

Australians at War Film Archive

Francis Wust (Frank) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

- 00:34 Well I was born in St James Hospital in Toowoomba. My mother told me I was the only boy in amongst all the girls that were born there. Didn't do me any good though. My family were rolling stones,
- 01:00 never stayed in one place very long. From Toowoomba we went to Laidley and from Laidley, where I first went to school and the only thing I can remember about Laidley it was about four miles we had to walk and we were on a farm there and I can remember a big flood. That was all I can remember about Laidley. From there
- 01:30 we went to Peppermah [?] and then just from one place to another and we ended up in Gympie. I went to, I think, every school in Gympie I went to it was only for a short while and was there that my father bought a farm down at Eumundi and at the age of 12 I went to Doonan
- 02:00 where we grew bananas, sugar cane and small crops. This was at Doonan when we heard that all the hullabaloo was going on over in Europe. I had seven sisters and it sort of got to me that I didn't want happening to them that which was happening over there to the women.
- 02:30 So I joined the army at the age of 17. I did many camps in the army, Redbank, Caloundra, Moreton Island up at Caloundra and then in 1941 I was called up for full time service. It was on the 17th
- 03:00 December 1941. I was in the 9th Battalion and we did our camps around, our training, around Enoggera and from Enoggera we went to Rollingstone at Townsville. We did quite a bit of training around Rollingstone.
- 03:30 It was there I got my first promotion, lance corporal. Which I didn't like very much, I wanted the second one, but they said I'd get it in 3 months, which I didn't. It was then in, I think it was in, June we went overseas we travelled in a Dutch ship call the Schwattenhundt and we all
- 04:00 reckon that the last trip it had done was carting cattle, because it really had a smell about it. And one of my mates as he walked up the gangplank, he got seasick, and he was seasick until we got to Milne Bay. It was two and half days travel and when we got to Milne Bay the first thing we heard there
- 04:30 was coming from the coconut plantation was, 'You'll be sorry'. And we were. We got our introduction to the mud and slush and rain of Milne Bay. It was at Milne Bay that I became a section leader, still only with one stripe and that was when our trouble started.
- 05:00 Our company commander had thumbs down, I don't why. But malaria was our big troubles at Milne Bay we had no mosquito nets. We were there for six weeks before we got the mosquito nets, I think it was six weeks before we got any aid for malaria, quinine, so there were quite a lot of
- 05:30 us down with malaria. My section went down from 11 men down to seven, and that was where I got three reinforcements. Now these men came to me and they handed me a letter and I said, "What's this?" and they said, "That's for you" so I took it
- 06:00 and I opened the envelope and what it had inside was that these men are not to be taken on patrol they've had no experience. So I gave them the letter to read, and the three of them read it and I said, "Where did you get this?" And they said that they give it to us back at camp. "Well" I said, I got the letter and tore it up into little pieces, I said, "You be ready at seven o'clock tomorrow morning" I said,
- 06:30 "You're going on patrol with me" I said, "That's the only way you're going to get a bit of information on what's going to happen." So from then on we went all over Milne Bay and we were on beach defence, our company
- 07:00 and the commander, Captain Goldsmith, he was the officer who had no time for me and I had no time for him. So anyway that didn't make any difference. I had a very good section all my own age, chaps 21, 22 and I had my 21st birthday at Milne Bay and to top it off, my mother had sent me a cake with all the

07:30 decorations for a 21st birthday and I got them before my 21st, so I was able to decorate my cake and in the mud and rain and a leaky tent I had my 21st birthday and I shared my cake with my section. We didn't seem to be getting very much information as to what was happening.

08:00 The only way we really knew if anything was happening was the extra air activity and the first we knew that the Japs [Japanese] had landed was when we heard the shooting. Now, a lot of people won't believe this, but I was a submachine-gunner, I had a Thomson submachine-gun and my ammunition was

08:30 nine rounds, they didn't give me any more. And my practice with a Thomson submachine was I had fire nine rounds on a rifle range. So, there were are. That was the practice we'd had with a submachine-gun. So when I heard the firing going on up where the Japs had landed I went down to the see the company

09:00 commander I said him, "Well" I said, "Are you going to give me any ammunition now" I said, "The Japs have landed by sound of it." He says, "Haven't you got any?" "Yes" I said, "Nine rounds you gave me." Now he told me where to go to get the ammunition, it was in the company truck, and the company truck was already loaded up and ready to clear out and make a withdrawal. So I went up and he told me to take 200 rounds, I took

09:30 250. I felt safe and I was guarding a bridge with my section and my orders were if the Japs break through I was to blow up that bridge. I never even had a grenade to blow the bridge.

10:00 I had nothing to blow the bridge. Our armament was a ren gun, Thomson submachine-gun and rifles, .303s. So that was my experience in Milne Bay. When I got malaria I went to hospital and when of course you go to hospital you lose your man's rank. So I came back as a private. I got paraded before

10:30 our new company commander and didn't do any good, I was back to a private which made me very happy. I didn't want the one stripe. It was just around then I heard that they were calling for recruitments for the Pacific Island Regiment and when I got their literature I read it through and thought, 'right,

11:00 this is for me.' They said if you were accepted there was promotion, if not accepted you'd be sent back your old unit. So I had nothing to lose. I went over to, we were transferred then to, Port Moresby and the first day I landed at the unit I was met by our battalion commander,

11:30 Major Bill Watson, he was a real gentleman. He said to me "Frank" he said, he called us by our Christian names he knew everyone of us, he said, "Go down to the queue stores and draw two stripes as of today you are an acting corporal." So that night I was able to write home and tell my parents they could write to me as acting corporal. That was my start on promotion.

12:00 So we had natives in, which just came straight out of the bush, we didn't know their language they didn't know English. So it was them to learn pidgin English, and us to learn pidgin English and that was how we corresponded with them. They were mostly very, very good and eager to learn,

12:30 and I, myself, got on very well with them. That was in 1943 in February when I got over to the PIB [Papuan Infantry Battalion]. About six months later after training these natives that we were sent up in to a place called

13:00 Wau. Now that was the only airstrip in New Guinea, that's on a slant of a hill, and the planes came down a valley and they landed and run up the hill. From there we walked down through Bulolo Valley through many native villages and, if you've ever been to New Guinea, you ask a native how far it is to the next village and he'll

13:30 tell you it's a, 'lick-lick way'. 'Lick-lick' is small. So the next native you ask how far is it, he'll tell you it's a 'lick-lick long way'. You never know where you are and possibly the third one you ask, he'll tell you it's a very long way. Anyway we got to our place, where we were camped. We'd taken over from a company, the 24th Battalion,

14:00 and that was where we started to patrol. We were placed in sections, two sections patrolled from and the third section we were on, what we called, the ambush. That was only one platoon there and we'd taken over from a company, so we were very thin.

14:30 Very hilly. One of our sections, we used to change over every week in each section position, and one place we were at we called a window, it was just a little section, it looked like a window we had a telescope there and we used to look over Lae and Markham River and from there

15:00 we used to report back to headquarters how many planes came in and landed at Lae and how many were taking off the airstrip. There was a boat on the Markham River it used to cross and we used to have to report every time the boat went from the north bank to the south, from the south to the north and approximately the number of people. They were working out, I didn't realise at the

15:30 time, but they were working out whether they were reinforcing Salamaua or evacuating. The bloke who was driving the boat was always dressed in white and we used to get a very good view of him in our telescope. It was there that I was called back to our company headquarters

16:00 and I was told that I was to, I was asked if I would take a patrol across the Markham and over the north banks and patrol the north banks of the river. But actually, previous to that I had volunteered for that patrol because I used to be a lifesaver in civilian life and they said no, it was for another platoon to do that patrol.

16:30 Anyway, it fell to me I was called to headquarters I was told to take my section, the platoon commander was to come with me, and we would walk right up the Markham River to a place where the lieutenant would say right-o this is where we want you to cross. So just before dark I got a message

17:00 that I was needed back at headquarters, so I had to run to get there before dark. When I got there they told me the platoon commander couldn't come with me that the presumed sergeant would come. So thought right, didn't make any difference to me. So the next morning I got another message that the platoon commander couldn't come, platoon sergeant couldn't come

17:30 that I'd have to go on my own. So the next morning I took my section and away we went. We must have gone about eight to ten mile up the river and we picked a place where we said right-o this is where we'll cross. So that was when I asked my men who could swim, this is the natives I mean, and there was only two of the natives that could swim. Whether the other blokes could swim

18:00 or not I don't know, but anyway two of them said they could swim. Instead of being able to take seven men with me I was only able to take two. We built a raft, a little raft, with small dry saplings, and we stripped off into the nuddy [nude] and put our weapons on that, which was two rifles, at that time I had a

18:30 Yankee [American] .45 Colt and that was all I took. It had 10 rounds in the magazine and one in the barrel. I thought, 'right if I get 10 shots I'll turn and run'. Any way we stripped off and we swam across the river and I gave my boys a wave to say right-o go back and report to headquarters that we were over. Little did I

19:00 know that I had another four parts of this river to cross, that was only the first part we had another four to cross over. Beautiful moonlit night and we got across quite safely. Now I've told this story a few times and I've always said throw in a few crocodiles just to make it exciting and at night if you were sleeping beside the river you could hear the 'clap' of the crocodiles

19:30 snapping. Strangely, I didn't give crocodiles a thought. All I was interested in was getting across and the river, if you've seen the Markham River, it churns and is muddy. Normally you wouldn't even go in for a swim, but we got across safely. We patrolled the northern banks of the river

20:00 and we got back to where I had to cross over. We stripped off and I found a log about 10 feet long about six inches through and I tied my clothing, boots, hat and my Yankee coat to this log and we started to swim across.

20:30 We got about half way and the swirls in the river, they caught us, everything got washed off the log except for a shirt and my Yankee coat. So when I got to the other bank I put my shirt on and quite strangely it didn't cover very much and

21:00 of course we were met by the party who was waiting for us, brigadiers, colonels, majors, captains and here I am in my shirt tails giving my report. I asked them for a pair of shorts and they said give us your report first. Anyway, you can imagine how funny it was. I didn't feel real comfortable standing there in my shirt.

21:30 Anyway, I gave my report and a colonel from the 2/2nd Battalion he handed me a tin of tomato juice and said, "Here you are soldier drink this." That was it, I'd given by report. The next day I received my things because that was the day the parachute landed on Nadzab

22:00 and we were in full view and it was the most beautiful sight you've ever seen in your life. You would have to be, I would say at least, 300 to 500 planes in the air at the one time and all these parachutes coming down - white blue green yellow - and each parachute denoted a different, one was ammunition the other one was food, others might have been rifles

22:30 and others were men and some of our Australian troops who landed there that was there first jump out of a parachute. When the paratroops landed that was our turn then to cross the Markham River, that was our signal, and at the same time, I believe, the 9th Division landed at Lae

23:00 and the 7th Division came up through Salamaua. It was a wonderful turn out and very, very pleasing for me to think that I had patrolled there for the paratroops and what I was very proud of there were no casualties. From once crossed the other side we all split up, we all had our different

23:30 directions to go and our company we went up the Markham River and, I just forget the name of the place we went to, but a chap name Dwyer and myself we were stationed in a deserted native village. This was where a very strange thing

24:00 happened to me. I put a native up a tree with a pair of binoculars and told him to look towards Lae, because we were expecting the Japs to retreat from Lae, and the second day we were there the native

up the tree called out, "Master plenty men he come." I said, "Right this is it", so out I went I climbed up the tree took my binoculars and I looked toward Lae and he said, "No not there behind us."

- 24:30 And when I looked there was about 20 natives coming behind us and we couldn't understand their language and they couldn't understand us, now I had 17 natives there and none of them could understand the language. So anyway I sent them all back with sign language I was able to talk to talk to the, seemed to be the, main fellow
- 25:00 who was in this group and I found that his wife had had a baby, the baby had died, but his wife was still sick and he wanted me to do something for his wife. I turned around to my mate, Herb Dwyer, and I said, "Herb, what I earth are we going to do? We'll have to do something for him because if we don't they will go to the Japs." I thought
- 25:30 right, she could have a headache, I had my own little medical outfit, so I took two aspros out and I thought right all natives have got malaria so I put two quinine tablets with it and my mother told me a few things about when she went to hospital to have a baby so I put a cascara tablet [cascara sagrada, natural laxative] with it
- 26:00 I said to Herb, "None of these can do her any harm, everyone of them can do her good." So I gave them to him, I said, "Now take these and give these to your wife with plenty of water." The next day the same thing happened, "Master plenty men come" and I expected to see Japs coming and here were these natives coming again. They were loaded up with bananas, paw paws,
- 26:30 pineapples and sweet potatoes and I said to him, "What's this for?" He said, "Mary belong me, she's right." So that was where I got the name and I was known as the 'little doctor' from then on. I was known as the 'little doctor' right through the Markham and the Ramu Valley and natives used to come to me from all over the place
- 27:00 they'd go away with a bandage or a bit of stick and plaster always give them an aspro, but I never refused to treat anyone. In the meantime, I'd been promoted to a sergeant. I was a sergeant during this time and our first experience
- 27:30 against the Japs was we were given instructions to find out how many Japs were at Gusap Mission Station. Our information we could get was 45 Japs in there and the 2/6th commanders came up through us then and they attacked the Japs at Gusap Mission Station. They ran out of ammunition so we had to bring our ammunition up and supply the 2/6th commanders
- 28:00 with ammunition. It was after they'd take the village we had to take our natives in and we had to station ourselves I the different villages and so that Japs counterattacked all night. Luckily there was only one of my men wounded. I won't tell where he was wounded
- 28:30 but he was very cut up about it. He was my lance corporal. From Gusap we went through to a place called Dumpu. It was there that we were relieved, we went back to Moresby, we had more training from Moresby we flew back in to Dumpu
- 29:00 and from Dumpu we went to a place called Faita, you won't find it on the map it's only a very, very little place, and at Faita we had to build rafts with 44 gallon drums and from there we floated down the Ramu River to a place called Annanberg. And from Annanberg we had to patrol
- 29:30 through all the different areas there. Annanberg had been a mission station, there was a beautiful big home there and I was the patrol section leader, I did most of the patrols, and of course naturally as soon as I got there I went out to get to know the country. The first thing I did when I got to a village
- 30:00 you'd get a small village, their boss was a 'tootell', and a group of villages the head man there was a 'luluwai', so if I went in to a big village I use to ask for a luluwai or a small village a tootell. And then I would wait there for them to come to me. I got to this little village and I said, "Bring me tootell." Then I waited, and saw this native coming towards me
- 30:30 he had a stick about 8-foot long and he was leaning on it like a crutch and he had a foot on him, his leg was swollen like that, so I put my hand up for him to stop and I went to him. He told me that he had gone for a walk through the bush and had just got a bit of scratch and it had got infected. I got out my trusty old medical outfit and there was a river right close handy so I washed his leg I put some ointment on it
- 31:00 and bandaged his leg and then I said is there any more, and of course all the piccaninnies, they all raced down and washed their arm, their legs, they come back there was about 30 of them went 'round with little bits of sticking plaster on their arms or legs and they were happy as Larry. Now his name was 'Snake', he said to me, "If you have to go on patrol
- 31:30 you come and get me I know all this country around here." Well the army doesn't work like that. After treating him I went back to Annanberg, and three days later he had walked 10 mile to tell me that his leg was better. He said to me there and then, I'd never heard this phrase before, he said,
- 32:00 "You my master true." Which meant I was his master above everyone else. About a week after that he was back in the mission station again and I got a message that I was wanted up at headquarters, so I

went up and the officer, lieutenant Tom Bruce, he said,

- 32:30 "Frank I want you to get out to a particular patrol." I said, "Right o." He said, "It will take you about two days, so get some rations and away you go." I went back and called my corporal and told him to get rations for two days and as we left Snake joined in
- 33:00 with us, and before we'd gone 500 yards he had taken the lead and he lead us out and he lead us back. About a week after that I got a message again I was wanted at headquarters and I was told I had to go out and patrol again in a particular place. Snake was in the village,
- 33:30 he'd come over and he'd said giddyday to me and I said, "Giddyday Snake," and he had a little stick over his shoulder with a little bundle about that big on the end of it. Anyway I got my corporal to get our rations and away we went and once again he took the lead and lead all the way out and he lead all the way back. Now you
- 34:00 wouldn't believe this, but about a week later, Snake was back in the village again and I was talking to two of my mates and I said to them, "I'm going on patrol." They said, "How do you know?" I said, "Look there's Snake back." They said, "What's he got to do with it?" I said, "You wait, you'll see." Sure enough, I got a message I was wanted at headquarters and I was told I had to go out on a particular patrol.
- 34:30 Once again Snake lead me out and he lead me back. And every time from then on that I had to go on patrol, Snake was in my village. He had to walk 10 mile to get there? How did he know? Mental telepathy, that's all I can say. Now he lead me out and he knew that country. There was a chap called
- 35:00 Bill Colbert and myself we were sent 60 mile down towards the Sepik River we had a chap, I can never think of his name, he was in ANGAU [Australia New Guinea Administration Unit] and he had 20 natives down there and he had them armed with American rifles and I believe he was kicking up a bit of a shindig down there and we were told to go down and find him and tell him to come out of it.
- 35:30 We said, "Where are we going to look?" He says, "Down there." So you just imagine where are you going to look. Anyway we were told it would take us about five days, we took five days rations and in five days we hadn't even found him so we had ten natives with us, Snake was with us too,
- 36:00 so we gave our nine men most of our rations to get back to camp and Snake took us in a little canoe and we went down the river and he said, "We've got to stop here." And we had to carry the canoe across country for about 200 yards and we come to a small creek.
- 36:30 We put the canoe in there and we paddled down this creek, now it was no more than about four feet wide, and then we come out in to great big lakes. When we got down there, the natives to get away from the Japs they'd gather up all their canoes, there must have been about 150 canoes there, so we left our little canoe there and we went to a little place
- 37:00 where the native had built a new village, there must have been about 20 huts there. We camped there the night and the next morning we found a little passage to sago swamp. There was no way you get through except by canoe and just beside it was a log, I think they used to call these logs gam moot.
- 37:30 Now they're hollowed out and they got a stick there and of course you bump on this log and it goes 'boom boom boom'. So we get this stick and we 'boom boom boom' on this log and we just waited. Nothing happened so about 10 minutes after we belted this log again and we waited again and then we saw the nose of the canoe come through this passage. So we got in the canoe
- 38:00 and we went back in and there was an island in the middle of this sago swamp. There on this island was the bloke we were looking for. So we were able to give him our message that he was to come out. He came out, and in the meantime we got back, we
- 38:30 had to eat a lot of different native foods. It was only through Snake that he was able to find these foods that we were able to eat. The top of a palm tree, the top section of the leaf, if you open it up it's just like eating raw cabbage, quite sweet, and underneath some bushes there was a
- 39:00 little, they looked like a little pyramids, and they were a lot of little berries so big. If you cracked one and it cracked it was like eating passionfruit. And of course we didn't go hungry we were able to find breadfruit and we managed to get some sago, raw sago, if you ever get to eat raw sago don't try it,
- 39:30 we'd run out of tea, we'd run out of sugar. Anyway we get back to camp and in the meantime our officer had decided he was going to build a listing post further down the river. Bill Colbert and myself we were sent down there and we 'd been there about, possibly five or six weeks
- 40:00 and our lieutenant, Tom Bruce, came down and he sent Bill Colbert back to headquarters and he and Tom McGuinness, they stayed there with me. We had found a Mitchell bomber out in the swamp on one of our patrols and Billy Colbert had taken the Browning
- 40:30 machine-gun off it and we'd rigged it up in our position so we had two machine-guns. So when Tom Bruce and Tom McGuinness came down, Bill had gone back to Annanberg, so I said to them, "Which

position do you want to go?" If the Japs attack Bill was going to go down to the Browning submachine-gun and I was going to go over

Tape 2

00:32 **We might just go back to your childhood and growing up and then we'll come back to Papua and your stories from there. If you can tell us a little bit about your parents.**

Well

01:00 my parents were Walter Wust and my mother's maiden name was Maria Marza Troust. Now my father used to work in a flying gang on the Toowoomba Range. And from the Toowoomba Range I believe, I don't know for sure but

01:30 I believe he had to get out of, because of ill health, he had to get out of railway and he took up half share farming. And went on to dairy farms. The first dairy farm that I can remember was at Malu that's up Gympie way. And it was there that the highest

02:00 number of cattle that we milked was 129. And we milked them by hand. Now the milking machines were in the dairy but my father didn't believe in them. So there we were, a mob of little kids, milking all these cows by hand. I can remember at one time the highest I milked, before I went to school was 29. And luckily our school was only about

02:30 half a mile away so we didn't have far to go.

