

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Frederick Power (Fred) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1142>

### Tape 1

00:40 **Can we start with a summary of your life?**

I was one of a

01:00 family of 8 children in a little country town. Went to the normal public school and after school I got a job in a grocery store and I worked there right up until the war years. When the war broke out I thought well I better do something about it. I actually tried to join up, I was going to join up in 1939 but the

01:30 boss's son was ill and he wanted me to wait until he was right again so I ended up not getting into the army until 1940. And then, cause we went through the basic things of training and the different camps, and eventually across to Malaya. After getting out from there to hospital in Ceylon [Sri Lanka]

02:00 and back to Australia was convalescing for a while, or for several months. And then my eldest brother was in the workshop unit and he applied for me to join him so I went up to Queensland then to the workshop unit and from there, one of the officers was forming a small workshop section to go to New Guinea

02:30 and he asked for volunteers so I said yes, I'll be in it. I joined there went to New Guinea and the Finschhafen and after about 6 months we were brought home and training, filling time in up at the [Atherton] Tablelands for months and months and later on we were absorbed by a bigger workshop and we went to Tarakan [Borneo] and

03:00 that's where we finished at Tarakan. War ended and I was one of the fortunate ones that had enough long service and enough overseas service to get home and early detachments you come up on priorities. But I didn't want to go back to Gunning and I chap I met there who, was with that unit, he and I

03:30 started a grocery shop, one of our friends came over, it was Moira's brother he came over there and we met and that's how we come to be married later on and we are still together after 52 years. Things can't be too bad. Then of course later we sold that business, we went into a hardware, we sold that and I worked then for a brush company for 22 years, I think it was, 21 years.

04:00 And when we retired we decided we'd try and get a house somewhere on the water and we went around Australia and took 12 months on that trip. And we had the opportunity to buy this block of land, not just around where we were at Wamberal Drive, so we moved down there onto the water front. Our boat was

04:30 right handy at the back door and fish was at the back door virtually. It was a fairly big house compared to this and lots of work to be done, cleaning windows and mowing lawns. So we decided to sell where we could still have more time for golf and less time for work so that's where we ended up after 18 years up there.

05:00 That's about, well nothing very exciting in my life I'm afraid.

#### **Any children?**

Yes we have two children. One's the Principal at Menai public school and the other one is the director of referees for the Asian soccer federation. He's based in Kuala Lumpur [Malaysia] now, he was in Qatar

05:30 on the gulf for nearly two years, but now he's in Kuala Lumpur but he's on the move all the time, China Japan, anywhere in the Asian soccer federation wherever there's referees, he programs all their training and inspections, from juniors right through to the World Cup referees

06:00 He's, strangely enough he's back in a country where I served for 12 months. But we haven't been over to see him, we did go over to Qatar but we haven't been to Kuala Lumpur.

#### **Take us through your early days? You were born in Gunning [NSW]?**

Yes, I was born in Gunning.

## **Where is Gunning?**

Gunning is on the Hume Highway

06:30 roughly half way between Goulburn and Yass, I think it was roughly 31 miles to Goulburn, 24 to Yass. And it was only a small village and father had a, he run the dairy . He had 4 and a half acres right in the town which were building sites really, and that's were all the milking and action took place, but

07:00 he had 30-odd acres about a mile out of town but we used to drive the cattle to it in the day and take them back at night for a second milking. So at a very young age I learned to drive cattle and milk cows and clean up the mess too which wasn't the most pleasant part but it had to be done.

07:30 Course I went then to Gunning Public School, as I said earlier, that had three teachers and if I remember rightly, you couldn't go until you were 6 because there was no kindergarten. And one teacher took first and second class, the next took third and fourth, and then the school principal took fifth, sixth, and seventh.

08:00 People say, why was there a seventh? Well there was no high school and unless your parents could afford to send you away to board somewhere, you had to virtually run your high school at the public school. And conditions at the school in those days in the country was fairly primitive and in the winter time the temperature would

08:30 be down to probably a maximum of 7 or 8 degrees some days. That's celsius and the teacher had a fire down one end of the room, but the rest of us we just shivered and those days, no way would a child go to school wearing long pants, that just wasn't allowed. It was shorts and your knees would be blue with cold.

### **Even in winter?**

09:00 **Yes, in the summer time it was the reverse. It was a very hot place. The reason of course is that its fairly high above sea level and those places get very cold at night in the winter and very hot in the summer. I suppose when we look back at it we were lucky. Where we were we had about oh a**

09:30 **quarter mile or less than that to walk to school. Some of the pupils had 5 to 6 miles, there was no school buses. And occasionally their parents would bring them in on a horse and sulky but otherwise they just walked. And if you asked some of the young ones today to walk 5 or 6 miles to school they'd say we can't do it. But there was no alternative those days. And**

10:00 **after school of course we helped feed the bloody calves and milk cows, early in the mornings too. As we got a bit older we used to do the milk run, we'd start bout 6 o'clock. Dad would start milking about half past four so the time there was enough to start the milk run as kids we used to go out and do the milk run and do**

10:30 **sell the milk and cream, bit of butter occasionally.**

### **What did that involved the milk run?**

It wasn't, these days you didn't have a carton or a bottle, it was, we had two five gallon cans of milk with taps on them and we'd had measures from half pint to a quart and people used to leave their billy out the front

11:00 with their money in it and the amount of money there you know whether they wanted a pint or a quart or, you'd pour it in their billy and you'd go on and pick it up later on. Except the little café sort of things, sometimes if there was busy times in the summer time they'd probably want a gallon or half a gallon or something, so theirs was a different proposition. But

11:30 generally speaking, they'd put their billy out with the money in it and we'd measure the milk. That's how they got their milk.

### **How many people would you do on your milk run?**

Ah, well you go really by homes rather than people because some people had 6, 7 kids and some had none. So I would say that the township had about 600 people in it and I would think there would

12:00 be about 100, 120 houses in those days. Bit this was all done on horse and cart not motorised transport.

### **Were you the only family providing milk?**

Yes, there was quite a few, well not quite a few, probably three or four had a cow of their own, but we were the only milk supplier. Any surplus milk was sent to the creamery at Goulburn to the butter factory there.

12:30 So that was the main part of being involved in the dairy.

### **What would you do in the afternoons when you got home from school?**

Well if we were, if we weren't helping up at the cow bales, cause we would just start playing around and with four and a half acres you can imagine kinds with trees, big trees

13:00 they had lots of fun. Strangely enough, I suppose it's a bit crude but kids, the odd film we'd see was often a war film for the First World War, we dug trenches down in the paddock and one side would be 20 yards away from the others and we'd pick up the old dried cow dung and hurl cow dung at each other, its true.

13:30 It sounds ridiculous but that was our way of fighting the war.

**So would you take sides? One German one British?**

Yes, oh yes. But no one wanted to be the Germans but every now and again you had to take your turn. Mainly the fun of hurling the clods of dried cow dung at each other.

**What were some of the films that you saw?**

14:00 I remember Tom Mix was a hero those days and they were cowboy films and there was a war film on, it was a very, very The films had no sound and there was a woman playing on the piano when the westerns were on and the horses were galloping

14:30 the speed of the playing went up tremendously. They'd sort of played off what ever was applicable to what was playing on the screen. The sad things they'd get on the very slow music, but I can remember the first time we had sound, it was unbelievable really these days. But part of the film went silent

15:00 but they had like a big gramophone with big records on it, and when the second half started that was to be the sound, the records would come on and sound was coming off the records to, according to what was on the film. But occasionally the mouths on the film were going faster than the gramophone or vice versa

15:30 but at least that was the start of sound for us at Gunning it was probably a long time behind the city and those sort of places.

**You mentioned you saw "All Quiet on the Western Front"?**

Yes, what?

**Do you remember the titles of films you saw?**

That was about the only one I think I can remember. I

16:00 often think about Slim; somebody who was one of the stars there and someone had to go over the top so they had a spitting competition to see who could get the closest to see who could get over the top but this Slim, was the hero of course, went over to wipe out a machine gun nest or something.

**So did the movies you saw**

16:30 **glorify war?**

Yes, well you see we were brought up in a era where as far as we were concerned we were part of the British empire and the empire was everything we used to have empire days and these sort of things and the British flag was flown at the school

17:00 because we didn't have an Australian flag at that stage. And we were drilled into being part of the commonwealth and anyone who was attacking England was attacking us sort of thing. So you did become brainwashed I suppose would be the word. But either brainwashing or just loyalty, it was loyalty to the flag and to the empire that

17:30 was probably the main reason for us wanting to see these things and looking at the Germans as the baddies and the British as the goodies. That was drilled in to us that we were part of the British empire and they would look after us and we would look after them.

**Was this your lessons at school?**

Yes, the only, the real only history

18:00 we got was mainly about the British Empire, you know right back to all the kings and queens and the empire where it had spread to like Burma and Thailand, no Thailand wasn't, Singapore and Malaysia. All those were British commonwealth countries in those days. And a to on Africa so I think in some way were very proud

18:30 to say we are part of the commonwealth because they had the mightiest navy in the world at that stage before the Americans really built up, and I think we were all looked to that as saying well if anything goes wrong the British Navy will be there to protect us. So it was a different sort

19:00 of upbringing that we had. Of course these days with the Australians are brought up as Australians the empire doesn't exist, we may belong to the commonwealth of nations as they call it but not the ties that

there was in those days.

**Can you tell us what sort of community Gunning was?**

- 19:30 100 percent white Australians, no ethnic people there at all, no Aborigines either, but in the depression years when things were bad because rents in some of the places, one place they used to call the warren. It had been an old hotel years before, in fact it was a shame they knocked it down because there were still bullet holes in it from when the bushrangers
- 20:00 had shot up, you've probably heard of the Hume and Hovell expeditions [Hamilton Hume and William Hovell, explorers of an overland track to Port Phillip, 1824]. Well Hume got a grant of land after they went through to Melbourne called Collingwood. It was a big grant about 3 mile out of the town and when the bushrangers were holding up this hotel, they were part of Ben Hall's gang, someone went out and told them
- 20:30 at Collingwood which was the name of the station, and John Hume the explorer's son, he came in and decided he was going to clean up the bushrangers and there was a little creek there and he got behind some rocks at the other side of the creek and started shooting at them and one of the bushrangers got in loft up above the stables
- 21:00 and of course he could see down on him and shot and killed Hume's son. So John Kennedy Hume was buried in Gunning cemetery. And very few people realise that there was ever a gun battle there, but the old warren, the people I say used to go in because it was very cheap rent there and they knocked it all down, there's a motel built there now. But it
- 21:30 should have been kept as a historic site.

**You mentioned Gunning had a café and a theatre, was it cosmopolitan?**

I was a little bit wrong in saying it was all 1200 percent white because there were Greeks that had the café. But their children went to

- 22:00 primary school with us and they went to the church of England church they were very much assimilated, the young ones, into Australian society. In fact we had a reunion back at Gunning Public school about 3 years ago and all the Coronias kids were they were all back there to meet up with all the old friends again.
- 22:30 They were definitely, you know, a great part of the community, they weren't looking to just be Greeks they wanted to be Australians and they were very, very good people.

**Can you talk about your father's background?**

Yes, well he was, when he was young, about 18 or something

- 23:00 he had a lot of trouble with, not infantile paralysis, I can't think what it was, but he was very sick for quite a while. As he got a bit older in his early 20s he started taking jobs as drovers and they, I remember him saying they brought a big mob of cattle from Queensland down to Melbourne and
- 23:30 they were to be paid when the cattle were sold in Melbourne. But on the way, crossing the old bridge at Gundagai, the cattle stampeded and knocked some of the sides off the bridge and into the water and they were about 2 or 3 days rounding them all up again. Then when they got to Melbourne at the, the fellow that was in charge to pay them, he sold up the cattle and he shot through and none of them ever got paid after about a 6 or 8 weeks drive
- 24:00 then he came back of course and he worked for a while on the railway. At that stage there was only a single line between Sydney and Melbourne and they were putting a double line in so he worked on that for a while and his father had the dairy sort of thing, and Dad took over
- 24:30 from him. I'm not certain whether he died or whether he just retired first, but Dad took over the dairy from then on. Briefly he hardly ever, except for his drover experience, he hardly ever got away from Gunning at all. That sort of thing happened in the country in those days, people were born in the town, they stayed in the town, and they died in the town. But
- 25:00 these days they are a lot more mobile.

**What sort of man was he?**

He was born in Gunning too. He was one of 3, 4, family of 4. He stayed in Gunning right through until he died at 78.

- 25:30 **Can you talk about his character?**

He was a terrific fellow. Very quiet man, he used to play in the band the Gunning band. You couldn't wish for a better father, cause he was a fine horseman but even, he was still riding his horse up until he was about 75, and unfortunately he was riding an old

- 26:00 horse that was getting a bit old too, and he was chasing somebody's cattle had got in with ours, so he

was trying to cut them out and he was trying to jump the horse over the log to cut off the cattle, and the horse didn't quite make it and he had a fall and broke a few ribs and was a bit of trouble for 6 months there. But his life was really pretty

26:30 simple in comparison today's mob. He was up early in the morning, he'd have a rest in the middle of the day and then in the afternoon of course the milking again. At night towards dusk he would check the horses and feed them, the last feed of the day sort of thing, very often at night with the old rabbiters lantern he would go down and

27:00 particularly if any of the cattle were sick or any calves were kicking up a row or anything he would go out anything up to 9 o'clock with his lantern and check up on them. So it was a very simple life really.

**How did he treat you as children?**

He'd, do anything he possibly could for us. If he couldn't afford it, anything, he treated us, he wasn't keen on us swearing but he used to

27:30 have a little bit of swear himself occasionally, but I can't ever remember him ever being cruel to us, just wasn't his nature. He was a very placid man.

**What about your mother?**

She was born at Canberra, at Ginninderra

28:00 I think it was. And her family had a farm there, near where Lake Burley Griffin is now. And when they were decided to form Canberra as a capital city they had to sell out they didn't have any choice. But in the mean time my mother learned she was a seamstress I think they called it in those days, and she used to

28:30 do sewing for the more affluent people and she used to come sewing to Gunning and I think that's where they met, at Gunning and they were married but the rest of their family moved out to Wilcannia to a lot bigger farm but a lot poorer soil. But she was the most placid woman in the world.

29:00 Strangely enough in our family there was two girls, and Moira and Mum they clicked the moment they met and they idolised each other so which was a very fortunate thing, because sometimes mothers don't get on extra well with daughters-in-law. They couldn't do enough for each other.

**Were they similar characters?**

No,

29:30 Moira's much more volatile, if she is determined to do something she'll do it, whether it hurt you or not, sort of thing. But I don't mean anything cruel, she wouldn't do anything cruel, but if want ed to move the fridge, if I said it was too hard, she'd move it herself sort of thing. We don't have much, any troubles or anything like that, but she

30:00 very, very competent at doing things for herself. She's a very fine dressmaker, she used to make dresses for David Jones.

**Was this your mother?**

No this is Moira. I think both of them had this thing in common that they were both very, very good with sewing and making dressing designing things and,

30:30 in fact they, although we had this dairy we were comparatively poor because it was only a small dairy in a small town and I can remember time and again my father's pants had worn out, the knees had gone in them or something, they weren't thrown out, Mum would pull them to pieces and make shorts for us out of them. And

31:00 another things in the depression years, money was very, very tight and half the time, 10 percent of people never ever paid for their milk because they didn't have any money.

**How did your parents cope with that?**

Well, that was Pop's said, well they've got kids, so we'll just have to do it. And those days when buying blankets and things was pretty expensive but money was short

31:30 so Mum was very capable at making what they call Wagga rugs. I don't know if you have heard of Wagga rugs? Well that started off because in the depression years people around Wagga which was sheep country, couldn't afford blankets and that so they used old wool bales so, what Mum used to do as blankets were getting thin, we didn't have wool bales but

32:00 we had wheat sacks. And she used to wash them out, the hard way too, no washing machines. We'd clean them up and she'd sew them onto the old blankets and we called them wagga rugs as well. But the real Wagga rugs was wool bales, but they were warm and wore terrifically. Getting back to wheat sacks, they were useful things

32:30 because rainy weathers we didn't have too many wet weather gear so we used to tuck one corner of a back in and pull the bag over our heads and veil down the back to kept the he rain off. And that was quite effective too.

**As a rain coat?**

Yes, except you didn't, if you were walking into the rain because it wouldn't come right around. But down your back and over your

33:00 head it was quite effective. So

**What kind of influence did your parents have?**

Main influence of course, he I think he taught us great values in life, to respect other people's things, there was no way in the world he would tolerate stealing or anything like that. And you would get it drilled into you, if it was someone else's property

33:30 you didn't interfere with it, so I think that was a great lesson. Apart from that he taught us all to ride horses. By the time we were 10 we could ride horses or saddle them up and put horses into a harness and put them into carts. He also taught us to shoot, and I'd say by all of us were quite capable of shooting by the time we were 10 year old, with a small bore rifle

34:00 like a 22. Although we shouldn't have done it, there was plenty of times, he wouldn't let us when we were very young, but there were times when we were 14 we could go out rabbiting with the dogs and take the rifle alright, you weren't supposed to but he's say, "don't let the police see you, and don't forget getting through fences to open the breach so it can't go off"

**34:30 It wasn't legal for children?**

Under 16, yeah. But we had many a shot before then and I think to us it was a big deal but of course it really wasn't anything much at all. We'd get a few rabbits and at times we'd bring some home to eat, others we'd skin them and sell the skins and there was some pretty good times and pretty

35:00 bad times, the skins sometimes were nearly valueless and other times they were probably about sixpence each which was 6 cents I suppose, not a lot these days. But that sixpence would buy a milkshake or two threepenny ice creams much more valuable than what 6 cents are today.

**So you were allowed to keep the money?**

Yes, oh yes. And we used to save it up

35:30 occasionally we'd spend it a bit rash but occasionally we'd save it up to buy crackers on empire day for the bonfire night. Everyone had bonfires and crackers and if you'd saved enough to buy a few crackers well that was a big night out on Empire Night, 25th of May.

**You mentioned the market for rabbit skins went up and down. Why? What was the reasoning behind that?**

36:00 Well the fur on the rabbit skins was used to make the Akubra hats and if rabbits were scarce they had to sell out to get skins so the price went up, but others of them, in the winter time when they had a lot more fur on them, they were used for making rugs and lining boots and things like that. And rabbit even furs

36:30 cause, sarcastically, some of the women would say, you'd see someone in a fur coat and they'd say, "oh, its only rabbits, its not, mine is only rabbits" and that was quite a fact.

**What did your mother teach you as a child?**

Well much the same as, when we were young she was there to take us to church every Sunday

37:00 send us to Sunday school.

**What religion?**

Methodist, in those days. There is a beautiful old Methodist church there at Gunning and the bricks in that actually were mined in the, or dug in the property where he dairy was before our father had it, but the hole in the ground was turned into a dam

37:30 for the cattle later on. But she was very versatile she'd make ginger beer and Christmas time we all had to have a stir of the pudding which she'd make the plum pudding. Imagine you were making it for 8 kids and two adults, it was a pretty big plum pudding and that was cooked in the copper because there was nothing else big enough to take it.

38:00 So it was cooked in the old cloth, I don't know if you have seen them cooked in the old cloth, but Moira still makes them in a cloth herself too. She can do all those sort of things. I suppose she taught us to look after ourselves a lot because most of us were pretty capable we could go around and hold our own and anything else. And another thing, you wouldn't believe it, because

- 38:30 you couldn't afford to buy them but she made us some boxing gloves out of calico and stuffed them with horse hair. But only thing is if you rubbed them against yourself it was like a rasp going up your face. So you didn't mind somebody giving you a punch in the face but you didn't like them giving you a clinch and rub this old calico boxing gloves up against your face. But people did things like that because they, I think it taught us all
- 39:00 a lot to be independent because if you couldn't afford it and you wanted it you had to make it. Same with billy carts, we'd go out to the tip and find any old wheels we could find and make billy carts out of them, kerosene cases. See kerosene didn't come out of pumps or petrol didn't in those days. They came into four gallon drums they were square and about that tall
- 39:30 and they were, course everything came by train there was no interstate freight in those days and they were packed in a wooden case so you always go to get a wooden case from them and turn it into a billy cart with a few palings for shafts and thing like that. I remember we had a billy goat too, oh he was a rogue. he'd sneak up
- 40:00 and out on the back portion of the house there was a sort of a veranda there, cause there was no running water it was only tank water and we'd have a dish and soap there and a towel to wash our hands in. And if you left the soap there the billy goat would come up and pinch it and eat it. But we made this cart up, one of my older brothers, Mick, he was the main architect of this cart. So we were living on a small slope so we took the cart up the top of the slope and
- 40:30 harness the billy goat up and put Mick in it and let him go. And the billy goat went straight for home it was 6 wire fence around the property, that's just ordinary wire, they were bout that far apart. And the billy goat went straight through it and left Mick the billy cart all tangled up in the wire. So we had some funny times, Mick didn't think it was funny, but we.

**Was Mick one of the brother's that ended up going into World War II?**

Yes, he was in the workshop. He went overseas with the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion, but he was a leather worker and very good at leather work and they grabbed him and took him into a workshop, transferred into a workshop where he was doing bootmaking and that, leatherwork, binocular cases sewing them up and all that.

**Were you close to your brothers when you were growing up?**

Yes, oh yes, we were, the whole family was pretty close. And Mick and I were very close. And I think it became closer I can remember when I was about 8 or 9 I know was pretty young and I got asthma bad, and there was not much treatment those days. there was only a needle and the doctor would give you there and . . .

## Tape 2

00:31 **You are from a big family. Can you tell us about them?**

yes, there was 6 boys and two girls. the eldest of the family was a boy, then there was a girl, then there was Mick,

01:00 Les, and myself, so I was the fifth in the family. Then there was another two boys, then the youngest was a girl. I was strangely enough, the only ones in the family living is myself and the two girls. And the oldest one is 92, she still lives in Gunning in the house she was born in which we were all raised in

01:30 and the younger sister is in a retirement nursing home at Goulburn. She's not very mobile but she's all her facilities, her brain is very active, she's quite happy there. So the others, the youngest boy he was killed in New Guinea and Bert died only 18 months ago

02:00 but Mick he died about 10 years ago or more than that, be about 15 years ago. And Jack, he died about 1961. He got, he was never really well after his experiences in the Middle East where he got just about every disease you could get, he was in and out of hospital at the time and he never really got back to being

02:30 really well again, he died about only about 55 . The rest of us went on fairly well. My father was 78 and my mother was 90, 93 when she dies. So hopefully I can be chasing something like that. I've beaten the 78 anyhow.

