorbike into a ditch. And there was another fellow in the ditch there.

09:30 I didn't break the bike; I ran it into the ditch to get away from this bloke under a big ficus tree. And there was a fellow there in a little bit of a trench. And I spoke to him and I said, "God that bloke was determined." And with that he just fell forward and he was dead. And that was the first of the Australians that I'd seen killed. And I was sitting alongside him. That shook me up a bit. So when I regained my composure after the plane went I had to get back to, about a mile,

10:00 mile and a half back to Don Company to tell them that there, C Company had gone. And the Japanese behind them as well as in front of them. I didn't know how many of that group I met on the road may have been just a scouting party or it may have been part of the main force. I didn't know. But my duty was to get back, but I couldn't get back because the, Don Company were retreating this way. And my old CO [Commanding Officer]

10:30 Captain Hutchison Smith said to me "The order's been given, every man for himself, so follow me." So I said "I've still got to get this message to Captain Travers". And he said "Well, it's no point because he's coming this way". I said "C Company are not in the 'drome, there's no one there". So they went, a bomb was dropped then and to my knowledge I was half blinded for maybe five or ten minutes and I believe the truck that was, that Hutchison

11:00 Smith and a few of his fellow friends were in, my fellow friends. We went to its side but they straightened it up and drove away and they saw me laying down with a motor bike alongside me. And they thought "Oh well he's gone". but actually I was just blinded by the dirt that came up from this two hundred pound bomb. And after a couple of minutes I got up and I blinked a bit and I could see a bit. So I started the motorbike and off I went in the same direction as the truck. And I came to a T-junction.

11:30 And I didn't know whether they went to the right or they went to the left. And I thought "This is the moment of truth". So I went to the left. They went to the right and nearly all of those were caught as prisoners of war. They went right into the heart of where the Japanese were. I went to the left past Mount Varsin and round to a village called Rabata. And eventually, eventually when the road ran out I met a few others. Oh no, when the road ran out,

12:00 I dumped my bike and then I went into the jungle. And I'd never been into the jungle before. I imagined a jungle would be something that you'd just pick coconuts off the tree, pick paw paws and pineapples and. But the truth is once you get into the big tropical jungle, there's nothing to eat. There's nothing to eat at all. So it was quite a shock to get in there. And I was on my own for quite a long while. There were troops moving about but I didn't,

12:30 didn't know whether they were Japanese or what they were. There was no defined track at this stage. I just went into the bush mainly to get away and hide. And so I progressed, I hid quite a bit for a while and then I eventually just on dark there was, I saw a bit of a fire going and heard some Australian voices. And with that a loud Australian voice said "Put out the fire, there the bastards are".

13:00 And I said "It's me", and it was some of our anti-tank people had escaped. And they cursed me for making them put out the fire but they had a billy. And between the six or seven of us we had seven tins of bully beef and seven packets of biscuits. And a few packets of tea, small packets of tea. Well from then on we had, we from the twenty-eighth of January, twenty-third of January til the 28th of

13:30 January, which was my twentieth birthday, we crossed the Gazelle Peninsula, which is a mountain range of up to five to seven thousand feet. And during that time we had practically nothing to eat apart from what I've said, a tin of bully beef and a packet of biscuits in those five days. We hit the coast at a place called Adler Bay. Where the Japanese had dropped pamphlets imploring us to surrender and we'd be treated as prisoners of war. And we met some civilians that had come down by the

14:00 coast and their boat had been sunk. And there was quite a congregation of people at Adler Bay. There was a Chinese saw mill. And for my birthday party I got half a coconut full of uncooked rice. That's a half a coconut with about a tea cup size and I ate that because I was pretty hungry and I had suffered but it was food. I didn't bother, drank a bit of water with it. One thing we always had was plenty of water because it rained every day. And all the creeks had water.

14:30 During our trip through the, through the Baining Mountains, that was a terrible trip. We were all exhausted. And there was one particular fellow there who was a bank clerk. I'm just going back a little bit to tell you some of the rigours of the jungle. And he complained, cursed that he was a bank clerk and he wasn't physically fit. So I carried his pack. And he worked for the Bank of New South Wales, his name was Keith Paul. Well, I carried his pack for about two or three days til we

15:00 got to a German mission station called Lemingi, where a Father Meyerhoffer was in charge. And we spent that night in a leper hut. That's where they kept the lepers. In the morning I asked him to come with us. He said "No, I'll stay here". Well we left the mission and had to cross a terribly steep gorge. It went down I'd say about, seemed like a thousand feet, almost straight down. Across a flooded river and then straight up again. It took us two days to do that.

15:30 And well half a day down and then half a day up I'm sorry not two days. And Keith Paul stayed on. A few days later some other troops came through before I hit the coast. And I said "Did you see that fellow called Keith Paul from the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles from the bank?" They said "Yes, he died". I said "And what happened to him?" He said "Well, they threw his body over the cliff. Because the German missionary didn't want to, when the Japanese caught up, didn't want to

16:00 be accused of harbouring the Australian troops". So they didn't bury him, they just threw his body over the cliff. And his parents to this day would not know what happened to him. And that's one of the incidents of the hardships going through the jungle. There were other stories that men had been, had fallen over cliffs and shot themselves. Rather than burdens to their mates and there was a lot of self sacrifice. And but it was the true comradeship of the little groups that

16:30 you would go to, you had to go to the speed of the, try and go with the speed of the, the speed of the fastest group or you'd drag behind. Because the Japanese were behind us all the while. We didn't know whether they were half an hour or half a day but we knew they were chasing us. So time was the essence. So speed and time were the essence of crossing this mountain range. And it was a big mountain the Gazelle Peninsula. Believe me it's big. So after a day's rest at Adler

17:00 Bay, we didn't surrender. Some did, they went back and they were taken prisoners of war. And then later of course they were sunk on the Montevideo Maru or they were bayoneted I don't know. Myself and half a dozen others moved down, I don't remember their names now, we moved down the coast to a place called Toll. And at Toll, the Japanese, four barges came in on the 3rd of February. And most of the men were

17:30 much older than I. And they'd had their first attack of malaria. They were either wounded or they were old or worn out, exhausted and they surrendered. But I had no intention of surrendering and I had a friend with me called, one of my mates, a fella called Wally Cooke. So we went to the mouth of the river, very fast flowing river about fifty yards wide. And we ran up the bank of the river and we dived in the river. But Wally didn't ever, I didn't

18:00 see him go into the river. I dived first, I said "Come on Wal, we'll go in here". Three years, three years later I found his remains on the edge of the river, higher up on the bank near where we dived in. And found his watch and have notified his family since. All the others had surrendered at Toll Plantation, about a hundred and thirty odd. I'm not sure of the figures, the figure. They were tied up and bayoneted or shot by the Japanese. They were not

18:30 taken prisoners of war. I continued, then I was on my own for a few days and then I caught up with the major party. Colonel Owen's party. Where there seemed to be, he was a wonderful man, and he seemed to organise all this riff raff of troops and by then we had our uniforms were torn. A lot of the boots were gone and we were pretty ragged looking bunch. And a lot of the men had thrown their arms away because the mountains were too steep. Luckily I kept,

19:00 I didn't have a heavy vehicle, I still had my .45 [pistol]. And however we, he organised us a little bit then. And then decided to move down the coast. There must have been about sixty odd in what they called the main party. It was a German mission station we were at there and my clothes were torn and tattered to pieces. And I went to the missionary and asked him "If he had anything, if he had food". And he said "No" and he ordered me off the premises, there was a big Nazi flag hung outside

19:30 there. In case the Japanese came down he could say he was a German. Not that that would have meant anything to the Japanese. His name was Meyerhoffer also; his brother was up in the mountains. However I picked up a crust of bread in the backyard that the hens had been pecking at, full of ants. And I ate it. Flicked the ants out and I ate it. And whilst I was there I took a pair of black German missionary's underpants because all my trousers were torn to pieces.

20:00 And going through the wait-a-while vines. And I finished up for the last two months, that was the only clothes I wore. My boots had rotted off, my shirt had rotted off and I just wore this German missionary's underpants. And when I escaped that's all I had on. However we, the main party was too slow for me. And in one village I found a canoe. Big canoe, it's called a maurn. Any case,

20:30 it's a, that's a canoe without an outrigger, you've got to balance it. Well I said to Colonel Owen who was, or Major Owen as he was then. I said to him, "I'd like to make, get this canoe and go through" and, we had no maps, we had no idea where we were going. But from my school day, school boy days I could remember where the mainland of New Guinea was. I didn't know whether it was Lae or Madang or anywhere. But I knew that New Britain was an island adjacent above it. So I said "I'd like

21:00 to try and get through on a canoe, cross to the mainland. And if I contact someone, I can", and he said "If you do contact anybody", I got his permission to do this. And I asked "For volunteers if anybody had any sailing experience". And one of the officers, this young officer, a fella called Peter Fisher, he had a compass and I wanted him badly. So he volunteered. And two other boys, Jack Hart and Bob Hannah. So for two days we

21:30 skinned coconuts, we knitted sails, the natives helped us. They wanted to get rid of us. We loaded up the canoe and we were all ready to go. We would have been travelling by night just going down the coast. Headed south into God only knows what. However, before we even cleared the first reef, a little wave came and the canoe fell apart, if was dry rot. And all of our coconuts were bobbing around in the water. And the so called sail was flapping about, and

22:00 water was up to our chests. And we waded back very disappointed. Lieutenant Fisher quickly left us and joined the main party, couple of days walk. And I said "Well, I'm gonna", the natives said "There's another canoe down the coast from another village. It's hidden in, so if you get it, it'll be alright." They wanted us out of the village but I didn't know that. So we went down, we went along the coast. And we came across this, there was a big river, called the Rak. The Rak River. And this side of it was a huge cliff.

22:30 It started from nothing but built up to about a hundred feet high. So we were going up, didn't know it was going to keep on going up and up and up and up. We thought "Maybe there'd be a track down there somewhere rather than cross at the mouth". So we were looking for, mainly looking for hidden canoes. In any case Jack Hart fell down this cliff, he fell seventy feet down the cliff. Landed on his back and broke his femur. And the bone

23:00 was sticking an inch out of his leg. And there he was seventy foot below laying on his back. And I said "Are you alright?" I couldn't bandage a finger let alone. So we got down to him and the little food I had that I'd saved up, a few cau cau, that's sweet potato and a bit of taro, some native food, I left with him. And young Bob Hannah stayed with him. And then I walked onto the reef, swam into the ocean,

23:30 looked back over my shoulders to try and find some evidence of a native plantation. Usually they have coconut trees or a bit of clearing. But when you're at the bottom of a seventy-foot cliff you can't look inland very far, so I had to get out. So I got into the river and went down the river. And then got into the ocean and they all form a sand bar at the mouth. And I swam out beyond the sand bar. And looked back and I could see a mile or so inland was a few coconut trees and a little bit of an old garden.

24:00 So I, all these rivers make deltas at their mouth. See, different wet seasons as they break through the beach. And on all these, and all these deltas are good crocodile breeding grounds. There's plenty of crocodiles in New Britain. But I was completely ignorant of that fact. And I walked through half a dozen of these puddles to get, two and three feet deep to get to this place. But I eventually got to this Rak village. It was what they called a mat

24:30 mat village. They were smoking some of their dead elders. There was no one living in it. There was a few houses there. I have a description in a book somewhere of exactly what was in it. How many coconut trees and how many huts? However they, I said "Well, there's a master fallen down the cliff, a soldier's fallen down the cliff. Down there and I want you to come and help me get him." So I had a few

shillings or marks. I gave each four boys a mark, one shilling each. And next, I

25:00 stayed the night in a hut with some pigs. They'd taken out the dead body, the smoked body and taken him somewhere else. And I went into a pig hut and stayed the night. And in the morning they were there. And I showed them, tell them, I back tracked. And, but it was low tide and I was able to walk along the cliff, along the reef rather than go out into ocean. And at this stage of the game I was in bare feet. But

25:30 it's amazing what you can do when you know, when you're forced to do it. We eventually found Jack Hart and he was in a lot of pain but he was still conscious. The boys supervised a stretcher with two poles and copra bags. And there they hoisted him onto their shoulders and off they went. The tide started to rise and they couldn't continue along the, cause the ocean was coming and hitting the side of the cliff. So they couldn't continue to do that. So they made, they went into the

26:00 bush somewhere. I don't know where or how and they made a raft. A huge raft. And they put him on this raft. And they swam out into the ocean as I'd swum out into the ocean previously. And he went, they went right round to the other side of the mouth of the river. And carried him up and made a little stretcher for him and looked after him. There I stayed with looking after Jack Hart for two months. Over two months. With Bob Hannah. Other people came through, one fella came through and died.

26:30 Another fella died, other, and the natives seemed to look after me very well. They had compassion towards me cause I'd shown some compassion towards them by removing some shrapnel or something from a native's knee. And other Australian soldiers within a hundred or two hundred yards of me were killed by the same natives. Were killed by the same natives that looked after me. They were killed for stealing from their gardens. Yet they were feeding Jack Hart and myself and Bob

27:00 Hannah. Bob Hannah had malaria most of the time, so I had to give Jack a wash every morning. They made a basket for me out of a big leaf. I used to go to the river, bring it back, wash him. Help him with his toiletry. Go back to the creek with another basket, empty that out and bring back fresh water and give him a wash. And for two months I looked after him and Bob Hannah with, who had malaria. At the end of the two-month period, this is a very brief story,

27:30 took three months to happen...

Yeah, no that's alright, we'll be coming back to this.

and taking me, taking me a few minutes to say. Well eventually I got a note from Father Harris who was maybe sixty to eighty miles from where I was in Jacquinot Bay, at a place called Palmalmal. Or Markin was the name of the mission. He said he was sending a big canoe

28:00 over to a plantation called Maktong. And I was to take Jack Hart down there where there would be an evacuation from Palmalmal Plantation. So it looked like we were saved. I immediately thought of something like the evacuation of, at Dunkirk. This was, wasn't anything like that. We carried the native; in fact I took my turn as well for about fourteen mile. Up an eight hundred foot

28:30 mountain. Straight up from where we were. Because it was a steep valley where we were. Carried him straight up. They carried him, absolutely marvellous piece of stretcher work, you've never seen anything like it. And on one occasion we had to cross this steep ravine with a slippery log. Naturally four of us couldn't do that. So two of the boys held him up high and walked sideways with their bare feet, to get their grip, to get him across this chasm. And the chasm was wider than this room. And if they'd fallen they'd have gone

29:00 a good eighty to a hundred feet down the rocks. There was no other way. However they carried him to Manguna or Maktong where there was a huge canoe waiting. With about twelve natives to pull it with an outrigger. And on this outrigger they had a big bunch of sticks with a big stone in it. The outrigger's to make it level. So the boss, the native in

29:30 charge said "Do you want to go round via the coast?" There was a big bay, Jacquinot Bay. Huge bay, maybe, I don't know how many miles, thirty or forty miles round, maybe longer. "Or do you want to go straight across?" It was daytime, about four in the afternoon. And I said "We'll go straight across". He says "There's be a big storm tonight". I said "Well, I don't care about that, you know". By then I'd learned the language. The pidgin English, I could read and write it and think it. Because you

30:00 learn the language very quickly when you're hungry. That's the best way to learn a foreign language, be hungry. And I said "Well, you know you're in charge. You go the way, what you think's best." And that night, we hit a storm. And God you couldn't see anything. And it was so big, the waves, we were looking up at the waves. And the canoe had that much freeboard. Jack Hart was laying in the centre on a stretcher. I was, had half a coconut and I was bailing out. And Bob Hannah with his malaria, still he was bailing out as well. And the moment you'd bail out and

30:30 the next wave'd fill it up again. So it was such a big sea that the boulder broke out of the sticks that was holding the outrigger. Which meant that any minute the canoe would turn over. So the boss of the canoe sent a young native of about twenty to climb out on a pole that round and sit in amongst the sticks to balance the canoe. He must have weighed about the same as the rock. And there he sat in and I'd say for about thirty miles or

31:00 from say three a.m. in the morning til, I can't tell you the mile. From two a.m. in the morning til dawn he was sitting half of his time under water. Keeping the canoe balanced. So we eventually hit Palmalmal. Father Harris and a few others were there to meet us. And we took Jack Hart into a hospital. The missionary gave each of the natives that's pulled the canoe one stick of tobacco as a reward. And cause he didn't have anything else.

31:30 And in the meantime there was about a hundred of us had been all collected and had a, the administrators, the pre- war administrators yacht, the Laura Bada had come over from Port Moresby. Someone else had come first and found that there were a group of men there. And then they sent the Laura Bada over and we went back through the Trobiand Islands back to Port Moresby onto the Machdui home, where I went straight into hospital with malaria,

32:00 hookworm, beri beri, skin disease, the lot. I had every known tropical disease but I think I could have lived there forever because I had the natives looking after me. And I believed in the native medicines. And when I had malaria there was a cure, when I had dysentery there was a cure, when I had ulcers on my legs there was a cure. But I'd lost a lot of weight and I was suffering from beri beri because with insufficient nutriment, water was getting into my system and I was swelling up. So perhaps I would have died if I'd been there another couple of months. But I felt

32:30 like I could have stayed forever. And there I came back to Australia. And I was medically unfit for a while. And then they sent me to a place at Canungra, Canungra. Where I was an instructor, I was made a sergeant. I was twenty years of age and I was made a sergeant. From a private to a sergeant. And I used to lecture on how to survive in the jungle and what the jungle was like. And what foods to eat and what not to eat. Not,

33:00 nothing about Jap tactics cause I knew nothing about Jap tactics. All the queries were about Japanese tactics but I was talking about escape routes and if you got lost, what to look for. And look for the little marks on the trees cause every native carries a knife and leaves a little mark when he goes somewhere. And they're easy to follow native tracks. There mightn't be a mark on the road but if you observe the vegetation. And a hundred little tricks like that. And what's edible and what's not edible. And to try and make friends with the natives and don't

33:30 rough them up cause they will help you rather than not help you. And from there after a couple of months at Canungra I was moved to I think it's Tenterfield. Training recruits that were just been called up, teaching 'em how to slope arms and military stuff. And I was gradually getting fitter. The RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] at the time, he, Mark White, he wanted to, he wanted to get back to

34:00 New Britain. I was determined to get back to New Britain and get even on those fellas that were bayoneted at Toll. I didn't tell you the story of how they were bayoneted at Toll because I was not there. I picked up the story on one or two of the survivors that came and told us after Toll. Later on I went back and discovered the remains. Maybe, in 1945 near the end of the war. We found out there were a hundred and thirty. No one knew how many. However, I

34:30 was rookie bashing there for a while. We went to Tenterfield. And then I made it known that I wanted to go back to New Britain. That I could speak the language and I knew the natives. And they could be a lot of the help. So I was sent to a special school and I, and part of this school meant learning how to get out of a submarine into a floating boat, a blow up boat and get ashore.

35:00 So to train us then sent us up to northern Queensland. Six or eight of us in a truck. It was top secret, no one knew about it. And we had to move out to a lagoon called Boobra Lagoon. That's where we had to do our practise on the black soil plains when no one was about. We were met at Goondiwindi by the local Mayor who said "I'm waiting for you boys". He said "I've got a lunch arranged for you". This was how secret is was, the local Mayor

35:30 knew we were coming up and where we were going. So we, we finished that training. And then I was, my, somehow my friend Mark White the RSM, ordered my medical status from B1 or B2 up to A1 and eventually to the highest grade where I was declared fit again. And I was pretty fit. So I was then transferred, I was then allotted to the

36:00 2/12th Battalion. Who had just come back from the Middle East. And they'd also come back from New Guinea, fighting at Buna and Gona. And they, I was a sergeant there. But a reinforcement sergeant going into a Middle East battalion and someone that had just come out of, wasn't very well met. So I let them know, I let the CO know that I'm in the wrong place, I shouldn't be here. I should be in New Britain. So

36:30 I was transferred from there to what they call the PIB Headquarters, which is at the back of Port Moresby up in the hills. Which is the Papuan Infantry Battalion. And that was no good to me because I didn't speak Papuan. I only spoke pidgin English from New Guinea. And I said "That's no good for me". So somehow I eventually got back to Port Moresby again. No, then I got back to Lae and I joined, which later became the First

37:00 New Guinea Infantry Battalion. And we were all natives with the exception of an officer and a sergeant for each Platoon. And I was a sergeant for one of the platoons I forget. The number it doesn't matter; I was in B Company of the First New Guinea Infantry Battalion. We went across, I can't tell you the date because my memory's not good enough. I can hardly remember what I go into the room for. But to my

knowledge it was late ‘43, it could have been early

37:30 ’44, I’m not certain. We went across to New Britain and landed at Pomio which is half way between Jacquinot Bay and Matong from the place where I took off. So we landed there and my first task was to go up into the Nakanai Mountains and search to see if there was any area of ground that could be used as a fighter strip. Any, like kunai Grass area, any flat area on top of these mountains. That took about a week.

38:00 And that’s the heaviest climbing I’ve ever done in my life. That was hand over hand like in the Blue Mountains in Sydney. But it was five thousand feet and it was steep. And on the top, we found quite a, there were no natives about. Which was most peculiar because there were, but we were not aware of it. They didn’t know what was happening. So one of the funny incidents of my whole army career was when we eventually got to this, to the top. We caught a little boy, found a little

38:30 boy watching us. And we called him over in pidgin. And he said “He was a Turn Talk”. Which a Turn Talk is an interpreter. And that’s how they get on, from one end of the island to another. Every village has a Turn Talk. He could speak this language and then he can relate it into another, and so it’ll go on, the Turn Talk. So I said “Well gather all, tell your little one and all the men to come and women to come tomorrow morning to this place here. I want to talk to them all.”

39:00 So they all, there must have been about forty or fifty natives. Bush natives, pretty sick, lot of ulcers, lot of sickness. Lot of malaria. They’d been hiding out in the jungle there for a couple of years. So I said “Well the King had sent me”. I said “And all these half dozen soldiers of mine are soldiers belong the King. And we have come here to rouse the Japanese. And no longer will the Japanese bomb your houses. No more will they

39:30 rape your Marys. No more will they kill your pigs and destroy your gardens. The Japanese will be roused, we will, the soldiers belong to the King, we will rouse them all, we’ll do that.” And the little Turn, one fella said something and the little boy picked it up, and I said “What’d he say?” He said, “Who’s that man belong Japan all in no look him. Who are the Japanese they’d never been up there.” And I granted them all their freedom like General MacArthur.

40:00 That was funny. So amidst all, amidst all the, that was just hard work doing that. From then on we moved up the coast. We moved up the coast. And we patrolled all in and around, oh we had a few fire fights on the way. On one occasion a lot of Police Boys on their escape in 1942 had named one little area there, New Guinea Club. It was near Toll Plantation, just

40:30 this side of Toll Plantation. And we were sneaking up, we’d been patrolling all in around, around Toll Plantation, knowing how many Japanese were there and what armament they had and everything. Cause there was an Australian, there was an Australian battalion coming up behind. But we did all the patrol work. Days and weeks ahead of them so they would know what to expect. But this particular day was a big shock for us. Because we bumped into a patrol at the, at the New Guinea Club. We bumped into a,

41:00 a patrol And we just happened to stay still as they came into our view. And we got twenty-five, we killed twenty-five of the buggers. And after that particular firefight, the Australians had moved up a bit close. And there was a, our intelligence sergeant and a malaria control man who’d been bayoneted at Toll, he was there, and a war photographer. And he took out photograph. Maybe an hour after I’d had this firefight. And there’s a photograph I’ll

41:30 show you in there where I look eighty. I’d just gone through hell. And I didn’t wear a hat I just wore a green beret, just a cloth beret. But he shoved his hat on me and he got the photograph of the three of us. Cause we’re at Toll in 1942. One of them was, had been bayoneted and escaped and Bruce Perkins and I had, had also escaped on the Laura Bada. So, that’s about...

Tape 2

00:31 Right, after the, after the fire fight at New Guinea Club, I met up with Bruce Perkins who had escaped on the Laura Bada with me and a fella called Nick Webster who had been bayoneted at Toll. A few days after that I was, we stayed near there. That’s just this side of Toll. And we got news that the Australian infantry battalion, that was coming up behind us. Usually about two or three weeks behind us.

01:00 But on this occasion, two or three days behind us and they were preparing to invade Toll. And to take Toll Plantation which was really a knob with the plantation round it. A hill I mean, a knob with some flats round it and a couple of rivers coming in on this side. We knew, we had already pointed out all of the Jap positions and all the rest of it. So our task then was to get round the back of Toll and if any of the Japs tried to escape, we

01:30 were to get them off. So we then went round, went up the river, across the river and round the back of Toll and we set up half a dozen different traps. For any escaped Japanese. Now we heard the firing and Japanese, the Australians taking Toll and consolidating. We had actually, we had them locked up prior to that in any case. Cause we were patrolling

02:00 all the while. We'd patrol right up almost to Rabaul. So we knew how many were there and we knew that, ultimately they had to be taken. So the Australian took, troops eventually took them. And one day we'd sent out three patrols. And I'd had an attack of malaria. Bruce Perkins the Intelligence Sergeant and a Major Lyon and four other sick natives decided to stay there. And these three other

02:30 sections went out on various tracks or alleged escape routes from. There had been some of the supply routes into Toll for the Japanese coming in. So they set up traps to get them on their way out. However on their way out they'd left their water bottles full, in the creek. Rather than carry water all day, they knew they were coming back. And they left their water bottles in the creek. They filled them up with fresh water and left their water bottles. And

03:00 one excited native came up one day to, came up the hill this particular day. And said, "Oh Japany come". He said "All the Japanese are coming", he said. Because they saw the water bottles of the troops and they're coming up here. And of the course the bloke in charge who was a Major at the time. He said "Ah what rot you know". So we Bruce Perkins and I, immediately took up our positions. One, I was down on the lower part and he was up on the higher part. And there was a hill coming towards us

03:30 like that. And we waited there for about ten minutes and all of a sudden they came into view. So we fired a few shots. Oh there was another, an RAP [Regimental Aid Post] sergeant was there. He was reading the, no, yes he was an RAP sergeant. He was reading the Bible. The major was shouting orders saying "Don't waste ammunition". And Bruce Perkins and I and two or three other natives were shooting Japanese as they were coming. All officers. Seven of

04:00 them. In the end they decided, we couldn't, didn't get them all first up. You know we saw the movement to side but they kept moving. Then they disappeared. And they'd moved round up the top of the hill and then decided to put on a Banzai charge with their swords out to charge at us. Well about thirty yards, this is one of the longest distances I've ever been able to see. This bloke was coming down the hill from where Bruce Perkins was. And I hit him, I had an American

04:30 Carbine and I hit him three times in the chest. And he kept running with his sword out. He was taller than I was. So I grabbed a native that was firing at nothing, wasn't aiming. And I grabbed his 303, this is about ten yards from me. He's still running at me. And I grabbed the three-o-three. And instinctively I didn't aim it I shot it and got him in the chest and he fell. And five feet from me was the tip of his sword where he hit the ground. And the next minute zzzhow, a bullet went past

05:00 my face like that. And I said "Hey, Polly, it's me down here". And he said "I know", he said. "I just got a joker that had a bead on you in that tree about ten yards from you. He was just taking aim at you to coincide with the, with the Banzai charge." And people ask me what fear was like. I wasn't frightened during the action. When it was over, I was I shook. I shook. I was that close. If it

05:30 hadn't been for that native being there with a .303, my Carbine wouldn't have stopped him. Another time I've been asked by other people, in civilian life, were you ever scared. The answer is probably I was scared all the time. But that's really not true. Waiting for the first shot to be fired on patrol is scary. Once the first shot's, you've either fired it or they've fired at you, you've got a job to do and you do it. And all fear goes. All

06:00 fear goes. You can, haven't got time to be frightened because you've got something to do. And that was one of those occasions. But when it was over, when I saw this bloke, when I saw this bloke's face you know. I can see him now. However that, after that, few days after that the war was declared finished. The war was finished. And I was sent by a Lieutenant Colonel Dawson to go right up into the

06:30 back of Rabaul to advise all the Japanese working in the gardens that the war was over and they had to go back and surrender. And I had no intention of doing that. So I got my half dozen of my best natives and I went up that way on top of a big mountain. Two weeks, and when I came down, the battalion had moved. And all the Australians had moved into Rabaul. And this was just a stores depot. So I waited for the little pinnis to come up. And I hopped on the Pinnis and I went down to Jacquinot Bay and I hopped on the ship and came

07:00 home. And when I came home I went to get discharged and they said "What's your name?" and number. And they said "Sorry pal, you're missing, presumed dead. From 1942. You", and I said, "I'm not". Cause we didn't get when we're up there. There was nothing to buy, there was no shops there was no pay books or anything like that. And I said "Well, I've just had, I've just had a, I've just had a couple of years in the bloody jungle. Virtually on my own with no chain of

07:30 command." I mean there was no one, the last order I'd heard was from a full Colonel who said "Every man for himself". So anybody under that I wouldn't take any notice of it. I felt like the King of the south coast. Because understand that I spoke the dialect, I spoke the pidgin English and I knew the natives and they knew me. And when I came back I was, it gave me so much confidence. There wasn't any job that I took from then on that I didn't rise to the top. And

08:00 you know I was afraid of nothing and consequently I made quite a success of my life in business life.

