Australians at War Film Archive

Walter Russell (Bill) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:43 **Thank you Bill for agreeing to do this interview. I want to start off by getting a brief over view of your life to date.**

This is what from the time I was born?

01:00 Are you ready to go? Thanks Claire [interviewer]. I was born in 1924 and I was born in Paddington in NSW just out of Sydney. My parents went back to Melbourne 12 months later and we lived at a place called Chelsea down on the Port Philip Bay and we grew up there for a short time and then we moved to a place called Murrumbeena

01:30 and then there and of course during the Depression years and things were pretty tough. And my Dad was a builder, was a carpenter and the first thing I can remember going back to five years old – I had my tonsils taken out on the kitchen table and my Dad had done some work for a doctor, Dr Le Sueffte his name was, he came from France and Dad did the work there and when he presented the doctor the bill

02:00 he said 'Well I can't pay you. I have no money' and he just said to Dad 'Hows the kids tonsils?' and Dad said 'I don't know'. He said 'Well I'll be down Saturday morning of afternoon and take them out' and so he came down and he laid me out on the kitchen table, took my tonsils out and then my brother was 14 months younger than I and took his out too. And that paid the debt. Things were pretty

02:30 hard those days but we moved around and we finally settled in a place called Blackburn which is east of Alma and Dad built a bit of a shed there and we were camped in that. We went to school at the Blackburn State school and I left school when I was 12 like most of us and I worked with my father who was a builder and I didn't like it. I wasn't keen on that and then I started

03:00 to work with a fruit man delivering fruit, Alf Hardy his name was, and he said to me when I was 13, he said 'How would you like to come and work with me full time?' and I said 'Well, Dad wants me to be a carpenter'. Anyhow he helped deliver fruit at our place and he said 'Where's your father?' I said 'He's across there in the other block'. He said 'Well, I'd like you to come and work with me'

03:30 and I said 'Well, you'd better go and ask Dad'. So he went over and asked Dad and he said 'No Alf. He's going to be a carpenter' and he said 'How much a week do you pay him?' and he said 'I pay him ten shillings a week' - which is the equivalent of about a dollar I suppose today – and he said 'Well I'll pay him two pound ten a week' which was five dollars and the old man said to him, he said 'Well, he can go and work with you'. So I went on a fruit truck.

04:00 Hawking truck food and fruit. And anyhow I loved the job. We used to go to the eastern market at 4 o'clock in the morning and load the truck up and I was driving when I was 16. I had no licence and early one morning going down into the market I fell asleep at the wheel and I went straight, just missed the all night tram, went straight across the road and straight up the steps of the

04:30 Greyhound Hotel there and busted down the front door. And no damage done to the truck at all but there was fruit and everything scattered all round – I had a load of berry fruit on and the punnets were…it was one mess in the back of the truck and I was just going to back the truck out and go on to the market and there was a policeman down at the Kew tram depot on duty 4 o'clock in the morning and he come running up and he said to me

05:00 'What happened here?' and I said 'I don't know' and he said 'Did you go to sleep?' and I said 'I could have' and he said 'Have you got your licence?' and I said 'No'. He said 'Where is it? At home?' and I said 'No. I haven't got a licence'. He said 'How old are you?' I said 'Sixteen'. Well, I thought he was going to explode. Anyhow we worked it all out and he contacted my boss from the Kew post, police station and Alf came down and we sorted things out with the load but I had to go to the court, face the court

05:30 and Alf was a bit of a character he said 'You'll get six months jail for this' and he was quite encouraging

really. And anyhow I went to the court, the magistrate was quite fair, he said 'Alright,' he said 'You'll be fined two pound and 15 shillings cost plus twenty five pounds damage to the pub

06:00 door'. Well Alf paid that, Mr Hardy paid that but I went up and saw the local policeman at Blackburn where I lived and told him what happened. I used to deliver fruit to his place and he knew I was underage driving and he said 'Well', he said, 'Tell Alf, tell him to take you into the exhibition building in Russell Street in Melbourne South. Tell them your 18 and they'll give you your licence' and that's what I did. So I was possibly one of the youngest drivers in Victoria with a licence. In those days.

06:30 Anyhow, when war broke out I was fifteen. It happened on my fifteenth birthday and we were all gathered round the wireless there at my grandfathers house and of course Mr Robert Menzies who was Prime Minister then said that we are now at war with Germany and we'll be joining with Britain and I remember when that came across I said to my old grandfather who was Scottish I said 'I wonder if I'll be old enough

07:00 to join the army?' and he said 'Oh Laddie!' he said 'It'll all be over in six weeks'. Well he was wrong – it lasted six years. Anyhow I decided, I told Mr Hardy I'd like to join the army. He said 'You're not old enough' and I said 'Well, I'll put my age up' and so that's what I did. Doug Stirling, who was my school mate, and I went into the Melbourne town hall to enlist. I was smoking a pipe

07:30 and I had six weeks fluff round my chin and one of those pork pie hats on and I remember the recruiting Sergeant – he was a First World War man because he had ribbons on – and he looked a me he said 'Sonny, what can I do for you?'. And I said 'I would like to enlist Sir' he said 'How old are you?' I said 'Nineteen' - you had to be nineteen to enlist – and he said 'When did you turn nineteen?' and I said 'Yesterday Sir' and he looked at me and he said 'Sonny, if I was

08:00 to come from behind this desk, pull your pants down you'd have a nappy on' he said 'Get out'. And I never ever forgot that so… But the irony of all that Doug Stirling who was my school mate he enlisted and he died on the Sandakan march in Borneo . It was a tragedy. He was the youngest out of the eighteen hundred that died on the Sandakan march. He went into

08:30 the army under an assumed name, Mattson, and they never knew or realised that he was Doug Stirling, he was a nipper. So anyhow when Japan came into the war I thought 'Well, I'll have another go' and I went in. It was a different recruiting Sergeant of course, and I was accepted. I put my age up to 19 – I'd just turned 17 – and the thing that really worried me

09:00 Nell's father signed my papers – my Dad wouldn't. Mum signed them and Nell's dad was in the army – he was a WO – a warrant officer and when I went out to Caulfield Racecourse was where they examined you and the MO, the medical officer there said 'How old are you?' I said 'Nineteen sir' he said 'Well', he said 'Your body doesn't show it'. I was about nine , a bit over nine stone

09:30 and he said 'Whoever signed your papers will be fined for false declaration of age' and that worried me somewhat but it didn't worry me at all. And nobody questioned it and so I went into camp on Australia Day 1942 in January and went to a place called Balcombe and did my initial six weeks training there.

10:00 You want a spell on that or is that alright now? Shall I continue?

Keep going yeah.

So we went and did our six weeks training there and I was sitting on the front steps of one of the huts we were camped in, the old magazine hut and this officer came up and spoke to me. I never forgot his name Lieutenant McKenzie Smith

10:30 and he said 'How old are you soldier?' and I said 'Nineteen sir' and he said 'Well', he said 'There's a draft going to the Middle East' he said 'And you won't be on it'. He said 'I enlisted when I was fourteen in the First World War' and I was going to say to him 'Well sir why can't I go?' but he took forty of us off the draft that he thought were all underage and of course they went over to reinforce 2/48th Battalion in the Middle East.

11:00 But then we went to Mangalore. It was north of Seymour and I joined the 2/5th Pioneer Company and it was an infantry battalion and we sort of camped there for some time and did manoeuvres round there with some American troops that had already come over to Australia. And whilst I was there I sort of enjoyed the army life. It was something that sort of

11:30 suited me. I like that type of life. We were moved early in 1942 to Wagga and we went up, the whole battalion, and there were five hundred and something odd men in the 2/5th Pioneer Company and we went up to Wagga. We were the first troops in the Kapooka camp at Wagga in early 1942 and that's where they reformed

12:00 the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion. My original battalion was taken prisoner of war in Java and they were captured there and spent three and a half years in a prisoner of war camp and so they reformed the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and we were built up to eight hundred men while we were in New South Wales. That strengthened the battalion. But whilst I was at Wagga I couldn't walk. I went to walk onto

12:30 the road one morning, I got out of bed and couldn't walk and they took me to the 116th Field Hospital just out of Wagga and I was diagnosed with rheumatic fever. I spent some time there and then my

battalion was moving over to Western Australia because the authorities felt Japan was going to invade from Western Australia and thousands of us

13:00 moved over there but I was unable to go because I was not fit to go and anyhow they discharged me from the 116th Field Hospital there, I was sent home and I took sick again and they took me out to Heidelberg Military hospital and they examined me and wanted to put me in B form, out of A form into B class and I didn't want that

13:30 so they eventually discharged me and I went over to Western Australia and joined my original unit the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and we were going to Burma. They were going to send us to Burma with the 7th Australian Division. Winston Churchill who was the prime minister of England in those days he wanted us to go but our prime minister at the time [John Curtin] would not release us to go so

14:00 we held on til early 1943 when we were brought back to Victoria when the threat of invasion from Japan was sort of over and then we had leave in Victoria and the whole battalion was moved up to Queensland. Up into the Atherton Tablelands and that's where we started our jungle training there as a unit. We were told that our battalion was set aside

14:30 for a special task. We weren't told what it was. And our commander Lieutenant Colonel Lang he got us out on parade once at Mount Garnet out at Ravenshoe [Atherton Tableland, Qld] and told us that we had been selected for a special task and we would start extensive training to meet the needs for what we were set out for.

15:00 And we trained with live ammunition and we went through Tully which was a quiet jungle place in North Queensland there and I remember you would go down you would have… I was a Bren gunner I got the second top score in the whole battalion for Bren gun and that's what they gave me – I might have failed if I had known that but they were mighty guns; semi-automatic gun

15:30 and I got going through the jungle in Tully and you had an officer at the back of you telling you to watch this, watch that and you were really hyped up. He said 'If you see anything, shoot it' and I just caught the corner of my eye and I spun my Bren down, round and blasted at it – there was a fellow there operating one of the targets and part of

16:00 his body come out but fortunately I missed him but the training was really extensive. So the whole of the 7th Australian Division and the 8th Division were all gathered up there and we put on a display at the Mount Garnet Racecourse there the radio track. And when that was all over our CO told us that we were all on the move and I

16:30 was selected as one of the men to go with the advance party to Port Moresby in New Guinea and we went over down to Townsville and went on to the HMAS Canberra and in another two days we were in Port Moresby and the first day that we were there was the Japanese came over with air raids and that was our first taste of warfare with the enemy

17:00 and so we did and extensive time there. We got the camp ready for the rest of the battalion to come over, which they did in three weeks time and then we marked all around the hills in Port Moresby, extensive training and until one day we were told that we would be flying out of Port Moresby from Seven Mile Airstrip at Moresby and so I was

17:30 again in the advance party. We were loaded up into the DC-3s, the aircraft twenty to a plane and we took all… and we flew to a place called Tsili Tsili – it was the most forward American airbase in New Guinea at the time. And we landed there, we got out of the planes and got ourselves organised and again we did some extensive training

18:00 around… the whole battalion was flown up – the 700 men were flown up to Tsili Tsili and we stayed there for three weeks. The good thing about Tsili Tsili; there's a lot of gold there and some of my mates were really keen prospectors and they gathered quite a lot of alluvial gold around there. I really wasn't interested in it. They – I don't know what happened – but they got quite a lot of gold in the area. One Monday morning we were called to parade

18:30 the whole 700 of us and I never, ever forgot the words of our CO Colonel Lang. We were ready to move, had all our packs on. The packs that we carried weighed about eighty pound which is about 40 kilograms – they were pretty heavy. And he just said to us 'Men of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, when you leave this place this morning there is not turning back. Your bridges will be burnt

19:00 behind you. There is only one way and that way is forward' and so we set off for a march of 120-odd kilometres. Some in inaccessible country it was and we were heading for Nadzab which was an airbase that the Japanese were using at the time and we left there on the Monday morning on Friday night we arrived at this position on the

19:30 banks of the Markham River and we just camped there. We didn't know that… we were told that the enemy was on the other side of the Markham River so Saturday morning at eight o'clock we were ready to move across and forge the Markham River, it was nearly a mile wide, in three channels and just before we started off we could hear the drone of the plane and the 503rd American Paratroop Regiment

20:00 flew over and from six hundred feet eighteen hundred men just jumped out of the planes and they were

no sooner out of the planes the chute was opening on the ground – it was an incredible sight to see them – and that was the signal for us to cross the Markham River and link up with them so we did that and we only lost four men actually on the crossing which was pretty good out of 700. And when we got over to the other side of the Markham River

20:30 you could hear the gun firing so we thought 'Well, this is the first taste of real action' but it was the Yanks walking around shooting birds. There was no enemy – the enemy had cleared all and anyhow we settled down and our job was to lengthen the airstrip there so that they could bring further aircraft in so we worked there for about a week I suppose clearing the strip, taking trees down and

21:00 everything like that. And then the first plane came in and he came in a bit short and he clipped the top of the first tree and it tipped him over and of course it crashed, burst into flame so we had some more work to do on the strip there. But just before that happened the 2/33rd Battalion of the 7th Australian Division was lined up at Ward's Airstrip at Moresby ready to fly to Nadzab and the Liberator bomb was taking

21:30 off then loaded with two 1000 pound bombs. It was five to ten feet, twenty feet and it dived straight into the Don company of the 2/33rd Battalion and wiped the whole of Don company out. Over a hundred men were killed. One of the thousand pound bomb exploded so that changed our course of pattern for us because we were going into

22:00 Lae because the 2/33rd Battalion were going in we took their place and A Company of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion advanced into Lae. We met scattered opposition as we went there and as we got into Lae we got into a place called Heath's Plantation and that's where I lost my best mate. He was our welterweight boxer Nick Eddy and he was killed

22:30 by a sniper there and he was our first casualty for our battalion. We got into Lae ahead of time and our CO [commanding officer] wanted to be the first man in Lae. The 9th Division come in from the sea and they landed also and we run into the 9th Division Artillery – they were still laying down a barrage – it was quite a frantic time. It was bad enough getting shot with the Japanese

23:00 but to get shot by your own artillery wasn't the best of things. Our CO was remanded about it – he was taken apart about it. Anyhow, after that finished and Lae fell we come back to Nadzab and then we start to move up the Markham Valley, went up into the Ramu Valley. We did extensive patrolling in the Finisterre Ranges there.

23:30 The Japanese were coming across from the dam with supplies and they were reinforcing their troops and we had to find out just what was going on and we would do a lot of patrolling. Some reconnaissance patrol, some fighting patrols – it depended on what you struck and one fighting reconnaissance patrol that we went on over there we run into opposition. This is where we lost our Lieutenant,

24:00 Rusty White he was. He was more forward than he should have been in the patrol and we run into an ambush and all I remembered Rusty doing he lost his hat and he went to pick up his hat and he never strike and he got a burst of machine gun bullets up the back. We got out, had to get out and three days later we located his body. The Japanese had buried him but they'd decapitated him – took his head off.

24:30 And he was never officially listed as killed in action because they had no identification on his body but they just said that he was presumed dead. Missing in action, presumed dead. And that was quite a shock to us because he was a tremendous commanding officer. So we just move on up through the Markham Valley up into a place called Kaiapit.

25:00 And at Kaiapit there was quite a strong group of Japanese there and the 2/6th Commandos went in before us and they killed about three hundred Japanese there. They lost fourteen men which was quite light compared to the opposition and we had to go in and clean up around the place – bury the dead and the likes of that. The pioneer battalion,

25:30 they always used to say it was first in and last out. And this was sometimes the case with us. We still did more patrolling in the Finisterre Ranges and fighting patrols and reconnaissance patrols. The weather was atrocious – it rained every afternoon. You were never dry and then we went to Dumpu – that was the furthest most point and as we were

26:00 going, flying up to Dumpu - they flew us up in the DC-3s twenty to a plane – and they'd been an air raid. The Japanese had got eight Stuttgart bombers, German bombers, nobody knew what they were. They'd never seen them before. And they came down with a strafing run all the way down the Markham and Ramu valleys. And of course we were grounded on the ground. They wouldn't take the planes up with us.

26:30 But when that was gone we started to take off and the pilot of our DC-3 – he was American – he said 'If the enemy attack us' – I was a Bren gunner of course - he said 'You engage the enemy through the little loophole in the window of the DC-3. So I thought 'This'll be good'. Anyhow, when we got off they only flew about 70 odd 80 feet high above the ground. They just kept

27:00 down low for camouflage and I remember the co-pilot got up and he just said to his pilot 'There's two fighter planes starboard port wing' and with that the pilot lifted the DC-3 up – we were just sitting on the floor – and we all finished up down at the tail end of the plane and we were scrambling up to try to

sort ourselves out up and when I got up to the little window the Ramu Valley River looked as though it was

27:30 running upside down. I had no idea what angle we were in and he straightened the plane up and brought it down to level again and we landed at a place called Dumpu. And that's where we started to go up through the ranges again up to a place called Shaggy Ridge which the Japanese had quite a fortress there and that's where I got extremely ill there. I suppose I would have been the first soldier that had his pack carried

28:00 by Major General George Vasey. He was a tremendous soldier. Just before the war finished he was killed in a plane crash just out of Cairns but he was a lovely fellow and I just collapsed at the side of the track and I remember him saying to me – he had no identification on him and I didn't recognise his face – he said 'You're not well soldier?' and I said 'No sir' and he said 'Give me your pack' and he said 'I'll carry it for you'

28:30 and he carried it 200 yards up the track. Tremendous fellow he was. But I was that ill I couldn't carry on any further and they, a stretcher bearer carried me down to the Dumpu hospital which was just a big tent and from there they flew me down to Port Moresby. When they loaded me onto the plane at Dumpu I saw this nurse – she was about four foot two high, she was an American nurse, and all I could see was

29:00 the two .45 pistols strapped to her side and I looked at her and I said 'What have you got those on for?' and she said 'I've got to protect myself from you Aussies'. So I said 'You don't have to worry about me'. But anyhow when they landed me at Port Moresby they took me to the 2/1st AGH hospital there and they diagnosed me as having BT and MT malaria and scrub typhus.

29:30 If I hadn't had the malaria and just had the scrub typhus I wouldn't be sitting here today but one fought against the other and that was Christmas 1943. The nursing sister that nursed me through the critical part of my sickness. She was a lovely person, I've never forgotten her. I was told later on that she was transferred up to Lae, she also contracted scrub typhus and died there.

30:00 But she was a lovely girl no doubt about it. So eventually when I got well I was brought back to the battalion who had been taken out of action and camping at Port Moresby and it was time for my battalion to go home. So they loaded us on the Kanimbla it was an armed merchant ship and we got in there and landed at Townsville and then we were put on the train and went

30:30 back down to Melbourne for a months leave down there. You want a spell for a while?

No this is good. Do I want…?

You want to stop for a while?

No, no keep going.

So I had leave. I still had some very good friend of mine, about five were still alive and that was a time of drinking and one thing like that. Home on leave and anyhow

31:00 I was going with Nell at the time and after having the month at home, on the very last night of my leave I rang Nell up and told her I was home. Not that I'd been home for 30 days but I was home now. Nell didn't believe me – she rang my mother up and she was quite puzzled at the fact that I'd sort of rang her up and told her I was home -

31:30 why didn't I come and see her in the last 30 days. And I said 'Well, I've been out with my mates' and she said 'Well, you'd better stop out with your mates'. Anyhow we sorted all that out, got all that sorted out and then we were sent up after the leave finished we were sent up to Cairns, Trinity Beach, where we commenced our amphibious training to go to Borneo. I was there at Cairns and I took sick with acute

32:00 appendicitis and they raced me to hospital. I was in hospital for 6 weeks with appendicitis – I got over it and they raced me into a civilian hospital and anyhow after I came out of the hospital I was sent out to Selheim just out of Charters Towers into a staging camp and I tried to go back to my battalion the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and I was told by Lieutenant Colonel Brown

32:30 he was the commanding officer of the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion but had since retired from that and he was in charge of this staging camp and he said to me, he said 'You're unable to go back to your battalion. Your battalion has been brought up to strength and they're going to Borneo' and I was very disappointed at the fact that I couldn't get back to my battalion because I had some really tremendous mates there and

33:00 in an infantry battalion you have a closeness with your mates – I mean you depend on them and so I was sent down to Strathpine just out of Brisbane where I joined the 31/51st Infantry Battalion and I was very disappointed about that and then I linked up with an old chap. He was 46 year old and that's old to be in infantry battalion. He was with the 2/4th Pioneer Battalion and he went

33:30 AWL [absent without leave] because he had just gotten married and never returned to camp when he should have and they arrested him and he spent some time in jail and he too was sent to the 31/51st Battalion and that's where we met. We became very firm friends. So whilst we were there I joined the Mortar Battalion. I knew nothing about mortars I was still the Bren gunner, I was still the battalion Bren

gunner in the unit and we were

34:00 packed off and sent off to Bougainville. Just on Christmas ’45 that would have been – yeah 1945 and we went over on the Sea Snipe an American ship and when we landed at Bougainville they had no landing jetties there or anything. Your ship was anchored outside in the ocean and

34:30 you clambered down the side of the boat on landing nets and dropped into a barge and it was quite exciting. It was about a 6 foot swell running and the boat was going up and you had to time your departure as you come down the landing net otherwise if you went up as you’d come down you’d have fell into the ocean. With all your gear on but yeah we made it, we got there. And they took us over to a place called Torokina

35:00 and when we landed at Bougainville I thought ‘Well, this is going to be a holiday’ because the Yanks had taken Bougainville but they only held a perimeter of about four miles long and three miles wide. They’d never advanced in Bougainville at all and they just sat there but that little strip of land cost 4000 American lives there. So we wondered what we were going to do there and anyhow we

35:30 so found out. We spent some time at the staging camp at Torokina then we were sent up to what they call the Numa Numa Trail, up into the top part of Bougainville. There was 3,400 steps you climbed - logs cut into the side of the hill and you just climbed up there. It was a very torturous, very tiring carrying all your gear up there so we got up there. The thing that I was amazed at the time you

36:00 looked down into the volcano and you’ve never seen such a beautiful, all the different colours of the rock, the hot rock and one’s like that. But you could feel the whole ground moving all the time up there. So we relived the 26th Battalion there at Bougainville and we stayed up there for some time. Before the 26th Battalion went up there the Japanese and the Americans had a peace agreement.

36:30 I just couldn't believe this. That the Japs went down to the creek in the morning to get their water and the Americans went down in the afternoon and they never engaged in any battle at all. When the 26th Battalion went up there they saw the Nips going down to the water and of course they opened up on them. And that was the end of the peace treaty. But that’s the fortunes of war I suppose. But we stayed there for some time and

37:00 then we came down. We had Christmas down at Torokina then we were given a notice that we were going to take the north part of Bougainville up the coast of Bougainville, up the north coast of Bougainville and so we set off there and we struck opposition all the way up there so we went into the Genga River – to Tsimba Ridge

37:30 and we lost a lot of good men there and it was hard going. It was pretty tough going. The 26th Battalion captured an island – Taiof Island – off the west coast of Bougainville and it was an island that had a hill on it about 2000 metres high and it was a very good observation post. You could see the movement up and down the Bougainville coast

38:00 and that was the idea of capturing that island – so we could watch the movement of the Japanese troops and that there. We went over to take over from the 26th Battalion and the first job we got; Charlie Hapi and I were to go up this spur, this mountain ridge, and set up a listening post and also a seeing post up there. And I remember when we left to go up this trail I suppose

38:30 it would take about 6 hours to get up there. We took 6 native with us to help us carry the receiving sets and one like that and Cliff Hathwick who was my platoon Sergeant said ‘No lighting fires’ and I said ‘Well that’s alright Cliff. No worries’. So when we got up there and we were getting closer Charlie said to me, he said ‘Peewee…’ Oh! Peewee was my army name – nobody knew me as Bill.

39:00 I was the youngest and the smallest and that’s how I got the name Peewee. He said ‘Peewee when we get up there I want a cup of tea’ and ‘Charlie’, I said ‘Cliff said no fires’ and he said ‘Well, I’m still having my cup of tea’. So we got up there and we sent the native boys home, they’d done their job tremendously and we set up the camp just on the top there. And you could see for miles, it was incredible view. So Charlie got a few bits of wood and one thing like that and started to light the fire and the smoke

39:30 was slowly going up and the next min I heard this incredible explosion about 300 yards down the hill. It was the Japs landed the first shell. They’d seen the smoke rising, they knew that the Japs were no longer in control of the island. The second shell hit about 150 metres down the… And I just said ‘Charlie out of this’. He grabbed his dixie, kicked the water onto the fire

40:00 and of course up went the smoke and everything like that. We clambered down the side, the next shell hit right on the top. We’d have been history. And we raced down back to our camp and Cliff Hathwick said ‘What happened?’. And I said ‘Charlie wanted a cup of tea’ and that’s what it was. So that put our plot away really but we still used it as an operation there and we used to wire back,

40:30 send messages back to Torokina, back at the base there and the American Air Force, New Zealand Air Force rather, they would come up and strafe the shipping up and down the coast there and just keep watch on it and that there. I was nearly drowned at Taiof Island. The Japanese had mainly cleared off but Taiof Island was split in half. It had a channel about 150 odd metres wide through it that separated

41:00 the two parts and the natives there said they'd seen some Japanese movement on the bottom side of the island so Freddy Herlock was the other Sergeant and he and Cliff Hathwick the sergeant in charge of our section decided we'd better go and have a look. When we got to the channel the tide was running pretty far through at about six knots, it was quite strong. I took my boots off, put them round my neck and carried the Bren gun up, lifted up high,

41:30 and as I stepped in and started to I fell into a hole. I disappeared and if Cliff Hathwick hadn't been behind me, and he had the presence of mind to grab me, I'd have gone. There and then. And he pulled me out and when I come up coughing and spluttering he said 'What? Do you want a swim Peewee?'. Anyhow we got over that but we didn't attempt to go across it. We got a barge and went round the proper idea is to go round it in a barge but there

42:00 was no Nips there. I think it was just a mistaken identity. So we come off Taiof Island and

Tape 2

00:41 **So you were pulled out of that hole?**

Yeah, yeah. Well when we got out, I was pulled out of the hole and saved by Cliff Hathwick. And we had to go back to the mainland at Bougainville. We go back to the mainland go back to the Torokina

01:00 for a respite period see, probably about a fortnight. Have a rest period there and get yourself together. Then we went up by barge onto the west coast of Bougainville and we had an area there that was fairly hectic. We had a job to do at a place called Porton Plantation. This

01:30 part of my was history there, was something that was never divulged for 40 years later on because of the problems surrounding the whole thing. It was put on tape, because he'd gone now, General Sir Thomas Blamey. And it was to land on the shores at Porton Plantation. It was inaccessible. We were advised not to even try and land there.

02:00 The Japs had 1500 top marines, a Japanese fighter was a pretty good fighter but the marines, they were top. And Anton was the Porton Plantation Manager before the war, he was a native, educated man. He'd done 3 years schooling at Geelong Grammar in Victoria. And he said that we would not get he barges in there because of the situation with reefs. The army authorities

02:30 just waived aside his warnings about it. Anton was a lone ranger, he would go out on his own, he had 200 Japanese to his credit. He would just go out and seek them out and dispose of them, incredible fellow. So we went into Porton Plantation. The first line of barges were stuck on the reef.

03:00 **So picking it up from the Porton Plantation?**

We went into Porton Plantation as it was, it was low tide, the barges got stuck on the reef. They couldn't get the equipment off at all, couldn't get any of the equipment off. Some of the men get ashore, got ashore and dug in at Porton Plantation. The Japanese put up incredible opposition to us.

03:30 When the situation got grim, they tried to reverse the barges off the reef. Some got off the reef and some didn't. They were sitting targets there. My barge got over , the barge I was on he was killed. Major Samson who won a military cross in the Middle East, he took control of the barge and got it off, we got it off.

04:00 We couldn't do anything for those that were already on the shore, the put up an incredible fight, and so were the Japanese. We went back to base to where we started off. And they had the barges there that were used in the Normandy landing in Europe. They were a shallow draft and we went in there, back on the early morning of the next day to try and get our fellows off the beach in these barges.