Did you have to milk the cows twice a day?

Twice a day. After school we'd come home and we'd milk the cattle again. But strangely we always had time and of course being a big family: I was one of eleven children. Being a big family we always had time for a game of cricket. And I don't know, I think, I don't think I'd like to be in a

03:00 small family. We had a whale of a time you know with a big family. That's not the reason why we've got a big family.

Where do you fall in those eleven children? Where are you?

I was the 9th. I've got two sisters younger than me.

What was it like having eight older, they were all sisters weren't they?

Well that's why I learnt to fight.

03:30 You had to fight to get anywhere. Not to say that I want any. No, I can't actually remember very much about the family life because I think I was nearly a twelve year old before,

04:00 the older ones had gone out working and they were married and I was still only a school kid. But my mother was a wonderful woman. I don't think anyone could've been loved more than my Mum was. By all her children. There wasn't much of her. She was only about 5 foot 4.

04:30 She was nearly that round too. Father died in 1948, just after I come home from the army. And my Mum lived 1970-something I think it was. And they had a home in Tawonga.

05:00 And the brother and I, we'd gone into partnership, we'd bought the farm off them so they had enough money to retire on. And there's nothing much more than that about my family.

Did you keep it as a dairy farm?

No, brother and I we went into fruit, sugar cane and bananas. We cut our own cane.

05:30 We carted our own cane. We had our own truck because we would cart it down from Eumundi down to Warrnambool. And we bought a new Comet truck, which we'd take down. And I would drive down there and unload it there at the mill. No I think we had quite a happy childhood. We never had a lot of money

06:00 but we had a lot of fun.

What were your schooling days like?

My school days: I can still name 16 schools I went to. And I ended up having correspondence for the last 6 months. So unfortunately, I only got to 5th grade. And that was one of the drags of my life.

06:30 I got as far as I could with a 5th grade education in the army: I got to a sergeant major, which was as far as you could go unless you had a certificate. I got to a gang in the railway. Again I didn't have the education to do the paperwork. So my advice to all children: get an education, the best you can.

07:00 Because I missed out.

Did any of your brothers and sisters continue further?

No. No they were all farmers, mostly in dairy. The younger sister she married a bloke and they were in

07:30 pineapples. And he ended up selling the farm and joining the Noosa Shire Council.

Why didn't you continue school further?

Well we were expected to work on the farm.

08:00 My father if he saw a weed he sent three of us out to chop it out.

Had you father been through World War I at all?

No. No. I had uncles who had been in the war, not my father. I think it was his ill health. He died in '48.

08:30 No. I'm the only one of my three brothers, we had three brothers. I'm the only one there who has been in the army. One brother was in the army but he got out because of, oh what do you call it? Necessary work out on the farm. Primary producer.

09:00 And one brother he had polio when he was 2 months old so he had trouble with his arms. And the older brother, he was too old. He was above the army age. Which left me to do all the work for them.

Did your uncles tell you much about World War I?

No. No there was nothing. Never heard anything about it. The only thing I

09:30 know about World War I was what I've read. And what I've read I didn't like. I've read every book I could find about Gallipoli and against France and Germany and my conclusion there is that I would never have carried out the orders, which they carried out. Not if I'd have been given them.

10:00 It was plain suicide. After my experience in World War II, what they went through it was just suicide. They were dead men before they left their trench.

Had you read about it before you went to war?

No I only read them after. I wasn't interested in war before I went away.

10:30 I was only when Hitler started to kick up a shindig that I got interested. So as I said before, I joined on my 21st Birthday.

Can you remember the reasons why you joined?

Yes. I had seven sisters. And I didn't want to happen to them

11:00 which I had read about in the paper, which was happening to women and children over in France, Belgium, Poland and those places. And I thought I could try and do what I could to stop it.

What had you read in the newspapers?

About the Jews being interned and Germany over-ruling Austria, Poland.

11:30 **What had you read about the women?**

Well I, actually I can't remember, but I didn't think interning the Jews was the correct method.

What were your parents' reactions?

They had no objection to me joining the, at that time it was the

12:00 CMF [Citizens' Military Force] it was the Commonwealth Military Forces. They didn't want me to go overseas. They asked me not to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] they didn't want me to go overseas. They said, "Stay with the defence of Australia." And I complied with that wish. It wasn't until I was overseas I joined the RA [Regular Army]... it didn't seem to make any difference.

12:30 They were sending us over in any case.

The militia was referred to as the 'Chocos' [chocolate soldiers] and there was a certain stigma attached to being in the militia?

There was. It was sort of a disgrace to be in the CMF. We weren't brave enough to go overseas to fight for our country. But as I said before,

13:00 I can not remember any time that I disobeyed my Mum or my Dad. And I complied with their wishes not to join the AIF until I was over 21. And I was overseas in any case so I joined then.

Can you remember the reasons for some of the other men that were in the CMF? What were

their reasons for joining that?

No. I've no

13:30 idea what their reasons were. Some of them they were definitely against going overseas, I know that. They were definitely against going overseas.

Can you remember if there were any incidences maybe at the local pub or in the streets, where people would judge

14:00 **you?**

Only on one occasion when I was down in Brisbane. And we were sent into Brisbane as army pickets. And we were stationed at Roma Street. And we were sent out with the MPs [Military Police] to the Griffin Hotel. There was a disturbance there. And

14:30 when we got there the sergeant who was in charge he grabbed one bloke and threw him into the, what do you call the truck with the bars on?

Like a paddy wagon?

Yes. He threw this bloke and he was a bloke who had one leg blown off, threw him into this

15:00 paddy wagon and he threw his crutches in after him, slammed the door and the MPs disappeared. They left me and me mate who were Chocos and of course the ARF [Australian Regular Forces] come around and they were going to do us over. Calling us MPs and you know. And I said, "No. We're not MPs.

15:30 We're only, we're town picket." And I've still got a glass inside which I've kept. A champagne glass. A very thin one. Which one of these blokes who was doing all the talking he had in his pocket. And one of his mates quietened him down. He said, "Look, they're only town picket. They're not MPs." And this bloke took the glass out and I heard it tinkle in the

16:00 water table. And after they went away I picked it up. And I've kept that glass as a souvenir. And that's the only time that we were more or less condemned as Chocos. We weren't condemned when we were overseas. And it was after the Battle of Milne Bay that we were comrades in arms.

Before you did go overseas, did any of the

16:30 **men get really angry at being referred to as Chocos?**

No. Oh some of them could have been, but I didn't notice it.

Did you get angry?

No. No. Not a bit. I reckoned I was doing my bit. That I was being trained to defend Australia.

17:00 **I've heard about the white feathers being sent to people. Were they sent to people in the CMF?**

No I can't remember anyone ever receiving one. I think that would have been an insult. Yes. No, the only thing, one of our neighbours

17:30 who was a gossip, started a bit of a story around Doomben where we lived that I was in the army for four years and I was still a private. So he couldn't have had much brains. That gave me a bit of a thud. You see when we joined the

18:00 CMF first a private was getting eight shillings a day, a corporal was getting nine shillings. I was approached to take a course to become a corporal and I said, "No. Why would you go through all that trouble just for a shilling a day?" I was having too much fun as I was.

18:30 I was getting trained and I was getting a lot of fun with it.

Did you prefer to have fun and less responsibility?

I think most of us did. You see it was an experience that we were experiencing. We were getting trained sure enough but I think we were going into it as an adventure. You never thought 'right, I'm going to

19:00 cop it'. You know, 'I'm going to walk into a wall of fire'. That never entered my mind. I was cautious sure, but I was invincible. Most of us were.

I guess it comes with being that age as well because you were what? 21?

That's right. Yes. Because nothing could happen to you at 21.

19:30 **Did people in the CMF refer to each other as Chocos?**

No. No. No, we were mates. My whole section was all CMF blokes. And they were all my own age.

Can you tell me a little bit about training in the

20:00 **CMF?**

Well, now you're asking something. You see a lot of this training is marching; left turn, right turn, turn about, turn quick. A soldier doesn't actually realise what this is coming to.

20:30 That's so that when you actually get into action it's being obedient. If you're told to get up, right you get up. If you're told to get down, get down. And this is where your training is. No I didn't realise you know what this actual training was. If the corporal said to turn right and get down,

21:00 that's exactly what you were supposed to do. And that's right.

Did you think it was senseless marching?

I did at the time yes. But once again, marching is toughening you up. It's getting you ready for whatever is happening. Whatever is going to happen, I didn't like the idea of night manoeuvres though.

21:30 Marching out at night when you didn't know where you were going. And that was what I found was one of the mistakes that the officers used to do. They would march you out and not tell you where you were going, not tell you what was going to happen when you got there or where you were going to go when you came back. When I got my instructions I told all my men where we were going and what we were expected to do

22:00 so that every man knew exactly what he was going to do. I didn't believe this going out and no one knows...

Why do you think they did it like that?

I don't know. They may have given it to the sergeants and the corporals but these instructions never come down to the privates.

22:30 So you know we were always in the dark. I can remember some of these officers I always reckoned they should never have been officers. One bloke, if you turned him around twice he wouldn't know where he was. And there was one particular

23:00 company manoeuvre we were doing, we were out around Redbank somewhere and we were having company against company. We were enemies against each other. And anyway we seemed to have got ahead of the other companies in one place. I don't know how. And the officers were talking and at that particular time I was one of the runners.

23:30 And I could hear them talking about, "Where are we? There's such and such a bridge shouldn't be too far away..." you know, "How do we get to this bridge?" And they had got compasses and maps. Anyway none of them seemed to know where they were. So I walked over to them and I said, "Excuse me Sir. I couldn't help but hear what you were talking about. That bridge you're looking for, if you walk up to the top of this little hill here,

24:00 you'll see that bridge." He said, "What?" I said, "Just walk up to the top of the hill and you'll see the bridge you're looking for." And there it was. So from then on they kept me close to them because I was a bushman. And as I said he would get lost if you turned him around twice and it wouldn't matter whether it was day or night, he'd be lost.

Was it hard to have respect

24:30 **for an officer like that?**

It was. You should have heard some of the names we called him.

What did they call him?

Well, he had a strange walk like a duck and we used to call him 'Puddlefoot'. And another name we called him was 'Dive-bomber'. And

25:00 whenever someone saw him coming you'd hear, whsooooo-boom! And we all knew that old 'Goldie' was coming.

You called him Goldie as well?

Yes. Golfmid was his name. And I don't think any of the men had very much respect for him at all.

25:30 He was in that poem I showed you before. They reckoned he went troppo [crazy] over at Milne Bay and he got sent home as unfit for tropical service. Now that was an officer in charge of a company. That was one of the reasons I said I had no respect for him. My life and the lives of the rest of the men there were in his hands.

26:00 And he wasn't the only one. Anyway enough about him.

When you signed up with the CMF what were you issued with?

Well it was quite a while before we received a rifle. And that was one of the World War I rifles. A .303. But we never saw ammunition until we went to the

26:30 rifle range. And of course some of these rifles they were quite rusty in the barrel and you got into trouble if you didn't get them clean. And we never saw a submarine-machine-gun until I think it was 1941. 1941 was the first I saw a submarine-machine-gun. We had the Lewis machine-gun.

27:00 It was quite a good gun but very heavy.

What would happen if the guns weren't cleaned out? The rust removed?

Oh well, it would kick like mule. And no, you've just got to keep them clean.

Were there any accidents resulting from that?

Not that I know of. Not that I know of.

27:30 Some blokes used to get very familiar with their weapons. They would do things with them that you wouldn't normally do. I know one bloke, he was a first class machine-gunner and it was a Bren gun and he had it mounted up on a tripod for anti-aircraft protection one day. And when he was taken down at night he bumped the butt on the ground and

28:00 of course it went off and he didn't. So you can get too familiar with them. And he was a first class machine-gunner. And that's the type of action that will happen if you get too familiar with your weapons.

What else were you issued with?

Well, the clothes you wore.

28:30 **Tell me about them.**

Well, I think we had two shirts, two pair of shorts, two pair of boots, socks, underwear, hat and it depends on the area you were in, whether it was cold or not, maybe one or three blankets. Eating equipment which was

29:00 plates, knife, fork and spoon and an enamel pannikin. Web equipment and that was about it.

And a hat?

Oh yes. We had the army hat. And in the early days we were issued with a

29:30 forage cap but very few blokes wore them.

Did you wear the uniform all the time?

We were also issued with a serge uniform. That was only worn when you went into town or on leave. Otherwise you just wore your

30:00 normal work dress, which was your shirt and shorts. Army boots.

You mentioned with training you did a lot of marching. What else did you do?

Well they taught us how to build rafts to get across the river. They taught us how to

30:30 wrap our weapons and clothes up in a groundsheet so that we could float them across the river without getting them wet. And they taught us how to, if there was a tree beside the river, how to judge the height of the tree so that you could fall the tree across the river and

31:00 you know be able to walk across without getting wet. It was quite a few things like that. How to get from one place to another with a compass. A few of us were given maps. How to map read.

31:30 Mostly we were taught how to become a team. A team to be able to act all together, do the same thing together.

Were there any teething problems with that?

Oh yes. Yes. A lot of men had two left arms, two left feet.

32:00 **What about egos? Were there egos? Would their egos interfere?**

I don't think so. I can remember one day watching a, well I was actually in the march itself, and as you go around a curve you see the front marching in front

32:30 while you are behind. And I'll possibly never forget this. There was all the men all in step except for one bloke. But he was in step with his arm. His arm was going at it with all the rest but his feet weren't. And of course everyone picked it out. And after coming back from one route march, I think the whole battalion was out then. It might have been the whole

33:00 division was out. I know the 61st Battalion was out and the 9th Battalion was out. And when we were coming back in after three days, you know marching all the time. Well I mean we had a rest at night. And they met us with the brass band. The brass band started up and of course

33:30 we all got into step with the brass band. And then the 61st Battalion, which were the Scottish Highlanders, they came over the hill behind us. And the pipe band started up and believe it or not every man changed his step to the pipe band. You could really march with a pipe band. They really had a beat about them. There was something with a Scottie

34:00 Highlander band. The brass band was playing away and I think the band was the only one in step.

During training how often did you hear about the war?

Well the only time, most of us used to buy a Courier Mail if we were in a position to and we would look it up. See what was going on.

34:30 There were no televisions around and very few blokes had wirelesses to listen to. I know I didn't.

What was your reaction when Menzies announced war in 1939?

Well I think most of us expected that it was coming. I think anyone with

35:00 anything upstairs you see, they knew it was coming. They could see it. Me, myself I just said, "Right. It's coming." And that was only my reaction to it. I knew I'd have to go overseas. I knew I'd have to go away. And I was prepared to go away to defend my country.

35:30 No. I had no objections to going. As I said before I had seven sisters and I had something I was going to fight for. When you've got seven sisters and a mother, you know.

36:00 I've only got two sisters left. No, three. So I ring them up every Sunday. We have a talk on the phone.

How long were you in training for?

36:30 Well we would do three months each year and then possibly twice with two weeks at a time. So that would be four months a year we would be training. We'd either go to Redbank, Enoggera, Chermside, Caloundra. I had a period over at Moreton Island at Cowen Cowen.

37:00 Oh no, we had quite an experience of different places. And then of course we had about six weeks up at Rolleston. We dug more holes up there than you could poke a stick at.

What did you do in between training?

I was on the farm. Growing bananas,

37:30 sugar cane, pineapples.

How was it for your brother when you would go to training?

No, I don't know what his reaction was. I think he was a bit disappointed but I knew one of us would have to go. And

38:00 I was in there. And I said, "Well why should I go back and let him come in?" So I was the youngest of the four boys. No, this was right, I'm here, I'll stay here.

Did he cope OK on the farm though?

Well, no.

38:30 There was too much work there but when I left the farm we just had it going good. We had our full quota of sugar cane in, we had about 6 or 7 acres of pineapples and we had 7 acres of beautiful bananas just starting you know.

39:00 And that's when I went into full time training in December 1941. The only thing I'm very jealous about is the years I left, lost out of my life in the army. You know someone today is really enjoying themselves,

39:30 at my age, we were in the army learning to defend our country. And those years we lost, I'm very jealous of those years.

So you really feel like you lost those years?

I feel as if I've lost those years yes.

Did you feel like you'd gained anything?

What was there to gain?

40:00 I gained a lot of experience in defending my country. I learnt a lot about New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain. But I'm never going to go back to those places.

You've never been back?

I've never been back. I was nominated to go back to the laying of the monument in Milne Bay.

40:30 The Caboolture RSL [Returned and Services League] and the Vietnam Veteran Affairs, they both nominated me but I missed out on that. Now I'm not jealous of them. They had the opportunity to be going back, I missed it.

So you would go back?

On an organised trip like that I would go back yes.

41:00 But to go back by myself? My son he's got his own plane and he said, "Dad, if you want to go back I'll fly you up." And I said, "No, I don't want to go back that much." This was when the trip was being organised and I said, "With an organised trip like that yes, I

41:30 would go back but no, not by myself."

Tape 3

00:30 **You're all trained up, did you have any idea at that stage where you were going to be sent?**

00:41 No idea in the world. Far as I knew we were going to be here in Australia. I got the surprise of my life when I landed at Milne Bay.

00:54 **Can you tell us about the orders when they told you were hopping on to a ship and how that all happened?**

01:01 Look I had no idea until we were walking up on to the gangplank of the ship And then we had no idea where we were going. They didn't even tell us where we were going. The first thing we knew where we were they said, "Right that's Milne Bay, that's where we're stopping." Seem to be a secret service.

01:30 **All you blokes, as far as you knew, weren't going to be sent anywhere except for the defence of Australia, so you thought you probably wouldn't be going overseas. So what was the feeling when you were told you were jumping on a boat and going somewhere?**

01:49 Actually, I had no feeling myself. I was right, I'm here, they've sent me here, this is where they want me. As far as I was concerned that seemed to be the place that I was needed.

02:00 **Did you have an inclination of where you thought you might be going?**

02:07 No. No idea.

02:09 **Can you tell us a little more about the ship and what the conditions on the ship were like?**

02:15 Well. I reckon it was an old cattle ship and it really smelt.