**So it was a busy household by the sound of things?**

Yes, and a huge big table

03:00 in the kitchen a long stool down one side and chairs down the other. So when you've got to seat 10 people you have a pretty big, pretty large table and seating accommodation for them. But we managed and never, never ever thought there was anything wrong with that sort of thing. Quiet good even through the depression years we always had plenty to eat, it might

03:30 have been a bit on the cheap side because we bought, mother would have bought mutton, not lamb sort of thing. But sometimes there was plenty of fruit we had a few fruit trees. She's make, turn apples into jam and make her own jam, and pears and plums and she'd make apple tarts for

04:00 sweet very often and, or, because if nothing else we usually had cream to put on it. We had plenty of cream which doesn't seemed to have hurt us, these days they tell you not to eat it, I don't know why. And the same with the milk, these days everybody is looking for fat free milk. I remember one stage the dairy people used to check your milk about

04:30 every two years and one year the, they checked it, and I remember it had to contain 3.7 percent butter fat. And one year it fell to 3.6 and they fined Dad I think about 5 pounds for not having enough cream in the milk so he had to buy another Jersey cow. The Jersey milk was very rich, and that was more than enough

05:00 to bring that up. These days you are more likely to be fined for having too much fat. That was a peculiar thing, but the brother, John was very capable with radios and electrical things and became a watch maker eventually.

**So where was John relative to you?**

he was the eldest. Mick he went working on stations, in fact he worked

05:30 on Collingwood for a long time and then he went to Queensland and he started doing upholstery there because that's similar to what he was doing in the army as well as boot making you were doing upholstery. And Bert, no Billy was the next he ended up buying a little farm and he had a farm about 9 mile out of town

06:00 and worked hard and just made a best living out of it. So he did alright without being wealthy but he was able to afford a motor car and that sort of thing later on. That was a big deal. Bert eventually took over the dairy until eventually there was too much competition from the cartons of milk, he gave it up eventually and he worked with the council then for a while.

06:30 Arthur, as I say, he was only 22 when he was killed in New Guinea.

**how many kids were you sharing your bedroom with?**

There was, 3 of us in one room, but their was five bedrooms, it was a peculiar old house

07:00 it was just like an oblong place with a passage right down the middle. Three bedrooms on that side, then their was a bedroom, lounge, dining room, and another bedroom there, and then on the veranda, it was closed in, was a sleep-out there too. So there was 3 of us in one room but all the others managed somehow with the other 2.

07:30 So if you've got a big family, you manage. Again you know it didn't seem extraordinary to us, it was just every day life and there was plenty people a lot worse off than we were, so.

**And all the kids got along well?**

Yes.

**Were you closer to any of the boys more than others?**

Probably as I said, Mick, because when I had the asthma bad Mick would come and sit with me for hours

08:00 and later on, or even at the same time, marbles were the big at school. Both of us were pretty good at marbles, we pooled out marbles together, we ended up, we had a, cause when you played marbles if you one the other fellows marbles you didn't get them back. We ended up a with a bag of marbles that you could hardly lift, and then even after the war, we used to call in at

08:30 Dalby and stay over with them when we were going up north, or going around Australia we stayed with Mick and Von up at Dalby.

**How much older was Mick?**

Four years, Billy was two years older than me and Mick was two years older than him. One of the things that I could never forgive him for really, I thought he was going to drown me one day.

09:00 This old milk cart we had it was pretty peculiar, the cans of milk sat in a big box on the front sort of thing with the taps out so you could get out, they wouldn't allow that these days, it was would be unhygienic but nobody cared then. There was a seat like a plough seat at the back and the reigns went over the box thing at the top and sometimes when two of us went out one of us would sit up on this box, and we were going along

09:30 one day and Mick hit a rut in the road and I went off fro this box. And it would have been about as high as that picture, and crashed down onto the ground and I winded myself, I was gasping for air. And Mick the first thing he thought was give me something to drink so he poured some milk, and I'm trying to



suck air in and he's trying to pour milk down my throat and I'm trying to spit it out. And I tell you it was a terrible feeling for a few minutes, till I

10:00 got my breath back. There was no harm done, but I tell you if you ever get winded don't let anyone pour liquids into you, it's a very, very unpleasant feeling. One of the funny things I suppose when you look back on it, that can happen to kids.

**Did you play sport amongst yourselves?**

Oh yes, we always played football, in fact,

10:30 most of the neighbours and that because we had plenty of ground there, they'd come and we'd play football. We'd kid ourselves we were golfers too and we'd make a golf club out of a bit of limb of a tree that had a bend in it and use that for hockey.

**So there was a lot of improvising going on?**

Yes, and the hockey ball was only an old sock stuffed with paper or something like that. Somehow, I don't know how, but we always seemed to have a football though,

11:00 we'd play rugby league, girls and all, all paly and no tag, you'd tackle the girls just the same and they'd tackle you. It was all in sort of thing.

**So the kids from surrounding places would come to you?**

Yes, cause the land was there, the four and a half acres, actually its nine

11:30 half-acre building blocks which are virtually 18 of the old standard quarter acre blocks so there was plenty of room and they all knew they could get a game there. Goal posts we seldom had but we'd put a couple of tins down as long as they kicked over there for a goal it was a goal as long as the other side agreed it was high enough. There was a few funny rules but it worked and we enjoyed ourselves.

**12:00 And was Gunning a close knit community in those days?**

Oh yes, it was very close in a way. And one of the things that is a very good lesson for people, there used to be a catholic school as well as the public school, primary school and there was a bit of interaction with sport there but not very much. But a few people were

12:30 bigoted enough to be anti the others. But I'll always remember the, we had a minister, Methodist minister there he was one of the finest men I've ever met called Robson. And he had an old T model Ford and he used to go to Collector which was 16 mile away to, for a morning service of a Sunday. And on the way he was virtually past the Catholic church, and if any of the Catholics were walking to church because very few people had cars,

13:00 he'd pick them up and run them right up the church and drop them off on the way. And old Father Carson the catholic priest, when Gunning was playing football against Yass or Goulburn, they'd be together at the football on the sideline, and that's the sort of thing that taught you not to be bigoted, it was a great pleasure

13:30 to see these people. You here some people criticising one or the other, but here were the priest and the parson side to side and really setting a great example for all of us, so we were very fortunate for the upbringing really.

**Did you have swaggies passing through the area?**

Oh, plenty, cause the, Arthur was a bit of a soft touch, the

14:00 swaggies used to come along a camp in the showground, horse and cattle stalls they were opened all the time, so they could camp there out in shelter. And they would come up, often a lot of them, and obviously they must have been telling one another, come up and say, "Have you got any work", or "can you give us a bit of tea", or something, Some of them would just be happy

14:30 to get a bit of tea. I can remember one chap in particular cause I happened to be out there when Dad was talking to him and he said, "can you do anything to help us along a bit of sugar or something?", Pop said, "oh yes, well come in a have a meal", he always used to give a meal of some sort. And he said, "I don't want a meal unless I can do something for you, can I chop some wood or something for you?", and

15:00 cause it was all long wood and it had to cut off and splintered, but Dad said, "yes, you can do that". And the fellow came in and he sat down and had a bit of meal with us, he went out then and started chopping the wood. And I can remember pop going out and saying, "that's enough, you've done more than enough", and he said, "no, I want to keep going, if you don't mind

15:30 I want to put in another half hour at least, or probably an hour", and he said, "well you don't have to", and he said, "if I do this I am keeping myself reasonably fit and when I get a job I don't want to lose it", and that was the attitude of some of them. But everybody went away with a little bit of food, few, a bit of sugar and tea, or a meal there. No one was ever turned away from our place.

- 16:00 But they had it pretty rough some of them but other people in those depression years used their brains, and a chap I met later in the army he was an electrician. And he said he never ever had any trouble, he went out on the road and he had his screw drivers and few things with him, and he'd
- 16:30 go along to some of the houses and say, 'Can I, do you have any electrical appliances you want fixed?', and nearly everyone would have a toaster that needed an element in it or something, something would be broken down, only a fuse or a bit of wiring. He said, "I could always make nearly enough to when I was working". So
- 17:00 by using his own skills and asking the right questions he was able to make do during the depression.

**Did you find that the swaggies were descent chaps?**

Yes, I can't recall any of them being drunks or anything like that. They were just people out of work, cause there was just no work about for them, not like when they are out of work now, they can go and get their dole

- 17:30 if you were single you got nothing, but if you were married with a family you could go to a local police station and get a voucher for a certain amount of food. But you weren't allowed to buy alcohol or tobacco with it, it only had to be food. And it was barely enough for them to exist on, that was the only chance that the families had. But if they were in a building
- 18:00 and it was rented and they couldn't pay the rent and the landlord put them out they'd have to find a tent, or they'd build, not so much around Gunning but other places. Around Kurnell, I remember I've seen then around there, the old humpies they built, they're just old bits of tin and bark, hessian, anything. They'd build a little humpy and they'd live there. And some of them didn't want to move afterwards because they were in pretty prime real estate
- 18:30 But they really had it rough, people had it rough.

**But your household was always a generous one by the sounds of it?**

Yes, yes.

**How did you go at school?**

was never top of the class because we had a couple of very brainy fellows there, but I was always topped the maths side of it, but generally speaking I would run along about 5th in the class, I suppose. So

- 19:00 5th or 6th, I don't think I was ever any further back than that, but I was never brilliant. We had one chap there, Tommy Verness, he was a wizard, he was really bright, Mal Johnson, he was a pretty close of mine, he was pretty good too. But his Tommy Verness he stood out, but we also had another fellow there, Ken Lucas, and Ken was a, his father bought a property at Gunning,
- 19:30 and Ken was about twice the size of all of us and I think he was about 3 years older, but he was still moving along in the same class. But he was absolutely hopeless, I'll never forget that, Ken. Old Joe as we used to call the headmaster would ask a question, first hand up would be Ken's every now and again old Joe would say, "yes Ken, what's the answer?", and he'd say, "ah, ah, ah, please sir, what was the question?"
- 20:00 So old Joe would put the question and down would go the hand. but his family had plenty of money there. I often used to do his homework for him, for homework I'd get 3 or 4 lollies off him because he always had a pocket full of lollies. That was a bonus, but Ken was, he was absolutely hopeless.

**So you went through to 7th grade?**

Yes, 7th grade.

**And you enjoyed school?**

- 20:30 **Was it a pleasure to you?**

Ah, generally speaking yes, I enjoyed it. At play time and that you had different mates to play with and we had a big school ground and plenty of room in it, tennis court. If you were lucky you would get a game of tennis and to our standard it was pretty poor, but it was something different and the

- 21:00 only thing is, the headmaster was against us playing football, we weren't allowed to play football on the ground. And one day we thought he was inside out of the road so we started a game of football, and it must have been about 20 of us all playing football. And he came out and caught us and it was four whacks each for us, and oh he whacked them too, he was a real. He really
- 21:30 ruled by the cane that headmaster, then we got another one later on, the last couple of years, he was a real dream of a teacher. He was, I learned more in those two years than I would have learned in ten with old Joe, Daniel Mathew Parkinson.

**When you finished those two years, did you know what you wanted to do?**

Not

- 22:00 really, like most people all I wanted to do was get a job because, and the only reason I got the job was because I could add up twice as fast as any of the other kids that were trying to get the job. And that was very important in the grocery shop then because you didn't have any calculators, you didn't have any adding machines on the tills, you had to add everyone's bill up, and if it was only
- 22:30 three or four items I could look at them and say it was so much and no time wasted. but if you had to write them all down and do them, and the boss was, he was a very good, very good boss to have but you couldn't waste money and you couldn't waste time. And another good lesson I learnt from him was about the, cause you went into the shop those days and a lot of people would come in
- 23:00 sometimes and they would sit down on the chair, there was always chairs there, and they'd talk to the boss over the, for perhaps ten minutes or quarter of an hour. And you'd lean on the other side of the counter, and I thought well this is alright for me, so I started just leaning there one day, I was there less than a week I think, it wasn't too long. And he came along to me and he said, "haven't you got anything to do?", and I said, "No", and he said, " well if you haven't got anything to do
- 23:30 I don't need you do I?" and I said, " oh I suppose I could dust the shelves", and he said, "I think you'd better dust the shelves". But you know in a real gentle way he taught me a lesson there, if you've got a job and you want to hold it, you go and find something to do. Don't be [(UNCLEAR)] because there was always something to do if you wanted to do it, there was sugar to weigh up, dates to weigh, nothing was
- 24:00 in packages and there was no plastics, so paper bags that everything went into . Even icing sugar you had to weigh up, bicarbonate of soda, little things like that, pepper. And we had tins of pepper and we also had bulk pepper for people who just wanted to buy a few ounces. So you had to weigh everything up, and when you had nothing else to do you made up your
- 24:30 sugar in twos, four pound, six pound bags. You had them ready so that you didn't have to weigh up when people were in the shop. Other thing was, no plastic bags so everything had to be wrapped. There was no way that people would walk out of the shop those days with their groceries opened. It had to be wrapped in brown paper and tied up with string
- 25:00 cause there was no sticky tape either. So things were very, very different, but all told, nothing like the variety that's in shops these days either, you had prices weren't changing much and you'd have to try to remember every price of every article in the shop. And 9 times out 10 I'd never have to check anything for a price
- 25:30 and that went on for years, right up until the war. Occasionally there would be a change like tomato sauce there might have been a bad crop of tomatoes one year, so the sauce might go up a penny a bottle or something. But boss would come along and tell you, you wouldn't go looking in a book for it, you were supposed to remember it. So it
- 26:00 was a very, very different life.

**Was it just you and boss in the shop?**

No, his son used to help too. He just, Harry only died about a fortnight ago, a few weeks ago. But he was younger and he was still at school but he used to come in after school and Saturday mornings and until he left school, of course he, that was just when he was starting to work there full time, and then the war broke out.

- 26:30 So we did things that you know people wouldn't think of now. When I say it was a grocery shop, down the back there was a big shed and it had bran, wheat, kerosene, potatoes and you were expected
- 27:00 to be able to lift a bag of wheat and take it up and put it onto someone's sulky or cart. But that used to weigh, a hundred and 14 something pound and you had to get it down like that, and you learned after a while to use your knees and you'd lean it on your knees and get it over and up on your shoulders and stagger up and put it in. But if
- 27:30 asked people these days to lift that sort of thing, wouldn't be in it. And potatoes, a bag of potatoes was hundredweight and a quarter or something, 12 and 28, that's 140 pound. And we used to, I used to be able to lift one of them plonk it up take it up and walk it up to their cart and dump it. But when he
- 28:00 the boss used to buy truck loads from Crookwell and it would come by rail, and Harry, who's dead, we used to stack it and we used to stack those potatoes as high as that lamp. We'd say one, two, three and hurl them up. So, we were really, those days for our size and that we were pretty strong, kept you pretty healthy.

**Was it the only grocery store in Gunning?**

No,

- 28:30 you wouldn't believe it, there isn't even a decent grocery store there now, but there was four selling groceries then.

**So it was competitive?**

Yeah, there was George Wells, there was Meldrum's, Hodgkinson's, and Cronin's . They were all selling groceries, but the other three had more clothing and that sort of thing as well, they had other sort of things as well as groceries. They somehow they

29:00 stayed there and made a living.

**Your one was just groceries?**

Yes, just groceries, well when I say just groceries, he had a few things for farms like axes, a couple of axes a couple of picks and some heavy work boots and some heavy, overalls, but that about the, the rest was all groceries, all produce.

**Sounds like it was a big store?**

No, it wasn't

29:30 very big the main shop would be about the size of this only a bit wider, probably about a metre wider, oh no it would be more than that, be about 2 metres wider. But a lot of the stuff was kept in the big shed down the back with the wheat and that.

**Did you enjoy the work?**

Yes, I never had any trouble saying I didn't want to go to work.

30:00 The only time I ever missed work, I was just, it would have been about 1937 I bought an old motorbike for about 30 pound and I was trying to find out just how fast that could go and I hit a heap of ruts and skinned myself all down the side and that and I had two days off then. Of all the years I worked then they were the only two days I ever had off then.

30:30 **And you worked long hours?**

We worked from 5 to 9, it seems funny times, but 5 to 9 Monday till half past 12 then we had an hour off, then we worked till 6 o'clock. But on Wednesday it was only half a day, the shops all closed at 1 o'clock on Wednesday, we had a half day off. But on

31:00 Saturday we worked from 5 to 9 til half past 10 at night. Cause Saturday night shopping was on, but no other nights.

**It sounds like it was a pretty busy job, did it have an impact on your social life at that stage?**

Well, I suppose it did, not that it ever worried me a lot. But the only time there was pictures on in the town was on a Saturday night, and so

31:30 you didn't see pictures unless you went in after half time and just saw the tail end of it.

**Did you do that?**

Yes, well the, [(UNCLEAR)] had had the picture show and they were pretty friendly with our family and they wouldn't charge you when you were going in late like that, so we'd go down and see the rest of it. Just occasionally they would have something special

32:00 on, one other day perhaps, once or twice a year there might be something else. Perhaps another time you could go and see them, but Saturday night was the night that practically every social activity, if a dance was on or something like that. But I never danced, I never wanted to so, that didn't effect me much. I would much rather at night go out with a mate whose father

32:30 had a car and we'd go out shooting rabbits in the lights of the car. That was much better fun for me than worrying about dancing. So we used to go out, not regularly, but probably a dozen times year, we'd go out night shooting, we'd use the headlights on his Model A Ford, he had a Model A Ford, he was up a bit from the Model T.

33:00 **Were the dances the main opportunity to start chasing the girls around?**

I, no, whether that was, or the social atmosphere of the church had, what they called a girls group called the MGC and that was Methodist Girls Comradeship and the boys had a OK

33:30 which was the Order of Knights, they were little social gatherings and we used to meet a lot through that. And very often we'd have trips to Yass or Goulburn, Dalton, and particularly Dalton which was only 7 miles away. And our transport was Ian Lanham's old Model T ford truck so we all used to get in the back of that. And in the

34:00 winter time it was bloody cold, believe me. But we used to go out and socialise there with the, always the games I suppose, but mainly with food, all the mothers or the girls themselves I suppose but there was all these, you know the really beautiful display of cakes and things to eat

34:30 so that was probably one of the best socialising places. That, and your school, it was all mixed grades at

school, whether you met the opposition, or the opposite sex, but whether you liked it or not.

**Do you recall the time when you did start to like girls?**

Oh, not particularly. To be quite frank I was

35:00 you know you would think oh she is a nice sort of a girl, but I think I was so keen on shooting, even nights we used to go out possum shooting with a torch, particularly of a moonlight night because possums skins made a beaut rug, they were very warm. But stinking things to skin, oh and foxes, they were terrible.

35:30 But you'd go out and look at trees, and because it was nice moonlit night and you'd look up and you could get them against, go through the trees until you got the shadow of a possum between the trees and the moon and you'd shoot him. But if you tried to skin them when they were warm, the fur used to fall out. So you used to wait until they were cold, and when

36:00 they were cold they were much much harder to skin, but you didn't ruin the skin like you did when they were warm. That was another distraction and of course, at weekends or when you had the days off, kangaroo shooting was always another chance to get out and do something different.

**so the guns became a bit of a passion for you?**

Yes

36:30 oh yes, they did. And I ended up, I didn't end up at one stage I bought a semi automatic rifle and it was a fantastic little rifle, it cost 3 pound. And I remember it was very, very accurate and I became very good at shooting things on the run with it. And I woke up to the fact that if

37:00 wanted to shoot a rabbit on the run with a rifle when you've only got one pellet, different if you've got a shot gun, you don't try to take him side on, wait till he straight away from you and when they are going straight away its not very difficult to bring your sights up with him, and I used to shoot a lot of rabbits on the run. Early I wasted a lot of ammunition trying to shoot them side on but you might get one in 200 but run the other way, probably get

37:30 one about one in ten. So it wall, that was another things that I enjoyed, and later on a joined the rifle club, they started a rifle club with .303s. Neville Tonkin and myself, in particular used to go down there regularly and shoot on the rifle range with the .303s

**When did you start to get a sense**

38:00 **that there were things developing in Europe and there was a bit of war brewing?**

Ah, I would say it was pretty close to when the war started because everyone used to say, oh no one will want to go to war nowadays because of the last Great War [First World War]. But of course

38:30 it didn't pan out and I think even right up until it started a lot of us sort of ignored it but we might have thought it was coming on, it might have come on but we also thought, Neville Chamberlain the British Prime Minister at the time was negotiating with Adolf Hitler. And we were saying oh, he's going to talk this over and of course they talked it over, but they didn't stop, so

39:00 eventually it sort of came on all of a sudden, Hitler invaded Poland and from then on we all knew that it was on. And everyone was saying oh it won't last long with all the modern weapons and tanks and airplanes, it will be over in no time, but because everybody thought the British Empire was so strong that they

39:30 could bottle Hitler up but they had nothing like the equipment the Germans had so. And again my wise old boss, I said to him, "if things are going bad I'm going to join up", and he said, "Don't be in a hurry", and I said, "why, if I don't get there in a hurry it will be over before I get there", and he said,

40:00 " don't you kid yourself, if you join up in four years you'll still be in in time", and I just could not believe it. And proved right, it was 6 years the war went on. but was a old digger for the First World War. He summed it up, that it was going to last a long time, and of course he was right.

**Why do you think you were so keen to get over there?**

I suppose

40:30 it was sort of a sense of adventure, you thought well, the Germans are causing all the trouble, go over there and do something about it, or do what you can. Apart from that a lot of the other people were joining up, so you may as well be worth it. You could sort of, I don't think in those days, I suppose we thought we were pretty

41:00 pretty right that nothing would happened to us, but it was foolish thing to think, but when you are young and carefree and you thought you were doing the right thing by the nation as well as wanting to go and find out what it was all about said right lets go. But it was very close to the start of the war before anyone really realised that it was on

41:30 or going to be on.

## Tape 3

00:32 **Where were you the day that [Prime Minister Robert] Menzies declared war?**

I don't know, I was probably if work, if it was a week day I would have been at work, yes. At the grocery shop.

**Do you remember in the weeks leading up to it that it was going to come at that time?**

Starting

01:00 to get a bit suspicious, but not really. We were a bit surprised that it came when it did come. But after Chamberlain had been there as I said before, most of us thought that they'd develop or come to some understanding and that peace would be declared but when as I said before when Germany went into Poland Britain of course

01:30 was had a pact with Poland that they would fight on their side and there was no alternative then but to declare war. I think we all knew it would have to be declared once Germany invaded Poland.