04:30 We got in there we got some of them off, some were drowned trying to get off. The fire power was incredible I was a Bren gunner, I put 50 magazines, and that's 33 bullets to a magazine, over one barrel, the barrel was nearly red hot, trying to stem the flow of the enemy, I just stood in the middle of the barge and just opened up with another Bren gunner.

05:00 We eventually got off, some of the boys were swimming out. The trouble was when they hit the water, the sharks were there. And the salt water crocodiles. It was absolutely turmoil, you just couldn't imagine what was going on. I picked one fellow out of the water and I'll never forget, he said, "Peewee", it was Ronnie Deburg from Gatton up here in Queensland. He said, "Peewee you are an ugly looking coot but I am glad to see you"

05:30 And we got Ron on, he only died about 18 months ago up here. But it was one of the greatest shemozzles you will ever imagine as it happened. And out of all this General Blamey was watching the whole thing, he was supreme commander of the Australian forces. And an island called Saposa Island off Porton Plantation. And he watched form that. Bluey Reeter our platoon commander, the was a Middle East man, he escaped form Crete and Greece,

06:00 incredible soldier, won the military cross at Crete. He was 18 hours in the water in the boat that was sunk in the Mediterranean he kept afloat and was rescued. Went through Tobruk and he come back to Australia and he come up to our battalion. He was the finest solider I have ever seen Bluey. General Blamey asked Bluey what he thought of the Porton Plantation show and

06:30 Bluey said to him, “It was a real stuff up” just like that. And the aide to General Blamey said, “You can’t say that to the General, the supreme commander” and Bluey said, “I can, he asked me and I told him”. No mucking about, but it was as I said, it was a real stuff up and we lost a lot of men. There was over 60 odd were killed. 129

07:00 were wounded, some never recovered. And with that was one of our commander, Lieutenant Downes, or Captain Downes he was then, he was killed there. Four little boys he had, going to school at Innisfail. But it was a real tragedy. And the whole thing was it was only 6 weeks before the war finished. Useless loss of lives it was.

07:30 So that’s just the fortunes of war I suppose. But as I look back at it, I have a tape here that the ABC at Townsville made it, of the whole set up and what happened. And when my friend from up at Mareeba sent it down to me he said, “Peewee, make sure you are sitting down when you watch this tape” And Nell sat with me, and she said, she just said to me,

08:00 “You are lucky that you are here with me” That’s just how it was back then. I have viewed the tape a couple of times with my family. And I really, I’m really horrified at just what went on. As is say, that’s war,

Was that the end of your war experience?

That was, as far as being in action goes, that was the finish of it.. And the horrifying thing about war, there is no winners, there

08:30 is no winners, whatever happens.

So what happened after that?

After we finished and the war finished at Bougainville and world wide. My platoon the Mortar platoon went up to ocean island. One of the phosphate islands, we went up on the HMAS Diamantina, to straighten things up there. The

09:00 Japs of course had occupied Ocean Island. And we had to get them off the island, send them down to Rabaul, they were shipped down to Rabaul. And we stayed there for about 6 weeks trying to clean the island up. Just before we got to Ocean Island, about 3 weeks before the end of the war. There was 200 of the islanders, Ocean Islanders lined up on the cliff face there. The highest part of the island was only about

09:30 oh 200 feet I suppose. And the machine guns just mowed them down, the 200 young fellows. There was one survivor, he hid in a cave for 6 days. And we had arrived and as a matter of fact, some years ago, I heard his story on the ABC. What had happened and why it happened. So what we did we got all the Japanese equipment, put it in their barges and took it out to sea and just sunk them all.

10:00 And waited until civil administration from New Zealand came up to look after and take over the island. And then from Ocean Island we went across to Nauru, the other Ocean island, the other phosphate island and we stayed there for some time, cleaning the island up and getting it also straightened out for the civil aviation, civil to come up from New Zealand. Australia, England and New Zealand

10:30 used to govern the island in a 3 year period. and when the war broke out New Zealand was governing the islands at that time. So they went back to finish their term of governing the island. Nauru was quite a bigger island and very rich in phosphate and after we sort of worked there and got things straightened out for the civil administration to come up. We went down to Rabaul in New Britain and we stayed

11:00 there, there was countless thousands of Japanese there. They were held in the prisoner of war camps and the likes of that. And we just patrolled the island, or patrolled around Rabaul itself. Making sure that things were alright. When you were discharged from the army you had a point system. You are allocated so many points. And when your points came up you were sent back to your country

11:30 and I had 136 points in my time came, I was taken back to Australia, and down to Melbourne. And in July I was discharged, July 1946 I was discharged and that finished my army career. A month later Nell and I were married. We corresponded through the war years. I couldn’t keep her letters

12:00 because they just disintegrated like that. But she kept most of mine, and every now and again we take them out and have a bit of a read. With them and that. We couldn’t say much because they were censored. if you said anything you shouldn’t have, the officers just cut it out. So you just didn’t say a great deal, and you couldn’t say a great deal. So that finished my army

12:30 career then. As I say Nell and I were married on the 31st of August 1946. And that was a new life. I had a battle to settle down like most people did. We had problems, but with Nell’s loving care we came through it. Will that do that.

13:00 **The time you were in Chelsea in Melbourne, can you describe what it was like at that time?**

It was a very, Chelsea of course is flat. And runs onto Port Phillip Bay. Of course it was pretty hard living, we were always moving,

13:30 when you couldn't sort of pay your rent you moved out of that house. And moved into another house. And this is what happened, I moved into two houses at Chelsea. things were hard, food was very, very short. All my family were Scottish and they loved their porridge, and I hated it. And but they never used to put sugar on their porridge, they put salt on it and no milk.

14:00 And the trouble was if you didn't eat it at breakfast time, when you came home form school it was there cold to eat it at night time. So you tried to get it down, you know. And but life was hard, there was no doubt about it. So we settled at Chelsea, Jack, my brother, was 14 months younger than I am. Jean my sister, or adopted sister, my birth sister, or my family sister died at birth.

14:30 In Chelsea and Mum went to hospital and Dad straight away adopted my adopted sister Jeanie, Jean died just some time, oh 10 years I suppose when Jeannie died, she had cancer. And then my brother was born, Barry, who is still alive and living at Tamworth. He was born in 1936 and that was our family there.

15:00 I remember going to the pictures at Chelsea, the first time I ever went to a picture theatre. I was terrified. It was a fire on the screen at the pictures and I thought the picture had caught fire, the screen the building and everything. But it wasn't that was the picture. And the best part of that, when we come out of the picture, the railway lien runs straight across the front of the, towards the front over Chelsea Road

15:30 and the ice cream truck had been hit by a train. Killed the driver but it didn't worry us, but there was ice cream everywhere. And as kids are kids, we were into the ice cream. And I still recall that, eating the ice cream. But no we decided after a period of time we would move to Murrumbeena. Which was oh only about 7 kilometres from Melbourne itself.

16:00 And we rented a house there with Dad's sister, they were there, auntie Lucy, and we just shared the house there. And after a while we couldn't pay the rent and we had to get out of that one too. And Dad and Mum bought two blocks of land at a place called Blackburn, that was east of Melbourne. and Dad put up a garage there and we lived in the

16:30 garage. It was sort of very rough, but still the roof didn't leak and that was the main thing. And that's, at school, well I let school when I was 12. As I told you before I had to work, do you have to record that one or not.

How old were you when you were living in Chelsea?

I was 5.

17:00 I can't remember where we lived, I think it was Elliston we lived before we moved to Chelsea. I was 5 year old. and I stopped there, oh 4 or 5 years I suppose when we went to Murrumbeena.

So from about 5 years to about 9 or 10?

Be about 10 when we went to Murrumbeena I suppose.

You can remember going to the pictures in Chelsea?

Oh yes, I remember

17:30 it quite vividly, yes. We used to go, we lived not far from the beach, and Dad used to take us down. My Dad was an incredible swimmer and we used to go out, and he used to swim right out in Port Phillip Bay and swim back. No we used to, my Dad was in the army those days, in the peace army of course. And I think a lot of our food came from army supplies.

18:00 It wasn't legal, but no, Dad was a very hard worker, incredible worker and that. But

Can you describe what kind of a man your dad was?

Very hard man. I think we got more beltings than we got feeds. But that's how it was those days. Discipline was so strict, to a point of cruelty too.

18:30 I remember one instance, when we moved to Blackburn Dad started to build the house. He built the garage and we lived in the garage and we decided to build the house. And Don Bradman was batting at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, that was in 1936. And Jack and I, that was my brother, wanted to go and see him. And bat. And we asked Dad and Dad said, well,

19:00 we were digging the foundations out of the house, and Dad had set us an area to dig the foundation out, if we finished that he would give us the money to go and see Don Bradman bat. Jack and I worked all night with hurricane lamps, digging the foundation out. and we finished early in the morning. Dad kept his word and gave us the money we get the train and into Melbourne cricket ground. and the most horrifying part about it, it was the only duck that Don Bradman made

19:30 and that was the day he made it. I never forgot it. Many years ago I was talking to Ida Shandler a friend of ours up here. And Ida was at the cricket ground that day too in 1936. Yeah.

Were you and your father close?

No, no. Never.

20:00 I don't think fathers were those days, not in the working field. Dad I can never remember my Dad playing with me or anything like that, cricket or anything like that. No He was rather a stand off man. Good provider, give you that, but as far as, I can never remember him cuddling me or anything like that. And

20:30 no he was a very hard man. But he provided so that was the main thing.

Can you tell me about your mum?

Mum was a lovable lady. She was a real girl, Mum, she was terrific. And with Mum, when Dad and her were courting

21:00 Mum was living in Melbourne of course, Elsternwick, and she used to climb out of her bedroom window and meet Squizzy Taylor, now Squizzy Taylor was one of the most notorious gunman, thugs in all of Melbourne. He committed 4 murders, he was shot, killed, I mean he was killed. And we never ever

21:30 found that out for a long time, but Mum used to sneak out and meet this Squizzy Taylor. So that's the dark side in our lives. So but Mum was a tremendous mother. Tremendous mother. Very pretty lady. Her and Dad, well I suppose you could point to a, later in life

22:00 they sort of put up with one another because, yep.

Would you say that the economic uncertainly was hard on everybody at that time?

It was, the thing that used to puzzle me, when we moved to Blackburn and Dad built this garage, my auntie Nellie and Uncle Jack lived next door

22:30 to us. Nana and grandad lived across the road from us, uncle Dave and auntie Mollie lived next door, and when things were even very tight as far as money goes, there was always an ongoing keg over at uncle Jacks place every Saturday, and that used to puzzle me, that they can afford to, the drink and all that that went with it. And you know, it just seemed strange to me.

23:00 **were people church going in those days, were your family church goers?**

No, no. I used to go to Sunday school, now my Sunday school teacher Margaret Landborn, used to take us for Presbyterian Sunday School, when we were living at Blackburn. But later in life things changed. I can remember

23:30 in 1957 I become a Christian. And in Tamworth here, which completely changed my attitude, my whole life and but it, Nell was a Christian girl, after the war she was going to go to India with the missionaries. She was doing her training to do that. During the war some part of Nell's life, she worked at a navy office. But

24:00 No we never sort of, no were interested in spiritual things at all. Until much later in life.

Were many folks at the time interested in spiritual things?

They never showed it, you know, they, yeah well you knew who was a catholic or who was church of England and that. But not like it is

24:30 today, all together different today.

How were other families responding to the Depression?

Well, the situation affected everybody, affected the rich and poor alike you know. But with the Depression, it certainly, the thing that seems to straighten a country up is a war.

25:00 Even after the First World War there was a depression, a slight depression. Then in the 1930's, '29 '30 depression, then we had a war and everything sort of boomed and they found enough to well, to attribute to the war effort and one another. But the point is with a war, it joins the country or the folk together, I'll give it that. They see the seriousness of it.

25:30 And they just work together and it certainly, very beneficial in that aspect, in that, yeah.

When you moved from Chelsea to Murrumbeena, how would you describe that new place?

Murrumbeena was a rather a staid place, it was older buildings. We lived in an old home, beautiful old home.

26:00 Probably built in the early 1900s or that. I went to school, the state school at Murrumbeena. But we only stayed there about 18 months, and that's when Dad and Mum decided to go to Blackburn and to be near Mum's family. Dad's family they lived at a place called Oakleigh, wasn't very far from Murrumbeena. And

26:30 my nana Low had a lolly shop there, I loved her. And but, no when Mum and Dad decided they would move to Blackburn, we just went with them, as family does, 3 children. Barry my youngest brother he was born at Blackburn.

Was moving quite an event?

27:00 Yes, we didn't have much to move, you know, I remember the, when we moved form Chelsea to Murrumbeena I remember the furniture we moved was Downards from Carnegie, we didn't have a lot of furniture. But Dad sort of made a lot of furniture, being a carpenter. But, food was the main problem.

27:30 **How would you move from one place to another?**

Had a furniture truck, an old A model Ford truck or something like that, but as I say we didn't have a lot of stuff to move and that.

How did folks mainly get around?

Well the people walked or used public transport, trains were you know, running. Most of the area around Melbourne was electrified

28:00 as far as train travel and that went. And if you didn't you walked.

Did Murrumbeena have trams?

No, no, there was no trams. No but the Murrumbeena railway line which went right through to Chelsea, people weren't they lived around the centre of it, the town

28:30 so they didn't have far to walk or catch a train, tram. Buses, there wasn't a lot of buses those days.

How often did you go into the city?

Very seldom, very seldom, no, we were I don't even remember going into the city from Murrumbeena at all. I used to walk down to Carnegie which was next door to Murrumbeena to do a bit of shopping for Mum, go to the shops there.

29:00 No you sort of just lived around your own little area. you never moved very far beyond that.

Was Murrumbeena where the lolly shop was?

No that was at Oakleigh, that's where nana had her lolly shop there, yeah.

Was that when you were in Blackburn or Murrumbeena?

Well Nana Low was still there when we were at Blackburn, and Dad had an old T model Ford and we used to do the trip from Blackburn down to Oakleigh.

29:30 **Can you describe the T model Ford?**

Oh it was ancient. About a 1923, 24 model I suppose. No side curtains or anything like that. Plenty of fresh air, but very little went wrong with them and they were so easy to fix. Not like the modern car today

30:00 they are that complicated, you lift the bonnet up and look at it and put it down again.

What did it look like under the bonnet of a T model Ford?

Just all spark plugs and a bit of flat steel on the top, and that's about it, oh and a carburettor of course. Hand moved windscreen wiper, had a handle on it, move that. Not it was

30:30 very, very primitive.

Did you fix the car?

No, no I wasn't really interested in cars, not those days.

Can you describe what it was like going from Blackburn to Oakleigh?

Well it was quite a long trip, it would be that far I suppose it would only be about 25 kilometres I suppose. But

31:00 it would be an hour and a half's run I suppose. You just choofle along, the roads were atrocious. Lot of dirt road and like that. But no,

Was that something that your family would do quite often? Go on these trips?

No, Mum and Dad and Jack

31:30 and myself, we'd go camping at Christmas time, that was the one thing we always look forward at, to. and we'd go camping, at some distance. Once place we used to go would be about 60 miles away which was a fair distance in those days. And take the tent down, take the tent up, pack it up and get it organised. Jack and my job was

32:00 you had a piece of hessian bag, sew it on the corners, you had to go into the paddock and cut bracken fern. And stuff the bracken fern inside the bag, that was your mattress. And you cut the ends off so they didn't stick through. Very, very primitive and you just had a old kettle that sat on a bit of steel, and frying pan to do your cooking and everything. But we used to enjoy it.

32:30 So that was our annual holiday was to go camping?

Just you and your brother?

Yeah, and Mum and Dad would come. Jean of course, Jeanie, well Jeanie would have come camping, she was only a baby then. But

Was Oakleigh less working class than Blackburn?

Yes, they were all mainly working class.

33:00 Very few professional men those days, you never saw them. I remember Mr Major he was an accountant, he lived opposite us in Blackburn. And he was only professional man that I ever knew. And they always kept apart, they never sort of, Laurie, his youngest son, Laurie and Jack my brother and myself, we were the best of mates. But the parents never seemed to mix in with anybody at all

33:30 they were sort of different today, you know, as far as, didn't matter what you are today, I mean, everybody seems to mix in. No they were sort of rather reserved.

What kind of jobs were people doing?

Mainly with their hands, yeah my Mum, where we lived at Blackburn, we lived in a big apple orchard.

34:00 A lot of fruit growing around that area, and they had quite a big cool stool there and packing sheds, my Mum used to work down there. Kids when they left school, they would go and pack apples, pears and like that. Until it got burnt down, it took 4 days to burn. It was all sawdust, packed with sawdust between the walls for cooling. And that caught fire early one morning, one Monday morning, it was still burning on the third day.

34:30 It was quite a big shed actually. And yeah, but.

I'd like to hear about your aunt's lolly shop?

Yeah, nana. There was always one of those stick with a ball on the top of it, all day suckers they used to be. But she was a lovely old lady, nana Low. They all were

35:00 they were tremendous, give you a hug and like that. Tell you to be a good boy, well they all told you that, but didn't take much notice.

Was nana Low's lolly shop just lollies?

I think it was, I think she had a few groceries there, grocery odds and ends. but it was mainly the lolly shop. It was in, what they called the Broadway at Oakleigh. Divided road, there weren't to many divided roads

35:30 those days, with a nature strip through the centre of it and that. And when we used to live at Murrumbeena I used to ride my pushbike, was the first bike I ever got, was from Murrumbeena down to nana Low's shop. I tried to be smart one day and drive the bike and steer it with my feet, but that was a disaster. I finished up on the road of course, didn't hurt myself, hurt my pride. Buckled the handle bars or something like that.

36:00 **What was her shop like?**

Very small, very tiny. I don't suppose it would be like an ordinary old fashioned bathroom, very small to get into it, and the residence was at the back. You had the residence at the back of it. Single fronted shop, I remember that. But granny Finch who was nana low's sister. She had a double-storey shop opposite. In Broadway and

36:30 she used to sell clothing. And live up in the top storey, and there was about 3 shops across the front it. And her sone Frank, I used to go with him, he had a horse and cart, or a buggy. And I used to go of a Saturday and he used to haul clothes around and, I'd just go with him, I don't know whether he paid me or not, just for company. Uncle Frank.

37:00 **What kind of lollies would she sell in the shop?**

Mainly, pretty plain sort of lollies. Liquorice things, little black boys and all this sort of thing, boiled

lollies, mainly a lot of boiled lollies, different flavours in boiled lollies and that. No the sweets those days were pretty simple. Cause most of the people used to make their own sweets those days.

37:30 **How would she keep them?**

Just in jars, screw top jars, glass jars, no refrigeration. Because very few of the shops had refrigerators. And if you kept anything cool you had the Coolgardie safe with a bag hanging over it and you pour water over it to keep it cool. And to set your jellies if you made a jelly you'd put that in the bath, in the bowl and fill the bath up

38:00 with water and just let them set in that.

Would it ever get too hot for the lollies?

They used to stick together too. Well the good thing about that, when you wanted one lolly you got 3 or 4 they were always stuck together.

You mentioned that your father wanted you to be a carpenter?

Yeah.

38:30 **Was that usual that sons would follow in their father's footsteps?**

Normally, yes, it was in the trade or anything like that you did what Dad did. But no I just wasn't keen on carpentering at all. And of course when Mr Hardy offered me the job at 2 pound 10 a week, my father jumped at it. Yeah.

Tape 3

00:58 **I wanted to talk about Blackburn.**

01:00 **You mentioned that you were going to school there and you went there until you were twelve years old. Can you describe the kind of school you were at and what you were learning?**

My class was very small – there were only two boys. I went there sixth class and of course in those days you went to the eighth class which was equivalent to two years high school here, now, the present day. But there was the two boys and we had six girls in

01:30 our class and the seventh and eighth class were together. There was about twelve pupils in the seventh class and there always seemed to be more girls than boys in the classes. But my worst subject was spelling – I could never spell. Maths, arithmetic as it was called in those days, I was pretty good. I excelled in sport. I liked sport; cricket and football which was Australian rules in those days.

02:00 The teachers were very, very strict. We had one teacher there – Boss Carter we used to call him, not to his face of course – but Mr Carter, he was a First World War man. Been badly gassed and he had a very low tolerance area. He just wouldn't tolerate any misbehaving or any… I think I averaged about two straps every day. Whether I needed it or not

02:30 I mean I still got them. And Georgie Burns was my school mate, he was the other boy in our class. But something had always puzzled us – how he knew we were misbehaving when he wasn't in the class. He'd come in and he'd call me out and he said 'Russell you're misbehaving' and I'd get two straps. Hold your hand out. Whack! Whack! He had a lone of pictures up above the blackboard

03:00 and outside, he used to get up on this form outside and he would see the reflection through the pictures what you were doing. And it wasn't til some time we woke up – this is what he did. He was spying so…. But they were tremendous teachers. They really drilled it into you but of course you limited in subjects – arithmetic, spelling, a little bit of algebra, geometry but

03:30 you know, I enjoyed school to a point I suppose. When I left school –I went eight years – which was equivalent to two years high school, I left school and Dad told me he wanted me to go to the Swinburne Technical College. That was down at Glenferrie about halfway between Blackburn and Melbourne. I didn't want to go. I had to ride my pushbike

04:00 eight miles down to Glenferrie to the school and back again and anyhow I started to wag it. Not go to school. I used to go to the letterbox before Mum and Dad ever got home and anything with Swinburne Technical College on it – I'd tear it up. I wouldn't even bother to open it because they were asking why I wasn't going to school. The only thing I really enjoyed at Swinburne Technical College

04:30 was making counterfeit pennies for the chocolate machines on the railway station. They were the size of a penny coin and we used to make them down to the blacksmithing shop and then you'd go up to the railway station and put them in the chocolate machines to get the Nestles chocolate out of them. And we were caught. So that was my term at the school. They lost my science paper and I remember

05:00 the science teacher saying to me he said 'Russell, we've found it. It would have better off if it was

completely lost. Didn't even find it' he said. I got one and a half percent. I just was absolutely hopeless so…

What subjects did they teach at the Technical College?

Well, mainly blacksmithing, carpentering, for men or for boys and that. You still had the orthodox spelling and arithmetic and things like that but

05:30 it was all at an advanced state against the public school. But I only spent twelve months there and I left. I think if I hadn't had left I would have been expelled. I mean, I just didn't like it and the fact that riding my bike eight miles and then riding eight miles home – I wasn't happy about that at all. And that's when Dad decided right I'd better come carpentering. And…

06:00 **Did you just hate the subjects?**

I just wasn't interested. I just wasn't interested in school and on a Saturday I was going with Mr Hardy on the fruit truck not through the week but I started going with him and I just enjoyed that and it was Dad said to me 'You won't be going on the fruit truck – you'll be a carpenter' and so we just didn't go to Swinburne the following year.

06:30 **Do you think your Dad wanted you to get out of technical college?**

I think he might have thought it would advance my education a little bit. I wasn't a brilliant scholar at all. Just barely average I suppose. Different to Nell, she loved school. She cried when she left. I just couldn't believe that anybody would cry when they left school.

07:00 **Was it usual for there to be more girls than boys in school?**

Yes. There was more girls followed on and went on to a higher education than boys did. Because the boys general got themselves a trade or something like that.

What's was the attitude at the time towards girls getting an education?

Well. Frowned upon as far as using their education.

07:30 It was a men's job to earn the money and this was a stigma I suppose and that's why a lot of girls just didn't worry about carrying on. They went through the various stages of their education but they found it difficult to fit into a job those days in the early 30s or even to the early 40s. Of course the Second World War changed all that.

08:00 **So it wasn't usual for women to be working?**

Very unusual yes. Especially in an executive job. They'd never sort of fill those jobs at all. Working in shops or the likes of that but…

What about women like your Nan and your aunt with the shops – did they work in the shops?

08:30 Yes

Was that kind of different?

No. All Nannas shared the girls, they were sort of… They just got married and that was it. And then the boys or men they got a job and that but they didn't follow any profession as far as a professional job or anything like that. Very, very few of them did. It was really frowned upon actually. For anybody to seek a

09:00 professional position. But even the doctors were the only ones that… And there were very few lady doctors. Well I suppose for a doctor you had to be born in the job or your father was a doctor or something like that. But mainly the children followed the profession of their fathers in that field of work.

09:30 **What were the women expected to do?**

Look after the children. That was about it. Bear the children and look after them. And their job was at the kitchen sink. And that was the attitude. They just did the work and looked after the home and all that.

10:00 And it seemed to work quite well. When I was doing the fruit run, hawking fruit round and we had set customers to whom we served. We covered a big area – about eight miles deep I suppose. From Camberwell through to Nunawading it was about eight miles and most of the women were all home.

10:30 And we used to work three days a week; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and Saturdays. Four days a week on the fruit run. The other time – we used to go carting apples when the apple or pear seasons were in. No men were the ones that did the work.

What do you think made you hate the idea of going into carpentry?

11:00 The money and working for my father. I had no – it's strange – I just had no incentive to work for Dad. He was rather a cruel man in many respects. As I've said before he'd sooner give you a good hiding than give you a feed. And the thing that upset me with Dad was – and this is rather personal too – I

remember Jeanie my younger sister,

11:30 I don't know what she did but it offended Dad and he tied her to the clothesline, rotary clothesline, and belted her. And she couldn't go anywhere and I remember my Dad belting her with a horse whip, a sort of one of those whips that they used to whip the horse with and that really turned me against Dad in that aspect.

Was she a kid? A little girl?

Yeah.

12:00 She would have only been six or seven years old. Men were really cruel to their children in a lot of cases.

Did some stand up to their fathers?

No you wouldn't dare. No, no. I only stood up to my father once and that was here in Tamworth.

12:30 He said something very derogative against Nell and it really upset me. I dropped him. I hit him – bang – I dropped him straight down. Something I thought I'd never do but I did for what he said about Nell. It was a hard old world. Very little love shown from most fathers towards their children.

13:00 And the discipline of course, stretched beyond the ordinary discipline into brutality in a lot of times. From what I can remember anyhow.

Do you think it might have something to do with the Great War [First World War]?

No.

The attitude of that generation of men -

13:30 **can you think of some reasons why the men were like that?**

The only thing that I can think about men were always appeared to be or thing they should appear to be in control of things. They were the boss. And you answered to them. Now Mum, as I said before, she stood at the kitchen

14:00 sink and that was her position as far as men were concerned in those days. They had no right to even go into a professional field or go out to work or anything like that. Dad brought the money home most times and that was his job and Mum looked after the household things and, as I said before, it's different now. Which is a good thing.

14:30 As far as I'm concerned. Or as I look at my own family. And he even of my own family I was incredibly hard on my children. Not to a brutal point or belting them or anything like that but strict in what I thought they should do and what they shouldn't do. And I think it's just built into you, bred into you.

15:00 And it's very hard to get rid of it.

How did husbands treat their wives in that generation?

I think most husbands – they showed respect towards their wife but the husband was the boss. He was the head of the house

15:30 and that's how it was. And the unfortunate part about it – the women also bowed to what their desire was- they accepted it. Because that was what it was in that period of time. Of course things change like war – it completely changed because the women were drawn into the workforce during World War II. I don't know what we'd have done without them as far as

16:00 the munitions factories and all that sort of thing. While the men were away they filled the man's place in the home. In thousands of cases where the man was in the army, navy, Air Force or whatever it was the woman was in the home and she had control of the home and that's what changed things. Of course a lot of the women were in the services too, thousands were in the services also.

16:30 And I think the war, the Second World War put a different concept on the whole life of the human life as far as that goes.

Was it a kind of accepted thing that fathers would be strict to the point of brutality with their children?

I don't think it was really accepted

17:00 but it was done. It happened. My Dad had a riding crop and we used to get belted with that and in fact I chopped it up once but he soon got another one – didn't make much difference of it disappeared. But no, they belted out the discipline. Mothers, they were the healers.

17:30 As far as I can remember anyhow.

Was it accepted that husbands were able to be brutal or cruel to their wives?

I don't doubt that this would be what had happened. It wouldn't be accepted but this is what did happen. I can never remember my father hitting my Mum.