02:30 Soon as I got on board I tipped my gear over and I sat it down beside the mast on the deck and I sat down beside it and said "Right this is my spot this is where I'm going to stay." It was very funny I thought to see all the blokes around the rails, feeding the fish.

03:00 I was actually enjoying the trip. I think it was my second day we were out and one bloke came to me and said, "Frank I'm on the Bren gun on the upper deck." He says, "I've been told to go down and get my dinner" he said, "Would you go up and take my position on the Bren gun?" "As soon as I have my dinner I'll come up and take over again." So I said, "Right," and away I went. I went up on deck and took over

03:30 and half an hour later he came up and said, "Right-o Frank you can go down and get your dinner now." So down I went and got my plate out of my pack and I got as far as the gang plank, not the gang plank the stairs down to the kitchen, and the fumes that came up from the kitchen, the hot air, and the smell of cabbage and corned meat and I turned straight around and headed for the rails.

04:00 And of course I fed the fish too. I ended up back at my pack where I first put it and that's where I stayed until we saw the shores of Milne Bay turning up, and surprisingly as soon as we saw land there was 50% of us we got over our sea sickness and we lined up and we watched getting closer and closer to the coconut plantations.

04:30 **Did you end up having a feed on the ship?**

04:35 Well the only meals that I had were army biscuits and water. The only time I was sick was that time when I smelt the cabbage and corned beef. It was the only time I was actually sick, the rest of the trip I

really enjoyed it.

05:00 **Before that occasion what was your opinion of army food in general?**

05:03 I think it was you ate what you got. You ate what was there or you went hungry. I didn't like a lot of meat and I used sometimes swap half my meat with someone else for the vegetables.

05:30 There seemed to be plenty of bread and butter and golden syrup, and quite a lot of plum jam. So we never ever went hungry. There were a few times when the food wasn't as good as what it could've been. You'd always find the officer in charge and the sergeant come around and say, "Any complaints?" and of course

06:00 there would be complaints all over the place, "Not enough of this," "The meat was bad," and some of it was. The old presumed sergeant he would take a piece of the meat and he'd eat it. I asked him later on myself, I said, "How was that meat?" He said, "I had a job to keep it down."

06:30 I hate lamb and the army had a lot of lamb, or mutton, and today I won't even eat mutton. I got sick of it in the army. If I go anywhere on holidays or anything and they put mutton on the table I'll tell them to take it away. No, as far as I was concerned I had plenty to

07:00 eat. There were a few occasions when I was up in the islands that food was short. You'd get four men to one can of bully beef and a packet biscuits. In Milne Bay, many times we topped up our food with coconuts. They were good too, you'd learn how to scrape the coconut out with a spoon. No army

07:30 wasn't bad.

07:34 **Where about from Brisbane did you depart from in the ship?**

07:36 We departed by ship from Townsville.

07:42 **After doing jungle training in Rollingstone?**

07:45 Yes.

07:46 **What was jungle training like?**

07:48 It was at Rollingstone that I got my first one stripe.

08:00 I had a section there, all my own age. There was a bit of jealousy between sections. Each section had a utility truck and we'd be out, maybe, digging trenches or putting up barbed wire entanglements and any stage during the day a whistle would blow

08:30 and they call out a map reference and you would have to leave what you were doing grab your equipment race to your utility truck, all get in, and then find that position you had to go to and form a perimeter. I said to my men, as I said to all

09:00 my mates all my own age, I said, "We are the best, we are going to be the best" I said, "We're going to get there first, we're going to be set up first. Nine times out of 10 we were, I was very proud of my section. That was most of the things that we did at Rollingstone.

09:30 **Why do you think that you stood out amongst the rest of your fellows to be promoted?**

09:40 I don't think I did. I don't think I stood out. Because I was a bushman I think I knew a little bit more about the bush that most of them didn't

10:00 and maybe I showed a little more initiative and possibly that was the reason.

10:14 **You mentioned at Rollingstone you were just digging holes?**

10:22 You were, you'd dig trenches for your section,

10:30 you'd camouflage it and then the officer and the sergeant would come around and inspect it and say, "That's not good enough, you'll have to fix that up." They wouldn't point out what wasn't good enough, and away they'd go, "We'll be back in half an hour fix it up." Away they'd go and you get out and call your section out in front and you'd say,

11:00 "What's wrong with that? You can see anything wrong?" "No" so you wouldn't touch it. They'd come back and they'd say, "Now that's better, you should have had it like that in the first place."

11:16 **How did you use to camouflage the weapons pits?**

11:22 You'd mark out where you were going to dig your trench. The grass that was there, you'd take it off very carefully

- 11:30 and that was the grass that you'd have in front and over the dirt that you would dig out. The dirt you dug out is what you'd put in front and that was your parapet that would give you extra protection. A few sticks and stones from around the place and throw them here and there, casual like.
- 11:54 **Did you have any other materials to rivet it?**
- 12:00 No we didn't have camouflage net or anything. I can remember in one place up in New Guinea, you talk about camouflage, I had a weapon pit that I had the Bren gun I had it made up that it looked like a native pig sty and the dirt which we'd dug out, it was thrown up around us
- 12:30 and the baby grass had grown up through it which gave us extra protection and the roof we had was palm leaves and there was a little bit of the palm leaf would hang down, just strings of it, and blades of grass coming up through it which gave you that extra camouflage that you could see through but they couldn't see you inside. I was in there with a rifle
- 13:00 a Bren gun and an Owen submachine-gun from seven o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the evening, and the Japs didn't know I was there. But when they did they pounded it. No one is going to believe this, even my children won't believe it, they say that if you hear a rifle going off, or a machine-gun going off, that
- 13:30 you can't duck in time, I disbelieve it, because as I said you have this palm leaf down blade of grass going up through it, on more than one occasion on the day I heard this particular machine-gun going and I ducked and when I looked up there were neat little holes through the blade of grass and through the palm leaves.
- 14:00 So I don't know whether I was fast or not, but I was lucky. I was always say that I could beat the machine-gun.
- 14:18 **If we can go back to arriving at Milne Bay on the ship, what were your first thoughts when you saw Milne Bay?**
- 14:23 I thought where are we going to go from here.
- 14:30 You couldn't see anything. Where the boat pulled up there were 44 gallon drums as a bit of a wharf and we just landed on that. I was held back to help unload the ship, so I was there for two days while the battalion was building the camp where we were. So the camp was set up before I was actually
- 15:00 got in to the camp. I can't remember the name of the place where the camp was, but I know that we had to walk through a lot of mud and slush to get there.
- 15:14 **How hot was it?**
- 15:16 During the day you stripped everything off, you stripped your shorts, your boots, we had a little, what we used to call,
- 15:30 a giggle hat that was the only thing we wore. 90% of had our hair cut off so we were all baldy. It was extremely hot, but it was a different heat to here. This is a dry heat, that was a damp heat. Like at night up there you'd strip off completely, this is after we got our mosquito nets of course
- 16:00 and you'd just lie there. I think you more or less got acclimatised after a while.
- 16:16 **How long did it take you to acclimatise before you felt comfortable in the heat?**
- 16:21 I myself I think I, like we're here we've got to make the best of it.
- 16:30 So I think I did the best I could anyway, but it was damned hot.
- 16:41 **Can you remember getting all your shots in Australia before you left?**
- 16:49 Well we got quite a few. The tetanus, no they didn't worry me,
- 17:00 it did some of the blokes. With your vaccinations, some of them got very, very sick, but I just came up in a very small pimple. They'd say 'right you've taken, that's it'. No needles didn't worry me, still don't.
- 17:24 **So when you first arrived and you unload the ship and the other blokes are building the camp, what was the mood of the fellows at this stage?**
- 17:30 I think we just accepted what the situation we were in. We had a tent, eight men to a tent, which didn't give us very much room, we sort of made ourselves comfortable. Daytime we'd be out maybe down the beach front digging trenches,
- 18:00 cutting fire lanes and then back to our camp. Most times we'd have to walk, when they got a few of the

roads in occasionally a truck would take us depending on the distance we had to travel.

18:22 **Did you see any enemy aircraft at that stage?**

18:24 There were a few. I remember, possibly one of

18:30 the first, this was at Milne Bay of course, I had a Bren gun he called 'Niggy Batchman' a very likeable little fellow and we had the Bren gun mounted up on a tripod for anti aircraft and Nick was my Bren gunner, and I can't remember who the second

19:00 Bren gunner was, anyway the air raid was on and the rest of us were in the trenches and I looked around and Nick's mate was missing, and I said "Where's George?" he was in the trench beside me. I never said a word I just got up without Nick and got the spare magazine ready

19:30 to put it on if needed. I saw this Zero coming over, it was no higher than about a thousand feet, I said, "Nick there's one let him have it," and of course Nick was just hands on the gun gazing up in the air like that, not a move out of him. So anyway the first Zero went over, and about half a minute another, I said, "Nick there's another one let him have it," not a movement, then Nick said, "Bombs."

20:00 Then he made one dive for the trench and he wasn't watching the zeros he was watching the bombers way up high. He told me later that he'd actually seen the bomb doors open and he saw the bombs drop. Now those bombs dropped about three to four hundred yards away from us. But luckily that we didn't shoot because the first Zero that was coming in, he had the second one watching for where the shooting was coming from and the second one

20:30 would have got us. So we were lucky Nick didn't shoot when I asked him to. That was my first experience there.

20:46 **As a lance corporal what was your role in the camp at that stage?**

20:52 Just to look after my men and if a patrol had to go out, maybe I was a fool I never asked a

21:00 man to do what I wasn't going to do. I didn't have to lead a patrol out, but I used to take my turn with the men, leading out or leading back. None of the other corporals used to lead, but I did I think I got a lot of respect from my men because I would take my share with them, I would take my share

21:30 with them and guard at night. The others, they reckon they slept right through, but I didn't. I never asked a man to do what I wouldn't do.

21:41 **What was your reasoning behind that?**

21:44 Because I reckoned that I wasn't any better than what they were. No I couldn't see where I was needed any more than any one else.

22:00 No.

22:05 **You must have had a lot of respect from your guys that you did do that?**

22:06 I don't think I got any more. I know one bloke, I told you before I was a bit of a rebel, if someone said you can't do this I'd say, "It could be done," and a lot of times when I should have had two men on guard I only had one.

22:30 There's one bloke, Ernie Evans I think his name was, I always had to wake him. So anyway, at five to when he had to get up, you would race and say, "Right-o you're on" and you'd race back out again. So I'd go in I'd wake him up, I'd come back out on guard

23:00 and you'd wait for about 10 minutes no Ernie. So you'd go back in and wake him up again, "Ernie, you're on guard" you'd go again. Anyway, one particular night it was 20 minutes before I got him out, so the next day when I had the section together I just said to him I said, "How long do you guys have on guard at night?" he fell in to my trap and he said, "We do two hours on

23:30 and four off." I said, "No Ernie" I said, "You do two hours on," no, "You do an hour and a half on, and four hours off." "It takes me 20 minutes," I said, "To wake you up." So I said, "Tomorrow morning if you're not cut out when I tell you I'm going to tip a bucket of water over you." I never had to wake him twice after that. He always got up.

24:00 No, I don't think I got any more respect. I remember on another occasion one of our officers had a, I always said it was dirty habit, of sneaking through the bush to see if had a guard on. I had, I was picked to, a special guard on a bridge one night so I picked my

24:30 men and I said, "Now, we're only going to have one man on instead of two" because there were only four of us. So I said, "Tell everyone that if anyone comes through the bush we're going to shoot and in the morning in the daylight he'll go and see who he hit." Anyway, when it came daylight, naturally in the

daylight

25:00 I had two men on, and I didn't have any visitors during the night, he wasn't game. So I think, maybe I got a little respect that way I would always do the unpredictable.

25:22 **Were the other sections having their own picket points?**

25:24 I always saw where I would get four men to do a job

25:30 they would get six. I never complained because it used to get you nowhere. That was one of the reasons I used to do a guard shift with my men, otherwise I couldn't see myself sleeping while they were out on guard.

25:56 **Did you ever have, because of your responsibilities as that section leader, did you have more responsibilities that meant that sometimes while they were sleeping you'd still be working?**

I always saw where I would get four men to do a job

26:08 Yes, you'd be called up, maybe you'd be called in to get special instructions. Maybe they were going to shift camp or shift positions, change positions so you'd be called away and you'd have to leave someone else

26:30 in charge.

26:31 **Did you like having that responsibility or not?**

26:41 Well yes I did. Although at one stage I had one bloke with me, I don't know how they kept him up there, because he must have been about 35, I just forget his name, and I said, "I can't

27:00 give you instructions as to what to do." I said, "You're old enough to be my father." He said, "Frank you're the corporal." So that's what he thought and he had no objections to taking orders from me.

27:23 **How often would it fall on your section to do patrols?**

27:30 On one particular place we were in we had to send out a patrol every hour on the hour, luckily it was only a bout 15 minutes out and 15 minutes back.

27:42 **Was that like a clearing patrol?**

27:47 Yes. Another one we had to send, I think it was six men, a six man patrol had to leave camp

28:00 every two hours six men would go out and then six men would come back from there. That meant that every 18 hours I would have to do that patrol. On that patrol we had to cross a river

28:30 and the river was neck deep, and that river had crocodiles in but we crossed that river, six men would cross it every two hours and there was never any one ever taken. The natives up there they had a saying when they crossed the river they would make the oldest woman cross last, because the crocodiles used to take the last person.

29:00 **Did that become a joke in the section that the last person was an old woman?**

29:07 I was never the last man.

29:19 **Can you explain what a clearing patrol involved, like when you were going out every 15 minutes?**

Actually, I myself thought it was a useless patrol, because we were just doing the same thing every 15 minutes. I couldn't see any sense in it. It was just going in to a swamp and then coming back and there were no other tracks leading in to that particular track.

29:30 We only did that possibly for about three days, and they called it off. Which I thought was a damned good idea. You know if a patrol had to go out, and you were out for some particular reason, I didn't mind that at all, there was some sense in it. It was only

30:00 when I got up to way past the Markham River that I thought we were doing any sensible patrols. We were going in to Jap territory. We were going in behind their territory. Finding out where they were or what they were doing if they were doing anything.

30:30 Milne Bay I never got in to the action. I volunteered to go up front, but I was told they didn't want NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] they only wanted ORs [Other Ranks] that was one of the reasons I didn't get up.

31:28 **You were telling us about how you first got there, there was no provision to ward off malaria. Can you tell us a bit about that?**

- 31:41 We had no Atebrin, no quinine, mosquito nets. We were told to wear long pants and sleeves down, that was our only protection. They gave us what they call mosquito repellent,
- 32:00 but the best use we found out for it was to put a bit of rag, bore a hole in the lid, put a little rag in it and made a little lamp that we used. We called it our smudge lamp, but I don't know the name of it. We reckoned that was the best use we could find for it. We used to reckon the mosquitos used to love it, they'd come and suck it up first before they'd have a got at you.
- 32:30 **How many of the blokes went down with malaria and how quick?**
- 32:33 I got my first attack, I'd say about, maybe about three months after I was up there. I got sent to hospital at that. Our hospitals aren't like what we've got today. One hospital
- 33:00 I was in my bed was a sheet of corrugated iron with a half a blanket on that. Once you got off the corrugated iron you were in mud that deep. When the doctor was in giving treatment he was standing in the mud. Another hospital I was in was much better. They had coconut logs about six foot apart
- 33:30 and they had holes dug in it and then two saplings in there with a palliasse in that and that was your bed. After about, it would have been at least three months before we got our mosquito nets, one per man, but that was too late.
- 34:00 **Once you get malaria, it's a reoccurring thing?**
- 34:06 Yes it can come at you at any time. I know when I was up at the Ramu Valley I was called back from the front to go on annual leave and when we were up in the hills, it's a different climate, when you're up in the hills it's nice and cool, when you down in the valley you're in the heat
- 34:30 and the heat brought the malaria on. So I went to the company commander and I said to him, Johnny Chalk, he was a hell of a good fella, and I said, "John, I've got an attack of malaria coming on." "Frank, if I were you I'd go and dose myself in quinine and get on your bed and sweat it out" And I did. Anyway I was able to, I think it was the next day
- 35:00 I was able to get out and I got home to Australia and I got another attack while I was home on leave. Once again I dosed myself up on quinine and I'd give that a bit of a help along with a double whisky, that helped.
- 35:30 Then I finished my annual leave, and as I walked up the, you mightn't believe this, but as I walked up the gangplank on to the boat I felt the malaria coming on again. Of course as soon as I got on the boat I asked for a medical orderly and a sergeant came up and asked, "Who asked for a medical orderly?" I said, "I did."
- 36:00 He said, "What's wrong?" I said, "I've got malaria." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "This isn't my first trip up here, I've got malaria." He said, "We'll see about that." A real smart alec, so we went down to the little medical placed they had, took my temperature, 'You've got malaria all right' "Of course I've got malaria," I said. They actually gave me a cabin
- 36:30 to sleep in on his boat and when we got to Port Moresby I had an ambulance waiting for me. I was able to walk out and get in to the ambulance and I ended up with a full malaria treatment in one of the hospitals that was quite a beautiful hospital, we had army nurses and all. It was a pleasure to be in that hospital.
- 37:00 **Do you know what the treatment involved?**
- 37:08 Quite a lot of quinine and rest and stay in bed. No that was about it.
- 37:25 **What was one of the side effects of taking so much quinine?**
- 37:28 Oh you turned yellow. They had
- 37:30 signs up everywhere "Take your quinine." I thought it was best to comply with their rules.
- 37:47 **Earlier on when you got evacuated, you said that you went to the hospital where you were lying on corrugated iron, how close was that to where you guys were based?**
- 37:57 I was there,
- 38:00 it was only about half a mile from the, what we used to call number one strip which was a fighter strip, maybe a half a mile from that. I suppose we were about five miles from the front, and when the Jap cruiser came in the actual shells were going over the top of us while we were in the hospital.
- 38:30 **Were you in that hospital while you were being shelled by the Japanese?**

38:36 Yes.

38:38 **What was that like?**

Well we thought it was our own, we were actually barracking for them. A ship had come in that day and we thought that they'd unloaded 25 pounders, you see, and we were saying, "Give it all."

39:00 We were actually barracking until the next minute there was this 'boomp' over the tent behind us. So we stopped our barracking and jumped in to the trench.

39:17 **At that stage did you still think that it was friendlies just dropping short?**

39:20 We knew what it was then I can tell you. That the was the night they sunk the [MV] Anshun.

39:30 They also came in, we had our hospital ship, the [HMAS] Manunda, was in the Japs, gave message for the Manunda to get out of the place or she'd be sunk too. That was the first we knew that the ship had been

40:00 shelling.

Tape 4

00:33 **So what are your memories of the first hostilities that you saw when you were up there?**

00:44 My first hostilities was actually, it was when we stationed up at Ramu Valley, at Annanberg. No, well actually

01:00 my first was Gusap Mission Station. Very strange this. We'd actually taken over this village just before the Japs were counterattacking, I don't know where our platoon sergeant got to, but the lieutenant, a chap called Sam Lucas he was a Pommy [British] not that I've got anything against Poms,

01:30 he came around he said, "Frank come with me and we'll inspect our defences." So I said to my native corporal, "I'll be away for a while you look after the place." So anyway we got about half way around and the Japs had come in and set up a light machine-gun, they started to fire in to the section. Same Lucas, used to smoke a bendy pipe,

02:00 and I don't care who it is any man wanders when he comes under fire, am I going to hit the ground, am I going to freeze, am I going to stand there in fright or what am I going to do? Now Sam Lucas had his pipe in his mouth

02:30 puffing away and he just turned around to me and the exact words Sam said to me, "Come on Frank, let's charge these bastards," and he took off and he never looked to see if I was coming or if I'd stayed. I said to myself, "If it's good enough for Sam it's good enough for me." I always say thank God Sam was there when that happened so we went in and now whether they saw us coming or not, but they disappeared.