**Did you ever think that you wouldn't join up?**

02:00 I think early we just sort of first month or so it was just wait and see what happens sort of thing but it wasn't very long before I think everybody realised that Germany was right on top and they were far far better equipped than anyone else in the world. I think we started to get pretty serious about it then, but the early week or two

02:30 I think everyone thought oh Britain's just too strong. Cause it again, it came to that indoctrination we had as part of the British empire it was the strongest force in the world. It just proved that it didn't matter how strong you were numerically you didn't have the best equipment you were in trouble. And Germany was that far ahead of everybody else it was unbelievable. So

03:00 all of a sudden the news on the radio saying that if Germany is progressing here and there. Because it was a while even though he invaded Poland it was a week or two, I don't know how long, but there was a time factor before the British forces really went over into France. It just didn't; happen over night

03:30 they didn't race across with an invasion force or something, they just gradually built their force up over there, but they didn't have to go very far to meet the Germans they come to meet them.

**Were you the first to enlist in your family?**

No, John was. He was December I think 1939 and then Mick was about

04:00 March 1939 and that's when I would have gone only for Harry Wells being sick, so I had to wait about a month I think, but hen I went and enlisted but I thought I was never going to get a call up because they just went on and on and on, and eventually I didn't get a call up until

04:30 July because we found out then why, there was a some others from Gunning, a few mates who had joined up about the same time and they were waiting to open up this training camp at Goulburn, or a recruit receiving depot rather than a training depot at that stage. And in July, I'm not sure of the date now, but I think it about the 7th or 8th of July.

05:00 Those of us from Gunning and five of us I think, all got the call up the same time and a rail pass to catch the train at Gunning at 2 o'clock in the morning, lovely time. And the freezing cold night with frost on the ground as white as snow, off we went to Goulburn, picked us up and took us out to the showground. And there was few army officials there

05:30 but we were the first intake. But on the train we were on the contingent from the Snowy River which they called the snowy river boys, they were on it too. So all told I suppose there was about 50 or 60 of us all rounded in there about 3 o'clock in the morning, freezing cold night. Cause they, there was no beds, that was

06:00 my first introduction to army life. Some of the others had been in the Light Horse they knew a bit about it, but they gave us what they called a palliasse, looked like a big chaff bag and they brought bundles of straw and hay in and opened the bundles and ten of you to a bundle. Oh, one of the chaps with us was Ernie Padel who'd been a digger in the First World War, Ernie only

06:30 died about 12 months ago, he was just over 100. He said, "dive into it mate, dive into it, these blokes will take the lot if you don't", cause I was going fairly careful and I found he was right too. Every time you went to a new camp and you had to fill your palliasse you didn't wait to be a gentleman you dived in to get as much straw as you could because they were pretty thin.

07:00 So we bedded down the rest of the night on that, and it was absolutely freezing you could not believe how cold it was. The old building had a, it was a show building and I don't know what it was for, to this day I never bothered to find out, but it was built about that high off the ground and then there was about that much of wire netting, and then there was about 6 foot or nearly 2 metres

07:30 of galvanised iron and then more wire netting up the top. And the next couple of days the wind was blowing off the snow up in the Alps and, oh boy, it was cold. I've never been as cold in my life as I was there.

**Were you really keen to go to war because your brothers had already left?**

Yes, I think so that was part of it and the other thing was

08:00 people mightn't believe it but I knew I had two younger brothers and I thought well if went, Bert was married, Athol wasn't, but Bert was with a young son or daughter rather. And I thought well if I go that should be enough from the family and he shouldn't be expected to go, so. Because I'm single if I get killed its not going to effect anyone, only my parents sort of thing, but if he got killed

08:30 it would effect, still effect our parents and his wife and child as well.

**So he never went to war?**

No, well our father got very crippled up with arthritis and he used to have a heart complaint so virtually someone had to stay home and look after the dairy and look after him cause he used to collapse fairly easily and have to be carried back to the house

09:00 **And the army was happy with the number of sons over there, did they ever try to . . . ?**

No, they called Athol up later so they ended up with four of us. But Athol was called up in about late 1941 and of course that was when it was getting very serious, the threat of the Japanese was on for sure and everybody knew it was

09:30 going to come, and they started to call up men and he was in that age bracket, was called up then.

**So the army different have a policy of allowing one of more boys to stay at home?**

Oh, yes, they did if, and particularly if you were producing primary products like that see. It meant, if Bert and gone and the dairy had collapsed

10:00 there was no milk supply for the families in Gunning. Same with farmer's sons a lot of farmer's sons, the government had enough sense to realise that there is no use having an army if you can't feed them. So they were exempted if they wanted to be, just fill in a form and they decided whether they would call them up or not. It was always some, if you were a primary producer

10:30 for sure you could get out. See Moira tried to, even she tried to sign up for RAAF later in the war but they wouldn't accept her because she was producing clothing and she was, she got knocked back, was never accepted because at that stage, by the time she was 18 it was getting fairly obvious that the

11:00 allies were on the winning end, they were not desperate. So she was exempted to.

**How was your mother feeling with three sons at war? She must have been scared for you all?**

Yeah, I don't think she was real happy about it but she was supportive for us just the same. I often think it was a very trying on them, particularly when the Nips [Japanese] come into the war

11:30 the really trying time was when Singapore fell because they didn't know where I was, didn't have a clue. I remember pop saying, we talked it over and he said well he's either dead or he's going to be a POW [prisoner of war] so there is nothing we can do about it. So he said to the rest of the family that we've just got the wear it

12:00 and hope things turn out.

**So Harry's father the shop keeper, did he give you any advice?**

Well he advised me not to sign up so early, to hang on because he said there would

12:30 be plenty of time and as he said, its going to go on for a long time. But he told me a far bit about life in the army sort of thing and what you could expect, you could expect you got to eat the food you get, you don't get any choices and at times you won't enjoy it. But he always said what ever you get you eat it because he said you might not know when you are going to get your next meal, and of course he was right in that too.

13:00 **What about going into battle, did he tell you of some of the horrors you might experience?**

He, said he was a bit lucky, he said he was a machine gunner but he never really had to fire directly on to oncoming people, he was always placed in position to fire when an attack was going on by the infantry and they

13:30 the machine gunners used to fire, they'd give them a grid to fire on and they were to fire so many rounds of it all the time and he said although we fired a lot of shots and probably killed Germans we don't know whether we did most of the time because we were firing it more to keep them down so they couldn't fire on the infantry coming out of the trenches

14:00 so he said as far as he was concerned, from a machine gunners point of view, unless they are coming directly at you that's where most of the action is.

**Your brothers were already at war, did you get any news from the Middle East about how they were going?**

Yes, well once Mick had gone from the machine gunners to the

14:30 work shops we knew enough about it generally speaking there'd been worries cause we were bombers not the infantry because they had a heck of a lot of valuable material in the work shop so John the oldest one, his work shop was doing anti tank recovery and when they were in Syria when the tank battles were on there, when he often described being up in the olive grove

15:00 and they had their big wrecked trucks up there waiting when there was a lull in the battle they'd go down and get the battered up tanks and bring them back and send them to the work shop. And he said it was unbelievable manoeuvring going on in these big, on the planes down below them, but he said we were in the trees, and the planes

15:30 although were bombing at the tanks, they couldn't apparently see us, either that or the tanks were more important. They didn't worry them but at times they dropped bombs fairly close to one of their work shops. Where Mick was they strafed where he was and dropped bombs right on their work shop and damaged some of them but he got a tiny

16:00 bit of shrapnel in the back but not enough to stop him going, just got a dressing on and that was it.

**And you knew about some of these events in that 6 months, you were in contact?**

Writing contact, a lot of, John was telling me about these [(UNCLEAR)], but that was after the war that he told me. But we kept in touch we all wrote to each other regularly but Maisy in particular

16:30 the older sister she would write to everyone at least one a fortnight.

**So you had some idea what to expect? Maybe more than other men who didn't have brothers who had gone to war?**

Yes, I think we did because they kept stressing about the planes, because they didn't have much plane cover, they did, but not much. And stressing about the Stuka [German Junkers Ju-87 dive bomber] that they saw and

17:00 big formations going over to bomb somewhere else. So it sort of, I don't think it sinks in really as much as it does when you see them over you, it's a very big difference.

**Can you tell us more about the training camp in Goulburn?**

Fortunately we were only there for about a week and at 6 o'clock in the morning a bugle would sound and

17:30 they had big drums, coppers with hot water in and you could go down and get your mug of hot water to shave with and it was freezing cold there and about 7 o'clock out on parade for physical training, PT and that was done with all the clothes you could get on, plus your overcoat cause we had greatcoats then.

18:00 And it was the old through the arms out and the legs about, and jump about. It was about half an hour's physical training and back to your hut and about half an hour afterwards was mess parade. It was again you just didn't go and line up you had to fall into a parade and they'd line you up, first line, second line, third line, up you'd go and get your meal and

18:30 I think from memory there we used to mainly get porridge, porridge and I can't think of what else we were getting afterwards, but porridge mainly was a the first start for the breakfast there and later on we'd get out and a fair bit of time was taken up in equipping you, oh you had to go through dental inspections and get needles for just about everything.

19:00 **Small pox?**

Yeah, vaccination and of course I think all of us have still got a scar on my arm where we had the, and clothing, we get clothing and later on a rifle, identification discs and all these things. So most of our time there was taken up with that

19:30 and about two days before we left we moved into new huts they were building, they were sort of igloo shape you know like this, and they had bed board in there and they were a lot warmer, bed board they called them bed board was shaped like a bed but made of wood and it was up about that high



- 20:00 off the floor and it was slightly dished like that and it was much more comfortable than laying on the old floor, particularly when the winds blew through the wire nettings cause there was none of that there. So that was a big step up. So then one day, oh that's right, we started to get a bit of guard duty and I was guard and they called out a contingent to go out and join the 9th Battalion,
- 20:30 and I was away and called out a Power, strangely no relation there was another Power and he got out and I stepped out into this group, and Mal Johnson who was a close friend at the time, he said, "that's not Fred Powers, he's on guard duty", so they checked the serial number then and said, "yes
- 21:00 he's wrong", so they come down and replace me as the guard on the gate and I had to go up and join the contingent there. And we were told we were moving the next day to Wallgrove [army camp]. So there was all told I think there must have been, all these snowy river boys and Gunning and Yass and that district there would be about 30 to 40 of us all went
- 21:30 down to join the 2/19th Battalion, which was just being formed at Wallgrove. We got down there and the difference in the night air to what it was at Goulburn was unbelievable, we couldn't believe the difference we were quite happy to get around just in a shirt and our pants down there, whereas in Goulburn we were around in our overcoat nearly all the time.

### **Where is Wallgrove?**

- 22:00 Its out from Parramatta, do you know Rooty Hill? It's close to Rooty Hill, and there was a camp there, it's no longer a camp it's built over now, it had been an old militia camp when the militia they had camps for
- 22:30 training once a year or twice a year. We went in there and they had horse drawn vehicles going around collecting the garbage, that's how far behind they were.

### **So it was just the 19th Battalion?**

Yes, the 2/19th.

### **What was the training there?**

Well it was there we started off, the first thing started off was discipline, the biggest problem an army had is to move large number of men

- 23:00 in an orderly fashion. so the first thing they tell you is drill and what they call the bullring they used to call it there, you'd be doing drill in one place and you'd move around to the next shot and you'd be doing exercises with the rifle and show arms, present arms and all this sort of thing
- 23:30 and from there as you got a few more weeks of that drill and you were able to march in platoons and then you started going out on exercises into the bush, wasn't bush it was countryside. And of course they teach the way to look for cover, where to conceal
- 24:00 yourself behind small objects and small bits of bush and things. All, if you are coming up over a sky line you never just walk up over the skyline you crouch down low and run over it, get over it as quickly as you can because that's when you are the best target. So you learn all that sort of thing. And they were teaching maintenance of your rifles and that sort of thing which I knew backwards anyhow being in the rifle club.
- 24:30 But that was easy and we also learned about Lewis machine guns, and its one of those things you know, you see on the pictures, you see people behind machine guns and they are shuddering like this and it goes on for half an hour, but the old Lewis guns they had 49 rounds in it and they fired at a rate of 600 a minute. So you know how far 49 rounds
- 25:00 lasted at that speed. So you were taught to fire them in bursts of five and it was a matter of just a touch on the trigger like that because and I mastered it really well so I was made an instructor then and teaching the other fellows on that and I enjoyed that because I could pull a machine gun together just about blindfolded and then when we went to Malaya we still had those. But about
- 25:30 a fortnight before we went into the fighting they were all taken away and replaced with Brens. All that time was wasted because the Bren was much more accurate. The Lewis used to dance around a lot, but the Bren you fire five rounds and put it through the same hole but you couldn't do it with the Lewis.

### **How were your ears?**

Oh, my ears are, I think

- 26:00 those are the things are the cause of my hearing not being as good as it should be. But they then we went to rifle range and we practiced, we had a few trips with the rifle, that was easy for me. And we did the that and machine guns. Then we learned to prime grenades, people think they know, people taking ammunition boxes of grenades thinking that's a risky job,
- 26:30 they won't go off unless somebody primes them. The fuses and caps sets them off when their not in

them when they shipped you've got to learn to put them in yourself, you take the bolt thing out of the back and put the fuse and cap in, then when you put it on they are dangerous. So we had to learn all those sort of things, bayonet drill.

#### **What did that involve?**

27:00 Bayonet drill they had bags hung on the ends stuffed with straw because you had to charge these things and whip your bayonet in and get out quickly then off again to the next thing, and, it's a thing that really didn't happen much in the war believe me. But because so many towards the war, fought the Second World War with automatic weapons like the Bren gun and

27:30 the Tommy guns so there wasn't a lot of that sort of hand to hand combat like there used to be going from trench to trench sort of thing. Also we had to learn to sort of sword fight with the bayonets on. You'd learn the drill of tipping the other fellows bayonet up, or using the butt

28:00 of your, bring your butt around of your rifle and they weighed nine pound and if they hit you with that it would cause a lot of problems. But it was one of those things that you had to learn because you never know if you were going to have to use it, but not many people did in the war. Most people that

28:30 bayoneted people bayoneted those that were already wounded because there was very little hand to hand combat, anywhere.

#### **Did you feel the training you got was adequate?**

Well I think so, I think it was the best that they could possibly do. See they taught simple things that people, the average person wouldn't have thought about. If there was planes coming

29:00 doing a bombing, and the thing that shows mostly up from the air is something white. So we were taught to never look up at the planes when they were coming close, look down. So they can't, they are much less likely to pick up your body than they are your face. So all those sort of things, also if the plane is strafing you didn't just lay were you were

29:30 you made sure if he was coming from there you went this way because most of them strafed with about four machine guns and there was a gap between them, always a chance that the bullets would go each side but if you were cross ways they were going to get you for sure.

#### **Practical?**

Practical things the average person wouldn't have thought of, someone had been through the mill knew what should be done. Training was

30:00 pretty thorough and I suppose a lot of cases when the Japs first came into the war there was practically no training because there wasn't time. But we had plenty of time and they, I think they did as good as we could expect.

#### **You trained with some people who came famous for different reasons. Can you tell us about Anderson [Lieutenant Colonel Charles Anderson, Victoria Cross, Malaya, 1942]?**

Oh yes he was fantastic he was our

30:30 2IC [second in command] when we were at Wallgrove. Later on he was promoted to our colonel. And he was in the First World War [and was a] very young lieutenant in South Africa there [the Boer War, 1899-1902]. And he got a military medal there for I think he raided into some of the, I think some of the old Dutch

31:00 or can't think what they call them now, the Boers, some of those were harassing some of the British units and Anderson had some task to go and clean them up which he led brilliantly apparently and so he had a task of what it was all about and that was a big asset. He was one of those persons

31:30 he was always respected and always, everybody even after the war still addressed him as colonel. But the first colonel we had, the difference in respect, I never heard anyone call Anderson, anything but colonel or Charles, but the other colonel we had first was an old World War I fellow too, a big stomach on him

32:00 and he was not affectionately known as it, but he was known as Mud Guts, nobody had respect for him like they had for Anderson.

#### **That was Colonel Maxwell?**

Maxwell yes. Later became Brigadier Maxwell. And then on Singapore Island, Maxwell was a doctor by trade and he had lost an eye in the First World War I think it was in the war but he only had one eye. But after the landing at Singapore

32:30 and the Japs landed on Singapore he went into the hospitals there out with the doctoring side of things. I think he was alright in a way but he just didn't look the part and he just didn't have the respect that Anderson had. Right from the word go Anderson was somebody to sort of click with the ordinary down-to-earth soldier, the private and the NCOs [non commissioned officers]

33:00 he was always well respected.

**Was he a bit of a Weary Dunlop type character?**

Ah no I don't think so. He was very precise in doing things, he wanted to do everything correct and he wanted us to do everything correct, but he wasn't that type. Weary Dunlop who I didn't know and I never met but from

33:30 what I can hear of him he was a brilliant man in caring for people. But in a different way to Anderson, Anderson cared about his troops but with the same token he wouldn't hesitate for one minute whether it was his best friend in the unit or not he was the best one to go in and do a job and he was going to be killed he would send him. He did it, really

34:00 brilliant brain at organising what had to be done irrespective of the cost, if it had to be done it had to be done, that was it.

**He won a Victoria Cross?**

Yes, he, that was after we first went into action up at Muar [Malaya], they were held up, B Company, we were coming back, we'd been up to

34:30 attack the 2/29th who had been surrounded by the Japs and they sent us up to get through to them and before we knew it we were surrounded too. But we got through to them and picked up what we could of the remnants of the 2/29th Battalion and their colonel had been killed and Anderson then took the whole force

35:00 them and us and we were coming back, trying to get back to a bridge which we had run over which was supposed to be held by a British unit, and which we didn't know at the time they'd been bombed and strafed and they pulled out and left us without any escape route really. And the Japs took that over and barricaded this bridge. We were coming down this road and

35:30 it had a cutting in it and about, as high as the bottom of those things on each side, and someone was coming down one side and the rest of us on the other, I was on the right hand side and as B Company had gone through, and Anderson and headquarters were coming through behind B Company and everything stopped and no one was making any progress

36:00 and he got a bit worried about it so he went forward to find out what the trouble was and B Company had run into a machine gun next and the one's that, the forward ones were killed.. I can remember three of them and that I can remember, I can't remember one of their names but the other two one was called Baker and the other one Sewell because I took their name tags off, ...just for the padre

36:30 and that was just after we did the action but he

**We'll go into that in great detail later, but let's get back to training. Where did you go after training?**

37:00 Well Ingleburn was the main Sydney camp at that time and the 7th Division had moved out of there and we moved into Ingleburn and we were there for I suppose about the best part of 6 months, it seemed a fair long time. And we trained there, we trained up in the hills at Flemington at Ingleburn and we

37:30 used to go out on night exercises as well as day time ones. But there was always periods where you doing just drills and the marching drills and that sort of thing and of course from there before we left for Bathurst we had a march through Sydney. And I'll always remember and I don't know who was the instigator

38:00 when you change arms because you do get tired, we used to change with the full movement, you'd, if your arms are on their you'd take it and put it like that to the front then bring it up and then on the other shoulder and then wait for it. But later they changed that to there bang, straight onto this shoulder and it was a spectacular move and

38:30 I don't know why they changed it but it was a little bit more difficult to do I suppose they wanted to speed things up . But we had a march through Sydney and Ingleburn but I used to have trouble, we'd get the train back to Rooty Hill and we'd have to wait on buses when we had leave to go to Ingleburn and

39:00 because they were nearly all country boys the 9th Battalion someone would start baa, baa, like a mob of sheep and everyone would start, and believe me when you hear about 2 or 300 men going baa, baa it does sound like a great mob of sheep, and that was one of the things they filled in time while they were waiting for the buses to go back. But I had one experience there we had a Scottish

39:30 sergeant major who had been in the Scottish Army all his life until he came out here and he was, oh Jock Gillespie, he was absolutely a stickler for discipline, I think one of the first things that struck me about him was, Archie Arnott had to go to sick parade because he wasn't feeling well and he turned out on sick parade without

40:00 a hat one, well didn't he get dressed down about that, and poor old Archie could hardly walk he was

that sick with the flu, he had to go back and get his hat to go on sick parade to go to the doctor so that was the sort of bloke, fellow that Jock was.

**Did you have any idea how the war was going? Did you still expect to go over to the Middle East?**

Oh yes definitely, yeah

40:30 we never realised we were going to go to Malaya until probably about three weeks before we sailed. But Jock was he was a hard task master, if you were on duty you were on duty, and Mick at this stage was still in Australia and he was getting married at North Sydney and I applied for leave to go

41:00 and Jock wouldn't let me go, because I was on guard duty so we had a pretty good sergeant there, sergeant of the guard and this was a Saturday so we were getting a leave, normally get a leave pass at 12 o'clock and Jimmy Smith the sergeant of the guard, and Roy was one of the privates there and Roy said, "I'll do your shift if you can get permission to go", so I went and asked Jock and he said, "no way" so went back and told Jimmy there is no way he'd going to let me go so I think I'll go AWOL [absent without leave] and he said, "oh don't do that, what time is the wedding?" and I said, "about 6 o'clock" and he said, "Jock will be gone on leave himself by about one or two so as soon as he goes Roy will take your place . . .

## Tape 4

00:31 **How long were you at Ingleburn training?**

I would say we would have been, just a minute, the best part of 4 or 5 months I think. I would have had all this in my pay book we were away once and we got burgled and somebody took my pay book and discharge certificate amongst other things so I don't have those

01:00 records, and I said to Moira the other day, get onto the internet and see if you can pick up my army records, they are supposed to be on there and she put all the information in and its supposed to be there and they said no record of Frederick Percy Power. So I thought with that coming up it would give me those dates.

**That's okay we just need to know roughly, so if you just give us a general feel for the time?**

01:30 If I took a rough punt I'd say we were February at Bathurst, yeah we would have been at least 3 to 4 months.

**So it was fairly thorough training?**

Yeah, it was really a lot of training there particularly with the exercises out in the field

02:00 only to cross streams and to tie your gear up in a ground sheet and float it across above your head sort of thing and carry it across. Learning to keep your rifle and ammunition dry, although a lot of people put too much on the ammunition I think, because these days with sealed up ammunition you can be wet and it will still fire, its not like

02:30 the old days when they were cardboard sort of covered cases on the ammunition and get that wet and they were no use at all. But we had to go through all those exercises.