18:00 But when we were at Blackburn, Jack and I had to do the dishes of a night time and we'd do the dishes, when we sat down for tea you sat down straight in the chair and you sat up and you never talked at the table. You never said a word other than 'Would you pass me that plate?' But you never joined in a conversation at all as a family. You spoke when you were spoken to and

18:30 my Dad – he would always get up at half past five in the morning – he was a porridge man, he would go to the porridge bowl, if that bowl was dirty or something like that or damp – hadn't been dried properly – he'd pull us out of bed, pull Jack and I out of bed and we would have to wash every dish in the whole house. Wash the lot whether they were clean or anything and that's what was required of us to do.

19:00 So we were pretty careful washers up you know. No., they were hard but we survived it.

Did you have any special friends at that time that you'd met at school?

You had your school mates but you never sort of… Nell's brother was my special friend, Bert, Laurie Major whose dad was an accountant

19:30 he was our special friend, Cliff Zerbie's, but you didn't have a lot of them. Of course the population was a lot smaller too, you know, there weren't so many around. I remember getting into a, had a problem one day 1936, I was eleven year old I think, and down in Melbourne they had extreme bush fires down there

20:00 and this day was an extremely hot day and there was Laurie Major, Jack my brother and myself and we decided we'd build a fort. My Dad had a lot of pipes on the block next door and we built this fort out of old cement bags and everything at the side of the house that Dad was building. And we played cowboys and Indians that was the favourite game of the day and anyhow we got all this fort, we had the earthenware pipes poking out

20:30 for the cannons and all this sort of thing and Laurie Majors said to me he said 'Gee it'd be good if we had some dynamite wouldn't it?' and I said 'It wouldn't be bad' and I said 'I know where there is some'. Now below us on the other side of the road was the Blackburn brick works and I knew where the explosive sheds were behind Zerbie's lemon orchard. I'd often seen the door open and I said to Laurie and Jack my brother too 'What about of we go and get some dynamite

21:00 from the what do you call it?'. They thought it was a brilliant idea so we run down the back of aunty Nelly's fence with all the cherry trees and straight across down past Nanna and Grandads', round the back of Laurie Majors place and Laurie said 'I'll go into Mum's and I'll get three milk bottles'. So he went to the laundry, he got three milk bottles, we went round Zerbie's fence and when we got to the explosive shed the door was open. So we went in there with three milk bottles and we dipped them into

21:30 this black powder and we had no idea what it was. Out the shed, didn't close the door of course, left it, back home and here we've got these three milk bottles full of black powder. So what we did we run trails out into the shrubs - we were surrounded the bush. There was a roaring wind blowing and Laurie said to me 'Who's got the matches?'. And I said 'I know where they are. They're on the mantel shelf in the garage park' so I whizzed in there

22:00 and Mum was in the old grass part where Jack and I slept and she said 'What do you want in there?' and I said 'Nothing Mum'. All I wanted were some matches and here they were sitting on the shelf so I got the matches, took them out. I'd got the matches 'Who's going to light the matches?' 'I got the matches – I'm going to light the match'. So I did. I struck the match and I put it down and you have never seen such a flare in all your life. The whole thing just exploded, lifted up. It was

22:30 not gunpowder but some other very highly volatile what do you call it. We both stood up straight through the top of the fort and as we trailed this stuff out the back out from where the fort was it caught fire. Then the whole bush started to go up. And the north wind blowing, it just roared down Aunty Nelly had these cherry plum trees all along. Cooked all the cherry plums on the what do you call it. Granddad had the cow in the paddock, he'd grabbed that and

23:00 the whole place was an inferno. I can remember my Mum when she come to the side door and she screamed. I said to Mum, I said 'Ring the Box Hill fire brigade in a hurry' she said 'What?'. I said 'Mum, ring the fire brigade'. Now the fire brigade had this old Dennis fire engine – only do two mile an hour – and it was five or six miles down the road and Uncle Jack and Uncle Andy, they worked up at

23:30 Monahemo's, a factory, it made cases and everything like that. Mum rang there and they come down, the fire brigade came down and the fire went straight through, jumped the railway line down the bottom and into the big seventh day Adventist paddock with all these trees, pine trees. And it exploded and really you've never seen anything like it in all your life. And all the people at the Blackburn cool stores had come out to try and put the fire out.

24:00 And they had some houses near Blackburn lake and I thought 'If it gets into that that's finished' but it

was an act of God. A southerly change came through and it blew it back on itself. But you've never seen such devastation in all your life. My Sunday school teacher lived down at the bottom of the paddock where we were – burnt all her fence, Jackie Shim who was a very good mate of mine his dad had about 500 WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s in WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK pens – cooked the whole lot of them.

24:30 Feathers and all. You've never seen anything like it in all your life. And Mum rang Mr Bail the policeman and I remember him come up our back drive with his handlebar on back to front and his trousers tucked in and his helmet on and he said 'What's going on here?'. Anyhow we got a good lecturing and I can never forget my mother saying to me 'Wait til your father comes home'. And I can't

25:00 remember what happened but I guarantee I had my meals off the mantelpiece for the next six weeks because I couldn't sit down. But you know, just amazing what happened. But it's a wonder the whole place didn't go. If it hadn't been for the southerly breeze that sometimes used to come in the afternoon and just turn the fir back on itself. But if it had jumped Lake Rose and got into all the…

25:30 I don't know where it would have finished. So they were the things we used to get up to.

Were you blacklisted in Blackburn?

Oh dear oh me. Poor old granddad and he's trying to get his cow Molly the cow. He said to me once he said 'have you ever seen where the cream comes from?' I said 'No Granddad' and he said 'Well, bend right down' and I bent right down and looked round. Next minute he grabbed the teat and gave me a squirt

26:00 of milk. So I found out where the cream comes from. But you did your own amusement. I mean this is what it was. Some of it was real devilish. I never forgot it.

When you were getting the strap at school can you remember what things you did to get the strap?

You didn't have to do anything much.

26:30 I think if you looked sideways you got it. Our old teacher Boss Carter he was a First World War man, he'd been badly gashed and I don't think he was responsible for his actions. I'm sure he wasn't. When I think back. I hated spelling and I used to, our school was on a main road, not a lot of traffic but you had to spend your time there to direct the children across the road at lunchtime.

27:00 Everybody went home for lunch. Very seldom did you take your own lunch. You used to go home to have lunch and so at ten past twelve, at lunchtime, I used to do the school crossing and supervise it and that – this was when I was in eighth class – so doing that I missed out on spelling. I didn't have to do spelling – I thought it was a real beaut.

So you didn't get up to anything naughty particularly in class?

27:30 **You can remember? Any naughty stories?**

No.

What kind of things did you used to eat when you went home for lunch?

It was mainly bread. I used to have egg bread. Used to have ordinary bread and you used to dip it in egg, mixing your egg up and you'd fry it in the frying pan. But it was all fairly simple food. I don't even remember having a sandwich, you know, making

28:00 sandwiches or anything like that. It was either bread sometimes with dripping on it I mean because very few people had butter. You used to eat a lot of fried food, a lot of good food – like wholesome food and that. The food was simple food. It filled you. I didn't think you really enjoyed it but at least it filled you. Not like the variety you've got today.

28:30 **Did you grow your own fruit and vegetables?**

Yes. Mainly my granddad had a very good veggie garden. Mum used to love growing veggies, my Mum used to grow veggies and something I used to like gardening or even when I come up here I still like gardening. Yes, you did a lot of your own growing.

What kinds of things would you grow?

Mainly

29:00 potatoes. I used to love growing potatoes because you never knew what the potatoes were til you dug them up it was quite a surprise. But mainly lettuce, silver beet, rhubarb. I used to hate rhubarb but we used to grow it. I used to call it squirt. Cabbages and all that. Those days there was never the insects about.

29:30 Snails or anything like that or slugs. There were very, very few of them about. Of course today you put them in the garden and they're gone, something's eaten them of something like that. But pretty easy

growing them.

How did people fertilise their gardens?

Never used fertiliser. No, No. I can't even remember using fertiliser, it was just the natural soil we had there. I think the trouble is it's over

30:00 worked today. Too much growing and they don't put much back into the… Well the availability of fertiliser today is terrific as far as that goes and expensive of course. No life was a lot simpler. Just not far from us was a big golf course and I used to love going down the golf course with Jack and Nell's brother and they had a great

30:30 big old bridge that stretched right across the golf course and we used get up on top of this railway bridge, used to be an old railway line. And as the fellow was just about to hit the golf ball we'd yell out 'Fore!' and he'd look up. But we used to do all those mischievous things – you know what I mean.

You mentioned when you were doing the fruit deliveries

31:00 **that you would drive from house to house – was it that there were no shops to buy fruit or was it just that people had things delivered to them?**

Well, there were no shops that… There were the fruit shops and that but this used to provide to them a door service. People never used to go out a lot to do shopping before the Second World War. They expected

31:30 that your ice was delivered – you had very few refrigerators or anything like that. And you used to have the ice, the ice man used to come round the block. The milkman used to call. The baker used to call and everything, most food was delivered to your house. You never went to a supermarket to buy anything at all. And that the same with the fruit. We had our customers to whom we used to

32:00 call on twice a week; Tuesdays and Thursdays and the others were on Wednesdays and Fridays. Oh and Saturday – that's right. No you relied on the tradesmen to call and supply you with what you need. Even the fruit tray – I used to have a bag or they'd come out to your truck. You'd park out front and they'd come out to see what you had

32:30 and they'd just buy from the truck.

What kinds of fruit were available?

Well, apples and oranges, pears, grapes, cherries. Mainly the same today – there's more exotic tropical fruit today than what it was those days. And where we lived in a fruit growing district there

33:00 was quite an availability of cherries and the likes of that. Passionfruit, in season of course. No, Nell's brother and I, we used to raid the cherry orchards and we got caught there once and I used to deliver papers - sell papers up at the pub. The evening paper, the herald and one thing like that and these paper bags were just like a sugar bag and

33:30 you had a strap over your shoulder and your papers down there. And Bert and I decided to go over to Toogood cherry orchard and thieve some cherries – they were just about ripe. And we went over there at about six o'clock at night, we climbed the barbed wire fence, got over there and we put the cherries in our paper bags – we'd done the paper run – and all of a sudden we heard this 'Hey!'. Old Mr Toogood was coming down and he had a shotgun. And

34:00 he let go with both barrels but it was loaded with saltpetre. Now saltpetre if it hits you – it stings. It really stings, like a buck shot but it's salt. And Bert got full, his buttocks both full of it. I got on the side and we hurdled the fence – about that high I suppose – off on our pushbikes and were gone. The only way you can get saltpetre out was to sit over a hot copper, boil, light the copper up and sit over there

34:30 with your backside and melt it out and this is what Bert had to do so we never went cherry raiding again.

Did you know at the time he had saltpetre in his gun?

Oh yes. Oh no we didn't know – we didn't even know he had the gun. And he goes 'What are you doing here?!' and then bang, bang both barrels. It wouldn't kill you but it would sting you.

Did you think he'd been shot, like dead?

Well I did. I just thought it probably loaded with buckshot that's lots of little small BBs,

35:00 you know little small steel what do you call it but it was saltpetre.

So why did you have to melt it? Was it embedded in your skin?

Oh yeah, embedded in your skin. And the only way – you couldn't pick it out – you had to melt it out. It dissolved with the steam of the copper. So we never did that again. Not at Toogood's anyhow.

Can you describe the fruit delivery and how that worked?

35:30 Well you had your own customers. You would go into the Victoria market, the eastern market right in Melbourne, buy your fruit and your veggies and then after you got that you had breakfast and then you would go out to your first customer. Now we were about six mile, our first customer was about six or seven miles out in Camberwell

36:00 and we would start the run there. This was before I was driving and I would go with Mr Hardy and he would go and get the orders and then when he'd come out he'd give me the list and I'd make up the orders and put them in a basket and he would take them in to the lady and she would pay. And it was spread by word of mouth. They'd say 'Where do you get your fruit and veggies?' 'Oh from Mr Hardy' and that's how you built your run up and it was quite a big run.

36:30 It was from Camberwell through to Blackburn which was seven miles and from Blackburn up to Narre Warren or Tunstall as it used to be it was another three miles. About ten miles I suppose and you had your customers just dotted around in the area. And you'd either call o them twice a well- probably Tuesdays and Saturdays, Wednesdays to a Friday and they would just give you a list of what they wanted.

37:00 They had a list. Pay you and that was it. Pretty easy transaction actually. And the chap that I worked for Mr Hardy – he sold no rubbish. All his fruit was top quality and the people round Camberwell, Canterbury through to Mount Albert and that were all fairly high class people. Fairly wealthy people and he had a side line which I didn't know about it – he was

37:30 an SP bookie and he'd take bets on the racehorses. I didn't know about that for a long time. Some houses he'd spend a bit more time in. I used to wonder what he was doing – thought old Alf, he was a bit of a rogue. He had no children and they sort of adopted me into their family. Not as in an adoption but I became a part of their family and I spent more time at

38:00 Alf and Mrs Hardy's place than I did at home actually. And as I grew up I became very close to the pair of them. He was very disappointed when I went into the army. He said 'Bill you don't have to go' I said 'Well, Mr Hardy – never called hi anything else but Mr Hardy – I feel I should go'. He said 'Why don't you wait til you're called up when you've got to a certain age?' and I said 'No I'd like to go now'.

38:30 And he said to me 'Well, if you survive the war' he said 'The run will be yours. I'll hand the whole business over to you' because he was fairly old. But then of course when I came home from the war I couldn't have coped anyhow because my health wasn't good at all. And you had to be fairly healthy because when your customers relied on you to be there at a certain time you had to be there at the certain time.

39:00 **Was he in the Great War?**

No he never went into any of the services at all and they had no children. He had a pet magpie that bit you every time you went near it.

Had he heard lots of stories about the Great War? Was that why he was reluctant for you to go?

I don't think so no. I don't think he was a conscientious objector or anything like that but he was just, he wasn't interested

39:30 in being involved. I don't know whether he supported the war effort in any way at all. I wouldn't really know that. They used to go away occasionally and I used to look after their house. And I'd sometimes sleep down there just to make sure it was alright. Not that houses were broken into in those days. You could leave them open and

40:00 nobody would ever go in them at all. I remember this time he had a lot of chickens down in the back shed and he said to me 'Bill make sure –' there was a black cat that used to come in and raid the chicken sheds and he said 'I'd like you to just look after the chickens while we're gone away'. They went away on the Sunday and was coming back on the Monday. So I slept down in the shed at the back and he'd left a double barrelled shotgun there

40:30 for me. So I got up early on the Sunday morning and I could see this black cat just going down to where he had all the young chickens and I said 'I'll have you'. So I grabbed the shotgun which was loaded, I closed the barrel, put it up but the trouble was I pulled the two triggers through at the one time and I got the double barrel. It flattened me. I went backwards like that. The cat survived but the chickens didn't. I killed seven chickens.

41:00 I had to tell him what happened. He said 'That's alright son. Don't worry about that' but I had a sore shoulder because I just pulled the two triggers through. Didn't even think. And of course when the gun went off it went up, missed the cat and hit the chickens. He was a pretty forgiving fellow.

Tape 4

00:41 **So Bill can you tell me how you found out about the war?**

Well on the 3rd of September 1939 my grandfather had bought new console wireless there was

01:00 few of them about. And it was announced by Mr Menzies who was the Prime Minister was going to make a special announcement on my birthday. And so grandad wanted us all to come over, we knew what was going to happen we knew that there would be a declaration of war. We were all huddled around the radio and Mr Menzies said that we were now at war

01:30 with Germany. And of course as I said very earlier I said to Grandad, I wonder if it will last until I am old enough to join up. And of course he said, "Oh sonny, it will all be over in 6 weeks" Well seeing how it wasn't, it was 6 years it went. And of course I just had, even then, that I would love to joint the army. I knew I wouldn't be old

02:00 enough, and when grandad said it was going to be over in 6 weeks, I thought well there might be another war. So, but of course as I said it wasn't over in 6 weeks. All my uncles they all joined very early and that's Mum brothers, they joined early in the war. Yeah.

02:30 **Explain to me when you decided to join up?**

Well in 19, when I turned 16 as I said earlier there, I thought I'd like to put my age up, which meant that I had to put my age up 3 years. And I had to pass that and then when Nipper Sterling and myself went in that's when, the recruiting Sergeant said to me, "if I was to pull your pants down you would still have a nappy on" So they get out of it. But

03:00 Nipper being tall rangy kid, he was a little bit younger than I was too. But he joined up there then, Doug joined up, his parents found out he had joined under his right name. And he was going off to the Middle East and they took him off the boat in Western Australia his parents got him taken off. And that's when he joined up under an assumed name. And a lot of people did. Especially a lot of older people, fathers, so that they could sort of

03:30 throw anybody off the track that they had joined under a different name. They sort of hid themselves. But I thought well perhaps it will go long enough for me to join up when I am the right age.

Can you walk me through that morning, preparing to go for enlistment?

Well

04:00 I know I hadn't had a shave for about 6 weeks because I didn't shave much, and I thought well if I've got a bit of a beard on and I had one of those pork pie hats, like a little dickey hat. You pulled it down. And of course smoking a pipe, I never smoked a pipe I don't think. I don't even know that it was lit, I can't remember if it was lit and that. But I just went up to the town hall and

04:30 presented myself. That was the first time I went up to the town hall and that's when recruiting Sergeant who was a very wise man, that's when he said, "Well if I pulled your pants down you'd have a nappy on" and you know, you better get out. But then when Japan came in it was a different kettle of fish. Men were urgently required because they knew the threat that it would be to Australia, what

05:00 Japan would be to Australia. And I still had this fluff around my chin and smoking a pipe. But the recruiting Sergeant let me go through. I was just turned, I had just turned 17 then. And to enlist in the AIF you had to be 19. So I was two years older, which was quite confusing because some things in my civilian life had to be back when I was born in 1924.

05:30 And in the army part it had to be 1922 and you had to sort of think about that. No it was quite an experience. Mum was absolutely horrified that I had joined up. She couldn't do nothing about it, even the fact that, I said to my Mum, "If you don't sign my papers I'll just go and join under an assumed name, that's what it will be" And

06:00 hundreds of people did that. Yeah.

So were you jealous of your mate who had actually got in?

No, no. I knew the way things were when Japan came in I knew that the war was going to last a long time. But it, and I knew

06:30 I didn't want to be called up I wanted to, I sooner just volunteer, I wanted to volunteer. But I felt anyhow. It was pretty hard going because I was only a kid, and as I say I was the youngest one in our battalion of 700 men. And they used to look after me and I didn't want that.

07:00 See I didn't want that, but that's the one thing about an infantry battalion its one of the closest knit battleships you can get, you know. You relied on one another, you had to you couldn't be a loner in the battalion. That was proved a lot of times in the various aspects of different parts of the war. You

07:30 relied on your mates. And they were terrific.

So why were you so keen? Were you keen to join the army or keen to join the war?

I wanted to join the army. I wasn't interested in the navy or the air force. I waned the army and I said I wanted to volunteer, I didn't want to be called up. When you are 18 you were called up, you had to go.

08:00 And I thought, nah, I'll go this way. My old man said, "You are mad" Because he was in the militia. Before but he was in essential services, and if you were involved in the essential services in the war, as you know, you couldn't join the forces at all, you were needed in the civil aspect of it. Oh, I think the uniform, its just something that catches your eye

08:30 proud to put it on and be in the, in some of the services. I never wanted to join the navy I get seasick on the Peel River, I'd be hopeless, and the air force didn't enthuse me, but the army just, whether it was the fact that Dad was in the militia or the war, and Nell's dad was. I knew Nell's family from going back to 1936.

09:00 And the army just seemed to be the one for me.

Had you heard stories form World War I?

Oh yes, I was quite interested in the history, especially in Australia. But that didn't worry me, didn't worry me. I knew that if you didn't keep your head down you lost it.

09:30 That didn't worry me, it was an adventure. and in my days there was no adventures, it was just routine life. And I thought that the army would offer something more than just choofing along. But some of the fellows that I joined with, were in my unit, they

10:00 lived around my area also, Con Tucknot was one, and you know, Con and I were put in the same battalion. In the army you soon got to know one another, you became mates pretty quickly. Yeah, so.

When you finally joined up what was your mothers response?

10:30 I can't remember Nell, Mum's response was, I remember Nell's response. She was 15 I suppose, she'd be about 14 or 15 and I come to her back gate. We lived about a mile and a half away and I walked down. And she looked at me and the first thing she said, "Well you look better than I thought you would" And I was happy at that, even at 15 I loved

11:00 Nell, I mean she was my girl and that was it, and I was her boy. Yeah, looked better than I though you would. And, but still I had other girlfriends and Nell had other boyfriends. You see. But she could never get serious with a boy. Because she thought, well I was the one, and that's how it was.

11:30 I remember coming home one night and I got off the Blackburn railway station where I lived. I lived about a mile and a half from where the railway station was then. And this chap come up to me and he said "Do you know a Nellie Eade?" and of course that was Nell, and I said, "Yes, I do", "Do you know where she lives?" and I said, "Yes I do" and he said, "Where is it?" and I said, "I'll take you down there" So I walked Charlie down, this was a fellow that was very keen

12:00 on Nell. And took him around the funnel, and I said, "There is her place, there it is" And of course unbeknown to Nell, she didn't know that I had taken him down you see until later on. She said, "You didn't even come in" and I said, "What do you expect, that fellow was coming to see you, not me" But he didn't last long. No of all the

12:30 she used to organise all the outings for the navy. The fellows that come home on leave. She used to take them, Lorraine the other girl used to take them up to Dandenong Mountains, picnics with the sailors. I said, "Its a worry, it's a wonder you didn't marry a sailor" and she said, "I didn't want to marry a sailor, I wanted to marry you" Fair enough. Yeah.

What did you pack for basic training?

For basic training

13:00 well 6 weeks at Balcombe it was just getting to know the army routine. What weapons they were, your equipment, it was just like an apprentice stage I suppose. And when you had done that 6 weeks, you were taken out into some divisions of the army, some unit or something like that. And that's when I went

13:30 into the 2/5th Pioneer Company. And of course with a lot of other fellows now. And then you really started your training, your route marching and the likes of that, weapons training, everything that was relating to the army, that when you really got down to what you had to do and what you were in the army for. Discipline; discipline was another thing.

14:00 **Tell me about basic training?**

Mainly at the rifle range, getting used to your weapons. Types of weapons, there was, in a battalion had a machine gun platoon, the mortar platoon, sig platoon, a pioneer platoon which cleaned up the camps and everything like this.

14:30 And you were given a choice as to what you wanted to go into. And then you've got your 4 infantry companies, A B C and D. And I went into headquarters company at first. As a routine, well just as a sort

of do anything at all. Just find what you want, but I didn't want that so I went

15:00 into a rifle company, into C Company. And that's when you got, when you are allocated to that, that's when you got into a rifle company and you were trained and that, manoeuvring and all this sort of thing. Route marching of course, physically fitness and yes, that's when they knocked the shine off you sort of. You got down into the

15:30 rough edges and cleaned up a bit.

How did they knock the rough edges off you?

Discipline. Its possibly the army, oh I don't doubt the air force and the navy had discipline too, but the army was a real big discipline, you know, you are in the army and you will do what the army says. And if you don't do what the army says or what the guide book says or whatever

16:00 it is, you'll be discipline. Many a time I carried a pack on my back around the bullring because I didn't want, do what I wanted to do, or what they wanted me to do. And I was a terrible dancer, I would be the worst dancer in the world and when we were at Mangle, some friends that Dad built a house for, a place called Abnel which was about 30 miles away in my civilian life, the Willis family and I wanted to go up

16:30 and see them. and they also had a dance at the hall there see. So Ray Ellis he is still a mate that I know very well, and a couple of other fellows, we jumped to goods train up to Abnel and went to the dance. But we missed the goods train coming back and we landed back at camp at half passed 11 the next morning. See and then we faced Captain McQueen, the discipline aspect of it see, and

17:00 we were charged one day, AWOL plus one day's pay, and that hurts. So you get it right, and you got it wrong the first time you get it right every other time. But that's something, although the fellows at my age then were pretty fairly discipline, you know. Even at home, they would do what they were told to do. And the army

17:30 was a step up I suppose to what we were disciplined with. You kick against the traces sometimes but you come back to earth again.

What did the drill sergeants come down heavy on?

No doing it right, yeah, I mean there is a away to do things, and its the right way to do things. And you did it the right way. And

18:00 if you didn't do it the right way, well then you paid for it. That's all there was to it. Whether you were confined to camp or whatever, or up before the CO and charge, on a charge sheet, on an A4. And you were either docked a day's pay or whatever it was. At 5 and 6 pence a day your couldn't afford to skip off a day's pay. Yeah. You only got one pound 15

18:30 a week. Which was about 2 dollars and something a week. But most fellows towed the lien. As I say in infantry battalion you got, the mateship was the thing that really counted. And I found that many times in my life, especially in action

19:00 you are relying on them and you had to be disciplined to be able to do that too.

So did you know anyone when you started basic training?

No, no. The only one that I knew was Con Tucknot he lived at Blackburn as I did. And Con was in the same battalion. But he was the only one out of the 700 men that I would have known.

19:30 All the others come from all around Victoria, and we got nearly 400 from New South Wales. But you soon got to known one another, you were all thrown into a tent, 6 to a tent. and you soon got to know one another that way I suppose. Yeah. You respected, well I did anyhow, and most of us respected our officers, even your lance corporal

20:00 my best mate was a lance corporal and I reckon he should have been a major, but that's how he was, he was you know, he was really a lance corporal and he carried that one stripe out to a T. I was a corporal for 3 days, didn't even have it entered into me pay book. I went

20:30 to a dance again at Euroa. Don't know why I get hooked up in these things because I couldn't dance. And I got back the next day too, not only me there was 6 of us. We missed the goods train back, and I had to front the, our CO Captain McQueen, and he just I remember him saying to me, he said, "Russell, for a potential NCO [non commissioned officer] you would make a good second class private" And that was it, stripes off, I didn't wear them.

21:00 No I went in a private, was corporal for 3 days, then nearly 5 years later I came out a private. Yeah.

What was the big attraction about these dances?

I don't know, the Willis family up at Avenel, I said I wanted to see them anyhow. So I hadn't seen them since 1934. And so I went up and saw them, see Nell she was an

21:30 exhibition ballroom dancer, she was a beautiful dancer. There was 3 things that she could do and I

couldn't do one of them. She was a an extremely good horse rider, very good dancer and a very good ice skater. And I couldn't do either the 3 of them. And yet we clicked. I loved the music, I love music, even now today I love music, especially country and western.

22:00 I'm a country and western fan.

How were your friendships formed in the beginning?

Just by sleeping in the one tent, getting to know one another, all the idiosyncrasies and you know, what they want and want they don't want and things like that. And it grinds you into a real close knit family, there is no doubt about that.

22:30 I was, in my company there was two brothers, Gil and Bill Tucknot, Tom Foley, we had two Tom Foleys, his dad was in the First World War and they were both in the same battalion. Young Tom, and yeah. It is a family, really is a family. And your officers you respected them, you respected them. but once you are

23:00 fighting for your life and in a lot of cases, I was and others are too. You don't see the flips on the shoulders and they don't wear them anyhow. But nah, no you are just a family and you know what's got to be done and you do it.

Why did you selected the pioneers?

Well

23:30 you are put into that. You don't select it. The 2/5th Pioneer Company the one that I first went to it was a very peculiar set up. As a matter of fact our captain was discharged, dishonourable discharge, they formed this bogus company of the 2/5th Pioneer Company, this is going back early 1942. When we got to Mangalore and there was nearly 500 of us there, there wasn't a thing on the block at all, not a tent, not a thing.

24:00 And we just slept on the ground that night, and the next day the tents started to arrive. But they set up he and Vic Rennick, was a Sergeant major set up this bogus battalion, 2/5th Pioneer Company. And they drew all their stores from Puckapunyal which was a big army camp, just the other side of Seymour. And how they got away with it I have no idea.