Can you tell us a little bit about what you did after the war?

Well I went to Fiji to start with. No I went back to Anthony Hordens, where I was a boy before the war

selling. And I couldn't stand standing behind a counter selling razor blades one by one. Because they were rationed after the war. And the bloke told me I had to join the union, so we nearly came to blows. So I

08:30 decided to go and live in, I was married, and so we went and lived with March White, the fella that, one of the fella's we'd escaped with. And we lived in Fiji for three years. I was a Customs Officer. And I joined Pan American Airways, I was the airport manager at Nandi Airport. When it took over from the navy, US Navy. Then I flew, came back to Australia and joined an airline here called British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines. And I flew to America and Canada, twenty-six times.

09:00 Return trips. It was a two and a half day trip over there. And two and a half day trip, I had twenty-six trips. Then I was made manager at the airport for Mascot with British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines. And then the government took it over, Qantas. Took it over. After they crashed a plane in San Francisco. And I didn't want to work for the government. So I, I'd met a Captain Miller in Honolulu, who

09:30 was short of funds on one occasion, so I approached him. I said "Remember we were in Hawaii a few years ago and I gave you some money at the right price. Some US dollars." And he said "Yes. He promised me a job." "Oh laddie, that job's gone", he said. "So", he said, "We'll send you, that was a storeman's job. There is a storeman's job at the brewery, Miller's Brewery." Was Britain's Brewery then at Taverner's Hill. So

10:00 I went out to the brewery and there I was in charge. And from then on I came back to Head Office and I became, I studied coal and combustion. And I became a very successful coal salesman. And I was transferred to Melbourne and made a Director of the Company. Had over, numerous overseas trips. And before I was fifty years of age, the boss died. And

10:30 I was made Managing, Chairman and Managing Director of a large Public Company that owned six coal mines, about six ships, about two hundred trucks and twenty-six hotels. R.W. Miller & Company. I was Chairman and Managing Director. I was in that job for two years and we were taken over. And at fifty years, taken over by another group of companies, and at fifty years of age I was out of work. So I went, guess what I did, I went to New Guinea. I went back to New Guinea to see some

11:00 of my old soldiers. Found some. And I was there for about twelve months. Took my wife, she stayed a little while but it was a bit hard on her because we were not in the town, we were out of the town. Right down the south coast of New Britain. Well I then came back and I started a consulting company. And I worked till I was sixty-five. And everybody wanted me because of my close association with the unions. I got on well with all unions. And they didn't know whether I was Labor, Liberal, Roman Catholic, Jew, Seventh Day Adventist or

11:30 Douglas Credit Disciple cause I treated them all the same and mixed with them all. And I, they all called me comrade. The Liberals called me Mr Taylor and all the Labor people and the Communists used to call me comrade. I didn't, they all thought I was one of them. So I made a great success in my consulting company and then sickness took over at sixty-five and I went through a period of ill health. From strokes to

12:00 to cancer, I had my kidney removed, to heart and now I'm on a pace maker, I'm on a battery. I'm living on a battery today, so don't let the battery go flat. And about once every six months I get that checked up. And generally apart from falling over three times this year. Once on a push bike, once on a wheelbarrow and once I tripped in town, I'm in pretty good health. Except that I can't walk like I used to. I think,

12:30 and that's to be expected at my age. And that's all.

Think you're doing very well.

That's a very thumbnail sketch.

Thank you very much Arch, that's fantastic. If you're right now, we'll go right back to the beginning and I'll start asking questions.

I'm right, yeah.

We'll probably go for maybe another fifteen minutes or so and then we'll have a break. Oh actually maybe a bit longer than that, we've still got a bit to go. But this is much

13:00 **easier because I can ask questions and you can fill in all the details. Going right, right back to childhood, I was just wondering what memories or experiences you had of the Depression.**

Well thank you for that question. Fortunately my father being in a very senior position in the government. The whole family, we were unaffected by the Depression in as much as that we

13:30 my father bought an new car, an Oldsmobile in 1927 for two hundred and thirty pound or something you know. And we had shoes to go to school with and we were well clothed and well fed. However my mother was such a kindly person, she had half, she used to feed half the district after school. They'd come play at our place. And we had to hide our shoes in the bush to go to Gladesville Public School. So we wouldn't be one out.

14:00 Hide them in the bush, there's a lot of bush there like there is out the back here now. And it wasn't long before dad got onto this. And he said "Don't you boys ever wear your shoes out". And he knew we were hiding them in the bush. We couldn't put anything over him. But they were mainly for going to church on Sunday, that's what the shoes were for. So we as children were not affected by the Depression. In as much as all of our schoolmates had raggedy

14:30 clothes and were hungry. Whereas we, we were more, we weren't of the silver spoon class but we were very well looked after due to my father's good job. And he instilled on all of the family that security was the most important thing to have in a job. That's the only thing I didn't want to believe in. That's why I wanted to join the army. Didn't brush on to me.

Did he know that at the time?

Yes he knew all the jobs I had, none of them had security.

15:00 **Can you tell me about, you were saying that your mother basically fed the neighbourhood?**

Yeah well lots of my playmates you know, not the neighbourhood. But lots of my playmates, up to half a dozen kids every afternoon would come in and get cakes and sandwiches. And soft drinks, we used to make home brew ginger beer and all of this. She was a very kindly woman. My mother died at forty. She was, that was in 1932. 1932, so my,

15:30 I was ten, I have memories of my mother, I can still see her you know handing out cakes and sandwiches to the kids. We'd line up.

That, I mean what was it, I mean that would've been a bit tough at the age of ten losing your mother?

Well of course it was. But I had an elder sister who thought she was, she thought, she was six years older than me. And she thought that she'd take over as mother, so there was some scraps there. Very strong, very strong person Jean. And forced me to

16:00 play the violin. All the other boys were playing football, I was playing the violin. I wasn't very happy about that. So in the end I, we had an argument and I smashed the violin over her head. And that was the end of the music lesson. But the football came in then. Not that I was a good footballer but at lease I could be outside playing. Or playing soldiers in the bush. That seemed to be the, most of, the best game amongst the boys was playing soldiers in the bush. Cause we had a lot of bush round us at Gladesville and Hunters Hill.

16:30 **Did you get on with the rest of your brothers and?**

Oh yes, yeah, very well indeed. No arguments there. Well we'd fight amongst ourselves you know. But there was no bitterness there. We stayed together as a family.

Are you still close now?

Well they're all dead. Yeah, yeah. I've been to all their funerals. Yeah, unfortunately. I'm the youngest so,

17:00 it's fair enough, it happens to everybody at time.

I'm the youngest, I can relate. Had you heard, did you hear many stories about World War I?

Yes we did. My friend George Thornton, who was my lifelong friend who was caught as a prisoner after he was wounded. And then sunk on the Montevideo Maru. His father was in the First World War and he used to tell us about it.

17:30 And I think it was because of his telling of the stories on how terrible it was in the trenches. He was not at Gallipoli but I had two uncles who were in Gallipoli. And on my mother's side and also my father's side. One was, one's dead in Malta. And those stories used to filter back to me as well. And I used to be enthralled with those stories. Thinking it'd be a wonderful thing. Don't ask me why but that's what I

18:00 thought. I always wanted to be a soldier combined with the fact that my Grandmother used to tell me the stories of the Scottish Chieftains and how they used to fight. And she used to pretend to me that she was, they were all direct relatives of hers. Every famous Scots Chief was some relative of hers you know. She fired my imagination about being, wanting to be a soldier. When I was ten or twelve without a mother, my granny was the advisor. Plus the neighbours' friends you know

18:30 and a few uncles. They'd tell me all the glories of it.

Can you recollect any of the stories she'd tell you?

I can recollect one but it's pure fiction. She told me that one of her chieftain predecessors were having a fight with another one. And they, the fellow with his big broad sword cut his leg off and he fell off his horse. And he was standing there. So the winner rode back to

19:00 his castle and left the drawbridge down. And he went into a huge hollow square bank, which you know like a big U shaped bank. And there they were celebrating, drinking whisky and all the rest of it. And

my uncle called his, the one with his leg off, called his manservant over and said “Put my stump in there laddie and mount me”. So he put his bloody stump in his hand and he mounted him onto his horse and got his broad sword back. And he rode across the drawbridge and into the castle and right into the centre of the thing.

19:30 Shwoosh, and with one slash, cut his head off. And that was one of the stories that my grandmother told me.

Did you believe it when you were ten?

Course, yes, yeah. I thought it was wonderful. Blood everywhere.

Did you have the same, or what did you think about the stories that you heard about people in the trenches in World War I? Was that a bit more serious?

Yeah but the, they

20:00 always used to glide over the bad parts about it and the suffering. They would tell you the humorous parts. That, like having cigarettes shot out of their mouth and, and not much blood and guts. But just that it wasn’t good you know about trench feet and all the rest of it. I didn’t know what trench feet was. Used to feel sorry for them, they used to you know always worry about those that were gassed. There were some people up at, Seventh Day Adventists, not

20:30 Seventh Day Adventists, Lady Davidson’s Home, even when I was a kid, that were in a formaline bath that’d been gassed in World War I. And my dad as we drove past there on the way to Bobbin Head, and my dad used to point out that some of the ravages of World War I are still in there. But that didn’t seem to affect me very much. Cause I didn’t see them.

21:00 **Did you, so with the stories that you heard, what was it that attracted you to wanting to be a soldier? What was it about a soldier that you thought…?**

Well firstly I wasn’t an academic at school. I think I went to, I finished up at North Sydney High School. Drummoyne High School then North Sydney High School. And I didn’t get to the Intermediate Certificate. Because I didn’t study. I only went to school on a Tuesday

21:30 which was sports day. And I didn’t study. Whereas my father used to instil on everybody else, security, security. Get the leaving certificate, get the leaving certificate. I couldn’t. It’s not that I was a dunce, it’s just that I had no intention of studying. I wanted to be a salesman or a soldier. Deep down I always wanted to be a soldier. And in those days I didn’t think you needed any brains to be a soldier. Whereas today you should have a University degree to be a soldier. In those days they were just foot

22:00 sloggers. Allegedly you didn’t have to use your brains, you had to do what you were told. Or do what someone else tells you. So I was not an academic.

Did you hear much about, did you know much about Hitler and the trouble that was happening in Europe before the outbreak of World War II?

Yeah we used to just read the newspapers. Didn’t mean anything, we were so far removed. I wanted, I joined the army wanting to go the

22:30 Middle East. See Japan wasn’t in the war. And we had to wait til I joined in July 1940, I was in the army in September ‘39 and I didn’t get to Rabaul, that’s two years, before I went to Rabaul in September ‘41. Two years doing nothing when troops were going to the Middle East and going to Malaya. And we were stuck at home reforming this anti-tank, cause the guns weren’t made apparently.

23:00 The guns were made in South Australia. Then they were painted yellow when we got them. So we naturally thought we were going to the Middle East. Instead of that we finished up at Rabaul.

Bit of a surprise.

Yeah. But I think the idea of joining the army was to get some travel. Combined with the fact that you know I wasn’t keen on much else. And there was a war on and everybody in our street had joined up as well.

23:30 In our little reserved street in Hunters Hill. So we all joined up.

What did your father reckon of you wanting to enlist?

Well he tried to stop it for a while when I was seventeen. And then I wrote him a little note and said look you know, when I was eighteen, I said “If you don’t sign the paper that I’m twenty, I’ll join under the name of John Smith. Under another name.” And he said “You wouldn’t do that, would you?” He said “I’ll sign the

24:00 paper.” He was very kindly man. He understood boys cause he was one himself.

Oh that’s fantastic.

Yeah.

Did you enlist by yourself or with any...?

No I enlisted by myself in the Showground. I just went along and joined up.

Can you describe what that was like? I mean were there a lot of people, was there a lot happening?

No, no just queues of people. Queues of people and men peeing in bottles.

24:30 That was the medical examination. Only fella, some blokes couldn't made it and others couldn't stop. So some fellas'd fill up two or three flasks and others, those that couldn't start and those that couldn't stop'd fill up three bottles. That's about the only exciting thing about joining up.

Which one were you?

Normal.

So how long did the whole

25:00 **process take?**

Oh, it was about a day. See they didn't have enough equipment. They didn't have uniforms or rifles or boots or anything. Cause prior to that they'd gone to the Middle East. See the war broke out in September '39 and here's me joining up in June 1940. Well all the old First World War equipment they had was gone. Practically.

So what was actually there?

At the Showground there was nothing there. Just

25:30 barracks. You could stay there but if you lived in Sydney you could stay at home. And then they'd allot them to various units you see. Batches'd be allotted to various units. So that's why we could stay at home and turn up to this park at Gladesville. Where we were drilled by some army blokes. Until they found a unit that had some vacancies in it. And that's how I got into the 2/18th Battalion. Well that's how it was formed. From the people, there were some at Willoughby, some at Gladesville and some at the

26:00 Showground. They put them all together and called it the 18th Battalion. 2/18th. They were forming the 8th Division out of these new recruits. And they were a different type of men than the new recruits than they were that had joined up earlier. They were generally, I shouldn't say that. Because people may think I'm drawing differences. But they were, they were deep, they were commonly called deep thinkers. They called up, they didn't join the army til

26:30 six or seven months after the war. Whereas a lot of blokes joined in 1939 you know they were fair dinkum soldiers. So they, and I believe they were. But we gave it a lot of thought. Well we weren't old enough, so they called us the deep thinkers.

Even though you'd just turned eighteen you were a deep thinker?

Yeah, that didn't make any difference. It all depends on your number you see.

So...

And my number was fifty-one thousand. You know fifty-one thou, five, one, nine two nine. Starting

27:00 from zero to five, one. No the first thousand were for the officers. Whereas someone a day later than me was sixty, double five oh six oh. And then another mate was six five one eight five. I can remember their numbers you know. So they didn't get in til, join up til early July. So they were joining up you know in their thousands. Thousand a day or more. Four or five thousand a day were joining up. At that stage.

And...

27:30 Cause Japan wasn't in the war, we knew nothing about Japan. It was just that we, you know Hitler apparently had hit everybody's conscience. And we needed troops in the Middle East. Crete was on and Greece and we were losing everything you know.

Yeah so what stories were you actually hearing back?

That we needed reinforcements. That they needed reinforcements and if you joined up now you'd be sent to the Middle East. And that was travel, adventure, the Middle East. Some of the stories I got were

28:00 from the Light Horse from the Middle East. The First Light Horse. Excitement. Yeah. Patriotism and excitement and travel. I think they're the reasons. Plus the fact that everybody in the street joined up. It was the thing to do.

Were you joining for Australia or for King and country?

28:30 I believed in King and country. I didn't just think, cause it was a World War. And Britain was at war and we were part of the British Empire. Yeah that must have crossed my mind. It wasn't, I didn't just think of Australia. I didn't even think that Australia would be threatened. So it must have been because of the

King and country. And the British Empire. Yeah.

You mentioned before about

29:00 **taking basically what was on offer. Is that how you went into the Anti Tank Brigade?**

No we went into the Anti Tank Brigade because they called for volunteers. And they said "This anti-tank business is a suicide squad". Because no matter what the other troops have got to do, you've got to stay in this little two pounder anti-tank gun. Four men were holding it. And you've got to stay there and get tanks. And nine times out of ten it all depends who fires first. The tank or

29:30 you. Aren't things you can hide in the jungle. You, they've gotta be in the open so when the tank comes along and provided he's on the road, in fact in Malaya they got quite a few tanks. And in Milne Bay with their anti-tank guns. But we didn't ever get into action for ours. It was like a, they said "It was like a suicide squad". You weren't mobile, you couldn't get up and run or take your rifle with you as you ran, you'd desert. So they, we decided, George Thornton and I that I grew up with, we

30:00 went into the 22nd Anti Tank Company. And trained at Bathurst with no guns you see. Because there was no guns.

So what did you think of being attached to what people were calling a suicide squad?

Oh people didn't call it that. That's what the officers that recruited called it. And there were lots of volunteers. No one else called it the suicide squad. They all thought it was a bludgers job. Cause they

30:30 didn't have to do route marches. And didn't have to do all the hard yakka and the infantry training. See.

Is that why you signed up?

No, no, no. Not, that was a bonus.

So can you tell me a little bit about training at Bathurst without any equipment? You mentioned it briefly before but could you go into a bit more detail?

Well we didn't have, we didn't

31:00 have any, we had the truck. We didn't have any anti-tank guns. So they got the dash of an old motor car and they put an axle on it, underneath it. Somehow they welded an axle under there. Then they put a long telephone, a clothes prop out the front and somehow hooked it onto the back of the truck. And we'd practise jumping out of the track and unhooking that and swinging it round towards wherever the imaginary road was. And they'd say you know, fire one,

31:30 fire two, three hot potatoes and all that. We didn't have any ammunition, we didn't do anything. It was just a lot of driving around and jumping out of the truck and setting this thing up and aiming it and jumping back into the truck and going somewhere else. And I was at Bathurst for, you know for quite a long time.

What other things did they get you to do at Bathurst?

Dig trenches, dig trenches. And to stay fit, every morning we'd get up oh, first light. Cold,

32:00 palliasses, straw palliasses on the floor. And the grooves in the corrugated iron, the cold would come in through there. So we'd run a hundred and walk a hundred, run a hundred, walk a hundred for an hour. Every morning. So that kept us so fit it didn't even matter. Run a hundred, walk a hundred yards. Do that for an hour. Whoo, boy, that keeps you fit and you don't get cold for the rest of the day. Digging trenches and oh and sporting

32:30 activities and sing songs at night. Pretending to set up our anti-tank guns when the other battalion were doing their exercises and all the rest of it. It was just training, it was more like playing. Without any weapons.

Did you make many mates?

Did I, yes. It was a small unit and I knew nearly everyone in it. Until it merged and became the 17th Anti Tank Battery.

33:00 When it doubled in size and I didn't know them all. Cause they were a Victorian crowd and we were New South Wales. And we both had a senior officer and they fought. So yeah it ruined it a bit. However it's by the way. They're all gone now so I can't say anything bad about them.

What…

There wasn't anything bad about them in any case. It's just that we, being young, New South Wales

33:30 versus Victoria, that's state rivalry.

So how would you, would you get into competitions?

Yeah we had competitions. Not within our own unit so much as with the other unit. I won a mile walk on

one occasion. And then they held the Brigade Sports and I was disqualified in the first five yards. Heel and toe. This bloke reckoned I was running so I was disqualified. But I won our own

34:00 unit one. So there was sports and there were football matches and there were fights, organised fights. If there was any argument, they'd form a ring and the two men'd fight. No boots, no knives, no anything just man to man. In the end they'd shake hands and go and have a beer. And that, right throughout the AIF that was how you had a fight. If you had a fight with someone, you'd set the date you'd meet him down the donga, after hours. Even if he was a Senior officer, senior to you.

34:30 You'd have your fight and it'd all be over. And they'd end up with their arms round one another having a beer. And the argument'd be finished.

What sort of things would people argue about that would actually get em into a fight to start with?

God knows. Maybe a few beers. Maybe a few beers or maybe talking about a woman. Maybe the women were the fault of it all, not that there was any women about. They're only in their own mind.

35:00 Oh sometimes you'd get into an argument with the attitude of your sergeant who'd tell you, you know roar at you and tell you to pick up matches. You'd have a go, say "I've been picking up matches all day". He'd say "Don't disobey an", you know they'd pull their rank on you a bit sometimes. So you'd tell em "To go to buggery". In the end he'd take you down the donga. And mostly they could fight like hell. So after a while it was better to pick up the matches. Discipline. Enforced discipline.

35:30 **Generally was that the way it went, that the...?**

Oh yeah generally that's the way it went. No one nursed grudges. No one nursed grudges.

Did you get into any of these yourself?

Course. Course. There was one man he was a lance corporal, we were on five shillings a day. Later six. And he was a lance corporal. No extra money. But he would have gone to nine shillings a day or something like that if he got his second stripe. And I disobeyed what he said

36:00 one day and he took me down to the creek. After our training, he said "I want to see you down the donga later on". So I went down and he was about thirty-five I suppose and I was about nineteen. And he gave me a father of a bloody thrashing believe me. He said "You're going to help me get my second stripe". He said "I'm a married man and I've got two kids and I need those extra few shillings a day. For my family. And I'm

36:30 not gonna allow you or any of you young fellas to be in the way of my second or third stripe." Cause that went up to ten shillings a day if they made him sergeant. He said "From now on you are going to get me that second and third stripe. So don't forget it." So we worked like hell and did everything he said and he was made a corporal. Cause he had such good troops. But I copped a thrashing.

37:00 **Was that the last fight you got into with him?**

Oh yeah, we became lifelong friends. I would never get into a fight, once you get a good thrashing from someone you don't want another. As I say it was fists. It wasn't boots and knives or anything like that. Nobody ever put the slipper in you know. Different world.

What did you get up to when you had a bit of leave?

When I had a bit of leave, I'd

37:30 naturally I'd get to Sydney. Wherever we were I'd get to Sydney. Mainly family-wise or with Vera, who was my girlfriend, who my brother had brought home and I pinched. So. My brother was a sailor. And he was away at sea. And he brought Vera home and I fell in love with Vera.

What did your brother think about that?

Well he couldn't think much, he was in Tahiti or somewhere. In the navy with the Free French so it didn't matter.

38:00 When he came back it was too late. No sore, he wasn't sore about it. She was just an associate, just a friend. They worked in the same place.

Can you tell us about the day that you met?

No I, yes I think we met in a hamburger store. On the corner of Hunter and Pitt Street. Where Vera and my brother and a few friends used to meet.

38:30 And they asked us to meet there. That was a hamburger shop. And we met in the hamburger shop. And then my sister, who also worked in the same place, asked Vera home to stay over our place for the weekend. And that's when, that's where we became attached to one another and fell in love. Because my sister had brought her home for the weekend. And then we used to ask her over regularly for the weekend. Then I, yeah, that's how we

39:00 met.

Lovely.

In fact when we became engaged I was on a few day's leave. And we had lunch in Tattersalls in town. And you know Vera had never been to a hotel in her life let alone the City Tatts, in this Tattersalls Hotel. And I'd bought the engagement ring. And we were going home in a taxi, which was big time. You know I was on six days leave. And I said "Look what I found in the back of the seat". And I pulled out this little box with a ring it. And she said

39:30 "Well you better tell the driver. You'd better tell the driver." And I said "No, better not it's for you". And I slipped it on her finger and that's how we became engaged. And our children think that's a very romantic story.

It is a very romantic story.

Yeah.

Okay.

Tape 3

00:32 **Arch, I was wondering, you were telling us that you were too young to join the AIF. Were you worried that the war might end before you got a chance to go?**

No, not particularly. Because I was already in the militia. I was just hoping that I could look a bit older and shave. Oh it didn't worry me. I was a bit disappointed but not worried.

What were you doing in the

01:00 **militia at the time?**

Well we, every, I think it was Thursday night and Saturday afternoons we used to go to Haberfield by tram which was quite a long way. And just do drills, slope arms, learn how to, the parts of a rifle and parts of a machine gun. Basically recruit training. Which when I, which came in handy when I joined the AIF. I already knew how to pull a Lewis gun to pieces and put it back again. They don't use those guns anymore now. And the same

01:30 with rifles. And the basic drill. Sloping arms, saluting, learning how to salute. How to wear your dress properly. It's just like a recruit training centre. We did a three month's camp in September 1939. It was about the time the war broke out we were in camp. And we did all, we were trained as infantrymen then. But a lot of that was digging trenches and back to the old

02:00 World War I trench warfare. Learning how to use a bayonet. But we had horses and carts then instead of trucks. They call it Limbers. They were the suppliers, they were the supply wagon, they were called Horse & Limber. And to avoid marching I used to be the brakeman on the limber. You'd, there was a step at the back of this square box behind two horses. And when they'd go down the hill you'd have to wind the brakes on,

02:30 so they didn't overtake the horses. And when they were going on the straight I'd hop up on the one step and I'd get a free ride whereas all the troops had to march. You get pretty cunning. So I learned that when I was young.

When did you hear that Japan had entered the war?