**Were you starting to feel like a soldier?**

By then, yes we were, as a matter of fact a lot of thought we were fairly well trained but we had a lot to learn

03:00 later on to find out we that it was a different war where we were going to because we were trained for desert war and you know out in the open areas so we had the applicable coloured suits too, the beigey colour shirt and shorts and that, and everything was all the training was what you would

03:30 expect out in the desert because they thought that that was were we were going to end up. I often wondered why because it was closer to bring British troops there in full force and finish the desert campaign a lot earlier than they did, because they didn't have the equipment, that was the let down, I think for the first time there we saw Bren gun carriers

04:00 which were like a very light tank without a top on so they were open at the top and they carried, they didn't, they called them a Bren gun carrier but they didn't; have Bren guns, they each had a Lewis gun on them and, that's right they had a Lewis gun and vicars gun, they were really a machine gun carrier.

**Were you and the boys**

04:30 **getting anxious to get over there into the action?**

Yes, very much so because everybody was saying, oh how long is this going to go on, you know we thought we were going over to the war because all the others had gone earlier without as much training

but I think again in hindsight we realised they just didn't have the shipping, and its alright to say they could have taken more passenger ships off the

05:00 coastal run but they had to have escort ships and because at this stage practically all the British navy was involved in trying to escort the ships across the Atlantic. So there was all those things that we didn't consider at the time but in hindsight you see there could have been causes for us not going over and in reality we weren't as well trained as we thought we were.

05:30 **Was there much talk of the Japanese when you were training there?**

Not much, there was a little bit because they were in the coalition with the Italians and the Japanese they had pacts together but I don't think any of them honoured it much but, and I think one of the things that was a false impression to us was

06:00 had been was if the Japs would come into the war the Americans would and everybody believed what the Americans were saying, Colonel Knox, or Commodore he was a navy man, he said if the Japs come into the war we'll back our fleet into the harbour and stick them overnight. How wrong he was. But those sort of things made us believe that at that stage the Japs wouldn't go into

06:30 the war.

**Did you have a sense that the British base in Singapore was a strong bastion?**

Oh yes we thought it was absolutely impenetrable. We believed that even after we went over there, it was supposed to be that way but some one who did the planning only planned for one end, and it was a very

07:00 bad mistake.

**Can you tell us what happened after Ingleburn?**

At Ingleburn we were transferred then to Bathurst after the division that we followed into Ingleburn they went overseas, I think that was the 7th Division, either the 7th or the 9th, I'm not sure which. But we went into where they were at Bathurst then

07:30 and again it was open country training and digging trenches and still a lot of them believed that trench systems were very important and we were digging trenches so that you had small weapon pits which were the hardest to fall into but these trench systems took you back to headquarters

08:00 to link you up with your company and then the company linked up with the battalion and the other two companies also linked up. So we'd have trenches in some pretty hard ground there for ages. We did night stunts and I remember we were taken out by one of the lieutenant and I think it was Lieutenant Johnson but I'm not certain now, in charge of us, but we had to do a raid, supposed to be a raid on a village

08:30 and the village didn't exist only it was in a certain mapped location and he was to lead up through there and about half past ten at night we ended up in an Edgell's asparagus farm, sampling all the asparagus. They weren't too happy about that the next day he wasn't as good at reading his directions at night as he thought he was

09:00 cause we all, we just followed we didn't have compasses or we didn't even have map references. So that one was a bit of a failed exercise.

**You must have been pretty fit by then?**

Oh yes we were very fit because we, well we'd do lots of route marches to keep us fit, 10 or 12 miles

09:30 and that, sometimes with a full pack on, oh we did respirator drills because there was a great fear of gases being used at that stage and doing drill with respirators on is a very, very tough task. You've got to force the breath in and out of respirators, its not just as easy breathing as what it looks, but it was very necessary, the training was necessary

10:00 at that stage so I suppose, although it was never used, a good precaution.

**Were you getting close to the boys around you at that stage? Becoming good mates?**

Oh yes. Well see some of us had been together for 6 to 8 months, sleeping in tents or this one at Wallgrove was only 6 of you to a tent and they become very

10:30 close then when you went into the huts that 6 would nearly always get close together again so you built up a close relationship there and then you spread it a bit wider as you mixed in more with the others. But you didn't mix very much outside your won company, there was three platoons of around 30 to a company, and they

11:00 were the ones you lived with you ate with you trained with 90 percent of the time. They had, each company had their own kitchen and feeding arrangements and their own Q stores for clothing and that sort of thing so you were really looking at, with your officers and NCOs you are looking at around about

100 which you became very close to, very close to about 5 or 6.

11:30 **And that 5 or 6 for you, were they mainly Gunning boys?**

No, no only one Gunning boy left, the others had been in the light horse and they'd been transferred to the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion.

**Did you have a best mate or a couple of best mates?**

Oh well I think Bobby Ives was probably

12:00 the best mate and Bluey Costello his real name was Costelli but he put his name down as Costello when he joined up, I become pretty close with him. Greg Wiley who later become a lieutenant, oh Rolf Sanderson, I think Sandy got a lieutenant too after some of the others were killed at Muar. They were close because

12:30 were ever we moved we were always sort of in the same section, each platoon was drawn into a section of ten, and they have a corporal in charge so there is three corporals in the company, in the platoon of 30 plus a sergeant and an officer. So you very often you just did training

13:00 as a platoon or a section, so again it gets back to a small group gets the closest to you. Other companies you hardly know them, naturally you know a few because you meet them and, not very many, you don't know them well, but, so time and time again the same one come up that you've been with, training in one place

13:30 trained you're with them nearly all the time, and often you went on leave together with them, because it was better to go on leave with mates then just haphazard in a strange town, but

**Did you get much leave in Bathurst?**

From memory I think it was pretty liberal there, if we weren't on exercises over the weekend we could get a day leave pass and

14:00 **What would your priorities be on a day leave?**

Well you'd go along and you'd look to see where your mates were going, if they were going to the pub you'd go along and have a couple of beers, I wasn't a very avid drinker, one or two would do me any time, but I liked to go and have a look at the parks and the gardens and things, and there were some very interesting things around

14:30 Bathurst and old buildings and things like that. And I have a friend in the engineers his uncle lives there and I used to go and visit them occasionally. But generally speaking it was, oh we'd go to the pictures too, it was something a bit different to, if you had leave, sometimes you wouldn't get it until midnight

15:00 so go along to the pictures and then if there was anything on like a rodeo or something on that particular day we'd go and watch that, it was something a bit more interesting to. But very often a lot of people out on leave, there would be over 3000 people in there camp and all of them into a country town, unless there is something on

15:30 you tend to wonder around a bit and just window shop and eye off the girls and this sort of thing but nothing very spectacular.

**Fred, the training you did at Bathurst, was there any real difference between that and the Ingleburn training?**

No, only I'd say it was a little more intense we did things a

16:00 little bit harder and longer route marches and longer training on the field deployment sort of thing, at that stage we started to pit one battalion against another to make, to learn defensive and attacking skills, I suppose you'd call them skills of some sort

16:30 so we did quite a bit of that, but generally speaking its very routine and after months and months of doing the same thing it get very monotonous and that's when people getting discontented you know saying, why can't we go overseas and but that sort of thing gets you browned off, repetition, but you have to do it, you don't have

17:00 any choice.

**So how long were you training in Bathurst before you got information about your movement?**

Oh, probably another 3 months at least and then we got information that we would be going overseas, thing again it was going to be the Middle East until the

17:30 you know we'd be inside of a month or so, before we were, that's right we got information then on roughly what date we were going, or what month at least I can't remember the details of it, but we were all told we were going there and some one picked up a rumour somewhere that we were going to Malaya and

18:00 it went all around the camp and about 2 or 3 days later the colonel, this was Maxwell, came out and we had a full parade and said that, the rumours that we were going to Malaya hadn't been substantiated at that stage and he said, I'd like to know how all the companies in the battalion

18:30 found this out before I was even told we were likely to go. So he was a bit browned off, there was always word around, don't spread rumours, don't do this, but he said I'll let you know when it is confirmed that we are, if we are going there, I'll let you know, which we did sometime later, that that day but a few days later. And of course the rumour was around and that was that

19:00 **Did you have an idea where the rumour might have originated?**

Not the slightest, no. I suppose someone must have known we never heard where it came from but I guess, I think those sort of things originated in signals office or somewhere like that, intercepted signals going through them, that's the only explanation that I would think that would be possibly right.

19:30 **So the possibility of going to Malaya, what did that make you think?**

Well we thought we were being sent there to bluff the Japanese not to we still didn't think that the Japs would come in we thought it was just a show of strength to let the Japanese know that Singapore is going to be protected it was a really

20:00 and I think with all due respect to them the Australians all higher authority really thought Singapore was a real fortress and it only needed enough troops there to back up the protection that was supposed to be there and everything would be alright. Because they didn't do anything about sending a any decent airplanes or anything there

20:30 the equipment that the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] had was absolutely murderous, they had no hope in hell, none at all.

**Did you know much about Malaya at all?**

No, hardly even, well just from geography at school hardly knew anything about it at all, What we did know was it was in the tropics and it would be tropical and hot and wet but that's about as

21:00 much as we knew about it.

**So the rumour went around and it was only a couple of days later that Maxwell confirmed it?**

Yes.

**And what happened after that?**

Well after that we were issued with summer clothing, but again it was the desert coloured stuff for the desert and we did have some of that but we also had the winter clothing, the winter clothing was

21:30 taken away and we were issued with more shirts and shorts and so it was pretty obvious again where we were going, the rumour was pretty right. Or what Maxwell had, confirmed it by then, so the equipment didn't change only just the clothing

22:00 **how long after that did you end up boarding the vessel?**

Oh, probably about a fortnight I think.

**What was the process from there? Did you get to visit your family before you left?**

Yeah we had what they called in those days final leave. But later on in the war they didn't give final leave because it was so final for so many people that they realised that it was a bad

22:30 move so they used to call it pre embarkation leave. Cause it was a kinder sort of word for it, but it was the same thing before you went away you always had virtually your final leave to go home.

**How was that time with your family?**

Oh pretty good, you know Gunning was nothing much to do but I think I played tennis for a couple of days, a couple of times, and

23:00 I think I helped Bert with some fencing he was doing at the time, with the fencing but generally just the normal things we would have done, pre war nothing very spectacular, it was only a week and it took us one day each way going and coming, so it was only really about 5 days to fill in right in the town itself.

23:30 **And how were your parents feeling that you were about to leave?**

Oh, Mum was a bit upset about it but I think Dad took it in his stride, he knew it was inevitable and he was that sort of, he didn't get very emotional about things whereas Mum did. Pos just, he accepted it, he knew the other two boys were away anyhow

24:00 and he, I think he took it well, he's going and we cant' do anything about it was his, just accept it. And if he's going to Malaya well he'd going to a pretty safe spot. Which didn't prove that safe eventually.

**So it wasn't forbidden to tell your family you were going to Malaya?**

I can't really

24:30 be sure now, I knew we were going there and whether we were not to tell them or not, I don't think we were allowed to tell them, as a matter of fact I come to think, I don't think we actually confirmed it until after we back from that final leave because when we come back we had another week or so, I don't know how long now but it

25:00 was packing up of all the gear and movements getting ready to leave, so I think he told us afterwards so I don't think we really knew at that stage. But if they did, they would have thought oh well that's pretty safe there, I don't think anybody would have thought the Japanese would have been an overly dangerous threat because of all the stupid propaganda that was put about of them being very

25:30 easy victims for the westerners to conquer, so there was a false representation for sure.

**What form did that propaganda take?**

Oh, I don't, they used to say particular oh the Japs they are only little runts and there're they got trouble with their eyes, they've got glasses they can't see well, and even then they have strong glasses a

26:00 lot of the hoey on the cartoons that you see on the Japanese and that and it sort of tried to impress you, that they weren't very important at all. And as far as treating them as a real dangerous force they sort of thought they just didn't measure up, of course they did.

**26:30 Did your family say goodbye in Gunning or did they come to see you off?**

No, at Gunning they weren't supposed to know we were leaving but got, I had some friends in Sydney and they got the information when we were going and they let them know tell them when we were leaving so

27:00 we and I think most of us, I can't be sure but I think most of us would have written home, posted a letter in the last couple of days, thought it would have been censored, if we weren't able to get it out of camp, if you knew someone going out of camp you'd send it without any censoring going on, but if its going through camp course if you put anything like your destination it would be cut out.

**Would you be punished**

**27:30 or was it just cut out?**

No, just cut out. Letters, get your letters home and of course they cut it quite a lot of them and home and you'd see them with cut outs in them even from when we were overseas and half the time you wondered if half the stuff they cut out was, I know in my case I wouldn't write it if I thought there was any danger to it, but they still cut it out

**28:00 So it's a frustrating process?**

Yes, and it was frustrating to some of the officers too because they used to read every letter coming from their section or platoon and cut out what they thought or what they were told were cut outs, they were instructed by the I sections what was allowed and what wasn't allowed. But it was very frustrating it must have been

28:30 frustrating for them at home reading a letter with 2 or 3 big gaps in it. But I suppose they thought oh well, he must have said something. There was no point in saying anything really, not the average soldier didn't know anything really of any real value to the enemy. They wouldn't know anything that the enemy wouldn't know, didn't know anything. It was a waste of time

29:00 and as far as I'm concerned it was a futile exercise but it had to be done according to the rules and if you don't follow the rules, you are in trouble.

**When you were boarding the Queen Mary, what was on your mind?**

Well, oh I don't really know only, probably we are getting away at last or possibly one of the things, will I ever come back again,

29:30 you can't help thinking it whether you like it or not, but those thoughts go through your mind and think well if I don't I can't do anything about it, we're on the way now.

**What was the general atmosphere or morale like?**

Oh great., full of confidence and full of support for one another, there were no

30:00 no worries on that score at all. They'd been together for quite a long time and they were all very confident of their own ability and the whole unit's ability.

**How did you feel about boarding the Queen Mary?**



We thought that was a wonderful adventure it was luck of the draw, they drew who went were and A company was lucky

30:30 they went to A deck which was up above the water line and some of the ones that drew at the bottom they were right down in the hulls. We went up to find our allocated area we were allocated to a two berth cabin and they built bunks in them and we had 10 in a two berth cabin but the beauty of it was we had a bath there, it was only salt water,

31:00 and a toilet handy there which was, you know much more than we had expected. And the Queen Mary hadn't been stripped properly at that stage either and a lot of the panelling there wasn't really there and I remember coat hangers on really carved out coat hangers on the ward robe there were sort of screwed on you couldn't take them off although somebody

31:30 pulled them off, they got them off but they were beautifully done, so it was a real luxury to be compared to anything we had seen. And course we went down to the mess deck which was the ball room it was a huge place and it was all fitted out with army tables and that on the floor but

32:00 the curtains and things were still there and beautifully done, but it could seat 2000 at a time for a meal and your mind boggles at the problems the cooks had at getting ready for 2000 at a time and as soon as they were out another 2000 in, three sittings. So 6000 troops.

#### **It was a full house when you were on there?**

Well it was but later on

32:30 for a short spell, they brought 14000 Yanks to Australia on it, but they must have slept on decks and everything then, and crowded the hulls and I think by that stage, down in the hulls they had built chairs and bunks too which they didn't have when we were there. But that gives you an idea of the size of the ship when you

33:00 bring 14000 people on it. I think they didn't cater for them too I think they lived on iron rations from what I've heard, I'm not dead sure on that, but it was absolutely a marvellous ship.

#### **How did you spend your time when you were travelling?**

Well the decks on the Queen Mary were almost as broad as this room and we used to have turns on the

33:30 certain areas for drill and we did unarmed combat and boxing and that sort of thing. And that was one of the surprises that Charles Cousins gave us. He was a beautifully built man and an absolute dapper dresser, you know everything was tailor-made and suited and he wore pretty

34:00 strong glasses and everybody looked at him, we didn't know him as well as we knew him later on, a very immaculate and he was a fairly strict disciplinarian but as fair as you could possibly, if you did the right thing he'd back you to the hilt.

#### **What was his rank at that stage?**

He was a captain then, he became a major later on. And we had a chap called Wally Burns who used to be a prelim fighter at the Sydney stadium, and he was giving us boxing lessons

34:30 and old Charlie comes, we called him old Charlie, cause he was a bout 35, he was old to us. Old Charlie comes along expecting the different troops and Wally was showing this bloke how to, I can't think who he was sparring with now, to box, and he said, you know you take cover like this and he was doing something and Charlie said, "I think you are wrong Burns", cause he always used to call us

35:00 by our surname not our first name, "I think you are wrong Burns", he said, "you'll be leaving yourself very open for a left hook there", and Wally said, "I've been fighting a fair bit Sir, I think I know what I'm talking about", and old Charlie said, "I still think you're . . .", and Wally made the mistake of saying, "would you like to try it?", and he says, "good idea, Burns". Took his glasses

35:30 off and put his gloves on and he said, "now you take that defensive thing", and he must have hit Wally Burns 50 times in a minute and a half, and he put them down and he said, "do you see what I mean Burns?" and he got and he walked away about 10 yards and he come back and he said, "don't be worried about that Burns I was welter weight champion of the British Army", and you know a

36:00 dapper fellow you couldn't have believed, but boy could he box.

#### **What sort of profile did he have in Australia at that stage?**

he was a radio announcer and a very, very well, popular one, he had the most beautiful speaking voice and clear with everything, I think he was on 2GB [radio station], I'm not dead certain of that, but I think 2GB and he was absolutely idolised by a terrific audience because of his

36:30 brilliant speaking and brilliant summing up of things, he was a really, really very capable man.

#### **So you were quite chuffed to have a celebrity in the ranks?**

Yes, for a while but it just became, oh well its just Charlie Cousins after a while, he was our captain, but no one was

- 37:00 overawed by him we knew his discipline, he'd pull you into line quickly, but after if you wanted to go and talk to him down in his hut any time, no trouble at all, or he'd come down and talk to us some of them were playing cards, he'd sit down and watch them playing cards for a while and that's, that was one of the main activities of a night there was nothing else to do, play cards and, no he was a great mixer with the people
- 37:30 once he got to know them, he got to know us, but the first we saw of him when he come at Wallgrove, he joined us at Wallgrove, adjutant the colonel Maxwell had drawn a parade out for all the battalion and someone was moved a foot or something and old Charlie roared out, "stand still, damn you"
- 38:00 and now that absolutely shocked us because we were allowed to get away with a fair bit before and we thought oh jeez we are going to be in trouble with this bloke, but he turned out something was really good. But being in the, he'd been in the permanent British army in India for oh I don't know how many years but a lot of years and he was brought up on
- 38:30 the English system and it took a while to be a little bit more relaxed but he turned out just as good an officer as you could wish to have.

**So he did manage to loosen up a bit?**

Yes, yes oh yes, but he was always a gentleman, and if he was reprimanding somebody for not doing something right or being AWOL when they shouldn't have been he did it calmly and

- 39:00 correctly but in a gentlemanly manner, but I remember know too, before we were going away once we knew, after we had final leave Ronnie Brown from Manly permission to go back to Sydney get his guitar and come back, because officers were going to entertain the men to and serve them before
- 39:30 dinner before we left, and Ronnie went AWOL and he stayed an extra two days and didn't bother bringing his guitar back and old Charlie he was terribly disappointed about that and he said, "I trusted you, one of these days you might regret that, I might have to do something to get even with you, you let me down", and he said, "I hope I never let you down, he said well I have to do something
- 40:00 to you sometime", he said, "you'll know it s not malice its just what you did to me", that was his attitude, because Ronnie got fined 5 pound I think it was for being AWOL, but that didn't worry him he stayed with his family for an extra couple of nights. He was a leading guitarist in an orchestra and he was a very good guitarists and
- 40:30 that's why Charlie gave him the opportunity to go back and get it.

**Was there any entertaining on board the Queen Mary?**

Oh, the bands, there was three companies, three battalions on there and each battalion had a band and they used to put on concerts and when you get a lot of men like that you get a lot of people with ability and all sorts of things comedians and singers so they used to put on entertainments basically every night

- 41:00 somewhere and of course the popular place with most of them was in the canteen. Two up was going on on some of the decks, it was something to do or you could go in your bunk and read, or you could wonder around the decks as long as you didn't light a cigarette or anything you couldn't smoke at night. But the, right around the
- 41:30 decks I believe it was something like 800 metres around the decks you could walk around there, that was a pretty good walk, there was always plenty of room to do exercises. It was a magnificent ship there was no doubt about it.

## Tape 5

**00:34 Tell us what happened when you arrived in Singapore and disembarked from the Queen Mary?**

A little bit of a funny incident. While we were on there we were on the top deck, the sun deck, to assemble to come off. There was a lot of natives with their bare feet working on the docks or

- 01:00 looking on. A few chaps threw over pennies or ha'pennies or something like that. They were fighting over it. They were running and stomping their foot on it. The edge of the deck there was a gutter about that size, of steel. Somebody got a heap of matches and lit them there. They warmed up the pennies and ha'pennies and the got a bayonet and flipped them
- 01:30 over. You'd see them put their foot on it. After a while they woke up and some smart bloke got away and he got a piece of sugar bag or something. He started picking it up with that so he spoiled the fun. People will do things like that. We had to wait about 2 or 3 hours before it was our turn to come off.

Then

- 02:00 from there we had all our gear with us. Kit bags and packs and went across to the railway station and boarded a train. They took us to a place called Seremban in the Negri Sembilan state. When we got off there we were allocated to barracks in George V's School. I don't know what they did with the kids, but
- 02:30 they probably had to get out. We were barracked in the school and outbuildings. I wasn't in the main building. We were in an outer building. We started getting settled down and they opened a canteen, the British troops had a canteen there all ready for us. A lot of them were down at the canteen. I got
- 03:00 put on picket duty for the night. Picketing the canteen. It was two of us on the canteen, the rest were going up to town, because they knew there'd be a few AWL, they had to find out what was going on. Reg Wiley, our lieut [lieutenant], who'd been with me since we were up on the street with the things there, because they didn't know where people were. They didn't know where the streets
- 03:30 or anything. We'd been told about all the dangers of mixing with the natives. Mixing with the girls you were likely to get diseases. The males were just as likely to cut your throat. They were deadly sounding things. We were only armed with side arms, that was just your bayonet and a scatan gun. About
- 04:00 10 o'clock Greg came through to say he needed a couple of extra hands up there. So the chap and I were sent up there. The canteen was left to look after itself. It was a strange feeling when you're in a strange world the two of you on your own, and all these natives looking at you. When I say natives they were Malays, Chinese, Indians and Pakistanis. They were
- 04:30 all mixed up together. We were going in there looking suspiciously, after we were looking more suspiciously at them 'cos of what we were told. I think we were feeling going up there. I struck Greg and

#### **How did you get up there?**

We had to walk. Was about a mile and a half. We struck Greg and he told us to go to this streets

- 05:00 with him and some of the others and he told us to meet at the post office in an hour's time. We didn't find anything so we just went back to everywhere we should be something. Every little shop sold grog, so we just went in. None of our blokes were there. So we went up. Parts of that was very uneventful. The going up
- 05:30 you didn't know what was likely to come out.