24:30 But we were there for 3 months training as a unit, had rations supplies, there must have been some really big cogs somewhere along the line. And when they found out, the whole unit was disbanded, they just disbanded the whole unit. And that's when we went to Kapooka, up at Wagga as the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion. And that's how it started off, Jock, old Captain McQueen he was discharged, dishonourable discharge.

25:00 They just threw him out, as I say how they got away with it, I don't know, because I was only a private, yeah. And they formed the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, with the remnants that escaped from Java and come back to Australia. See when my original battalion was dropped off at Java they came back from the Middle East on the Orcades and it left them there, but their supply ship and others

25:30 went down to Fremantle and when my original battalion landed at Java, they had nothing, they had their rifles and 50 rounds of ammo but not a thing, because everything was diverted down to Fremantle. And of course they were captured and they spent of course 2 1/2 years in a prisoner of war camp, we lost 350 odd men, died in the prisoner of war camp.

26:00 They lost 100 men in Syria, they were fighting against the Vichy French in Syria. And they lost 100 men there. It was a highly decorated unit, I've got a book there of all the decorations that the men received through bravery. And they were just a special unit and that's why they decided to reform it. And this was how I got in with them.

26:30 **How many men made it back from Java?**

Only those who were on the supply ship, I don't suppose it would be more than 100 come back. And they were mostly men with a rank. Not captains but Sergeants or corporals. and like that. But the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion had the best army band in Australia, incredible band.

27:00 And all their instruments and the band people were on the supply ships, they didn't lose those. But nearly all their equipment was sent down into Fremantle while they landed at Java there with 50 rounds of ammo and that was it. Just one of those, the big blues that happened during the war. And the skipper of the Alcaldes refused to go back and get them all from Java, and he said, no I can't risk my ship. To go back and take them

27:30 off Java. Because not only those, I mean there was Louis Dunlop and all his medical crew landed there, 2/3rd Machine Gunners, they were landed and lost. It was just something that happened.

So these 100 men who were from the 2/2nd, they had gone to Java?

No, they never, the boat pulled in at Java and there was no room in the port and then they got the word that the Japs had

28:00 landed in Java and of course they just, the captain said, well I am not going to lose my boat, and the

same as the skipper from the Alcaldes said I'm not going back to risk being hit by a submarine to bring the men off Java. And that's why about 100 odd, that had in charge of all the men, all their equipment and everything, went down to Fremantle, and of course they never got caught. and they joined the reformed 2/2nd

28:30 Pioneer Battalion at Kapooka at Wagga. When they got the men from Melbourne.

What were these fellows like? What did they tell you about Syria?

Nothing at all, very, very few of them spoke at what happened in Syria. That was a problem, who the enemy was, I mean, today you wouldn't know. You wouldn't have a clue who your enemy is today, really,

29:00 but in the Second World War if you were Jap if you were German if you were Italian if you were Vichy French, you were the enemy. If you were a native wearing a red lap lap he was an enemy too, because he was working for the Japanese. So you knew your enemy, but today, you wouldn't know who your neighbours were, well I do I know Kathy next door. But

29:30 that's a fact though, when you think of it. Its pretty hard to distinguish who your enemy is today.

How did these 100 men fit in with the new men?

Oh no problems, no problems. They were really an asset because they had had experience, they'd been through action and so they were, and of course they were relieved in their own personal thoughts of not being at Java. And they carried on again.

30:00 **Did they help instruct?**

We were pretty well, when they joined us at Kapooka, we'd we were pretty well fully trained. I had a funny experience at Kapooka, we used to get Bren gun carriers, you know the Bren gun carriers? They are a track vehicle 6 people and they've got tracks either side of them

30:30 drive like a track thing. And they used to make them in Fisherman's Bend in Victoria. and when they got up to Albury they had to transfer them onto a different gauge the railway line was a different gauge. and instead of that they would take them off at Albury and go down from Kapooka, which was about 80 miles, and pick them up and drive them up from Albury up to Kapooka camp. and I was one of the drivers.

31:00 And we went down, went down by truck, and picked up a Bren gun carrier, and I was coming back early one morning and always took a spare driver with you. And I'm coming back early in the morning, come through Uranquinty and I threw the right track and I was doing about 40 mile an hour and they could hoof along. And it veered across the road and all I could see was this black cat sitting on the fence, no I couldn't control he thing it just went. But I bowled the

31:30 cat over, killed it, mushed it up. And I remember this lady coming out of the house, and she abused me, oh she was. I said, "Look lady, I couldn't do a thing about it, I'm sorry about your cat, I've thrown a track and the Bren gun just carrier just veered off" and she said, "You are speeding through here" and I said, "Well I said I've got a time I've got to be up at Kapooka at such and such a time" I said, "Turn a requisition into the army and they will get you a new cat" and away I went.

32:00 Yeah I should have gone and apologised. Yeah, but.

How did you fixed the track?

Well some engineers come down from, I just left it, left I sitting there, couldn't do a thing about it. She just threw, and the other track grips and it turned into the fence. Could have put a match to it I suppose.

32:30 Another time, Charlie Barko he was a, come from Mildura, he was as mad as a two bob watch, Charlie. And we used to cart our water in the water tanks on the carriers. In the trucks and we were going into Wagga into the showground where we used to pump the water, because there was very little water out at Kapooka, it was just a brand new camp there was no installation of anything there hardly at all. And it was about a quarter full, when we went in and the water started to sway

33:00 and you couldn't control it, and it rolled the tank over on its side see, and this is how mucked this right leg up. and I got it caught between that and the steering wheel when it rolled over, no other injuries at all. But yea, poor old Charlie and the water wagon.

You were driving?

No I was a passenger, but I don't know how I got my leg underneath the steering wheel, or the column, actually it was under the column. I don't know

33:30 where Charlie finished up, I can't even remember that but I know I felt pain in the leg and I might have got it caught there. No, nothing got cut or anything like that. But

Did you feel the thing going?

I could feel it because it was starting to rock. And a dirt road, dirt roads, and the water just started to

sway like that and away it went.

34:00 If it had been full there would have been no problem because there was no movement.

Tell me about life at Kapooka?

It was a good life. I had relatives at Kapooka, they owned Nesbitts furniture. They were not close relatives but they were distant relatives on Dad's side.

34:30 And I used to spend a bit of time there. I had three friends. Ray Ellis to who I still write to and ring up occasionally, I write if I don't ring up. And Con Tucknot who was our battalion butcher. And Roy King, Roy was test driver for Austin cars in Victoria, he was mad, absolutely mad Roy. And

35:00 but he had a nice looking sister, so we would go down and round, every time we went into Wagga we would always go to a certain café there, the Continental café, and there was this very lovely German girl, whom Ray knew and got to know very, very well, as a matter of fact I think I've got a photo there. And but I never had any girlfriends, but Roys sister was quite a nice girl and he live in North Fitzroy. Now North Fitzroy

35:30 its pretty, it's a deadly place, it right in the heart of Melbourne. and Roy lived there in Gertrude Street, and we'd go down to his place there and Roy unfortunately had a crash in the car in the Austin car, he had a plate across the front of his forehead, which put pressure on his brain and sometimes he would really

36:00 lose it, and we were walking down Gertrude Street and this fellow comes up. It was a cold night because we had our great coats on and this fellow asked Roy for a cigarette, he knew this fellows, and Roy said, "Nah, you are not having it" and he said, "If you don't give me a cigarette I will drop you" and Roy had a, unbeknown to me had a 38 revolver in his overcoat pocket, and he just pulled the trigger through the overcoat and put a bullet straight to his knee, into this fellows knee.

36:30 And he said, "Come on Peewee, go" I got the shock of my life, he didn't hesitate he just, he didn't even take it out of his overcoat pocket he just pulled the trigger, went straight through his overcoat and shot this fellow in the knee. Yeah, the wild days, I don't think I went out with his sister after that.

37:00 Ray Ellis, he was a fellow who was very good boxer Ray, Lester Ellis a [contemporary] fighter in Victoria, Ray was his grandfather. And Ray could really fight. And when we come back from New Guinea up at Cairns there doing our training, we were in Cairns, having a café or a meal in the café there. And we come out of the café

37:30 there was 3 of us come out of the café and there was Ray Ellis myself and somebody else, I can't think of the other fellow. And there were 7 Yanks standing out on the footpath. And Ray said to me, "We'll have these" I said, "Ray" he said, "We will still have them Peewee" I didn't even throw a punch, one of the Yanks hit me, I lost 4 teeth in the front.

38:00 Mad. yeah, we'll have these Peewee. On with the questions.

Tape 5

00:51 **So how old was Roy and what happened to him?**

He'd be a little bit older than me- not much older.

01:00 And he just got worse and worse the pressure on his head and he went down to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] one morning and he just couldn't control himself at all and anyhow they sent him down to Heidelberg Hospital and that's where they diagnosed him as the pressure of this plate in his forehead thru the accident with the Austin cars and he was discharged medically unfit. Whatever happened to him I don't know at all. I have no idea

01:30 I lost all track of him actually. Whether he eventually died through it or not I don't know. And I didn't bother to even follow it up – you know you sort of get caught up in other things and I didn't even think of it.

So did he serve with you overseas?

No. He was discharged at Wagga, at Kapooka.

02:00 I can't remember Roy coming over the Western Australia with us and of course then I had a spell in Heidelberg hospital with rheumatic fever and so I don't know whatever happened and I never bothered the follow it up. As a matter of fact I keep contact with Ray Ellis my other good friend in Melbourne now I might ask Ray if he ever

02:30 heard what happened to him.

So tell me what it was like sharing a tent with five other men?

Pretty hectic sometimes. I was an extremely good bridge player. I used to love playing bridge and there was three of them in our tent that played bridge. You were like a family.

03:00 No privacy of course in a tent like that but you just lived together and you accepted that and that was life I suppose. You were all in the one section and you generally stuck pretty tight and when you chose your mates you sort of kept

03:30 in that little group and just the same with the tent. But of course when we were overseas well that was different because you're just a two man tent or you just camped out in the open I mean you're sort of individual but still worked as a team. You know in a compact tent situation well you still respected one another's views and everything like that. Had blue at times and all that sort of thing but you just got on well together

04:00 because you just had to. You had to. You couldn't just walk out the door and say 'Well hooray I'm leaving'. You could but you'd pay for it. In detention.

Did you get caught up in any blues?

No I was pretty peaceful sorta fella while we were there. I had a mate of mine Major Collis, he wasn't a Major but he was a Thursday Islander – this is when I went in with the other battalion, 31/51st Battalion -

04:30 and Major and I got on pretty close together. Excellent boxer. He was one of the smartest, cleverest boxers I've ever seen and he taught me quite a bit of boxing. Ray was a bruiser he sort of got, Major he was a very fine fighter he was. He only died about three year ago too. Went back to Thursday Island after the war but he was a very

05:00 clean fighter.

So when Ray and you took on the seven Americans how did Ray fare?

How did Ray fare? I can't remember because we were all pretty drunk. We had to be pretty drunk to be with us – take on seven of them. But I know I lost four teeth and I wasn't a pretty sight. Just as well the army gave me a part upper plate I suppose

05:30 later on when I'd settled down.

So what happened with the dentist?

I can't remember what happened. I think I went... It was after we come back from New Guinea wasn't it. I think I got them down in Royal Park in Victoria when I was down in Melbourne.

06:00 I just had four teeth missing in the front - it wasn't a pretty sight. Nelly didn't seem to mind though. Of course I've got none now.

And it was at Kapooka you learned the Bren gun is that right?

No. I learnt at Balcombe actually when I first went into the army. Then when they put us through a range

06:30 when we'd been at Kapooka. Oh I used to use the Bren quite a bit in manoeuvres and one thing like that at Kapooka when we used to go out into the hills and do manoeuvres but then when we went over to Western Australia they took us down to a place called Subiaco out of Perth, east of Perth and I went down to the rifle range and they out you through a pretty severe test there. And I scored the second top

07:00 score of the battalion and I was made officially a Bren gunner as far as the battalion went and there it was.

So what's the key to firing a Bren gun?

Well you had your strap round you when you put it on, you had a tripod in front. There's no keys – a very foolproof gun. I

07:30 mean not like the Vickers gun which is a different set-up. You get a lot of stoppage in the Vickers gun. Same sized bullet - .303 bullet and you had 28 to 33 bullets in a mag and next to the Owen gun I think the Vickers was up to it's class. The Owen gun was a very tremendous gun.

08:00 It got rid of the bullets quick. They used to say by the time you said 'No more beer' the mag was empty – 33 bullets were gone. That's how good it was. The problem with the Owen gun it had a fool of a safety catch on it. It was on the inside and if you kept it so sometimes it would work forward and if you touch the trigger of course it was loaded, ready to fire. But the Bren I mean it had a safety catch on it - you had no problem at all with the Bren.

08:30 **So how big was the Bren gun in size and how did you set it up?**

Well the Bren gun weighed 28 pound or 14 kilos. You could strip the barrel off it and the tripod and you

could carry it just about on the tripod and then you could carry the bulk at the back of it. And it wouldn't take you very long to assemble it. We did make a mistake once – well we made several mistakes – but we were

09:00 doing a routine patrol up through the Finisterre Ranges and it was hard going, tough going. There wasn't to be any enemy – they thought it was just a reconnaissance patrol to just see what the movement was. And it was hard going – we stripped the Bren gun down and I give the barrel and the little tripod to Archie Stanton, he was a jockey here in Sydney Archie, and I took the other part of it

09:30 and as we were climbing the what you call it Ginger Gaye was our scout, he had an Owen gun and three Nips appeared just at the top of the rise and he yelled out and he went to fire the Owen gun and it wouldn't fire. They called for Bren gun, unbeknown to me Archie Stanton had dropped out and didn't pass the barrel on. Here I've got a Bren gun couldn't do a thing about it but the three Nips flew. They disappeared

10:00 but we worked out why the Owen gun never fired – the fact that in a bit of a slight panic Ginger never pushed the safety catch off. Of course nothing happened. In the panic of the moment but nothing happened like that in a Bren gun. No they were incredible guns. I had an American carbine for many years. I bought it from a Yank at Bougainville. I don't know what he did.

10:30 He was going home to America so he thought but he finished up in Iwo Jima without a carbine. I gave him two boxes of beer for it and I had this carbine and I carried this carbine sometimes. Didn't use it in action and when I came home I couldn't bring it into Australia because they told me it was a fifty pound fine for every unissued weapon you had on you. And I had two German Lugers [pistols],

11:00 and also the carbine and I left that at Rabaul with a mate of mine Dick Tellin, I don't know, Dick I think just left it up there, didn't bring it down. The annoying part about when we got off the boat at Townsville there was no inspection. I could have walked off with the world and anyhow. I wanted to get the Lugers and take the pin out of it and mount them on a board, a polished board.

11:30 That just didn't happen.

So how do you aim the Bren gun?

You get the site, or just from the hip you just point the barrel but you can sweep it. I mean you can move it around. Better to be down on the ground and aim rather than…

12:00 But they were very versatile guns. We got some reinforcements when we were up in New Guinea and you could tell the Japanese weapons by different sound. It's quite different to our weapons and that and we captured a Juki, like a Bren gun, a Japanese semi-automatic machine gun. Their rifle, their rifles were good. They were a bit longer

12:30 in the barrel than a .303 and they were more accurate for that reason. They fired a very small bullet sort of 2.95 I think in calibre as opposed to the .303 and we used to take our reinforcements out and I used to take the Zuki out and shoot up in the trees just to give them an idea of the different sounds in weapons and this day – I didn't realise this – there was about sixteen reinforcements sitting under the tree and I was aiming at this branch.

13:00 Of course it chopped the branch through, down came the branch. Didn't hurt anyone but I think it gave them a bit of a fright. Gave me a fright too. But the Japs had some good weapons. They had some really good weapons and that. Of course all the officers carried a Luger, all the Japanese officers. I got a, what do you call it, a Japanese sword at Ocean Island I got that. And I brought it home. Quite a good sword that was.

13:30 Had four stones, rubies, in the middle and I like a silly donkey when I got to Brisbane I was told that either I had to out the sword away or hide it or do something but in a staging camp it would just disappear and I sold it to a Yank for twenty five pound which was a lot of money in those days. It was five weeks wages, more than five weeks wages for me. But I regret the fact that I did. I should have persevered and brought it home.

14:00 That's gone too.

You were nicknamed Peewee and the Bren gun weighs 14 kilos. Why didn't they give it to a bigger fellow to carry around?

Well I'm not going to skite about this but I was the second top shot in the battalion and that's why I got it. I handled it alright. No problem at all.

14:30 **Are you working with another fellow?**

In a Bren? No you're independent. No independent. You had, you normally carried six mags with you, three in each pouch. Fairly weighty. Then you had others that would have a couple of mags. If they wanted they called for more mags and they were there. No the weight never worried me at all. I was a wiry little fellow and fairly strong I

15:00 suppose as far as it goes physically.

And was there different processes of firing? Would you fire all at once or what was your field of fire?

Depending on the situation. You never wasted bullets because you never knew what might be ahead of you. So if you can conserve them to a point I suppose if you can conserve

15:30 bullets, you didn't waste any of them at all as far as the rifle would go. Normally a mag if it come to a point, I'd probably do about five shirt bursts. And of course then you had to think about the barrel getting hot and all that. There was a time I put 50 mags through the Bren and that's a lot of shells – 1500 – and the barrel

16:00 wasn't much good after that. But we didn't have a spare barrel.

How long did the gun last for?

Can't remember that. Depending on the use probably some Brens had never, ever fired a bullet in angry circumstances you know. I think it's just the wear and tear on the gun.

16:30 The barrel would be the only thing that would… You had to keep the barrel pretty clean like any weapon I suppose but the rest of the parts don't seem to wear out a great deal. No they were very constructive, well constructed.

What process would you go through in cleaning a Bren gun?

Strip it right down. Yeah,

17:00 you just strip it down, put a good ground sheet down and what had to come off you took off it and cleaned it.

Could you talk me through the process if the gun was right here?

Not really. I'll probably forget it. You take the block out first, out of the breach block – that was all it a solid component and you had it set on automatic or single shot. There was very little

17:30 as far as the cleaning goes, it was nothing that had to be really looked after as far as it went. I don't ever remember anything like that at all. Every time I pulled the trigger it worked which was good. But I was out of the Bren gun for a while until Porton Plantation came and I used it extensively. Because I went into three inch mortars.

18:00 And Cliff Hutch the Sergeant and I, I used to do the Opip [observation post] and we used to go out seeing where the shells used to land and radio back to base up fifty, down fifty, up twenty five and what have you just to see what was going on.

Tell me about when you got rheumatic fever – what happened and how were you fixed up?

18:30 Well this morning up at Kapooka my good friend of mine Con Tucknot who was the battalion butcher, he and I were in the same tent and he used to feed me a little bit of steak occasionally and I went to get out of bed that morning and I went to put me feet down and they just collapsed on me and I just worried about that and I told Con and he said 'I'll get you up to the RAP' so I got a stretcher

19:00 and they carried me up to the RAP, that's your own first aid post, and the doctor examined me but he couldn't find anything wrong with them or anything wrong with me. I was running a bit of a temperature I believe. And so they decided they'd put me in an ambulance and take me up to the 116th CCS – Casualty Clearing Station – just out of Kapooka it was and that's when I stayed there. I don't even remember what they treated me with.

19:30 With it the legs came good, I just don't remember a great deal about the CCS to what they did but when I heard that my battalion was moving, on the move and going, we didn't know we were going to Western Australia of course, we were just told that we were moving out and down to Watsonia that's just down from Melbourne out of Heidelberg, I wanted to get out

20:00 and by this time, by the time I was released from the 116th CCS my battalion had gone. They'd gone down to Watsonia and they were moving over the Western Australia and so I went down. I arrived in Melbourne at home on the Saturday afternoon, no Saturday morning, on the Saturday afternoon the army ambulance took me out to Heidelberg and I was placed in ward 14A

20:30 in Heidelberg and went under stentive, what do you call it. They found nothing wrong with my heart. That was the sort of puzzling thing because that the first thing that rheumatic fever goes to your heart but I was there for about three weeks I suppose. Even Nell came out and saw me while I was there do that was something. But they wanted to board me out to B-class – that means, you're A class and then B, and I didn't

21:00 want that and I talked to the MO about it, the Medical Officer, and he said 'Look,' he said, 'I'll tell you – you're not going to be much god as far as the job you're in and the battalion you're in' and I said 'Well, can I just take that risk?'. He said 'Well that's up to you'. So he gave me a medical clearance from that but the problem was nobody notified my battalion that I was in Heidelberg Hospital.

21:30 And I came out of the hospital and out to Royal Park and then I went over to Western Australia by train, I was sitting in the cab of a truck all the way over there and finished up I eventually got up to Strawberry just south of Geraldton and I walked into the unit as large as life but I was about three weeks AWOL.

22:00 And nobody had processed my holding papers or anything at all like that and I had a lot of explaining to do and I remember when I walked into C Company and they looked at me 'Where have you been?' and I said 'In the hospital'. They said 'You're AWOL as far as that goes' and I was paraded to the orderly room until they checked right back through the records and they found that I was in Heidelberg Hospital.

22:30 So that cleared that charge all right but when I got up into New Guinea or even up into the Atherton Tablelands I lost all the pain, it just disappeared. And right through the action in New Guinea walking never affected me and I often wonder at this time – there was no effect on my heart – whether I had been wrongly diagnosed. And it wasn't rheumatic fever because my heart's as sound as a bell

23:00 even to this point in time too. So I just don't know what happened as far as the medical. Nobody's perfect I suppose but still. There must have been something wrong for my legs to go like that.

Why wouldn't you at all consider B-class?

Well you may as well be discharged really. I mean, alright you don't have to be in the front line to

23:30 be a real soldier – I mean, I don't agree with that – but it was what I was used to, what I wanted to be, and all my mates were there and I just didn't feel inclined I'd like to be B-class or boarded out so I sort of just stuck it out and as I say I had no idea what the problem was medically.

24:00 Because it never worried me the whole time up through New Guinea or Bougainville or anything at all like that. Can't remember it affecting me in any way.

And did you have to do a lot of explaining to the senior officer in WA?

No. Once they contacted Heidelberg Hospital they gave my whole medical history. When I

24:30 came in, when I was discharged. Then when I went out to Royal Park I had to, when I was discharged to Heidelberg Hospital I went out to Royal Park and I was given new movement orders. They traced through there, found everything was alright and I was just given my movement orders to go back to Western Australia. No it wasn't a problem at all but the battalion hadn't been notified. That's the strange part about it to say I'd been in Heidelberg

25:00 and all the rest of it. So I felt there was a break down there somewhere.

Was that common that the battalion can be so organised and disciplined in training yet so undisciplined in events like this?

Well, I wouldn't blame the battalion because if they'd been notified by the authorities, by Heidelberg Hospital to say right, I'm being held in Heidelberg Hospital

25:30 they knew what battalion I was in, they would know where my battalion was. And it was just a break down in the structure part of it I think so I don't know. But I'd have been in six months jail if I hadn't righted the situation and that. I told you about Nell's dad didn't I? Nell's dad when I was, he was in charge of LCD at Royal Park he had a very good

26:00 position there and when I went to Royal Park he said to me 'How would you like a job for three weeks?' he knew where every battalion in Australia was going or where they were. Incredible in the military sense of it. He said 'How would you like a job in Royal Park driving a staff car for three weeks? Your battalion will not leave for three weeks.' And I said 'I'd love that Dad' so I just drove a staff car around Melbourne and all over the place - this

26:30 was a good job this was. Anyhow one day Dad said to me 'Well, your battalion are going in two days. I'll give you your movement orders and you go back up to Mangalore'. So that's what I did. I just walked in as large as life to camp again 'Where have you been?' 'I was down in Royal Park driving staff cars'. They just shook their head and yeah, I went and saw Jock McQueen and I said 'You'd better contact WOE at Royal Park and he'll tell you about it'. So they did. Dad forgot to post the

27:00 what do you call it. One of the mistakes he made, the other one, no he didn't. Didn't stop me marrying his daughter. So everyone's not perfect.

So who did you drive around in the staff car?

Mainly officers. Just to different parts round Melbourne. In the city those days nearly every establishment had army in them or navy in them or something like this and you

27:30 just drove them around and I knew Melbourne inner pretty well because of my association with Victoria Markets carting the fruit and something like that. Oh it was a lovely job. 'Yes Sir' 'No Sir'.

28:00 **So what were the 2/2nd Pioneers doing in WA?**

Well, see the situation in Burma or over in Asia was pretty good and the fact that we'd lost the 8th Division in Malaya and they decided they would attack the Japanese up through Burma and they wanted to send the 7th Australian Division over to Burma. Churchill did, not here but our Prime Minister said no and the

28:30 whole movement order was stopped because of the situation in Australia. You know people today, even men, didn't realise just how bad things were in Australia as far as the occupational forces from Japan. It was a desperate situation. I mean the Brisbane line, anything above Brisbane right down through South Australia was undefended. I mean that was their

29:00 first line of defence and the situation was really grim and to send the 7th Division which was 25,000 men over to Burma. Just couldn't lose it. So our Prime Minister then just stood on what he believed was right and not to send the 7th Division away. And they'd only just come back from the Middle East and a lot of them were up in New Guinea

29:30 anyhow on the Kokoda trail the 7th Division along with some militia units also.

So you had some 2/2nd Pioneers from Syria who'd returned home. 100 men. Did you have any World War I officers or guys there?

Most of our officers were World War I men, and decorated. They were decorated

30:00 World War I men. And our CO Joe Laing he won the Military Cross saving the French I think it was but the majority of… A lot of them were First World War men.

And what were these fellows trying to teach you about war?

I always say keep your head down. I mean, that's the main aspect of it. I don't think

30:30 they tried to teach you I think that was done through your platoons, your platoon commanders and one thing like that. The CO of the unit looked the over part of the unit itself. He just stood and kept his eye in that and left the responsibility of that to his subordinate officers and one thing like that to do the actually training.

31:00 **Were there fellows that didn't get on within the battalion?**

Oh yes. Not many at all. I can't remember clashing with any of them at all. Mind you, you might have a bit of a heated argument or something like that. But you accepted the situation that you were placed in and in accepting that, you couldn't do anything about it anyhow. You couldn't just walk out and go. Well you could I suppose if you wanted to.

31:30 Spend the rest of the time in jail but no, I don't know what the non-combatant units would have been like because I was never in one. But we had to have them, we had to have those that organised things and one thing like that. You all couldn't be with a rifle or a Bren gun in your hand and no, the army itself, of course I can't speak for the

32:00 other like the Air Force or the Navy and that, but you just learnt to get along with one another. See I had a brother that was in the Air Force. Jack was 14 months younger than I and Jack wanted me to claim him out of the Air Force which I could have done. The army being a more senior, the navy was a senior one, the army was second. And he wanted me to claim him out of the Air Force into the army into my battalion

32:30 and I said 'Jack, no'. I wrote to him and I said 'Nah'. I've seen where one brothers been killed and the other brother has just gone to pieces after. I just wouldn't like to do that. And we left to go at that, and when he came home, he came home after I did, I said 'Jack, what were you in, in the Air Force?'. He said 'Bomb disposals' - he used to go out and de-louse the bombs - and I said 'Mate, if I'd known that I would have brought you out to

33:00 out battalion because you would have been safer off' and he said 'Well, I'm here' so there it is. No, we had two sets of brothers; the two Tompiles, or father and son actually, and two brothers Gill and Bill Tuckwell from Geelong. They were brothers but they managed through and nothing happened much at all as far as that goes.

33:30 **What happened to the brothers who one was shot and how the other coped?**

I don't remember. Did I say that did I?

You said there were two brothers in the battalion and one had got killed…?

Don't remember that.

When you were responding to your brothers letter.

34:00 No I said if one brother was killed. Yeah, sorry about that, if one brother was killed how would the other respond. No that didn't happen as far as I know in our battalion anyhow. Of course you've got four rifle battalions, I mean you really only know what happens in your own platoon – thirty odd men. You know, you don't know a great deal…

34:30 I was in 14 platoon in C Company, you had 13 platoon and then 15 platoon but you didn't know much what went on outside of your platoon or even your section of ten men, you never knew a great deal what happened because those ten men were constantly with you all the time. The full platoon wouldn't go out together on a patrol. Wouldn't be more than twelve men would go out on a fighting patrol and if it was a reconnaissance patrol it would be less.