Well it, we were in Rabaul. It was at a, I was at a,

03:00 on a lookout post of a school. Mr Waterhouse's school at a place called Nordup, just on the other side of Rabaul township. And at about twenty thousand feet we saw a Japan, well we didn't know it was a Japanese, an aeroplane flew over Rabaul on the seventh of December. I don't know where the anti aircraft fired at it or not but they had no chance of hitting it because it was so high. But you could almost see through the plane. And we knew then,

03:30 then it came over the radio that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbour. On that day that the plane flew over. And that's the first, then we knew we were at war. But we didn't know, but it was about, it wasn't til about December. I'm sorry that was the seventh of Dece, seventh of December Pearl Harbour. It wasn't til maybe round Christmas time and early January they bombed, they bombed, they started

04:00 bombing Rabaul and the township. But it didn't interfere much with the troops. They weren't bombing the troops, they were just bombing the aerodromes. And the ships that were in the harbour. So we knew that there would, an invasion would be imminent but we didn't know when.

When did you find out that you were headed to Rabaul?

When we sail, when we sailed into Rabaul Harbour. Cause we didn't stop anywhere on the way.

When, can you describe

04:30 **when you left Australia?**

We went up on a troop ship called the Zealandia. And we were all full of excitement thinking we were going to the Middle East. And we had an idea, we had an idea we were going somewhere else because the ship called into Bowen to refuel. It was a coal-fired ship. And it called into Bowen in Newcastle. And some of the blokes went ashore and we couldn't find them. So they must have got full or something and took a while to get back.

05:00 And we had an idea we were going somewhere there but we had no idea when.

Had you…

That was in September 1940, '41. Sorry '41.

Had you been issued anything, any tropical gear or…?

No, not at, none whatsoever. No we had just khaki shorts and khaki longs. All desert gear, our trucks were painted yellow. Our anti-tank guns were painted yellow. We eventually got guns before we went

05:30 away. Well they were on the ship but we hadn't seen them 'til they were put on the ship.

Had you heard of Rabaul before you …?

No I well, oh yes I had. My Uncle Arch had been a photographer in 1927 with the administrator and he'd gone down the south coast of New Britain. The same area that I escaped from he'd gone down by ship and taken photographs here and there. And he told me about it. And subconsciously I, it never registered. Til

06:00 one day subconsciously I envisaged a village and it was exactly as he'd described to me when I's a boy. So, some of the stories he told me must have stuck. And I didn't remember it until I saw this village and then I knew exactly where it was.

Amazing. What were your impressions of New Britain when you arrived?

I thought it was heaven on earth. It was in the old colonial days. We weren't allowed to mix with the natives. We weren't

06:30 allowed to talk with them, we weren't allowed to mix at all. There was, you know, there was a European and a native and that was it. We were all called masters, however we always found, we found a way of getting friendly with the natives. I could learn a bit of pidgin English before I left Rabaul. Cause I used to go to the botanical gardens and there'd be a boy working, I'd talk to him. And he taught me a few words of pidgin. Later on I became very fluent in pidgin. Course when I got in the bush, I was hungry and that's the quickest way to learn pidgin, learn their language,

07:00 is to be hungry, you learn it quickly. But I didn't make any friends with the natives. We were, the old European days, we were the masters and they were the natives.

Was there any resentment from the natives?

Not at all. No they were doing very well out of the soldiers cause we were buying souvenirs and buying food. And a lot of them were cleaning, employed round the camp and that. They were a very friendly lot.

07:30 Very friendly lot. But we weren't supposed to be friendly with them. And where there's a will there's a way. Yeah. And as far as the women were concerned, we learned there and then it was absolutely taboo, forbidden. And I don't know of any soldier there that went with any native woman. And that includes the whole of the war. Because firstly it's the quickest way of getting a spear in your back. And secondly most of the Europeans I know would not have gone with a native

08:00 woman. In New Britain. Oh and in New Guinea. Most of them would not. It's different nowadays. They marry. In those days they didn't. You know like black and white. That was it. The old colonial days.

What was the physical landscape like?

It was a most beautiful harbour, and a most beautiful post card

08:30 appearance you could ever imagine anywhere in the world. Beautiful, surrounded by four or five volcanoes. One volcano active. Palm trees leaning over. Natives washing their clothes on the sea shore and children playing. It was like heaven on earth. It was like heaven on earth. It was the most beautiful place I've ever seen. Still is. Not withstanding the volcanoes, they go up, blow up

09:00 every now and again, that's part of their life. They live with it. Yes a beautiful place. Paradise. In fact I wrote a few notes years ago, a copy of which I gave to one of your young ladies called Tropical Paradise. We were forbidden by Mr Justice Webb when we escaped from the Japanese and came back to Australia. We were forbidden to write or to tell anybody the details of the invasion of Rabaul. Particularly

09:30 about the massacre at Toll Plantation. Because for the fear of the Australian public panicking. And we were sworn to secrecy. So I went on a holiday up to Kurrajong and I wrote in those books, those notes there, I didn't mention anybody's name. And I mentioned very few places. I just wrote Tropical Paradise. I didn't mention any action and I didn't mention any massacre. I didn't mention anything really about the war. It was about the

10:00 beauty of the place. And it was about the jungle and about the fella breaking his leg, about my escape. That's mainly what it was about. But during the book, particularly one part there I wrote about the mountains around Wide Bay. Where the clouds were sheltering there for the night. And as the sun rose the clouds unwound themselves from around the waists of the giants and drifted on their way. And you know a little bit poetic I suppose. But you feel that way. It,

10:30 it's very spiritual. The beauty is spiritual. Such a wonderful place. Untouched too, by Europeans, no blocks of flats and high rises and. Just nature at its very best. Yeah. That's why I've been back to New Britain three or four times. Maybe five or six times I've back there in the intervening

11:00 years. I'd go back tomorrow if I got a chance again.

Did it feel much like a war zone when you got there? Did you feel like you'd entered the war when you arrived at Rabaul?

After the war?

Oh no when you first got there?

Oh no it was the most peaceful, tranquil place you could imagine in the whole of the world. It was going to Honolulu without the high rise you know. Warm water and, beautiful. No, no talk of war when we went there. We weren't even at

11:30 war. Only with Germany. And the only threat would have been a, some German ship in the Pacific somewhere. Some raider, some sea wolf that may be about but we couldn't have done anything about that.

What were you doing in the time before the Japanese arrived? What was going on in Rabaul?

Well it was, it was, to me it was, in hindsight now it was a disgrace. We were doing nothing.

12:00 We were just marching and doing drill. We were never given any talk about the jungle about what's edible or what's not edible. We were never taught the native language. Never talk of establishing food dumps in the event of an invasion by the Japanese. Or anybody. We were just treated as we were when we were new recruits. Slope arms, march up and down the town. March over the hill. One day we climbed the mother, that was the largest volcano there. That was the most

12:30 exciting thing we did, but there was no jungle there. It was just kunai grass. But we kept ourselves fit by marching. But there was no food dumps in the jungle or anything like that. We were just left there and whose fault that was I don't know. And I can't speculate.

Were you still in desert clothes?

We do, we were yeah. There was no such thing as jungle greens then. Our water

13:00 truck was still painted yellow. We were just in khaki you know. Not khaki you know, same as they had, same, ordinary drill clothes, drill shirts. Green shirts and things like that weren't invented. At that stage.

When did disease start to become a problem? Was it evident straight ...?

Disease.

Disease.

13:30 Well with me it became evident, my first attack of malaria was about the fourth of February, no fifth of February. That's when I first got malaria. And then right on top of that I got dysentery. And, and I got a few tropical ulcers. Doctor Palmer, there was a doctor at the time, he had a little bit of medicine and that seemed to stave off the malaria. But from then on

14:00 I had a shiver nearly every afternoon. For the next two and half months. But later on of course once I became established at the village called Rak, or Drak, and with the man with the broken leg, I conversed a lot with the natives. And I learned all about their medicines. There I learned of a cure for dysentery, I learned of a cure for tropical ulcers. They chewed up a,

14:30 chewed up a certain root and spat it on my leg. And then wrapped it up in banana leaf and in two days time it was cured. I get dysentery, they gave me some little marble, half a dozen or couple of dozen things half the size of a marble. They were red, they got them right up in the mountains. And I had to bake those in a fire and chew them. It was just like eating clay, just like eating a clay marble. In any case in two days the dysentery stopped. I stopped bleeding, otherwise

15:00 I'd have bled to death. And thirty years later I, we were flying round Australia inspecting port facilities.

And I landed at Weipa. And I saw these little red pebbles being shipped, two hundred thousand tonne at a time to go to New Zealand to make aluminium. And I said “I used to eat that stuff, it cured my dysentery”. And they said “That’s called bauxite. No wonder it cured your dysentery. It’s, they make aluminium out of it.” So it’s got

15:30 alumina in it, And it’s got kao, kaolin in it which is clay. So the tablets for dysentery and diarrhoea are clay and aluminium. And they’re put together under surgical procedures that cure dysentery. And these natives knew how to do it thousands of years before we did. And they said “Where did you see the bauxite deposit, was it on the shore?” I said “No, it was five thousand feet above see level.

16:00 Where there was coral and seashells as well.” And the natives knew it and knew its cure. They also had a, they could relieve my malaria by bleeding me. Cutting my forehead to bleed. Make me climb this eight hundred foot mountain. Sit up there for three or four hours and a lot of heavy breathing. And come down and the fever would subside. And as I said the, with the leg, they chewed, the name of

16:30 the root they chewed was kavava. Kavava, which I think is a wild ginger. And they chewed that up with their spit and spat it on, their saliva and wrapped it with a poultice and the ulcer disappeared. So I believed in the native beliefs and in their foods and even their spirits. Two types of spirits. There’s a Masali and a Tambran. Tambran usually a good spirit or a place of good spirits. And

17:00 a Masali is a place of bad spirits. And sometimes they wouldn’t like to stay where I’d stay because it’d be a place Mandrin. So they’d have to go until they found another place Tambran which was a good place. So it was no good knocking it, cause I didn’t want to lose them. They might have gone bush. So I became a native myself. The best way to stay alive is to become one of them. Believe in what they believe in. You know don’t knock it.

17:30 **Just ask, you were talking about the native medicines. Did the army have any medicines to combat disease at that stage?**

On the way out, when we were escaping from the Japanese in 1942 we had, Doctor Palmer had very, very little enough. Very, very little, practically nothing. One man, he was a doctor. We had no medicines on the way out. But of course when we returned we

18:00 had, Atebrin had been invented, that kept the malaria down. We had surgical packs, we had something to put on our ulcers, we had disinfectant. We had our own Doctor boy, RAP. And he had good medical supplies. For flesh wounds and things like that. We could treat a flesh would but if it was a serious wound, we couldn’t do much about it, they’d die. We didn’t have many natives actually

18:30 die through illness or gunshot. We lost half a dozen natives out of that whole lot. That’s about all.

In the time before the Japanese arrived in New Britain, were you hearing news from the rest of the Pacific, from Malaya or Singapore?

No, no well there was nothing happening in Malaya because they invaded us the same day as they invaded Malaya. We didn’t even know Malaya existed.

19:00 Apart, only what you could remember on a map from school days.

Was there any intelligence before the Japanese arrived that they were on their way?

Yes the RAF used to fly over the Carolines with Truk Island. And they could, they had evidence of a build up, a military build up there. But then about two or three days before they arrived, one of our planes spotted the fleet heading our way.

19:30 So we got two or three days’ notice. Only men digging trenches like World War I. Digging trenches. And of course all the trenches in the world won’t stop twenty-five thousand men when they come on landing barges just before daybreak. There was wire there but you know it didn’t matter much. They just came over that and ran over their dead. But I was not on the beach so I can’t, I really don’t know what happened. We were

20:00 on the hill behind.

Can you tell me about the raids that happened before the invasion?

Yeah, well they didn’t affect us very much. They were only after the oil refineries or the ships at sea or the airport. A great number of aeroplanes came over one day, fighter planes, before the main fleet. And our five Wirraways, that were training

20:30 planes, took off against this hundred odd planes. And they were all shot down. And we saw the dogfights and we were cheering thinking it was the Japanese planes coming down. And they were all of our brave pilots coming down. Our five trainer planes went up against about a hundred fighter, Jap fighter planes. In fact one of the, one of the fellas is still alive. I’m in touch with one of the pilots. He lives in a soldier’s home at Narrabri. See

21:00 we really had, we had two coastal guns. They never got into operations because a couple of days before the fleet came in they dive-bombed the cliff and the cliff fell in and smothered the guns. So they couldn’t

be used either. So they really had no opposition. Only some small arms fire and mortars were landed on. But that was all over by ten o'clock in the morning. From then on it was escape you know. Stay alive.

21:30 And the worst order in the world of course was given by the commander. The day before the Japanese invaded the order was "Every man is to stay at his post, and die if necessary. Stay at his post." And after he was well inland at a place called near Mount Toma he issued an order "Every man for himself". And when you're nineteen

22:00 years of age, twenty years of age and you get an order every man for himself, it's a pretty shattering experience. Believe me. What do you do? You know there was I on my own really at one stage. Or that stage, on a motorbike. Knowing not where to go. So that was a very devastating command. But of course later on, the Australian

22:30 Government were aware of it. There are reports, in fact I've got one over there that the War Office, they've got notes of the War Office. And the Government War Cabinet decided that Rabaul shall not be, the troops and the civilians shall not be evacuated. Shall not be reinforced, shall not be re-equipped. And they shall be considered hostages to fortune. In other words the government

23:00 of the day or the War Office of the day wrote us off. And theoretically I should be dead. So that was a terrible waste of lives. See the Japanese came into the war on the seventh of December. And there were ships available to bring us out before the twenty-first of January. Which was what, three weeks later [actually was six weeks later]. Twenty-third of January from the seventh of December.

23:30 Three weeks, nearly four weeks later. But of course the American Command couldn't afford the, didn't have the ships. That was called a grey area or something. So we were just left. And the War Cabinet agreed to leave us there. But we suppose by our, the little, the very fact that we were there, did delay the Japanese forces coming towards Australia. And they had to stop and re-group. If we hadn't been there they could have come straight down to Townsville. Or straight to Port Moresby. But the

24:00 very fact that we were there and we had two airfields and five aeroplanes and a thousand troops, they had to get rid of us so they had to come in. And that probably, those two or three, even a week's delay of that force. They had to refuel their ships and all the rest of it and their aircraft. Otherwise they could have come straight to Australia. So we may have done some good. Nice to think so in any case.

When did you find out about that statement from the War

24:30 **Cabinet?**

We didn't find out til a few years ago. Through our Lark Force Association. Just a few years ago that leaked out. I believe instructions were given to destroy it. And one of the clerks of the men that was instructed to destroy it after so many years, he kept a copy and sneaked it out.

What did you talk about in the Association when you read it and heard about it.

25:00 **What were you saying to each other when you saw it and…?**

Well we more or less knew it. We more or less knew it. We just felt just, I remember Mr Justice Selby who died. He wrote me a note. He, Mr Justice Selby, he was one of the officers of the anti aircraft unit. And he wrote me, he was the man that informed me and then signed it and said "Arch, theoretically we shouldn't be here". And then

25:30 later the Association found it and in their quarterly letter, that's the Lark Force Association. But the Association I belong to now that I'm Senior Vice President of is the 8th Division Association. And there are very few of us left. Because that includes Malaya, Ambon, Timor and Rabaul. You know there's very few of us left. You can see by the Anzac Day march. Out of twenty thousand men you know maybe a thousand march. If that. So that's the whole thing

26:00 appeared as thought it was a waste. But in hindsight now as I'm getting older and I think well maybe we did some good by just holding them up for a couple of days. Maybe a week. Until they chased everybody around because they were still chasing us as long as the fourth of February. That's and from then on they followed us down the coast a bit as well. So yeah we must have done some good. Just by being there. I like to

26:30 feel that way in any case. I'd hate to think that all those men gave their lives for nothing and were written off by the government of the day. I shouldn't have said the government of the day. The War Office, yeah the War Office. That was the order. In fact if you can turn it off for a moment I can read it for you piece by piece. Just tell you first before you turn it on.

27:00 You ready? "Communications between Australia and Washington were intense. One cablegram from R.G. Casey, the Australian Ministry in Washington on the twelfth of December 1941 is significant and I quote. "Most secret and important for Naval Attaché from the Chief of Naval Staff. In view of the present situation, Naval Board of Review proposals for development of Rabaul as a defended base. Formerly it was not intended to develop Rabaul beyond the requirement of an advanced air

27:30 operations base. It was felt strategically Rabaul was too exposed for our very slender forces. Under the foregoing circumstances and as reinforcements and subsequent supply would be hazardous without

United States co-operation, it is considered better to maintain Rabaul only as an advanced operational base. Its present small garrison being regarded as hostages to fortune.

28:00 Occupation by Japan would of course bring nearer, Japan nearer Australia and give the Japanese a base for air operations against Port Moresby. If however the United States Forces carry out original intentions of operating in the shaded area based in Suva, the whole position might well be changed and cleaning up operations might be undertaken at a later date. It is requested you will obtain B.A.D.'s

28:30 opinion and if possible those of the United States Naval authorities to inform me as soon as possible." A photograph of the cablegram was made available by Doctor Hank Nelson, Director of the Pacific and Asian History Division of the Australian National University, Canberra from the Australian Archives Document War Cabinet Agenda Files. A copy was enclosed in one of our Association Newsletters some years ago but it is repeated just to revive memories. It was this cablegram which formed the term

29:00 "Hostages to fortune". And it was on that day the twelfth of December 1941 that Cabinet decided that the force in Rabaul would not be reinforced and would not be relieved or re-equipped. Consequently they were to be considered hostages to fortune. There we are. So officially I'm not

29:30 here.

Do you think had they known what a hostage of fortune meant, they would have done it differently? Do you think if they knew what the Japanese were gonna do?

I didn't think they had the resources to do anything else unless they'd implored the American Forces to send some ships over. Australia had none

30:00 to send. Our navy was either in Malaya or in the Mediterranean or the Atlantic. So if they'd implied, if they'd pushed the Americans further, I don't think you could have pushed the Americans in any case. Because they were mainly concerned with getting on with the war. They weren't concerned with twelve hundred odd people in Rabaul. Risking ships. Their main objective was to get to Japan.

30:30 **Can you tell me about the day when the Japanese arrived?**

Yes I can tell you that very well of course. We were, I was with the Anti Tank Battery as I told you. I was, we spent the night at Four Ways and the word got round that the Japanese were going to land at dawn. And

31:00 there was a lot going on but no one seemed to be organising it. There were trucks going everywhere and people going everywhere. And in the morning we were then attached, moved up the road a few miles to Taliligap Ridge. And that's when were made a section of Don Company. The anti-tank group were made a section of Don Company. D Company of the 2/22nd Battalion. And that's where we went into action. It was after that, that first accident that I got

31:30 was sent on the motor bike across to the upper drome to find out what happened to C Company and they'd gone. I don't know what time they'd gone but it was between ten thirty and midday that I got there. So I'd been up all night and I didn't, I don't think I'd had a watch. It was round about midday and there was no one there. That's when the planes strafed me.

Did you know anything about what to expect from the Japanese forces?

Well they dropped leaflets

32:00 and promised to, they would treat us, surrender and they'd be treated as prisoners of war. And if we continued to try and escape they would eventually catch us and we'd all be killed. So it was surrender or be killed. So that's your choice. And those that surrendered were killed in any case. Those that were not bayoneted were sunk on the way back to Japan. By an American submarine, you know, not on purpose,

32:30 because it didn't have a Red Cross marking on it. And there were no survivors for that. They all went down. So out of our unit, the 17th Anti Tank Battery that I said there was about a hundred and eighty, I've never counted them all, we were split in two parts, I'm the only one alive today. Now they weren't all killed in action. Some did escape and died subsequently because it's quite a few years since the war ended. And some of them, you know one fellow, you know thirty-five

33:00 years of age, you know compared to me being early twenties. So they'd be over a hundred now. One fella is, ninety-six or ninety-nine. Yeah oh Sandy Sinclair, yeah. He was a Policeman, he's ninety-nine I think. But he was a senior man then in the Police Force. But lot of them have died. Lot through tropical illnesses have died. Lot have died prematurely too. Yeah.

Did you know

33:30 **the Japanese as fighters, did you know anything about them?**

Well we were told that they were all about four foot high, they were all myopic, they couldn't, they all had to wear glasses because they couldn't see. And they were quite easy to defeat, then not to worry about them. They couldn't see and they were bad shots and their rifles weren't any good. And not to be afraid of the Japanese. We were never told that the troops that were coming down were the ones that

were blooded in Nanking.

34:00 That killed three million or more Chinese and they were all, a lot of them were Koreans. Big six foot Koreans. We expected little blokes like this. And a lot of the Japanese were taller than I am or bigger. And I'm over six foot, or I was. I've shrunk to six foot. And these great huge bloody Japs. And they didn't all wear glasses and some of them were good shots as well. And there were thousands of them in any case. Didn't go, wasn't one against one.

34:30 So the information we got was terribly false. And that came from our attaches and our diplomats that were in China and Malaya and all these places. Not to be afraid of them, they're not good fighters. The Americans thought the same too. They didn't think they had a navy. Then they hit Pearl Harbour. One of the greatest tactical operations that had ever been done or made.

35:00 Except that they'd done it years before in China somewhere. They'd done exactly the same thing in China, the same, similar type of raid. And no one learned from it. So they were very clever, very clever race. And they're a very brave race too. Because they love dying, because if they die they'll go to heaven. I have never met any Japanese

35:30 to surrender. I didn't want em to surrender in any case. We had to take a prisoner on one occasion. And that wasn't very exciting. He was wounded pretty badly. And didn't last very long.

Were you, were troops, were the Australian troops frightened before the invasion? Was there a sense of…?

No,

36:00 no. No, fear doesn't, in things like that you don't know what to expect. Probably, when you're early in the piece, once the firing starts, all fear disappears. You get a bit, you wonder what's going to happen of course. It's a wonderment not fear. You wonder what's going to happen. I don't know of any soldiers that displayed any fear. But the fear I,

36:30 on patrolling behind Japanese lines which I did for a number of years. They're tapping you. I was never afraid until such time, until a shot was, beg your pardon, I was never afraid only before the shot was fired. After that all fear would go, you'd have to take control. And that's all. And you've got, how's the tape going?

37:00 **That's good. Did you and your mates feel ready to, did you feel prepared to go into battle?**

No, we were not, seeing, we really didn't know what to expect. We were hoping that we'd get some ammunition for our two pounders. And hoping that they'd land tanks. They didn't land any tanks in any case because it's too steep. They couldn't get up, they could only come up the roads. And they didn't have to. Cause they knew there was only twelve hundred of us there. So we were just, treated

37:30 it as an infantry action you know. Man against man, that's what it got down to. But it wasn't one against one, it was you know about twenty-five to one, against one.

Did you know how many of them were coming?

No idea. I thought it was a million, when I saw all those ships. And I think it was two or three aircraft carriers. And twenty-six ships of all different types, destroyers, troop ships and different things, looked like a million.

38:00 No one had any idea how many were coming or how many would land. Nobody had any idea. We had no chance in the world of ever holding it. Be like trying to defend north head in Sydney. And the Japanese landed at Manly Wharf and Manly Beach. They landed on both sides and just. So to escape, all those that escaped had to fight their way out through the

38:30 Japanese lines. And that's what, and they waved to me. When I went through them on the motorbike I mentioned earlier. They thought I was one of them who'd come up from this side.

Can you tell me about where you were when you were seeing the ships coming in, who you were with?

Well we were on Taliligap Ridge then when I saw them. See daybreak,

39:00 on daybreak you could see them, in. They'd already landed at dawn and round about midday, after the mists and everything cleared, you could, from Taliligap Ridge you could look into the harbour see it. They call it nowadays, they call it Coastwatchers Ridge. But there was no coastwatchers on it, that's just a name. Coastwatchers were right up in the mountains. And a different operation to me altogether. They were obtaining intelligence and radioing back to Port Moresby to arrange bombs. Bombings

39:30 and all that, we didn't do that.

Were you there with some mates or, on the bridge?

On Taliligap Ridge?

Oh ridge, sorry.

Our whole company were there. The Anti Tank Comp, oh a section of the Anti Tank Company was there. Yeah. Yes I was there with my, George Thornton my best friend. Who lived next door to me. And eventually he, eventually he got, as I learned later he was in the truck that,

40:00 tipped over when I got blinded with the dirt from the bomb that the plane had dropped. And he got a bullet in his thigh and he was taken a prisoner and sunk on the Montevideo Maru. And I mention him in my book when I was at Toll Plantation and the massacre. A few hours before the Japanese came in and I was on the beach and I was wondering what happened to George. I didn't know of course what

40:30 had happened to him. And that was on the same day that a hundred and thirty Australians were bayoneted.

Tape 4

00:32 **Arch just before the last tape ended you mentioned your mate George.**

George Thornton, yes.

I was wondering if you could tell me how you two became friends?

He lived, he lived two doors from me. He was closer to me than my own brother. We grew up together. I've got a photograph of him there I'll show you later. Fine stamp of a young man, white curly hair, good looking fella. He was in love with my sister. One of my sisters.

01:00 But he didn't marry cause he was killed of course. He was a boxer, he was a gentleman. And his task, we, having been in the militia I said to him "The best way to get out of this marching and get out of this infantry thing is to be a driver. And you dodge guards and you dodge marching." So I became Hutchison-Smith's driver, that's the OC's [Officer Commanding] driver, and he became the water cart driver. So we, he, we missed

01:30 all guard duty. Toilet, cleaning out toilets and all those, peeling potatoes, being on guard. And we missed out on all those because we were drivers. We were in a transport platoon. And that was through my previous experience back in the militia days. And I passed that on to him. But we'd have laid down our lives for one another. That was our pact. When we went away. And of course during the day, God only knows where he was. I think he was on the

02:00 back of that truck where, but I don't know. I heard later on, one of the fellas that did escape on the north coast. That he was in a truck that was tipped over on the upper drome. And they straightened it up and George was in that. And later he got shot through the thigh with a point five bullet, which smashed his thigh to blazes. I learned later. Cause some got out on the north coast and we got out on the south coast.

Had you gone through training together in Bathurst and…?

We went all of our

02:30 training, not, except the militia, we went all through our army training together. And he was one of the ones that also, that Lance Corporal wanted to be made a Corporal. He got the same thrashing that I did. I remember him saying "You two, you two boys will make, give me, get me my second stripe". So when he got it we congratulated ourselves. Said, "Hope you're not after your third".

03:00 Yeah. Yeah, George and I were inseparable twins. My sister used to embarrass me relating, when she ever mentioned George to any of our relatives or any or our friends. She used to say "Archie's bosom friend". And I used to think that was a terrible thing to say but that was my sister Jean. My bosom, Arch's bosom friend George. And we were lifelong buddies. Yeah.

03:30 **Was that mateship important?**

Oh absolutely. Yeah absolutely. In fact his mother was very good to me when my mother died as well. That made us even closer still. We were closer than brothers. I was as close to him as I was with my own brother. We shared everything. An army friendship

04:00 too, there's nothing like, we were friendly before the war. But in an army friendship like I formed with Mark White and George, still kept George, it's just something that no one could ever sever. It's there forever. I can think of it now.