03:00 One of my boys was wounded in that action. Now that was my first experience. The second experience was at Annanberg, we were there from about seven o'clock in the morning, we'd just finished breakfast when they attacked and it was four o'clock when we got out

03:30 and we lost seven men, seven natives and our lieutenant.

03:39 **In that first contact that you were talking about, what was your first natural instinct when you heard that Japanese machine-gun fire?**

03:54 My first instinct was if it's good enough for Sam, it's good enough for me and I was with him.

04:00 And that's exactly what you expect from every other man that is there, that one in all in. That's where your training is, that's where your left turn, right turn, quick march, halt, get up, get down. So Sam said let's charge these I was with him.

04:26 **What weapon did you have with you on that instance?**

04:30 On that particular occasion I had a submachine-gun, an Owen submachine-gun.

04:34 **How much ammo did you have on you at that time?**

04:35 I had plenty of ammo. I had plenty of ammo [ammunition], I always thought that I had plenty of ammo after the first occasion.

04:47 **Once you realised that they'd obviously scarpered, what was the follow up then?**

04:54 Well they cleared off, but they came back periodically through the night.

05:00 They never got through us. The next day we just pushed them back. But that was my first experience there. General Vasey, came through, I'd met him before on different occasions, and I always found General Vasey a real gentlemen, only senior officer I ever had any time for.

05:30 He came through, now we never wore rank, he didn't know whether I was a private or what I was, and he said to me, "Well soldier what did you think of the action?" I was sort of taken aback, a general coming up and talking to you, I said, "Well sir, after the information we gathered I think they did a fantastic job."

06:00 There were 260 odd dead Japs. Our information as we'd gathered it was 40. Now the Japs had been reinforced the night before and some of the dead Japs still had the packs on their back. They were stupid, honestly, you didn't see anything like them. Once you got a Jap out in the open he'd

06:30 run, and he'd throw everything away. I saw them throwing rifles away, I saw them even pulling their shirts off and throwing their shirts away. They'd just run. But in the bush they were perfect. But once again, I found out from different blokes that if you sit behind a bush, doesn't matter how small it is, you can't be seen, but if you move just that little bit

07:00 you're seen. Ninety per cent of their ambushes were turned against them because some silly Jap go anxious and he'd move. Me and an officer stood behind a bush one day and there were two Jap officers had come through and there

07:30 were no more than what, Kylie [interviewer] is away from us, but we were behind one bush, they didn't see us, and no more than 20 yards away, wouldn't be 20 yards, 20 feet away we had 20 natives sitting in behind bushes. Now both he and I had submachine

08:00 guns, the don't know how close they were. All they had to do was just move their head down and they would have looked straight in to our eyes. But because we were in the middle of three, we'd stuck in between three companies of Japs and we didn't want to be seen, we didn't want to be heard, and that's why we had to let them go.

08:30 **Can you tell us about the battle that you had there?**

08:35 Well there was actually nothing, nothing to really to talk about there. Look, you can be in a jungle, you there and I'm over here, you can hear the guns going off and of course the only

09:00 thing that you've got to go on is where they are going off. So you've got to shoot back to where you think they are maybe. I know on that particular occasion there, there was this rifle shot, about every five minutes I could hear this one particular 'crack'

09:30 and I was thinking, "Now where is that coming from?" So I started looking for it. And when I heard this particular crack I saw a little puff of white smoke coming, I thought, 'right, that's where he is'. So I just rid around with the machine-gun where I saw that smoke coming from.

10:00 There was no more noise come from there. So whether I chased him out or what happened, no one will ever know. You just can't see them, they can't see you.

10:21 **Did you feel that your jungle training in Rollingsstone prepared you enough for the conditions that you faced up there?**

10:25 We didn't have any jungle training here in Australia.

10:30 The only jungle training we had was when we got to New Guinea. Australia is open, open country. Some of the other troops, they went through Canungra and places like that, but we didn't. We had first hand jungle training and you found out, you soon learnt

11:00 that a movement and then still.

11:12 **When you were in such close quarters to your enemy how does smell work?**

11:24 Smell. Well, put it this way we smell to natives, natives smell for us. I could actually smell a Jap camp at least 200 yards away, that's if the wind was blowing towards you. The natives could do better than that. So when we were going out we had, if the wind was drifting towards us, we had a bit of a warning, more so than what the white troops would ever have.

12:00 I was always glad that I was with native troops.

12:10 **Can you tell us again how the literature you read was asking for volunteers for PIB?**

12:15 Well when we were given our instructions, like the captain would go back say to brigade headquarters

and he'd get instructions as to what was expected of us and then he'd call us in and he say, "Right-o we want a patrol to go to such and such a place to find out what's there." Now we would be given say 24 hours maybe 48 hours maybe a week depending on how far away

- 13:00 this position was. Now how we got there, how we found out our information and how we got back, that was left to us, and I think that was very good. With a white unit it was different. They are told to go in there, they are not given individual instructions.
- 13:30 I went in the way I wanted to go in, not the way someone else told me.
- 13:37 **Was that one of the things that appealed to you about being in the PIB?**
- 13:41 That appealed very, very much to me and them being bushmen. They taught me a lot.
- 13:49 **How did it all come about you going in to the PIB, how did that all happen?**
- 14:04 Well the first thing was this gossip back at Doonan where I used to live, she spread a bit of a rumour 'round, or a bit of a gossip 'round that I'd been four years in the army and I was still a private and I couldn't have had much upstairs. So when I heard that I thought 'right, being a bit of a rebel I'll have to pull me horns in
- 14:30 and let's see what I can do'. Then this pamphlet came 'round with new information if you accepted in the PIB. I thought here's my promotion. So when I transferred over, I did pull my horns in and I did get the promotion.
- 14:53 **Did it bother you that you were leaving all your mates?**
- 15:00 In a way yes, but I made new friends when I got over, not many because there were so few of us. There was only, in a section, I was the only white man in a section. In a platoon, there would be four white men
- 15:30 in a company there would be about 15 white men, so you didn't have many friends and even then you'd be in different areas, so you may not see your other section for three, four weeks, might even be a month. I was three months at one stage and I never saw another white man. My contact was walkie talkie radio
- 16:00 or I'd have to send a runner.
- 16:05 **How effective was that method of communications?**
- 16:07 Radio, not very good. Runners quite good. Pigeons no good at all, because in the rain the pigeon would get wet and wouldn't fly. I can tell you a funny story about that too. Do you want to hear it? Well, it was over in Bougainville,
- 16:30 the lieutenant, I always called him Mac, he and I were sent out on a patrol to try and find the Hongori River and we were given pigeons to send out. So we went out and of course the rain came down and the pigeons were in cardboard boxes and of course
- 17:00 the cardboard boxes got wet. And on this particular occasion we didn't get to the Hongori River, and we got back to camp and we've still got these pigeons. The next morning when we woke up I could hear 'drrr drrr drrr' and here's one of the pigeons walking around. I said, "Hey Mac one of those pigeons got out," he says, "Catch it." So here we are going around trying catch this pigeon and of course
- 17:30 the next thing the pigeon took off. If a pigeon gets back to your headquarters without a message that means that that patrol is in trouble, and they send out a fighting patrol to get them out of trouble if they can. I said, "Mac what are we going to do now?" He said, "Write a message and send it with the other one," I said, "What am I going to put?" He said, "Put down what you like." I don't know whether I should say this on camera, but I wrote on it, "This bastard's mate got away"
- 18:00 put it in their little capsule and sent the pigeon away. About three months later we got relieved and I'm at the head of the jeep train and there's a bloke there, he must have had about a thousand pigeons in cages, and every time a jeep train came in he would send pigeon off, and every time a jeep train went back he would send another one.
- 18:30 I said to him, "What are you doing this for?" And he said, "That's to let them know that the jeep train got here and that the jeep train got away," I said, "Have you ever got any funny messages?" "Yes, we get a few occasionally." I said, "Any very strange ones?" He said, "Yes, a couple of months ago I got one" I said, "What was it about?" He said
- 19:00 "All it said was this bastard's mate got away." I said, "Did you get that?" He said, "Yes." "Well," I said, "meet the man who sent it."
- 19:17 **So no forwarding patrol was to sent to rescue you?**

19:18 No.

19:21 **Were there any other strange, funny things that happened that you can recall? Like, you mentioned before about Snake's mental telepathy, did you think of that at the time?**

19:44 The only thing I thought was mental telepathy, how the diggings did he know that I was here? The natives are very superstitious. I had a

20:00 Yankee grenade, which I always carried with me, I never trusted it and I always said that when I got to a likely place I was going to throw it in and get a feed of fish. So I got this message that I had to go out and patrol, this message had come in and there was this very strange thing in the bush out beside their village. It was walking around, it was shiny, it had doors in it,

20:30 it had windows in it. So the officer said to me, "Frank you better go and find out what it is." By the time I got to the village it was dark, or just before dark, and it was a beautiful river there and I thought I'll have fish for tea. So I got the grenade and I was going to throw it in and the natives said, "No, don't throw it in there, if you throw the grenade in there it is going to rain. You'll make it rain and

21:00 rain and rain." I thought you superstitious beggars I'll show you. So I just pulled the pin and just tossed it in and up came one fish, about that big. The closest I can get to the name of it would be like a Red Emperor. So I said to the natives of the village, hop in and get the fish. No, they weren't going to go in there. So I said to my boys, "Go in and get the fish," no they weren't going to go in. So I said, "You superstitious beggars" so

21:30 stripped off and went in. I got the fish. I said to my native cook, his name was Marty, I said, "Marty you take this fish and cook it for my tea tonight." So away he went. He came to me and said, "Master fish he cooked now you come and eat." Believe it,

22:00 or not, just at time I got a funny feeling in my stomach and it go worse and worse, and I got so sick that I felt as I was going to vomit, I almost feel like it just thinking about it, so I said to the other two blokes that were with me, they were single blokes, so I said, "Right, go and have a feed of fish." They went and had their dinner and they

22:30 came back and I said, "What was it like?" they said "It was beautiful." Meanwhile cook boy come back and he says, "Master plenty fish left," I said to him, "Did you cook it?" He said, "Yes," I said, "Did you clean it?" He said, "Yes" "Well you go and eat it" and his eyes popped up and he says, "Can me eat that fish?" I said "Yes you can eat that fish." So he turned and went away and within three minutes I was right as rain, there was nothing

23:00 absolutely nothing wrong with me. Now, I do not know, I went and had a feed of bully beef and biscuits. Where I could have had a beautiful fish. So that is one of the little things which happened, but you've no idea why. I've no idea why.

23:22 **Did you ever find out what the thing was that scaring the villagers at night?**

23:27 No. They've just

23:30 got a superstition. You can be taking them through from one place to another, and might take longer than you expect, you might have to camp over night, and you say right-o there's a nice dry spot over there we'll camp there, and they'd never been there before in their life and they say, "No we can't camp there, we'll camp over here. You can't sleep in that spot." That's taboo. No way in the

24:00 wide world could you even get them to go there, but over here, yes they'll sleep there.

24:11 **How were the natives paid?**

They were paid with money, but in my opinion I thought they were paid very poorly.

24:20 **Do you know what they were making?**

24:21 Yes. A private got ten shillings a month, a lance corporal got 15, a corporal got a pound

24:30 and a sergeant got 25 shillings, that was a month. But that was a lot of money then for them, I mean after all we were only getting five bob [shillings] a day to throw lead around.

24:45 **What other things would they get out of that besides the pay?**

24:50 I think they were very proud to be a soldier. They took soldiering extremely,

25:00 they were a soldier and they were proud of it.

25:06 **Were they fed and clothed as well?**

25:07 Oh yes. They were fed and clothed. Their clothing was their 'rani' which they normally wear and their

food was rice, fish, meat, I don't what else there was, but they supplemented it with different native foods.

25:38 **Did you have to carry out extra provisions for paying with tobacco and salt and things like that, if you came across another village?**

25:47 At times, yes.

25:50 **What kind of stuff did you carry for that?**

25:51 Dog biscuits, tobacco, bully beef, what we used to call me and vee, meat and vegetables,

26:00 beans, maybe spaghetti, I even bought a canoe one day for about 10 sticks of tobacco and half a dozen packets of dog biscuits [dry biscuits].

26:22 **So in your patrols in PIB, how many soldiers would go out on a patrol with you?**

26:31 Well, as I told you, I was a rebel. Where other blokes would take out five men, I would go at three, I'd have two scouts in front of me and one behind. I felt quite safe with those three men and I would change them over periodically.

27:00 **What was your rationale for doing it like that, taking out few men?**

27:14 Less noise, you could move quicker, faster and less movement. I myself though it was safer.

27:30 **What about what you were telling us about how you learnt how to walk through the jungle in your army boots without making any noise, how did you learn that skill?**

27:40 If you were walking through and you cracked a twig, the natives would look around at you and they'd frown and 'shh' don't make a noise. So you would learn. More or less sort of tippee-toe.

28:00 I find myself sort of sneaking through the bush, not walking, you were sneaking through the bush or through the jungle. Sometimes I still find myself sneaking around like that. Even in civilian life the blokes used to call me hawk-eye. You've got to use your eyes, your ears.

28:30 **Was it the jungle that made you attune all your senses to a heightened level?**

28:38 I reckon it was. You would hear things that, or listen to things that you would never listen to before. You would hear things that normally you would never hear. I think you would see things you would never see before.

29:00 or you just weren't used to it. I never walked on tracks, I always broke bush, I'd go around. I'd always come back to the track, cross it go the other way. A lot of blokes always walked the track, but I wouldn't.

29:30 **Would that compromise the speed or the distance you could cover in a day?**

29:38 Mostly we were given a time, provided you got there and got back in the time you were given how you got there was up to you. It was a good way to go.

29:53 **Were the Japanese using booby traps on the tracks at that stage?**

29:55 I never ever ran in to booby traps. We used booby traps.

29:59 **What sort of booby traps did we use?**

30:00 We used to call them Murray switches. They had a little gadget that we'd put against a tree and you'd put a blank cartridge in it and the other end of the blank cartridge you'd have orange fuse and then in to a grenade at the other end. You'd then run an almost invisible wire

30:30 across the track. So they'd walk through the track, you'd pull the trip wire, the cartridge would go off, ignite the orange fuse, the orange fuse used to burn at 90 feet a second, and you'd have about three pieces of this orange fuse and then in to the grenade and the grenade was instantaneous. I was

31:00 very fortunate once, we walked in to our own booby trap. The orange fuse burnt about that much and then went out. I was standing no more than six feet from the grenade. So you get some very close encounters, gives your nerves a bit of a shake occasionally. On another occasion

31:30 I had almost the same thing happen, the same place it was too. You change the position of your trip wire and on this one we had it waist high and it was either a bird or a branch fell off a tree, and hit it and it went off. It was about 10 o'clock at night, just getting comfortable in bed,

32:00 and I had two visiting officers with me from the 24th Battalion and within five seconds I had my section of natives over where I was and I had these two officers over and they said, "What are you going to do?" "Well I'm going to go out and see what happened." They said, "You can't go out it's dark" "Well" I said, "What are you going to do?" They were the officers, "Don't know." "Well" I said, "You can

32:30 either come with me or stay here until I get back." It was so dark that I had one of my natives crawling on the ground and there were mushrooms up there that shone at night, and we had a bit of mushroom in his hair and the next native had a hold of his back and he had a mushroom in his hair and then

33:00 I come next holding his hand, and then I think there was one, two, four natives myself and these two officers come through. Anyway the bloke in front he found the hole in the ground where the grenade had, and he passed a message back, this was it. I know it was stupid, but what can you do

33:30 I had to find out if there was anyone there. So I lined my men up in a straight line and told them I was going to switch my torch on and if they saw anything move, they were to shoot. The officer said you're bloody mad, I said, "Yes, maybe I am." I shone the torch and there was nothing there, so I worked it out it was either a limb or a bird had flown through. So we went back in to camp and

34:00 I fixed up another booby trap. They said, "What are you doing with that?" I said, "I'm going out to set it again" "You're not going out again are you?" So I went out and I reset this grenade, I said, "I want to have a bit of a sleep." Anyway I went out and set it. They weren't having anything of it.

34:21 **What was the purpose of their visit?**

34:25 It was to come up to see for themselves what the actual front

34:30 looked like, or as far as we were going. We were only attached to them, they were in charge of the area and one was the battalion commander, I can't remember his name any more, and the other one was his 2IC [Second In Command].

34:49 **What was your opinion of them?**

34:52 One of them, thumbs down, that was the battalion

35:00 commander.

35:06 **Do you know what their opinion of you was?**

35:09 About the same I think. He came up to me and he said, we were at the window and we could see the area, and he had a little map of the area too, but the only thing was his map he was calling the

35:30 different places different names to what I knew them by. He was calling the bottom position that I knew as the 'Governor's Stairs', he was calling it the 'Ambush'. The top position, which I knew as the Ambush, He was calling the Governor's Stairs. He was pointing to these places on the map and then pointing out that position. Even I know that

36:00 he's saying the wrong name, that's the place he wants to go to. So I said, "Right, if you want to go there we'll have to leave in about half an hour." I got my corporal and we got our rations together for overnight and we went out. We climbed up this big mountain and we got there just on dusk. I said, "We'll camp here" I said, "The main track you want to see, is just over this rise"

36:30 because I'd been over there before. We slept there that night and at daylight we were up. I said, "Right-o we better go over so you can see what you want to see." He said, "Look we're at the wrong place, I wanted to go down beside the river" I said, "I can get you there in 20 minutes." So I just broke bush, and I got him there and I said

37:00 "That log there is a call a slippery log." It was a log that went over a creek, and I said, "Just as you cross that log you come to a grass paddock." We call it bladey grass here, they call it kunai out there. I said, "You can see the kunai grass from here, at top of that rise that's where the Japs are" I said, "If you want to go there, I'll take you." He said,

37:30 "No I have to get back to headquarters, an important engagement." So he turned around and we went back. The words he said to me was, "Frank, if I ever want to go anywhere again I'll ask for you" I thought to myself, 'that's good, he's pleased with what I've done for him'. He didn't, he gave me the thumbs down when he got back to my headquarters.

38:00 I got called back about 20 mile back to go back to headquarters. They asked me what happened so I told them, so I said to the company commander, "Whose word are you going to take, his or mine?" He said, "We'll take your word." I hope he has. We've been good friends, right up to when he died, I knew him and I knew his family and all.

38:30 **How well did you sleep?**

38:33 You got your sleep when you could and when you're asleep, I didn't know and I don't know to this day,

whether the natives all went to sleep or whether they put a guard on or not. I asked them to put a guard on, whether they did or not I don't know. I know there was only on one occasion I had to wake up and I found the guard asleep,

39:00 so I told him to wake up, I went back to sleep again. When I woke up an hour later he was asleep again, so I thought right keep on sleeping if they haven't found us by now they're not going to find us until morning. You just had to take that risk, and I did.

39:23 **Would they keep a fire burning all night as well?**

39:25 Oh no, no. In our, back in our headquarters, yes they'd keep a fire going all night.