35:00 **What happened after WA? Where did the 2/2nd Pioneers go after that?**

They come back to Victoria. We had leave, we were put in at Watts Avenue which is just out of Heidelberg. I don't know how long the leave was and then we went straight up to Queensland on the train

35:30 and straight through, The whole battalion moved up there. Up to Ravenshoe and that's where there were thousands and thousands of troops there. Well, two divisions the 7th and the 9th division were there. And that's just where we did our jungle training and manoeuvres and one thing like that. We had an international rodeo at Mount Garnet. We were given the job

36:00 at Mount Garnet of reconstructing the old race course round there. Mount Garnet was a tin mining town, only a small place, named by a fellow called Lucy, he owned everything round the area. And he supplied the timber for us to reconstruct the rails around the race course and one thing like that. And I remember our lieutenant who was killed, Rusty White, three of the boys were coming back from

36:30 Mount Garnet one night and they'd had a few beers and something to drink there and what they were drinking was a concoction of methylated spirits and beetroot water and they crashed the truck and one of them was seriously hurt and I remember Rusty White getting us out on the parade ground, this was in 14th section, out on the parade ground. He had a bottle of this Red Ned, this beetroot water and methylated spirits and there

37:00 was a camp fire going in one of the camp oven sort of things there they had the firs coming up through it and he was going to show us, give us a demonstration of what this did so he got the bottle and stood there and we were all standing back there and he butted it and of course it all flared up and it singed his face and you'd never seen anything like it. We roared but he straightened himself up and he said 'You can imagine what it's done to me' and someone said 'Yeah and to you too

37:30 Sir'. But he wanted to give us a demonstration I mean it wasn't the best stuff to drink. Poor fellow lost is life. The thing that really disappointed me with Rusty was not one of our officers went and saw his wife after the war. I wasn't told that but I heard that. You would have thought that somebody from C-company would have gone

38:00 and seen his wife and spoken but not one apparently. He lived, he come from New South Wales. So whether the boys give up drinking up this Red Ned again or not I don't know.

And what were they preparing you for there?

At Mount Garnet? Well,

38:30 it was just the two divisions coming together for an interchange course before we went overseas because we were going over to New Guinea to Tsili Tsili where we did the march and then the 9th Divvy were coming in from Lae, Finschhafen from the coast and they just brought the two together and Major General Vasey addressed to crowd, addressed the troops.

39:00 Yes and he was killed later on just before the war finished in an aircraft, his Hudson [bomber] crashed in the sea. Out from Cairns [at Machans Beach, 5 March 1945]. A remarkable man he was. His wife is still alive, she's ninety odd and still lives in Melbourne actually and I said before that he's the one that carried my pack, and I boasted that no, very few soldiers ever made the general carry their pack for them.

39:30 So after that we just left, the whole 7th Division left for New Guinea and the 9th went to New Guinea also but through the coast.

Tape 6

00:32 **So can you tell us about the training in Queensland?**

It was very severe and of course it was under jungle conditions because up in Tully there it was all jungle. And the main problem there was a bush called 'wait a while' - if it go tangled up on you and you had to wait a while because it just held you up so but

01:00 to get used to life, firearms and bullets and one thing or other you had to use them as though you'd be in action. So they had this trail I suppose the trail would be half a mile long and you'd walk down it and you'd have a Lieutenant or an officer behind you putting you in the picture as you're moving through enemy territory where the enemy are and when he starts off

01:30 with you if you see anything that moves shoot and so we were walking down and he's breathing down my neck saying 'You got your eyes about you?' 'Yes Sir' 'You know what's going on around you?' and I said 'Yes Sir' or 'I think so Sir' or something like that and he said 'Well you'd better – oh there's movement over there!'. And you'd see something, a target moves. It was a man made target and you'd fire your gun, I had the Bren, you'd fire it. Whether you

02:00 hit it or not didn't matter – it was never counted - and you'd keep on moving and the Lieutenant would say to you 'Well, it's getting closer to the enemy's line – is there any movement? Can you see any movement?' and somebody would move on your right and you'd spin the Bren round and fire a few bullets there. Now they were just ordinary targets and somebody would be behind the tree activating them, making them come out and that. Anyhow this particular time the

02:30 officer's still breathing here and you're really tight, you're expecting everything to happen. And as I looked with my left eye I saw the movement behind the tree and I opened fire. This fellow had his arm out, the fellow that was moving the target had his arm out and I saw it and I thought 'Well, it moves' and I shot it. Fortunately I was a bit high – it didn't hit him. But he yelled at us – he let out a scream – and the officer said 'You were spot on there

03:00 but you missed the target' I said 'Just as well I did Sir'. So it was, really put you on the ball and you just got used to the conditions to which you would be facing when you went overseas, same thing when you were there.

So were other fellows hit as well? Shot?

I never heard of any. I guess there would have been. I never knew, it wasn't until, there wasn't any, I can't recall any in our section anyhow that they were shot

03:30 and that but just as well I was a pretty crook shot or he'd have had a pretty short arm I'd say.

And were you ever shot at with live rounds during training?

In training? No. No you went down to what they call a rifle range and you did all the training under strict supervision. No I… There were fellows that were accidentally shot. I had a mate of mine he had

04:00 three bullets pumped into his stomach from an Owen gun. He was bending down and he put the Owen gun down the safety catch was on and it jarred it and three bullets went up into his stomach. But he survived but he was charged by the army authorities of course for self inflicted wounds. It was pretty tough and he paid the penalty. I don't think know what the penalty was but he was put on a charge – whether it was careless use of arms and that

04:30 but it was just the vibrations that set the gun off. Just as well it wasn't 33 of them or he'd have been in trouble.

So what other training accidents were there?

Quite a lot. Quite a lot. As a matter of a fact when we did a manoeuvre over in Western Australia and of course it very flat that area there they had Don Rs [dispatch riders] that used to ride the motorbikes and they would be delivering imaginary information and all this sort if thing

05:00 and one night, one Sunday night we lost five Don Rs that were killed on their bikes. They used to ride 250 motorbikes BSA motorbikes – hit objects or one thing like that and they were killed. Five in one night just thrown from their bikes. Of course it was pitch black – couldn't have lights on. Well they had lights but only a little peep hole in the front of the headlight but it never reflected anything at all so there were I would say

05:30 quite a lot of accidental deaths and woundings under the training anyhow.

And is that the same accidental deaths with guns?

Well there would have been I would think so. You get fairly careless sometimes. You get a bit used to handling guns and that and you do get careless in the operation of them

06:00 and accidental deaths must have occurred. I can't recall any in our battalion as such but I guess there would have been.

So why were they giving the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion jungle training?

Well it linked up to this special mission that was set before us and it hardened us up to the jungle conditions because nobody in our battalion knew the conditions we were going into in

06:30 New Guinea. No one had been put through that aspect of the country before. And we were told that it was hard, it was rugged. And so it was. So you just had to condition your body and one thing like that to these conditions.

When did you find out it was a special mission?

When we landed at Port Moresby we were told when the whole battalion arrived in Port Moresby and we were given a parade

07:00 before we went into the planes into the DC-3s to fly to Tsili Tsili we were told what the mission would be. But that was about all. It was an arduous march they told us the approximate distance and there were two ranges of mountains to climb and not only was there the 700 odd troops we had but there was also each man had a native carrier which was over

07:30 700 natives that were involved in it too. The local inhabitants of the country. So it was nearly 1600 personnel actually that were going on this trip plus well the natives carried a lot of the gear. The local population.

So nothing was said to you about a mission in Australia?

No. No we heard nothing at all.

08:00 We weren't even told that we would be going to New Guinea.

So tell me then about the journey to Port Moresby and what happened then?

It was uneventful. We were just taken down by train to Townsville, embarked, marched onto the wharf and just got into the Canberra. The good part about it was it was only a two day run to Port Moresby.

08:30 But we were waited in by white-coated waiters, I don't know whether they were civilian but they were all Navy but they were all dressed up in their Navy uniforms and I thought 'Oh, this is good' but for the two days we were waited on hand and foot. We sat down for a meal and serviettes, the whole lot. I mean it was incredible. I wished I'd joined the Navy really. But that soon came to an end.

09:00 And then when we landed at Port Moresby of course that was only, I suppose there would have only been about 80 of us in that party as an advance party and we were to set up the camp at Moresby. The rest of the battalion was to move later on.

What was required in setting up a camp?

A lot of clearing, digging sullage pits to out your rubbish in. Everything was dug, holes were dug and you sort of

09:30 put all your rubbish in there and you filled that up over and then dug another pit and that but it was very hard, very rocky – volcanic rock and we had a sergeant who was an explosive expert and gratefully but when we put the charges in you'd dig down as far as you could then each corner you would drill and plug the gelignite into the what do you call it and then link the four fuses together and then

10:00 you'd set it off see. But unfortunately the cook house was very close to this particular pit - it was all set up; the saucepans and the pots and pans and everything whole there was there already and the Sergeant we got out of the what do you call it. We'd done our job as far as setting the charges and he set them off. The ground was that hard they just blew straight out and took all the saucepans, the roof of the old cookhouse and everything off with it, the force there just come out and lift it.

10:30 We weren't very popular I'll tell you with the cooking staff. So there was a funny side to it too.

Why were you sent in the advance party?

I don't know why. I don't know why. There was just personnel from each section and I was in what they called headquarters company then and they came from headquarters company and they were either specialists in the various trades, nobody came from the four

11:00 rifles companies to be in the advance party. It wasn't later til we were going up the Finisterre Ranges that I put into C Company. But Port Moresby was different to what we'd been used to. A few air raids but no damage done as far as the air raids went. They had a very good fighter force there the Americans and the

11:30 Australians and they kept things in and of course the Japs were running out of planes then at that time and that was '43, about February '43 when we went over in the advance party.

Tell me what happened in one of the air raids?

The bombs fell short of our camp. We never had any damage at all,

12:00 we didn't lose any personnel through it. They were mainly decking where the aerodromes were; the Ward Strip, the Seven Mile Strip and they would bomb and strafe the fighter planes on the ground or the bomber planes on the ground and that but they didn't really… I think Moresby itself was bombed a couple of times, shelled a couple of times but it was mainly after the planes and one thing like that, the military staff that was

12:30 there. No we never had any damage done at our camp.

Did you set up any buildings when you went there?

No everything was temporary. Everything was temporary and all in tents. No we didn't have any permanent, where we camped anyhow there was no permanent structures there at all. The latrines were just holes dug in the ground

13:00 and some canvas or hessian wrapped around it. They were all you could just pull them down and go. Fill in your trenches and just move out.

And how far ahead were you of the main force?

What do you mean the soldiers that were fighting the Japanese?

No the 2/2nd that were coming – how far ahead were you?

Three weeks. We were three weeks, we were there. It took us

13:30 three weeks to set camp up and get everything organised and then they arrived. I don't even remember the ship that they were on, I know we came over on the Canberra.

What happened from then?

Well, we'd been there for three weeks, we marched all around the different hills at Port Moresby to get our legs operating and one thing like that and one morning we were told 'Pack up' – you were always

14:00 packed up ready to go – and we'd be getting on the planes at Ward Strip, and we were loaded twenty to a plane and we just flew out. Took quite a lot of planes and we flew fairly low. High enough to skim the hills anyhow and the mountains and that and I remember saying to one of my mates next to me 'I'm glad we're not walking when you look down there'

14:30 and then when we landed at Tsili Tsili we just got out and we made our camp on the southern end of the very back end of the camp and just waited til everybody got there. All our equipment came up, it was all unloaded, stacked there. And we were there for about a week I think before we marched off to Nadzab. No, three weeks rather, three weeks til Nadzab. We spent three weeks at Tsili Tsili

15:00 just preparing the stuff as it came in. Incredible the equipment that had to come in and be transported all by shanks pony. You had to walk it, carry it, because there was no way you could get beetles through the place at all. It was quite an exciting time at Tsili Tsili there. They had, the Americans there were grounded - that flew the DC-3s - were grounded fighter pilots and some of them

15:30 thought they were still in fighters but they had Aerocobras in the American Air Force part at Tsili Tsili. They had a tricycle landing gear in the front of them and if they got damaged by enemy fire in flight or something, or strafing or one thing like that they would collapse when they landed and we saw a flight of seven came in one morning and five of the landing front pivot wheel collapsed and it just put them

16:00 on their nose and they could skid along the ground on their nose. Quite spectacular actually – see the sparks flying out the back of them.

So what equipment was being brought up to you?

We had no equipment other than armament, can't remember having to carry other than your own personal gear which varied – some packs were 40 pounds, some were 80 pounds.

16:30 But equipment I don't remember a lot of equipment going with us at all because we had this special task of not carrying too much because the journey that we had to it was virtually impossible to get a lot of equipment through those areas even to the fact that each man had a native carrier to help him with his personal load and of course they carried food.

17:00 Of course food had to be carried, you counted all the hard rations with it and but we never had any equipment til we got to Nadzab and crossed the Markham River and took the strip over there.

So what type of things were the donkeys bringing up on the tracks to you at Tsili Tsili?

Mainly ammunition, I wouldn't remember what the

17:30 equipment was but see every man carried his own rations and of course the native boys used to carry theirs, whatever they wanted. We had a boys anti-tank rifle that weighed about 50 pounds, we threw that over the hill because we reckoned we wouldn't get any tanks up there and we thought

18:00 it was a waste of time carrying it so we put it over the edge and that was it and we didn't see any tanks anyhow. Not there anyhow.

Tell me more about these natives.

They were mainly tribes, all in the one tribe. The tribes didn't really mix a lot though, they were segregated. Of course it's possibly different now but they

18:30 come from various tribes and they were employed by the Australian Army, whether they ever got paid or not I don't know. I guess they would have. And they volunteered to do this work because the Australians were fighting in their country trying to rid it of the Japanese invaders and well I hope they got paid anyhow. But they carried quite a load.

19:00 Ammunition and everything like that, they carried all of that, the mortars, everything. Probably carried

all the officers gear too I don't know.

Were natives assigned to the troops?

Yes through ANGAU [Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit] they were really

19:30 assigned to the various areas and mainly in the same areas they were used to, they were drawn from that locality so a lot of the tribes they spoke different dialects and were quite fond of one another and wouldn't understand one another. We used to try and speak pigeon English which is sort of broken English but that was very seldom successful either.

20:00 But we used to operate through the ANGAU - they used to look after the natives interest and one thing like that. White people and white New Guinean people too lived in the area for some time.

So how did you communicate to a native if you needed something?

We weren't with them. They either walked behind us or walked in front of us. They

20:30 didn't sort of walk with us so we were all our battalion went through but the natives either walked ahead or walked behind or something like that but they didn't walk with us as far as that goes. I can't remember having any natives with me or with our group and so we didn't assimilate them in any way that way.

You were never caught in an engagement with them?

21:00 No. No I can't even remember that. They would never come out on patrol with us or anything like that. Of course the only native that you was wary of would be wearing a red lap lap and he was with the Japanese. But where we marched from Tsili Tsili to Nadzab

21:30 there were no Japanese there at all. It was quite clear of enemy troops until we got to Nadzab. And that's where they were stationed. They used to send out patrols from Lae to Nadzab once a week they would come out there. It was about a days march from Nadzab up away from Nadzab and they would just survey the area and then go back to Lae.

22:00 **So you were in Tsili Tsili for three weeks what were you doing there?**

Just resting. We didn't do hardly any movement at all it was just a rest period preparing ourselves for what was going to be ahead and then we went to see what was ahead of us.

22:30 **So now tell me the journey from there.**

Well the first day we headed out we probably left Tsili Tsili about half past eight and we headed out and as I say we only did a bit over six miles the first day because it was through swamp and it was pretty hard to move. The other days, there was two days where we had a pretty steep climb

23:00 to go. Some days it was good walking but it took us from Monday, early Monday morning to Friday night to get to our destination of 120-odd kilometres. Going up the hills was the hardest part. But we knew that there was no enemy so we weren't worried of being ambushed or anything like that.

23:30 And the natives did most of the carrying other than out own personal gear.

Where you following tracks? How were you progressing forward?

There was a sort of track but very undefined. You mainly worked on a compass and each platoon leader had a compass,

24:00 prismatic compass and you worked on that. We never lost one man through being lost or losing his way. Everybody made it. There was no sickness, there was no sickness as fas as with the troops themselves. We were really physically sick before we started off. We'd been trained for it and even when the three weeks we were in Port Moresby we

24:30 did rigid training and that's what got us through it. Crossing the Markham River – that was a little arduous but we only lost four men I think that were drowned which wasn't too bad out of 700. And of course there was no enemy there in that area.

25:00 **How did you lose four men there?**

Drowned. The Markham River flowed probably six to seven knots. It was a fairly fast flowing river. It wasn't deep but you were carrying up to 70 pound pack on your back, 35 kilos and it was pretty hard going and you hung on to the next persons rifle.

25:30 You sort of formed a chain and just forged your way across it. The middle channel was the worst channel, the others were two side channels but still dangerous. There was no crocodiles or anything like that in the water so there was nothing to worry about that way.

So just describe for me entering and coming out of the river?

It was pretty level going.

26:00 After we saw the paratroopers land, when they jumped out of the plane the [US] 502 Paratroopers, and of course they were walking around shooting birds. We could hear them shooting, we thought the Japs were there but they weren't they were just shooting birds for something to do. Typical Americans still. But they were top crew, they were really top fellows. Big men they were, 1800 of them and so we linked

26:30 up together, as I say they only lost eight men in their jumping and we went out to find those that were missing. We found two, it was incredible. The fact that they jumped from 600 feet and there was only eight that didn't make it in the jump. And one of the two that we found – my section – you wouldn't read about it.

27:00 There was about a two foot indent in the ground where his body hit. It was fairly soft ground and another interesting thing about the jumping. The 2/4th Australian Field Regiment, they used 25 pounders and one crew jumped with them. I think it was about fourteen men. Some had jumped once before some had never jumped.

27:30 And they threw two guns out, 25 pounder guns, they lost one wheel and I don't think they ever found it. They don't know where it finished up but they were brave men because as I say they had trained to jump but never actually jump and they made the jump and I mean to jump from 600 feet, you're no sooner out the plane than you're practically on the ground straight away. By the time the chute opens you're on the ground.

28:00 So they were remarkable men 2/4th. None of them were hurt fortunately but I think they lost a wheel.

Back to the river – how did these men drown? I take it you walked across the river?

You walked, you walked yeah. Well I mean if you happen to stumble and you've got say a 40 kilo pack on your back

28:30 what we tried to do was hold one another's arms, the guns and you walk across single file just hanging onto the rifle of the fellow in front of you and like that and walk very, very carefully. It's stones and we knew that we had to take care in crossing that and the reason that they put the Americans through on the other side of the river was to clear any enemy

29:00 that might be in the area and so we just treaded carefully. We were warned, we were told what we should do and what we shouldn't do and if you didn't do what you should have done well then you suffered the consequences. And so the loss of eight men was pretty good out of a battalion of 700.

How wide was the river?

29:30 From bank to bank was three quarters of a mile. Now that's a wide river. Just on three quarters of a mile but there was a lot of it with no water at all. The volume of water in the wet season must have been incredible and that's why they picked in spring, early in spring, to cross it because that was the slowest level and it proved terrific for Australia.

30:00 **And how deep?**

I don't think it'd be any deeper than you're waist and sometimes only about 30 millimetres as far as the shallowest part of it. No it was… Providing you took your time and was careful we were warned to do that – take your time – and there was no hassles.

30:30 **Were you surprised when you heard that eight men had died?**

Not really. Not really. I thought it was a pretty good indication out of 700 that we only lost eight men because I guess some they fell, might have panicked, mightn't have been able to swim, and as I say it was fairly fast flowing. By the time you would have tried to reach them you wouldn't have,

31:00 you'd have probably gone yourself. And as our commanding officer said 'Every man for himself. Look after your own interest' and that's what it was. And that's what you had to do.

In respect to the battalion moving through the jungle – how does a battalion travel through a jungle? In companies?

No actually you

31:30 had your forward scout, you had your second scout and you all was in single file, never bunch and you always kept a certain amount and your last man was a getaway man. If anything happened to your section he was to get out and get back to base and just say 'Well, we got wiped out'. But he had that responsibility of disengaging himself from the rest of the men, whatever happened would go. Get back.

32:00 So you know very seldom were you kept unawares or caught unawares. Providing you stopped in a single file and didn't bunch. Then you had your smoko breaks and one thing like that. If there was any enemy there you never smoked. You weren't allowed to smoke bed they'd pick it up straight away and you could tell the Japanese smoke to the Australian tobacco smoke because it was

32:30 altogether different and you could smell Japanese which was the strange thing and they tell me they could smell us. Our body odours or their campsites, you knew where they were. I used to go out Opiping [observing] with the mortars, Cliff Hutchie and I, Sergeant Hutchie and I and we had to go out to find out where our shells were landing and you knew when you were getting next to a Japanese camp because you could smell it.

33:00 It's unreal you're sense of smell. And they knew where we were – even if the fact that we were spotlessly clean we had a body odour they could detect.

Describe to me the smell of the Japanese?

As a matter of a fact you could smell the campsite. They were very unhygienic.

33:30 Their toiletry and everything like that was just a hole in the ground – didn't worry about covering it up or anything like that. Very unclean, well this is in the jungle and one thing like that though. They had no idea of hygiene at all and they never did much about that at all. Now in their closer quarters like their hospitals and everything like that I guess would be different but out on the field they didn't worry. They didn't worry at all.

34:00 As we used to say you could smell them a mile away. But in the same way they could detect us so there must be some body odour that's different to one another.

So for you describe to me what type of smell it was.

It just stunk.

34:30 It was like a toilet because they would just drop their tweeds anywhere at all. Wouldn't bury it or anything like that unless they were in a permanent camp – they would dig a trench and I had a mate of mine Harold Brody, we got into a ambush, this was in Bougainville, this was relating to the hygiene, and we were ambushed and Harold saw this indentation in the ground

35:00 and he dived into it. Well, you know what it was. He was horrified. He come out of that pit and he smelt. So they just had a, the same as we could detect them and they could detect us. There's just something about the human body that's like that apparently.

The cigarette smoke – how did they differ between Australians and…?

35:30 The Japanese cigarette smoke was quite heavy. The Australian you could detect a lot of difference in it - I just really can't relate to it but we would never smoke on patrol. It didn't matter if you were dying for a moke because if there were enemy there they knew that you were coming. So you just had to wait til you got back to base before you could have a smoke.

36:00 **In the camps you set up on a journey – how would you set that up – the latrine system?**

What as far as if you stopped overnight or something like that? Well, first of all you'd booby trap it. Either the entrance, the in and the out, you'd set booby traps which would be a grenade in a jam tin, empty bully beef tin with a trip wire at the entrance.

36:30 If it was a track or something like that you didn't go into the scrub because you could easily get lost and you certainly didn't move at night. So you would booby trap, if it was a track, both ends of it and if the enemy was to come well it'd go and you had a set of instantaneous fuses. In a grenade there was an instantaneous fuse, a four second and a seven second and so that was your safe guard and then

37:00 you was always two together and if you didn't dig a hole or anything like that you just camped together and then at five o'clock every morning before the dawn you would have to stand to. You would be told, the word would go down the line 'Stand to' and you'd be awake and you'd just wait because normally the Japs never used to attack at night. It was known that they did but it was always a dawn if they

37:30 were going to attack and you just stood to. You didn't stand but you were just alert and awake and you would stand to for tow hours and there was always two of you together.

So you're saying you'd do nothing for two hours?

No. Stop awake that's all. Yeah, stop awake. You might if you wanted to say to your mate 'Well, you have a bit of a camp for half an hour' or something like that but one of you would

38:00 stay awake until the order was given 'Stand down' and that means normal – back to normal.

Was that a difficult time to stay awake?

No it wasn't a difficult time to stay awake. You were sort of conscious of taking the caution to stay awake. I mean you trained your body after a while so that you could stop awake. Because if you didn't

38:30 stop awake and the enemy come through well them you were history so you forced yourself to stay awake.

What if you needed to go in the middle of the night? How would you determine where the…?

You wouldn't move. You'd do it where you were. You'd scratch a hole or something like that and just if you had a motion that's a motion. You wouldn't dare move at night.

39:00 **So these latrines were just set up for daytime?**

Daytime, move on. Most patrols unless you had a reconnaissance problem like covering say a seven day period - that's different, but if it were just a contact patrol to see if the enemy were anywhere or a fighting patrol that was a top patrol a fighting patrol

39:30 - you went out to look for the enemy. But you always endeavoured to make back to your base by night.

Tape 7

00:43 **So tell me about the setting up of Nadzab?**

We arrived there, crossed the strip. It was a very

01:00 inadequate strip for the B-25s [Mitchell bombers] and that. We had to lay mesh, clear a lot of the land, they flew bulldozers in, they were assembled by the engineers, and they just cleared the ground and just put down the steel tarmac stuff for the landing strips and that. And we were just general work and getting the whole strip ready.

01:30 The engineers and the pioneer worked together. And I think within about a fortnight we had the strip ready to take bombers and what like that. We camped on the other side of the strip and then they put in the ack ack [anti-aircraft] gunners, they were all Negroes from America and they dug their puts for the anti aircraft guns and everything like that. It was remarkable just how quickly the whole camp

02:00 got together. And then we started to do patrols from Nadzab into the ranges. And we had the job of taking two coastwatchers up to a place called Boana. It was about 30 K away from Nadzab and went with these two Australian fellows to walk on, if the Japanese were planes were coming down and all this sort of thing. And that was quite interesting, they were going up for a stint of 3 months.

02:30 There, just the two of them, so it was just general getting things organised at Nadzab. We captured 12 prisoners, Japanese prisoners on the way when our A Company went into Lae. And they had to be interrogated. As a matter of fact through the interrogation, I didn't take a part in the interrogation but we had to guard them, they were in a

03:00 compound. And they thought they were in Australia, they weren't in New Guinea and they had counterfeit 10 shilling notes, see. And they were told of course they weren't in Australia and that. It was just routine work and then when everything was settled, A company went into Lae. They took the position when Don Company of the 2/33rd Battalion was wiped out. And then everything was

03:30 settled we started to move up the Markham River to make contact with the enemy. And that's where we moved out, and our job at Nadzab was finished. And we were back into a fighting unit again.

What was your role at Nadzab?

Just to build the air strip, that was the main thing, with the 2/6th Engineers. And to lay the metal stripping down, the matting or what they call

04:00 a metal matting, they were just sheets of steel with holes in them, just to lay them level them off and everything like that. Pretty hard work, pretty constant work, but we weren't worried about enemy. They were way away from where we were and when we had to move out form Nadzab we went up to that place called Kaiapit.

04:30 The 2/6th Commandos had gone in and cleaned the village out and we sat there for a while and then we started to do patrol into the hills, into the Finisterre Ranges and we worked as an infantry battalion again.

What laying mesh?

Its, like reinforcement, you know how you see reinforcement in building sites and everything like that, steel mesh

05:00 it was just strips of steel, oh probably quarter of an inch thick, with holes in it, and that just didn't, the aircraft coming in would slip onto it when it was wet and that. But that was mainly all the strips were made of, this thousands and thousands of tonnes of it, they used to use. And we used to just put it down.

05:30 It was permanent as far as that.

You said it was interesting when you climbed the hill to spot Japanese aircraft?

Well to take them up to this place called Boana, all Boana is, it was a native village there. And we had to take these coastwatchers up there and they were to be there over a certain period of time, and to watch

06:00 just the aircraft movement, and they would radio back to Nadzab or to Lae to say so many aircraft approaching such and such, give them the readings of degrees and like that. And by that time the air force base at Nadzab, say it was Nadzab or Lae, they would have aircraft up ready waiting for them. And they used it, they just used to warn us. And of course as the

06:30 war progressed the aircraft got less to because they were being driven back. No it was rather a lonely job for them, they sent them up in pairs because they had nobody to speak to, and the natives in the area couldn't understand them anyhow. But a very lonely job. Many of coastwatchers were given awards, military awards for the work they did and the danger they faced.