How did you become friends with Mark?

George used to do a bit of boxing. And he was, Mark White was, spoke perfect English.

04:30 Thorough English gentleman and he and Reg Guy, they came over from Fiji to join up. And they both spoke perfect English gentleman. And George pushed in front of them on a mess parade once saying

"Oh you two Pommies can get down the end of the line". See, well Mark could also fight so that afternoon Mark called George out and they had a fight. And Mark knocked the tripe and thrashed George. Gave him a terrible thrashing.

05:00 So George said "I think we better be pals with these two, with these two blokes". And I said "I think that's a good idea". So we had the two Englishmen, Mark and Reg, and Arch and George. We became a family of four, we're in the same unit. And anybody that interfered with any one of us had to face up to the four of us. So that's how we formed our own little group. And then Mark White and I became lifelong friends. We even went to live with him in Fiji after the war.

05:30 And I did everything in Fiji, yeah. I had, once you get the islands in your blood you can't keep away from them. If I hadn't gone to Fiji I would have gone back to New Britain. And I would've gone back to New Britain and when Vera came back with me and stayed there forever but there's nothing, I would've killed Vera. With malaria. We were forty, the plantation that I ran and went back first time forty-eight mile out of town. No European neighbours and she doesn't speak pidgin. And she's not a nurse, she's not a teacher.

06:00 There's no women there, they're all men. So she stayed three months. And then I came home then went back again for another three months then I went back every other opportunity I could. And I found one of my soldiers that I'd served with, Tavinson, who'd helped me with the man with the broken leg. I found him and he burst into tears. One of the most emotional scenes I've ever seen in my life. Vera was crying, he was crying, tears were rolling down my face.

06:30 And all the children were whooping it round about. And he'd seen me, he'd seen me, he said "In the last thirty years every ship that came in he used to go to look at everybody's eyes to see if it was me". And he could hardly believe that I'd changed so much. Because I was so thin then and I'd put on weight. So we were staying at my son's place. And my son was the Manager for Carpenter's Gas Company in Rabaul. And we were staying in his house. And as Tavinson was visiting me,

07:00 he's one of the men that was, helped with the broken leg and was kind to me. My son got out of his jeep and walked towards me and he shook. And he said "Look, look, there's you, there's you". And in his mind he thought that was like my spirit coming back. Because I looked the same, my son looked the same as I did thirty years earlier. Which was another wonderful thing. You know, I found that soldier after all those years.

07:30 He was an old man then and he was one of the ones that carried the stretcher and kept me protected and fed me. Helped me with the broken leg. He's the man that straightened the leg, straightened the leg, didn't, wasn't properly, stuck a thing in the ground. Wound up some bamboo and pulled it, some bamboo strips. And pulled it straight as he could with the peg in the ground. And every couple of days he'd give it another turn to try and keep the leg straight. And this poor fella with the broken

08:00 leg, lay on a bamboo stretcher with wounds on his back. People complain about hard hospital beds. He had no flesh on his back because he was laying on bamboo for two and a half months, two months. And Tavinson used to wash his sore. But he couldn't mend the bone. But the man lived, only died a few years ago. He ended up a half inch leg shorter than the other. And the Veterans' Affairs Department gave him a

08:30 pair of shoes to adjust that. So, his fallen, and having malaria and all those things, affected his mind a bit and he divorced his wife and went and lived in an island off Hong Kong. And lived with some Chinese for a while and became quite odd. Then he came back and I had to officiate at his funeral. Because he wasn't, he didn't have any religion. Cause he'd gone Chinese. However

09:00 that's what happens to some people. But he lasted all those years. But if the natives hadn't gone to get down that cliff to find him, he'd have still been there. And if I hadn't gone down in the first place he would have still been there. Cause no one ever went there. Cause at high tide it disappeared. The ledge he was on disappeared.

What did you talk about with Tavinson when you met him?

09:30 All about time belong before. All about time belong before. And I'd ask about various natives in the villages. And we'd talk about our experiences. And how he used to teach me dialect and I used to, in pidgin English. And I used to try and tell him that climbing a coconut tree; you didn't have to do that in Australia. If you had to pick a coconut they had a machine that would go and lift

10:00 and the men could pick it. And he couldn't work this out. He just couldn't comprehend that. But we talked about all sorts of things. And he was a, he was called a Kutikut. That was the equivalent of a Catholic Missionary that'd learned his Catechism. So he was posted by a priest, in charge of that village. But he was hopeless in the bush. But he was very good as far as I was concerned. He'd look after my money, my tobacco and whatever I, clean my rifle and

10:30 make sure I was fed and everything. He was like, he was my right hand. And when I, when we made him a soldier we'd, I didn't, see I had to go back to New Britain to make him a soldier. I sent a note up to him, to where his village was that I returned, something like General MacArthur. Only I did it before MacArthur, I had returned. And he came down and we swore him in, and my natives taught him that night, all night the fundamental principals

11:00 of sloping arms and using a rifle. And the next morning some of the other natives came, some of the local natives from another village came on the other side of the creek to have a look at him and he turned on them. And he said “Get back to your village you lot of Kanakas”, he said. “Get back to the village you lot of Kanakas”, he said. “I’m a soldier belong the King now. So you get back there and go back to your village and don’t come pestering here or we’ll open fire on you.” And he abused the tripe out of them you see. He was immediately from a native to a

11:30 soldier overnight. And all my, the boys that I had they all loved him. He was useless. In fact he was a God fearing man and he was a good man as well. On one occasion we were climbing a very steep hill, a very steep hill. Very light shrub. And he said in quite a loud voice, we were well away from the Japanese. In quite a loud voice he said “Jesus it’s steep”.

12:00 And all the natives went “tcha tcha tcha tcha tcha tcha”. Sounded like a plague of locusts, you could hear it miles away. And I said to him “Why did you take the Lord’s name in vain? You know”, I said. “How’s that you sack him talk long Jesus Christ”. He said “No God”. He said “No, I didn’t, I wasn’t being disrespectful. I didn’t take the Lord’s name in vain. I merely asked Jesus to ask God why he made it so steep”.

12:30 So, see dealing with the natives we weren’t dealing with fools. We were dealing with very clever men. Yeah. So much for Tavinson.

You were telling me in the break about when you met up and you were talking about being frightened?

That was with, that was with our an ex-Policeman from before the

13:00 war, Bipon. He was in charge of the fighting troops. He was the leader of the fighting troops. And at the end of the war he asked me just as I was waiting to get a pinnis to go back to Jacquinot Bay. He asked me “Did I ever, was I ever frightened?” I beg your pardon, I’ve got the horse in the wrong way. I asked him “If he ev, was he ever frightened?” In pidgin English I said you know,

13:30 “All the time, long time, all the time that we’ve been together did you ever savvy fright. Did you ever, were you ever frightened?” In English, were you ever frightened? And he said “Yes, I was frightened”. He said “I was, but I couldn’t show it because you were always with, within a hand’s reach of where I was. And you were only a young white man.” And I had these twenty or thirty, up to twenty or thirty

14:00 natives with me. And I couldn’t let them know that I was frightened when you were right up the front. On these patrols. So that’s why, but I was frightened but I never let on. Then he said to me, “Master you semi fri”. I said “Yes I was frightened. I was frightened most of the time but I couldn’t show it. Because here I am a European and yeah you’re a native from Madang, an ex Soldier. And all these other native soldiers down there. I

14:30 couldn’t let them think I was frightened. So that’s why, but I never showed it. I was frightened, same as you.” So he put his arms around me and he howled like a baby. And I got on the pinnis and went. And tears were rolling down my eyes too. Yeah. I nearly got overwhelmed then relating. It was so moving. I didn’t ever see him again.

15:00 Cause you know I think he was a lot older than I was. He was probably about thirty when I was about twenty odd yeah.

Look at my notes for a minute sorry, Arch. If I can take you back to the day when the Japanese arrived at Rabaul. You were up on the ridge.

Yes, Taliligap Ridge yes.

Where, where did you go from, what happened

15:30 **on the ridge?**

The Japanese were coming up the hill pretty steep hill and we could hear them coming up the hill. On one occasion a patrol was sent out to see what was happening. And I was in that patrol. And we could see, we could see the Japanese moving about. At that stage it was no good firing. Because you’re only gonna draw the crowd. So we quickly went back up the hill and said “They were coming up the hill”. So they all got ready for it and started to exchange

16:00 rifle fire. But it was not a big force. It was not a big force. They seemed to be waiting to join up with someone else. In hindsight they seemed to be waiting with someone. Then more of them did come because by the time I’d gone to the top drome, I must have been away an hour to get over there and run up and down and hide on my bike and hide, miss this plane. And by the time I was on the, they were on their way out. And they wouldn’t have been on their way out unless a big force had come up. Yeah that’s what we did.

16:30 That’s, that so they would have been attacked from by the Japanese. But they were forward scouts who were looking over the place. To see what was there. To see what defence was there, whether there was any artillery. There was some anti-tank guns there but they had no ammunition. We had sixteen half charged rounds of ammunition and they were used before the Japs came into the war for four guns.

17:00 Not funny really. I'm just laughing at the ridiculous situation it was.

And so when did you get on, how did you get to the motorbike?

The bike was there, the dispatch rider had been killed, he must have been strafed and killed. It was there. He got a Military Medal the other dispatch rider. I don't know how or why. I don't know

17:30 how he got there or where he came from. But we only been, we only got there that morning. We'd spent the night at Four Ways and we'd only got that morning. So we didn't get there til about ten o'clock I suppose or nine o'clock. No, no, no it was a bit earlier than that. But I don't know what happened to him but I know he got a Military Medal. And his bike was there. And I could ride a motorbike. Best thing that ever happened to me. Yeah.

18:00 **Sorry, so we were just getting to the moment, you'd just gotten to the motorbike.**

Yeah.

Where did you learn to ride motorbikes?

Years ago a man fell off a motorbike outside my father's house and injured himself. And he was taken to hospital and he asked my father if he could leave his motorbike on our side yard. And when I came home from school I saw the motorbike. And I started it and I used to ride round and round

18:30 Hunter's Hill on this motorbike. And that's how I taught myself how to ride a motorbike. I've never been any races or anything. The motorbike was called a Matchless. That's what I learned to ride it on. And in a week's time the man came back with the injured leg and said "Thanks for looking after my bike". It had no petrol in it. I'd run it all out.

How old were you then?

About fourteen. I did things what most boys do.

19:00 Boys of today are probably doing it too only they're doing it in different fashions now. They're using violence. Whereas we didn't have any violence we just used to amuse ourselves.

And so when you were offered the bike, and…?

I jumped at that. I jumped at that because I could see how many Japs, you know, I could see the ships there. And I could hear where the mortars, the firing that had gone on in the morning.

19:30 And I'd been on about a fifty-yard patrol to see there was some Japanese coming up, or a few forward scouts were. So I got back quickly and said the "Japanese are coming". And that's when he wanted to know how C Company was, whether he could fall back or not. But they were gone. They, I don't know where. They'd probably gone bush. But they were, or the Japanese had taken them all over. I don't know. No one knows.

20:00 A lot of them were taken prisoner I know that.

How far away was C Company? How far did you have to ride?

Couple of mile, couple of mile. Was a good road but once I saw the Japs I was off the road, And I road across some gardens that were there and anywhere where the Japs wouldn't be. Along dirt tracks and all sorts of things you know. Native foot-

20:30 paths that went up to an old mission, German Mission Station. And I went round there and I went, and took me a lot longer than if I'd stayed on the roads cause the Japanese were on the roads. I'll never forget them as I was driving towards them they all started waving at me. So I put my head down like that and put my head down and let 'er rip, went through. And then when they went past they all started to fire at me. You know very hard to hit a bloke on the run.

21:00 Or I was lucky, yeah, I was lucky. But they didn't stop and aim you know. They just fired thinking well he'll get caught over there you know. Then when the aeroplane came in I thought "Good Lord, what else can happen". And then later on the name of a pilot, one of those early pilots that flew over Sydney Harbour and came. I got in touch with him in Tokyo. Trying to find out if that pilot from that

21:30 particular, if any of that squadron was still alive. And I was going to look up the pilot. See just after the war I was trading to Japan selling coal. And I went to Tokyo not many years after the war. In 1950, '54 I think it was, '54 I was in Tokyo. And I was looking up any of the other pilots that were on the invasion of Rabaul. Trying to find this particular bloke. I traded with the Japanese, no enmity. I'd never held

22:00 anything against the Japanese as a nation or as a person . Because I got, my aim of going back to New Britain was to get even for the hundred and thirty Australians that were bayoneted. And I got even. And then I traded with the Japanese. And I made friends with some of them. War was war. Peace was peace. And I hold no, I hold no enmity. The Japanese Command I'm not very happy about but most of them were killed as war criminals. And all the blokes that did the

22:30 bayoneting they were killed on the Kokoda Track. And the officer that was in charge he was killed, he was lanced to death I think, they got an officer's name, he was hung in Rabaul. I'm not certain about

that but they were, we, the association and the government carried out exhaustive enquiries to find out which unit was responsible for the bayoneting. But there were none of them alive. But I was very keen to find the pilot.

23:00 I put an ad in the Japanese paper too at one stage of the game. In Tokyo to see if I could find one. To see if they had some association. But I didn't get a reply. I would have liked to see him. I met one fellow who was a Naval Commander in charge of a destroyer. He was in charge of Mitsui. One of the big companies that I was trading with. And we became lifelong friends. Yeah.

23:30 So funny thing, you can have war where you want to kill everybody. And war's over, later on, you trade with them. And I hold no enmity. I know other people that just wouldn't talk to Japanese and hate them for life. It's not in me. It's not in me.

What did you want to say to your pilot?

I think we'd have had a good laugh. I think we'd have had a good laugh. I'd have said

24:00 to him, "I outsmarted you, you bugger". And he'd have said "Yes. You were bloody lucky though or something like that." See. Or "I'll get ya next time or something like that". I mean, you know, we'd have made, I feel, cause they're pretty well educated men the pilots and pretty well trained. Like our air force pilots are. They're not like poor old plodding infantrymen you know. They're pretty well educated people. Our infantry-

24:30 men today are not plodding infantrymen like we were in those days either. They're all Intermediate or Leaving Certificate people or University educations. Different world. Yeah but I think we, I'd have got on well with the pilot. He'd have had a laugh and I would have. Cause he couldn't have forgot it. But who knows, he might have been shot down later on somewhere else.

Can you

25:00 **tell me about the actual strafing incident?**

The strafing?

Yeah just how you were riding and dodging and what happened?

Well I did say before but I can't, there's not much to elaborate on. Because I was looking for C Company and went, they had a bunker on one end of the drome. And I drove up there and they were not there. So then I drove down one side of the aerodrome. And across the aerodrome were coconut logs put across there, to stop any planes landing on it. Maybe every hundred yards were

25:30 coconut logs going across there. So I went round, right round the end of the up and down one side and across the bottom and back along the top. And then I thought "Well I better have a better look". And as I was driving down the right hand side this plane zoomed up over the, from nowhere, zoomed up and up over the top of the coconut trees and I could almost touch it. And then his two guns were firing. And I looked down on the dirt

26:00 and they were going like that on either side of me. So I just kept straight for a second and then I swung round and he'd gone. And I went across the other side of the drome and I decided to go down and have a look further there on the side of the drome. And as I was driving there I looked behind me, and I watched him line me up, I was going very slowly, I watched him line up. And as he lined up he came down at me, and as he was coming down at me I swung off in between

26:30 these coconut logs. And went to the other side of the drome. And then I came back. Then he, then I decided to go down that way again and I thought "I'll face him this time". So as I was going along there I saw him come up, he disappeared down a hill somewhere. Then he came up, excuse me, and as I saw him line me up at the last minute I swung off to the left. And he couldn't swing off to the left because planes can't turn that quickly. And the bullets went ftsh, ftsh, ftsh, ftsh, down there.

27:00 Five times. So then I thought "Well he's gonna come back this way, so I'll go back that way and have him face on". The worst was over my shoulder when he came behind me. And as he passed, each time he passed he looked down, after he'd fired his shots, he looked down and he grinned at me. As though to say "I missed ya". Yeah, quite an experience. And then in the end

27:30 I thought "Well I've had enough of this". So I drove into a ditch you know, drove, left the bike. It was just under a huge big ficus tree. And there was a soldier there and I said "Gee that bloke was giving me hell". And he just went gonk. He just fell forward and he was dead. And how long he'd been there I don't know. Whether one of the bullets got him, I don't know. I don't know when he was shot. Maybe that was the explanation of C Company. I don't know.

28:00 But it came in handy. Then I, it gave me a good ten or fifteen miles to go along made roads. Then I came to that point to go left or right. I took left and came down the south coast. And gradually ditched it in the bush and went in the bush myself. And caught up with the other mates that, some of my own unit that were there. That's how I got into the jungle. But, if,

28:30 without that motorbike I'd have been in the truck and I'd have been on the north coast where they were all taken prisoner and sunk on the Montevideo Maru. My number's not up. And if George was hurt, I'd

have stayed with him. George Thornton, I'd have stayed with him. Mmm.

What made you turn left?

I don't know. I remember a Sunday

29:00 School lesson once, where there was a Y turn in the road. And the lesson was if you turned one way you were going to do the right thing, this is the decisions you've got to make in your life. There was a big Y. And if you go that way that'll be taking the wrong path, and you may be doing the wrong thing in your life. Whereas if you go that way you might be doing the right thing in your life. But I don't know whether it was right or left that I remember. But I remember the Y diagram. Cause this was the

29:30 same thing. It was all just steep bush down there and jungle. The road finished there, I'd hit a cross bar, dirt tracks you know they're not roads. There wasn't, they weren't bitumen roads. So I turned left. I said "Well, I've gotta make a decision". Left. And went left. I'd never been to the right, I didn't know what was down there. I didn't know what was down there either cause we'd never been out of the town. We'd only been to the upper drome once.

30:00 Cause that was about you know seven mile out of town. I was not particularly proud in later years. I began to realise how poorly officered we were at a higher level. In as much as we didn't have any jungle training. We didn't know what was

30:30 in the bush. We didn't what and there were no food dumps put in the jungle. Even when we knew the invasion was inevitable. There was a Colonel First World War, Colonel Wagstaff or some similar name. Approached the army and implored him to put food dumps up in the hills. Where we could carry on guerrilla warfare until the end of the war. And the army refused to do it. This Colonel Scanlan, the bloke that was in charge refused to do it. Yet the civilians that

31:00 were there, and he was a First World War man, he suggested they "Put food dumps up in the jungle cause you'll never hold the Japanese". And the army refused to do it. So we were very poorly officered at the senior level.

Do you know why they refused?

No I don't, I've no idea. I think it was just because this he was too stubborn to be told anything.

31:30 It was the obvious thing to do. There are many books written about this. Where they actually talk about the suggestion of Colonel Wall, Wagstaff or Wallstaff, I just forget. But he was a First World War man. And he went along and he spoke to Colonel Scanlan and suggested these food dumps and he was scoffed at. You know "My men'll hold them and I'll be there. And they'll all stay, hold their posts."

32:00 No reason. At the time I had no knowledge of this. Later on you learn it. People write books and historians delve into it. That Hank Nelson has found out a lot about it. He's interviewed me at great length for about two or three days and quoted me in a lot of journals and things. About of the fall of Rabaul and the reasons why and how. But for my private, personal point

32:30 of view, I had no knowledge of it. Because I'm, I don't know what the higher command or what anybody else was doing. I don't know what the Company Commanders were doing or what their duties were. You know it's a very thin perspective. These people that know what's happening, what's happening over there and what's happening there. And what C Company is doing, what the air force is doing and what the navy is doing. They're making it up. Because a single infantryman's perspective of the war is about one degree.

33:00 It's yourself and what's happening there. You learn later on what's happening there. People that write books, they must have been a bird in the sky to know where everything was and what was happening. Cause they make it up or they hear it from someone else. That's one reason why I would, I have never and I would not ever write a book.

How much of a difference would food dumps in the jungle have made to you?

Well it could have, well they did it, they

33:30 did it in Ambon and Timor. They held out a lot longer. We could have delayed them a lot longer. And some of those places we went to the Japanese could never have found us. What with the caves and the mountains. And if we had had food, there was always plenty of water there cause it rained every day. We could have held out there for goodness knows how long. And would have held them up considerably by having to send more troops and planes and artillery and men. Could have held them up for months.

34:00 Whereas we did, we held them up for a day. Would have made a big difference, would have saved a lot of people surrendering. The reason they surrendered was because they had no food. And no medicines. And a leaflet to say "They'll be guaranteed prisoner of war. But if you continue you'll die and you'll eventually be killed unless you give yourself

34:30 up." That's what happened at Toll. They gave themselves up and they were killed just the same. So, so much for the pamphlet.

When the order was given, every man

35:00 **for himself, what could you do?**

Well that, I decided then, I was going to get into the jungle. I, we didn't have a map, we didn't know where Wide Bay was. We didn't know where Toll was. These places I mention to you I've learned later because I went back. But outside of the town of Rabaul we didn't know anything. I didn't know where Lae was, I didn't know where Madang was. I didn't know where Finschhafen was. I didn't know where

35:30 Buna, Gona, Milne Bay anything. I knew that there was safety in the jungle. It was the only place to run. If I'd run that way I'd have ran into Japanese. So I went that way where the jungle was. And that was the reason. When you're on the run, every man for himself, and my unit was gone. They'd gone, they'd taken off because I was a good ten or fifteen minutes getting my sight back.

36:00 After being strafed I was practically blind cause I got all the dirt from this bomb, the two hundred pound bomb that the plane, same plane that was strafing me. When he saw the tracks coming he dropped his bomb. Forgot about me. Probably saw me laying there you know. I was trying to get the dirt out of my eye. And once I got the dirt out of my eye, they're gone.

36:30 And later on when the war was over and I spoke to Hutchison, he came here for my daughter's wedding. He said "When the bomb went, the explosion went up, we saw you go over. And we drove, when they straightened the truck, poor old Arch is gone." So I was laying there you know, probably knocked out, I don't know. But I kick started the bike again and it went.

37:00 Yeah.

Did you have a chance to grab food or...?

No, didn't think of grabbing food, where would I grab it? I had a pack on my back, a little pack, square pack on my back. With a tin of bully beef and a packet of biscuits. That was a day's ration. And on the invasion day and even people that went into the jungle, still had their tin hats on and they had their respirator on, the gas mask. In case,

37:30 because of the First World War they had to wear their gas masks. And there we were one degree off the equator or two degrees off the equator, going into action with our gas masks hung in front of us, an extra thing to hold us back. Would have been better if it was full of bully beef and biscuits. But no one thought of that. See we were poorly, we were prepared, we were totally unprepared to go into battle. Totally unprepared. Because we were very poorly

38:00 officered. From the top level. I'm not blaming them, it's a system. Take it right back to the government. The government, the War Office said "We're not to be re-equipped. We're not to be reinforced. We're not to be evacuated. We're to be considered hostages to fortune." Sheew, just rub a line through them. That's what happened. And they must have known it, right from the

38:30 twelfth of December. The war and the Japanese invaded Rabaul on the seventh. We got nothing. In the way of ammunition or food or anything. We, I mean, there's twelve hundred soldiers and civilians. Most of the women were shipped out round about Christmas-time I think. And they came back to Australia, they had a terrible time. No family, no friends, used to

39:00 native servants, kids, no pensions, no migrant hostels, no anything. They just had to absorb into the system. In fact one of the babies that came out became my secretary. Yeah, she's still alive, she's dying of cancer right now. In Brisbane. Robyn Carlisle. Mmm. The whole thing was a complete rort.

39:30 However we may have done some good, who knows. We may have delayed it just those three or four days or a week, whatever. But if we weren't there, could have come straight down to Port Moresby or come straight to Australia. Would have been easy. Cause there's nothing to stop them.

That's wonderful Arch, thank you.

41:30 **End of tape**

Tape 5

00:33 **Arch on Friday you were talking to us about your experience with natives and things. I'm wondering if you could tell us a bit about your very first experience in the jungle when you first came across them. And how you basically made friends, how you actually tried to communicate?**

Yes, the, it was so, there'd been many contact with the natives during my escape. That is from the time

01:00 I hit the jungle and we came across a few villages. And I like everybody else, whenever we saw a native garden that had food, we robbed it. We robbed it. I was completely ignorant of the fact that, well we were hungry and we didn't think that, most of the native's had disappeared and they'd usually leave one or two there as a guardian. And they didn't do much about preventing us from robbing the garden. But

it was the wrong thing to do.

01:30 In hindsight it was the wrong thing to do. And I remember one particular occasion we had a very fast river to cross. And the native, we couldn't get, one fella went to cross it, one of the soldiers and he was washed down about twenty feet. Another fella, two, two held, went together and they were washed down together twenty or thirty feet. And the river was about a hundred, seventy-five yards wide, about four feet deep, waist deep. And running at oh maybe twenty or thirty

02:00 knots you know. Very, very fast. There'd been a flood, there'd been a storm up the valley somewhere and the river flooded. And from nowhere a native appeared. And he cut a huge vine, about an inch and a half to two inches thick. He tied it, fastened it to one side of the river. Walked through this water up to his, how he could walk through the water I don't know. So he fastened it to a tree on the other side and he came back and that day and he escorted up to two hundred soldiers across

02:30 this swollen river. And I asked him his name. And he said his name was "Magnificent". And I asked him if he was a Mission Boy. And he, this is in English. And he said "Yes and he belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist Mission". And we all commented, we gave him whatever we had, tobacco, little bit of money, each soldier gave him a reward. But it stuck in my mind what a wonderful name for a wonderful native. I think he was a Solomon Islander. He was black

03:00 and shiny. Course he was very shiny and black that day cause he was wet all day. But that was my first contact with a friendly native really, where he'd helped us. From then on for maybe two or three weeks we continued to, whenever we got the opportunity we would take whatever we could from the native garden. Because I suppose that's part of survival. It's wrong but under the circumstances we had to have something to eat and

03:30 you'd pick a cob of corn. And they became very cunning after a while. I remember on one occasion, fella called Jack Hart, the man that broke his leg. He and I went back because we'd noticed a native garden well off the track. And we went back to see what we could get. We had a sugar sack with us, a copra sack with us. And we got about ten or twelve cobs of corn. Not ripe but nice and juicy. And about half a dozen sweet potatoes and some other

04:00 plants. And the fella that owned the garden ran over to us and said, "Oh master quickly. You'd better go. All man belong Japan, he come close too." The Japanese were coming down the coast and were very close to us. So we left our food and we, and we ran like hell. And about a couple of, few hours later we caught up with the main party and we told the story. And the, the Colonel in charge said

04:30 "That was an old native trick to get you out of the village". And so there again we were stealing from them. After Jack Hart broke his leg and they brought him back to Rak Village, we had this Katikut, this Tavinson in charge. And he seemed to organise a lot of other natives. And he insisted on, barked orders out to the other natives to bring me food, which we'd cook

05:00 on an open fire. With, we kept going for the whole of the time we were there, couple of months. And it was during that time I learned pidgin English true. And the proper, and he in turn I would teach him English and he would teach me pidgin English and bits, parts, bits of dialect as well. And we would discuss all sorts of things about native customs. And I would tell him about European customs. And it was there

05:30 I learned really to become fluent. Which I am to this day in pidgin English. And I formed a very close bond with those natives that were round me. Cause he had three or four friends. They all came from different villages but they seemed to be hanging round Rak where this place was. They didn't own Rak. One native said "He did", then another native said "But it was between two villages". And like a lot of places in New Guinea, once the garden areas worked out

06:00 round about a village, they'll let that village fall to pieces. And they'll make a new village somewhere else. Sometimes by the same name but it'll be in a different location. So whoever owned the village at that time, really didn't make any claim to it. Although there were quite a few coconut trees, some bread fruit trees and oh a moolee tree, that's like a lemon tree. And it had been quite a popular village. But at the time we moved into it with Jack Hart who had broken his leg,

06:30 it'd mainly been used as a resting place for travellers, or alternative, and a hut where they were smoking one of the elders that had died. So it was not an operative village as such. It was sort of a staging post between two villages. And consequently there was a fair flow of natives coming to and fro. There was a garden at the back of it that no one seemed to own. But immediately we moved in,

07:00 Tavinson claimed it and said that "That village and all the taro and the sweet potato and the things that were growing and the tapioca, was for the masters only and no one else was to take it. No other native was to touch it." Strangely enough, the only other people that did touch it were soldiers on their way through, in fact one of them was killed. Not fifty yards from where I was. And I didn't know that til after the war. I, when I spoke to Tavinson, thirty years after the war ended I,

07:30 I, and he confessed to me that he had killed a soldier that had taken food from his, my garden. So consequently we established a rapport with the natives. I understood their thinking. I had empathy towards them and they in return with me. They, because I had showed them compassion, they showed me compassion.