#### **Must have been amazing to see these people.**

The multinationals like that, it was amazing. They're all chattering away in their own languages. We didn't know at that time that 90% of them could speak English. All the younger ones, if they were going to school, if they were Chinese they had to learn Chinese, Malay and English. If they were

- 06:00 Malay they only had to learn Malay and English. So they had to have their own language plus Malay and English. After a while, we were there a few weeks and got to know them. Little kids this size going bargain up the stalls if we wanted to buy some apples or something like that. Had to bargain with these dealers. Everything was bargain. Nothing had a set price. They'd tell you something. If you paid it that
- 06:30 was bad luck. They accepted. If they said \$2 you paid them \$2. We didn't think much of that. We thought it had to be right. Sometimes what we were paying \$2 for was worth really about 20 cents. We soon woke up with these kids used to translate for us. They'd bargain with them "no, no, no, don't buy that, master, he's a robber. Don't buy." They were
- 07:00 terrific. So we got to know the kids very well. If we tipped them 10 cents in Malay for them that was big money 'cos things were very cheap compared to here. I remember we went to the pictures in Singapore once, this is getting away from the early stages, when we had leave. We went to the pictures. It cost twopence or threepence. That's how cheap they were. A rickshaw ride was threepence
- 07:30 a mile. Three cents in our language now.

#### **What was your impressions of Singapore?**

We didn't see Singapore really until we went on leave. It was a filthy place. Absolutely filthy. The gutters were nearly always running water in them. The Indians in particular, the Pakistanis and

- 08:00 the Tamils, the Indians, the lower class people, they used them as their toilets. All this went down into the harbour and the harbour, you could smell it from a mile away. Dreadful.

#### **Singapore harbour?**

Yeah. It's one of the cleanest places in the world now. It was absolutely filthy.

#### **How far was your camp from Singapore city?**

I think

08:30 it was roughly about something like 200 miles. it took us quite a few hours to travel in the train, which wasn't over fast, but it was a fair way up in the peninsula.

**There was a few different Allied forces there? Not just Australians?**

No, there was British and Indian forces there.

09:00 There was more Indians landed after we landed there too. They might as well have kept them at home really. They were inexperienced young troops. Didn't understand things. Had English officers. They had quite a job trying to control them. Not control them, but trying to get them trained properly cos some of them didn't speak the Indian language well enough. It was

09:30 a shambles for a lot of them. They had their troubles.

**What was the general consensus amongst your men about the Indians?**

They didn't think anything about them at the early stage. Only after we'd seen them fail in the battle field that they lost respect for a lot of them. Some of the Sikhs in particular, or the Punjabis, the

10:00 Gurkhas, they was only a small unit of hem, but hey were fantastic. All the forces were everywhere, they were really brilliant.

**Like our SAS?**

Yeah, they were absolutely brilliant sneaking out at night and getting at the Japs and taking them out with their kukris, their big knife. They apparently did remarkably good work. But

10:30 the Jahts and the Buldhis, probably through no fault of their own they were too green. They didn't stand up a field. They decided that the best place was somewhere else, that's their officers and a few NCOs in a unit without their men.

**Tell us more about what you did at the King George**

11:00 **School. Was it a period of training for you?**

Yes. Right near it was a beautiful oval with a cricket pitch in the middle. It was beautifully kept. We used to play football at night. When I say night, about 5 o'clock till 6. We played rugby league there every time we got an opportunity. We still did training, route

11:30 marches. We had one experience there that was really trying. We had six shirts on issue. You only could put them on, do a little bit of strenuous exercise you were absolutely soaked in perspiration. In the mess huts that they built there, these tables were just comfortable

12:00 for six, but we had to sit eight to them. You'd come out from breakfast and you'd come out wet with perspiration. So we asked the officers could we go without shirts and they said no. A company, we had a chap we used to call Pop, Poperani. He was only about 22-23, but he was bald. He got some problem in the surf once

12:30 and lost all his hair. He was always known as Pop. We went on, we went and had a big discussion about that and we decided we were gonna go to dinner that night without any shirts on. What happened at

13:00 a bad time, poor old Charley Parsons happened to be orderly officer for the day. So we all lined up in A company, no shirts. The others went to mess in normal gear. Charley comes up, I'm sure he grew 6 inches, he couldn't believe it. He said "you can't go to the mess like that. You've gotta have shirts on." Pop was our spokesman, he said "no,

13:30 we're going to go to mess without shirts, sir." He said "you can't go." Pop says "we're not going with shirts on, and if we can't eat we're not gonna drill either." Poor old Charley was brought up in the army and couldn't understand the attitude. He said "don't do this to me, fellows. Why couldn't you pick it when somebody else was orderly officer." Pop said

14:00 "we've made up our mind now, so we may as well carry on with it." He said "you could be court-martialled for this." Pop said "bad luck, you'll have to call court-martial the lot of us." He said "I wouldn't wanna do that." He thought for a while and then he said "I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll agree to wear your shirts tonight I'll get paraded to the brigadier," who controlled the whole brigade "and see if I can get permission for you to go without shirts, but you gotta

14:30 remember, we have to wear a tie in our mess." Pop said "yes, and you've got a dirty big fan above your head haven't you?" He said "yes, you're right. Hadn't thought of that. If you go back I promise I'll get paraded to the brigadier." Half passed 10 that night, just as the lights were going out he popped in and said "it's all right. I explained the situation

15:00 to the brigadier. It's your mess, if you're all happy to go in without shirts you can go without shirts." We thought that was great and we thanked him. He went off very relieved. 4 o'clock the next morning the bugle sounded "A company on parade." Out on parade, we get out of bed at 4 o'clock and we were all lined up there. We thought "what's going on now?" No other company was out, only A Company. They said

- 15:30 "you've got your breakfast on in quarter of an hour and then you'd better be back in full marching order" I think it was 7 o'clock or something like that. Very early anyhow. Full marching order was all your rifle, webbing, bayonet, haversack and your water bottle in a big pack on your back, which weighed about 25 pounds.
- 16:00 We all come out there and were all going on a route march. Poor old Charlie was there with all his stuff too and we had a 30 mile route march in temperatures of about 98 degrees Fahrenheit, which I suppose is about 38. We got punished. No other company had to do it. By the time we got home about 5 or 6 of them had collapsed, they couldn't carry on.
- 16:30 The Band must have felt sorry for us, because about a mile from the barracks they come out and kicked up a march and we lifted our shoulders a bit higher. It was hard punishment. Everyone got benefit from it. Didn't have to wear shirts. It meant if you went to breakfast, you went on tea with your shirt on even if it was wet. Went to breakfast another one was wet. If you changed again by lunchtime you've got half your shirts all wet. You can't just knock off and wash them, you had to wait until the opportunity came to wash them.

**Did they train you for the heat and conditions of jungle warfare then?**

Yes. They did then,

- 17:30 slowly. First it was only route marches around the town and then particularly when Anderson took over, he wanted more and more jungle training. You'd go on bivouacs and you'd be out in the jungle perhaps a week or occasionally two or three weeks. You'd learn to get used to it. They tell you some things that are very frightening. Where we were trained
- 18:00 about a fortnight before one of the Tamil workers on a rubber plantation was taken by a tiger and killed. That wasn't real encouraging, because we had to do everything as what would happen in the war. So if it was dark you weren't allowed any lights at all. You bunked down on the ground and
- 18:30 was happy to get to sleep any way you could. After a while we got used to it and didn't worry about them cos we had safety in numbers. If there was 30 or 40 of us in a group you had to be unlucky if you were the one was gonna be attacked. It never happened.

**Were there many tigers around there?**

I don't think there was too many. At one stage we were coming out of the rubber plantation and in the big open space we saw two black

- 19:00 panthers. They weren't looking for us, they went like mad the other way. None of us I don't think ever saw a tiger. There were elephants too in Malaya at that stage.

**Were they dangerous?**

Only if provoked or cornered. I don't think they're dangerous under normal circumstances.

**What would Anderson try and teach you on your bivouac?**

The main thing he tried to teach us,

- 19:30 and it was very important, don't be frightened of the jungle. You know the snakes and ticks and things there. Just watch yourself and 90% of the thing in the jungle are more frightened of you than you are of them. Also, get used to dealing with the monkeys, 'cos lots of monkeys around chasing you. They'd jump from one tree to another making crashing
- 20:00 noise. The first night was "what the heck's that?" He taught us very well that the jungle can be a friend as it can be an enemy. After a few bivouacs we weren't worried. We did have trouble with wasps cutting through sometimes
- 20:30 barongs, and the wasps would build nests in the bamboos. Some of the fellows got very badly stung. Generally speaking we'd take cover. In Malaya there was a lot of rubber trees. A lot of the fighting was not in jungle, it was in these rubber trees.
- 21:00 They used to be like small bushes growing up. Like our bush here you see a big tree and you see little ones around. Quite a lot of those. Teaching us how to take advantage of the cover of all those sorts of things.

**Did Australians take to jungle training better than the British?**

Yeah.

**Did you know you were getting on better?**

Yeah, we always

- 21:30 felt that. They were too regimented. I don't think the average British regular there had been in the

army so long, he was a parade ground soldier more than anything else, through no fault of his own. They didn't take to the jungle nearly as well as the Australians did. When I sat Australians I can only talk about our own battalion, which were

22:00 90% country people. Every one of them was used to hunting. Creeping up on something and take cover. We were better off than them that came from high-rise settings. Had to do it the hard way.

22:30 [...]

#### **What happened when the Japanese came into the war?**

Before the Japs came in we were allocated, at this stage I think they were beginning to think the Japs were coming in. We were allocated a defensive area at Jemaluang

23:00 on the eastern coast. We were there for about 2 months, or more. We were camped in tents and every now and again they'd put on what we called stunts. We was out at night, right out on parade for battle orders, which put on all the battle things.

23:30 They'd have a headcount and say "OK, just an exercise so we can see we can get you out quickly in a hurry." They used to practise that time and time again.

#### **Was this anyone else but the 2/19th Battalion?**

Only the 2/19th was there. We were digging these trenches. Then when the Nips came into the war we started

24:00 to put up barbed wire then. We put mines out in front of us. It was a beach area. It was supposed to be one of the areas they reckoned the Japs would land in. There was a little village there. Most the shops were weatherboard buildings. We were ordered to evacuate the people. So we had to force them out. They didn't want to go, but they didn't have the option.

24:30 Our trucks came along, I don't know where they took them. They took them to a refugee camp somewhere.

#### **They had to do that at gun point to get them out?**

Yes, they used to turn up with a great big box with netting around it with fowls in it. One fellow had a pig in it. We used to have to say "no, you can't take them." It was a little bit heartbreaking if you could understand how you would be yourself being forced

25:00 out. When they got them all out they said "knock the town down." We set a field of fire there with the machineguns, cos it was from where some of the machineguns were placed that would have been their fire area if the landing was coming. So all the homes were knocked down, a lot of stuff left. Some of the shops were pretty cunning. They nearly all sold liquor. Some of them

25:30 buried it under the floor boards. We picked the floor boards up for the sides of the trenches and course we could see where something was there. Mick Kunai and myself saw one been dug up and we dug in there. It was all grog. So we thought "this is good. We'll plant this, try and get it back to the thing." Someone else had raised the alarm and the officers come along and confiscated

26:00 all the grog. We managed to smuggle a bottle of Spanish wine out and got that back to the dugout and that was put away for Christmas we thought. We couldn't leave it in the dug out, because they were doing that, so we buried it outside. The only fellow that saw us bury it was our sergeant major at the time, not Jack Felicity, he was the company one. Christmas time

26:30 Mick and I went to get our bottle of wine and it was gone. I'm sure Frank got that. I'm sure it was him. He got killed later. Mick and I both got home. We thought we were doing well planting it out in the dirt that had come out of the dugout.

27:00 **Did the villagers know this was for their own good 'cos the Japanese could land there? How did they feel about the Japanese invading?**

I don't know. It's easy to be wise afterwards, but I think a lot of them thought it was a good things because the Japs were relieving them. There was a tremendous amount of Japanese propaganda.

27:30 The Southeast Asian Cooperative or something was formed and they wanted to form it with all these islands. But what they really wanted to do was take charge of them. The Malays, they had nothing to thank the British for, really. I think there would have been more pro-Japanese than what there would have been

28:00 pro-English. Because they thought the Japanese were going to, according to the Japanese propaganda, they were going to be so much better off when they got rid of the British.

#### **Did you have to worry about Malays firing at you?**

No, I don't think there was ever any danger. There was a Malay regiment which were trained with the British.

28:30 We intermingled a couple of times on different things. I remember one of our chaps said to one of these Malay fellows, they had all been taught English, "how do you think you'll go against the Japs if they come down?" He said "we won't be fighting the Japs." "Why won't you?" He said "you're here to fight them. We're not here to fight the Japs. You fellows

29:00 are here for that." That was their attitude.

**What did they think they were in uniform for?**

I think they were there for parade ground purposes. When dignitaries came they were there on the parade ground and show off the bigwigs sort of thing. That was more their job than actually fighting, I'm sure. Again, I think more of them were pro-

29:30 Japanese than what there were pro-English.

**How long before you saw any Japanese?**

We saw the planes go over us when they were bombing. The first we knew of the Japs coming in the war was we had sentries on duty. Stan Day and myself were on

30:00 duty at the entrance to our defensive area. During the night, I think it was about 4 o'clock in the morning, we heard this thump-thump-thump. Said "that sound like gunfire or bombs." We listened for about half a minute and said "it sounds like it's coming from Kahang aerodrome, which wasn't too far away. So we went to wake Charlie

30:30 Cousins up. He said "Jesus, it's the Japs definitely bombing and they're bombing Singapore. I've been talking to headquarters and they got the word. Everybody stand to" because they didn't know whether it was going to be a landing or not. Everybody was out in their defensive areas. We didn't see any Japs. We were there for about, 7th December,

31:00 we must have been there about another month. About a month or 5 weeks still there making better trenches and better dugouts and communication systems. Then we got word that the 2/29th Battalion had been sent up to the

31:30 west coast and the British forces had been overrun, and the Indians.

**They'd been overrun where?**

Up at Muar. We was to go up and join upwards.

**The city of Singapore at this stage?**

Singapore was getting bombed. The planes we had, by that stage I don't think there was any operative planes left. There must have been a couple of old ones because they dropped supplies to us later.

32:00 Fighters had no chance at all. They were slower than the Japs' Zeros [Mitsubishi A6M fighter]. They were just shot down like shooting dead ducks. The bombers, the Wildebeest, the torpedo bomber's supposed to be able to go out and bomb any invasion fleet, they did 110 mile an hour, but without anything

32:30 on and 95 miles per hour with the torpedoes on. The Zeros were doing over 400. So someone didn't have a clue of the higher levels of what sort of planes they had. The ones they sent over were just shot out of the sky there.

**Did you see that happen?**

No, but I come back, I was in hospital in

33:00 Ceylon with Jimmy Smith, same name as the sergeant we had from Tasmania. He lost an eye. He was shot down. He said he never even saw the plane. He was in the wield cos he was the gunner. The defence of the Wildebeest, the pilot had a revolver, you can imagine how good that'd be against other planes. He had a Lewis gun in the back, he was the gunner. That was the only

33:30 armament they had. The Zero, they think it was a Zero that hit across the back where the gun was and the magazine blew up. Some of it hit him in the eye and blew his eye out. He said he remember, cos for protection they all had flying helmets in those days because it was no proper protection on those old planes, he said he thought the top of his head was blown off.

34:00 The plane crashed into a tree and gently down on its nose. The pilot jumped out and he said "are you all right?" and he said "I was holding my head like that and I said 'no they blew the top of my head off.'" He said it felt like it. He said to the pilot that's happened. He said "don't be stupid, if the top of your head was blown off you'd be dead." So he said he got out of the plane and got him back to hospital eventually cos he was in

34:30 Allied territory at that stage. That's how quick the Zeros were. That plane was shot down and they never even saw it.

**Can you walk us through everything that happened as you were joined with the 2/29th Battalion?**

We got this message we had to go up there.

- 35:00 The transport trucks were driven by Indians. They must have been done through British or Indian, the drivers were mostly Indians. They picked us up at Jemaluang and took us across to the east coast. We disembarked, I suppose it'd be 10 or 15 miles from where the 29th
- 35:30 Battalion was. We proceeded on foot then. It was getting late in the afternoon. So we brought the beach along, which was reserve food and ammunition. They set up the echelon camp somewhere around there. We went ahead on foot for probably an hour. Then we went into a defensive position for the night.
- 36:00 At that stage there was a group of Indians, a battalion of them on our right flank. Early in the night, 8 o'clock, all hell broke out over there. Machine guns going off, rifle fire. So the colonel didn't know what was going on.

**It was Colonel Anderson?**

Yeah. So he said "we want to find out what's wrong. Greg Riley, pick up a patrol

- 36:30 and go find out what's going on." I was one of the ones he picked on the patrol. We went out across there. When we got pretty close we could hear the white officers yelling out and some of the firing had broken down and gradually it stopped. Greg put us, I think about 6 of us, into a defensive position to cover him. He called out to them and
- 37:00 went forward. One of the officers came and met him. He said "what's going on?" He said "one of the sentries thought he saw a Jap moving in the undergrowth there and opened fire. As soon as he did so, everybody else opened. I don't think there's any Japs there at all." That was our first introduction to what
- 37:30 was going on. What they did succeed in doing was letting the Japs know where they were and consequently us as well. They started dropping a few shells around us then, just to give us a welcome.

**Did planes fly them?**

No, shellfire from their artillery.

**So they were fairly close.**

Yeah. They've got a range of about 15 to 20 miles anyhow.

- 38:00 We couldn't tell how far away they were, but they were close enough to drop some in the night. The next morning we decided to get through to the 2/29th and I suppose about an hour after we started going forward they came under fire. From then on it was for young and old
- 38:30 sort of thing.

**What was it like when you were first fired on?**

It was sort of what you knew was going to come on, because we knew the Japs were overrunning everything in front of them. It was just a matter of doing your best and hope for the best. So we were progressing and they gradually knocking a few

- 39:00 out here and there. Eventually they got a patrol through to the 2/29th and our colonel said "for them to stop trying to be defensive and try and fight their way back, they were going forward to meet up" which they did. Some of them escaped into the jungle. Quite a few of them got back into our lines. How many, I haven't got a clue now. During that day
- 39:30 the Japs virtually overrun the Indians. The Indians surrendered or cleared out.

**Where were the Indians in relation to where you were?**

They were on our right flank, but they hadn't gone up forward as far as we had gone. I'm not 100% sure whether some of them were or not, because we couldn't see them, except ones that were close to us, because 50 yards away there was too much

- 40:00 undergrowth between us.

**How many of you were there altogether?**

There would have been about 600 2/19th and 600 of us. By that time the 2/29th had lost their colonel and they had quite a lot of casualties as well. So I don't know how many was left. There was never any stage you could see more than perhaps 3 or

- 40:30 4 people, perhaps a dozen at the most.

**Because of the jungle?**



Yes. Scrub and stuff. It was mostly rubber trees, not so much jungle. They were big trees. There was plenty of drains.

**Had the 2/29th Battalion lost men through firing on each other?**

No. There was very seldom casualties like that from the Australian forces.

41:00 They were the same everywhere. Either they were better trained or much more conscious of it. There's no doubt occasionally a patrol might have got fired on because they didn't speak up early enough or something, but I've never heard of any incidents where they were firing on each other.

**You managed to get a few of the Japanese that night.**

41:30 **How did you know? Did you see it happening?**

Dead Japs. I didn't see much of that happening till the next day. I saw it happening when major Wilde charged trying to break in. A mass of probably 20 or 30 of them in a heap over to the right. Everybody firing at once and the Japs just

42:00 went down like cutting barley.

## Tape 6

00:31 **Recap the development of the battle of continue the story.**

The Japs were coming down the west coast and breaking through the British lines. The 29th Battalion was sent up as a stop gap, but they got cut off very quickly. Our battalion was sent up then to join

01:00 up with them. Supposed to have the whole area there. They were bringing back troops from one of the branch roads, I can't think what they called it now. They had to get back through Yong Peng before the Nips cut them off. So we were trying to get thought to the 2/29th and hold up. But they started to come back to us and joined up

01:30 during that 2nd day we were up there. Gradually it was organised that we start to move back. We started to move back to the bridge at Parit Sulong. It wasn't very long, the first I know of the echelon being in trouble was a truck come careering up into

02:00 our lines with bullet holes all through it. They said they'd escaped from the echelon. It had been overrun by the Japs and it was miles behind us. So we knew there was a problem. We started coming back then. Both sides of the road troops and taking turns up the front. Someone else would move through. They got held up. The Japs had cut rubber trees and put them across the roads

02:30 to stop the vehicles. Our vehicles were still in the middle of the road because they couldn't get off. We were putting wounded into them. There was an ambulance among them with wounded in. We got held up. The part I remember bitterly was B Company was held up and Anderson came up forward to find out why the hold up was. The

03:00 officer that was nearest said there was a machinegun there and had lost a few men already. Anderson said "where is it?" And apparently we come up behind, Jack Thomson and myself, and we saw what was going on there. He said "I see where they are now" and picked them up. He was a great hunter

03:30 in South Africa in the jungles. He knew the jungle life backwards, which was good for him. He said "I think if I crept along the edge of the road there I could get up with a grenade in there." The lieutenant said "no, don't you go. I'll send someone along." He said "no, it's my idea, I'll go." So he got two grenades and he crept down real low along the side

04:00 and I think the lieutenant signalled him when he was level with it, cos he just stood up and hurled the two grenades. They went off, then he went up and fired a few shots with his revolver into the Japs and there was a machinegun there. There was 3 Japs in it. We started moving forward again then. I remember these three dead B company fellows lying there. Took the

04:30 tags off them for the padre. One of these chaps looked as though he was trying to get up and Jack Thomson, next to me, shot him. Major Hughes was a very real gentleman too, from Wollongong I think. He come up and said "Thomson, you had no right to do that. He was a wounded man." Thomson didn't say anything, we

05:00 moved on a bit. The colonel said when we went through again "it's okay Thomson, it's the only thing they understand." There was no reprimand from the colonel for it. Apparently he was right. He could have got his rifle around or a bayonet and he would have shot any of us whether we liked it or not. Part and parcel of war.