Tape 5

00:32 **Frank are you OK to start off with your song?**

00:42 I'll give it a go. Don't be surprised if you have to block your ears. It's a parody to the 10 pretty girls, which was a hit song way back in the 1930s:

\n[Verse follows]\n There were 10 Kittyhawks flying oh so high\n 10 Kittyhawks way up in the sky\n For they were to patrol, not to

01:00 stand or barrel roll\n

they're guarding the shores of Milne Bay\n

there were 10 Kittyhawks lined up on the strip\n 10 Kittyhawks ready for the trip\n

for where they'd come through to take off in the blue\n the mitsy bitsy boys were on their way\n

That's the first verse.

01:23 **Can you remember any more?**

01:23 I'd prefer not to sing the last one, because it's got a little bit of discrimination in it.

01:30 You can read it if you like.

01:35 **Can you read it out? The last verse?**

01:42 \n[Verse follows]\n Now four were blonde and four brunette\n

While Truscott was a stumpy little red head\n His boys were brave\n

02:00 Now the Japs were in their grave\n

And as per acting hero\n They always claim a Zero\n Now those 10 Kittyhawks\n Their job is done\n They've lowered the flag of the rising sun\n So let's give our thanks to our boys, not the Yanks\n For the Aussies are on top in every way\n

That's what I didn't, your thumbing down to the Yanks and the Japs.

02:30 **When did you used to sing it?**

02:34 Well I never used to sing them, I just got them as a collection of songs and poems that I found. I have no idea who the author is, but I think it was someone in the 9th Battalion. I've taken them in to

03:00 army reunions, I've put them on display, and I couldn't get anyone who recognised any of them.

03:13 **When was the first time you came across that song?**

03:16 In way back in 1942. We landed at Milne Bay and it was only about, maybe, six months ago that I happened to be going through some of my odds and ends and I came

03:30 across them, and I thought they're too valuable to be sitting at the bottom of my cupboard, so I brought them out and I got my wife to type them up for me. There's been a couple of them printed in our local paper and outside of that I've been trying to find someone who I can give them to.

03:57 **Can you remember who did you hear singing it?**

04:03 I've never heard any one singing it, it's just a parody to the song on the '10 pretty girls' and it was just one of those that I found and I've copied out and kept. I've hummed it to myself a couple of times. I

thought it was quite nice, because I used to like the song of '10 pretty girls' and I've forgotten what that is now.

04:30 **Did you ever hear much music?**

04:34 Not a lot, although we did have our concert parties when we got back in to base. There were some very, very good concerts. I never saw any with Bob Hope or any of those big highfalutin TV [television] stars. We didn't 't see any of those. We had blokes dressed up as girls and they'd come in and act

05:00 the part quite well. They would have fights, and one particular night we went to watch this fight and I don't know what actually happened, but on the outside there was a bit of an argument started up and everyone turned around to watch the one outside instead of in the ring.

05:30 **Were the concerts mostly singing?**

05:37 Oh no, there was one bloke there with a pair of drum sticks. He played the drums right across the floor. He was the best I've ever heard in my life. While he was going backwards and forwards, he was turning 'round and almost doing somersaults. He was terrific.

06:00 **Were there ever any plays or skits?**

06:03 I can't remember any. We used to get a few films, but this was only when we were back in base. I believe there was, once in, I just forgot where we were, somewhere round Lae, and they had this open air picture show. They tell me, I didn't see it, they tell me that

06:30 all the Aussies [Australians] were one side and there were half a dozen Japs on the other side. Never knew they were there until the next day. That's only hearsay, I don't know if that's true, it's quite possible.

06:48 **Did the natives ever perform?**

06:50 Yes, some of them. I used to play a mouth organ for my own enjoyment, not for anyone else just myself and one night it was pouring rain

07:00 and I was playing a little tune and this black head come through the bit of hut I was in, he said, "You play and I dance" and he did out there in the mud. He was just fantastic. I've seen a few corroborees they've had up there. I don't whether it was a privilege for me to have been there, but I happened to get in to see them.

07:30 I've seen a few of their burial ceremonies, very weird. No, they didn't have any actual concerts, they had their dances, their ceremonial dances.

07:48 **Overall did they include any of the Australians in any of their culture activities?**

07:57 No. I didn't see anyone included in

08:00 No it was purely native dances.

08:05 **What about to watch as an audience?**

08:06 Oh yes. Yes there was quite a few of us. It would be announced as it was on so maybe a couple hundred or maybe more who would turn up.

08:25 **Were you ever invited back to their villages?**

08:27 I've eaten with them,

08:30 joined in with them in their meals, god knows what I was eating. At night time I was invited in to, they had separate huts, if they invited their visitors to stay in overnight. I've slept in them.

09:00 Some of their food I wouldn't eat of course.

09:05 **Why?**

09:07 Have you ever eaten dog?

09:17 **Really?**

09:17 Really.

09:19 **What else?**

09:20 Isn't that enough for you?

09:23 **What about cats? Did they have cats?**

09:26 Now that you're talking about cats, I can tell you there

09:30 we were about three months and we hadn't had fresh meat, and one night we had fresh meat in our stew, and everyone was saying to our quartermaster, "When did the fresh meat come in?" He said, "There's no fresh meat come in," "Well what did we have for tea?" "Ooh" He said, "So we did." So we called our cook boy in and our cook boy had been

10:00 a head hunter, and he was a very good cook too. So he said, "Where did the fresh meat come from?" he said, "Pussy cat."

10:14 **How many times did that happen?**

10:16 Only the once.

10:18 **What did it taste like?**

10:19 Well, I enjoyed it, but there were a couple that raced outside and there was quite a few that asked for second helpings.

10:30 I wasn't lucky enough, I had to satisfied with one helping. But I do believe that it was cat.

10:40 **Before you were talking about how you were called the doctor, were there any kind of medical procedures that they would do in their own traditional medicine that they would teach you?**

10:59 No,

11:00 they were very jealous of their own, no I couldn't get anything out of them like that.

11:08 **Why?**

11:09 I don't know why, they were very jealous of their own.

11:15 **What do you mean 'they were jealous of their own'?**

11:17 Well they guarded it very well. I couldn't get anything out of them. There was on one occasion they

11:30 knew that I was coming through their village on this particular day and this woman was due to have a baby, and the baby wasn't waiting, and they were saying, "Wait for little doctor, wait for little doctor." Anyway, when I got there the baby had been born. So I said to my Mum when I come home I said, "What would I have done?" She said, "It's very strange that a

12:00 person who doesn't know anything about it would have done the right thing." So there you are. I didn't treat anything like that, only scratches and some open wounds.

12:17 **If they regarded their forms of medicines so high why do you think they came to you?**

12:30 I don't know. This word of mouth gets around that little doctor's in the area. Look, mental telepathy again I'd say, they know you're in the area and they know you're coming through. Just how they know I don't know.

13:00 **Do you think some of them were willing to drop their traditional indigenous methods?**

13:10 When they saw what you'd done for one and it was ok, they would come back. We never ever carried a medical orderly with us anywhere. That was the reason I carried the medical bag.

13:27 **Do you think it would ever cause any conflict in the villages?**

You mean fighting between themselves?

13:33 **Yeah.**

13:34 Oh yes, quite often.

13:40 **How? Why?**

13:41 You've heard of this payback? It's an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. So I don't know

14:00 but they did have their own battles, not while I was up there, like reading they had their own battles beforehand and they have their own little village fights up there now.

- 14:36 **But do you know of any impacts that resulted in the communities because of the Australians had entered in to it?**
- Not that I know of.
- 14:47 **Within their villages some men who left the villages to come and fight, how did that impact the village?**
- 14:58 Well the native soldier
- 15:00 he was a soldier an he was looked upon a little bit above the rest of the village. They were only 'kanakas'. He was a soldier and to call a native a kanaka was an insult.
- 15:30 Especially if you called a native man an old woman, that's an insult.
- 15:38 **Did that ever happen?**
- 15:40 Yes.
- 15:41 **What happened?**
- 15:45 Well I don't know the reason why, but one of the natives told me that the next time we were going out on patrol I wasn't going to come back. So I called him out straight away
- 16:00 I said, "You've got a rifle, you've got grenades why wait 'til we got out, go out and shoot me now" I told him I said, "You're just like an old woman." Nothing happened. He wasn't game, I called him out, I called his bluff. I told him to go and get his one talks
- 16:30 from his own village.
- 16:40 **That was very effective then?**
- 16:42 It was very effective and you had to show a brave front. I tell you what from then on I slept with a .38 revolver under my pillow.
- 16:51 **Really, did you feel in danger for your own life, a lot?**
- 16:54 I didn't feel that I was actually in any trouble, but I thought if it comes I'm ready.
- 17:03 **Did you hear of any times when it did?**
- 17:04 Some of them would say to you, "What's the difference between you and me?" You cut my arm the blood comes out red, you cut your arms the blood comes out red. The black soldier was the same as the white soldier, he goes in to battle and he comes out
- 17:30 he knows everything. Some of them were good. And they were just like us, we'd be told you got to go through the ren practice, he'd say, "What again?" and if I told them, because I had to give my natives Bren gun practice, same thing happened,
- 18:00 "We know all about it." I had to think up something very quickly, I said, "You do, do you?" they'd say, "Yes", "We'll see about that." I put a cloth on the ground and I got another blindfolded one of them and said, "Now pull the Bren gun to pieces" and they made a game out of it. They pulled it to pieces,
- 18:30 and they'd put it together again. "Me next, me next." They were terrific.
- 18:35 **What was their English like?**
- 18:36 Pidgin English. Some of them were very, very good. We had a native sergeant major, he could speak better English than what I could. I was told he could taxi a plane from one place to wherever he would take off. Now
- 19:00 I never ever seen it, but I was told. I spoke to him and I was talking to him in pidgin English and I said, "What the blue blazes am I talking to you in pidgin English for?" I said, "You can speak as good as I can." He could.
- 19:23 **How did you find learning pidgin English?**
- 19:30 At first we found it a little bit difficult, but it came to us quite easy.
- 19:36 **It's the type of thing that if you think about it too hard it becomes more difficult?**
- 19:40 Well you've got to leave a few words out and add a few more, cut the end off some of them. Instead of saying, "You fellow" "You fella" "What man you belong you?"

20:00 **Were there any times when you stuffed it up?**

20:10 There was only once when I was trying to learn Motuan that's the Papuan universal language throughout Papua and one of my batmen men come to me and he said to me, "I'm going on guard, can I have a loan of your Owen gun?" It's a real no-no to give your weapon away and

20:30 I thought to myself, well he is my batman, he washes my clothes, he cleans my boots, and cooks for me and all this. Well I've got to do something back so I gave him my Owen gun. So I waited and waited, two hours go by, and there was no Owen gun came back. Couple more hours go by. No, I thought he can't be on guard for four hours, and after about six hours I called for

21:00 him and he come over, he doesn't have my Owen gun. I thought right I'll try my Motuan on him, I said, "Maaree lary e Owen gun insee ary ore" and he looked at me and said, "Master you can speak Motuan." He rattled back saying a string of language back at me, I never understood a word he said so I gave up. I went back to

21:30 pidgin English. He did tell, me when he went off guard he'd give it to the next bloke and then when he went off he'd give it to the next bloke. There you are, eventually gave it back.

21:44 **What names do you have for them?**

21:47 Well I've got a book in there, I've got them all written out. My batmen was Maaree, my corporal was Alpalcha.

22:09 **What do these names mean in general?**

22:19 The native people, that I was with, they were PIB, they were soldiers, or NGIB [New Guinean Infantry Battalion]. ANGAU was 'fuzzy wuzzy angels', there was quite a distinction. They were carriers, not army at all. Quite a distinction and it was more of an insult to call one of our men ANGAU, 'me soldier'.

22:57 **So what kind of conflict did that create for them?**

23:07 It didn't create any conflict for them at all, they were just a class above the average native.

23:18 **Just back to when you were helping them when they were injured, how easy was it getting more supplies?**

23:32 Whenever I went or passed through a different unit, see we were attached troops, there maybe a platoon or a company that would be attached to a battalion or a brigade and we would patrol for them. So, whenever we through them I would get to a medical place and I'd ask for bandages, aspros, band-aids, things like that, anything I thought I might need. I'd stock up on it pretty well.

24:24 **There was no issue with you getting more supplies to help the natives?**

24:27 No, the

24:30 doctors would always comply with my wishes. They would just hand over whatever I asked for, there was no trouble at all. When I left I always, I had a little respirator bag and I'd taken the gas mask out, cut out the partitions and that's where I kept my medical gear.

25:00 **Can you tell me a little bit about the differences between the PIB and the PIR [Pacific Islands Regiment]?**

25:05 No. There was actually no difference at all. The PIB was when we first joined back in 1942, that's when the PIB started. They were Papua boys. Then they started to bring the New Guinea boys in and that's when they started to bring in the NGIB and the second NGIB and a third NGIB. In the end, it was only in the last 18 months 2 years that they combined the lot and called us PIR.

25:58 **So what about the differences between the N[G]IB and the PIB?**

26:00 Well the PIB were Motuan speaking and the NGIB was pidgin English. That was the only difference. When they first busted it up there was about, I wasn't there I was home on leave actually when that

26:30 happened, there was quite a few blokes preferred to go back to their own units that they came out of and the others volunteered to go over to the New Guinea side, NGIB. Of course I was on leave when that was going on, when I came back they didn't know what to do with me.

27:00 They put me on the bullring training the natives. The new blokes that took over they taught them the Motuan back in Australia before they came up, and I'm on the bullring and I'm instructing these natives on the rifle drill and this officer come down, I'm just getting ahead of myself.

27:30 One of the first rules when you go in is if a native gets in to any, has any trouble he comes to the sergeant. If the sergeant can't handle it, he takes it to the platoon officer and if he can't take it he then

takes it to the company commander. Exactly the same as in a white unit. But anyway, and you don't blow a man up in front of the squad, you call him aside. Well this

- 28:00 officer came down and he blew me up in front of the native squad. He said I was training them the wrong way. I just turned around to him and said, "Who the hell are you?" "I'm lieutenant so-and-so" "Well" I said, "I don't give a damn who you are as far as I'm concerned I'm doing the right thing, I'm training these men the right way. Have you ever seen a native before?" I told him
- 28:30 he was wet behind the ears, which didn't go very well. I was placed on open arrest for insubordination. So for about six weeks I walked around doing nothing. Naturally, I was called up to the battalion commander, a very understanding bloke, he knew, he asked me what went wrong and I told him he blew me up in front of the natives, so I told him he was wet behind
- 29:00 the bloomin' ears. He said, "You can't do that." Well I said, "I did it." I must have been about six weeks, all I did was walk from my hut to the mess hall and back to the hut again, no work no nothing. So I was called up to headquarters and he said I can't just have you walking around doing nothing he said, he said he won't drop the charges, so we'll have to get you to do a
- 29:30 bit of work. So he got me in to build a rifle range. About a month after he called me up again, no he won't drop it and the only way I can get you out of a court marshal is to transfer you over to the NGIB. "What do you think about that?" "Well I'd sooner stay here, but" I said, "If it's going to do any good, I'll transfer over."
- 30:00 So within about three days I was in NGIB and he dropped the charges. I still think he's wet behind the flamin' ears.
- 30:13 **How far away was that from where you were?**
- Well this was Moresby, to Nadzab, which was possibly 400 hundred mile and completely different battalions.
- 30:25 **What was that like leaving one battalion and having to arrive in another?**
- 30:30 Well there was no difference, they were natives, I was speaking pidgin English to them where back on the Motuan side I was speaking pidgin English to them. There was actually no difference, except one was PIB and the other was called NGIB. It's the same as being in the 9th Battalion or the 63rd Battalion or the 25th.
- 30:55 **What about the relationships that you'd formed with some of the men?**
- 31:00 Most of them had gone over to the NGIB and it was just going back to the same mates again. You mixed up with new men, made new friendships. It wasn't any good because there were so few of us that you never really got a really close friend, because there were so few of you.
- 31:30 **How had you been instructed to train the natives?**
- 31:41 Oh we were told to teach them the drill, the rifle drill, the same drill as you do with a white unit. To march them, left right left right, left turn right turn, halt, about turn, the
- 32:00 same, exactly the same as you'd train a white unit and most of them responded very well to it. We had our ceremonial parades. They were magnificent to watch. Even though they were bare foot, they could almost click their heels together and they'd really stuck that rifle in the slope arms
- 32:30 and so on. We had a ceremonial guard for the Duke of Gloucester. That was up at White Bay up in New Britain, one of the most senior officers I ever saw anywhere near the front.
- 32:56 **Was there any level of command with the natives or were they all equivalent to privates?**
- 33:00 We had our privates, we had our lance corporals, our corporals, lance sergeant, sergeant, as far as I know there was only one warrant officer. The corporals showed the privates were corporals too. The sergeant showed made sure that they did their work.
- 33:26 **Did they show that in any different to how the Australians would have?**
- 33:33 No, exactly the same. They were very proud of their rank if they were a little bit higher up than the other normal soldier was. I don't think they ever really bossed them about. You called your corporal, you told him what you wanted, and then he did it.
- 34:00 Exactly the same as a white unit.
- 34:16 **Earlier on you were telling us about superstitions. Were there any other examples of superstitions, or any rituals that you can remember or saw?**
- 34:34 **Not really. As I said you could be walking along, and say we're going to camp here and they'd**

say no you can't camp there we'll camp over here. That was taboo. Whatever it was that was taboo about it I wouldn't know.

34:54 **What about if any of their men were killed in action?**

35:00 **We made it a rule, in our unit, that if anyone got wounded or got killed they had to be brought back. It protection for them and it was protection for us. We were one white man amongst a group of black men, you've only got to think of it, the white man was the target. So we were protecting ourselves.**

35:30 **If anyone got hurt they had to be brought back, not left behind. We never lost anyone. We never left anyone behind, we brought everyone out.**

35:53 **Would they hold any burial ceremony for their own men?**

36:00 Where I actually was, I can't say that I ever lost anyone, actually killed. I had them wounded, not killed. Where I told you we lost seven men, that was mostly in the flooded river, so it wasn't through any action.

36:30 **What about within the other units?**

36:32 Well as I say I don't know. We very, very seldom did we, we would be A Company, which I was in, we were attached to the 7th Division which went up Ramu and Markham Valley. The C Company, I think it was,

37:00 they went with the 9th Division through Finschhafen up around the coast. We'd be attached to different units. We even had one company attached to the Americans. Purely and simply for patrol work and gathering information. We were never asked to go in to a battle.

37:30 One of the instructions I was given was if I thought I could inflict damage on the enemy, with none to myself, go ahead and do it, otherwise if I was told, or I thought, I'd bet as much damage done to me to get out. I believe in the old saying, 'he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.' I believe in that.

38:00 **Were there any other sayings that you went by?**

38:12 Me? Can't say I have. No I can't say I have.

38:29 **How often would you get leave?**

38:33 Actually I got leave twice while I was up there and fortunately I was able to come home and I had Christmas with my family.

38:45 **That must have been pretty extreme, coming back to Australia and having Christmas?**

38:52 The worst part of it was going back. Coming home was very exciting. Being home was even

39:00 more because I was with my family. The family that wasn't there, they came. Going back was the worst part.

39:20 **Did they ask you lots of questions?**

39:23 No.