08:00 Now this of course was a wonderful background for me on my returned to New Britain. One of the first things I did was send a message up to Tavinson that I had returned. As I said like General MacArthur. Only it was a bit before he went to the Philippines when I sent the message up. And he came down and of course we swore him in as a soldier right away. That knowledge and that understanding that I had of, brushed off and it stood me in great stead from then on. I treated all the natives as men.

08:30 As soldiers and as fellow men without any familiarity. I was still called the “Master” or “Sergeant”, nine times out of ten “Master”, and I would call them by their name. There were no such thing as ranks. There were no Corporals or Lance Corporals in that but. They would either call me “Sergeant” or ninety-nine percent of the time it was “Master” belong before. Master belong before meant I was there before the war.

09:00 And that I was a Master dry fella bone. I’d grown up I wasn’t a monkey anymore, a monkey’s a young man. And I had a little bit of grass on my face. I was shaving by then by the time I went back. On my escape I wasn’t shaving but when I went back I’d started to shave. And my bones were drier so that made me a Master belong before true. So that’s how I became friendly with the natives. And that’s how,

09:30 I trusted them, I had implicit faith in them. And they trusted me. On many occasions they would risk their life to protect me and I in turn would do the same for them. We would never leave a native wounded. And when they were dead, we got them and buried them. Those that were killed. Never left a native and they would never have left me.

Can you, Arch, can you tell me an example of a time

10:00 **where the natives were risking their lives for you and vice versa?**

Beg your pardon?

Can you tell me of a time, of an experience when the natives were risking their lives for you and vice versa?

Well when we were patrolling, we were out on patrol. The natives, every time we went out they would risk their lives. Because they were, we were operating behind the Japanese lines. Early in the piece there was no other Australian battalion on the island. The Australian

10:30 battalion didn’t get there til 1945 towards the end of the war. Whole brigade of them arrived there at Jacquinot Bay well down the coast but we’re up behind Toll. And we’re patrolling right into the Gazelle Peninsula. So every time we went out we were risking our lives. And they would, I could not have slept at night if I hadn’t of been with the natives. And I doubt whether they ever slept. This,

11:00 they seemed to stay awake all night. And still be fresh in the morning. And but there were many, many occasions where we’d be pinned down by rifle fire, particularly those in front. Where I normally had to be in front. You had to be either in front or at the rear. Because that was an old habit of plucking the last man out of the line, plucking them off. And there was a story that the Mokolkol

11:30 natives used to, they were alleged cannibals. And they used to take the last man in the line. Say of ten or twelve natives. They would let them go through and take the last man off. So no one wanted to be last. But there were many occasions I had to be last. And the natives had to be first and vice versa. When I’d be first, they’d be last. But at all times with it I went into action and we had any fire, as they call it now, firefights with the enemy. Which would only,

12:00 which would only happen if (a) they surprised us or (b) we set a trap for them. We were not like the ordinary infantry that had to take Hill 66 and hold it at all costs. We didn’t have to take ground. We had to get information on troop movements. We had to get information of where their camps were, where their hospitals were, where their gardens were. Where their ammunition dumps were, if you could get in that far. Our job was to get

12:30 information. But of course, we were also on a seek and destroy mission as well. If we got the opportunity. But there were no circumstances apart from defence where we actually had to, where we were forced to attack the Japanese. We would not go out looking for them, we would try and trap them. Which was a great sense of security. The poor old infantry battalion that came along later and had to take Toll Plantation. Or had to take the certain hill. They’d

13:00 have to go on and take the hill and hold it. And that’s a different thing. That’s entirely different. Mine was a much mobile war, we could arrange all sorts of tricks over a vast twenty or thirty mile area. To all fire as much ammunition or throw as many hand grenades towards Japanese camps and disappear and meet two weeks later, forty mile away in the mountains. And so we

13:30 really knew our way in through the jungle. Mainly because of the native cunning and intuition. Without them we couldn’t have done anything.

Can you tell me about some of the tricks that you were just talking about? That you would deal on the Japanese to on those kind of patrols? With gunfire and grenades?

Well we’d split into three. Into three groups of maybe four or five men and then we’d try and, no maybe,

14:00 half a dozen groups. And spread them as far across this part of the island as we could. Almost to the north coast and from the south coast. And then we'd make arrangements to say fire at seven a.m. in the morning. And unload, fire as many shots as you can towards the Japanese. Get as close as you can to the Japanese camps and fire as much as you can and throw away your hand grenades and everything. Course at this stage we were being re-equipped by the Americans and a barge occasionally would come over and we had plenty of ammunition.

14:30 So we'd hit em in three or four places at once on the same time on the same day. And of course the Japanese also had a similar unit with the troops called Kempetai or Military Police. They co-opted natives and would try similar things with us. But we didn't have the concentration of troops that they did. Because we were like roving bands. And in a Japanese book written after the war by a Japanese who survived Rabaul

15:00 campaign, they estimated that we had three thousand men. And they referred to us as the green shadows. Because they didn't really have much joy in following us into the jungle. Because the natives of New Britain were the masters of the jungle. When I say the natives of New Britain, they weren't all from New Britain. Some came from the Sepik, they hunted to live. Like crocodiles and cassowary birds and the same with some of the boys from the Markham Valley.

15:30 They're hunters. They don't just plant and fish. They hunt. And that makes em good soldiers. The boys that lived in the outer islands, they called them the Soda Water Boys or Sodda Water Boys or Sea Shell Boys, were really not keen on fighting. But they were good cooks and they were good carriers. But they couldn't fight like the bush native. The bush native was the best one to fight with. The

16:00 town boys were not full of fight but the bush natives were. They'd rather have a fight than a feed.

The difference between city fellas and country boys today.

Yeah I think so, yeah.

What were the, some of the first lines of pidgin that you ever learned?

First lines that. "You got

16:30 kai kai belong me? Have you any food?" That's the quickest way to learn any foreign language to be hungry. Have you any food? And in pidgin English is, "You got kai kai belong me?" "Ham now you got kai kai belong me?" Then they'd find something and give it to you. Some of the men now during the escape from Rabaul died within two and three feet of edible food. Because we

17:00 were so ignorant. For instance tapioca trees, I know a fella that went and lay on a tapioca patch and died. And I didn't know what tapioca was either. But I learned pretty quickly. And he died. And later on all you had to do was pull up the stem, about four or five feet high and there was the tapioca on the root. And all you had to do was put it on a fire and stay alive. It was all starch but it could have kept him alive. But there were many cases of that. Talking about food, during our escape and

17:30 one night, during our escape, there were ten or twelve of us in a group. And feeling pretty lost, wondering what were they thinking at home. Is he dead, no one had heard anything, knew about, I didn't know whether they knew about Rabaul. Is he a prisoner of war, is he dead, will we ever see him? That worried us. And one fella, bit coarser than the rest of us said, "I'd like a bloody big thick steak now with eggs and

18:00 bacon". And then this married man about twenty-six said "I'd like a piece of bread and, with butter, buttered by my wife". And we all gave him a cheer cause he was the most genuine of the men. And it was marvellous how a little simple line like that could get to your heart. To realise how sincere the man was. Cause in a group of, you know

18:30 they're all types. There are some, there's some rough, there's a rough element and another element. But we're all going through the same experiences of being hunger, hungry. However I, once Jack broke his leg I was never hungry from then on. In fact each morning there was a little native girl. As I've told you before that we never spoke to the native women. And of course the original, when we were first

19:00 given that order we weren't supposed to talk to the natives at all. But particularly the native women. And we all laughed and joked and said "Well it's the quickest way to get a spear in your back. If you have, if you talk to a native woman." So however this little girl had to come down from about an eight hundred foot mountain, she lived at a village called Poorman. Go and tend her garden that was some two or three miles from me on the steep side of a mountain. She'd

19:30 work all day, make a fire and cook me a taro. And then she'd wrap, put, just before dusk she would come past the hut where Jack Hart was and Bob Hannah, three of us, and she'd cook a taro about that big. Which she cooked on an open fire and scraped with a shell to get all the black of it and then it was ready to eat. And nearly every day she did that for the whole two and half months we were there in that, at Rak Village. She was pregnant, and

20:00 that was quite obvious to everybody. Very little clothing. You didn't take any notice of that. I mean to see a woman with no breasts and no clothes on, just a bit of, didn't have grass skirts, you know just in the flesh. Is, doesn't, particularly with a native woman, that was their custom. In any case on this particular

day she came back and she was had a sort of a shawl affair round her, oh no, she didn't come back

20:30 for about three days. And I got worried. So Tavinson came down and I said "This little Mary that brings me food from that other village hasn't come back from her garden, her work". And he said "Oh don't worry about her. She'll be alright." But I said "I am worried about her". And in any case that afternoon she came back just on dusk. She had some old cloths over her shoulder and she had on her head her billum, that's her, a bag full of taro and cow cow

21:00 and native vegetables. She was balancing that on her head and under, and through these cloths across her shoulder I saw a tidy hand, a baby's hand. And she, had still given, gave the taro for me that she'd cooked. And she'd gone to work in the garden, had the child on her own in the garden. Stayed there and cooked my taro, probably lay exhausted for a couple of days and then came back and carried on with her life. Amazing piece

21:30 of fortitude. And I never spoke a word to that Mary. I used to say "Thank you" to her but she didn't understand thank you. I never, could never get into conversation with her because she'd look away. So there was no, I wouldn't, we were prevented from talking. It was the rule. I didn't want a spear in my back either.

Understandable. I'm just curious, on a, you talked about custom

22:00 **and offering respect to the natives. What, I'm just curious from a detail point of view what you would do to show respect to the natives if you were meeting them for the first time? If you had to tell me about it. If I was gonna go off into the jungle and perhaps meet some of these natives at that time. What would you have told me to do in terms of offering respect?**

Firstly I'd

22:30 if I was carrying a rifle for instance, I'd turn it upside down and put it away from him. And like a normal European meeting, I would extend my hand and offer to shake hands with them. And I'd say "Friend, me fella friend belong you. And always happy this talk." They all understood that friend, nearly everybody, pidgin English is a universal language in New Guinea and New Britain. And you'd say, you'd offer your hand, "Me like sakan

23:00 long you pilla, me friend belong you." That would immediately establish a rapport. And they would rather be friends than your enemy. You know the first approach to a native is to make sure you're not coming at him with your rifle and bayonet. Or you wouldn't be there for long cause he'd go and get his spear. And they were pretty good at that. No, the first, the best approach is as you would a European. If you were to walk in the bush

23:30 and you saw someone, you'd say "Hi" and walk over and shake hands. They're no different, they're human beings the same as we are. But they're a bit more timid. Bit more timid. Particularly in those Colonial days. When we were the so called masters and they were the natives, you know so, they didn't exist apart from labour. They were just a source of labour. They were exploited.

Did you see much evidence of strife between

24:00 **tribes?**

No I didn't. It, during the war they seemed to band together, mainly for safety. There, in New Britain there's a fair distance between each tribe and they don't seem to have the arguments over the land like they do in the highlands. I suppose over a period of years they would have had their fights to see who owns this river and who doesn't own it. In fact there could have been arguments about the

24:30 Rak Village. And then both sides might have drawn a piece and in the meantime they gave it to me whilst I was in occupation. They could have had a fight over but I'm not aware of it. I'm not aware of any talk either of fights for land. Because I would hear a lot of the talk about before about when their forebears and their exploits and things like that. I can't think of one at the moment. But they used to catch crocodiles by hand.

25:00 That was one of the things I remember.

Was that something you saw?

No, no, no they said their parents used to and their grandparents used to. And they'd hand down stories like most villages do you know. The ones before were always bigger and better, bigger, greater. They're very, very, they're human beings the same as we are. They have feelings the same. They have spirits, they have beliefs, I told you about their medicines. And their spirits.

25:30 And their belief in their God. Their God, all their Gods have different names too. Ulu is one. Strangely enough I mention the Tambourine being the evil spirits. The mountain at the back of, actually it's not Tambourine, it's Tambran. Tambran. That's how it's spelled. And Masali. And Tambran. Well the evil spirits, ah the good spirits I beg your pardon was the Tambran.

26:00 Now the back of Mount at the back of Surfer's Paradise is Mount Tambourine which is and was, was and is a native burial ground. The Salvation Army girls shake their little symbols, that's called a tambourine.

And there's Tambourine Mountain and tambourines from this. And there are other cases as you move up to New Guinea where the word tambourine comes in. Or Tambran that means a good spirit.

26:30 So that's why the Salvation Army Girls shake the Tambran to chase away the evil spirits. That's my story in any case.

Should stick to it.

There's a connection yeah.

Did you, were there any, ever times, having to got to know the culture and their Gods, were there any times where you felt the Tambran spirits were looking after you or?

All the time I did yeah because when we would camp at night, if there were any evil spirits about they would say "Not to camp here".

27:00 The best defensive position that we could ever have always a place, Masali. It was always a, you know an evil place. They'd say it was better to go over there and I'd say "No don't go over there because you leave yourself wide open". Because there's no defence there. And on one particular night we defied their rules and Bluey Hurst, a soldier called Sergeant Hurst, who was with me for a few months. He,

27:30 one of the natives said "That there was someone out beyond the perimeter". It was a good defensive position and there was someone out there. And he said "Oh, what rot". And he ran out, and as he ran out he hit a small sapling. And he ran, and in the dark, and there, the sapling was about four inches round, and a great lump came up on his head. So he came back, it was dark, and he came back and he said to me, "There's some evil spirits out there,

28:00 look at my forehead". So I said "Well you better not let the natives see that". So he, or we'd have lost them. So, this was very early in the piece. So he went to his little two-man tent and then he sent a note over, scribbled on a little piece of paper he had the next morning. He said "I've got laryngitis. I've lost my voice." And we stayed there for two days til he got his voice back before he came out of his tent. Because if he'd have come out that would've been proof, with a

28:30 lump on his head and the loss of his voice, that the evil spirits had worked. And we may not have held our natives. So you know the natives, you've gotta believe in them. You haven't got to but I did.

And do you reckon that helped?

Yes, course it does. It makes you help because you know your natives are not going to shoot through.

That's fantastic. You talked on Friday a bit about the

29:00 **tribal medicines and particularly the bauxite, what turned out to be bauxite. But I've seen a lot of photographs of things like tropical ulcers which are extraordinary. I'm just wondering what did they use to treat things like that?**

Well the, I found out later of course, but at the time I didn't, because I was escaping and I didn't know anything about this. I just knew that they had a cure. But later on it was used a lot. There's a small, very strong ginger plant. It's, I'll call it ginger for the want of a better name. It's called kavava. Don't ask me to spell it,

29:30 I couldn't. Kavava. And they chew the kavava and they chew it up with their spittle, and they spit it on, make a paste out of it and put it over the ulcer. By the way you must catch your ulcer within one or two days or within a week, it'll from that big it'll be that big. You must catch it very early. And then they wrap that with banana leaves and in three day's time it was gone. And if I'd have gotten an ulcer then I'd have lost my leg. If that ulcer had've developed.

30:00 And I, later on even when other medicines were available, the natives would look after their own ulcers. Cause one little sandfly bite that you scratch will turn into an ulcer below the knew. And an ulcer, I've seen ulcers where you could smell them twenty feet downwind. You know right into the bone. That's one of the worst tropical diseases actually. Everybody has malaria, everybody has hookworm, everybody has beri beri through lack of

30:30 diet. But a lot of people will die with ulcers. Because they just lose their mobility.

And they would come up, essentially on the lower legs?

On the lower legs.

Not anywhere else?

Well I've never seen them anywhere else. I've never seen an ulcer anywhere else.

Amazing.

Yeah.

What other medicines did you encounter that kind of really stood out to you?

Well their cure for malaria was a

31:00 physical one. And each afternoon during my escape I would get a shake about four o'clock. It rained every day, every day by the way right until the end of April. And I'd be forced to climb this mountain, oh about eight hundred foot high. And they would cut my forehead and make it bleed with a little bottle, bit of broken glass they had. And I would bleed right, then I'd stay there for about half an

31:30 hour doing deep breathing. And I'd come back just on dark. Cause it, the sun goes down very quickly. It just, once it, in, there's no twilight. It just goes over the horizon, it's light one minute and almost dark the next. And I'd just make down the, I'd just get back to our hut as it became dark. And I'd sleep that night without any malaria. Without any shakes, shivers or headache. Two or three days later it would come back again. But, my, it finished

32:00 up I was getting a shake about four o'clock every afternoon. So I didn't have to go through that harsh treatment every afternoon. But when I was bad, I did. Now young Bob Hannah, he suffered terribly with malaria. He didn't have enough strength to go up the mountain. In fact when we were eventually being evacuated, you know and they sent the natives down to carry Jack Hart down to get the, on the canoe, to go across Jacquinot Bay. Two natives practically carried Bob Hannah, who was a

32:30 year younger than I, up that hill. And once we got him on the top he could walk but he couldn't climb the hill. I'd say another month, he'd have been dead with malaria. I'd already buried one man, George the Greek. Who the natives, whilst we were rescuing Jack Hart, George the Greek had been dumped ashore by a civilian party escaping. And the natives brought him up to where I was and he was raving with malaria and he was dead in the morning.

33:00 So I had Jack Hart with the broken leg in one hand and I was burying him. And Tavinson came along and said The Lord's Prayer. In English. Lost, and we buried him about that deep. Because we only had sticks, covered it with coral stones. In the end there's a photograph there of George the Greek's heart and another soldier that was killed. And the other soldier that was killed, I found out his name, thirty years after the war. And he was stealing from the

33:30 garden, not sixty yards from where I was. By the same natives that looked after me.

So they had a very strict code.

Yep. Yeah, they did. If I'd have known of course, it would have been my duty to report them. Which I would. I would have. But, cause you can't let them get the upper hand. But he told me eventually that, "He didn't do it", he said, "But his boys did it". He knew of the boys that did it. And I don't think it was in him

34:00 to kill anyone. That's Tavinson, I don't think it was in him. But that was that, the fella they killed, I won't mention his name for his families sake but to me he's just an unknown soldier.

Just check my notes for a second. What other jungle foods

34:30 **you know you mentioned the tapioca…?**

Well the tapioca plant is planted in gardens. They're not native, they're an imported thing the same as sweet potatoes, they're an underground thing. But their main, their basic foodstuffs are taro, which is all starchy with a big leaf like an umbrella, type leaf, they grow in swamps and things. That's their basic diet. Cow cow is a secondary diet and

35:00 tapioca which is all starch of course. It's tapioca. But those are the main things. Then there's lots of greens you can eat. A lot of people don't know about either. There's one called Ibeeka. It's a greens, a slimy thing. Then you'll get a wild pumpkin that doesn't bear pumpkins. But it's got lots of nice young shoots and leaves on it. They're wonderful stuff to boil up and eat to keep the greens up to you. We couldn't keep enough of the greens up to us cause we all developed beri beri. But it is a, there are many, many

35:30 things edible in the jungle. There are many trees that have a very hard shell, bout that big the shell is. And you can't climb the trees to get them. But when they fall off you put them on a fire, they'll burst open. And they're very ed, they're a good source of nutriment. Also the natives used to, with their spears, they would go for the fresh water prawns. Every now and again they'd catch a fresh water prawn.

36:00 And two or three. And they used to say "Oh master this immin good too much grease more". Meaning it's got plenty of nutriment in it. "Immin grease more". Meaning it was very fat and that's what we needed, some fat. Of course there's wild pig, there's plenty of wild pig. There's the cassowary bird. Lots of other birds, pigeons and. On one occasion we had a go at a white cockatoo but it wasn't very edible. It wasn't edible I can tell

36:30 you. But we tried it.

Didn't taste very good?

No it didn't. You could put a piece of blue metal in, and it wouldn't even go soft, let alone the meat. It was enough to chew and spit out that's all. And I can't, I can't look at a white cockatoo now. Unless I

think of this. Their screeches. In fact just near war's end, I'd been out on a two week patrol. I,

37:00 we went out on a week's patrol and we got orders to, by radio to stay another week. And that was, that was a bit hard to take particularly for the radio operator receiving the message in Morse. He had the shakes in the first place and then when he got this order to stay out for another week. And on our way back there was a flock of white cockatoos, followed me for miles. And they used to scream, "Chaps, chaps,

37:30 chaps, chaps". It sounded like "Japs, Japs, Japs", you see. Twenty or thirty screeching cockatoos. And everybody was on edge for days with these cockatoos. So when I got back to the base camp, I had an American Carbine with about, I think it was about thirty-two rounds in it. I'm not certain. And there was a hill above us, above where the camp was, behind the Australian lines. And it was full of white cockatoos. And I emptied my rifle, just

38:00 instinctively, fired it into the trees and they all screeched, "Japs, Japs, Japs, Japs" and they all flew away. Now the Commanding Officer, a fella called Captain Lyons. He came running over to me and said "Who fired that shot, who fired that shot?" Cause it was illegal to fire a shots within the confines of the camp. Cause we had an Australian battalion in front of us, artillery behind us and this was our rest area. Not that we, I hated being

38:30 there. So I said "I did, I fired the shots". And he backed away from me as though I was going to fire more at him. In any case a few days later he sent us a psychiatrist from the Australian battalion. He sent a psychiatrist up to see me to see if I was off my, and ask if I'd like to go across the bay and spend a week in, a week's holiday across the other side of Wide Bay. And I said "Yes but you've got the wrong man". I said "It's the captain bloke that's off his head, not me". And so

39:00 they took me off in a barge and went across the bay. I was having, sitting in the sun, watching, having a swim and watching, marvellous whilst the troops were having a rest on the other side. And I was there for about five days and then Major Lyons came over to me and said "Hurry up and get your gear", he said. I said "What for?" He said "We've gotta get the mortar. The Japs have got a four inch mortar there". He said "And you and I and your boys are going to get this mortar. Because it's knocking the tripe out of the Australian troops". I said "I can't I'm a patient in a

39:30 hospital". Now I didn't, I went with him. And that went on my records. That I suffered from some nervous condition. That I was off my head. And when I applied for pension many, many years later. When I was sixty-five when I applied for a pension, when I couldn't work anymore, because I'd had heart attacks and cancers

40:00 and strokes and my nerves weren't any, weren't troubling me then. And it was on the record that on this, that I was under severe mental stress and showed signs of neurasthenia. Which is a nervous condition. So in fact he helped me get a pension. And I frightened all the white cockatoos. That's my story of the white cockatoos.

Tape 6

00:31 One of the natives we had with us came from, oh one of the northern islands, I forget the name, in the Admiralty Group. And he was a cook in the Government House before the war. He could make the best date pudding with two jam tins you've ever tasted in the whole of your life. And towards the end of the war when we were getting Australia rations Sakap was our mess boy. He used to make our breakfast, he used to make us a date pudding out of anything he could get, scrounge from the Australian battalion.

01:00 And he was good. We were sitting down on this bush table one day. Polly Perkins said to him on one occasion, he was drinking a cup of tea. "Hah", and he said "Sakap". "Yep". "Wanna say my name. Don't tell me, why did you made the tea out of boiling water again? You know I nearly burned my mouth out." And he walked away and just shook his head. He just shook his head. Because it was beneath him to even argue. Cause how else could you make tea without

01:30 boiling water. But, so, he ignored that. Few days later he got a tin of biscuits and we were sitting down eating the biscuits. And he presented the biscuits. He was a scrounger, he'd go in the Australian battalions and get anything. And he brought this tin of biscuits along to us, Sao biscuits I think they were. And Perkins said to him, "Sakap, cheeses he stop where. Where are the cheeses?" And he said "Jesus he stop on top". Third occasion we got some kokoroks.

02:00 Some kiobrong kokoroks. That's hen's eggs, they were white, hen's eggs. Only small, pulooks, sized eggs. And one of the sergeant s said, "I have brown eggs not white eggs". Next day he got brown eggs. He boiled them in tea, cold tea. So that was Sakap. In fact I have a photograph of him somewhere standing alongside me. We made him a lance corporal. Standing alongside the graves of the two soldiers.

02:30 Yeah, that's. So these wonderful natives, they have a sense of humour as well. And they knew how to dish it out as well. Yes.

That's good to hear. Could you tell me Arch about when you actually managed to escape from

the island? When you made, when you finally got away?