05:30 There was a lot of people like that were killed after they were pretty well injured. I don't blame Jack

Thomson one iota, because I think nearly anyone would have done it, because the Japs didn't have a very good reputation with us. Just before we left Jemaluang we had a patrol out and we waylaid a platoon of Japs.

06:00 It was definitely a patrol about 10 to 15 mile out from where the defensive area was. They shot them up and then their job was to get back as soon as they can. On their way back the chap with the Thomson machinegun tripped and shot himself in the foot. They knew they couldn't wait because there was a lot more Japs coming than what they were, so he said to them "leave me here and come back tonight.

06:30 So they put him near a bush and thought he'd be all right. A Jap officer came along apparently and cut him up, but he yelled out before he was dead "boys, the Japs are coming." They got the Bren gun. I got back and we witnessed the Jap taking his sword.

07:00 It was an agreement that they didn't want any prisoners and we didn't want any prisoners. The bloodthirsty thing that is war is different to civilian life.

#### **Finding yourself in such a situation, how did you**

07:30 **cope?**

I think we were very fortunate. We'd been together about 18 months. There was no unit ever left Australia better trained than we were. I think we accepted it. At times we thought "we're not going to last much longer, we're going to be killed," but it can't be helped. It's the sort of fatalistic thing more than anything else. At times

08:00 you felt "it's going happen and it doesn't matter," other times you thought "whatever happens I'm gonna try and stay alive."

#### **There were times you thought "this is really it"?**

That's right. You didn't think there was any hope at all, particularly after we realised

08:30 we were cut off. That night, I think it was that night, must have been, we decided after we broke through there, we'd go to Yong Peng to the part of Salon where the river was. There was supposed to be held by the British so

09:00 we started on the trip back marching at night. Beside the road, about 10 yards between men. It was normal thing.

#### **Are you doing fire in the surrounds?**

No. Peaceful then as I remember. I don't remember any firing at that stage. I don't say there wasn't, because my memory's not that good, but I don't think so. We're making good

09:30 progress and we're getting down nearly to the bridge. The colonel sent one of the dispatch riders down to check the bridge was still being held, which we believed it was. We thought "we're right, we're getting through." When he got down near there he was fired on and he saw the roadblocks in the middle of the bridge. He said it definitely wasn't, he'd seen enough

10:00 to know that they were Japs. We had to go into a defensive area just north of the bridge. That's when we started really plenty of artillery, strafing and bombing from the air. This again was a case of how lucky you are. I was out there and they dropped a bomb about

10:30 twice a far away as from this and killed Lieutenant Gill and blew Jimmy Byron's leg off. People think you're exaggerating. It's true Jimmy Byron turned around and said, I was lucky, I was down on the ground and shrapnel was flying everywhere. They were trying to fix radio communication up because we'd lost contact with

11:00 the radio. He said "looks like I don't fall back with the battalion any more fellows." He died a couple of days later in the bridge because we couldn't get him out. That was the calm attitude that he was able to say.

#### **Was there a lot of that attitude around?**

Yes, a lot of them were more worried about their mates than themselves. Then the Nip

11:30 come back and he sprayed us all with, he machine gunned us with four guns. You could see, because we're keeping our faces down, but you could see the ground jumping up all around it. Again it was between then and me. If he had been a bit this way then, you can't explain it, it just happens.

#### **There was a lot of**

12:00 **men killed and injured at this stage?**

Yes, we were starting to lose casualties, All we could do if they was killed was put them in the trucks. I don't know how many they had there, but they loaded the ambulance up and got a volunteer to drive the ambulance down and ask the Nips to let them go. They were all hospital cases that could never have been a danger again. The Nip wouldn't let them through unless they surrendered.

12:30 The colonel said "no way, we don't surrender." So the Nips demanded the ambulance stay there. Late at night somebody went and pulled the handbrake off. There was a slope un onto the bridge and let the thing run back into our own lines. It didn't save the blokes, they eventually got killed anyhow.

13:00 The idea was right at that stage.

**Were you helping to load up the wounded?**

Yeah. Some on the ambulance. I think there was about 6 in the ambulance, they were crowded in. We had all our own vehicles there. Trucks and probably about 6 or 7 of them. They were getting

13:30 full too. Some of them were able to get out and walk a bit, shot in the legs. Should have been sent to hospital if it was possible, but it wasn't. So they had to stay there.

**Up to the time when the handbrake was released on the ambulance, how long had you been stuck in the position at the bridge?**

Would have been

14:00 all day, cos it wasn't the night when I went down. It was the next day. Yes, the next day. We went into a perimeter for that night. We were stuck there. It was the next day I went down.

**You spent the night at the bridge?**

Yeah. We were back about probably 50 yards for a while and then

14:30 gradually they found the Nips were the other side of the bridge and gradually their troops got right up to the water's edge. It was a pretty wide river between us.

**The Japs' weren't moving towards you at that stage?**

No. They were from the back.

**Were you holding them off from the back?**

Yes. At this stage the Japs had lost a lot of men. They were very cautious. Right through the campaign they'd been overrunning every

15:00 position. They attacked nearly without any great loss. They found they'd lost so many to the 29th Battalion and then to the 19th Battalion that they were very cautious. They'd yell out at night "how are you Joe? Come and get me, I'm wounded." They were making all sorts of names, George, Jack and all this.

**The Japanese would do this?**

Yeah.

15:30 But no one was falling for that because they knew that had been happening earlier in other campaigns.

**Did you hear those calls yourself?**

I heard a couple but they were a bit indistinct from where I was. One I hear was calling out "how are you, Joe?" Or "come and get me, Joe. I'm wounded." He didn't mention any names. If he'd said "I'm so and so" and known what the password

16:00 was it had been a different thing.

**So his English accent was good.**

Yes, they were pretty good. Generally speaking they were trying to break morale as well as. They wanted us to surrender, which would have saved them a lot of life as well. They were doing everything in their power

16:30 to try and get us down.

**How was morale that night at the bridge?**

We still thought that the Norfolks [a British regiment], which was the new British troops, we still thought they'd come and take the other side of the bridge, cos up until then they had radio contact with them,

17:00 we had Sigs [signals information]. They were told the British were organising an attack on the other side of the bridge to get us out. Then they said it would be delayed till the next day. Before that happened all the batteries had gone flat, they couldn't get any more radio messages. So we were still hoping that it was happening, because we didn't know, but later on we found out,

17:30 in the day after that they sent a message to Colonel Anderson "sorry colonel, cannot help you. Permission to destroy all the materials and do your best." In other words they'd written the whole lot

- off. Lost cause. The Japs sent a Malay fellow in to see the colonel. He come in
- 18:00 with the white flag. The colonel went to see him. He said "come with me, I'm from the Malay regiment. We're holding the bridge." The colonel was pretty suspicious. He pulled his pistol out and I didn't see this happen, but I've been told this by so many that I really believe it is the truth.
- 18:30 As he started to go towards the bridge the Malay jumped sideways and so did the colonel and he shot the Malay on the spot. It was definitely a trap to try and get the colonel. Later on they sent a Japanese in and he asked that if we all surrendered they'd be treated humanely and be respected.
- 19:00 The colonel spoke out loud to some of the fellows there "they want us to surrender. What do you think?" Someone told him in no uncertain terms what they thought. He said "thank you gentlemen, that's just what I wanted to hear." We got through the next night. At this stage we'd run out of food and ammunition was down to, some people had none at all and others were just all right. The only thing we had was a bayonet. Others
- 19:30 had a few rounds left. Had to do something. In the meantime, the second day there, there was an RAAF plane came over, an old biplane, and dropped some ammunition and some bully beef. Some was dropped in our lines and some in the Japs'. But they got a little bit more ammunition there. We got a third of a tin of bully beef each for the day. That was the meals we had.
- 20:00 **Did you have ammunition yourself?**
- I had about 10 rounds, cos I wasn't involved in much. I can't think of the chap's name, but he was one of the late ones to come into the company, he'd run out of ammunition so I gave 5 rounds to him. He got killed. He never come out. He was right in the thick of it. I'm sure, when he come back looking for some ammunition his
- 20:30 bayonet had definitely been into the Japs for sure. He was as bloodthirsty as anything. He had the right and the duty and wanted to keep going at them. I don't know whether he used the five rounds or got killed before. He didn't come back. On the last day we were there, the colonel decided we'd have to
- 21:00 try and break through over the barrier or create a disturbance. His plan was that if they created enough of a disturbance the bridge would attack that. Then we would cross to the, I'm not sure whether it was north or northwest, and swam across the river. We were all to try to get out, so the word was passed around. He sent some of A company down.
- 21:30 My mate, Bobby Ivers, not Bobby, his brother Ted, Bob had already been killed, was among them. I said to Frank Beverly "I'm going down with them Frank." He said "No, you're not. We'll storm onto every man. You get down the other side, if you see anything, fire." So I went down the other side. The road was here and the attack was going down the left hand side to break into the bridge. I had to go on the right
- 22:00 hand side. I thought "if I see anything I'll have a go," but I never saw anything. One of the Nips, I don't know whether they saw me or felt they did, as I was going down into a bit of a gutter that was there, they opened up with the machinegun and. You hate to say these things, you think it couldn't happen, but without a doubt there was
- 22:30 100 bullets passed within a foot of me. It happened, so you just wonder why you were just down early enough and all this had gone over your head.
- What do you put it down to?**
- Just the luck of the draw. Spiritually, well, maybe somebody was looking after me. You never know.
- 23:00 People, the first day we were up there, some of them copped it without even firing a shot, before any Australian had fired a shot, some of them were dead. You can't explain it, it's just impossible. They put this attack on the bridge. There was a terrific amount of fire going on. I
- 23:30 knew I couldn't get out. I didn't have the ammunition. The ones that were going over there only had at the most 2 or 3 rounds each. What happened as soon as they, Jimmy Clarke was the sergeant in charge of them, as soon as he said "right, over" they all stood up to jump over and the Nips just cut them to pieces with machinegun fire. It created such a disturbance, we didn't know that at the time either, the Nips thought it was a full scale
- 24:00 attempt to break out. We dragged the people that was the other side where we would go through and went round to reinforce them. We went to break out there. Again, dead lucky I was on my own where I was. I didn't get the message we were going out to there. I heard a bit of a talking behind me and I
- 24:30 looked around. There was 5 blokes from C Company walking along the back. I said "what's going on?" They said "we're falling out." I said "how could we pull out?" He said "that's the orders. We're to swim the river and try to get into the jungle." I said "if you're going I'm going too." I crawled along for a while until I thought we couldn't be seen and I hopped up, caught up with them and went across and we swam through

- 25:00 this, some had already gone over. A plane come along and killed some of them. They machine gunned the ones that were in the water. When we got across, the Nips that where dug in on that side had gone down where the diversion was caused. So we got through there and it was again the difference between trained and
- 25:30 untrained men. When we got across there, there was no one just running and trying to run to where there was cover of jungle. Some of the officers were there organising. When they got through they said "no group bigger than 20 in case you get caught. We want a lot of groups so that some might get through and say what's happened." They were organising groups of about 20. Then letting them go. If you had
- 26:00 your rifle and ammunition you gave your bayonet to someone who hadn't even got a bayonet.

#### **All the training paid off?**

It paid off. There no doubt about it. It was no threatening from officers, no panic, just "right, make sure you're in your group and stay with it" either a centre lieutenant or a

- 26:30 sergeant in charge. Always had someone that had a compass so we could find our way back. That's how we got out of there. Later that day the Nips apparently couldn't understand why everything was quiet. It took them a heck of a long time to creep in and find there was no one there, only the wounded. I suppose you've heard the story of what happened to them.
- 27:00 Took them out the truck, made them strip off, bound them up with wire and then killed the lot of them. Everybody said that nobody knew about that until this lieutenant from the 20th Battalion got back about 3 weeks later. He pretended to be killed and he was pretty badly wounded, but he got into the
- 27:30 jungle at night. A Chinese or someone helped him a bit and he was about a week or more getting back to the British lines and reported that all the wounded had been killed.

#### **How many would that have been?**

They think it was somewhere around 40-50. Again, I'm not sure, it

- 28:00 was a fair lot of them. One of our old lieutenants, he was an old gentleman too. I never forget Johnny Crawford getting up. He said "what's wrong, sir?" "Fred, the bastards shot me" as if they had no right in the world to do that. He was shot through the ankle. Moses Brooks and myself helped him up, got him into the trucks.
- 28:30 His batman was there. He said "I'll go with him" and he stayed with him. He was all right. It cost him his life to stay with Johnny. Quidlip was his name. Hew as that loyal to John that he stayed with him and it cost him his life. He may have lost it anyhow. One never knows. That got us out.
- 29:00 We got into the jungle. Frank Beverly was in charge of our lot. We were still going along until about 10 o'clock at night to get as far away as we could in case they were pursuing us. We had to call a halt because we were falling over all sorts of trees and stumps and things in the dark. When it was dark over there it was as black as your shorts. We went to lay down in the swampy ground and had a bit of
- 29:30 a sleep. We hadn't had a good sleep in 2 or 3 days.

#### **How many hours?**

I think it'd be about 3 hours. Don't know if we slept that long, but we were there from about 10. At dawn again we started off again.

#### **How does that sleep deprivation feel?**

You felt washed out a bit, but you had to pick yourself

- 30:00 up and you had to be alert. You just had to say "well, I've got to stay away." Pur doctor, who was fantastic, Roy Cahill, he was treating people all day and all night all that time. As we got up before we went to sleep that night he said "I can't go any further. You'll have to leave me." I said to him "no doc, I'll stay with you." Desmond Kaye" one of the
- 30:30 corporals, had a machete. He said "no, we won't leave him. We'll cut the saplings, make a stretcher and carry him." We got these saplings down and we took off putties and things, shirts, we made a very, very crude stretcher and put him on there. We hadn't gone 10 yards and he was sound asleep. We carried him in turns for about 3 or 4
- 31:00 hours and then he woke up and said "what the hell am I doing on here? Let me down." It was enough to revive him and he got through all right. He was quite prepared to stay there rather than hold people up. One of the British officers, strangely enough his name was Anderson too, He was a captain. I didn't know this cos he wasn't in our group, I heard about it from Gilbert Manz,
- 31:30 he had been wounded and he was holding up his group. He tried to get them to go without him and they wouldn't. He got his revolver out and shot himself. It's marvellous what people will do. That's where we got some Chinese to ferry us across another big river. Lord knows what it was, I haven't

32:00 got a clue. We had a bit of money and we bought some rice and a few biscuits off them and we boiled the rice up in the tin hats and the paint taste was awful, but it was something to eat. We ate that and these few biscuits and stamped on again.

**Did they have crafts?**

They're like pretty crude canoes, fairly big. I think they were taking about 6 or 8 of us at the time.

32:30 We got across and carried on through rubber plantations, which was pretty easy going. All cleared scrub. Eventually we got back to, I'm not sure where it was, somewhere near Yong Peng anyhow. We met up with the British units there. The Australians, they must have contacted headquarters or something, because the Australians

33:00 came up with a water tanker because we'd been drinking water out of the gutter cos we'd run out after he first day. They brought that up and anyone had water bottles filled them and the rest of us had a drink. They filled a slit trench up so we could have a bath in the slit trench. They brought up some clean clothes. That was the seventh day in sweaty clothes and

33:30 they were a little stinky as you can imagine.

**How were you feeling at that point?**

I think the general feeling at that point, myself included, was that they were never able to break into our perimeter once we got into a perimeter, so if we could hold them there

34:00 they had no hope in hell of breaking into Singapore with all the defences that were in Singapore. How foolish we were to believe that, cos they just weren't there. We were misguided but full of confidence. It was a tragic event for the wounded not to be allowed out. They would never have done any harm

34:30 in combat again.

**The river you had to swim across, was that a long swim?**

It was running pretty fast. It'd be about twice the length of this room I think. Be about that. Most of them threw away all their gear because they didn't think they could get across there. I was a pretty strong swimmer.

35:00 I wasn't gonna part with my rifle while I had some ammunition in case I needed it. I got across all right. But breast stroke I didn't do, I went straight in and crawled and got across.

**Did you keep your boots on?**

Yes. When we got into it some of them took all their gear off and dived in, but I found that I went in feet first because of what I had on.

35:30 I was able to walk for about 3 yards before it was too deep and then I got near the other bank and I was feeling pretty tired, it was pretty heavy going. I put my feet down and to my surprise I was in shallow enough water and I had the first few yards in and first few yards out because I was able to wade before swim. People that

36:00 weren't there could never understand how calm everybody was when they got across and how well organised. The colonel had these few officers and men there to get everyone across. Get them going in groups. I think everyone that got out there got back to Yong Peng eventually. Some of them lost their way and were about a week late getting there.

36:30 One of the chaps that came back late, a chap from the headquarters company. He was one of the regimental police. He got left behind, he didn't get the message. When he heard the Japs coming he hid in an old building with a lot of old rice bags and things in the corner. He got in under that. He

37:00 said the Japs come in and looked around. A couple of them stabbed the bayonets into the bags and he thought they were gonna get him for sure, but he stayed quiet and they didn't. That night he got out and the Japs had moved further down by then. He went back and saw where they'd killed all the other fellows, they were all dead there. He came back, but no one believed him because he was one of those very nervy fellows in his

37:30 own life. I was sure he was telling the truth, but about a week later the lieutenant from 29th turned up and everyone believed him then, he was alive. They wouldn't release it to the public news because it would be too upsetting to the parents and families at home. So we all hushed up for quite a long time as far as the Australian public was concerned.

38:00 But it was a pretty traumatic experience. A lot of us got out and could meet together and have a yarn, we were just lucky.

**Was Charlie with you though that?**

No, Charlie was unlucky. When we were knocking the village down at

- 38:30 Jemaluang they were burning some of them. One was burning and apparently it had a bottle of methylated spirits in it that exploded and sprayed Charlie on the chest. He was burned all down the chest and he was in hospital while we were up there. He nearly cried when he saw what was left of us. He was on the island. I didn't last too long on the island, about half past 7, quarter to 8 in
- 39:00 the morning I got hit with a mortar shell and headed back to, couldn't find the Australian aid post, they dropped me off at a Chinese RAP [regimental aid post].
- Can you lead us into that episode?**
- They took us back to base at Johore Bahru
- 39:30 just north of Singapore Island. We were in barracks there. We were given a week's rest. We were given a groundsheet and that was all we had on the floor. We had a week's rest there. We were properly fed and new clothes. At that stage they brought in the jungle green colours too. We had green clothes then, but it was a bit late.
- 40:00 The British forces were coming back gradually, and the other Australian forces were coming back onto the island or were going to come in. We had something like 400 reinforcements come in to make us up to full strength again. We were sent up into Johore Bahru. We went into a
- 40:30 defensive area there not far from the causeway. We had to stay there for 24 hours after all the Allied forces came back. Bar seeing planes going over us the Nips never attacked us there, because I think they were too busy regrouping for the Singapore attack. After all the other troops had some back, on the morning,
- 41:00 I've forgot what the date of it was, two mornings I think before the Nips were coming down there, we come across the causeway and every morning the bombing used to start about 8 o'clock. The Nips were as regular as clockwork. Half past 7 we started off back and 8 o'clock we were walking across the causeway and up comes the Scottish pipers, 4 of them, and they piped us across the
- 41:30 causeway. About everybody that had been there before said it was the only day for at least a week that the Japs hadn't been coming over the causeway strafing and bombing in the area around, so again luck was with us. If they were sending mortars on the causeway there was nowhere to go. We were just sitting ducks. We got across and
- 42:00 then we went around to where our new defensive area was

## Tape 7

- 00:32 **We'll pick up from where you were talking about walking across the causeway from Singapore to Johore and their were bagpipes in the background?**
- They were right in front of us, they met us turned around and escorted us across and
- 01:00 it lifted everybody's morale up there is no doubt about that and then of course we went back to where we were at barracks and picked up some, I don't know, some of the reinforcements I think it was and then we moved out into where the allocated defensive area and we were on the as you come across the causeway from Johore we were on the left hand side of the causeway
- 01:30 and some of them were right up front and the, at this stage I'd been transferred to the Pioneer platoon, the headquarters company and Greg Wiley who had been with us through everything once we'd joined up, he was lieutenant there and we went and dug in where the allocated position was. And the first day wasn't too bad but after a while when it started ranging their guns in and we were copping
- 02:00 a quite a lot of shelling and that and the morning the Nips landed, they were put up, the day before they had given us a big barrage but they terrific barrage that morning too and shells landing everywhere and all the bombs. And they decided to move us slightly forward and slightly to the left so Greg said, "come on we
- 02:30 got to go and a spot to dig in", so we can out of this ranging, where the range of their guns on and we'd moved forward and he and I and they started up again and at this stage the Nips had landed up on the west side of the causeway and they were using short range mortars dozens of them, they started landing amongst us so we went to ground and
- 03:00 we were laying on the ground and one went pretty close to us and Greg got a bit of shrapnel, only a tiny bit and I said, "do you want to tie it up?", and he said, "no I'll be alright", and the next thing, bang, one I thought all my birthdays had come at once we had blithering, and just deafened, arms it was numb, it wasn't hurting strangely enough, just
- 03:30 numb and I said to Greg, "oh, they've whacked a hunk out of my arm", and he said, "get moving back with the first group you see moving back, walking wounded, so I said, "right" and a couple of minutes after that before I had time to even put a field dressing on lieutenant, not Harris, I can't think of his

name now, he was coming back

04:00 he'd been shot through the chest up high, he still had his roller in his hand and he had about 4 or 5 walking wounded with him so I just tucked my arm in my shirt and come along and he said, " come with he", so he lead us up out to the road, which was a fair walk and the Nips opened up machine guns on us, but from a fair range and they didn't do any harm, we got into a

04:30 bit of a defile and kept to that, and a Bren gun carrier came and picked us up and took us down to a Chinese RAP post.

**What was the sound like? It must have been deafening?**

Oh, yeah, its absolute deafening and the big shells they were uprooting trees and leaving holes oh as big as that area there where they went into the damp ground, and the little ones weren't leaving much but he shrapnel was flying everywhere and you had to keep your head

05:00 below ground level or you were in trouble. But the barrage used to stop for a while those that and then start again you know and that range on us and then they'd go further back and then they'd stop and we'd get a bit of a break and then they'd start again.

**And you were firing back?**

No, our artillery didn't get the message that the Nips were landing, they were all ranged on firing on the water

05:30 with the Nips who crossed but all the, the barrage the day before from the Nips had cut all the lines, telephone lines and they had no radio contact, so the artillery never got the message that the Nips were landing and they got a free ride across with only the infantry trying to protect them and the infantry was so thin up there is was hopeless. because the Poms always believed that the landing would take place down on the beaches

06:00 other end of Singapore and there was no fortifications up there at all.