07:00 Because if they were caught they were immediately executed. And I had a very good mate of mine, he's still here, Dr Hammond, he was a coastwatcher on Bougainville.

So did the Japanese attack when you were building?

Yes they would come over and bomb. We used to get all our supplies

07:30 in by air, come in by DC-3s, DC-2s and they would unload it at the strip and we would help them unload the planes and stack all the stuff there and then it was distributed to all the battalion all around the area. but the Japs used to come down, they used to have the Betty bombers [Allied codename for Japanese Mitsubishi G4M bombers] and they used to drop what they call a daisy-cutter bomb. It only cut about 2 foot 6 high, but it, were bombs filled with nuts and bolts and

08:00 all sort of thing and it would chop your legs off if you were caught in it. And we had slit trenches alongside the aerodrome and as soon as we knew that they were coming we'd go to the slit trenches. And we had unloaded these DC-3s there and it had all the stuff, it was all set ready there, drums of cake and everything like that, and they dropped the daisy cutters, and of course the whole lot of our food supply was filled with bits of bolts and nuts, in your fruitcake and everything. But one thing they kept the grass down

08:30 shot the grass off too. Terrible thing the daisy-cutter bombs. They were nearly as good as a Victor lawn mower actually. But it was pretty quiet at Nadzab we never had a lot to do until we started to move up to the Markham Valley up through Ramu Valley and we got back into the patrolling again, or

09:00 got back into what we called an infantry battalion. Because we used to set up bits of bridges, we might build bridges also, for the jeeps to get across and like that. it was quite a diversified job really, you weren't only a front line soldier but you built bridges and try and got roads through and everything like that.

Tell us about going up the Markham River?

09:30 Yes we went up there and this is where we started to go into the Finisterre Ranges and they were I suppose, some of them there would be 4,000 metres I suppose they were quite a high range, it separated the coast to the inland area. And that's where we knew that the Japanese were bringing supplies across from Madang.

10:00 And that's where we had to go out and find where they were bringing them through. And we had a few sticky moments there. yeah. But you were always on the alert didn't matter where you were, you were always prepared and ready for the enemy, even if the enemy wasn't there you were still prepared.

10:30 You never not as far as that goes. And of course a lot of the natives were with the Japanese also. So and you didn't hesitate, as I say, if they had a red lap lap on I mean they were as good as dead.

Can you talk me through the sticky moments?

At night time, I mean,

11:00 it was pretty lonely, I mean sometimes you could get your tent up, little two men tent, because two of you worked together. If it wasn't possible you just slept in the open, just put a ground sheet down and that was it. And you could bet London to a brick at 3 o'clock in the afternoon it would rain. Every afternoon, so cooking was practically hopeless to try and cook, so you lived on hard rations that was all. Unless you were near a native village that had paw paws and

11:30 bananas, you might get a bit of fruit or something like that. But you diet was a staple diet, water was no problem. The only thing is hook worm was a terrible thing, it was a worm that used to get into your intestines and eat them out, you had to be very careful, but you'd take tablets for that. And of course you took Atebrin for malaria. So you did the best you could.

12:00 But as far as a roast dinner went, you never had one. Didn't have a roast dinner.

So the sticky moments with the enemy were?

12:30 Yes well you are always alert to enemy action I mean, you were always prepared for it. Just the same as the Nips were prepared for us, you were always prepared and. We were fortunate I suppose in, we never lost a lot of men in New Guinea and but,

13:00 with Rusty White I mean that was just an unfortunate accident. If he hadn't have worried about his hat he would have been alive today. That's how it was. I suppose when you lose your hat you automatically bend down to pick it up. And of course he didn't straighten up he just went straight down. And they put a machine gun bullet through his back and that was it. And you've got no chance of trying to get them out, its no use

13:30 trying to. And Tom Foley our platoon sergeant knew he was dead. And you can't risk the lives of other men on waiting and trying to recover his body, you've got to get out. And they're the hard things to do. Yeah.

14:00 **Talk me through the engagement with the enemy there?**

What to make contact?

In that situation where he died?

Well the enemy too are just as wise as you are, they hit and go. And they don't hang around either, they want to move out. They've done what they have come to do and that's it. They made

14:30 contact with the enemy and we left some of the enemy on both sides. And that's a fighting patrol you are in and out and gone again. A reconnaissance patrol is to look for the enemy, and if you come across the enemy well you engage them. And but you play the whole situation as it happens. It's very had to plan something

15:00 because the plan just might not work so you do the best to what is best.

So what happened on this particular day?

Well it was a reconnaissance patrol, come to be a fighting patrol. We were going over there we knew that the Japs would bring stores over on the Monday and bring them and then they were going back on the Tuesday back to Madang. And we knew that they were coming through, they changed their plan and they came through a day ahead.

15:30 And this was were the upset was, the enemy wasn't supposed to be there. And so they changed their plan and we were caught unaware. And there is nothing you can do about that situation.

How were you caught unaware?

Not prepared. Not prepared. Probably relaxed, you know, because we didn't expect to see the enemy. And the

16:00 only way you can tell by the enemy, is how much the track is worn, foot prints and something like that. Because there is not natives in the area, they are gone. So we just misjudged the situation for a while. We didn't even get a crack at the enemy

16:30 they just hit and run. And Lieutenant White he was the only one that suffered, he lost his life. And out of all that, I was always disappointed, I think I might have mentioned it, but none of the officers of ours

17:00 battalion went and saw his wife, after the war was over, to tell her what did happen. Because I wouldn't go and see her because I was in Victoria. And I thought it was sad that they didn't take time to go and see her, she was only a young girl too. But that's how it was. But you were always alert you was always awake to what

17:30 might happen, and what does happen, I mean you have got to be very careful, very alert to it.

So when was contact made? When you were walking up a track?

Yep.

Can you talk me through that?

Well as we moving up the track, it was up hill and the enemy just appeared, and he just opened up. How the

18:00 Rusty, actually the only mistake, he shouldn't have been up in front. The officer is generally normally in about the middle of the patrol. And I don't know what happened., Well I think I know what happened we didn't expect the meet the enemy and we were wrong. Btu of course the whole patrol could have been wiped out too as far as that went. But they just opened up and were gone again.

18:30 I suppose the whole wouldn't take a minute. Hit and was gone. The fortunes of war, and the misfortunes.

19:00 It certainly keeps you alert for the next time. Were are we now.

What emotions were running through the men?

19:30 Well naturally you were sorry it happened. Then you wonder why it happened. But some of the fellows were pretty hard, they say well his number came up. Which is right I suppose when you look at the

physical sense of it. Yeah, the bullet had his name on it or something like that.

20:00 Or sayings something like that, it was his time to die. They are very, very callous sometimes and I suppose my mind would have been the same thing. I'm glad it wasn't me, or something like that, or it could have been me. Lots of thoughts go through your mind.

What about when you found him with his head cut off?

Well fortunately I wasn't

20:30 on that patrol, the graves commission went out to exhume his body. But of course that's the Japanese pattern, they chop their heads off because they think their eyes still see. And this is one of their beliefs I believe, if they chop the head off they can't see anything, even if he's dead. And the unfortunate part about it, they removed his identity kit, name see.

21:00 And that's why they couldn't really say that that was his. That was Lieutenant White. So that's why he's put missing in action believed killed. That's what they class it as.

21:30 **Can you describe in that minute, what you actually did when you came into contact with the enemy?**

The actual thing, you quickest thing you do, you go to ground. You hit the ground, hit the dirt, because when you are laying on the ground you are a lot smaller target than standing up in the air. And you look around, you don't move for a time

22:00 you just stay there expecting something else to happen. or not to happen. If it happens you do something about it, you get involved, if it doesn't happen you get back off you go down. Then you move back. I suppose everybody reacts differently. But the

22:30 main thing is to get down on the ground, that's the lowest part and you are a smaller target than standing up in the air. I was a small target anyhow.

How many other contacts did you have with the enemy then?

There was none at all there. No we didn't have much contact until we got to Dumpu

23:00 when we were moving up through the Finisterre Ranges and ready to make the assault of Shaggy Ridge. And that was the Japanese stronghold, Shaggy Ridge. But our battalion had I didn't have anything to do with that.

So for that initial contact how many people were killed?

With Rusty White? Only one, he was the only one that was killed, there was nobody else wounded

23:30 and that was it. They just hit and went. And Rusty wouldn't have looked an officer because he didn't look like an officer, you didn't wear any identification or anything like that. To the Japanese you were just a man, an enemy. And he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

What booby traps would the Japanese leave for you?

The same as us

24:00 exactly the same, they would put grenades in the ground. Cover with a board, and you walk on the board, put a bit of dirt on it, but the same system actually, yeah.

Did that happen?

I don't remember them, I don't remember we come into contact with any Japanese booby traps. No, no. but they used to leave them, they used to do that.

24:30 If you were going through territory you looked for bits of wire and that that might be hanging around. You were always alert to a booby trap, but of course sometimes you didn't see them. They were pretty well camouflaged, they certainly didn't have flashing lights or anything like that. So you had to be very, very careful just where you put your feet.

25:00 Doing nothing, only talking the only part that gets tired is your mouth. No I'm fine.

The booby traps at the latrines, did anyone set those off?

Oh yes. Well if you are near a river, of course there was crocodiles or alligators. And they would set he booby traps off. They were quite a hazard actually. Say, well you couldn't do much about them.

25:30 I remember at Bougainville when we were at the Yangi River there and there's quite a lot of crocs and alligators in the river there. We used to set the booby traps and they would trip them, but that's just, but it alerted you be you thought the Nips were coming or something like that. No where there was any sort of livestock or any movement at all you just had to be careful.

26:00 Btu we never had much trouble that way. Bougainville was the only place on the Yangi River where we

had trouble with h crocs and that, and the alligators.

Tell me about white guide, you said you had a lot more engagements?

26:30 Yes, well going up to, we left Kaiapit, we went through Dumpu up to Narawapum, Gusap, they were all native villages. And then onto Dumpu which was a pretty big base for the Australians at Dumpu. And a mobile hospital there and everything, because that was the next step

27:00 off to go up to Shaggy Ridge. And the Australians wanted to capture Shaggy Ridge. So it was a stronghold, it was an incredible high rock ridge or something like that. And Japs controlled the whole area from that particular part. I was fortunate, I didn't play any part in that. I was carried out with scrub typhus and malaria. So I wasn't involved in that at all.

27:30 **Explain to me what was happening to you physically up to that point?**

I was pretty good. I was the first person to get malaria in my battalion that was at Nadzab. I went down to 106 casualty clearing station and they diagnosed it as

28:00 malaria BT malaria. And they questioned you whether you'd taken your Atebrin as it was then. Because quinine wasn't available and to make sure that you take your tablets, well you had to, either a Sergeant or an officer watch you take that tablet every night, and they had to watch you. It was pretty rigid discipline. But I took mine regularly and

28:30 I was there for about 10 days at casualty clearing station there. And then when of course I never had any sign of it again until I went up to Dumpu and I got it there again with the scrub typhus of course. I don't know whether you know what scrub typhus is? It's a little red mite, and it gets into your groin or under your arm, and it

29:00 bites and it has a very potent poison. And you lose the feelings in your joints, you can't move, you are practically paralysed and its very painful and a lot of men contracted it and a lot of men died. From it, scrub typhus. But I was fortunate that had the B T malaria with it and one counteracted the other, I don't know how

29:30 because I am not a real good doctor but that's what happened.

How were you feeling physically on the march from Nadzab forward?

I was pretty good, because they flew you where ever they could, you would be loaded in a DC-3s and flown, even in they just landed on the kunai grasslands

30:00 and you got out of the plane and you were ready for action. And if they could fly you they would fly you. And you get out of the plane and be engaged in action. So of course we are talking, oh from Nadzab to Dumpu would be 100 kilometres at least probably more than that. And the

30:30 Nips the Japanese were in pockets. And they weren't terribly strong there, and a lot of them were very critically ill because of the various diseases. They were still active.

The malaria didn't knock you around when you went from Nadzab?

The malaria

31:00 is like a bad attack of flu, it just drains you. You can't, you just couldn't be bothered lifting your arms or anything like that. And that's how it affects you. But of course the scrub typhus paralyses you. And that's a lot worse. They just told me that I was fortunate that I had the B T and the MT malaria with the scrub typhus and one counteracted the other. So they tell me. I wouldn't have know, something must have happened otherwise I wouldn't be sitting here now.

31:30 **At what part of the journey did the joints start feeling sore?**

When we were going up Shaggy Ridge. We had left Dumpu down at the base and we were starting to walk up to Shaggy Ridge which was probably, in the Dumpu Ranges about 5,000 feet I suppose. That's fairly high and I just didn't feel well. And

32:00 we had only been out about 4 or 5 hours out of Dumpu. And I just collapsed I just went, did virtually collapsed. And that's when the Major General, George Vasey carried my pack. 200 yards, he just said to me, "You are not well soldier" I recognised his face because he didn't have any identification to what he was. And I said, "No sir" and he said, "I'll take your pack up" and he picked it up and took it up 200 yards.

32:30 I made it to where he dropped the pack but that's as far as I could go. So they just transported me out on a stretcher, carried me down and with my gear, down to the Dumpu hospital, and that's where I stopped. I don't know for how long, until I was flown down to Port Moresby. By the DC-3 aircraft down there, and then admitted then to

33:00 the base hospital there, the 1st AGH. The field hospital. So that was my time finished then, I didn't engage any more until I was discharged form hospital. And rejoined my unit at Port Moresby when they

were relived at, from action, and flown back to Port Moresby, the whole battalion.

33:30 Was flown out. And then we come back to Australia.

So you could have continued on with the malaria if you hadn't been hit with the scrub typhus?

No, no. I had had BT and MT malaria, just had BT malaria is bad. But MT affects the brain, it

34:00 and MT malaria on its own can kill you, and of course scrub typhus could have too. I say I was very, very fortunate to survive when I had and I hand that out to the nursing sisters as I said before. She was the one that really looked after me.

34:30 Even I relented and went to church Christmas Day in 1943, I didn't want to go but she asked me and I said I would go because I wasn't really interested in going. But I don't know whether she was a Christian or not but she was a lovely capable lady, no doubt about that. and she really looked after me. Because I was only a young boy, I looked a young boy. They just couldn't believe that

35:00 I was then 21. And so, no I wasn't 21, I was 19, 19 and a half. I didn't turn 21 until I was up at Ocean Island. No she just looked after me really tremendously. and then when I was discharged from the base hospital, 2/1st AGH I went straight to my unit which had already moved back to Port Moresby

35:30 and prepared to come home.

Can you tell me the picture of being picked up by the stretchers?

I remember very little about it because I was really bad. I remember being carried

36:00 down by native carriers. They carried me down. and where we down to the bottom of the range it wasn't far to the Dumpu hospital and they loaded me on a jeep and transported me across the valley actually the valley floor, and into the hospital there at Dumpu. Yes I don't remember a great deal, I remember being loaded

36:30 onto the plane, at Dumpu and flown down to Port Moresby, I remember that. Especially the little American nurse that was there with two .45s strapped on either side of her. She wasn't much bigger than the guns. The only thing about that story, Ken Byfield who was a solicitor up here in Tamworth

37:00 he was up in the 2/1st AGH at Port Moresby when I entered in, I didn't know him he didn't know me. And I just relating that story to me, and I said, "The thing that got me, Ken, was this American nurse with the two 45 revolvers strapped on her waist". And he told me her name and all about her, he said, "She was quite a character" and I said, "Well she looked it".

37:30 Yes he knew her very, very well actually. 4 foot nothing she was. Yeah.

Tape 8

00:40 **You said the nurse was carrying the .45s because she was afraid of the Australians?**

Well that was a joke. That was really a joke, she admitted that, she wasn't afraid of Australians at all. But if the plane was forced down in enemy territory,

01:00 which it could have been she was armed herself to protect herself. Why she picked a .45 revolver, because it's a big gun. And she was such a small girl or lady, she would have been in her early 20s I suppose. Why she picked two .45s I don't know. Might have been for looks because Americans are like that everything is big.

Annie get your gun?

Yeah.

01:30 **So was she?**

Very pleasant.

Was she issued with the guns?

No she, I doubt if she would have been issued with a gun she would have been issued with hone. But I don't think she would have been, because the American set up was altogether different to the Australian set up. But I think it might have been just a oh I don't know what it might have been about her, just a peculiar thing, I don't know.

02:00 But I just felt strange, I mean all I could see was two .45s. Hardly could see her because the guns were there. She is probably a very efficient nurse. Anyhow I didn't die between there and Port Moresby so she must have been pretty good. Cause I wasn't the only one of the pane either.

The first contact you had with the American was when you finished the long trek?

02:30 **What were your impressions of the Americans?**

They were incredible, when they jumped from the planes and they landed on the ground, their air force came over with ice cream and everything, all the food just bundled it out and in parachutes to their men, I've neve seen, I said, well the Australian army could have learned something from that. All the goodies

03:00 they required just tumbled out to them. the ice cream was packed in dry ice, incredible, we had quite a feed with them. And but the way they just looked after these, because these were special men. The American paratroopers, I believe their next episode was up at Leyte near the Philippines and they nearly wiped out to a man there. So But the Yanks certainly looked after their troops no doubt about it, we were

03:30 still on bully beef and biscuits. But they shared it with us, no problem at all.

How would you describe an American paratrooper?

He was a tough man. Very tough man. They did a lot of the training up in Ravenshoe up in North Queensland, they did a few practice jumps up there I believe. And no they were top soldiers no doubt about that

04:00 I remember one soldier, he'd done 55, no 500 jumps he had done, and for every jump he had a star tattooed on his body. And his whole body was covered in these stars and when they did the Nadzab jump, that was their first jump in action, he had a big one right in the centre. So they were fanatical.

04:30 **Did he tell you why he had the stars?**

Because that was their first jump in action. Oh why he put the stars? Oh it was just to record all the jumps he had done, it was something he decided to do and he did it. He was a mass of stars.

Was it dangerous being a paratrooper? Did they ever tell you about their experiences?

Well this was I say

05:00 this was the only time that they had been in action in it this time. But he said that's the reason he said you packed your own parachute. You don't trust anybody else to pack your parachute you pack it yourself. And if it doesn't open well you are the one to blame, and you are not alive to blame yourself anyhow, you are finished. But no they were a special brand of men, all white personnel, no Negroes amongst them.

05:30 They never seemed to segregate black or white. I remember the ack ack gunners a Nadzab the gunners along the strip, they were all Negroes, no white people, no white Americans with them and they never sort of intermixed with the races. Might be different now, I don't know . But they had everything, they had everything and were

06:00 well looked after.

The ack ack gunners were they infantry?

No they just had a hole in the ground, had the ack ack gun mounted and were ready to open up on any enemy plane that come through. The first time they opened up some of them took off to the bush. They didn't stop for the guns, they left them there. Very open it was, Nadzab was clear as a billiard table.

06:30 And of course they were, they didn't have enough protection so they thought, well I'm going. And they wouldn't have done much as fast as the aircraft, because the aircraft come through terrific high speed and just dropped their bomb loads and were gone. And just like a blink of the eye, drop their bombs and gone. The daisy cutters.

07:00 **When you had a meal with the American soldiers did everyone eat together including the ack ack gunners?**

No, they never come together. When they arrived the place was quite settled there was only the paratroopers and our battalion. When they first arrived there was no other troops there at all. But they were quite friendly the paratroopers they were tremendous

07:30 they intermingled and shared their rations with us. Everything like that. But the Negro, the coloured Americans they never intermingled with the whites groups at all.

How do you think the Americans viewed the Australian soldiers?

Pretty good. Yes, I, I think they had a high regard for the Australian soldiers,

08:00 you never talked much about it, I mean, but you know just through the war period I got that impression that they thought the Australian soldier was a pretty tough fellow.

Did they get the Aussie humour?

They had a problem. They had problem, they just thought we talked funny and of course we didn't

08:30 think they talked much better anyhow. Nell's sister married an American marine during the war and they went back to the states to live but, it was a side by side but they were camped at Knoxville at Tennessee and the racial hatred was something incredible there. So Eugene that's Nell's sister's husband decided to come back to Australia, so they moved back to Australia because of the racial hatred

09:00 **Is he white?**

Yes, he's white. Yeah, no they never kept them together as I say it might be different now. You got to know one another a bit better I think, in the racial hatred, I don't think it's a bad anyhow.

Were there any situations where Australians would be their typical joker selves and the Americans would take it the wrong way?

09:30 Oh yes, I don't doubt that for one minute. I never experienced it but I am sure there would have been. I suppose there is nothing much cruder than the Australian humour from a solider. Yes, it wasn't too nice.

10:00 **When you were with the battalion did the fellows have time to tell jokes and carry on?**

In the Aussies, what my battalion? I think we were the crudest bunch of men that ever were. No, truthfully, and now that I am a Christian and have been for many, many years, I unfortunately was one of them.

10:30 But God changed that pattern in my life. And I guess I was as crude as any of the others were that were there. The married men were certainly a lot more respectful, they didn't carry on like the single fellows did. But although when I was courting Nell I would never say

11:00 anything about Nell or even divulge what was in the letters or anything like that. To her but the Australian man was crude, there's no doubt about that, especially I the armed forces. I don't know about the air force or the navy but the army was, yeah. They had no respect for women. And you only know that when you are living with them. And unfortunately you are a part of that too.

11:30 **Do you mean crude in terms of what they did in R and R [rest and recreation]?**

Crude in what they say, what comes out of their mouth. You know, its just foul, and very degrading. I'm not saying every soldier is like that, but a lot of them were. They had no respect or decency.

12:00 Married men were altogether different to single men.

Do you think that the carry on by unmarried soldiers was all show?

All show yes.

Had they had much experience with women?

No none at all.

12:30 I felt that anyhow, no they had no feeling at all. And a lot of them just said because their mates say and something like that. It was sort of like a contagious disease, you know, that went right through everyone. I'm sure I wasn't any better, but I would never say anything to Nell or my mother or anything like that. But to other women

13:00 yes you would talk about them. I suppose that's the, used to be the Australian pattern, thing like that. Or to just be in it with the others. No.

What was the average age of soldiers in your troop?

13:30 The average age would be, we had a lot of married men. I suppose they would around 23 or 24 I'd imagine. Some of them would be older. But they were mainly all young men with the infantry. It was, the younger ones were more fitter possibly than those who were in their 30's I mean that's not old

14:00 but the physical demand on your body, you had to be fairly young. But I must admit that the married men used to hold the younger ones in a bit. They would really pull them up and I've seen that and I have received

14:30 that also. But, yeah, I think they were the stabilising force for the men in the army anyhow.

Was there much opportunity for the men to have contact with women?

No, no. As a matter of fact I remember

15:00 when we went over to Western Australia and we were in the train and we saw all these Yanks and Australians, standing out in a long line. That was the brothel at Roe Street there in Perth. I just couldn't believe it, never seen anything like that. You know, but they were the places that men could go and relive themselves I suppose as far as that goes.

15:30 No, but.

What about in New Guinea? Where their any brothels?

No, no, not were we were. Nothing at all. No, not that I knew of, I wasn't interested anyhow as far as that went. Didn't interest me. No you

16:00 thought of one thing and that was getting home in one piece. Yeah.

How did the marry men pull up the younger single men?

Well the majority, well they go crook at them, you know you got a foul mouth, and all this sort of thing. But the fellows didn't take any notice of them at all.

16:30 That was there way of life and they didn't worry much about it, they were pretty crude there is no doubt about it. But most of the married men that I knew were quite restricted in what they say. They would never talk about their wives or anything like that at all. But the young fellows just run riot as far as that goes. But, no, all talk, they were all talk.

17:00 **Were the guys, were they still virgins?**

They wouldn't have had a clue. They wouldn't have know, yes, they would have no idea at all. Probably never even kissed a woman I suppose. And the most of them tried to outdo the other ones, and they knew nothing at all. As I look back on my life anyhow.

17:30 No, no.

Must have difficult being in a battalion and not having access to women, the build up of testosterone would have been quite remarkable?

Oh yes I don't doubt that. Yeah, but see I don't know how, we sort of, oh yes we thought of women, I did I suppose. I was writing to Nell.

18:00 We were pretty close when I first went into action. We'd planned to get married if I survived it and so for me Nell was the only girl in my life. I had no interest in any other girl at all. I'd been out with other girls, and but there was nothing between us, in a sexual relationship, that was not even there. But

18:30 And I wasn't a Christian, I didn't know the standard of what you should be but Nell was my girl and I was keeping myself for Nell and that's how it was.

The men that you saw lined up for the brothels, were they service men?

Oh yes all servicemen

19:00 a mixture. Very few Australians, mainly all Americans. But well they had them in Lonsdale Street, in Lonsdale Street in Melbourne. Oh yes, they were everywhere, I suppose.

19:30 **When you describe the segregation in the American army, were there any Aboriginal soldiers in your battalion?**

We had, in the battalion I was with, the 31st, the 51st infantry battalion, Major Collis, he wasn't a major but that's his name, he was a Thursday Islander. he

20:00 was a tremendous fellow, Major, he only died about 5 years ago, Major. But he was a native from Thursday Island, he's the only one I knew. We had a Chinese fellow in our pioneer battalion, naturalised Australian Chinese, he never went to the front line. He was in headquarters company because he looked a little bit like Japanese

20:30 and he came overseas with us, it's a wonder they let him come over seas but he was part of the battalion, he was naturalised, born in Australia. But there was quite a few, there was an aboriginal battalion formed in the Australian Army during World War II and what, Kenna, Lieutenant Kenna he won the Victoria Cross, as an Aboriginal.

21:00 But they never seek the army a great deal, they never sort of went into it, a few half castes, as they called them, half castes.

In your battalion?

No not in my battalion. No Major Collis was the only one, in the pioneer battalion I can't remember any Aboriginals in the battalion itself.

21:30 **What about the concern with the Chinese soldier, were there any negative impressions put onto him by other soldiers because of his heritage?**

I don't think so. Not that I know of no. He really didn't look Chinese.

SOUND DROP OUT

22:00 He never went to the front line. He was kept back in headquarters company.

What were your impressions of the Japanese soldiers? What were some of the rumours about them?

22:30 Well the Japanese solider, I mean, we knew he was suicidal, he'd rather die than stop alive if he was in battle. And there was two types of Japanese soldiers, one was the regular army, he was a good soldier, but he wasn't as good as the Japanese marine. They were top soldiers.

23:00 They were fanatical. And they were the soldiers we struck at Porton Plantation. And they just didn't care, they just went in and that was it. They died and that was that. The Japanese soldier all around he was a very good soldier, he was, as I say, even the ordinary soldier, if he died he died for his country.

23:30 And I think most Australians if they lived they lived, they weren't that enthusiastic about getting killed, but it didn't worry the Japs. Didn't worry them. I mean nobody wants to get killed, but still, their life was nothing. And very few were taken prisoner, very few.

24:00 So our battalion never took any prisoners at all, even the two battalions I was with. We never took prisoners or we never had the opportunity to take prisoners.

How personal do you think the war was for Australian troops?

How personal?

24:30 **AT that point in New Guinea? For the Australian troops?**

I think they wondered, they knew that the prospects of Japan, when we went to New Guinea we knew every prospect was that Japan wanted to invade Australia so that the personal aspect for each one of us I think was we're gonna stop that. And that's all there

25:00 was to it, they mustn't reach Australia. And So we were there as guarding Australia in New Guinea. And now with Bougainville I had a different concept of that altogether. When the Americans went into Bougainville and they took Torokina they lost 4,000 men. We went

25:30 into Bougainville we lost 590 I think it was. Dead, and I thought that was a waste of lives, and a lot of us thought that because the Japanese weren't going anywhere in Bougainville, they couldn't leave Bougainville, they had no way of transport, but for New Guinea yes, in the early days of New Guinea they had every prosect of coming to Australia and the

26:00 Coral Sea battle stopped that. Thousands and thousands of Japanese were lost, ready to invade Port Moresby and Australia, but of course the American navy and the Australian navy stopped that. So the threat to Australia was real, quite real, and a lot of people in Australia today don't even realise that, just how close it was, that we would have been invaded. So the fact

26:30 that we were in New Guinea, yes, we were going to stop that invasion.