39:27 **So everyone was excited to see you, but no one asked you what you were doing?**

39:34 I think they were too polite to ask. Soldier never really tells where he's been or what he's done. That's why I told you, you'll get no blood and guts from me.

39:52 **Did you find that difficult thought?**

39:54 Not really. No, we had family things. We had

40:00 outings to go on, friends would come in. I think I had more parties than enough.

40:12 **What were the general public's impression of what was happening over there?**

40:24 I really don't know. My parents didn't know

41:00 where we were. It was only when I come home on leave that I was able to tell them where I was. My family, even now, they're not interested in the war, any war, they want piece.

Tape 6

- 00:32 **Can I ask you about religion when you were a young fellow, were you religious at all?**
- 00:37 I was brought up as a Catholic and I followed the religion right through. We have our Catholic Church over here. Shirley is a reader
- 01:00 for the readings and I'm one of the Eucharistic ministers and also a Eucharistic minister for the sick, I take holy communion out to the sick. Shirley comes with me on those occasions.
- 01:17 **How did you find that your faith served you in the army?**
- 01:21 Actually we didn't see very much religion in the army, except for the Salvation Army.
- 01:30 You'd be walking along carrying your pack, the old saying is, your tongue hanging out and you're wondering when the next water hole was going to be, and sure enough you come around the next curve and there was the salvation army with the couple of coppers going and both boiling, "Have a cuppa tea mate and a biscuit." So you'd get a cup of tea and a biscuit and a packet of PKs [chewing gum].
- 02:00 **How good was that?**
- 02:01 That was Salvation Army. They were everywhere. I have a lot of time for the Salvation Army. When I was up there I said to myself if ever I get home and the salvation rattle that box in front of me I'll give them all the change I've got in my pocket. I carried that out, I was back in one of the hotels at
- 02:30 Brunswick Street, don't know which one it was and one of my mates, Gerry, said, "Come and have a drink" and I said I would and the Salvation Army rattled and I said, "My bloody oath" and I had about 15 shillings in my pocket and I put the lot in the bag. So I carried out my promise which I'd made up in the islands. I've got a lot of time for them. I still do, they are just down here and
- 03:00 I find them very, very good.
- 03:05 **How good were the Salvos [Salvation Army] for morale of the soldiers?**
- 03:06 We used to look forward to seeing them. If you saw a Salvation Army bloke, your morale would come up like that. They were terrific. I saw more Salvation Army than I did of any other religion. They were there.
- 03:30 **How often did you get to see the chaplain? Was there any chaplains attached to the PI [Papuan Infantry]?**
- 03:37 No. You might get to a church once in six months. There was only once we had a mass before we went in to battle and that was a combined, everyone.
- 04:03 **So how did your own belief and your own faith, how did that effect you as a soldier?**
- 04:14 I was brought up, my mother had a very strong faith. She taught us, all of us kids, and I still have a strong faith.
- 04:30 Even though, you'd go when you possibly could.
- 04:42 **Were there incidents like the booby trap that didn't go off, that could have very well killed you, did you ever think someone was looking out for you?**
- 04:49 Well I thought there was always someone looking after me the whole time. I've always said thank god
- 05:00 I joined those natives. I said to Shirley I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the natives. I reckon they saved my life more than once.
- 05:21 **How often would you hear news of the progress of the war?**
- 05:25 Very seldom. We had our own little papers that were printed up there
- 05:30 there was the, they call them all different names, the West Australian little paper was the 'Sandgroper', the Victorian one was the 'Muddy Yarra', of course Sydney NSW [New South Wales] was 'Our Harbour' and the Queensland one was the 'Banana Benders'. If you saw
- 06:00 one of these, they were two pieces of paper bent over like that, like four pages, they'd possibly be about 8 by 6. If you happened to find one you count yourself very lucky because paper had many uses up there. Main one being rolling cigarettes.
- 06:27 **Did you use to smoke at the time?**

06:30 I took up smoking Milne Bay because of the excess patrolling. That's what I blamed for it.

06:41 **And what would you smoke?**

06:45 Pre-rubbed, roll my own.

06:47 **Did you ever smoke any of that nasty tobacco they used to hand out?**

06:49 I did. I smoked that native twist for about three months, and sure it was strong

07:00 I tell you. One day I asked one of the natives to roll a smoke for me and he got a strip of banana leaf about that wide and he rolled me a cigarette that would have been about that long, 'round and 'round , now how he got that banana leaf to stick I don't know. But it was a very good cigarette.

07:28 **Would any of the chaps smoke on patrol, or was that taboo?**

07:33 No that was taboo.

07:37 **So how many cigarettes do you think, at maximum, how many would you smoke a day?**

07:40 Well, back in camp, me I'd say between five and ten.

07:49 **Did you continue to smoke after the war?**

07:52 I smoked up til think about 34 or 35 years ago I knocked off,

08:00 just before they started about this smoking causes cancer.

08:04 **And you mentioned early on that you had a double shot of whisky to stave off another attack of malaria? Was there any other grog to be had?**

08:26 Oh this was when I was back in Australia. We were supposed to

08:30 be getting two bottles of beer a month while we were up there. Now there was very few times did we get any beer. Officers would get a bottle of whisky or gin or wine a month. Now I know that because the officers in the unit I was in got more spirits than what they could drink.

09:00 When we left Bougainville they gave each of us two bottles of sprits, you could take your pick a bottle of whisky or a bottle of gin or a bottle of wine. That's how much grog they had, they couldn't carry it with them from Bougainville to New Britain.

09:27 **What about in New Guinea, did you come across 'jungle juice'?**

09:30 Yes I did. I never ever brewed any, but when we were at Britchatatu [?], they brewed down there and it was a potent brew. You'd put about a tablespoon in to an ordinary big glass and fill it up with, what we used to call Moulee water, they had their soft drink factory at Moulee [?], and you'd fill it up and that would really burn all the way down.

10:00 Someone got a bright idea one day they poured some in to a container and they lit it and it burnt with a blue flame. One of the officers, Lieutenant White, he made a brew himself and you could drink a big glass of that and it was just like drinking a glass of lemonade or some sort of soft drink, it was a beautiful drink. He never told anyone

10:30 his recipe. That's the only experience I had. I never drank very much of it.

10:39 **The brewing of jungle juice, that would have been taboo?**

10:43 Supposed to be, but you'd always manage. Some of them managed to get a still going.

10:51 **Interesting that an officer was doing it as well?**

10:52 Oh there's, look, everyone was in it.

10:58 **What about the natives, did they have their own concoction?**

11:00 Some of them did. I never ever saw it, but I heard that they would climb a coconut palm and they would bore a small hole in the coconut palm, put a straw of grass in for the coconut milk to ferment. And how they collected the fermented coconut milk I don't know. But they reckon that was there drink. I never ever seen it done, but I heard.

11:30 **Did you ever see any of the fellows drunk from that?**

11:40 Not from that. I've seen them drunk with chewing that beetle nut.

11:44 **Did you ever do that?**

11:46 No. All you had to do was to look at them and that was enough to set you off. I bit in to a beetle nut one day, and it was like biting

12:00 in to a green banana or a green persimmon. It dries your mouth out just like that. That was enough for me, I spit for about 10 minutes.

12:16 **Did you ever see any of the news reporters up there?**

12:22 No. I saw a photographer once. I had a photo there I thought I could show you about it.

12:30 He took a mock up photo of me taking my patrol across a creek. No news reporters.

12:43 **Do you happen to know that photographer's name?**

12:46 No.

12:52 **I was wondering if you could tell us the story of the compass and the watch?**

13:04 I was sent out to try and find the, or get as close to the Hongori River on Bougainville as I possibly could. On my way back my forward scouts kept turning to the right and I would stop them and bring them

13:30 back to the left again. Within a couple of hundred yards they'd be going to the right again. So after three or four times of stopping them, I asked them why are they going there, and they said, "That's where our camp is." I said, "No, our camp isn't there, our camp is where I'm telling you to go." They said, "No" and more or less started to argue with me that I was wrong

14:00 and they were right about where the camp was. So I pulled out the compass, and asked them did they know what this is and they said, "No." So I asked them if they knew what a wrist watch was, and they said, "Yes." A watch tells me what time it is and this tells me where to go. And I said, "This tells me we have to go through there." I told them, back

14:30 where our camp was, I picked out a particular place that they all knew and that is where, if you go where I tell you, that is where we will come out. In about five miles in the jungle I had missed about 200 yards. I was never ever questioned again about the direction I asked them to go.

15:00 **What about when you used to roll up your sleeves to cover your chevrons?**

15:09 Yes I did. Only when we would be back amongst the white units. We were back, when I came home on leave, I think we had to call in on, what's the name of the place

15:30 just out from Townsville, there was a big army camp there anyway and I was told the sergeants' mess is over there and the men's' mess is over here. And of course, believe it or not, right in the middle of this particular place, you meet up with someone that you know and this bloke happened to be a sergeant too.

16:00 I said, "Are you going to the sergeants' mess?" And he said, "No" "I'm not going over either." So we rolled our sleeves up and covered our stripes and we joined in the line to men's mess. We happened to be in the left hand line, there were two lines going through, and somehow or another my sleeves started to get down a bit and the three stripes started to show.

16:30 One bloke, he was looking at me, what the dickens, I'd look around and he'd be looking at me and I said, "Do you know me mate?" He said, "No, but the sergeant's mess is over there." I looked down, and I very quickly rolled it up again. I said, "This line here is good enough for me." Kept on going with the, when I got amongst the white

17:00 I didn't show my rank.

17:04 **Why was that?**

17:06 Oh, I don't know. When I was travelling from going home for leave and coming back, yes I did, you got privileges. In the navy, if you are travelling on a navy ship as sergeant is equal to a petty officer, so you eat in the officers' mess.

17:30 It was just those little privileges like that. One trip when I come home on board a ship, I forget what the name of the ship was, but because I was sergeant I was allotted to a cabin. So there are those privileges.

18:00 **Speaking about coming home when you did come home for Christmas in '44, how good was sitting down and having a Christmas dinner?**

- 18:08 Well first off when we got to Townsville, we were told we'd be sorry. The old army saying, "You'll be sorry." There's no food, you can't get any food, you can't get a pie, you can't get an ice-cream you can't get anything. So anyway,
- 18:30 the first station the train stopped at I raced out this way and my mate raced out that way and we both come to an ice-cream container, a place selling ice-cream. So I bought two little family bricks about so square, he'd done the same. I'd bought one for him. We had to sit down in the train and eat two ice-creams. Sitting down for Christmas dinner with the family was
- 19:00 just amazing. Of course, the different foods. The whole time I was up there the only time I had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , there was a big pigeon up in New Guinea as big as a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , and I shot a few of them and cooked them up and that was, you get a few extras. I shot a few ducks, killed them that way.
- 19:30 **Did you see much other wildlife in the jungle?**
- 19:31 There was quite a bit. Quite a bit. Ducks, pigeons. I was sent out on one patrol to find a crashed plane. It was overdue and we got a radio message to go out and see if we could pick it up.
- 20:00 I got my gear together and we were gone, possibly about an hour when the next radio message came in that the plane had limped home. But I was out and no one could contact me so I had to finish the patrol. Got in to a village the first night, and of course the natives knew that I was coming and they'd all disappeared.
- 20:30 There was no one there. So the next morning I sent two natives down this track, two down that track, two down that track and I said, "Bring someone back." I said, "Now don't hurt them, but bring them back." So anyway they came back and they had a bloke a woman and two piccaninnies. They were a savage looking lot, bones through their nose, through their ears
- 21:00 and he was carrying a bow and a set of arrows. I was trying to get the bow and arrows off him before he did any damage, but no he wouldn't part with them. Anyway in the end I said 'keep them, they're no good anyway. The rifles the best' and just then two pigeons flew over and sitting in a big tree. So I just turned around to one of the boys and said give me your rifle, and I lent on a palm tree and 'bang' two of them come down.
- 21:30 He just handed his bow and arrow over like that. I said, "No, you keep them." Naturally, as I said the plane had got home. I tried to draw a picture of a plane and a crash and no he hadn't seen anything. So I asked him where all the natives were and he led me right up through the hills, he led me to a brand new
- 22:00 village right on the crest of a ridge, like that. The front of the hut was on the ground and there was about 30 feet of a post at the back, that's how steep this ridge was. That's where the boss of the villagers were and he said, "No plane crash near around here." So when I got back they gave me the bad news that the plane was back and I had to do the patrol
- 22:30 for nothing.
- 22:34 **Did you often find yourself doing patrols that seemed to be not much good?**
- 22:38 Yes. Yes I did. You'd go out and you'd find nothing.
- 22:49 **But I guess in some ways it's better to find nothing than to find what you're looking for?**
- 22:52 Yes that's right. You'd, you know you'd be
- 23:00 expecting the whole time that, one of the funny things a mate of mine called, Bill Calvert, he and I got in to this village and we asked the boss boy any Japs around the place. He said, "No, no Japan." We said, "How long?" Not for three moons, is three months.
- 23:30 I said to him, "How many Japans here?" He said, "One fella, one fella, one fella, one fella, one fella, one fella" and he got down and he went through his feet and when he got to his big toe he said, "Here boss boy." So there was nineteen ORs and one officer.
- 24:00 **I was going to ask, what do you reckon he would have used if there was any more than that?**
- 24:08 I don't know what he was gong to use.
- 24:12 **What about sleeping at night. I heard that sometimes you would sleep on pretty steep slopes. What would you do there?**
- 24:17 It's one ridge I had to stay a night there. It was so steep that I slept with a sapling between my legs so I wouldn't slide down the mountain.

24:30 And I had an army gas cape, and I put that coat on before I went to sleep, covered myself up like a little cocoon . It was raining when I went to sleep it was still raining when I woke up in the morning. It was so steep. I don't know what the others did, but I had the sapling between my legs.

25:00 **How did you go being wet all the time?**

25:05 It didn't seem to make any difference. I never ever got a cold while I was up there. At night, a lot of times you have another white man with you, most times you didn't, but a lot of patrols you'd have another white man with you, and if you got cold you slept close together.

25:30 When one side got burny and achy you'd say right I'll roll over.

25:46 **You've mentioned about all the little doctor work that you did, what medical training did you have?**

25:52 I had no medical training whatsoever, but because we did not carry a medical orderly with us, I thought someone is going

26:00 to need some medical gear. We had shell dressings, which is about so thick and so wide with a bandage coming out from both ends. But that was all. We had no iodine, no sticking plaster like that, I thought well if one of my men get hurt I'm going to have look after him, I'm going to be

26:30 the first person to have to treat him. I wanted something to treat him with. That's when I first started to get my gear together.

26:43 **As a soldier back in Australia you guys were given no training at all in first aid?**

26:49 Not in first aid. I wasn't anyway.

27:00 **How was the morale in general of the men?**

27:08 I found it very good. I can't say that any of them ever tell me that they aren't going or didn't want to go. I found the morale very good.

27:24 **What was all the relationship between all the guys in your section?**

27:29 Our relationship,

27:30 as I said, we'd be one white man and the rest would be natives. You would stand apart. You wouldn't eat with them, they wouldn't want you eating with them. They'd cook their own meal and I would cook my own, which didn't take very long heating up a can of bully beef or a can of beans.

28:00 **What's your opinion of bully beef?**

28:05 I don't think I've had bully beef since I got home. I will not eat spaghetti, I don't mind beans occasionally. I've never touched the army dog biscuits and don't wish to any more. We had cooks

28:30 and cooks.

28:38 **Can you remember what you had for that Christmas lunch back in Australia in '44.**

28:44 No. It would have been WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK for one thing. Possibly a roast.

28:52 **How many Christmases would you have spent away?**

28:56 Only the one. No two. I'd had Christmas at Milne Bay.

29:00 **What was that like? Do you recall?**

29:03 I don't remember. I had my 21st birthday at Milne Bay. My mother had sent up the Christmas cake and the decorations and I was able to put it all together. Me and the gang we cleaned it up.

29:26 **Can you tell us a bit more about floating down the Ramu River?**

29:30 It took us two days, over two days to float down. And one particular place was very scary. There was a whirly-whirly in the, have you ever seen a whirly-whirly in the river, it was quite a big one. Thank god we were on the opposite side. We were able to bypass it. About 250 miles we drifted down by these rafts.

30:00 **Can you tell us a bit about the rafts?**

We made them with 44 gallon drums and saplings, laced them together with lawyer cane. Natives were very good at tying things. They made them up. One raft we had eight drums and the other two I had 6

in. So we had three drifting down.

30:30 And as you were going along past some of these little islands in the middle of the river, you'd see all these big crocodiles laying on the sand banks. So there weren't many blokes going in to cool off.

30:48 **Did you feel exposed being on the river both from the bank and from air?**

Yes I did. I felt very exposed, but I knew that in front of me I had white men down there,

31:00 like the advanced party of our unit. Once we got to Annanberg the closest support troops were 10 days march away. So we were sitting out, we were told that we could rely on no help from outside. We were more or less a listening post.

31:26 **Was there any way of resupplying you, if you had to, by air?**

31:30 Oh yes that's how we got our food by parachute. A lot of times it would just tip out and it'd just scatter everywhere.

31:48 **What was the normal procedure for them finding you and for delivering food to you?**

31:54 You'd lay a white sheet out and a tee piece on a flat clear piece of ground.

32:00 We were in touch with radio, we had a big, what was it, oh I forget a 217 or something like that, it as a big one. They put dual purpose sending and receiving, so we were in contact with headquarters 24 hours a day.

32:30 We had wireless operators on day and night.

32:38 **No native wireless operators?**

32:42 No, they were just white blokes on the radio.

32:49 **Sometimes when you were out on patrol did you ever feel lonely for other white company?**

33:00 You would, but I can't say that I ever let it worry me. I knew I had to do it, I knew it had to be done, and I knew others were relying on me to bring back whatever information I could find.

33:15 **What was your opinion of the geography of Papua New Guinea, was it something that you could admire or did you hate it?**

33:19 I didn't mind New Guinea. I hated Bougainville. I don't know any reason why, but I hated Bougainville,

33:30 I hated it from the day I landed there to the day I left. I didn't have any opinion of New Britain because I, we were actually re-grouping the company and retraining there. That's in New Britain where I became the acting sergeant major and I had one week to go to get my

34:00 to get my crown and peace was declared. You know what happened I come home. That was my one ambition was to get my Sam Brown belt and the crown. I let it go.

34:21 **How did you find out about the end of the war?**

34:23 I don't know, someone said, "It's all over." We, there were a

34:30 few times when we heard rumours that were trying to negotiate for peace. On a couple of occasions were told if we run in to any Japs, hide and let them go past or bypass them, because they were trying to negotiate for peace. They just said, "Right, it's all over." It was just like,

35:00 "Aghh, at last." That was a relief. Thank god for that.