**So you were sitting ducks?**

Yeah, just sit there and cop it

**What was going through your mind? Did you think this might be the end?**

Oh, yes, it was, no doubt that was going to be the inevitable end, it seemed like it because we knew when we found out there was no defences up there it was definitely the Nips had everything to their advantage. They had planes

06:30 plenty of guns plenty of ammunition and everything that they wanted all we had was a hole in the ground and our weapons. No support from the artillery as it happened, no anti aircraft guns anywhere near us and they were just strafing and bombing from just treetop height. So they could do what they liked, the RAAF would have been left without

07:00 been taken away from Singapore about 2 or 3 weeks before, cause they were virtually wiped out all their planes

**There must have been hundreds of men killed that day?**

Yes, I don't know how many but I do know the 19th Battalion lost more men during the war than any other unit and it was 782 killed out of

07:30 1600 with the initial ones or reinforcements, they were either killed or went POW. So it was near enough to one in two to go home.

**So you were taken to a Chinese RAP Post, and who were you with at that stage?**

I was with Bunny Austin that was the lieutenant's name and others, and after they

08:00 dressed our wounds they gave us a cup of coffee and biscuits. And they got an Australian ambulance, they contacted them somehow and they come and took us to Singapore hospital, well they took us to the grounds there but you had to lay out on the grounds and wait until you could get in because the casualties were coming so fast they couldn't cope with them.

**And this was Australian, British, Indian?**

08:30 This was only Australian hospital

**So how many people were waiting on the grass?**

Oh, I'd say the best part of 30.

**And you were one of those?**

Yeah.



### **Were you in a lot of pain?**

No, not it was starting to really pain when I got to the ARP post but they gave me some morphine injections there, and some of the others they gave morphine to and starting to get in pain so

09:00 considering what it was like, it wasn't too bad, it was bearable. So eventually someone come along and said, "how long since you've been here", and I said, "about 3 to 4 hours", and he said, "we'd better get you in pretty soon", so he took me in and of course I don't remember too much about that at all because by this stage I had been bleeding fairly

09:30 well and I was a bit dizzy and I just remember much going in. The first thing I remember was them putting this damn mask over my face and then of course I was out. The next thing I remember, I woke up and one of the sisters sung out something about who knows sergeant something, I didn't catch the name, I can remember sounding so stupid, saying sergeant who?

10:00 I know all the Sergeants, and the next thing I remember someone saying, "don't worry sister, he'd one of my blokes, I'll look after him" and it was one of our lieutenant Keith, Keith Westbrook who'd been shot up at Muar, Keith was pretty right he'd been shot up through the shoulder and dressing up so he stayed with me then until I fully recovered.

### **How long did that take?**

Oh I suppose

10:30 about a best part of an hour sort of our of it and going all right and that night I couldn't sleep because every time I turned over I would feel something pricking me in the back and the nurse came along and gave me aspirin or something she said, "this will put you to sleep", it didn't and about 3 o'clock the nurse said to me, "are you still awake?", and I said, "yes", she said, "why can't you get to sleep?", I said, "every time I roll

11:00 on my back there's gravel in the bed or something and it sticks in my back", and she said, "don't be silly there's no gravel in the bed, lets have a look", and she sat me up and she said, "there's shrapnel in the back that's your trouble", so she pulled all the shrapnel out and dressed them up with patches. By this stage my arm was all in plaster, that was the problem I could feel this

11:30 sticking into me I didn't have enough sense to realise that it was little bits of shrapnel as well in my back. So these things a bit, the next day they asked for volunteers that felt they could move out of the hospital to move into a private home provided there was medical orderlies went with them, and Keith Westbrook said, "well I'll go" and I said, "If you're going Keith I'll go with you", so we both decided we'd go out, they took us to

12:00 well half way along the ambulance they said, "all ORs [other ranks] out here all officers stay on", we'd been talking about, Keith and I having a go at escaping, and I said, "well it looks like we part company Keith we might get a chance later on", and he said "yeah, well goo luck to you" and other ranks we went off to this house. And I'll never forget the name you couldn't think of anything worse, it was a Doctor Fo's plaque on the

12:30 front door, he wasn't there but they had two nurses and a medical, male medical orderly looking after us. that afternoon the shelling was getting closer and closer and one chap that was there was from our own battalion, Bartlett, I said well they are going to overrun this place pretty soon, I'm going to have a go at getting away tomorrow, anyone coming with me?", and the chap from Melbourne

13:00 called Carr said, "yeah, I'll go", and I said, "what about you Bartlett?", he said, "yeah I'll go" and so I said "we'll pinch a boat at form the sandbank, and have ago at sailing away", so we tried first thing in the morning. About 6 o'clock in the morning we got up and Harry had malaria but he had his clothes and Bartlett had clothes, all I had was pyjama pants and boots, no socks, didn't even have a hanky

13:30 and I thought well I'll take a towel to put around my shoulders to keep the sun off a bit, so I took a towel, oh I had my wallet with 5 Malayan dollars in it, my sole possessions. So we went out and got to the gate and Bart and he said, "no, I'm not going to go its too risky", I said "look might as well go and get killed there as stay here and let them kill you anyway", he said, "no the worst thing that could happened we'll be prisoners of war", and I said, "well this is your last chance,"

14:00 and he told me after the war that late that afternoon the Nips had overrun the place and they were POWs, we just got out in time. We thumbed a lift into the wharfs and Harry and I were trying to organise things, some water and some bananas to eat and a pinch a sandman and a Pommy MP [military police]

14:30 come up to me and he said, "what are you doing here?" and I said, "there is nothing I can do anymore", and he said, " that's for sure, what are you going to do?", and I said, " pinch a sampan and get away.

### **Did you know where to?**

We were thinking of going south, we knew if we go south we'd hit something but didn't have a clue how long it would have taken, we would have never made it, no risk on that. Well he said, "we'll send you out to the hospital ship", and I said,

- 15:00 "what hospital ship?", and he said, " the Wu Suey" and I said "that's been here since we've been in Singapore they use it for convalescent to get them out of different change of air", and he said, " yeah but its transferred now to hospital ship and I'm in charge of loading it, but they've bombed the road between here and hospital and we can't get anymore out, we'll send you out", Harry said, "oh do you think they'll take us?" and I said, "all we can do is send us back so we might as well try it", and he said, "right", so we went out
- 15:30 they the Pommies in charge of it and they had a share of Indians, Australians, and British on board and we were at the side of the boat and a captain or something put his head over and he said, "send your papers up and I'll get you in", and we said, "we don't have any papers", and he said "oh I don't know what will happen now, I'll have to confer with somebody",
- 16:00 he went away for about 5 minutes and he come back and said, "alright come up", so they took us up onboard and we were on board about 5 minutes and they bombed the docks that we just left and he said, "that's it, not waiting anymore" and pulled up the anchor and sailed. You know its unbelievable but its true, we weren't on it 5 minutes and they took
- 16:30 us to Jakarta, Batavia it was called in those days.

**What was the ship called?**

the Wu Suey, not much bigger than a Manly ferry but it had about 300 on it crammed everywhere

**All wounded all sick?**

All wounded yeah bar the crew, they didn't have much rations but they used to make bread on there so we got a couple of slices of bread for a meal and lunchtime we got a bottle of stout so money must have purloined loads and loads of stout

- 17:00 because each lunchtime we got a bottle of stout instead of food. So that took us to Batavia and they transferred us then to an Indian hospital ship and that took us to Ceylon to the 2/12th AGH [Australian General Hospital] there. And we were the first wounded they had so we got royal treatment from them there, we had more nurses and orderlies than you could imagine looking after us there.

**Cause you were**

- 17:30 **still quite debilitated?**

Well this arm was still in plaster right from the finger tips right through to the shoulder, so I couldn't do anything and I still had a couple of patches, particularly one up on the shoulder there.

**Why didn't they take you to Australia?**

It was an Indian hospital ship, and they were Indian crew, Indian nurses on that one. And some of them that didn't have plaster on they

- 18:00 were wooing them to come on troop ships and they wouldn't let anyone with plaster on, cause you couldn't swim if you were hit by a torpedo. And I kept arguing that if you had a life boat you were going to float anyhow, but they wouldn't let us on, I had to stay there they used to change the plaster about every 3 weeks when it got too stinky, and the other patients used to complain, they used to call me stinky

- 18:30 and Morrie Close from, you get no sympathy in the army, Morrie Close from Young we used to call him wheezy, he'd been shot through the lung and when he breathed you could hear this whistle, he was wheezy. But they use dot cut the plaster off and put a new one on because they couldn't do much for the wound it was just too wide. What they did when they operated apparently they pulled the skin together

- 19:00 as much as they could and then put it in a plaster and let it heal in its own juices. So eventually I got well enough and I got a trip home on the, oh my brother John.

**Tell us about this it must have been amazing?**

You couldn't believe it again, that all these fluke things can happen to one person but it happened, he was on his way back from the Middle East and they leave and they tied up out in the stream as they call it, well out from the wharves, and they had

- 19:30 a runabout just to bring them in for leave, and he had his leave in Colombo

**And he'd been in Syria?**

And I think he was in Lebanon too, but in the Middle East all the time. And they this chap came up to him and said, "where'd your boat come from digger?" and Jack said, " the Middle East, why?" and he said, " I thought there might be another one from Singapore", "what do you mean another one from Singapore?"

- 20:00 he said, "well a hospital ship come in yesterday with wounded from Singapore", Jack said, "where did they take them, I have a brother there I'll go and make some enquiries about him", and he got a taxi out, and of course when he got the names who should be on it but me. And he come out and he got

special leave the next day and he brought me out a toothbrush and hankies and a face washer and all the

20:30 things he could scrounge that he thought I might need so, he also, I think he left me about 5 dollars or something, and I knew it was all he had, cause they hadn't been paid for ages, and I couldn't get any pay because I didn't have a pay book. So I couldn't get any pay until I was issued another pay book

**Can you describe the meeting?**

Yeah, believe me, he grin that wide on his face

21:00 yes it was petty traumatic but, it was very welcome

21:30 and he got well treated there and after a while they sent us up to a convalescent camp at the top in tea country and we had a week up there and then back, eventually got the plaster off and they let us come home on the Katoomba, which was another troop ship coming from the Middle East and they gave us, they didn't

22:00 have much clothing, those that got an overcoat didn't get any field uniform, I got an overcoat and shorts and a shirt and we froze on the, when they come home they come right down below Australia and around, and boy was it cold down there I think we went around Antarctica. But we got home alright so that's all we could do.

**Did you**

22:30 **have any contact with John during the war?**

We used to write, but eh last month in Malaya we never got any mail so even if we written something he wouldn't have got it at that stage.

**So what happened to him after you left each other, where did he go?**

He come back to Australia he was on a troop ship back. And they were building a big tank workshop up in Queensland and they sent him up there as the instrument maker and he was fixing all the watches and

23:00 chronometers and all the things they have in tanks, so he was a technical engineer up there, he was warrant officer 1 in charge of the section up there and, no first he went to a search light workshop in Brisbane, that's right, and when I got home after convalescing they declared I could come onto the board and I said no way my mates there,

23:30 they boarded me A so I went back to report back to the showground and there was three of us from Malaya that day and there was a draft going to New Guinea with the 2/13th and we thought we were going with them, so they sent us up there and they wouldn't take us because their raft was full, there was no places on the boat or the train going to Townsville, so back we went and this went all day, they sent us up and sent us back

24:00 eventually at night they sent us to a recruit receiving depot at Dubbo and all we were doing then was training recruits and I was pretty sick of that as a monotonous job showing them the basics of it, so I talked to Jack on the farm and he said, "I'll put in a claim for you" he'll said, "you'll lose your stripes but you'll be made a craftsman up here, there is a position up here as a storeman"

**That was Jack?**

John, yes my brother, and he

24:30 put in a claim for me so I went to join there then one of the, after there for about a couple, a few months they were forming a small unit with the search light battery to New Guinea and the one of the officers going to be in charge he wanted to volunteers to go, and I said, "well I'll go", so

25:00 about 6 of us decided to go, no about 4 of us from there. So we formed up this little unit, it was only small unit of 16, there were electricians and radar operators and I had charge of the store there, everything was in one big van and we went with them and it wasn't too long before we got on the boat and went to Finschhafen in New Guinea.

**Your brother was**

25:30 **fighting in New Guinea as well?**

The youngest one, he was with the field ambulance. But he, I met him in Brisbane before when he came back on leave, and when I was staying in Brisbane but he was around Milne Bay area at that stage when we went up to Finschhafen and later on he moved up with them and up to Aitape

26:00 near one of the bigger towns which are only tiny little villages and he got killed by a tree of all things, it crashed and been hit by a shell and crashed on him and killed him, I was on Tarakan at that stage and so after stint at Finschhafen we had the search lights up on the mountains and we went up there one day and

- 26:30 did infantry had just been through there was dead Japs all over the place and supplies and hat and I got a heap of Jap grenades and Stan Eastgate was with me and one of the Sergeants driving the jeep and I said, " well take some of these back and delouse them", and he said, "can you do that?" and I said, " well the Nips must put them together, if they can put the fuse in them, I knew how to do our own grenades, its got to come apart somewhere, so we'll take some back". We brought 6 grenades back
- 27:00 nursed the all the way down the mountain as we got back and we had a vice on the side of truck that side flap used to drop down and the vice was there to put things in to file an that, so I got a singlet and wrapped it round the grenade and you should have sent the blokes leave the area when I'm winding the vice up onto the grenade, and the grenades down here, the one
- 27:30 I brought down is in the RSL [Returned and Services League] here now. But then I got the multi grips and I said, "well its got to screw off", and I tried to unscrew the top and it wouldn't work, with the Nips you never know and I tried the other way, it was a left hand thread, one I got that out I pulled the fuse and the cap out, and they all wanted me to do have one of the others, they all wanted a grenade so, I was the delousing expert, they weren't so frightened after

- 28:00 and dig out all the explosive material and put it back together and you got a what looks like a real grenade, it is a real grenade that won't go off. But they cleared the ground I can tell you when I put it in the vice.

**How different was it working with the searchlight compared to your experience in Malaya?**

It was

- 28:30 like chalk and cheese you couldn't believe it, and when we went to Finschhafen after there, after the first night we had tents to sleep in because the infantry had cleared for about a mile a mile and a half away, cleared the Japs out of there and people in those sorts of having been in the infantry just can't imagine the difference it is. Its so
- 29:00 different your virtually like as if you are working at home in the workshop, only you haven't got all the facilities of a big workshop and most of the problems with the radars and some of the search lights were radar controlled and we used to pick up the mains by radar and the human atmosphere there used to cause a lot of trouble there and they were continually going out and drying out a thing they called a VC 20
- 29:30 VC 90 rather and replacing them, so they were getting called out all hours of the night, but apart from that there was no inconvenience much at all, Nips were still coming over us pretty often there but they were going over to bomb the aerodrome at Dobodura. When the Yanks come in to take over they brought in picture shows, and they took over from us. They'd pick up the planes coming in on the radar and
- 30:00 the search lights would be going and the Yanks would be racing away from the picture show and they'd all race up there. Cause we knew they weren't going to bomb us they were going to bomb down there at the aerodrome. Gradually the allies got on top and the bombing became less and less all the time.

**What kind of pictures would the Yanks be watching?**

Oh, cowboy ones and the Greta Garbo ones and so sort of things

- 30:30 the pre-war pictures I can't remember what they were now because I can't remember what's on TV ten minutes ago, after I've seen. But they were normal run of the mill films that were around at that time.

**How long were you in Finschhafen altogether?**

About 7 months and then we came back and we absorbed then into a bigger workshop called the composite workshop which did searchlights and

- 31:00 artillery and ack ack guns as well.

**Where was this workshop?**

That was formed up on the Atherton Tablelands and later on we were sent to Tarakan and we went in there with the fleet for the landing.

- 31:30 **The searchlight mobile workshop, what do you actually have to do as part of that workshop?**

We had the store van and then as I say we had all these tradesmen there and three Jeeps, they had lots of troubles and they had to go out and

- 32:00 more often fix the radars or if there was anything wrong with, each searchlight had a generator and half of them had radars and the others didn't so they were the ones that took a lot of looking after, radars were continually going out and the technicians went out to fix the radars more than anything else. Occasionally the electricians but when

- 32:30 I think it was happening and everything was going well we virtually had nothing to do.

**And what was your role?**

I had the store with all the parts, resistors and valves and switches and anything that was needed to fix a searchlight or a generator. These generators weren't little generators they were like a V8 Ford engine driving a turbine or whatever it is that

33:00 creates the power for the searchlights. And the searchlights, the smaller ones went to 300 million candle power and the sperries at 500 million candle powers. Its not an electric bulb its two carbons come together and they burn and they burn at this terrific heat which is reflected by the reflectors and show then up.

**And who was it that made the decision to come back to Australia? You weren't needed?**

33:30 The Yanks took over that area, they were making Finschhafen into a big depot for further advances into the Pacific. So they took over and we had a period just waiting for a ship to take us home then. We were working on unloading Yankee ships, pinching some of their fruit and tins of fruit and tins of cake and tea and coffee so we used

34:00 to make ourselves some tea at night. We never got coffee we got tea, sugar and cake. They were really looked after the Yanks, different and tinned fruit for their meals, all Australian tinned fruit.

**Was there a bit of animosity?**

No, not much, they cooperated very well, in fact we had two of them there that used to get very friendly they used to

34:30 come over and have a cup of tea at night with us every time they had a chance to. They were quite good people as far as we were concerned. But the first night we were there there were these planes come over and they were flying about 30,000 feet according to our searchlights crew and the Yanks come out and they were firing everything in the air at these planes, revolvers and Tommy guns

35:00 a revolver has a range of about 50 feet and a Tommy gun of about probably at the most 100 yards and they threw thousands of rounds of ammunition up in the air. No hope in life of ever hitting anything.

**the officers allowed them to do that obviously?**

Must have done, I think, they were as green as what the troops were, they soon woke up to that, and told them to leave them alone and save the ammunition

35:30 **The Atherton Tableland you said had a composite unit there. Who else was there?**

Well it was the, oh there was all sorts, Australia had troops of all sizes up there at that stage. It was the training grounds for tropical warfare and there was infantry artillery, searchlights, guns you name it it was up there at that stage and they were getting

36:00 ready for, cause at that stage every body thought that Japan would have to be invaded, they never, nobody ever knew anything about he atomic bombs. So that was a big build up of everything because eventually that was the plan to take Japan. Never eventuated thank heavens they would have lost millions

**So the Atherton Tablelands was like the powerhouse?**

Yes, it was

**When did you get word you were going up to Borneo?**

36:30 Oh, '44, be early in, late '44 I think it was and we sailed early in '45. We went to Morotai on one ship and stayed there for two or three days and camped there and then we

37:00 got onto landing barges to go to Tarakan and we went along with this fleet of landing barges and I saw the loneliest man in the world on that trip. He was in one of the barges in front of us, two blokes fooling around and wrestling and one fell overboard, and they always told you if you fall overboard the convoy won't stop for you because a sub could sink a stationary ship and that poor bloke, somebody

37:30 through a life buoy over for him and he was trying to swim the last we saw of him, but we had escort vessels right out wide to sea and we heard afterwards that one of them come in and picked him up, but he must have felt terrible out there on his own and all the ships sailing.

**Who was in the convoy?**

The 48th Battalion was one that I know of, I think there was three battalions all told. I don't know what the others were

38:00 and an artillery regiment, an engineer regiment and the anti-aircraft but no searchlights at night, they realised that they didn't have enough planes to warrant so they only took the guns, not searchlights.

**What was your role up in Borneo?**

I was in the store there cause there was a much wider range of things there because they fixed guns

and vehicles and made anything that had to be made

38:30 they had a terrific amount of gear there, so again I had it pretty easy in the store.

**What was the purpose of going up to Borneo?**

It was just before they landed on Borneo and they wanted the airstrip there for the fighters and on the map said they was an airstrip there, and when they got there the airstrip, about the second day,

39:00 there was pretty heavy losses because it was well defended, it would only take light planes it was really a real swampy sort of place and they eventually had to bring in metal strips and put metal strips down before they could land fighter planes on it. By that stage Borneo campaign had started instead of having cover from there to start with they were all on the shore in Borneo.

**Can you walk us through your experience in Tarakan?**

39:30 Well it was pretty tame. The worst experience and I didn't see it but I saw all the people. We were waiting to go off after the infantry had cleared things, the Japs fired a shore based, in fact they fired two I think, shore based torpedos and some of the fellows stood looking over the rail and they ran from there

40:00 some yelling out, "torpedo, torpedo", and it went under the shallow end of the barge, and the Yankee Negro was up there with an anti aircraft gun up on the turret and the front he jumped off and broke his leg. I don't know what he thought he was going to do by jumping off there when he saw it coming if it was getting close it would, but he did. They scattered and they thought there would be trouble but one of the Australian escort vessels

40:30 went in and flat out in towards the shore there and they pounded one particular area there where I suspect is where they must have had their shore base tubes and they fired rounds and round into that for, oh a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes every gun they could fire was belting that area. So it caused a bit of stir for sure, but once it was under there was no risk it was gone

**41:00 How did you spend your days there in Tarakan?**

Well the workshop was working there was still a bit of work but otherwise we read a lot and we wrote a lot of letters home. It was obvious war was coming, the Japs were getting weaker and weaker all the time, but there were never ever going to shift them out of the mountains where they were in the mountains there, they didn't want to, they were just going to starve them out eventually.

But strangely enough again you wouldn't believe it, as I said Harry Calf in the field ambulance there, one of our chaps hurt his hand I think it was on the grinder or something. And he had to get down to the CCS, there wasn't a hospital there was a casualty clearing station, to get it dressed, and he was talking to one of the male operators there and he happened to say that he had been in Malaya and he said, "oh, that's funny a fellow in our unit was ..."

## Tape 8

**00:31 Could you tell us about the interaction you had with the locals in Borneo?**

Very, very little there, one of the funny incidents, one of the chaps going over learned to speak Malay and he thought he was pretty good at it. And we'd been there for a far while this time and he was on guard duty at the entrance

01:00 to our camp at night and Tarakan local came up to him and said I want to speak, oh before he had a chance to speak he said, "Jalan, jalan, jalanan, kampong anom", that was go up the road to camp number 6, and the fellow turned around 'cause he was just in his shirt and shorts and bare feet and he said "pardon me sentry I'm I friend of Mr Packard's and I wish to speak to him, could you go and ask him if I could see him?"