When you were in New Guinea, there had been no attacks on Australia by that point?

Yes, see you know, Darwin was raided 68 times, and a lot of people were killed in Darwin, the official

27:00 toll they maintain was 239 I think it was, killed in Darwin, there was 1300 killed in Darwin. Never ever released until just recently. You know Townsville was bombed, Broom was bombed. You know, lots of places in Australia were bombed by the Japanese, people didn't even realise that. Didn't even know about it because it was hushed up, censorship stopped it.

27:30 So you know, I think the Coral Sea battle and the Kokoda Track was the turning point for Australia anyhow. And that's when the Japanese were held.

So the bombing on Darwin had happened before you left?

Oh yes, it happened before I left, yes the first raid was 1942, February '42.

28:00 Something like that I think. But still Japan must have through Australia was a jewel, you know, it was a big country they thought, compared to what Japan is. But of course nearly 80 percent of it's barren I mean you couldn't grow anything it, but still that didn't worry the Japanese, and I think

28:30 they had their eye on Australia for quite a long time. Way back before the Second World War, it was a jewel in their crown but it never eventuated.

Can you remember what the impact of the Darwin bombing had on Australia when that happened?

It was quite a shock, but of course a lot of people didn't know really, they just didn't know what had happened, there was no figures released.

29:00 Nell's dad was in Darwin when it was bombed and he said the people just fled, just deserted the place,

didn’t even turn the wireless off. They just took off and headed south. No, it was

29:30 very, very close, as I said before the turning points were the Coral Sea battle plus the Kokoda track. And the majority of those that turned the tide there were kids, 18 year old, the 39th Battalion, they were all young people. 53/55th Battalion they were all kids too, and yet they did an incredible job

30:00 in holding them back.

When you were in Nadzab, how much information did you know about the Japanese tactics and treatment of POWs [prisoners of war]?

We didn’t know a great deal about it . We knew, you know, the treatment of the POWs we knew that. My old battalion was one of the battalions that was taken.

30:30 We, as our battalion was, we knew what they were going through. I had a cousin of mine that was taken prisoner of war, Bert, and we knew how Bert was going, very little information come through, but yeah. I think on the whole Australia’s people never knew a great deal about the treatment of, until the letters and information started to flow back to

31:00 Australia what was going on, really.

With that 5 day trek to Nadzab, did you know at that point that would be safe, that there wouldn’t be any ambushes?

We had no idea. We had no idea what the strength, we knew that a patrol used to come from

31:30 Lae once a week and journey to Nadzab, but we didn’t know what the strength was between Nadzab and Lae, knew nothing at all, the Australian troops were, had been moving up the coast from Buna, Gona up to Sanananda, up towards Lae, I don't think anybody really knew what the strength of the Japanese were there.

32:00 But or what their condition was, because all their food supplies were just about cut off as far as rations and that go. And

Were there any false alarms?

What do you mean?

False alarms that maybe there was an ambush or presence of the Japanese during that trek?

No, no.

32:30 No, the ANGAU that was the Australian forces that worked with the natives were pretty well informed, the Australian troop, they were pretty well informed and they knew where the Japanese were and what strength they were, they had a far idea. the ANGAU played an incredible part in New Guinea working with the natives and like that

33:00 they were incredible really. Even, they had carrier pigeons, a lot of the pigeons didn’t make it, but still quite a few did and a lot of information that way. Plus the coastwatchers, sending information out. But, yeah.

33:30 **Were the carrier pigeons intercepted?**

Yes all of them very few of them made it to base, but they were used, quite extensively. Just bringing back information back to Port Moresby. They wouldn’t have been bad to eat actually. Bit of a change of diet.

34:00 **Were they intercepted by the enemy?**

No, by hawks and things like that. No I don't think the enemy worried a great deal. But yes, I think some of their feathered friends were enemies, but they did a tremendous service. I read a book some time ago on the carrier pigeons during World War II and it was very interesting actually.

34:30 **Were their any animals that you encountered on that trek?**

No, not that I remember only mosquitos. Yeah, mosquitos, a few snakes, no I don't think there was anything that was any worry to us at all. Wild pigs but they didn’t worry you a great deal.

35:00 And certainly the enemy didn’t find us with was good too.

It was quite thick jungle?

No it wasn’t bad, it was fairly open country. But very swampy, a lot of it was incredible swamps which took a bit of getting through. Leeches, flies were terrible, the flies, and the native bees were the worst thing in the world. They didn’t sting but they used to get onto your, the sweat that used to come out of you and they used to love the

35:30 sweat that comes out of your face, but they had no sting in them, but they were just annoying like a fly. And they used to swarm.

Would the leeches get into your feet?

Oh yes, they were trouble. I know two mates of mine had them up their penises, you know. Might be pretty crude but that's what happened. One thing to remove them, because most of us smoked.

36:00 And you just put the cigarette on it and they would drop off.

Were they able to get them out?

Well they just start to, oh they would be sent down to hospital base, I don't know how they got them out. I never had that experience.

Were they okay in the end?

36:30 They went down to the hospital, they went down to the RAP, I don't know what they did, how they got them out at all. But the cigarette was the best thing, they just drop off, touch them with the cigarette, problem was you burnt yourself sometimes.

Were they similar to leeches we have here?

Very similar, very similar

37:00 I don't think they were poisonous I can't think of anybody being poisoned by a leech, I don't think they are any different to what they are here. But the native bees they were worse than flies, they would swarm on you, as I say fortunately they didn't sting, they were a lot smaller than he ordinary be, they were like a fly. They just loved the sweat, and they would just swarm around you.

37:30 **How did the leeches get under clothes?**

They just walk up your leg. You had gaiters on but they weren't, you know, they sort of get up your legs and no problem that way, for a leech, they just, arch your back and they just walk up your legs and that. But you could feel them, and once they got to your blood stream, they just stop there and suck the blood. And once they got there and take the blood they just drop off.

38:00 The trouble was where they had entered into your body, that could come infected and that was a bit of a problem.

So were you fully immersed in water in the swamps?

Not really no. Only if it rained. No you never worried about body washing or anything like that, you just got dirty. I mean you might try and have a wash or something like that but it was virtually

38:30 impossible. And up in the Finisterre Ranges there was no streams, you could just stand out in the rain with nothing on, have a wash if you wanted to. And you put your wet clothes back on again. Fortunately it wasn't cold, it was very warm climate. Up in some of the Finisterre Ranges it was quite cool because they are quite high. But yeah, I think

39:00 your body adapts to the climate of places, I think you sort of adapt it. Your brain mightn't.

Can you describe the ration packs?

Yes, you always had a

39:30 packet of biscuits, the old army biscuits and a tin of bully beef, you always had that. You had a dixie that opened up in half. It was an aluminium dixie, if you are lucky enough to have a fire you could cook that. But that was your ration you had nothing else, you just had your tin of bully beef and your hard biscuits. You could soak the biscuits in water if you were lucky enough to have a fire you could make a sort of a porridge out of it

40:00 with it, it was a little bit better than eating them raw I suppose. But butter or anything like that, you could have a tin of jam, you might be lucky enough to have a tin of jam. But it was just cold tack, that's all it was, and yet you used to survive on it, and if you went through a native village and if there was paw paws and bananas, and coconuts, you could get coconuts.

40:30 Break them open get the juice out of them. But it certainly wasn't a roast dinner. Incredible how your body adjusts itself though. a lot of the time you didn't even feel hungry. You just made do with what you had.

Do your taste buds get picky?

No mine didn't. I mean you were never ever satisfied with what you had. I mean it filled your stomach up but there was no real nourishment in it. If you come back to base or wait till you get a cooked meal, at the cookhouses and everything like that, that would be very seldom. Once you are on the trail itself, you just lived on the hard rations and any native trees about. Good old Salvation Army, they would give you a packet of PKs or something.

Did you encounter the Salvos on the trek?

Yeah, not on the trek. No but we contacted them at Nadzab, they were at Nadzab and

Tape 9

00:42 **What's the difference between a reconnaissance patrol and a fighting patrol?**

Well a reconnaissance patrol was when you set out to find the enemy. Not necessarily engage the enemy.

01:00 Possibly just find out the enemies strength if possible, which is rather difficult. I went on a few reconnaissance patrols, you sorted out where the enemy was but you didn't want to make contact with them. Now when I was with a mortar platoon in Bougainville we had to go out and

01:30 find out where our shells were landing. And that was more or less a reconnaissance to look and see and not engage. Fighting patrol you were out to look for the enemy, seek out the enemy and to engage the enemy in combat. And that is the difference, you didn't know the strength of the enemy until you made contact, but you sought out and destroy. But of course

02:00 then unbeknown to you could go out on a reconnaissance and be forced to become a fighting patrol, making direct contact with enemy. Sop there wasn't a great deal of difference, the circumstances would change things. And that's how it was and you took it as such. So the two patrols worked together.

02:30 **How many fighting/reconnaissance patrols did you do during your time?**

Oh its hard to say. Hard to say, we were there for 5 months in New Guinea. You were on the move all the time and every time you moved somewhere else you were on patrol. But you had no idea where the enemy

03:00 and just the same the enemy have much idea where you were either. So it was seek and find and make contact and destroy, that's what it was.

What were he conditions like of operating in the jungle in that way?

Actually in the Finisterre Ranges it was more

03:30 rainforest it wasn't jungle, it was fairly open a lot of it. Not heavily timbered and it certainly, you were more careful in that type of country because you were easily spotted by the enemy. Well not easily spotted but they could see you. Now in the jungle you had everything around you, I mean, heavy foliage, you had

04:00 plenty of places to hide, whoever got in first was the winner. and you hoped that you got in first. You were certainly more alert in he jungle, and I guess the enemy was too. So that was about the only difference in it.

Did you have much time to come to terms with fear?

04:30 You feared all the time, I mean that was a natural thing. Your enemy was your enemy and he wasn't out to put his arms around you and give you a big hug and that, he was out to destroy you. So you lived in anticipation and fear of the enemy and what he would do. Those days

05:00 the only enemy that you wanted to see was a dead one. And that was your way of life. And of course the enemy was the same to you, he wanted to see you dead, so it was two way battle. There was no friends.

05:30 Is that answer alright.

Can you describe Kaiapit?

Kaiapit was a fairly big village. Oh probably a population of 3 or 400 natives there I suppose. But they'd left the village when the Japanese occupied Kaiapit. They cleared out

06:00 from here. And about 400 Japanese moved into the village as a base for their patrolling and it was when the 2/6th Commandos landed on the kunai grass patches outside Kaiapit. They went straight into action took the Japanese by surprise. And practically wiped them out actually, there was over 300 and something killed. And their losses

06:30 were particularly light they only had 14 killed which is not good going but still one of their officers was killed in that. So for 15 deaths was pretty good odds as far as the Australians went at that time. And they didn't do much work, we had the job of cleaning Kaiapit up, the dead and like that. And

07:00 marking the graves of the 14 that were killed from the 2/6th Commandos, put their names on, all crosses and like that. And the graves commission came through and exhumed the bodies and buried them down low. Sent them down there.

These were Australian troops?

Yeah, they were Australian.

You said there were over 300 Japanese?

Yes they took the Japanese by surprise. They

07:30 landed further further up, up the Ramu Valley, they moved down and took them by surprise. The 2/6th Independent Company, they called them, they were commandos.

What happened to the Japanese that were killed?

I think they buried them in a mass grave, I'm not too sure about that.

08:00 but they were just disposed of. And as far as I know, whether they were ever exhumed up out of Kaiapit I just wouldn't know, whether they went into the ground and that was it. I don't know what the Japanese did as far as recovering their bodies, I don't think they did anything at all. That was there job to die for their country and what happened to them, they

08:30 weren't interested, what happened to the body or anything like that.

When you arrived in Kaiapit at what stage was the combat at?

Oh finished. Well and truly finished it was over, probably 3 or 4 days had gone, might have been longer than that, all the commandos had moved out. And we just sort of straightened the place up, and there

09:00 was no natives in the village at all, they were gone. No there wasn't much to do there at all.

Can you describe the impact of going to a place that had been devastated in such a way?

You felt

09:30 for the Australian soldiers that lost their lives there, the Japanese was your enemy and that's all there was to it. Not even a feeling for that. No we felt for the 14 commandos plus an officer that died. But that's all.

10:00 You didn't even think about it, you might of thought, well I wonder if I'm going to be next. And that though was always in your mind, that that particular bullet had your name on it, that's how your thoughts went. There was none that had my name on it apparently, fortunately. Very close bit still.

10:30 **What were your duties in Kaiapit? Were you bring the dead?**

No they were all buried.

You were telling me your duties in Kaiapit?

Yes well just to clean it up again, I think we might have hoped that the population, local population might have moved back there again. Now I don't know whether they did because we

11:00 moved off form there and back up in the Finisterre Ranges. Whether the native population moved in or not, or whether the actual village died. I suppose it would have been a good place to move back into for what had happened there. I don't know whether any of the natives had died there at all, as far as when the Japanese moved in, I don't know of any record of any natives where killed or not.

11:30 All I know was the 14 Australians were killed there, plus one officer.

What kind of cleaning up did you do?

Oh, we burnt some of the huts that were, just cleaned the place up a bit. We never had much equipment, just cleaned up, probably destroyed some of the huts that were damaged

12:00 in what you call it, I don't really know. And I suppose at that stage as far as I was concerned, I wouldn't have cared. I probably would have thought, well lets get out of here and that's what happened. I don't even remember staying there in the village after we landed there, we moved out the

12:30 next day or not, I wouldn't remember that.

When you say cleaning up were you sweeping?

Oh no. Just going through the checking the huts and like that. No we were just go through and make sure that no dead bodies there or anything else there, I think the 2/6th Commandos would have gone through all that anyhow.

13:00 But it was just a stopping over place as far as we were concerned before we moved off.

Was the surprise attack actually in the village?

Right in the village, yes the Japanese were camped in the village, the native population had gone, they had fled. And they knew the

13:30 information that the Japanese were in Kaiapit village had occupied it. And the army I presume would have said, right we'll send the commandos in. And that's what happened and they did a very effective job of it. Well to the loss of just 14 men, it is 14 men but still as far as casualties went, it was surprise attack from what I can gather.

14:00 **How did they surprise them?**

Well either they were in bed or not, I don't know.

How did they get there?

They flew in but they landed back from the village, the planes landed and I don't know how far they, they would have had to march 4 or 5 miles I can imagine because the Nips would have been aware that there was air activity somewhere. So and they just took them by surprise.

14:30 **When you arrived in Kaiapit what evidence was there of this surprise attack?**

Nothing, I don't remember vividly because we weren't involved in the, the things that we were involved in you remember but when you are not involved in it, you don't car

15:00 about it, and that's my memory of Kaiapit, where 14 commandos were killed and 300 Japanese wiped out.

Was there any blood spilled you could see?

I can't remember. No I don't remember that. There would have to be though wouldn't it. When a force of commandos go through and they just open fire.

15:30 There would be a lot of blood shed out of 300 bodies.

Any bullet holes?

No it was very hard to see that because they were all grass huts, bullets just go through, you would see them really.

Can you describe the inside of the huts?

No

16:00 wouldn't remember that. To me that wouldn't even interest me, I just wouldn't have though about it. Probably would have through, well lets get out of here and it think we all did the same. The commandos had done a good job, leave it at that. What would interest you would be your next move, what you would do next time.

16:30 **Your orders were to clean up?**

Well just to make sure that there was no live bodies or anything like that. But the commandos certainly cleaned the village up. and of course the native population were gone anyhow, they were left.

You were sick in the time between Kaiapit and Bougainville?

17:00 I was sick?

Was that when you had the typhous malaria?

Oh yes, that was when I was coming out of Dumpu and I went down to AGH yeah. That was Christmas '43, 1943 I was there. I don't even remember how long I was in the 2/1st AGH. Possibly be a fortnight, and I spent Christmas Day there.

17:30 And but I just don't, probably early January I would have come out of 2/1st AGH. And gone back to the unit which was back in Port Moresby then, I come back, and back to base at Port Moresby, ready to come home. Come back to Australia.

Was it easy to lose track of time

18:00 **when you were moving from one place to the next?**

The only thing you are interested in in the time was when you go home. You never worried much, nobody wore a watch or anything, you didn't worry about what the time was. If you were hungry you ate. I mean there was no set pattern, I mean you did what you could do when you could do it.

18:30 And you knew at night time when it was dark and the morning when its light, well that's day time. But you didn't worry about what day it was, you know, No it's a peculiar set up actually. Well I guess you knew the day, but you weren't really interested in that facet of your life. And you knew that if you survived

19:00 you would possibly get home at some time, that's where it was.

Did the salvos bring mail for the troops?

No that come from the battalion. And it was given to you, either your section leader it was sorted out and from headquarters company they would sort you all out. And they would bring the

19:30 mail around to you. And if you were out on patrol they would hold your mail. Or if you are doing something that separated you from your battalion headquarters, or when you come back, or wherever you had been, you got your mail. It was handed to you, your section leader of your platoon, he would give it to you. Pretty simple system I suppose.

20:00 **How often would you receive communication from Australia?**

Well I used to hear from Mum occasionally, Nell was a fairly adept writer. That would be about the only two letters I would get from Mum. And from Nell, that's it. Because my brother was in the air force at the time. And I didn't hear from him at all. I think I can remember my sister writing

20:30 to me. And my other brother, Barry, now he would be to young to write. But no the main interest was the letters from home, from Mum or from Nell, who kept up a steady flow of letters. And there was many a time you couldn't write yourself, because the conditions didn't lend it self to writing. Because you just camped out in the open, and the rain and

21:00 you tired to keep yourself dry. And that's why I could never keep any of Nell's letters because they would just deteriorate. Under the conditions.

You said there were times you were really close to enemy fire? When was the closest shave you had to enemy fire?

21:30 When we run into the ambush I think, that would be the closest I think. You were right there. You are always living under expectation of meeting the enemy and going into their fire. But

22:00 No it was a constant, you were constantly on the alert. Even if the enemy wasn't there you were still constantly alerted to the fact that he was there. So you lived on tender hooks the whole time. For that reason. Of course there was areas where there was no enemy and you it was a lot easier. Come back to base camp or something like that.

22:30 **What about in Bougainville?**

Well Bougainville was a different story altogether. It was a lot harder. There was more Japanese on Bougainville say to New Guinea, anyhow where we were, and you were constantly on patrol. It was a lot harder war as far as I was concerned.

23:00 I was on the 3 inch mortars there. And we went up the north part of Bougainville, the north coast of Bougainville which was very heavily infested with enemy. And they were desperate, they were desperate for food, they had no food.

23:30 I think at Bougainville you were more alert to the dangers of being killed, well than I was in New Guinea. And there was two major battles that I was in that was Tsimba Ridge and Porton Plantation. And Porton Plantation was just horrifying. It was of the many blunders that the army had made,

24:00 but still. We survived that too.

Can you describe the way the battle was formed in Porton Plantation?

Well General Blamey who was, he was the leader of he Australian forces, was on Bougainville at the time

24:30 and they planned this landing at Porton Plantation. And he was going to come up there and watch the whole operation from an island called Saposa Island which was about 7 miles off the west coast of Bougainville. And as I said before we were warned that we would not even get onto the shore, and this is what happened. And so 229 of us went in here. We lost 60 odd killed, 109 wounded.

25:00 And it was just a shemozzle and the Japs were ready for us. And the fact was at Porton Plantation that worked there, the manager, he said they would never get into Porton Plantation because the strength of the Japanese. And that's exactly what happened, we went in on the first barge load there

25:30 we didn't get onto the beach at all because our barge was stuck on the reef. We ripped the bottom out of the barge, and we were just sitting ducks, we couldn't do anything at all. Our barge driver was killed, Major Samson who was our commanding officer, knew nothing about getting the barge, we eventually got the barge off the reef when the tide was coming in, and we floated out. We made it back to base that night and

26:00 they called for volunteers to back to Porton Plantation on the small barges they used in the Normandy landing. They were shallow draft, and we went in with 500 mortar bomb shells on the barge a mortar mounted. I had a Bren gun and my other mate had a Bren gun. And we went in to see if we could get those fellows off the other barges stranded on the reef, and of the shore also.

26:30 When we went in we were just hammered. But the point was the little Elko barges they were made with very thick armour plating and there were no problem that way. But when we got in there, the fellows were trying to get off, the barges that were stranded, to get off the shore, to get onto our barges. And we could rescue, and we got quite few off, off the other barges, but the machine

27:00 gun fire from the Japanese was incredible. They had 50 Woodpeckers [Japanese heavy machine guns], they fired about a 50 calibre bullet, and they were all around the shore and they just hammered everything. So lots of our fellows were taken by salt water crocodiles, by sharks, when they tried to get off. The Japs were swimming out and dropping grenades over into our barges, they were stranded there. It was just a shemozzle.

27:30 And that's where I put the 50 magazines through a Bren gun, one Bren gun. And the Bren gun wasn't much good after I had finished with it. Still, it was something that never happened, and it was so bad that it was never discussed for 40 years. The information on Porton Plantation was not released for 40 years. And in 1982 the Daily Mirror, I've got the cutting of it,

28:00 and it was put in the Mirror, the whole story of Porton. And the ABC in Townsville got to hear of it. And they made a video of it. Not of the actual action but interviewing men and what actually happened there.. But it was just a fruitless exercise. The enemy wasn't going anywhere, they couldn't move, they couldn't get off the place.

28:30 And Porton was such a stronghold because Buka Island was right at the top of Bougainville, it was the naval, well fortress of Japan. And that's what they were protecting also. But we survived it, and of course a lot of them didn't. I lost a lot of good mates there. Which was quite unnecessary, 6 weeks before the war

29:00 finished. But that's war, you do as you are told. And hope you do the right thing. When Nelly viewed the tape she just couldn't believe it, she was just sitting in the chair there and she

29:30 said, "You've been there" and I said, "I got out of it, and I was fortunate, I was one of the lucky ones". As I said before, there is no winners in war, everybody loses, and that's what happened at Porton Plantation.

30:00 **Porton Plantation was on an island?**

No it was the mainland, its the biggest coconut plantation on Bougainville. And the Japanese had it as a stronghold there, and also a protection for Buka Island and

30:30 that's where they had their strongest force that was there. And it was just a fortress and the fact of how the half moon bay and they had 50 woodpecker machine guns right around that bay, protecting it.

The plantation was near the shore?

Right to

31:00 beach and it went inland, right inland. But it was just a Japanese stronghold and they had just taken no notice of the manager, Anton, who was a Bougainville native, very educated man, he had gone to school at Geelong Grammar for 3 years. He knew the place back to front, he knew every stone in the place. And he just told the army they will never make it. But

31:30 they just ignored it, and of course when General Blamey was up there they just put the whole show on for his benefit. And that's what happened.

What was the objective of the troops?

There was nothing, there was no objective. It mean it was 6 weeks before the war was to finish. They were going nowhere, they couldn't move anywhere. And

32:00 it was just a fruitless exercise, and I maintain the whole of Bougainville, the 519 lives that were lost at Bougainville was a waste of men, wasted lives.

How did they instruct you?

To land on the beach and take Porton Plantation. That was the instruction. And

32:30 lot of our officers were men who had been in the army right through, some of them highly decorated men. And they knew the situation. At Porton Plantation there was our battalion was awarded 13 Military Medals. There was also 5 Military Crosses awarded and several mentions of dispatches, that's how tough a battle it was, you know.

33:00 And I believe that every man that went into Porton Plantation should have been given something, some kind of recognition. But as far as the whole exercise it self was fruitless, just a waste of lives. The army sees it differently. But now as I look back over it and have for many, many years, it was just a waste of lives.

33:30 Captain Downes, I mean, 4 young kiddies, he lost his life there. And a lot of men went the same way.

What was the general attitude of the troops before they went in on this mission?

Well it was another job, you know, we didn't really know what the situation was, but we felt

34:00 as a group that it was better not to be in it, but still you followed orders. Because we could see the writing on the wall that the war was bout to finish, we all knew that. To what the exact date, I don't know. Nobody knew, but we knew it was close to being finished.

34:30 **Did that give you a false sense of security, that you could take the plantation?**

No, no, I mean, see there was actually nothing to gain with it. Just to go in there, the loss of lives, when there was no territory gain. No gain as far as winning the war goes or anything like that. I mean the war was won. The war

35:00 was 6 weeks before Porton Plantation, the war was already won as far as the Americans and Australian or anything like that. That's the same that happened at Wewak in New Guinea. The 6th Division, men that had been right through the whole circle of war, the Middle East, Crete, the lot, come back sent up to Wewak. The Japs weren't going anywhere at Wewak, and they were murdered up there.

35:30 The same thing, men that had been 5 years through sheer hell. And yet the lives were just wasted because the army saw fit to put these veterans in there.

With the war almost ended did it seem that it would be easy to defeat the Japanese at the plantation?

36:00 Well Japanese would never give up hope, they would never give up. Irrespective of what their situation was, they would fight to the last. Well I guess in a similar situation as far as Australians go I think we would fight to the last man, if we were in danger of losing something, losing our country and that. But when the war, as in the sight of the Australians eyes was just about finished.

36:30 And we were winning, why throw in men and lose their lives at a time like that. And that's what happened at Porton.

So you were in a barge that got stuck on a reef?

That's right.

And you were basically stranded there for how long?

37:00 Well for 3 hours, and when the tide came out, the barge was damaged underneath, and when the tide come in, it floated us and Major Samson who knew nothing about driving a barge got us out. And that s when we were told we had to go back to base. and we got back to base we were going to ordered the next day to come in and try and rescue those that were still on the barges and

37:30 still on the shore. That had no hope of surviving. They had no food, they had no, any artillery, they had no guns at all, running out of ammo. So that's why we went back the next day to try and get them off, do something about it.

The Woodpecker machine guns, did they have enough range to hit the barges?

Oh yes.

38:00 They had, I mean, well the Nips themselves were taking risks themselves and swimming out to the barges and dropping grenades over. One barge there, we had fellows in the barges and they had cut copper tubes, and they were under the water and had the tubes sticking up out of the water, in the barge, in the body of the barge breathing through that, that's how the situation was.

Describe that again?

Well they were in the barge

38:30 they were, the barge was half full of water, they were under the water and they were breathing through pieces of copper tube that they had cut off from the barge to try and breath through. They got out, if they got up out of the barge they were killed anyhow. And when we got them of the barge, got hem out of that, some of them swam out. And in doing that of course they were taken by sharks, and the salt water crocodiles. But there was quite a few got off the barge

39:00 in the night and swam out and. Two of my mates swam nearly 5 kilometres onto a neighbouring island, and made it. No it was just a situation, shouldn't have happened.

How did the barges arrive there?

Just straight in we drove them, we had a base down, oh probably about 7 or 8 kilometres

39:30 down the beach on the coast. And they just set off form there and just headed in. This half moon bay and in they went into land and go in and take Porton Plantation but the Japs had other ideas. And of course when they went in at the right time and Anton, the foreman of the plantation said, they would not get in there because of the reef that goes across. And that's what happened they got stuck on the

reef.

40:00 **How many people per barge?**

Hard to say what the capacity would be. I think there was about 219 that went in to Porton Plantation. See they had all their supplies, medical supplies, food stores and everything on the barges, loaded onto the barges. Because they thought

40:30 well they'll just get in, knock the Japs off that were there and settle down and that was it. But it wasn't at all. the whole operation was badly planned.

When you first approached Porton Plantation in the barges, at what point did the Japanese start firing?

Oh I'd say at 150 yards. They knew that they were going to be, and they just, but if they'd arrived, if we had come in to Porton Plantation further south we would have hit the beaches no problem at all. No reefs no nothing, land on the barges and just moved in. But that wasn't the case, they landed too high up in the bay itself, and that's where the obstacle was. We had the aircraft, the New Zealand Air Force there were flying Corsair fighters in, they were strafing, trying to help the ground troops. And they just shelled it and all sort of thing. But they couldn't do a great deal because we had our own men already landed there, they were on the shore, they made it. So, and this mate of mine, Reba, Ned Masterson, I still contact Ned, they were on the shore and we were digging in but ...