Yeah. Well, I'd

03:00 just got to Palmalmal Plantation. That was where the Laura Bada had arrived to take us away. Firstly you know there were a considerable number of men, a hundred and twenty, hundred and fifty, I don't know. Because how many were there. But two soldiers came over in a small boat first to find out if there was someone on the south coast. And they found it. They found that there was a big Headquarters in Jacquinot Bay near Palmalmal Plantation. So they

03:30 sent a wireless back and sent the Laura Bada over. The Laura Bada was the administrator's private yacht which held about a hundred and twenty of us. And I'd arrived in the morning, that morning. And the boat came in and just moored behind a very small island. It looked like the Queen Mary to me. It really did. It was about sixty foot long I suppose or forty foot long and fifteen foot beam you know. And

04:00 the following morning, just the, following that evening we all went aboard. And Father Harris stayed behind, he refused to come away with us. And eventually he was executed by the Japanese, no one knows how. And the first night out our engines stopped and one of the men, one of the escapees died, a fella called James. I forget his other name. He was buried at sea. And then

04:30 the boat proceeded, as I've learned later, of course, geographically, through the Trobiand Islands, through Samurai, Milne Bay, up to Port Moresby. And we were a pretty sad and sorry lot. There is photographs of the Laura Bada but I'm not in possession of it. But it's pretty well known the story of the Laura Bada and that trip. They've got photographs of it steaming into the harbour. They are available and but I, it

05:00 would take me a lot of trouble to get them. But they are available. They'd be available on the, in the archives in Canberra, in the War Memorial.

And so you got to Port Moresby?

Then onto the Machdui. And then we all got European food and then we all got diarrhoea and from there to Cairns. Where we were most of the time on the throne. And then when we went to Cairns, they, the locals

05:30 got us clothes from the Red Cross shops. Anything'd do. And eventually to my memory, no, then we proceeded to Sydney. And I can't remember now whether we came down by train or whether we came down by ship. I don't know cause I only remember the time after the war when we went straight into Sydney and that was with Murphy. Yes.

Can you describe, you mentioned yesterday that one the natives

06:00 **had built a contraption to fix the broken leg?**

Well, it, yes, well really it was a femur broken and protruding an inch and a half, two inches through the skin. And he had to try and straighten the bone which it did but it didn't mend. It went in that position instead of that position. Surgically the only people who can do that. It healed like that and the flesh grew over. But what they did to do that was they drove a

06:30 stake into the leg, into the ground. A stake. And then they got some thin bamboo, that was pliable, and then with a twist in it. And every day he'd give it an extra twist to make it come further. And of course this would pull Jack Hart down the leg as well. Then we'd push him back. But it was and to straighten his leg they knocked him out first. They said "You stay there master and we will fass,

07:00 fass im leg belong im." Straighten his leg. And then I heard a whack. No noise. And went later and he's looking groggy. And they said "They'd knocked him out and then pulled his leg to pull it straight and then left." And then arranged this bamboo contraption to try and keep it straight. But it didn't work, it didn't work. He couldn't walk. Couldn't walk. But he stayed alive for a long time. It was only about two or three years ago he died. But it did affect him. Cause he must have had

07:30 severe concussion and internal injuries when he fell down the cliff as well. It did affect him. He led a strange life from then on.

Injuring that.

Yeah.

I just wondered what the contraption was that was all.

It was very hard to describe but it was just thin strips of bamboo.

Amazing. And so when you arrived in Sydney you were hospitalised?

Yeah straight to Concord Hospital. With malaria. There again I got into

08:00 trouble. Remember one of the fellas, one of the patients there, not belonging to us, was comp, not bacon and eggs again for breakfast. And I jumped over the table at him. I said "I've just been wearing, you know, a man would have killed for that". So couple of men in white coats came and grabbed hold of me.

And tried to put me in a private ward. But by the time I got hold of an officer and I explained that I just escaped from the Japanese and I'd been without food for a couple of months.

08:30 European food for two and half months and I objected to these people complaining about the good food they've got here. They don't know they're alive. See Australia didn't know there was a war on. We didn't know, no one knew what was happening or what anybody. Australia seemed to have no idea how close the Japanese were. It wasn't til they got to Kokoda they realised that they were on their way. Which was a long while after us. Yes, so a

09:00 lot of people here didn't know and I took it out on this patient at the, course at that stage I wouldn't have called the King my uncle. I wasn't frightened of anybody. And that stayed with me all my life. I became pretty explosive. I moved pretty quickly, I did, when I was younger. I've slowed up now.

When did you find out about what had happened at Toll?

09:30 About two or three days later after I'd crossed the river, made two, crossed two rivers and spent one night on an island. And after I'd, some other soldiers came through and told us about it. And then some of the boys that had been wounded actually came through and joined the party. And later on Billy Cook came through with his eleven bayonet wounds on, he came through later. And Major

10:00 Palmer, the Medical Officer looked after him. And he did have a little bit of medicines but Billy Cook got most of it. But that was looked, at last someone was going to take over. And Major Owen he looked like he got the group together. And he said "Now there's a job for everybody. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Disease is strife so we've gotta be utterly clean in everything we do. And there's a job for everybody, no shirkers. Shirkers can get out. And workers

10:30 can stay." And I stayed with that party for a couple of weeks you know. Scrounging for food, robbing gardens. Then once I found the canoe of course, I asked his permission to, if I could get some help and we'd get through to Australia. And he said "If you get through, this is where, where we'll be". Course we had no maps so he had an idea where he was headed, no one else did. No one had a map. Very hard to describe what happened

11:00 in New Britain. And the places that I've mentioned, unless I had a large map of New Guinea. And most of the place names, the village names that I mention now are not in vogue today. Because they've moved their village and changed their names. Sometimes they've kept it. And again in interpretation from a native's pronunciation to a cartologists interpretation to put the name for a village, could get it entirely wrong. The village called Rak

11:30 that I stayed, is on the maps shown as DRak with a 'D' when in fact it's pronounced Rak. Sometimes people put a 'D' in front of that and call it DRak. So I haven't got a map. There is one available but all the names on it would be incorrect. But I'd know every, I know every river. I've crossed every river on that Gazelle Peninsula. And climbed up to Mount, climbed up and down Mount Lemingi.

12:00 And places now where I would fear to tread we just had to go. And when I think of it and I look at, you know I go, not recently, I went to the Blue Mountains. And I looked up at the mountains and I said to Vera, "The mountains I climbed were taller than these". And some of them are almost as straight but always had a bit of green vegetation hanging onto it. If you pulled too hard you'd pull it off and if you didn't you could pull yourself up on it or down on it. And hold you down. But

12:30 it's very mountain, see the whole island is volcanic. And as I said at five thousand feet I've cut my feet on coral. And there'd be white sea shells there. And that's where they found, to cure my dysentery that's where they found this small pocket, I've never seen it, I don't know where it is, of Bauxite. And they knew of its medical value way back then. Probably a thousand years before.

13:00 Which is incredible. Cause most of our medicines come from the bush or the sea. Quinine comes from the bark of a willow. And the barks of other trees they get our medicines from. And the natives understand this. You know we're not that superior as far as intellect's concerned and survival, as they are. They know more about survival than we do. If we had to survive without our modern conveniences

13:30 today, we wouldn't last very long. We, I'm talking as a nation. But they've been there for thousands of years, hundreds of thousands of years. Probably millions. And leading a wonderful life. And no, and they all smile. People in warm climates, the closer you get to the equator the bigger the smile.

I like that.

14:00 **You were saying that, I mean what could you teach when you began teaching at the jungle training? What could you teach people about survival school?**

Oh I used to not do, I didn't teach them jungle training. I used to lecture on how to handle natives, how to be kindly, how to follow a track, how to look for a track when apparently none exists. And one of the ways is, a native will walk through the jungle

14:30 just searching for food. And they always carry a knife. And he has a habit of hitting a stick or breaking a branch every now and again. And one on the left and then one on the right and one… And if you observe these things closely, they become tracks in your mind. And you can follow, you can follow, eventually it'll lead to, lead you somewhere. Either to water or to civilisation or to the coast, or it'll lead you

somewhere. So that's how you follow a native track by following the native markings on the trees.

15:00 But they don't mark them deliberately to make them tracks. Cause they don't get lost in the jungle. They can just go through it as they are. Cause if you're usually after a cassowary bird or a crocodile or a pig or something so that, they're at home in the jungle. Where we are just as much at home in Pitt Street. I know Pitt Street's changed as well. Since...

And so

15:30 **how, I guess how valuable would that training have been, had you had it? What you were, what you were teach, lecturing on at the...?**

Oh I think it helped a lot of people, a lot of soldiers that would've got broken away from their unit. They would have been able to try and, they would have helped them. It was invaluable, not only that, I had to teach them about food. And what's edible and what's not edible. And I had samples of it as well. And

16:00 you see we had none of that training whatsoever. And what I learned about living in the jungle and surviving with the help of the natives, I passed on to troops that had just been conscripted that were being sent to New Guinea. And all, just as completely unknown as it was to me, they were about to face the same. So I taught them a little bit and gave them a few points to look for. Which was very, which was vital for their training.

16:30 Because you couldn't always rely on the army to deliver your food at the right time. Or if you got cut off or, it's not the end of the world if you're cut off because if you know what you're doing, because you can follow a water course. Nine times out of the ten, the water course will go the sea. But not always. Sometimes they wind back like the Snake River and they go back into the mountain again. But not always. They're little tricks like that. Or not tricks, know-how.

17:00 **I was wondering if I could go back to I guess, you said yesterday that you were anxious to get back to New Guinea. Oh back to the Pacific and the war.**

Yes.

Was it frustrating to be in Australia teaching when you...?

No I knew I was getting fitter. And I knew I was headed back. I mean I'd have gone AWOL [Absent Without Official Leave] to get back. I'd have

17:30 left the Australian camps but it was part of me getting fit. And then eventually I, you know when I did go back first time I went back with the 2/12th Battalion. And the 2/12th Battalion of course I then finished up in Lae. They went to Nadzab. And that's where I got this smaller boat to go across to New Britain.

18:00 In fact the boat we went across to New Britain on was the Francis Peat. That was the Peat, the Hawkesbury Bridge's motorised ferry, Peat's ferry. To get to Newcastle you had to cross the Hawkesbury with a ferry. Well the boat we went to New Britain in was that, four knots was it's flat out. With a huge canvas shoved over the top of it. The Jap planes'd fly over and have a look at it. And the natives'd get out and wave to them with their lap laps on. And of course the Japs'd think it was a fishing boat. Cause it looked

18:30 like nothing. But that, I was so determined to get back. One stage was so, once I left the 2/12th Battalion they sent me to PIB. Cause I went to see army Intelligence. And I said I've got to get back to New Britain cause I speak the language, the dialect, I know the names of the rivers, I've got good navy contacts there. And I must help out my cause. So they sent me up

19:00 to the PIB in Port Moresby. Or out from Port Moresby. They were the Papuan Infantry Battalion and I didn't speak any Papuan. So I came back then to, I don't know where I came back to, I came back then and said "I've gotta get to the New Guinea Infantry Battalion". So in any case that's how I came to get into the New Guinea Infantry Battalion. Was never, a company of the Battalion, New Guinea

19:30 Infantry Battalion had one Company in Bougainville, one on the north coast of New Britain, one in the Madang Aitape area and one in New Britain on the south coast of New Britain. And so they operated more or less, we never operated as a battalion. Then they formed a second battalion and then a third battalion and then they called it the

20:00 Pacific Island Regiment. And it's the Pacific Island Regiment today. I showed you the medal I received from the Pacific Island Regiment for my service with them. With the PIR and also the NGIB [New Guinea Infantry Batallion].

Were they operating in a similar fashion to your work do you know or?

I don't know, as I said you think, I don't even, haven't even learned later. But we operated in a very one

20:30 degree, I've read books where they operated on the Kokoda Track and on the north coast of New Britain but I have no knowledge of it.

I was wondering if I could come back to your friend Billy Cook. And the information you gave

us to read over the weekend was just amazing, was just shattering in some ways.

It is, oh yeah.

Could you believe what he was telling you when you, or the stories you were hearing about what had happened?

21:00 Oh yes you only had to see him because he'd show everybody. Every Anzac Day you know he'd lift up his short to show everybody all the wounds. Being a medical man too he knew which arteries were severed and went in his ear and out his mouth the eleventh bayonet wound. He was quite proud of it. And in fact that, we got together and built his house. The 2/22nd Battalion Association.

21:30 And we built his house in Bexley for him with no steps and a ramp and a low toilet and all rest of it. Then he got about on with his hands on this little trolley. About the size of the trolley I've got behind. And then we'd wheel him on Anzac Day and he'd used to, he lived for Anzac Day. He used to wave to all the children. And he lived to about seventy-five, seventy-three years of age, which is an amazing thing. He was quite a, he was a wonderful man. Yeah and he knew every detail of where every wound

22:00 was. And he didn't even lose consciousness when the train ran over his legs. Yes, quite, quite an amazing man. In fact should be compulsory reading that, just to show what human nature can put up with. And I became very friendly with him and visited him regularly. Every Anzac Day or every opportunity I could I'd see him. In fact it was only two months ago I attended his wife's funeral. She was ninety-three

22:30 and she'd been in a nursing home for about ten years and I used to visit her at least once every two months and she just died. And I still, I'm still in contact with his son who's just a few years younger that I am. Younger. Yeah. So we forged, we with, I wasn't bayoneted but we went through a lifetime experience of escaping together. Coming out on the same boat. But

23:00 Bill was one of those fellas that was quite proud of his wounds. I would be too if I'd survived eleven bayonet wounds. He wasn't disfigured, his face wasn't disfigured.

Was he, had he been, was he in a bad state when you first saw him after that?

No he was so stoic, he was just so pleased to be

23:30 alive. And he was not in a bad state. You know he had no shirt on. His back was bloody, but it was all scabby. He'd allow the flies to eat, blow flies to eat the proud flesh. His back was maggoty, he had maggots. In all of the bayonet wounds were maggots and he knew that. And he'd lay, he'd lay down to let the, so the disease wouldn't set in. And the flies, the maggots would eat the

24:00 flesh. So he'd throw himself in the sea and get rid of most of the maggots and then they'd come back again. And then eventually when he got Doctor Palmer he was able to, he found Doctor Palmer he put some medication on it. What he put I don't know. He must have got something from the missionaries. They were a long way from where I was because I was held back behind with a broken leg. And with, when I was a good sixty-mile from where the fellas were, where the main party was, I was back on my own with Jack

24:30 Hart with a broken leg, Bob Hannah with malaria. George the Greek that'd died. And no one of their unit came back to give me any assistance. The Japanese patrols would come down, and I'd get a fair days notice of it. The natives would come and pick us up, pick Jack Hart up as well, take him into the bush about thirty or forty yards. Cover him with leaves. I'd go a bit further and hide somewhere til the Japanese patrol would go down and come back again. And on no occasion did anyone come back and give us food or try and help us. Even his own

25:00 unit, they wrote him off. Cause they all thought he'd died naturally. But there was just something in me that I was determined to get him off. I didn't, I had no idea how. I was determined, I was just as determined to get him off as I was when I came back to Australia was to get back and try and get even because of the Toll Massacre. And that determination stayed with me I think.

25:30 In fact I was determined to do this interview.

I'm very pleased about that. I was wondering if you could, I guess, if you remember what the people who survived Toll were telling you when you met up with them. What they were saying about it, what had happened?

Well it was very similar, it wasn't you know. One fella was shot through the shoulder, another was bayoneted somewhere else. And they just said "They were

26:00 tied up and, their hands, fishing line was put round, all their possessions were taken from them including rings and wrist watches. And their hands were behind their back and they were tied together with fishing line or some tight line. And their legs were fettered, were hobbled like a horse so they couldn't run away. And then they were just tie, used as bayonet practise." Now there wasn't much more to tell. And some, they got tired of bayonet practise so they shot some. And they

26:30 didn't all die. There were about five survivors. I just don't know how many. I don't know. Each time you read a book you hear of another one but there were, there one fellow got across to the south, north

coast. And the others came across here. I think there were four or five, I'm not certain. Billy Cook would have known. And other people coming through spoke of it. And when we went back after Toll Plantation was re-taken we found the remains of about a hundred and

27:00 thirty. But no, very few remains, full remains of a body because the pigs had snorted them round. And there'd be a skull here and a leg here and a boot there. And you'd pick up the boot and shake the toes out of it. And we identified about four people of their, from their remains. One was Wally Richardson, he was a fellow that ran up the river with me when I dived in the river with me and I found his watch. I think I mentioned that before. Another was Micky Pilgrim, he had a stainless steel mirror, bout six inches by four.

27:30 And he was continually combing his hair as a young boy, about seventeen or eighteen. And I found that stainless steel mirror and that was the only one. There was another fella had a, a particularly bad set of false teeth. And we found these false teeth and I recognised who the owner of that teeth was. There was another man, we found attached to his belt. He must have put it on the inside of his belt, was the Cronulla Life Surf,

28:00 Life Saving Club at Cronulla. And I knew who that was. So we were able to identify about five or ten then get the stories of the others. So we got the majority of the names of those that were killed. A lot of people coming through and if they didn't get to the other side, there was every presumption, you could presume they were killed at Toll. That's how they could establish about a hundred and thirty. It goes, it ranges between a hundred and thirty-five and a hundred and fifty were bayoneted at Toll. Bayoneted and shot, or

28:30 set alight or heart cut out or who knows. Who knows what happens. And the dead don't talk so. And that was quite a moving thing when the army arranged a funeral service. And it was our job to put them in a small sack you know like the sacks they put round embankments that type of sacks. And we were putting the remains in. Quite a few of those bags pieces of coral went

29:00 in where we couldn't find the skull to make up the weight but they were identified as about a hundred and thirty-five. They were and the funeral service was held. And they're buried in a mass grave in Rabaul with the names of those who have no known grave. They didn't say they were buried, bayoneted at Toll cause they may not have been bayoneted. They may have been shot, they might have drowned, they might have died in the jungle on the way through.

29:30 But the Bitapaka Cemetery in Rabaul has a special section of all the names of those who died that have no name. Now that not only included the Toll massacre, it also included the rest of the battalion and civilians that were sunk on the Montevideo Maru on its way back to Japan off the Philippines sunk by an American Submarine. And I, full details of that submarine and the latitude and longitude and the Commanders name and everything. But that's been published and that's

30:00 available at the War Department. The War Memorial, they have that. But no one's ever gone down and seen the Mariana Trench. No one's ever gone down to, what would you find? It'd be like just some old rusty steel plates, there'd be no bodies left or bones. And the, they wouldn't have had any trinkets, you know. So no one's ever done, there's a group trying to get organised now to find out what happened to the Montevideo Maru.

30:30 All sorts of stories come up about they were, it never, didn't exist and we know it existed. It didn't leave the harbour and then it did leave the harbour. And it came back again and all the men must have been bayoneted and thrown overboard. There's a dozen different stories. The most probably one is they were battened in their hatches and they were sunk by the American submarine. Because there were many other ships sunk by the Japanese with Australian troops on. From Malaya, from Singapore, from Sumatra, from Ambon and Timor. They sent

31:00 them to Japan to work in the coal mines. As labour. And the American's submarines thought "This is great stuff". And they saved quite a few as well. Mmm. There's a book called Heroes at Sea listing the names of all those that were sunk by the Japanese, there are survivors, and a list of all those that were dead. Well they presumed, they presumed in relation to Rabaul because there's no proof. There's no roll

31:30 kept. The Japanese gave them the roll but there's lots of names on it that were alive in Melbourne.

When you were back in Australia, what did revenge mean?

When I first came back. I just wanted to get back and try and kill some Japanese. And I had no idea how I was going to do it. I had no idea how I was going to do it but I was

32:00 determined to do it. See all I had, and I was very fortunate, I had a forty-five Revolver. Because when I was made the dispatch rider I handed my rifle in. If I'd gone back on my own with a forty-five Revolver, I wouldn't have got very far. I wouldn't have lasted very long. Fortunately with the natives that were armed and then we had to train them as well, we went back as a unit and, we went back, well not as a unit, but we went back in groups. And they

32:30 you know, we could inflict quite a fair bit of damage. We had some Bren Guns then. When we were originally in Rabaul we didn't have Bren Guns. We had World War I Lewis Guns. We had no, you know, all World War I equipment. And you couldn't fire a Lewis Gun because it only had a one piece extractor. And in the tropics they used to burst and they wouldn't extract the bullet. So, I just went back with a

determination to try and get even

33:00 for all of those people that were killed at Toll. Cause I had hatred in my heart. And now it's all gone. Not that I'm in love with them but it's all gone. Mmm.

Could you tell people in Australia what had happened, what was going on?

Before I went back?

Well when you came back.

At the war's end?

When you were hospitalised?

Oh no, no we were sworn to secrecy. And no one would believe us in any case.

33:30 People were complaining about bacon and eggs for breakfast. No we were just told "To shut up". We were sworn to secrecy. Because Australia would have panicked if the newspapers had got hold of the story. Just imagine it. Whooh. They didn't know about the Montevideo Maru but they knew about Toll Plantation. And they knew that the battalion was wiped out. But they didn't know and none of us

34:00 knew til years later that the battalion, that the Lark Force as it was called, were considered by the government to be hostages to fortune. Not to be reinforced, not to be re-equipped, not to be evacuated. And I read you the piece, the official, from the official document. But we didn't know that til just a few years ago.

34:30 And as Mr Justice Selby said before he died. He said "Good God, I shouldn't be here". And it wasn't long before that he died. Yeah.

Just have a look at my notes, won't be a second. When you, how did you recruit,

35:00 **for your battalion with the natives? Did they come forward and volunteer? Or did you…?**

No, a lot of them had been, a lot of them had been injured or chased or hurt or ill-treated by the Japanese. They'd been indentured labour in Rabaul and in different places. And when they heard that the army, or they heard that the New Guinea, a unit was being formed to

35:30 train soldiers, they seemed to come out of the woodwork. That's how they came. And they wanted, and a lot of them were ex-Police boys and a lot of them were, some schoolteachers. And other ones, as I said one was a servant for the officer in charge of Rabaul. Yes, they came from anywhere and everywhere. And they all wanted to be soldiers and of course they could, all had a good eye and they could shoot pretty well. They were pretty good at target practise and real practise too.

36:00 Yeah they were good. I always felt very safe with them. Safer than I was with the Australians. Cause the Australians made a lot of noise in the bush. The natives made none. We'd keep as far away from the Australian battalion as we could. Yeah. Mmm. Not that I'm anti Australian troops, they did a wonderful job. I just didn't like being with them. And I could walk twenty mile

36:30 in a day with a natives you know, hardly break a twig. And if you got anywhere near an Australian battalion some galoot would yell out, "Stand to". At four a.m. in the morning. And everybody was awake. No I didn't like being anywhere near the Australian troops.

What was the discipline, or the structure and the discipline like within the native…?

Well we had some senior natives in charge of sections. There was never any

37:00 there was never any trouble with natives not doing what they're told. In fact, we'd tried to get a group together to go on patrol, there'd almost be a fight amongst them to see who'd want to go. And they were all so very keen. They were really keen. There was no trouble with discipline. None at all. None. Never had any trouble. You know I've heard people say that you know "If you ordered them over a cliff, they'd jump over a cliff for you". But that's ridiculous they wouldn't jump over a cliff cause they've got too many

37:30 brains. And we had no trouble with discipline. They disciplined themselves. They liked being, "Soldier belong King".

Did they have the same hatred of the Japanese that a lot of Australians did?

Yes they did. They did. Because the stories went round, you know. It's a small place, one village tells another, coconut wireless. After the bayoneting of Toll, I guarantee nearly every native in the island knew within a week.

38:00 Long before we knew about it. Because the natives would have witnessed it. And when the message was sent from Jacquinot Bay to where I was staying, which is a good sixty mile or more, the message got to me in under a day. How they did that I don't know but their lines of communication are good. Whether it was with drums or, I don't know, or runners. As I say they communicate very well with themselves. That doesn't answer your

38:30 question but that was on discipline. No they, they adjusted to discipline, army discipline very, very well. Because they were well fed as well. When we got army supplies.

How difficult would it have been, had the Japanese treated the natives better, and the natives had been on their side?

Well that was one of their biggest mistakes. Because the Europeans were very tough, the old colonial days. They had a

39:00 wonderful opportunity of getting them on-side and turning them all against the white man. They had the wonder, most wonderful opportunity but instead of that, they did the wrong thing. They ill treated them, raped their women, did everything wrong. Consequently it turned again, they wanted the master to come back again. Or they wanted the white man to come back again. Yeah it would have been a different story. So Japan made many mistakes.

39:30 And that was one of the biggest mistakes right throughout. I believe.

Tape 7

00:35 **Arch, on Friday you mentioned something that really struck me about when you were on your first, perhaps your first months in Rabaul when you were escaping through, away from the Japanese. You mentioned that the beauty on the island was almost spiritual.**

Yes.

Can you talk to me a little bit about that, what you meant by that?

Yes I can, it's

01:00 to me, I must, I'm a Greenie really, not politically Green but I'm a lover of natural beauty. And I love the Blue Mountains. There are so many beautiful sights in the untouched, completely untouched, apart from a few natives. But the untouched virgin bush on the island of New Britain, that are virtually beyond description.

01:30 The island's made out of limestone. And it rains practically every day up to, in some places up to four hundred inches of rain a year. And there's one spot where when it rains up in the mountains, the water shoots out of a side of a cliff and goes about ninety feet into the ocean before it hits the. And that can be seen in Waterfall Bay at certain times of the year. And I've been in Waterfall Bay when, after a heavy flood, we saw this huge sport,

02:00 spout of water shooting out about ninety feet in the air and going into the ocean. Maybe four or five hundred feet above the waves. Now it's nature at its absolute best. The beauty of the limestone and the caves, the rivers. The limestone formations of the creeks how they seem to run in tiers, high up in the mountain. They run over tiers and little bits of limestone form up and form like huge mushrooms.

02:30 And it's coming down when it's not raining in the good weather. The best time of the day, it's like stepping from mushroom to mushroom, coming down some of these creeks. You feel at time with army boots, you feel as though you're destroying the place, it's so beautiful. During my early days, whilst I was escaping, I observed one particular tree that was, had a terrific girth. And on either side of

03:00 it, were trees that were struggling for the light. And some had given up and died. And some creepers had gone half way up and died. And the tree had won. And I made a note in my writings, being poetical about it. That little did I know that I'd be in a very similar situation of that tree. It was only the strong that survived and not the weak. And those that were weak, you know some men who died they died because of lack of will. And others died

03:30 because of lack of food, when really food was close nearby. But the beauty of the mountains and the beauty of the lush, green jungle and the beautiful white sandy beaches, not that there are many white sandy beaches because of the coral reef. But the beauty of the coral reefs. And I described one portion in Wide Bay about the mountains, I may have mentioned this before. About

04:00 in the morning to look across the bay we saw the clouds as though they were wrapped around the waists of the giants, these mountains. They were gradually uncurling themselves from around the waists and drifting on their way. As though they were drifting on their way to work, to go, to continue their day. To continue their day. As though they had taken refuge for the night in the mountains and then drifted gradually, uncurled themselves and drifted away

04:30 as the sun came up. And when your mind can appreciate the beauty of the jungle, I feel you've got something, I feel it stood me in good stead. It gave me something to think about all the time. And every time I go to New Britain I make every endeavour to get as far down the south coast as I can. And I've been back to New Britain on maybe a dozen occasions since the end of the war, mostly on business. Although on one occasion I did go for a holiday to meet some of my old

05:00 soldiers. But mostly I go back on business. But I still like to get into the jungle when I do go. And I always, I hate the towns. Because that's where all the violence and all the trouble is in New Guinea. But in the jungle there's none. It's perfect tranquillity.