35:15 **How quick was the coming home from when you heard that?**

35:19 I had bad feet, very bad ingrown toenails. So when peace was declared I said, "Right I'm going home

35:30 I'm going to go home with good feet, the same I came in to it." So I reported to sick parade and they sent me from Wode Bay to Jac Bay Hospital and they took my toenails off back there and I was there for six weeks and the doctor come around and said, "You're ready for a discharge, now" he says,

36:00 "I've got two little pieces of paper here, one will take you back to your unit and one will take you home to Australia." He said, "Which one do you want?" I said, "Just show me the one that takes me back to Australia because that 's the one I want." I'm sorry ever since I did. If I'd have gone back to the unit I would have got my Sam Brown belt, I'd have got my crown as a WO 1 [Warrant Officer Class 1] which was the rank that I really

- 36:30 wanted. My father was very sick at the time and I don't think I gave him one day more of life because I came home. I'm glad I came home.
- 36:54 **How long had you been operating with your ingrown toenails?**
- 37:00 When I got up to New Guinea, they got bad because of the mud. The mud would seep through your boots. Besides your nails would just fester up. One doctor said, "I'd operate right now but before long we're going to need every man we've got." And when peace was declared, that was the first opportunity I
- 37:30 had of getting in to a hospital.
- 37:30 **So how painful was that?**
- 37:39 Very, very painful.
- 37:41 **Was there anything you could do to try to help with that?**
- 37:48 Metho to clean them. Methylated sprits. Try and keep them dry, that was the only treatment I could give them.
- 38:00 **How did you find the army boots?**
- 38:01 Good for walking. I wore a pair out in three days once. We were walking over volcanic rock and it just tore them to pieces. I ended up walking back to camp bare foot. No the footwear was good.
- 38:27 **What about the rest of the gear?**
- 38:30 Look you'd go to sleep in wet clothes you'd wake up in wet in wet clothes, you might be in the same clothes for a week, same socks for a week, you mightn't get your boots off for a week. So, I think there was quite a smell going 'round.
- 39:00 I never had equipment fall off me. As I said, I had a batman and he kept my clothes washed, cleaned.

Tape 7

- 00:30 **Tell us about your batman, how he used to always have a cup of tea ready for you?**
- 00:41 My batman's name was Demagoogi, I had two different ones, one at one stage, he was a very tall native, close enough to 6 feet and his age would have only been
- 01:00 about 16 and how he got in the army I don't know. He had a most beautiful smile and he would always be there, no matter what I wanted he'd be there. I would say, I used to carry fishing gear with me wherever I got an opportunity a few minutes to spare I'd go down and toss in the river, I caught a lot of fish,
- 01:30 I used to say to Demagoogi if I'm not back in time for morning tea, forget about it, don't bring it. He would go down, sometimes he would get in a canoe and paddle up the river and down the river. Anyway, he'd end up finding me and my cup of tea would be icy cold. I'd say, "I told you not to come" "No good masterno getting cup of tea" he'd say.
- 02:00 **In that little break we just had, you had some cold tea, is that where that comes from?**
- 02:04 Yes, possibly where that comes from.
- 02:15 **Would you have tea and coffee quite often?**
- 02:18 We always had plenty of tea. I never drank coffee. I don't know why. I don't like coffee, I never ever drank coffee.
- 02:30 **Do you know where your family name comes from?**
- 02:41 As far as I know it's from Switzerland. I'd say Germany, there's only an invisible fence between the countries anyway. That's why I say I'm on the League of Nations.
- 03:00 Both my parents were born here in Australia. I got my father and mother's wedding photo and I've got their marriage certificate.
- 03:21 **You can still remember 12 of the schools you went to?**

03:28 Well I haven't tried just lately to name them all,

03:30 but I used to be able to rattle off 16.

03:33 **Can you remember a few of them for us?**

03:35 Well I went to the Laidley school, or Blenheim, I also went to the convent at Laidley. I was the (UNCLEAR). Then we come around Gympie. Now in Gympie itself I went to the one mile school for a short time,

04:00 I went to the two mile school and I went to the central school. I attended the Christian Brothers, not for very long, and for religious instruction I went to the convent. I went to the Mooloo school, went to the Wolbi school. The Coles Creek school.

04:30 I think that's enough anyway.

04:35 **What was is like going to so many schools?**

04:38 I didn't like it at all and you'd get to a school, and most of these schools were only small, and you may be in second grade, they've got no second grade so they either put you up in to third or put you back in to first. So you either knew everything or you

05:00 knew nothing. You'd be, you'd want out you'd be lost.

05:05 **What was the reason that you had to go to so many schools?**

05:11 My parents were, going on half share farms and they might go there for 12 months or 2 year or 18 months, or it might even be 6 months. From Wolbi they'd go in to Gympie and

05:30 they'd rent a house in Gympie and you'd either go, wherever the house was, it was closer to the two mile I used go to the two mile, if it was closer to the one mile, you'd go to the one mile. Closer to central, you'd go to the central. So, there's four or five schools that I went to, when you'd leave Wolbi you'd go in to Gympie and you might be only there for six weeks, you see.

06:00 So, from Gympie again you might go out to Coles Creek, you'd stay there for 12 months and then you'd come back in to Gympie again. So you'd be going from school to school.

06:13 **What did you think of that gypsy lifestyle?**

06:15 **I didn't like it very much at all because you'd just get to know your school mates and you'd leave. You'd go to another school and you'd be lost again. Same with the, as I said, with the different classes you'd either**

06:30 **go up and you wouldn't know what they were doing or you'd go down and you'd know everything.**

06:38 **What sort of things would you do in your spare time when you were a kid to yourself?**

06:43 With our family, we had our cricket and brother and I were very keen fishing, we'd head off and go down to the creek and fish for Jew and eels and.

07:00 perch, there was plenty to do. Later on when we got older, we'd go shooting, wallabies, kangaroos

07:19 **Can you ever remember having Guy Fawkes night?**

07:25 Yes. Ever since we've been here

07:30 I bought a little farm down towards Morayfield and we'd go down their on Guy Fawkes night and we'd build our Guy Fawkes down there and the kids would have a whale of a time. That was our Guy Fawkes night. We'd build our Guy Fawkes bloke, stuff an old pair of pants and a shirt or a

08:00 coat, stuff it with grass and you'd have crackers, he'd have sleeves and legs and a hat and of course a bon fire underneath him. You'd let the kid light the fire and as the fire got bigger and bigger, the different crackers would go off. They had a really good time. I even bought them a little

08:30 go-kart, and we had our go kart down there in the little farm and they would drive around between the trees.

08:43 **And you joined at 17. You would have been underage?**

08:45 Yes I was underage, but I was six feet and I was tall for my age. No one ever questioned it.

09:00 **Can you tell us a bit about the different machine-guns?**

09:08 The Lewis gun had a cooling system, used to have an air cooling system and it was possibly so round and it had the barrel through the middle. When it was firing the bullets drew the air up through the cooling system to keep it cool.

09:30 Now that would send out a cone of fire, you might save be aiming at a particular target and some of your bullets would be going 10 of 15 feet either side, further up or closer. The Bren gun I thought was too accurate, you could blow the bull out of a target every time. It had no counter fire, it was direct.

10:00 The Thomson submachine-gun. I never liked the Thomson submachine-gun because the bullets were loose in the magazines an every step you took it rattled, like a bloomin cow bell. Especially the round magazine, it carried 50 rounds the round magazine and it would rattle, rattle, rattle every time you took a step.

10:30 The ammunition, that was very heavy. The Owen submachine-gun, I liked the Owen submachine-gun. I had it most of the time I was up there. It was only a nine millimetre bullet which was very small. A lot of times it didn't do a lot of damage, a lot of times it would only just penetrated

11:00 didn't come out the sides. I found the Owen gun very, very good. They all had a slight pull, especially the Bren, but you were firing from the hip. When yo got used to the Owen gun you could blow the target

11:30 to pieces. I had an American crew, they came in on a plane, and landed at Dumpu, we were guarding the airstrip there, and one of them came over and said that he'd heard a lot about this Owen gun, could we show it to him. So anyway I went and got the Owen gun and I showed it to him. He said would you take us out

12:00 and give us a demonstration. I said we'll have to get permission to do that and I went to the officer and he said yes, go out with them. We went out and on the way out I picked up an old drum, took it with us as a target. I showed him how to load them, the repetition and the automatic and I went to give him the gun and he said, "No, no, no," he said,

12:30 "You show me how it works." Well it was the best bit of shooting I ever did. My first burst hit the drum. The second one hit again and kept it rolling, you know how the cowboy shoot things, shoot the targets. It was the best bit of shooting I ever did. So I swung it over to automatic and then I followed up, 'bang bang bang' I kept the drum rolling. I said, "There you are Yank

13:00 that's what you can do with the Owen submachine-gun." "That's good shooting" he said.

13:09 **What did you think of the Americans?**

13:11 Me, I didn't think very much of their soldiers. I thought a lot of their equipment. I heard a story once that the Japs asked the Yanks who was the best jungle fighter

13:30 and they said we are, and he said no and they say you are. He said who is the best jungle fighter? The Australians are the best jungle fighter and he said, the Jap said we are the next best jungle fighter. And the Yank said, "What about us?" You don't leave any jungle left, you just blow it to pieces.

14:00 **How much of the American gear were to you able to see or to get?**

14:06 I had, the only American gear I had, was the Jackie grenade that I told you about. I had no other gear. I saw a bit of it. I liked their short rifles.

14:24 **Was that the M1?**

14:25 I don't know which one it was, it was only a short rifle only so big.

14:30 What I liked about them, was I think they held about 20 rounds. They were automatic, just 'bang bang bang bang'. Whereas with the old .303 you had to, it made a hell of a lot of noise at night, when you were reloading. You could hear it, at night-time, a hundred yards away.

14:58 **What about at one stage you said you had a .45 Colt. Where did you get that from? Was that issue?**

15:00 No I brought it on the lap. I paid 10 pounds for it. I thought it would be a little extra protection for myself.

15:14 **But you were issued with a 48, is that right?**

15:16 No, when my officer left to go home, on a discharge, he gave it to me. He said, "You look after this."

15:30 **So did you have both then?**

15:32 I had the .38, no I sold the Colt. Well I almost give it away because I didn't want to bring it home with

me. I handed the .38 in later on. I just kept the Owen gun.

16:00 **In training, I can't remember which machine-gun, they only had 9 bullets?**

16:07 That's right that was the Thomson submachine-gun.

16:10 **And they told you to fire five in a burst and four singles? How did you go with that?**

16:13 Well, they must have thought I was good because they told me I was a submachine-gunner.

16:20 **So you weren't instructed on how to do this you were just expected to know?**

16:23 That was my training with a submachine-gun. And I landed at Milne

16:30 Bay with nine rounds of ammunition.

16:32 **In that training were you able to squeeze off a five round burst?**

16:37 Close enough. It went 'brrr' and then twisted on to automatic and went 'bang bang bang' empty.

16:51 **So when you were waiting for the Japanese and you finally saw air activity, what did you then once you knew something was up?**

17:05 At that time we were on beach defence and we had our fixed position, so that was where you stayed.

That was at Milne Bay, just away from Gili Gili wharf. Gili Gili wharf was the air force jetty.

17:23 **What sort of beach defences did you have there?**

17:26 We had practically none.

17:30 We had a few Bren guns and a few Owen guns. I wasn't, actually on the beach, I was about 200 yards back guarding this bridge and this bridge was just logs with dirt packed up on top of it.

17:49 **Is that the one they told you...**

17:51 That's the one they told me, if the Japs break through, I was to blow it up.

17:57 **With your imagination**

18:00 Well they didn't even give me the gin of beans.

18:12 **What did you see of the Royal Australian Air Force?**

18:13 I thought they were wonderful. The activity when the Japs landed they were flying almost night and day.

18:29 **What aircraft do you see up there?**

18:30 Mostly the Kittyhawks. There was the, I saw a few poor old Wirraways, I thought those pilots were always bloody heroes, 180 mile an hour against 400. Suicide. Boomerangs, Double Tail Lightning, we saw plenty of Mitchell bombers, Beaufighter bombers.

19:00 When we got down the coast you'd see the occasional Catalina, flying boats, the Sutherland flying boats.

19:14 **You flew out at one stage. Was that at the end or was that when you went on your leave?**

19:17 No, I did quite a bit of flying up there. Our unit had first priority in air travel. If there

19:30 was an aerodrome where our destination was they would take others off the plane to let us on. We didn't get a very good reception about that sometimes. You'd see that your knobs were pulled off, you wouldn't have your ranks on as far as they knew you were a private, they'd really kick up a shindy, "What are they coming off what are they going on for and you're

20:00 taking me off?" Going from one place to another we used to build a little airstrips and they would land the little Elfires in there. Single engine, two passengers, like pilot and one passenger, and if you were leaving going from one place to another they'd bring in one of those little planes in and bring you out.

20:30 **What aircraft mainly when you moving around?**

20:39 DC-3.

20:42 **What did you think of those?**

20:44 I thought they were a very safe plane, very noisy, because you only had aluminium seats one up each side of it and then you'd have to pack your gear in the middle

21:00 as the plane did a circle all your gear would go to one side, when she'd come around to do another one, slip back this way, you'd be hanging on to your gear and trying to hang on to yourself. No, they were, I come home from on leave and when we got back to Townsville, they said, "Did you know that that was the oldest DC-3 in the Australian air force?" and we were

21:30 told a story later on that parts of it were tied together with wire. Whether or not it was I don't know. I thought the DC-3 was a good plane to fly in.

21:50 **Is it true that when you came home one time the batman was crying when you were leaving? Can you tell us about that?**

21:51 This one particular bloke, I even forget his name now,

22:00 we recruited him out in the bush. We brought him and I had to mother him around a bit, teach him about the rifle and as I was leaving to go from one place to another he thought I was going away and not coming back, and the tears were just running down his cheeks, "Master" he said, "you go away you no come back won't see you any more."

22:30 Some of them you got on extremely with.

22:46 **And you came back to that same place? How was he when you came back.**

22:49 Just like that, you know. Welcome me back with open arms.

22:56 **Was it weird for you that they had such a deep affection for you?**

23:00 One of the things they told us when we first go there, do not mix with them they haven't got any sense of humour. Now whatever you do don't join them in any of their games or anything. I did. I was a rebel, I told you that before.

23:30 I played their cards with them. They had a very strange way, one bloke might put a cigarette in, a half smoked cigarette, the other bloke might put in a quid, a pound note, another one would put in a packet of tobacco. They would work it out, they were quite happy about it. I'd put in a couple of cigarettes and tell them to deal me a hand. They'd deal me a hand and when they said I'd lost I'd leave and

24:00 walk away. I found that they had a sense of humour, you could show them a trick and they'd laugh like blazes and they would think it was magic. They had senses of humour. If you let them know that you liked

24:30 being with them, that they were your friends and they were your friend for life.

24:41 **Was it hard to leave?**

24:46 No. I knew what I was coming home to. I had that theory in me that these men that I've been with all this time,

25:00 well I've been true, I'm leaving them and I won't be seeing them any more, but I didn't refuse to go.

25:18 **How did being a bushman help you to be a soldier?**

25:26 Well I think it helped out because you

25:30 knew the bush. You'd gone shooting pigeons, you'd be looking through the shooter to find the bird, sitting way up in the top of a tree, and you would go shooting wallabies, we declared war on wallabies once because they were pulling the hearts out of the sugar

26:00 cane, that's why we were shooting them. They were destroying our sugar cane. You'd be going through the bush and you'd be looking for these wallabies. I was always walking through the bush looking for a different way to go through to some area. How many new things did you learn by being a soldier in Papua New Guinea that added to your bushman skills?

26:30 Well I had to learn how to walk through the jungle without making a noise. That, I think, was the main thing. I learnt how to use my nose for smell and to use my eyes a lot more than what I had and my ears for listening. There's

27:00 all these things come in, we were going through one place once and my scout pulled up and he said to me that there's a Japanese camp close around here. I said how do you know. He said if you look over there, there's a little bush cut off and over there there's another one and over there, there's another

- one cut off. When I took particular notice
- 27:30 sure enough there were these bushes cut off, why were they cut off? They were cut off to build a hut. So there had to be a hut within walking distance. The camp was there. That was on Bougainville I learnt that one and that was where I captured my first prisoner. He was in one of these huts.
- 27:57 **Can you tell us a bit about that?**
- 28:00 He was a captain. He was the captain who was in charge of the attack of Slaters Knoll on Bougainville. And because he couldn't capture Slaters Knoll he was left behind to commit hara-kiri. His clothing consisted of a pair of shorts, no boots, no shorts
- 28:30 no hat, and a bayonet. And that was when we captured him just before he committed suicide. We got him back and I believe he spilt a lot of information.
- 28:53 **Did you get the feeling that he was quite indignant about being captured before he committed suicide or that he was glad?**
- 29:00 I'd say like that. He tried to hold me up. When we got him back, I didn't take the full section in I left some of them back, when we got him to where I had the full section I said, "You in front of him, you behind him, if he runs away shoot him." Let's get back. We went about three or four hundred yards back through because
- 29:30 when we captured him there was quite a lot of noise was made, and I thought if this has attracted any kind of attention I wanted to be away from there before the Japs came through. So we took him back three to five hundred yards and he was indicating that he wanted a smoke, because I wouldn't give him one because where we were we were too close. When I had taken him back I formed a little perimeter and
- 30:00 I said you can all have a smoke here but listen. I give him a smoke then, he hadn't said a word, and I believe he could speak perfect English and when I went to take him back, back to headquarters, I instructed two of my natives with machine-guns, one go in front of him and one come behind him and if he makes any
- 30:30 attempt to run away shoot him first, don't let him get away. He never made any attempt. When I got him back to headquarters they said, 'We were just after a prisoner' and I said, "Now you've got one." I believe they made him talk and he gave all the information about all the places around there.
- 30:57 **Prior to that you mentioned that time you were watching the crossing of the river from the raft and the Captain of the vessel was wearing his little white naval, what was your first impression of the Japanese?**
- 31:00 Now that's a hard question. We were more or less led to believe that they were invincible.
- 31:30 I'm the Imperial Japanese Army, there's nothing that can stop me. Here's us poor chocos, we're in there and we've got to try and stop him. What's your impression going to be? A little bit on the scared side, yes.
- 32:00 **How would that opinion change by the stage where you captured that captain?**
- 32:06 Once the battle in Milne Bay was over, we all knew then that he wasn't, that he was stoppable. That was the furthest south he ever came to Australia. Us poor chocos we were the ones, we were the ones who stopped them. Same as the 39th Battalion on Kokoda,
- 32:30 they were chocos too. Very strange. No, we found out that he could be beaten, that he wasn't just as good as he thought he was. All it took was a bit of determination on our side, and we could stop him. And morale went up just like that after the battle of Milne Bay.
- 33:00 I did hear that the blokes on Kokoda, they were saying I hope those blokes in Milne Bay can hold out and we were saying I hope those blokes up in Kokoda could hold out. Well as it turned out we were both held out.
- 33:14 **When was it that you changed over to the AIF?**
- 33:19 That would been just about my 21st birthday at Milne Bay.
- 33:26 **And did most of your mates do the same thing?**
- 33:27 No, a few did, but not many.
- 33:30 **What was your reason for changing over?**
- 33:34 I was overseas , they were going to send me wherever I was needed, so what's the difference? I may as well be in the AIF as the CMF.

33:46 **Were there any benefits in being in the AIF?**

33:47 None whatsoever. It was just that they were, well the CMF they

34:00 more or less said that they were conscripts and the AIF were volunteers, that was the difference. As I told you before, I volunteered when I was 17 so even though I was in the chocos I wasn't a, I was a volunteer.

34:15 **Were there many other blokes that you knew of that were volunteers in the CMF?**

34:20 Yes there were.

34:23 **If you had to summarise the CMF's involvement in New Guinea, what would you say to somebody?**

34:37 If anyone asked me I would say they did a magnificent job. For someone who, you could almost say Australia had thumbs down to them. The AIF we had, we did have AIF in Milne Bay, we had the

35:00 2/10th and the 2/12th, I don't know if the 2/10th was there or not, but I know 2/9th was our back up. They more or less embraced us as comrades after Milne Bay. I would say the same thing on Kokoda, the AIF came in they would have embraced the CMF up there.