Tape 10

00:35 **At Porton Plantation, once you had got out of there the first day, what was said when you got back to camp?**

They knew what had happened. Because they had radio contact, and they knew the whole situation actually back at base. And

01:00 then they called for volunteers to go back, not at night, but early the next morning, and see what the situation was and see if we could do, in taking those that were stranded there off the stranded barges and bring them back to base. That was the whole exercise the next day. The New Zealand Air Force came through, they strafed they bombed, they did everything

01:30 but they had to be very careful when they were strafing, they even dropped rafts. DC-3s come in and dropped rafts into the sea itself, they come about probably 500 feet and they dropped the rafts, hoping that those who were stranded on the barges would try and make for the rafts see. But of course there was the sharks and the salt water crocodile. So that wasn't a good exercise either and to actually

02:00 accurately pinpoint to drop the rafts at the right spot was pretty difficult. So every other rescue operation was just, couldn't work, wouldn't work out.

So you volunteered?

Yes, I said that I would be one that would go. They called for volunteers.

Can you describe what happened, where did you set up your Bren gun on the barge?

02:30 I stood in the middle of the barge and just, I was exposed the same, there was two of us on the Bren guns, I can't even think of the fellows name that was on the other Bren and we just stood there and poured the bullets into the shore. We had to be careful because we had men still on the shore. But we were firing above them trying to fire above them into the background, to stop the enemy

03:00 from coming in. It was a pretty risky situation I suppose when you come to think of it. But we had to do something, that's what tit was. If the weather had been calmer, and we had the 3 inch mortar mounted on the barge, we could have fired mortar shells, but you couldn't get a proper range, of course, there was the prospect of the shells falling onto our won men in the stranded barges, so we just couldn't

03:30 risk it, couldn't do anything about it.

What were you aiming for?

We were aiming onto Porton Plantation. You couldn't see the enemy but we just hoped that us shooting would keep their heads down and give our fellows a chance to get off the barges and go. The air force did a terrific run, they strafed, strafing all the time with the corsairs coming in doing

04:00 strafing runs. And my mate of mine, Ned Masterson, who was on the shore, Ned said, "The greatest problem was the hot shells, the case shells were falling on you" See. He said, "We didn't mind that as long as it was only the empty cases" But, yeah. The officers were absolutely incredible and the men too Yeah, but

04:30 under their leadership they were first class. But it was a no win situation. We just got off what we could

get off and that was it. I don't remember what happened after Porton. To get the bodies back, I just don't know, because that's all done with the War

05:00 Graves Commission, like that. I don't know whether the bodies would just lay there, I suppose for some time until they were picked up . Might have been well after the war finished that they went in again. And tried to do something about it. But those survivors who survived it were brought back to base and that was it.

When you volunteered, how many men were you trying to save?

05:30 We had no idea. We had no idea. We went in I suppose there probably would have been 20 o us that went back to try and get the others off. And but we had no idea who was alive and who was dead. But we knew there were those still alive. There was quite an artillery barrage of 25 pounders, did a lot of work too at Porton Plantation, on the shore lines.

06:00 Further down the coast, they were shelling up into Porton Plantation itself, right into the heart of the Plantation with the prospects of trying to make the Nips keep their heads down. And plus the strafing run of the corsair fighter planes. No it was just, I mean it was just by chance that anybody really got off

06:30 I suppose. Yeah. If you didn't get off it you died.

Did the men have to swim to your position?

Yeah, some of them swam. Some of them got out. I just,

07:00 some time ago, Ronnie Deburg from Gatton, he was one, he stuttered Ron and when he swam out to our barge he wasn't taken by a shark, wasn't hit by a bullet, or a salt water crocodile, he made our barge, and lifted him in. He said, "Peewee, if ever I wanted to see somebody I wanted to see your ugly face". We got him back onto the barge.

07:30 Some of them I know two fellows that swam, to a neighbouring island to Saposa Island, it might have been about 5 or 6 miles swim.

Was your boat attracting much attention from enemy guns?

They did pepper us but it was a barge that, they were absolutely, as far as an ordinary bullet it wouldn't go through them. They were constructed

08:00 for the Normandy landing in Europe. and the barges they were really, they were bullet proof. But the Australian barge the big LSTs [landing ships tank] they were just like paper. Bullets just went through them, bit of three play, but they were steel, but they didn't have the thickness of the steel. But, yeah.

08:30 But the barge drivers were 48th Battalion, I think it was the 48th troop carrying, and they had all the barges, those fellows, they did a marvellous job. For barges that were quite inadequate for the job they were called upon to do.

Did you try and shoot the sharks and crocodiles as the men were swimming?

09:00 The trouble was if you were trying to do that, some men were trying to swim away and you could have shot them too, it was pretty hard to do it. With a rifle you might have, but with a Bren gun, it is pretty erratic firing I suppose with the Bren. To control your fire or control your aim so we never attempted it.

09:30 **What was the noise like?**

Didn't even hear it think, it was noisy of course. But the noise didn't worry us a great deal. I said when we lifted Ronnie Deburg up on our barge, he said, "H-H-H-Hell Peewee,

10:00 I'm glad to see your ugly face" I never forgot that. I didn't think I'd see your ugly face again. Yeah but. It was an experience that your couldn't forget your just couldn't forget it. But that's war.

How many men did you get off?

I don't know if I ever got he official count

10:30 of those who got off. Some were able to get down the coast and they walked out. They walked down the coast back, I wouldn't really know how many we got off. I don't know whether the book over there says it, but we left more behind than we actually

11:00 got off. But I will never forget Major Samson, he only just recently died, he was 95 and died in Sydney must some time ago. And I always said, "Samson by name and Samson by nature" and he was, he was an incredible leader.

11:30 If it wasn't for him, he already won the military cross over in Middle East and he won a bar to his military cross here at Porton Plantation. So he won actually two military crosses. No,

12:00 just trying to think of one of the lutes there, Bluey Rita, he also won a military cross in the Middle East and when he got off Porton Plantation, he got out of Porton Plantation, and later on he interviewed,

what you call it, General Blamey asked him, Bluey Rita what he thought of Porton Plantation

12:30 and his exact words he said to General Blamey who was the commander and chief of the Australian forces was, he said, 'it was a real cock up" and the aide to General Blamey chastised Bluey Rita for what he said and how he said it. he said, "How dare you speak to the Australian General in charge of the Australian forces" He said, 'he asked me what I

13:00 thought of it and I told him" That was it. End of subject. Bluey is still alive, he's quite a character, he's 87.

Tell me after that, the war was coming to an end, what happened form that point onwards?

Well we went back to base, we went right back to Torokina and when leaflets, of course they dropped the leaflets to the Japanese

13:30 telling them to surrender and that. Unfortunately we had a patrol out and it was a two day patrol, on the night that they were to return, on the day before that, they run into a Japanese patrol, and they lost two men, after the war had actually finished, I remember that . And I can't remember what we did.

14:00 They might have given us a bottle of beer or something like that, because I used to drink pretty heavy those days too, when you used to get it. But it was great jubilation, there is no doubt about that, we looked like going home, I think we all expected to go home the next day. But that wasn't the case of course. We had to go up to Ocean Island and Grew Island, the garrison there, after the war finished. And send the Japs back to

14:30 Rabaul repatriate them back there. But it was an incredible relief, as I say, even before Porton Plantation came, most of us had a idea that it must be pretty soon, that its going to finish. We were fairly aware of what was happening. And so when it did happen there was great relief, great relief.

15:00 **Talk me through the events of the two men being killed?**

Oh yes. It was a strange circumstance, I don't know even how or why they were on patrol. But they went out, I don't know if it was a reconnaissance patrol, they went from Torokina, which was the big base. And the Japs were they were didn't pick up a leaflet or whatever it was, I don't know how the understanding, but there was

15:30 two of them killed on the patrol on the way back to base. They had picked it up, of course they were written in Australian and also in Japanese. And so I don't know it was just one of those unfortunate things that happened.

So you weren't on the patrol?

No, no.

After that did you go to Phosphate Island?

Went to

16:00 Ocean Island. We went up to Ocean island on the Diamantina, HMAS Diamantina was corvette just to garrison the island. When war broke out Australia, Britain and New Zealand governed those islands, the phosphates island and ruled Ocean Island for 3 year periods. And when the war finished the

16:30 New Zealand administration had to come up and take over the running of the island. But in the mean time we had to go up there and just keep law and order on the island. Then repatriate the Japanese prisoners of war that were on the island. Down to Rabaul and destroy all their equipment that was on the island.

Was there a massacre on that?

Yeah, that's where that the 200 young men, all in their early 20s were murdered on Ocean Island. They just lined them up, the highest part of Ocean Island

17:00 would be about 200 feet, and they just lined them up on the top of the cliff and just mowed them down with machine gun. And there was one survivor. That survived that massacre. And I heard his story, I knew of his story of course but I was laying down one after noon and I heard his story come over the ABC. on the wireless. And I recalled it then,

17:30 I never met the man, it was quite interesting. But he was the only survivor out of the 200 that were killed.

You didn't have any role in burying those dead?

No I think they just tumbled into the sea and then the tide come in the bodies were washed out. it was all catacombed in there underneath there and that's were the survivor

18:00 lived there for a short time. Yeah.

You story goes from there? You retuned home?

Returned home. Went down, went over to Nauru first and stopped there for while and did the same thing there for the civil administration come up from New Zealand and then went down to Rabaul or New Britain. and

18:30 we just drove around the hundreds of compounds that they had with Japanese prisoners in there, Keeping an eye on them, until we went back, our point system came up and we went back to Australia. And that was the finish, yeah. Good old Aussie, yeah. No

19:00 my experience in the war, a bit over 4 and a half years, was a really growing up experience for me. I learnt a lot. Some of it I wished I hadn't, but still, you can't do much about that.

19:30 But I was glad to see it over.

So you were married?

Yes, married. I was discharged in July in '46, and I was married in August. I don't know whether Nell thought I might run away or something, I don't know. No, but we married at the Methodist church at Box Hill. Of course I had no spiritual life at all, I could have got married at the street

20:00 corner as far as I was concerned it didn't worry me at all. But Nell was a gracious, and still is, a gracious and precious lady. I know if I hadn't become a Christian in '57 I wouldn't be sitting here today.

Tell me that story?

Yes, when we moved back,

20:30 Nell was a Christian when I married her. I wasn't interested in spiritual things. and I hadn't had a winter home for 5 years in Melbourne, and I said there has got to be a better place than Melbourne. I want to move see. And Nell's older sister married an American marine during the war. And they went back to American to live and they lived at Knoxville in Tennessee where the racial hatred is

21:00 something shocking. And they decided to come back to Australia. When I came out of the army I did a rehabilitation course in building. Did a course for 12 months, and I was working for a fellow who had taken over my father's building business down there. I lost track of Dad I didn't know where he was. When I come home. And Isabelle and Eugene, that's Nell's sister and her husband, decided to come back to Australia. And I was building two rooms on the side

21:30 of Nell's parents place. And we, Nell and I were living there, we were living in the partly constructed rooms, really roughing it out. And the phone rang one night and Nell's mother said to me, "Your father is on the phone" and I said, "Who?' and she said, "Your father" Oh I had forgotten all about Dad, didn't know where he was, didn't even care. And I said, "Where are you ringing from?" and he said, "Kootingal" I said, "Where is Kootingal?"

22:00 And he said, "About 10 mile out of Tamworth" and I said, "Where is Tamworth" I had never heard of Tamworth. He says, "About 280 miles north west of Sydney" and I said, "What are you doing up there?" and he said, "Building houses, what about coming up?" "Oh I'd have to think about that" and he said, "Well I'll get you a house here in very short time" So after the conversation Nell and I talked about it, she didn't want to leave Melbourne. She didn't want to leave it.

22:30 And I said, "Look it might be a new start, a complete new star in our life, I think I will go up and just have a look" So Dad paid my air fare and of course we had no money, we come back from our honey moon, we only had 10 cents, or shillings it was, and good in laws. So I flew up from Melbourne, flew on the old Avro Anson up to Tamworth here. I left Melbourne wrapped up in a overcoat on the long weekend in October, beginning of October

23:00 in 1948. Got up here the sun was shining, I thought, well this is the place. And anyhow Dad picked me up at the aerodrome, the old aerodrome down near Taminda down here, it was then. He said, "I will take you over to the office" and I thought Oh Dad must be doing all right. Well Dad's office was the saloon bar at the Tudor Pub. And because I drank those days, and

23:30 had a drink. He said, "Well we'll go home now" We got home and it was an old shed sitting on a block of land up here, trespassing on the block, see. And I camped on one of the houses Dad built, I camped on the back veranda, Happy Morris's place, see. And I said, Oh well things might improve, but they didn't. Anyhow I told Nell, I got very, very ill when I come home, I had malaria, I went through two 6 months courses of formadrine to try and get it out

24:00 of my system. and I said to Nell, I said, "Look the sun's always shining here I haven't been sick since I've been up here" and I said, "I am stopping here, I am not going back to Melbourne" So Nell just didn't know what to do. Anyhow the long weekend, later in October, Nell came up to have a look at the place. She was devastated. You know there was nothing

24:30 in Tamworth those days. The grass came out of the ground, brown not green and so it was a dust bowl, wheat paddocks and everything. And I said to Nell, Nell said, "I can't live here" well I said, "I'm alright health wise and I said I'll have to start" and I started to build a house not far from here. Anyhow Nell came up 12 months later. And she really suffered I mean, the fact that she was a Christian, she told me she had been a Christian

25:00 and just couldn't live like this. And I said, "I'm not interested in spiritual things, that's all there is to it" and so it went on, Nell came up and we finished the house down there. And life was pretty hard, I was a heavy drinker and my Dad was a heavy drinker. Everybody around the area drank. Nell was a loner she never ever did. And she started to go to the little church down here.

25:30 And I said well if you want to go there you can go there its nothing to do with me. Then the Church of the Christ started down here she went down there and she rededicated her life down there. And she told me what she had done. And I said, "Well that's your part of life, you go that way, I'll stay on my side of life" But they had a lovely minister down there, Harry Walmsley, he was a gorgeous old fellow. He came to the

26:00 front door here one Sunday afternoon, I went out and I said, "How are you Mr Walmsley?" and he said, "Well Bill, how are you ?" and I said, "Fine, and he said, "Look we are having a men's tea down at the church of Christ, would you be interested incoming about, down?" and I remember the words I said to him, I said, "No thanks Mr Walmsley, that's a trap" I can remember that as clear as anything. And he said, "Well Bill, you might look it at way but there is a man down there

26:30 Bill Horsley speaking on industrial chemistry at the men's tea" That sort of pricked my ears a bit, oh that might be interesting. So I went down. Bill Horsley was a lovely Christian fellow, he only passed away a couple of years ago, but he was a real dedicated Christian. And he spoke on industrial chemistry, then he related it back to God. And I closed off, I said, I've heard all I want to hear, I'm going home.

27:00 Anyway Nell said, "How did it go?" and I said, "Oh it was good, but when he started on God I shut off". But that's when the message of God's free salvation got to me. And my eldest daughter, Juanita, was 11 year old and Les Nixon had a tent mission over here, and she committed her life to Christ. and she came home and told me what she had down, 11 year old. And I said, "You're mad

27:30 you don't know what you have done" and I really went crook at her. She went up to her top bedroom there, she stood there for while and she came down and she looked at me and she said, "Father, its not your drinking, its your stinking thinking" and it really ran me, my 11 year old girl saying that to me. I could have flattened her. Nell said she could see the hairs bristle on the back of my neck. And she turned around

28:00 and walked up to her bedroom, Not another word. Anyhow I started to go down to the church of Christ just to be down there see. And Harry Walmsley was the minister and he spoke on God' salvation one Sunday night. Nell was sitting beside me. I touched her hand and I said, "Its right, bub" and I went out to the front and committed my life to Christ. And I

28:30 could say now that if God hadn't taken control of my life from that night to this very moment I wouldn't be sitting here today. I wouldn't be sitting her today. Only by God's grace that I am here. It was a transformation in my life, I fought it, I fought it, but God won. And that's been our life right through. I know that I hadn't committed my

29:00 life to Christ, we would be here today, together, no way. And but he is a mighty powerful savoir, yeah. There was much rejoicing when I committed my life to Christ in Tamworth. Was something special. Billy committed his life, all the children have. They are still living a sort of a spiritual life I suppose,

29:30 Juanita our eldest girl, she is a radiant Christian, she is tremendous. The two other daughters, yes they are sympathetic towards something, they have all committed their life to Christ. But in the circumstances they sort of just go on and live their life. But the 3 girls are tremendous and the 2 boys are tremendous. And so that's how it was.

30:00 **How did becoming a Christian assured you of being here today? What would have happened if you didn't become a Christian?**

What would have happened?

What might have happened?

Well I'm sure that, I don't think Nell could have lived out here life. She was faithful. But as the

30:30 situation was, I mean, there was no actual life and I was dead against Nell going and getting involved in her church work, I just couldn't see it. Allowing her to do that. And Nell has always taken the role as the head of the house. And Mr Walmsley the man to whom I converted, under his ministry. Nell was very concerned, because I wouldn't allow her to go to church.

31:00 I said, "you are not going to church, that's all there is to it" And Mr Walmsley, Nell went and had a talk to Mr Walmsley and he told her that Bill is your husband, you should obey him, and in obeying him at this stage of your life, he might see things in different light. And so I would not, and Nell would not antagonise me. When I did

31:30 I did, and that was all there was to it. I was never involved with other women or anything, Nell was my only life, she was what I lived for . the drink unfortunately was my downfall. I was making good money in the work. And it wasn't until the as I say, the 24th of November 1957, I committed my life to Christ. and I can still remember the hymn.

32:00 All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give. And that was the night I committed my life to Christ. but I had a battle, the old state had lost me and he was working hard overtime to try and drag me back. But with the prayers of many a Christian persona round here brought me through the pitfalls and the doubts and everything like that, it was tremendous.

32:30 **How were the memories of war affecting you?**

Oh no, didn't worry me. No, had no impact on my life at all. That was behind me, gone finished. Yeah, so.

Why were you so resistant to God in your life up until that point?

33:00 Well I blamed God for the war, I blamed God for everything, I had to blame somebody. And that's who I blamed, and when Nell used to speak to me about God and she was very, very gentle about it. When she would get the bible out and we would go through the bible and that. I said, "Nell, that's old hat, that's history"

33:30 Its not relevant for today. And she would try and explain to me what was relevant for the day and I said, "What I have been through in my army life, I just can't see, you know, why all this thing happened" I said, "God could have wiped it off like that". She said, "Bill, God has given man free will, you can't blame God.

34:00 It was Satan who did this" and I said, "Well why doesn't God stop it?' "Well its man that goes against God and when man is going against God, just godly things won't happen in your life, in what ever it is" And she said, "You can't blame God, man is the person who is at fault". And we would have discussions on this the whole time you know.

34:30 And she said, "Man is the one that works in opposition to God. God is the person who works for man" and until I started to see that, the patients and the prayer and a lot of people here in Tamworth, God had that victory in my life.

35:00 **What was the response of your army mates when they heard?**

One of my best army mates was Dick Callum who lives at Toowoomba. I had a very good mission mate here, Jack Bond, he was holding a mission up there. And I felt the lord drawing me to Toowoomba to take Dick Callum and his wife Zoe, to a mission up there, in Toowoomba. So I went up, I took Suzanne with me. She was 11 year old, she was a second daughter

35:30 and I went up there and I invited Dick to come down to the mission tent on the Sunday night. And I think Dick said yes, just to sort of please me. And so he came along, Zoe didn't go, she didn't go with him. And he sat through the message and he spoke incredible message it was, the invitation. And Dick just sat there and I said,

36:00 oh well, that's God speaking to him and Dick not listening. And we sat out in the car I had a panel van at the time, till 3 o'clock the next morning. Talking. About the spiritual aspect of our lives. Dick was very patient listener and but he didn't respond to Gods call. About 12 months later he started to go to church, he was going to the Anglican church there. And I believe now we still keep in contact with him

36:30 they are still going to the Anglican church up there, see. So you know, I think if you are witness for the power of God and you witness in his name, the victory will be God. Sometimes in their life. But that's happened in many a time in my life. And you know, I have the opportunity of sharing, I have had the opportunity of teaching, teaching

37:00 girls and boys brigade, boys and girls clubs, everything. And I believe that God has been my life We falter many a time but he is always there to lift us up. And you know, and I feel that his power is sufficient for me, and we claimed his power and his life, we will have the victory with Christ.

37:30 So its been just a remarkable experience for me. I know I wouldn't be here today if God hadn't taken control of my life. I'd have been gone, yeah. Does that answer that?

Anzac Day, you didn't march for 20 years? Why?

Ah,

38:00 I went to the first Anzac Day after I was discharged and I got horribly drunk. That was in Melbourne. and I said I will never go to another Anzac Day march. And for 20 odd years I just didn't go I wasn't interested. It wasn't as though I didn't respect Anzac Day or anything about Anzac Day but I just felt that I just couldn't be bothered marching. And it wasn't until I joined the RSL [Returned and Services League] here

38:30 and I wouldn't miss an Anzac Day march now. I have a, you know, I do the Anzac Day funerals here, it's a poppy ceremony and that. I just love doing it because it is a witness, it is a testament. And I'm involved, I'm in the committee of the RSL here.

39:00 I've just renewed my subscriptions, financial. Yeah I've got a while to do that yet. But there is some

camaraderie in the Anzacs. We only have a small, oh probably about 300 odd members in Tamworth. Might be a few more than that. But

39:30 I do a lot of school work with Anzac Day. I go into the schools and just tell them the ANZAC story, not my story. But the Anzac Day, the ANZAC story, the last Anzac Day I did 5 schools, not in the one day, but just spoke to the kids on Anzac Day. Last Anzac Day I stayed at the Gipps memorial down there. On the 7 am one. But

40:00 I just feel that I have something to give. And why keep it to yourself. And a lot of people, especially a lot of young people have no idea what Anzac Day is about or the word Anzac. And so that's how it comes about.

Tape 11

00:39 No you want me to read this first? Shall I introduce this?

If you want to?

This is a letter by a very good mate of mine who as

01:00 with me on Bougainville and he's written to my eldest daughter Juanita, and Juanita had a few words to say about her father and I'm the reader of this letter and so I will just share it with you. Dear Juanita, It was great for Robyn and I to meet one of Peewee's daughters. And I would say at that time that was my army name, Peewee.

01:30 I told you that your dad was s good soldier but it goes deeper than that. That it was good for the rest of us to be in the same platoon as he had such a positive attitude. The jungle was a terrible place with its clammy half light, clinging vines, nothing but green and we were soldiers. While your dad kept their morale high and it was infectious, I think that his secret was in the fact that he truly loves his fellow man and

02:00 accepts the people with all their faults and weaknesses. I have a clear recollection of Peewee when he and 3 other soldiers struggled up from the Genga River with a stretcher on their shoulders. C Company had crossed the Genga in an attempt to bypass Tsimba Ridge and

02:30 as they were heavily engaged by sword welding native troops I don't know who the other three were but your dad had a look of exhausted misery on his face. When they put the stretcher down I saw why. The poor bloke on the stretcher had blood soaked bandages where his nose should have been and you could only see the whites of his eyes. It was about

03:00 to and was dying and there was nothing any of us could do for him. On a happier note I remember a look of happy expectation on your dad's face as he buried some bottles of beer in a hole he had dug in one of the creeks that ran through Torokina. We would get a bottle a week with the tops off, always warm. If you had been in action for a few weeks they kept the tops on

03:30 so you could have a party. it was a pretty enterprising thing for Peewee to do and to try and cool them down a bit. 3 platoon was a great one, our first officer Cec Back was killed by a Jap shell. His replacement man was a marvellous man called Kelso Knight. We all got along fine but we all had a special things, china plates, best of mates.

04:00 One of mine was a corporal Jim Parsons, who came from Julia Creek. he spent many hours telling me what a marvellous place it was, what Julia Creek was. All the beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but when I saw Julia creek years after the war I was surprised how dreamy it is. You wouldn't think that there was a sentimental bone in his body, but when I heard him say

04:30 dear john letter, I received he just tried to describe the fact that he was going to cry for me. your dad was in a terrible action at Porton Plantation. The amazing courage they showed is always mentioned. I sometimes feel that they emphasised the courage to divert attention away from the casualty list. And the military mistakes that were made. Peewee Russell is good brave man who has more done

05:00 his share of making this world go around. I'm glad for you that you are proud of him. Regards, Col McKinnon.

Thanks very much.

05:30 **How would you describe the kind of man you were when you returned to Australia after the war?**

Well I suppose I was still a kid. I mean I was only 21. I was a lot more mature of course. Looking forward to being married. Well I suppose deep within myself there was a lot of

06:00 hurt. I guess each one of us felt that in many different ways. I sometimes felt that perhaps my time in the army was perhaps just time lost. But then as you mature in your age you fell, well it must have

accomplished something. And I hope I did accomplish something in that aspect of my life.

How would you sum up the war for you?

06:30 Yes, to sum up the war for me. The five or nearly five years that I spent was perhaps a learning process. The mateship was something incredible, something that I have never experienced before. But life must go on, you must put

07:00 things behind you and keep moving forward. And that's what I have hoped to do in my life. To except things as they are and get on with life. Can I mention about the Christian. The turning point in my life was in 1957 when I committed my life to Christ. It completely transformed my life,

07:30 I didn't but God did. Through his sone the Lord Jesus and my life before was lost. It was lost to Satan but thought the love and the care of people in Tamworth, Christian people here that love was transformed in my life. And so along with my wife and family it s been an incredible experience. An experience

08:00 that I will never forget. And as I go through the remainder of my life which is possibly not a lot, Christ will still be my guide and I will depend on him in all things I do. And perhaps do the best I can in witnessing his power and his love that others might come to see the saviour and know the saviour.

08:30 **Of the 5 years you spent during the war, what was the most vivid or bravest thing that stands in your mind?**

The gravest thing

The bravest?

Oh, it's a bit difficult to answer that. I think the bravest thing is to come to grips with

09:00 terms that are in your life at that time. Face life as it is, and as we have it. Carry on the best you can for your fellow man, and love, not to hate your fellow man, but to love your fellow man. And I have done that through the power of the Lord Jesus. I couldn't do it on my own strength, but with God's help and the

09:30 power of God's love within my life I can accomplish this . and I hope I will continue to do that to the end of my life on this earth.

During the war when you weren't a Christian, was there something that stood out as the most courageous thing you saw in your life?

Not as individuals

10:00 I think the two battalions that was with, there was outstanding men as leadership as companionship. As caring people. But of course there is always the other side of the coin where there is some that don't show that attitude. But as I said before in the infantry battalion you were part of a body of men who cared for one another.

10:30 and always helped one another when that need was there. And I hope I had done that in my army life. To help my fellow man.

What's the scariest situation you can think of now looking back on your experience in the war?

The landing of Porton Plantation would be the most scariest thing. The

11:00 odds just seemed that far, everything against you. And yet I know there must have been some divine power that was looking after me, unbeknown to me of course. During that period of time. But in the infantry battalion as everybody would know, you face dangers every day of your life and I know that God's power was working

11:30 perhaps not in my life then but he knew all about me and he knows the beginning to the end. and I am sure he knew the very life that I was to have and through his power, through his love, his tolerance his patience, and God is a patient god and a tolerant god, I came to know him as my saviour.

12:00 **What would you say to future generations about war?**

Well as I have said many a time, nobody wins a war. But I feel that your must be involved you can't brush it aside. Especially when lives are threatened.

12:30 War is hate we know that, but through hate sometimes comes love, and most times will come love. And if this world were to learn how to love their fellow man and as God has loved this world this world would be a far better place to live in.

13:00 **Is there any final words, anything you would like to add?**

Yes there is lots of things I could say. But, when this world turns itself around and

13:30 faces the prospects of a far better world and only the people in this world can make a different world. And the 4 letter word that I would impress on you is L O V E, love. And if we love one another as God has first loved us this would be a better would. and I pray that when I am not in this world

14:00 that this whole world would turn to God and seek his guidance in everything they do and say. And this would be a far better world, if they took God into their own lives and live to that end in their lives.

INTERVIEW ENDS