Fantastic. You mentioned that the natives that you were with and

05:30 **were Commanding were very good fighters and keen to get into it. What made them good fighters? I'm wondering if you could talk about sort of tactics that they used or that given that you might have learned?**

Well the natives themselves, ninety percent of the natives we had were natural bush hunters, they were not planters. They were not fishermen. They didn't plant a living, work a garden. They hunted for a living. The Sepik natives for instance they hunted wild pig and crocodile.

06:00 And they didn't eat meat. They didn't eat meat. If they, the women may have planted taro and different things but the men didn't. They were hunters. The same with the Markham Valley people, they were hunters. And most of them were hunters. The boys around the towns were not exceptionally good soldiers because of their education. Whereas the bush native is a natural hunter and a fighter. And very few of them savvy fear. Fright. Understand fright, I beg your pardon, excuse the

06:30 pidgin. Yeah, so they, it's natural for them to hunt. And to go on a patrol hunting or seeking Japanese is equivalent to stalking a wild pig or a cassowary bird.

So what were they like in battle?

Very calm. Very calm, no panic. They didn't ever panic. They were calm and that's what made them good soldiers. They could just lay still, lay perfectly still. And not move and you couldn't see them.

07:00 They almost became invisible. They'd blend in so perfectly. They were part of the jungle, that's their home.

You mentioned also again on Friday about, we were, I think we were talking about fright and fear and how, and you mentioned that the most frightening time is actually going

07:30 **out on patrol and waiting for the first gun shot.**

Yes.

Can you walk me through as if we were, maybe we were doing it now what that might have been like?

It's very difficult to explain what it was like but to give you an idea. When you, the purpose of our patrols was to locate the Japanese. The Japanese, like ourselves had coast watchers up in the hills.

08:00 And, up in the mountains. And they used to warn Rabaul when the allied planes used to come and bomb Rabaul. Now they had coast watchers at a place called Lemingi. They had coast watchers in the cent, in at the mission station that I mentioned earlier where the priest was and where young Keith Paul died and they threw his body over the cliff. The Japanese occupied that. And they occupied other high points. And they had their coast watching stations as well. So we'd go out on a patrol

08:30 to try and find out if there were any other Japanese troop movements. We knew where most of the standing troops were. If you understand what I mean, the standing troops. But we didn't know if there was going to be any big move to move down the south coast again and re-occupy the whole island like they had previously. So we'd leave, cross a river, and then go up what they called the Lemingi track. Now the Lemingi track was about three foot wide with trees studded in it.

09:00 And a fall of in some places up to a thousand feet on either side of it. It was such a narrow track. So naturally there's a great fear and trepidation in going up this track in case the Japanese somewhere up there set a trap for you. Because there's no escape, you can't jump to the right because you might go down four or five hundred feet before you find another ledge. If you find another ledge. So going, creeping up these and looking around

09:30 trees before you can get to the next one. When I say the track was a foot wide but the ridge maybe it was four or five feet wide. Then the track was about a foot wide and it would wind in and out the trees. And that's a very testing time. There's a lot of perspiration comes off you then. And that's where you, if there's any fear in your body, that's where you have it. All your nerves, you're on edge and you're waiting for something to happen. The moment a shot is fired, that, all that disappears and

10:00 then you take over. You know what to do with your natives, you can find out who's hurt to start with. You then send someone off to the left or someone to the right to try and make a scissor movement out of it or encircle them. But once you're doing something or you're returning your fire, fear is gone. But fear was ever present going up these ridges. And these ridges went for days. They went for days, climbing. As I say the highest point is at Mount Sinuet, that's seven thousand two hundred feet.

10:30 And I've gone from near Toll Plantation, a place called the Bulus River to Mount Sinuet. To see, which is a natural place, would have been a natural place for a Japanese outpost. And during that time we'd heard stories about the Mokolkols. An alleged wild cannibal tribe. And we'd stayed, taken a lot longer

than we should on the way out.

11:00 And our boys were frightened of being at the end of the line. Our natives were frightened at being at the end of the line in case one of them was pulled off by the Mokolkol and killed or eaten. So I stayed last for quite a few times. And that particular night we lit a big fire and we were above the clouds you know. And we weren't worried about anybody seeing any smoke or anything or fire. Cause no one about for miles.

11:30 And I decided that to try, in an attempt to pacify my own natives, I got some food from each of my natives and I left it in a big bundle, some biscuits and some salt, a drum of salt with the lid open. A tin of hard army biscuits and half a, couple of dozen tins of bully beef. I put in a big heap and we moved on, left Mount Sinuet and broke bush and came down to the coast.

12:00 And then we couldn't find, there were no Japanese up there. And then on the coast we bumped into some Japanese near Putput. So, no near Adler Bay which is down a bit, which is a bit further. So then we didn't, I thought "Well if they're here they might be all the way on the coast, so I'll go back again". So I went back up into this Mokolkol country, not as high as the seven thousand foot. But I went up, maybe halfway up, at about four and half thousand, five thousand feet. And

12:30 went south then. I had a compass so I knew I was going south. But you couldn't miss it very much cause most of the water ran to the ocean and we knew where north, south and east was. In any case we were a bit short of food. And so we, all we had was thrown in and I'd stayed out about four or five days longer that I should have. And we'd given half of our food away thinking it'd be a quick trip up and a quick trip back. So we lit our fire and got round our fire. And when we moved off in the morning

13:00 there was a huge heap of wild yam and edible nuts and fruits. Not native, fruit, well not fruits. Nuts and wild yams had been left just beyond our fire. And the Mokolkol had returned us, these wild, alleged wild people, had given us their food, some food because they knew we were short of food. And how they knew I don't know. But we were very low on rations and we had a long way to

13:30 go back. So they must have been onto us all the while. And of course that put the myth to the fact that, it was for many years even after the war that they sent patrols out to try and make contact with the Mokolkol. And they eventually did and the government then in their wisdom, who awarded them to stop the killing, with long handle axes. And each got a long handle axe. And that's how the Mokolkol is probably still there today. The origin of them no one knows. They seem to think they were escaped convicts that went

14:00 bush in pre- war days and maybe picked up a Mary at a village along the way. And gradually bred, and interbred and lived on raiding other villages. But to me they were quite live. And they, our natives were a bit scared of the Mokolkols. Because you know stories passed from one to another gets bigger and better. But that was my brush, I never saw a, didn't see a soul. And the yams didn't come out of space.

So they were like the shadows in the bush for you?

Well yeah,

14:30 that's right. They were, they were watching us.

That's fantastic.

Yeah.

You talked about, you've talked a little bit in brief about an ambush that you performed on a company of about twenty-five Japanese.

Yes.

But you've only given us that story in brief. I'm wondering if you could also talk us through how you approached it and what you did and just

15:00 **that story in itself.**

Well the, it was just before Toll Plantation was attacked by the, we'd been all round Toll Plantation. And we were clearing, more or less clearing out the area this side of the rivers to make sure that there were no Japanese acting in any numbers. So when the Australian troops came on and had to cross the rivers they only had the Japanese in their said positions to fight about instead of roving patrols. So we were,

15:30 we were sent out or I was sent out to have a look at this area they called New Guinea Club. Now it was not a club, it was just an area of ground that on the escape early in 1942 the Police Boys set up a village there and called it the New Guinea Club. It was something that they were never allowed to go in and when there was a New Guinea Club in Rabaul. Because it was only for the white man. And an exclusive club it was too. So the native Police Boys set themselves up

16:00 and called this the New Guinea Club. How long they stayed there, no one knows. But we called it the New Guinea Club because it was an area, a flat area, near the river. So on approaching this particular area, I'd noticed a Japanese sign that was an entrance. The entrance sign. Which is a curve with two uprights. A curve with two uprights meaning entrance. And I saw that, there were no signs of any Japanese about or anything. So the patrol went further on and I dropped back.

16:30 And the patrol went further on. And all of a sudden I saw two or three Japanese coming about twenty yards from me in a very clear spot and I let them go. The other sections had gone well ahead and I had about twelve boys with me. Twelve soldiers with me. And I let two or three go hoping there's a main party beyond them. And sure enough coming behind them, these were scouts, coming behind them

17:00 were a group of about twenty odd Japanese who didn't have their rifles at the ready or anything else. And they were laughing and joking amongst themselves. And when they got, we just crouched down in this undergrowth and when they got within about twenty yards of us we all opened fire. And threw hand grenades and God knows what. And that alerted the other people down there that grabbed hold of those two or three. And the fire fight, they call it a fire fight because they do on tele today. But the action lasted about five or

17:30 five minutes. And by the time we went forward to go through the, get the papers from the dead and make sure there were no booby traps and all the rest of it. Cause a lot of the Japanese would, if they were wounded they would lay down and pull out a pin and when you'd go to help them, there'd be a hand grenade there. So we had to make sure they were not booby trapped and we, and any papers they had we took them and handed back to the. And I was on my way to hand back that information to Sergeant

18:00 Perkins the Intelligence Officer when I bumped into the war photographer. And Nipper Webster, who was, had been bayoneted in Toll. And I just told him that I was about to report the fire fight. And that's how it happened. But I wasn't in any laughing mood. I was very uptight when that was over. Because the nerves took over then you know. You just, at that stage of the game, you don't want to talk about anything to anyone.

18:30 You know you've just been responsible for killing so many people and you haven't lost anybody and you're responsible for all that. So you're pretty uptight, well I was in any case. And consequently the war photographer then they put, I had a beret on, a green cloth beret cause you sweat so much. Your hat'd get caught in the undergrowth in any case. You don't wear slouch, very few people wear slouch hats. And that's how that happened. The war photographer there put his hat on my forehead and got,

19:00 and got that photograph. Which I think is one of the best photographs I've ever had of a soldier in action. Cause I'd just left an hour before or less.

Were any, did you have any thoughts around that time of the, what had gone down at the Toll Plantation?

No, no. That was in my mind all the time. It'd, once you get into action you only consider staying alive yourself and taking someone with you. You know if you, if I had to go, I would've gone with the satisfaction of knowing that I'd

19:30 someone would've gone with me. That's the feeling you get. That, you can't, your memory doesn't go back that far. Just having returned to New Britain more or less satisfied that desire. Just having returned to the same island.

To have a go.

Yeah. That's about, that's about all.

No that's fine, that's a good picture. Just go back to my notes for a minute.

20:00 **Were you ever, I mean you were doing a lot of scouting patrols and, were you ever instructed at any time to take prisoners of the Japanese or bring any back?**

We did capture, we were never given instructions to get any prisoners. But everybody wanted

20:30 to get a prisoner to get information to find out more than we could already tell them. We did, we got a wounded Jap on one occasion. But the natives were very reluctant to carry him. And we were about five days into their area and he only lasted twenty-four hours. And I think he might have died of old age. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

21:00 **Fair enough.**

However there was one interesting thing. And that was at the back of Putput Plantation we got an old Mary, that's an old native woman. She looked very old and very thin. And she spoke pidgin English to me and said that "She had been in Rabaul and she knew the disposition of which plantation had the

21:30 troops and where the anti aircraft guns were and she told me all sorts of things". But a lot of it meant nothing to me because I didn't know, wasn't aware of the names of the places that she was referring to. Because when I was in Rabaul we never got out of the town. So she mentioned some plantation called Ranowana or a mission station called something else. I wouldn't know, or Bitapaka where the War Cemetery was, I didn't know where that was. So I thought "Well, the best thing

22:00 we can do", I said, "Is we'll bring you back, we'll feed you and bring you back to where they have a Japanese interpreter and an Australian man who knows all these things". That was our Intelligence Sergeant, Perkins. So we walked for a few days and then she got dysentery very badly and was

bleeding. And I thought “Oh God, she’ll be dead soon”. Had about a five day walk. So in the end I got four of our boys to make a stretcher

22:30 and carry her. And that was really beneath their dignity. Because she was a Mary nothing to them. They didn’t come from that area and women didn’t mean very much to them, particularly the soldiers. And she was old, lapode, and she looked like she was dying. So I said “Well, you’ll carry her you know and it’s very important we get her back. And if she falls off the stretcher”, I said, “The boys that are responsible will be shot.” And

23:00 that was the actual words that I used. No intention of doing it. And they had a laugh at that, they knew I wouldn’t shoot them. But they, I had to make sure that they didn’t tip her off, over a cliff or something see. So they said “Oh the best way to carry her is like we do with the pigs, tie her hands together and tie her legs together and we’ll carry her on a pole. It’ll be more comfortable for her.” I said “Leave her on the stretcher”. So we put her on the copra bags, the stretcher was made out of copra bags. We always carried copra bags with us,

23:30 even to put over our head in the rain or something to sleep on. You know we always had copra bags. Well we got her back to the Bulus River and they have a wire across the, a wire rope across the Bulus River. It’s about that deep up to your waist and flowing very fast. And I said “God how are we gonna get, I said to Bipon my sergeant, native in Charge. “How the hell are we going to get this old Mary across here now?” And then she said in perfect English to me,

24:00 she said to me in perfect English, “Sir, after the inconvenience that I’ve suffered at the hands of the Japanese and others over the last three years, I could almost walk the wire”. She was, and then one of the boys, she jumped on one of the boy’s backs. And he went across the river and delivered her to the Intelligence Section where they fed her, hospitalised her and then got her talking. And she gave a lot of

24:30 information for bombing sites and all sorts of things, a wealth of information. And we found out that she was a house girl of a pre war plantation owner that’d been sent to Sydney and went through the Ladies Methodist College [Methodist Ladies College] at, wherever it was, Pymble, or wherever the, where’s the Ladies Methodist College. MLC, the Ladies Methodist College, educated in Sydney to a higher education. And then sent back and the war broke out.

25:00 So the missionaries had her educated in Sydney at this school and then the Japanese had come and she went native. And found out all about all these things.

That was a good discovery.

Yeah, so that was better than a prisoner. Cause we, but to hear her speak English I nearly fell over. And the reason she didn’t ever speak to me, speak English to me before, the natives wouldn’t have touched her. They wouldn’t have, my natives wouldn’t have touched her.

25:30 An educated native.

Why?

Well that’s just fashion belong them. She didn’t want to be treated any otherwise than a bush kanaka. Cause a bush kanaka’s something nothing. And that’s all she was to them, a something nothing. As it turned out she was a jewel. But they would have dropped her or not carried her. I could’ve had a lot of trouble. Particularly if she spoke, because it puts them at a disadvantage. If she

26:00 spoke perfect English to me. And she spoke perfect English. “After the inconveniences I’ve suffered at the hands of the Japanese and others over the past three years, I could almost walk the wire.”

Thanks Arch.

And you’ll not read that in any other book either.

I know, that’s why I’m glad we’re talking to you.

Lots of books have been written that have used some of my stories. They’ve never written that one. To my knowledge.

26:30 **You mentioned before just briefly that there was a time where, because of what you were going through you wouldn’t have called the King your uncle. Did you, when you signed up and went to war was it, did you consider yourself a British subject or Australian citizen?**

I was always considered Australian but then Australia believed in the King. Near war’s end the Duke of Gloucester

27:00 came up to inspect Toll Plantation after it was taken. Came to inspect our native troops. And they all stood to att [ention], cause I always used to talk about the “King sent us here and the King sent us there”. You know as I gave, granted all those natives their freedom. And the Duke of Gloucester came up further than General Blamey ever went. And when Blamey went there they reckoned he was in sight of the Japanese and all the

27:30 rest of it which was baloney. They weren’t twenty mile away, they were more than twenty mile away when Blamey came up. When the Duke of Gloucester came up he came right up. And our boys lined up

on a, I told them to “Stand to attention”, they presented arms for him and then stood to attention for his inspection. And when they all went I said “I told you that brother belong King would come and see you. That we’re soldiers of the King. And you are, you’re soldiers of the King too. And here the King’s brother’s come out to say thank you to you.” I told them that in pidgin English. And then I said

28:00 said to the bloke in charge. “You look him my belong brother belong King. Did you look him in the eye?” And he said “No God Master, me stand up all the same”. He stood up with that still and that straight he looked ahead and saw nothing. And the pidgin English was, “No God Master, me stand up and me look, me stand up straight and me look him all the same.” He just looked straight ahead. And didn’t move his head or have a look at him or anything.

28:30 So they had that, so that’s it, yeah.

So they got their visit by the King?

Yeah.

Virtually

There’s another story that’s, I can’t turn this tape off.

But you can tell us.

I’m just wondering how far the censorship goes nowadays. It can always be deleted in any case.

There, I can tell you there is a way, there is a way to protect you and the story for that. I can tell you about later if you like.

Well, you did mention

29:00 that. Well this, we were waiting for a barge to come in one day for supplies. And we wanted a group of natives to help us unload the barge, this is at Pulpul Plantation. And they were not a good lot. And they’d killed some Australians not far from where I was, which is another story again. But the Lulawai, that’s there’s the head man’s a Lulawai and the Tultul’s second in charge. But the Lulawai had gone bush and most of the young men

29:30 had gone bush. And we wanted forty natives to go, when the barge hit the sure, the Japanese were only a few mile up, we wanted to get the tins of biscuits and the salt and the ammunition and get it up into the hills as quickly as we could. So we wanted these, we wanted forty natives or as many as we could get to unload the barge and go for their lives up for the hills the following morning, right on dawn. Well I knew the Lulawai wouldn’t grant me anything. Because I’d arrested two of his men that’d killed two Australians, one member of my

30:00 unit on the way out in 1942. And I knew there was no love lost between myself and the Tultul. So I got Bipon the Police Sergeant to talk to him. And I stood in the background with half a dozen soldiers. So he went over to him and he said, “Me Sergeant belong, master belong me stop along”. “My master’s over there and my Sergeant has

30:30 asked me to ask you for forty native carriers tomorrow morning to meet a barge you know to provide the labour.” And he said “Oh you think you’re a big man don’t you. Yeah look at you in your uniform eh.” Well he didn’t have a uniform but he had a green laplap and a rifle. And these other blokes, “Yeah you think you’re a big man don’t you”. And he said “How many gardens have you got? And

31:00 the garden’s called wook.” “How much wook belong woopola?” How many gardens have you got?” And Bipon says, “Gardens”, he says, “I’ve got all the gardens in Australia. If I want anything that’s grown in a garden I talk to my master, he gets on the wireless he sends it back to Australia and they either send a ship or they’ll lease an aeroplane. And whatever produce we want we could have hundreds, I could, hundreds of gardens I have access to. And how many gardens have you got? How much, how many gardens have you

31:30 got old man?” And he said “Three”. “Three, hah”. He said and the old man said to him, “I believe that you Police Boys, I believe that you ex Police Boys like going with little boys, young boys, instead of young girls.” “No God”, he said, “If I like, no God”, he said, “No”. He was very annoyed. He said, “If I like a man, if I want a man I just go to a village and I pull, she comes.

32:00 And I can get whatever I want, whenever I want.” “Oh”, he said, “You don’t have to send back to Australia for it, in his language”. And he said, “No God, I got plenty of women”. Then he said, “How many pigs, how much, how many pigs have you got?”, he said to the sergeant. “Pigs, hah”. He said “I just talk to my master if we want pigs. He sends them, gets on the wireless he sends a message back to Australia. A balloose comes over and drops whatever I want. Some of them are in

32:30 tins, some of them are in copra sacks. We never want live ones cause they’re already cooked. All the pigs in Australia we have access to. The King arranges all of that. Yeah, me soldier belong King and we’ve got everything we want we can get through the wireless.” “Oh”, the old man said “Then, this is the battle between who had the most authority”. And he said

33:00 “How much Mary belong you?” “How many women have you got? How many wives have you got?” “Me,

none". He said "I haven't got any. I'm a soldier. When I'm finishing with soldiers I can have the pick of the crop, whatever I like, I can get. Tell me old man, Sergeant Bipon said, "How much Mary belong you? How many Marys have you?" And the old man said with sweet accord, he said "Three

33:30 pella. Three". "Three. Lapu like you. An old man like you. Tell me how much cock ball you pella?" "One pella that's all", the old man said, "Emme enough. Got it? Emme enough". "One only but that's enough". You might have to delete that. Don't, I wouldn't like my name to go to it, but you'd hear, more, worse than that on the television.

Oh you would, you would.

And that actually

34:00 happened.

No, I think that's…

And that's another thing. All the time that we were with that I was with my natives bad language was barred. No one used bad language. No swearing, there was a bloody but that wasn't considered swearing. And no one, no profanities, no one used the Lord's name in vain. Except that time I told you Tavinson was going up the steep hill and he said "Jesus it's steep".

34:30 Wonderful to be in a climate where there's no swearing and wonderful description.

So even within your…?

Our own troops, no. We didn't swear, no. No. No, we were…

Out of respect.

Yeah. And not only that if you swear you were lowing yourself in front of the natives. Cause they knew what swearing was. They picked that up years ago from the old plantation owners but we didn't.

That's great.

First thing a native learns, first things words he learns, are swear words.

35:00 Go to New, Rabaul now and you know ask the natives. Be like looking at one of these M television series. They all use every profanity known all the time, which is a shame. They're losing their pidgin English and they're putting foul words in their place. I'm not sermonising but you know I don't like to hear a native swear. It's not their language. And that's foul language to us and I don't like it.

And I think

35:30 **there's something very actually very poetic about pidgin.**

Of course, it's a beautiful language. Yeah, it is a beautiful language.

Just another thing I wanted to ask you Arch was you mentioned to Isabelle earlier that you moved pretty quickly when you were younger. I was just wondering if you could describe that of yourself. What, were you quick

36:00 **to temper or you didn't suffer fools. Or what was it in yourself, how would you describe yourself back then I guess is what I'm asking?**

What, when I was young.

Yeah.

Well I had two elder brothers. Now there was competition, I was born into competition. I had to try and keep up with them at all times. And mostly I used to try harder because I wanted to beat them. And I think that was part of the training that made me a bit faster. When I was

36:30 young they used to belt, knock me about but when I was about fourteen or fifteen I was able to beat both of them. Because I grew taller than them. And I think it was the fact that I was the younger brother. And having all older sisters and two older brothers I think that had a big bearing on my growing up quickly and moving fast. And trying to go one better than anybody else. Playing football for instance. I was very light and very skinny but I

37:00 played rugby league, I played second row. I know it was on a weight basis but I used to come home with the most terrible headaches in the world but I never ever admitted it. I never admitted it that I'd had a hard game. I used to suffer at night though. But that's part of growing up I think. And with a name like Archibald, you've got to do something a little bit better than Bill and Jack and Joe. Cause there's hundreds of them and only one Archibald. Cause they all look at you or they looked forward, or they were

37:30 ready to laugh at you. And I didn't want anybody laughing at me.

Do you think, was it those kinds of things that you think in a way prepared you well for what

you went through at Rabaul?

I think it did. Yeah, that combined with my grandmother's tales, combined with my grandmother's tales about all the Scottish Chieftains that she claimed that she claimed direct relationship with. Which I don't believe of course. But I used to listen to her stories.

38:00 **Do you think you would have, you rose up to those tales, with what you were accomplishing in the jungle?**

No I don't think I ever did. No I didn't try to emulate them.

How much time have we got, two minutes. I just, there's another question I wanted to ask you just about the isolation that you kind of had I guess as within the war that you

38:30 **experienced in the jungle. I mean, what were the effects of that for you do you think? Given that I mean you were isolated and basically a lot of your war was fought with the natives themselves. It was a very different war to I guess…?**

Oh entirely different. Actually I was always very pleased to be on my own or with a few Europeans and a lot of natives. It always suited me. Because we're

39:00 in a position where we, unlike the infantry where we had to take ground, we were mobile, we were virtually like scouts out in front. Like the Light Horse that was scouting out in front for the. We should have been used like, we were like the Light Horse for the infantry. To move about and mobile and find things are and then not put in the final charge. And leave that to the infantry. Yeah it was, I liked being with the natives, I didn't like it when I was

39:30 in any Australian encampment or near an Australian encampment. I didn't like it cause they weren't as well trained. They weren't jungle-ised. They didn't speak pidgin. They used to shoot one another at night when they changed guards. They were nervy, they were conscripts most of them. They weren't volunteers. And I didn't like being near them. In fact, when I went to this tent that was so

40:00 called the sergeants' mess, I had two hand grenades, a bandolier of carbine, an American Carbine, a forty-five and two hand grenades here. And I went into this little tent. And the fella said "Eh you can't come in here like that". I said "What do you mean?" I said. "See that hill up there, there's no guard on it". "There's an Australian battalion in front" and I said "There's no reason to

40:30 stop the Japanese going around the Australian battalion, getting to the top of the hill and coming straight down here. And for the last two months, or three months I've been living on tactics just like that." And I'm not, and "If any Japanese do come round this battalion right into our rest camp here, I'm armed, you're not. So I'm leaving them on." And then this joker said "Well you better take em off", he said. I said "Don't start giving me any orders; I'm not taking them off." And I didn't take em off. And any

41:00 time I was in the camp I left them on. And I wouldn't take em off. Because I, you know I make a living out of catching people with their pants down. Not relaxing. So that gave me a bit of notoriety. They used to call me the mad jungle man. That helped me get a pension.

Fantastic, thanks Arch.

Tape 8

00:31 **You're about to tell us about 'chased'.**

Yes well it's one of my claims to fame. I was the most chased men in the AIF. In the Australian Imperial Forces in World War II. C-H-A-S-E-D. I was chased out of Rabaul down the south coast, when I returned to New Britain I was chased again by the Japanese down, further down the coast. Then I went back again and I would make a few yards then I'd be chased again.

01:00 I've often referred to myself as being the most chased man in the AIF. And people misunderstand me. They think I'm talking about my morality. Which is also is one hundred percent.

That's wonderful Arch. I was wondering if I could ask, where were you when the war ended?

When the war ended I was, I'd just returned from a patrol.

01:30 I'd just returned from a patrol and I was pretty tired. And they told us "An atomic bomb had been let off. And that any day the war'd end." And I was at a place called Bulus River where that wire was across there. Which was at the head of the Australian battalion. I was there. And the CO in charge of the area

02:00 at the time was Colonel Dawson. And through Sergeant Perkins the Intelligence Officer I was ordered to immediately take a patrol of my best natives, to contact the Japanese gardens that were just, out of Rabaul. And tell the gardeners, the Japanese gardeners up there that "The war had ended". And I said "Why can't the Japanese tell them themselves? I've got twice the distance with my."