35:30 I think myself we were, after Kokoda and Milne Bay, we became one army. There was no distinction.

35:46 **Considering what the CMF accomplished there, given their lack of training and lack of equipment, how do you summarise that?**

35:55 I don't know.

36:00 I really don't know on that one Peter [interviewer].

36:01 **Did you feel like you were prepared?**

36:06 No. No I wasn't prepared. I may have been prepared, but I wasn't prepared with the equipment I had. See I had nine rounds of ammunition. How could I be prepared?

36:27 **How did that make you feel? Here you are put on the front line so ill equipped.**

36:36 I said to the office, "What do you want me to do, go 'drrr' and throw the bloody gun at them and run?" That's what I said to them. I said, "That's all I can do".

37:04 **So what do you say, what was the main job of the PIB?**

37:10 Main job? Gathering information. We were attached to a white unit and the white unit would ask for information about a certain position and they would contact our company commander or our platoon commander, we want to find out about that and you've

37:30 got 24 hours or 48 hours or whatever. Then we would go out and gather whatever information we could. Find out, if we could where their machine-guns were placed, and the number of men they had.

37:55 **Something that I meant to add on to what we were just talking about, what did you think about that letter where these men should not be sent on patrol?**

38:00 I didn't give it another thought. But I thought to myself how are they going to get knowledge about patrolling if they're not taken out? You'd do it yourself, you've got to go. I mean

38:30 how did we get our knowledge, how did we get our experience? I think they were very happy that I took them the next day. I showed them what had to be done and what actually went on. They never looked back, they turned out to be very good men.

39:00 **How was it that you were sent to Bougainville?**

39:06 I was sent over as a reinforcement. One of the white blokes got killed, and I was sent over as a reinforcement to take his place.

39:25 **And you say you don't know why you didn't like Bougainville so much?**

39:26 I've no idea why I hated the place and I don't know why. It didn't seem to be any difference anywhere else. I don't know I just hated it.

Tape 8

00:35 **So if could tell us a bit about the listening post, when the Japanese chased you out?**

00:46 At most listening posts you were right in the, close to a main

01:00 track, so that you could see what was going on and your out of sight yourself so you couldn't be seen. We'd just watch and wait, look and listen.

01:25 **What about when the Japanese chased you out of there?**

01:39 Yes, we were 60 odd mile from our base there and we had to get back through the jungle about 60 odd mile the best way could. We had,

02:00 on that particular day we were having an air drop too with rations, and there was a native woman, must have been a fairly bony one, she went out and pulled the white cloth away so the air force people couldn't find it. Otherwise they would have just dropped all our rations out. It was only the, when they found we weren't there, the next day they came looking for us, and of course we were well up

02:30 in the bush, we'd found another clear area, and we laid the cloth down again and that is where we got our rations.

02:47 **How much gear did you have to travel with?**

02:49 We had very little because we'd lost most of it when we were crossing the river. I lost my Owen gun, I lost my magazines and I had no grenades,

03:00 I had absolutely nothing. As a matter of fact, there's a little story there. I wanted to be able to swim across first and take my Owen gun with so as I could give them covering gun fire as the rest were coming across the river. Now I was getting washed out and I knew I would never make it so I dropped the Owen gun, now it's still up there

03:30 in the river on the bottom, and I just, swimming, I just managed and I grabbed about six blades of grass where the two rivers met like that and I grabbed those six blades of grass and I slowly pulled myself in and I got up and crawled up on the bank. There was a big fig tree there, I stood behind this big fig tree and I was watching the other blokes coming. Now our officer, he did get washed back

04:00 and the last ever he said was, "Help me Frank." Now to this day, I've often thought what was I going to do? Two days later we sent one of our natives back and at the foot at that tree he found my army boot, he found by web belt with

04:30 four magazines in it and he found my shirt, no he found my shorts and he brought those up to us. So to this day I don't know, I say to myself I must have been going to go and help Tommy Bruce, he was our officer. I saw Tom getting shot and he disappeared

05:00 below the river. So I don't know what I was going to do. I was the last white man to see him alive when I caught up to the others they said, "Have you seen Tom?" and I said, "Yes, Tom is gone." They couldn't believe it. I told them what had happened.

05:26 **What was there reaction?**

05:30 The couldn't believe it at first. The last they saw of him, he was still swimming you see. But I had told Tom that it was a bad place for our position, that he should have had our camp over the river, beside this, on the northern side, not the southern side. I told him, the first thing the Japs are going to do is cut us off. And that's exactly what they did.

06:00 When we had to get out we had to swim this flooded river. There you are. So we didn't only have the Japs in front of us, we had the flooded river behind us. He thought that was the best place to put the camp and he was in charge and that's where he put it.

06:30 **Can you tell us a bit more about holding the villages that the commandos had cleared?**

06:42 The commandos , after they took these, I think there was five villages, after they went through and took the five villages they still had the mission station up on the hill, so when they took the mission station that's

07:00 where they stayed. They called us to come through and hold the villages down below. Only about six grass huts. That's what I didn't like about, you'd lose good men and after you'd spent all this time all you had left were two or three bloomin' grass huts.

07:28 **Because everything was destroyed?**

No. They weren't destroyed, but what was the good of a grass hut. I mean, AIF over in the middle east,

when they took a town they had a city, they had something that they'd fought for, captured. We had nothing but two or three grass huts.

07:58 **What about being in Bougainville towards the end of the war?**

08:00 As I said, I hated Bougainville, from the time I got there to the time I left. I didn't like it at all. I did many patrols there. I patrolled around a place called Shaggy Ridge. As far as I know I was in the first patrol to reach Hongori River, that's down the south.

08:30 We were relieved by the PIB. The PIB relieved the NGIB, native units. I was happy to get out.

08:44 **What was the overall atmosphere like?**

08:51 Mud and rain. No matter where you went you, well where I was that's where they put us

09:00 and you were walking ankle deep in mud. There were ranges there but I never ever got near them.

09:15 **What about the other men what was there mood like towards the end?**

09:18 I don't really know because you see there I was more

09:30 or less with only one other white man, that was the lieutenant, I forget his name now Lionel McMillan. He was a very, very good bloke. I liked him and we got on very well together. Actually he nominated me for the company sergeant major when he came home on leave.

10:00 So I didn't know really what other blokes thought of it.

10:16 **I want to ask you earlier what kind of impact the Depression had when you were growing up on your family?**

10:28 Naturally they didn't like me being over there.

10:30 I think they all accepted it, it was just one of those things that just had happen.

10:47 **I'm talking more like your childhood when you were growing up, what kind of impact the Depression had?**

10:55 I see what you mean.

11:00 I think I was too young to understand what was going on. I've heard my Mum and Dad talking about it, I spoken to other people around my own age and we can all remember eating bread and dripping, with a bit of pepper and salt on it.

11:30 Had bread and dripping for your lunch at school. Outside of that we didn't, as kids, we didn't feel it.

11:51 **Did your sisters say anything?**

11:52 I don't think so. I think they were, see we were on a dairy farm, you'd have your own butter, your own milk

12:00 and you'd have your own garden and you'd have your own vegies so that way it didn't really interfere with you very much.

12:18 **What other specific bush skills that the natives taught you?**

12:37 No not really. We had our special little signals that we used when we were going through the bush, which we'd pass back , hand signals, that's 62 years ago.

12:55 **You talked before about different foods and that you never went hungry?**

13:00 There were quite a lot of different native foods. A white man wouldn't be able to find them. They'd just go along and there be nothing there at all and they'd dig it up and they'd bring up a bloomin' potato or a taro or something like this, and you'd have your dinner. It wasn't often that you had to rely on it, mostly, I'd say 99 times

13:30 out of 100 you had your own rations.

13:39 **Would they eat their own rations?**

13:42 **Yes, mostly rice, fish, meat. I never actually never joined in their dinner parties, but I think**

14:00 **their main staple was rice, fish or meat. Maybe occasionally they'd supplement that with**

animals that they'd catch themselves.

14:18 **Earlier you talked about booby traps that you set up? Did you ever come across any traps that had been set off?'**

14:30 No. No I never ever saw a Japanese booby trap either.

14:44 **Were there any particular strategies you had for hiding from the Japanese?**

15:00 No. The main thing was not to move. If you moved, you could see it. I could sit behind a little bush out side in Shirley's garden and I just did it the other day for one of my grandkids, he wanted to know, he was just up to soldiers and wanted to know what a soldier did.

15:30 I told him if he could sit behind a bush without any one seeing him, I'll show you and I'll sit behind this little bush. I just moved like that and I said, "Could you see that" and he said, "Yes." But he didn't know I was there until I moved.

16:00 **What did you know about the atomic bombs?**

16:14 I knew nothing until after they'd gone off and someone said an atom bomb went off in Japan. As far as I know it was just another giant bomb.

16:30 It was only until later on that we really got the news in that Japanese had surrendered we realised just how big it was. People today say they should never have dropped it.

16:50 **What do you think?**

16:51 I think they did the right thing, because

17:00 Japan was guarded with 10,000 suicide planes. So what would a navy's chance of coming in against 10,000 suicide planes? They were prepared to die, every suicide pilot. So I'd say by dropping those bombs they may have killed innocent two, three million

17:30 Japs but they saved five, six million Americans and Australians and whoever else was going in. For myself, I say yes they did the right thing. I know it was terrible, wasn't everything else during the war terrible?

18:00 I mean there were none of us that went up there enjoyed sitting down and waiting for someone to come along and pop them off. We weren't playing cowboys and Indians.

18:20 **Did you ever get tired of the war?**

18:26 Yes I did.

18:30 There was no one more happier about it when it was finished. I had a reporter after me once, was I ever scared? Well I was up there, I said, "Yes, once" and they said, "When was that?" And I said, "I went overseas in June 1942 and I landed back in Australia in

19:00 October in 1946." I said, "I was scared the whole time I was over there."

19:09 **So how did you deal with having that feeling for such a long time? What were your ways to cope with that?**

19:18 You knew you had to be there. There was no way you were going to get out of it. You were there to do a job

19:30 and as far as I know I did that job to the best way I possibly could.

19:46 **How did you get back to Australia.**

19:55 How did I get home. I think I flew home.

19:58 **How many men were you with?**

20:00 The plane was loaded. Possibly 40, 50 men on the plane.

20:08 **Where were they from?**

20:10 Finschhafen we landed at Moresby and the come from Moresby back to Townsville. From Townsville we flew through to Brisbane.

20:20 **Was everyone sharing their experiences on that flight?**

20:25 No. We didn't talk about

20:30 our actions and what we had to do. It was enough for us that we were doing it. It wasn't something that you talked about.

20:40 **What did you talk about, do you remember?**

20:47 The weather. Home. Family that was at home. Folks would talk about their wives and their children,

21:00 others who didn't have a wife would talk about their mother and father and their sister and brothers. What we were going to do when we come home.

21:21 **Did you have a plan?**

21:25 The only plan I had was, what I wanted to do was

21:30 buy a utility truck, load it up with a few tools and the camping equipment and go around Australia. Go somewhere until I run out of money and get a job until I have a few pound and the go around to the next place to see what Australia was like. That was my ambition. It never ever happened.

22:00 I never ever got around Australia.

22:05 **Why?**

22:07 Finance for one thing. I got married. My family. We had to build a home here.

22:26 **What was it like arriving back in Brisbane?**

22:39 **It was an extremely cold night and they said to go down to the Q [Quartermaster] store and draw three blankets each and a lantern so we could see where we were going, pick a hut and a couple of mates and go in to the hut**

23:00 **I did not know anyone that was there, no one from my unit, one bloke said to me, "Are you going to get three blankets?" And I said, "He said to get three blankets so I'm going to get three blankets." I'd be told so many times to do this and to do that I was used to taking orders. He said, "I'd better get three" and thank God we did because it was an extremely cold.**

23:30 **We put four blankets on the floor and the others, and we slept in the on top of those three blankets and we even had our overcoats on and we were cold then. So as I said it was an extremely cold night.**

24:00 **Was there any welcoming home parade?**

24:08 No. For me there was no welcoming home at all. I come home and went in to the bush and I didn't tell anyone where I was going. And when my son became a builder we put a sign up out here, Brian Wust Builder, and a bloke driving past saw the name and he said

24:30 I wonder if that's the same bloke that was in the unit with us. He pulled up and made himself known and he said come back and rejoin us in our reunions, join us in our march in Brisbane. That would have been about 15 years ago and that was when I started marching in Brisbane. The day I march in Brisbane with those people

25:00 people cheering and clapping that was my welcome home, the whole thing brought tears to my eyes. Those people that were clapping, saying good on you mate for doing what you've done. And on one of those occasions, she wouldn't have been any more than

25:30 about six, she'd left her mother, I was sitting in one of the parks down there by myself, waiting for the march to finish and she come over and she said you must have been very brave. By then her mother had come over and was standing beside her, I said, "No love, I wasn't very brave I was told to do a job" same as Mummy tells you to go and do, maybe wipe the dishes

26:00 put your shoes away or something like that. I said, "I did it. I had a job to do the same as you have a job to do." And her mother said, "Thank you very much." They're the things, I told you before I was a rebel, I used to break rank in a march. You'd be marching through Brisbane and you'd see poor little old lady sitting on her deck chair

26:30 with tears rolling down here cheeks , I'd break rank and go over to her and say, "Good on you Mum thank you very much." I'd join back in to my march again. I used to it all the time, I was told not to but that was me. I thought I was doing the right thing.

27:00 A lot of people that knew they'd call out to me. This last year, my youngest daughter, she was about 300 yards from the end of the march, and she said to her young lad, you go out and say g'day to pa. He hasn't seen me and he was actually walking away from me, so I walked over and grabbed him by the hand and I

- 27:30 brought him back in to the march and we finished the march together. The Courier Mail picked us out, the photographer and he took our photo and we got our photo taken in the Courier Mail. There the things that make it, makes it for me. One of my grandsons
- 28:00 marched with me one year and I still got my army hat, with my badges and colour patches, and I took it off and put it on his head. There was no way in the world he was going to give me that hat back. He finished the march wearing that hat and when the march was over, another one of my grandsons said, "Pa, are you going to let me wear the hat next year?" These are the things that we
- 28:30 appreciate it.
- 28:31 **Do you think your feelings towards your experiences have changed from when you got back to now?**
- 28:46 Honestly, I still don't know what we fought for or why?
- 29:00 No one gave us any good reason except that they were coming down to take our country and that was the reason I fought, was to save my country, my mother and sisters.
- 29:33 **Why didn't you join the RSL when you came back?**
- 30:35 Well I did. I joined the Gympie RSL. I paid my dues every year but I didn't go to any meetings. I lived about 40 miles from Gympie and it was bit hard to get up there. I found after about four years I found the going I found it a little bit hard and I went to the RSL to ask them if they could give me a bit of assistance. Not them themselves, but through different organizations. They said, no that I'd have to go through the sub-branch at Noosa. No, I don't want to go to Noosa, I belong to Gympie club, not Noosa. They said we can't do anything for you. So I said forget the whole thing.
- 31:00 If I had gone to Noosa, and said one word there, the whole of Tewantin would have know the whole of my business. They'd have know that I was in trouble, that I wanted help, because at that stage Tewantin was all related to each other and they were all cousins, and there was no way I wanted anyone in Tewantin to know. They all thought I was rolling in money.
- 31:30 I used to get around on a new motorbike.
- 31:46 **Why were you having trouble?**
- 31:48 We struck a couple of cyclones and they just wiped me out. So when I
- 32:00 couldn't get help from there I just walked off the farm with the clothes I stood up in and my motorbike. I joined the flying gang on the railway. I've never looked back.
- 32:19 **When you came back were you keen to start a family straight away?**
- 32:26 No when I came back I had plenty of girlfriends if it comes to that, but no one I was ever serious about. Then of course I met that blonde inside there, she's a twin.
- 32:44 **How did you meet her?**
- 32:45 Well that's, it was strange there. There was another young lad I was friendly with and she asked Shirley and her twin sister to go up for a swim at Noosa. And she said we'll go up and ask the Wust boys to go with us, he said it'll be a lot of fun. When they came up I was on the only Wust boy there. They asked me to go swimming with them. I had three girls here why wouldn't I go swimming with them. The lass with the long blonde hair, skinny legs, what could I do? I was smitten.
- 33:36 **Did you ever tell her much about what happened up there?**
- 33:39 No. She didn't seem to be interested. Might have been, but didn't want to ask. No I don't think she was interested.
- 34:00 I'd tell her a few occasionally , this is what we did when we were at so and so. I might tell her about a place and what a beautiful sight it was in the sunrise or of the sunset of the evening. Different things like that I'll tell her.
- 34:28 **Do you ever dream about it?**
- 34:30 No. Who'd want to. I don't get any nightmares any more.
- 34:39 **So you did?**
- 34:44 I did after I heard Tommy Bruce say, "Help me Frank," and there was nothing I could do . If that's the last words a man ever says to you, or ever spoke in this world, it gets to you.

- 35:00 I heard him for weeks after. I can see him now. When I come home and I went to see his mother and father, it was the hardest job if ever I did, it was the hardest I mean.
- 35:26 **Did they appreciate you coming?**
- 35:38 Oh yes they did. I was able to bring back his wristwatch, I don't know how I was able to get his watch, he must have had it on a table or a bench when he left it there in the morning and our company commander had his camera. I was able to return those to his Mum and Dad.
- 36:00 **What did you think when it all started up again with Korea or any conflict since World War II?**
- 36:10 Can you see any sense in it. I can't see why. The only people who are manufacturing ammunition, they've got to sell it somewhere, people who are manufacturing guns they've got to sell them somewhere. They are the only the places to some of these places. No I can't see any sense in it. I never could.
- 37:00 But people like Hitler, Mussolini, and the bloke in Iraq, Hussein someone had to stop them. They were just going too far. They had to
- 37:30 be stopped. I agreed with, in myself, I agreed with going in there, they had to be stopped.
- 37:49 **If your grandchildren had to go off to war, what would be your reaction to that?**
- 37:56 I would hate to see any of my grandchildren having to go. I don't want to see any go. I've got five sons and I always thank god that none of those have had to go. I've got grandsons now that are just at that age, 20, 21 at the age that I had to go.
- 38:00 I keep my fingers crossed that they will never have to go.
- 38:42 **What's your opinion of Japanese people?**
- 38:51 You mean my opinion of them today? Well my opinion of them today is that they are people like us. My opinion of them during the war
- 39:00 was they did what they'd been taught. I don't blame the Japanese soldier for the treatment that they gave our prisoners of war, because that's the way the Japs were taught, that's the way they were taught from when they were kids, it was there religion, to die for their emperor. It was an honour.
- 39:30 They'd sooner die than surrender. When our blokes surrendered, to the Japanese, it was the biggest disgrace on a soldier was his surrender. I don't agree with what they did, but I don't blame them. I don't like them either.
- 39:56 **What do you think of the saying 'forgive and forget'?**
- 40:00 Forgive and forget. I can forgive, but I'll never forget. Which is years out of my life and that's the years I can't forget. I spent three years and three months
- 40:30 up in New Guinea, three years three months away from my family. Lost. When I should have been living. Youth, that's the youth that I lost. I think a lot of young fellows, a lot of blokes my age have got the same thought.

INTERVIEW ENDS