01:30 So poor old Count, cause we used to call him the Count, he got that poked at him for the rest of his life, he tore up his Malay book and decided he didn't want to learn too much more. That was just one of the funny things that happened. Another guard taking over the guard duty he took a, had a Owen gun the guard, he'd never seen one, I had one before, an the guard was handing over to him

02:00 and we used to call him Doc he was about 90 cents in the dollar poor old Doc, he meant well. The next thing we hear a rattle of machine gun fire, everybody jumps to, and he yells out, "it's all right mate I'm just acting under instructions", the bloke told him what to do, fire the gun and he did it. So you get things like that but generally speaking it was a quiet time for us on Tarakan.

02:30 And the fellows built a little boat, they built an engine out of a Jap barge and they used to go across and trade with the natives on Borneo and they had fish traps in the sea and for a tin of condensed milk or a bit of sugar you could get two to three big fish we were living very often on fish, once a week or

something. Then one day it was my turn to go out with them and Gordon

- 03:00 no not Gordon Brown, Gordon something I can't think of his name, he was in charge and we went across and we got our fish and decided we'd explore the river a bit and we found a little village and traded there for some eggs, come back, thought we were coming back, but we got out near the sea and we took the wrong thing and we ended up running out of water and coming back we ran out of petrol just as we got to the sea and
- 03:30 we were drifting around there and fortunately a Yankee barge come along and gave us some petrol and we got going again and by this stage it was late and it was dark and the Nips had about three quarters of the island and we had about a quarter and it was all blackout conditions and we were trying to decide what to do, we'd try to find it in the dark and a spotlight come out so we said oh well Nips or not we'll make for it, we were making for it and it was a
- 04:00 with the wreckers truck with the spotlight out to sea and they realised we were overdue so of course we headed for that and come down, and of course we got into a lot of trouble for not doing what we should. We should have traded and come back home, the fish had gone rotten so things were pretty grim for a while but we got away with it. The rest of Tarakan was just routine and filling in time sort of thing, wait until you were
- 04:30 to get home and then eventually the war ended and I come home with the first shipment from there.

**How did you find the Borneo locals?**

Well I really had nothing to do with them at all

**When you were trading?**

Oh

- 05:00 I don't think they could speak English much but they got the message what we wanted alright and they we'd just say fish, and we offered them first some bully beef and they said, "no no", but we offered them the condensed milk and they said, "yeah yeah" but they didn't, and sugar, but they weren't interested in bully beef

**They knew what the good stuff was?**

- 05:30 Yes, cause this had been going on for quite a while before I went across so they were pretty well educated on what they wanted and what they could get so they, they were willing to trade an anxious to trade. That was just it there was just trade nothing else no frivolity or anything, just we take the fish you take the sugar as simple as that.

- 06:00 **Who was operating the searchlight the night you got lost?**

Yes, that was Gordon Brown he used to drive the wrecker truck for picking up wrecks and bringing them back to the workshop and

- 06:30 I think he went down there of his own accord and realised that at least he could put a light out and something might happen, so he was, Gordon and I were pretty good mates, we used to fraternise quite a bit, in that, when I went to that unit, we always got on well together. He was very easy, quiet chap very easy to talk to and so

- 07:00 it was I think he was concerned about all of us, not just concerned about me, he was concerned about everyone so he did the right thing and came out and put the light out so it was certainly a beacon in the dark for us. We got out one of the chaps couldn't swim, Harry Ollie, he had a nightmare time because this little boat was only drawing about 3 inches of freeboard and the waves were coming up pretty big towards the

- 07:30 finish so poor old Harry I think he died about a thousand deaths coming home. But we got there that's the main thing, thanks to Gordon. Lord knows were we would have finished up otherwise.

**How were you feeling at that stage about still being involved in the war? Were you ready to come home?**

Yes, I was because it was

- 08:00 getting close to the finish and not long before that I got a message that the youngest brother had been killed in New Guinea and I thought well my parents have suffered enough with that and the other three of us being away, the sooner I can get home the better, so he, they were had a scheme out then, the longer that you had service the more priority you had to come home. An the
- 08:30 cut off was at five and a half years service, I only had five years and four months, an there was one chap that had been there at the Middle East with a workshop and he kept rubbing it into me saying, "Fred, you should have heard the bugle early, you should have heard the bugle early" and blow me before he got home they changed the rules and changed it to five years service and you must have two and a half years overseas and I was the only one in the unit to

09:00 do it. I said to Sid, "its alright hearing the bugle early Sid, but if you don't do something you are going to be left behind", so I had my little revenge on Sid, we got on about 20 times after the war, we got on quiet well but it was always fun and, but I was very pleased to get home for a change and particularly after losing one brother, I thought well I'm better off home, more comfortable

09:30 the folks you know

**It must have been tough getting the news when you were away from home?**

Yes, it was particularly so close to the end of the war because when he was at Milne Bay at the big battles was on there and he was with the field ambulance and the Americans were involved in a bombing raid and strafing raid and one of the American officers got hit and no one went out for him so Athol went out

10:00 and got him and dragged him back, and he said "that's the bravest thing I've seen done, son, I'll see you get a medal", but there was no way he could get a medal because they wouldn't allow Australians to receive American medals, so he never got it, he took the risk at that was the sort of thing that Athol would do, eventually got, lost his life through no fault of his own, well I don't know whether how many

10:30 others on there but one other chap in the unit he got news of his brother being shot down, he was a pilot in England an only about a week before Stan and I were hit, we were in the small unit together too but it made a bit of, it made us a bit closer together that we had both lost a brother in

11:00 a matter of a week. It was something that we just had to live with, it hurt but you couldn't do anything about it. So we just put it down to luck of war and unfortunately we help, we couldn't; do anything about it so it happens and when you think about the millions of other people around the world getting the same

11:30 news you think, well I suppose, you think one of us out of four, it was unfortunate for Athol that it was him because he was the youngest but the odds weren't too bad really. Its not saying that in a cruel sort of way, it sounds like it but in actual fact one in four was a pretty good result particularly when in the 2/19th Battalion

12:00 I know three sets of brothers that were in there and both of them killed in each case. So imagine how their parents felt and they were probably got word the same day or within two days, one first then the other killed. Its one of the fortunes of war that you can't avoid unfortunately.

**So how did thing unfold from there?**

12:30 Oh well when we come home from there I went back I had I think it was a fortnights leave and to come back to be discharged and they I went back to Gunning, and I said I'm not going to stay here and try to get a job in Sydney so I went down and rented a small

13:00 room, or a room in a boarding house there and went for a job and I got a job at Five Dock in the mean time a mate, we'd been talking about, he used to work for Stonewall Jackson who was a sort of Woolworth's store in those days, when Woolworth's was selling nothing over 2 and sixpence, Coles nothing over 5 shillings, how thing have changed. And I went and

13:30 saw her and said you know between days off and the weekends I'll go looking for a business and went out to Miranda saw one there that I though was okay so I range Herb up and he come out and we had a look at it, and said yeah we got just about enough money to buy that so. We bought this little business there with just the two of us running it for about a week and Gordon

14:00 and his mother, they, Moira, they knew her they all come over and that's how Moira and I met and we sort of just from there on you know it looks like we are suitable for each other so it went on from there.

**So Gordon being the gentleman with the searchlight?**

Yes,

**How was the reunion with your family?**

14:30 Oh, it was particularly dramatic a bit with Mum, or traumatic what ever the word was, she was a bit upset, but the rest were just glad to see me and glad it was over. I think they were all relieved when the war was over because it was you know when you've got someone away I often thought about how they must have felt

15:00 wondering what was happening, its alright for you there, you know, it must be hard on them not knowing what's happening but we got through it.

**Were you brothers there when you had your reunion with your parents?**

No I was the first home. Jack was still up at the tank workshops at Queensland and strangely enough Mick

15:30 was on Morotai and I didn't know he was there and he didn't know I was going through there. He was there at a workshop there at that stage and we had I had a couple of days there both going and coming,



never dreamt that he was there, never found out until after the war that he was there.

**So you blokes eventually had a bit of a reunion?**

Ah, well

16:00 I can't remember anything special but we always kept in touch, cause again you see Mick come home at one time and Jack came home another time, we were never all home at once. There was never a doubt about that.

**When you were together was the war something that you talked about?**

Really we talked more about what we were going to

16:30 do and what was available and different ones, well we did talk about ones that didn't come back, this one didn't and that one didn't sort of thing, that's about all, but we didn't talk about experiences much at all. Jack told about a bit about the tank battle that he saw but generally speaking, it all comes out at different times, different subjects

17:00 you would just talk about what ever was going on at the moment but perhaps next time you see one another something else would come up and be mentioned but they, I don't think they had any idea of they knew about the battle but they didn't know just how intense that it was, they knew it was pretty dangerous and that's about it.

**They would have eventually learned more about that battle?**

17:30 Well the write ups in the paper about the death of them, and Gilbert Mann who was a writer's correspondent was in the 19th Battalion until they brought him home and they sent him back as a correspondent who wrote a little book called Grim Glory and that was the start of the big book that called Grim Glory that battalion published later on but they had writings

18:00 for all sorts of things but our own 2/19th Battalion Association got so small they couldn't carry on. But the 1/19th which is the permanent army people they took us over now and we can write to them and they publish quite a lot of the stories from different fellows that the army, and I remember not long ago, Vince Tobin, who

18:30 was a very devout Catholic, he swears that the night before we broke out that he was panicking a bit and he swears that he saw the virgin Mary and she come and told him that he would be alright and back home in Australia. And that sort of faith and belief hits people I must admit it never quite hit me like that but at the stage

19:00 where we didn't think we were going to get out and Anderson said well we're either going to break through or we'll die here. I felt very calm about it, it was though something was there to calm you down and you say well that's it, we're going to get killed so there it is. You must accept it but different ones have remarked on how their faith helped them at different times

19:30 its a very difficult point deciding what you did see and what you didn't see really, it a mental thing there is not doubt about that. But that how some people were affected. Vince went through the whole of that, got back to Australia he died about 5 or 6 years ago and

**How do you think that experience affected you?**

Well it made me

20:00 realise one thing that you might think you are invincible but somewhere along the line you could be here today and gone 10 minutes later. You become a bit of a fatalist quite frankly and you think what's going to happen will happen and you can't do anything about it whether its real bad you just have to accept it.

**How do you explain that incredible run of good fortune that you had through the war?**

20:30 There's no way in the world I can explain it really, it just happened and I can't understand now that why I was lucky enough to decide to escape from Singapore but I just made up my mind I wasn't going to be, I'd just rather them kill me in the boat trying to get away than on the island because I honestly believe that any opportunity they had they would kill you. That was the type of mentality that was

21:00 operating up at Muar but of course when the final surrender came, I didn't anticipate it ending like that I thought it would have been no surrender until the last ditch sort of thing because the tremendous casualties to civilians and no where to bury them water mains broke and the Singapore absolutely a mess, they decided, they knew they weren't going to keep it eventually because they weren't going to get

21:30 any supplies in to, so it was decided well that's it, that why I never dreamt for a minute that that was going to happen, but it did happen. I thought that no surrender until they were completely overrun but the last few days what I've heard from the ones that survived of, when they had a short defence line the Nips made no progress at all the last couple of days but then they didn't have to they knew they

22:00 were going to win anyhow. Cause you can't get supplies you can't stay forever, so it's a its just one of those things that happened and I don't think anyone can explain it, but I think some are lucky and some are unlucky.

**How did the war pan out for old Charlie?**

Oh Charlie he

22:30 was very unfortunate, he was a radio announcer and the Japs were looking for anyone to broadcast propaganda as radio announcers and you didn't have any choice with them, and the higher ups, the colonels, made sure that he went on a working party so that he got out of Singapore and they sent on one of the working parties the Japs wanted to Borneo

23:00 and they eventually found out and the Japs got him there and they took him to Japan and they insisted that he broadcast off them. And according to Charlie and I believe him because he was a very honourable person, they belted him up a couple of time and he said he could see no point in that but he'd try and get a few messages over. So he bargained with them if he would broadcast if he would let him

23:30 mention some of the people who were still alive, POWs so their parents would know. And he, after the war, he was broadcasting at definitely Japanese propaganda which he was broadcasting in a way that nobody should have ever believed what he was saying, and he was saying about how the Japanese

24:00 were winning a war in this place and that place when anyone around the army knew that they were in American hands at this stage. But afterwards they court martialled him and took his deferred pay away from him and they made him a very, very unpopular man with a certain group of people that were never there. But I haven't heard one POW

24:30 that was with him that would ever say a word against him. I do know he was accused of telling some of his troops to leave Singapore island and I never ever spoke up before, but that was true too, because while we were waiting to go on the boat there was some of the 19th Battalion, there were a couple that I knew the rest were reinforcements that had only been over there a week and they had only had a weeks training

25:00 it was really and they got cut of with Charlie and they come down into Singapore and he said look this place can't be held and if you want to get out, try and get out because it can't beheld. Eventually someone did get out on liberty ships or supply ships and he was accused of telling them to desert but they could

25:30 never prove it, but those fellows said, they saw me and they told me they said Charlie told us to get out cause there's going to be cause there is no chance of us holding it. And I said, "where's he gone?" and Jackie Smith, Jackie Jones said he's not coming he said he can't go because some of the there's more of A company back there and he's got to try and find them.

26:00 And he went back into the battle and eventually caught and surrendered. But you wouldn't believe himself and to me, and he wouldn't' go because there was A company fellows back there and that's fair enough to me, there were plenty of other fellows who would have shot through if they would have had the opportunity that he had to but he got a very raw deal and then he came

26:30 back Channel 7 put him on as a TV announcer and he was right up the top ratings and that because his presentation and his speech was really amazing. But when they started bringing stuff on him they had to say well sorry you're gone. So he lost his job as well over it. And the last

27:00 time I saw him he was selling medical supplies to hospital and that. He knew he had a rough deal and he said tome, he said, "look Fred, there is no way in the world that I'd be here if I hadn't done what they said, but I did my best to put messages over", and some of them had been picked up saying things that should have helped the allies but they didn't act them sort of thing, and they should have

27:30 known that he was not trying to really put propaganda over, he said, "did you believe anything you heard?", and I said, "No". Because at that stage when I heard he was on the radio in New Guinea and according to what he was putting over the Japs had just taken 90 percent of New Guinea, at that stage they didn't have 5 percent of it. And yet they accused him of propaganda so it was obviously written by the Japs and he just

28:00 had to read it. So but he was a terrific person and it was just unfortunate that he was caught in that position. He wouldn't have been had he not been radio announcer. So it's a cruel world at times, but I think they looked after him as far as food in Japan, he was fed reasonably well by all accounts, and he says so himself he was. He said, "what would you do? If they feed you like that

28:30 you're are not going to say I won't eat it", it was quite a story and a chap wrote a full book about it Charles Cousin's story, it was quite interesting.

**How did you feel when you heard about the two bombs that were let off in Japan?**

Well we

- 29:00 were absolutely excited because we realised, a lot of people don't they think oh what a terrible thing to do, but if they hadn't dropped those two bombs there would have been a million more people killed at least. So its very, very hard on the Japanese that were caught in it, but the number of lives that saved must have been tremendous. Because people don't realise how big the Japanese army was. At the
- 29:30 end of the war they still had a million troops in China and Korea. So how many they would have had at home is debatable but there would have been many millions and the allies would have had to take them by landing on Japan and landings are very costly things most of the time unless you got overwhelming gun fire and air support. So that
- 30:00 while it's a terrible way, weapons, lets hope no one ever has to use them again you saved a heck of a lot of lives, both Japanese and allies. Cause it would have been a fight to the death with the Japanese they wouldn't have surrendered.

**How do you feel about the Japanese these days?**

They don't worry me now, I think they are more educated lot and in all

- 30:30 fairness to the Japanese, I didn't mention this before. But when we were coming out of Singapore on the Wu Suey the second day out one of the Mitsubishi bombers which was a single-engine machine come flying around and he had a string of bombs under his wings where they used to carry them and we thought, cause I was up out on the deck and quite a lot of us were out on the deck, it was the only place to put us.
- 31:00 And we thought well fancy getting this far and now we are going to cop it. And he flew over the ship at first, it was all painted up like a hospital ship and then he few around it about three times, and reasonably high. And then he came in real low just above ship height, and as he got past he just saluted like that and flew off. So they weren't all animals like a lot of
- 31:30 people wanted to believe but that fellow was obviously doing the right thing. And there was no doubt in my mind that he was eventually killed anyhow because the Japanese air force was just about wiped out eventually. But that was another let off for all of us on that boat. If it had been somebody else from the Japs they probably would have sunk us.
- 32:00 Cause they weren't too fussy a few of them.

**Did I take you long to adjust back into civilian life?**

No, not really because I was so wrapped up in we wanted to get a business going Herb and myself and I was concentrating on that and that was what really I wanted to do and go and get a little business going ourselves, I was looking at businesses

- 32:30 everything that was advertised in our price range, and I kept myself pretty busy.

**What was the nature of he business that you did?**

It was a grocery business, grocery and a little bit of produce and then we dumped the produce eventually, we went into a new shop a bigger shop and expanded it and we put in a deep freeze with take away meals which was unheard of

- 33:00 in those days but it probably wasn't any more than half a dozen around Sydney but they didn't take on very well because they weren't up to the standard that they are today's are but we sold a few of them. But the deep freeze was handy to keep things in anyway. And we ended up putting a bit of hardware in and gradually built that up and then we, the chap that owned the house, the shop building, he built another
- 33:30 shop further down and we put the hardware into that and Moira and I took the hardware and Herb and Lillian the grocery. So we stayed in that for abut 6 or 7 years and got pretty tired of it doing long ours and Sundays and that and someone was always knocking on the door wanting a tin of paint of something so a chap come along one day and said, "do you want to sell the business?", and I said, " No", and he said, " well I've got a buyer who wants to buy it",
- 34:00 so and I said, " Well what's he got to offer?", cause he told us and we took it. I used to sell Pollack brushes there from a brush manufacturer, Bill Pollack heard it and said to me before if ever you sell out come and see me. So I went and saw Bill, " I said, right I'm going to have about a months break and then I'm looking for a job if anything's available", and he said, " You've got one", so I went there travelling
- 34:30 for him mostly countries early days and gradually took up a challenge and, Bill was a very poor business man he was very soft hearted and he wouldn't sack anyone, and I kept at him and said you got to get rid of this bloke and that bloke and he had an accountant there and you wouldn't pay him to teach kindergarten, and Bill was short of money and the other chap he knew used to come down every week
- 35:00 and guarantee the bank account for 50 pound, which was a lot of money in those days, and I said, "you're mad", he said, "oh the bank won't give me money", and I said well I'll see what I can do and I rang up the chap that I used to bank with Bill Creswick and I told him what the circumstances were.

And he said, "I'll enquire into it", anyway about 3 weeks after he said go and tell Bill to ring the bank at Padstow and talk to such and such a bloke and Bill went up

35:30 and he said "yeah we will honour your account as long as you don't go over a certain amount", and I said to Bill "how are you going to get rid of the bloke who's getting 50 pound each week", and he said, "oh I don't know whether I should", and I said, "of course you should", so he got rid of him and he got rid of the accountant and the place started, and a bloke had a branch at Newcastle and he was

36:00 fleecing Bill right left and centre, he used to get the stock and wouldn't pay for it, he was owing about 12,000 dollars and he bought a Mercedes car and booked it up to the firm. Bill was driving a Volkswagen, and I said to Bill, "he's got to go" and Bill had been an alcoholic at AA and this chap had been an alcoholic and AA and he said, "oh but he's in AA"

36:30 and I said, "there is no use being in AA and you're not going to help him when you're broke are you", and he said "no" and he said, "well you go and tell him that he's got to finish up" and so I had to go and tell him to finish up. So eventually it got moving and the sales manager was pretty insipid, and Bill said one day, "would you like to be sales manger?" and I said, "Yeah but I don't want to push Cec out", and he said, "he's not doing his job is he?" and I said, "no", and he said,

37:00 "well I'll tell Cec on payday that you're taking over I don't think he'll mind" and Cec didn't he was relieved to get out of it. So I ended up sales manager for the company and that's where I finished up. It was quite a good move for me as it happened but you had to be a little bit firm with people and without being too

37:30 crude but you can't carry lead weights on people who are not doing the right thing, it just doesn't work.

### **Can you tell me how you think the war experience changed you?**

Well it did teach me to be tolerant of people, and also that

38:00 war should always be the last resort. But when things are bad enough you've just got to do it whether you like it or not. Matter of fact when we were on Tarakan I used to write little bits of ditties for the paper there and the day after the war ended I wrote a little bit I put it in my pocket, I don't know if you want to hear it, so cut me short.

### **That would be fantastic?**

I called it

38:30 look forward it was published in our little weekly paper I used to write quite a few other ones about different blokes, under just mystery that no one knew who was writing them because some one might criticise pretty strongly but this is it. The war is won, the roar of guns will cease, but millions died that we may live in peace, forget them not when we are growing old, there's once again theirs is slaughter unfortold, I wonder

39:00 those lives been lost in vain, for when we see the sun shine after rain, our eyes will dim they shall not look for war, until again we will have it at our door, what will you do to see their children share, some little joy as if their dads where there, to guide and teach a noble way of life, prepare and keep them guarded through their strife, their heritage is his to see,

39:30 that they shall not be short of food in any way, that would have been provided for the hound that's gone, because its gone to help to save our land, before you idly boast of what you've done, think forward of things that's yet to come, then ask yourself and with yourself be fair, I wonder if I have really done my share, look forward

40:00 now and never once forget, the future is the test we haven't met, although the noise of battle now will cease, we'll yet to prove that we can we can win the peace. And we didn't win it we lost it. We've gone from war to war ever since. Staring with the Korean War and Vietnam now the Middle East again, we just don't learn somewhere along the line

### **40:30 Why do you think that is?**

Because people are, the nature of some people is they must have more and more power and when they get more power they still want more still and they still go for it. And as much as the Yanks made a huge mistake going into Vietnam, Oh I don't know if they did because if they hadn't gone into Vietnam the communists regime would have taken over all of that pacific area, but they slowed that up for sure. But this last one to get [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein, he was a brute there's is no doubt about that, he probably still is if he's alive. But if was a costly mistake for the American they should have tried to boycott him keep the pressure of the stopping them from selling their oil and things till let them revolt within themselves. Because now they've got even it seems that people who supported the Yanks at first are now against them and want to get them out too quickly. So its cost the American a lot of money and a lot of lives to do that and we don't know where it will end. Its just got out of hand, but while ever there is people that want to be at the top . . .

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