02:30 He said “Oh well they don’t want to let the Japanese you know out of Rabaul into the jungle in case they go wild so you.” “Why me?”, I said to Perkins. He said “You’re the most experienced Patrol Officer we’ve got. That’s why Colonel Dawson’s picked you, ordered me to tell you.” So I said “Alright but I’m staying here the night and I’ll move off tomorrow morning.” And I stayed the night working out a plan and I thought

03:00 “My God I’ve risked my life so many times. And now the war’s over and now I’ve gotta go up this blasted track again to Lemingi.” And I knew there were Japs at Lemingi. And then get back through onto the Warongoi River where the gardens were. And I knew there were a lot of Japs round there too. And I thought “God Almighty why should I do this?’ But you can’t disobey a lawful command. So then, I picked out half a dozen of the boys that’d seen the most action. And said “Cheerio”.

03:30 And they said “Well, we’ll be off shortly, we’re going to, our orders are, we’ll be going round to occupy Rabaul. We’ll probably see you in Rabaul.” So instead of going north I went up, I went out here. I got about thousand feet up to a mountain and I, and we took as much food as we could, and we got some native food as well. And for a fortnight I stayed there. And we put a bit of a tent up and we had fires, and we had a feast, feast and a vino and a sing song and everything else. And after a

04:00 fortnight I came back again and there’s no battalion, there’s no one there. There’s just a few orderlies and some stores and a little, few landing barges here and they’re coming to and fro. So I hopped on board a pinnis, a small, little trading vessel, and went down to Jacquinot Bay and hopped on a ship and came back to Australia and got discharged. I disobeyed a lawful command and I’m alive. And Colonel Bruce Perkins is dead and Colonel Dawson

04:30 now is in Paddington with some terrible complaint, Parkinson’s disease. Wonderful man but he’s now you know at the, at a very critical stage, he won’t last much longer. I’m now trying to get him a war pension that he never applied for in all those years ago. However that’s the story of how that’s how I got. And it was on that occasion when Bipon asked me “Was I ever

05:00 frightened?” I asked him “Was he ever frightened?” and then he asked me “If I was frightened?” And we embraced and the tears rolled down his face and mine. And to see two grown men crying was really something. In fact I’m a little overwhelmed now talking about it. Underwhelmed.

What did you talk about for the fortnight up on the mountain?

We talked about, we spoke about

05:30 everything. About all the experiences that we’d had in the last two and, two years at least. All the good times we’d had and all the funny incidents. And all you know and a lot of the time they would never sling off at the European. They would never tell a story about any of the funny officer’s we had. Cause near the end of the war we were sent up a batch of reinforcement officers. And each time we went out on patrol we had to take a reinforcement officer with us.

06:00 Oh, well they were like bulls walking through a China shop. We might only go four or five hundred yards and send them back. On one occasion I was with a sergeant, we had about thirty strong on this patrol. And we had two reinforcement officers. And we weren’t that far from the Japanese lines so silence was golden and at night no one strikes a match cause it looked like a flare going up. Like the Sydney Harbour Bridge when it was alight. All of a sudden about one a.m. in the morning there’s somebody struck a match,

06:30 there’s this huge flare. So I said to Bluey “Go and see who that was”. So it was one of the reinforcement officers, he thought he’d light his pipe of all things. And the smell of the tobacco would have gone too. You see the natives would pick that up at thirty or forty yards let alone the Japanese. So I said “Who was it?” He said “That reinforcement but don’t worry Arch”, he said, “I put a light in the other eye”. So I sent him back.

07:00 Then I sent the other bloke and then the other bloke I said “Well we’re going further, you’re not much good, you’re buggered now”. He said “Good I want two natives to take me back for my own safety”. I said “Go now, no natives. No natives. Go now.” So I was in a position although I was a sergeant, I didn’t wear my stripes, really, no such thing as stripes. Unless it was for an occasion. Like a photograph

07:30 or something, you’d stick some on. But I was in charge of the patrol. Whether they were lieutenants or anything else, didn’t make any difference to me. These blokes were up there to get their Returned Soldiers Badge you know. And at the end of the war they stopped my commission coming through because all promotions were stopped. I’d been recommended for field commission. Filled out all the forms and everything and it was back in Australia. And then when the war looked like ending, couple, about a month before they,

08:00 you know once Europe had fallen. They sent the reinforcement officers up here to get their, no more field promotions. So I missed out on my commission. But I didn’t mind because you know I came out of it alive and virtually unscathed. So that was just one of those things that happened. But that was a long answer to a small question.

Oh it was a great answer, thanks Arch. I guess, how did you feel coming

08:30 **home? What were you thinking when you got on that boat and you were leaving?**

Ohhh. Well Perkins, not Perkins, Murphy was with me. He must have asked to go down instead of going to Rabaul. He'd had enough, he didn't want anymore. I met him at Jacquinot Bay and we got on this boat, don't know its name. But we got into some beer and it went straight to our head and we were drunk with about two drink, two beers. You know we didn't, not only that, I was, how old was I, twenty-three.

09:00 I suppose. I was married when I was twenty-one and I came back about twenty-three. Yeah. And but we talked all about our patrols and about our good times. But there were other troops aboard and other people. But they didn't know what we were talking about. We were more or less one out. See I said remember when the Australians landed on the Bulus Beach, that's to get around Toll Plantation, there had to be a scissor movement, they had to get round there. We had to go round first,

09:30 and line up the markers on the beach to show that, where the reef was and where the beach was, so this surprise landing could take place. And when the first barge hit the reef out jumped a cameraman with a Fox Movie tone in his and started to. And then they came out and we're standing there with our trees, with our leaves and black mud on our face and our cloth hat and leaves here and bit of, few leaves here. Cause we'd been right round the,

10:00 and through the Japanese line to mark the beach. And when they, when, one of the blokes, an officer came up to me and said, "What are you? What are you? Who are you with?" I said "We're natives." "Oh good", he said, "Thanks very much" and on he went. Now they had no idea that we had already arranged their landing place to make sure it was safe for them. And they got in on a Movie tone, these soldiers running ashore with their bayonets out. The landing

10:30 at Bulus Beach. I've seen the movie, Movie tone. And I was there you know. We put flags up on the beach and out on the reef to show where they were to come in. See we felt we were a different kind of soldier. In fact we were different because we didn't have the discipline that other officers were, they used to call Ben, Colonel Dawson was Ben. He was Ben. Bruce Perkins once said to him "Eh Ben, Ben, you better get rid of that bloody dog", he said. "Our boys haven't had

11:00 much meat lately. You better get rid of that dog." We called him, the Major Ly, Hugh, Major Lyons, I hope he's dead, probably by now. But he we used to call him the "Idiot". Because he used to do idiotic things like calling for Sakap to get the antidem and getting his compass out to find out where north was, for no reason. And being a sergeant saying to a Major, "You sit down at the ass of the DY and stay there

11:30 until I tell you". The ass of the DY means the bottom of the tree. See ass is the bottom and a DY's a tree. So we were a different kind of soldiers. Yet we'd have done anything for him. We'd have, you know we covered for him. In fact I covered for him for a couple of years. To be honest. Yeah. But he was wonderful, his language, his pidgin English was good. But it was a pre

12:00 war pidgin English and it was more bombastic as master to native. Rather than I'd speak more as native to native. I'll always maintain my dignity as a white man but there's not much dignity when you're out in the bush together and you want to go to the toilet and you want to do something else you know. And when you want to have a wash, we all hopped in together. If you're lucky enough to be on the coast and you go swimming, you're all in the nude you know. Black and

12:30 white I mean it doesn't matter much. But that would never have happened in the old colonial days. We lived with our natives. Slept with them. The blokes I mean, there were no women there. We slept with them and swam with them and ate with them. And still maintained our degree of discipline. And they would either call you a "Sergeant or master. Master belong before." That was the most common name was, if they

13:00 introduced me to some other native, "Master belong before stop". Oh the air conditioning just went off. Vera must be cold. Sorry. That'll go on record.

That's okay. Did you talk much about the war when you came home for good?

Only when I met, only when I was with someone that could understand me. You know when my friend from Fiji stayed with me for a couple of months before he

13:30 went back to Fiji. We spoke of it all the time. Cause he was in Rabaul and he also came back as the RSM of the unit. But well back in the training area. And we spoke a lot about it. Mark White and I. And when I went to live in Fiji there was only Mark and I knew about our experiences. So for three years I was living in Fiji, whenever we met in Fiji, we would talk about the war.

14:00 But talking about the war to anybody else, "You know what unit were you in?" You know oh one day I remember there was an Australian there and he was one of the Desert Rats in Tobruk. He said "I was in the Seventh Divvy, or the Ninth, I was one of the Rats of Tobruk". And I said "Go on, you know, what'd you do there?" You know I had no idea of what other people did. And when I was talking about native troops and operating these patrols and things, he said "Gee that must have been great". You know

14:30 they had nothing in common with us. And then I came back to Sydney, we formed a little bit of an association. And we'd met, we'd march on Anzac Day. And there was never any talk about the war. On Anzac Day. Not cause, there were, was, no one was on patrol with me. They were in the 2/22nd battalion

but they probably came from Mildura. And then went to some other unit. There's a friend of mine in

15:00 Gosford area now. He likes to talk a lot about, but I don't know what he's talk, about his escape. In fact he's got a, he's written a book about it. But I don't know anything about him because I didn't escape with and I didn't know him. We've just got that in common that we're in Rabaul. So there wasn't much, unless you know someone that's been to the islands, there's no point in talking about it. It's like bearing your backside to the moon because they don't know what you're talking about. Because it's a very exclusive club the before. The Master belong before in

15:30 New Britain.

What was it like going back the first time?

First time we went back in 1982. We, that was the fortieth anniversary of the Fall of Rabaul. That was marvellous, that was marvellous. We were able to go to, we saw Bitapaka War Cemetery. We saw the old sights where the camp was and we saw all the different things. And my son strangely enough was made the manager for Boral, which is a gas supply company. And when he came

16:00 back from Fiji, when he came back from Vietnam he was posted to Rabaul as manager for Boral Gas Company. And he lived in a house where the Doctor's Surgery used to be when we were in Rabaul before the war. And he, I used to talk to him about it because he learned pidgin. He had to, cause he had natives working for him. And when he met my old soldier Tavinson, the Katikut bloke, he thought that was my ghost after a forty

16:30 year break. I'm sorry that happened later, that happened later. Doesn't matter. That happened about in the seventies which was fifty years later. Yeah. But at every opportunity I would go to New Guinea. I've gone there selling timber, I represented the Swedish Government and sold two saw mills. Every opportunity I get I go back to New Guinea. I'd go tomorrow if I could but I don't want to expose Vera to malaria. And the town's are no good and there's no means

17:00 of transport down the south coast. And I wouldn't ask her to live in a native village cause she'd pick up something. Whereas I'm immune to all those diseases now. I know where to get fresh water. That's another thing, the natives know where to get fresh water too. You know they don't suffer from dysentery because they know which creek has the dysentery germ and which doesn't. That's pretty obvious when you think about it too.

Do you remember

17:30 **when you saw Vera for the first time after coming home?**

Yes I do. Yes I was at home and she came, after work she came home by tram. And I met her at Gladesville at the, not engaged, this is after I escaped.

Oh, at the end of the war when you ...

Oh at the end of the war we'd been married three years you see. Almost three years. Yes, yeah that was very, very emotional. We, I bought an old car.

18:00 Went away to get away on our own you know. Went to Tuggerah and went to different places. And one day I bought a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , drove down to the mouth of the river, lit a fire. She said "What are you gonna do with that?" I said "I'm gonna cook it". She said "What do you mean you're going to cook it, what are you gonna cook it in?" I said "I'm gonna put it on the fire". She said "How do you, it's not plucked even?" I said "Don't worry about that, I'll

18:30 burn it all off. When you pull the skin, skin and all comes off when you get the raw flesh. Lot of it'll be burned but it won't matter, you just." She said "What'll we eat it with, we haven't got knives, forks or anything". I said "We'll eat it by hand". She said "I'm not gonna eat it by hand." Then she, okay, so we slept that night. We got, we had a sleeper in front, the back, the front seat went down, it was an old Tourer. Willies I think it was called. And we couldn't go to sleep because the fish were jumping in the

19:00 water next door. Plop, plop, plop, plop, plop. And a great light came in the sky and I thought "God they've dropped another atomic bomb". That's what's happened. So we said, I said "Let's get out of this and we'll get under the car". So it started to rain so we got under the car and we slept there. In the morning she said "What am I gonna do for a wash?" I said "I've got a water bottle here". She said, "That's a quart of water". She said "How do you wash in that?" I said "You take your clothes off and you pour it all over, you

19:30 pour it, soap yourself up all over and leave half for me. Or there's the creek, you can jump in the creek". She said "I'm not gonna have a wash like that. Let's go home", she said, "Where there's some civilisation". So we went back, I was staying with her mother then. So she, to me it was a natural thing to do. I just went bush again as soon as I could. Got off the main road and went to the mouth of this river. Cause the native was still in me. That was quite a normal thing to do to get a fowl and throw it in the fire. I was quite happy to do that. She

20:00 was horrified. Particularly with the wash. And then of course we went away and we'd been married three years. And we eventually went to a guest house at Tuggerah, Tuggerah Lake somewhere. And the couple of old girls at the table giggling and looking at us. With that look of, "Look at these two, they're

just, they're just married, they're just married". And I leaned across I said "We've been married three years, dears. Three years." And we made friends

20:30 with them then. And told them the story see that I'd been away. And got married only on a six day leave and then I went away. Yeah. But Vera was a most stoic one as far as my father was concerned. Cause when I was posted missing believed killed, she always had faith in me and used to visit my home regularly with my sister. And cause they worked at the same place. Or one or two sis, no three sisters

21:00 worked at the same place. And they'd invite Vera home for the weekend. And dad had his first heart attack when I was missing. And she used to say "He'll be alright, he'll turn up". And when I did get home he said "You better not let that girl go". So it's an arranged marriage, you see, my father arranged the marriage. And then when I went away the second time for much longer there was no mail. No mail man calling me. She didn't worry. She said "I'd have heard, I'd have

21:30 known if any, I'd have known in my own heart if something had happened to him. I'd feel it." And it was only last year we celebrated our sixtieth wedding anniversary. Sixty years, and we got a letter from the Queen, the Governor General and the Prime Minister. So all my loyalty to the Crown paid off. Yeah.

22:00 **I was wondering, you have an OBE?**

Yes. In 1973 I was awarded the Order of the British Empire. By the Queen who saved it up on the same day she opened the Opera House. There was the presentation at midday at the Governor's House in the gardens. The Governor's House and then a stroll in the gardens

22:30 with quite a few of the others. And that evening I was introduced to her again at the Opera House for the concert. So three times in the one day. And the reason I was given, awarded an OBE was because of my contribution to the coal mining industry and the ship building industry of Australia. Because the company I was in I rose to the top, I was, I'd about, that was my business. That's how I travelled all over the world

23:00 selling coal. Strangely enough with that bombing in Morocco the other day, I said to Vera. "Where's Morocco, Morocco?" She said "You know you've been, were there. Casablanca, Rabat." I said "Yes I was". I was selling coal, trying to sell coal to Morocco. And take the coal north from New South Wales and bring back fertiliser from Casa, from Morocco to Australia to keep the ship fully laden. But it failed because I was dealing with Frenchmen. But that's how I got my OBE.

23:30 Through my contribution to the coal mining and the ship building industry. I was responsible for building, or partly responsible for building two sixty thousand tonne tankers. And that put me on-side with all the unions in Australia. They were all for it. I think I told you before my contacts with the unions, my comrades. Yeah. And they, and now with this new order that's out, this humorous one, it's over,

24:00 OBE is over bloody eighty. I can say I've got a bar to my OBE because I'm eighty-one.

You were talking before about how when you went camp, when you went out with Vera you, you know threw the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK on the fire. How had the war changed, how had you changed as a, during the war? You know how...

How had I changed?

Yeah. No how had it changed you as a man I guess?

24:30 Well yeah, I don't, I don't, see I was loved Vera that much, I was her protector. And I've never hit her and I've never roared at her or blamed her or done anything wrong. And she's more than an angel. If there's been any discord it's been because of my foolishness. But it's never her cause. And she's always loved me and in return I've loved her and I didn't

25:00 change. She had faith in me and that was something that was great. You know I thought it was wonderful. She told my father that she had faith in me. Then he arranged the marriage. Yeah to have faith in one another I think's the most important thing. And if I do get a bit silly and you know do the wrong thing, she might say, she might, doesn't nag me, but she'll tell me the following day "I made a fool of myself". At a party if I tell the wrong joke or drink too much or something like that. It's

25:30 she'd tell me the next day. She wouldn't, would never embarrass me in front of anybody else. And I haven't always been perfect of course. Only tell you that.

Did, I guess a lot of the soldiers that you were with, the European, the Australian soldiers, have trouble settling in when they came home? Back into civilian life?

I really can't say

26:00 because I, most of them were young men. Well in my particular unit they were all killed. They were all, if they weren't killed in action they were bayoneted at Toll or sunk on the Montevideo Maru. So I really can't say. I think they were all pretty pleased that the war was over. And it was a great time to get together for soldiers. That's how the RSL Clubs bloomed and blossomed. I dodged, I kept away

26:30 from all that. I have been associated with the RSL but at the moment I'm Senior Vice President for the Eighth Division Association. And that's why I was led that, I was asked to lead that march. But it's not a gambling affair, we haven't got a club, we meet four times a year and have a service at the Cenotaph each year. And that's what it amounts to. I did join the local RSL when I came up from Melbourne. I had ten years in Melbourne then came up here and I joined the,

27:00 and on that night I was made a committee man. I was put on the committee and I was made the Northern Districts Council's Member. And the meeting was over in about ten minutes, everybody wanted to get stuck into the grog. And the club became a casino instead of a, and they don't do anything as an RSL Club. It, they use the name but they're not really Returned Soldiers Clubs. They have a sub branch but they can't do very much. Except go to funerals.

27:30 Cause they haven't got the money. It's the club that's got the money. And it's the same throughout Australia now. They call it the north, up here they call it the RSL Community Club. And then they advertise on the television you know come to the RSL Club. They leave the word community out. The RSL Club was originally formed for the benefit of the RSL members and their families. But that's gone. So I wasn't in it, I was only in it for twelve months because they didn't have proper meetings and

28:00 I was a businessman and they weren't. So I pass on the RSL. A lot of them weren't you know soldiers that I knew, they might have been aircraft mechanics. Not that the aircraft mechanics weren't necessary. But I didn't have anything in common with them. I didn't have any infantrymen let alone patrol men.

You mentioned earlier that your son had gone to Vietnam?

Yes, yes he

28:30 was a, he won a, he was a school sergeant major at Box Hill High School. Company commander, warrant officer class two. And then as soon as he was about eighteen he won a Scholarship to go to Duntroon to become a permanent soldier. And he went for the medical examination they said "He was colour-blind and had flat feet". So he got out of it. So he said "Alright I'll go to Portsea. And I'll join the permanent army and I'll go to

29:00 Portsea. I want to be trained as an officer." I said "If you're going into the army be an officer, don't be a non commissioned officer. Don't be like me. Be an officer." So they gave him a medical examination and they said "He had spongiositis and some other minor thing wrong and he failed the medical to go to Portsea." Twelve, when he was nineteen he was called up for Vietnam. And he was suddenly

29:30 fit and he was in the Third Cavalry Regiment in charge of an armoured personnel carrier. And he was there for twelve months and saw action. And when he came back from New Guinea, from Vietnam he went straight to Rabaul as manager for Boral Gas Company. Which, and my daughter, who was younger again, she was working for a solicitor in Lae. So both my children before they were twenty-one were back in New Guinea. So it's in the

30:00 blood.

What did you think when your son had said he wanted to join the army?

Oh I said "Well you know it's a good profession. But become an officer, become an officer and you'll get good pay and good promotion. And you'll have to have a good standard of education and you know you'll do well." But I gave him a few tips.

What tips did you give him?

30:30 I'd rather not say, it, only tips how to stay alive, otherwise it becomes, otherwise I'd be saying the wrong thing. I didn't want him to become involved with the Americans, for reasons of my own. That's as close as I'm prepared to say.

No that's fine Arch, I just, I just wondered if you

31:00 **could, if you'd given him advice on being a soldier?**

No. I'd given him my story and of course it was in the family, you know back to uncles and everybody else. So he wanted to be a soldier. And of course being in high school, being in third year at high school or something with a, being a school sergeant Major. All the girls you know were throwing themselves at him. So that's what was the big attraction. There wasn't

31:30 a war on, there was no talk of a war. And then Vietnam came and of course he went into that and got it, went into action. And he's been back to Vietnam since. Back to where they actually had a fire fight. And they accidentally, or not accidentally, the Viet Cong were in a little mission station or church or whatever they call it, some holy place. And the Viet Cong were in there firing at them, at this armoured personnel carrier. So with their

32:00 heavy machine guns and their front end cannon whatever it was, they blew the place to pieces. And that played on his mind. And years later he went back to the same spot. They'd rebuilt this little temple, dunno what religion they were. And he met an old fella with a long white beard and he gave him fifty dollars U.S. And he more or less cleared his conscience the fact that he'd killed some, he'd knocked

down some holy place, which was

32:30 against the rules of war. But the Viet Cong didn't matter. But he was quite pleased he went. He formed some life long friendships with his friends. He's fifty-five now so.

What could you, what had you told him, had you told him about your experience?

No, not much, only, no. No, only that I was with the natives. Course talking to a boy, is going

33:00 over his head. I could only tell him the funny things, about where the cheeses, where the cheeses are. And things like that. You only remember the funny incidences. Actually I mainly only remember the funny incidences. And the coincidences. And it's really, if I'm talking to anybody, that's about all I talk about. You've dragged a lot more out of me than I, you've got to the bottom of my brain.

Did you talk a lot when he came home about

33:30 **maybe common experiences as a soldier or?**

Yeah. Well he was sent to an American firebase to support with three armoured personnel carriers. And when he got there, they were all smoking marijuana, and there was no one on guard. So he turned round and came back home, back to the Australian lines again. And he did say to me "What you told me about the Americans was quite good, quite right that I didn't get mixed up with them". So that's, I didn't want to enlarge on that. And when he came back home, when he came back

34:00 to the Australian base, whilst he was away they'd laid a mine field right across in front of their lines. And with his three vehicles he came straight across through the Australian mine field and missed every one. So someone was looking after him. So when it was over he said to me, "I know what you meant by staying, keeping clear of the Americans". Cause he wasn't sent there to defend Americans when they weren't mounting guards. And they were smoking marijuana and singing songs and playing mouth organs.

34:30 It's called an American firebase. So he wasn't very happy about that. No discipline there at all.

Had he been conscripted or had he?

He was conscripted yeah and found fit but when he tried to join up he was, he finished up with two stripes I think. As a Corporal.

Did he stay in the army after?

No, he came back and then went to New Guinea. And after New Guinea he stayed there for a couple of years. And he was so well liked in Boral, if he'd stayed on

35:00 he would have gone right to the top you know. He said "I'd had enough of being in the jungle so he joined the airlines". And he's still with Qantas.

I guess one thing I'd just like to touch on or go back to is you said to me you know that you'd let go of a lot, you'd let go of the hate that you went back to New Britain with,

35:30 **you know before, I just wondered how you let go of that kind of?**

Well, it'd been my wish to get back to New Britain. I just had to get back with the thought of getting even. That was the burning desire I had. I was not happy in any other unit. And not only that I was a sergeant, I'd been promoted in Canungra, promoted to sergeant. And any other unit I was attached to like the 2/12th Battalion, they'd been in the Middle

36:00 East. And they'd been in battle everywhere and I came in as a reinforcement officer you know, these fellas looked down their nose at me. They didn't like it, they didn't like it. So I didn't like it either. The desire was to get back to New Britain and to try and avenge the deaths of the people that'd been killed at Toll. That was my desire. I didn't know the Montevideo Maru had been sunk. I only knew about the men at Toll. That I'd only picked up by hearsay in any case. Only what fellas that'd come through, what Billy Cook had told me. I didn't know how many.

36:30 No one knew how many. Billy Cook didn't know how many. We calculated by some of the fellas that had, there was over a hundred. We've got the remains of about a hundred and thirty to a hundred and fifty. And I'm leaving that balance cause it's a bit hard. And that seemed to satisfy my desire. I mean because you know when you go into action and you do face the Japanese you can't have

37:00 anything in your mind regarding revenge cause you'd lose control. You concentrate very strongly on staying alive. And that was a good concentration. There's all this talk about revenge is something imagines, really the desire was to get back to New Britain and do what I could. But once I got back there I had to be very careful. Cause I didn't want

37:30 to get killed the first day or anything like that.

That's wonderful thank you Arch. I guess I mean pretty much my last question would be, I guess if you had to thank the Tambran Spirits for looking after you or protecting you?

I don’t think I took it that far, no I didn’t take it that far. No I used to believe in their

38:00 spirits not to the, believe that they believed in the spirits. I didn’t necessarily follow their belief. I mean I know they had a God apart from our God. And depending on the area the God had a different name. Ulu was one in one particular area. And the missionary would come and talk about God and Jesus Christ. That was total confusion

38:30 to them. Really. The missionaries had a very, very tough job trying to teach these bush natives about Jesus Christ. “About”, they say “One minute you talk about God and the next you talking about Jesus Christ. All the same what name.” You know so they had a tough job. Yet Tavinson he understood it all. He understood it.

Did you feel like maybe you had you know their Gods on your side as well as your own?

No I never thought of it that. I never thought of it that way.

39:00 No. In fact I didn’t worry much about the future at all. I really didn’t think I’d last the distance. I’d made up my mind that you know I’ll get knocked off one day. I had that at the back of my mind. I just hope I didn’t get wounded. I was just hoping I didn’t get wounded. I got a few scratches and that. Bits of shrapnel and few little,

39:30 few little bits of bullet wounds but nothing serious. Flesh wounds. But I didn’t want to get wounded cause I know they’d, I know what’d happen if I’d be wounded.

Thank you for that Arch, is there anything else you’d like to say?

No, I’m, no. You’ve searched the bottom of my soul.

Thank you very much for that.

And thank you for the interview. Thank you. When you’re ready. I think it was a few days ago I was talking

40:00 about food dumps being put in the jungle The young lady asked me were there any preparations about food dumps in the jungle. And I answered her by saying a Colonel Wagstaff or some name like that had suggested this. That was the wrong name. It was a Colonel Walstead. W-A-L-S-T-E-A-D, Walstead. He wrote a blue book. A blue book that suggested

40:30 escape routes into the jungle, food dumps into the jungle. And with the proposition that should the Japanese land they would defend a certain position and then fall back to here, and fall back to here, and then fall back into the jungle and carry on fighting as guerrilla’s as they did at Timor. He presented that to Colonel Scanlan who was the commander of the unit. Both World War I men and he scoffed at the idea. And Colonel Scanlan’s reply, so I’ve been told

41:00 is, “No every man will remain at his post”. Cause that was the order of the day. “Every man will remain at his post”. Til later on Scanlan got about fifteen mile away and he issued the order every man for himself. So Scanlan really did the wrong thing not by listening to this First World War Colonel Walstead. I’ve said the...

Thank you very much. Yep, no that’s alright.