

Australians at War Film Archive

James Waters (Jim) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 11th December 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1250>

Tape 1

00:35 **All right James if you would like to start, give us a bit of your life summary?**

Well I was born 15 November 1920 something, I will tell you later, recognised as 1922 right and I grew up

01:00 in a country town. And my father, mother, my family worked she worked at the Warringah basin in Victoria during the, first he was a photographer during the '20s and worked on the river, Murray River barges and what they used to get paid in sovereign, half sovereign because there was no general money around. Because the Depression was about to land on our doorstep. So our kids

01:30 were allowed to play with the sovereign and whatnot on the table under Mum's jurisdiction. And then the Depression hit so consequently there was no money.

Sorry Jim can I get you to stop for a tick?

Ok tick tick.

Ok take 2. Ok Jim if you would like to start from the beginning and your life summary.

I was born 15 of November 1920 plus which I will explain later.

02:00 Because as a reference to my war service. In the '20s my father worked as a photographer but he worked in Warringah Basin which was the, later on that was in the Depression years. But he worked as a, all sorts of things, he was an inventor to a degree which was sort of passed onto me. And he was

02:30 paid for his work at those times with sovereign and half sovereign, which we were allowed to play with when we were kids on the kitchen table. The Depression hit and there was simply no money about. And the only money that we were able to get was work for the dole system as it is now, it was called the plain dole and we went to Warringah Basin to live up there in tents. While

03:00 he did his work on the channel systems and took water, it was all built, that scheme was all built with by hand, horses and scoops and what have you for, and there is miles and miles of the channelling that runs down through the Murray River and down there and it is still visible, it is still there, it is still operational. But

03:30 apparently I had my first accident, I walked through fire. I stood in a fire as a little one and the panic was on so they rushed me off to Echuca in an old two model Ford, I can barely remember it. Running like blazes and where we were assigned to the hospital in Echuca my feet were mended, and that come out ok.

04:00 And then we moved from Echuca eventually but I will tell you more about that later. Over to a place called Moama which is just over the river and it was a place where I did all sorts of things as a kid. I had my second brush with death when I was a 13 year old. I ended up with double

04:30 pneumonia and I was in hospital for six weeks, at Echuca hospital. I survived it fortunately, and liquorice powder, I shudder when I think of the day you know but there was various incidences through my life, younger life where I put myself at risk. Not deliberately. But I was born to live and so I escaped all these near tragedies

05:00 just through god and good luck and then I worked in various fields as a youth. The money that I brought in was given to my family, there were ten of us in the family, including, not including my Mum and Dad. That made 12 and the chit [signed voucher] that they we were getting for the dole just gave you a list of things you could go down to the groceries and get like the

05:30 basics, flour, sugar, potatoes etc. You couldn't buy anything like sweets like that with it. But as children we learnt a way to get sweets, without stealing. And occasionally we got to the picture show, and these

things could be picked up later but, and then I became a grocer boy. I was in the chemist shop first, ten and six a week. And

- 06:00 there was Friday night shopping all through the Depression through those towns and I got all sorts of trouble there, some misdemeanour happened in that period but then the I got a job then in oh a fellow came along and asked if I wanted a job. And he was a man, I was a young fellow, a kid I was just over 13
- 06:30 and he wanted to know if I wanted a job, and I said, "I got a bloody job I don't want another one." I was very aggressive then. And I said, "Who are you talking to me?" and he said, "Oh I am offering you a job," and I said, "Yes what sort of a job?" He said, "Fruit hawking," and I said, "What the hell is that?" you see. And so he explained this fruit hawking bit and you know I promptly thought to myself, you know, "Is this real or is this some sort of a deal that is
- 07:00 even going on today?" But I thought, "Well all I can do is give it a go and if it goes in the wrong direction I will smack him in the mouth and I will shoot through," you know - that was my attitude to life. And I went off and he was a fruit hawker, he sold apples out of Harcourt and Bendigo, all over Victoria. And I was paid quite handsomely for that because I was able to send the money home to my Mum and I think the most that I earned at that particular time was about four pound fifteen
- 07:30 shillings, that is a week. And I would keep five shillings and send the rest home to Mum. I did that for a few months until I got fed up with it then I come back and I was a grocer assistant. I learnt to be a grocer assistant, delivering orders and packing and what have you and weighing out. Everything was weighed on scales and in paper bags and was tied with string. There was no such thing as tape or anything like that. And
- 08:00 I remember an incidence there when the old grocer came out, my boss and he had a gimpy eye and he had a ruler in his hand, and when I break the string on my finger, just snap it and he measured the string. And he said to me, "You know," he said, "you're wasting my profits." I said, "How come?" He said, "Well the amount of bags you've got here is a half a ball of string, use the scissors
- 08:30 I supplied to cut the string," and I was oh you know this is a bit rough. Anyhow I stayed with him and then I joined the, I wanted to join the services, I did a lot of roller staking by the way, and stuff like that in my younger days and I was a figure skater, beautiful auburn haired girl I used to skate with, she was lovely. And so I went and they had navy, army and air force in
- 09:00 Echuca the, what do they call them, recruiting places, and I thought I wanted to be an air force man you see, well I hated planes. I remember my father wanted me to go in Kingsford Smith planes, and he paid the fare and all this business, and I jibbed, and I would not go up in that piece of paper but you know and well anyway, air force was first choice and they measured me and they said, "Go home and grow up a half an inch." "Oh hell,
- 09:30 what is going on here?" So I went to the navy and they told me the same thing, "You are not quite tall enough." "Oh God," you know. I said, "Give me a break." They said, "Go and see the army." So I seen the army and they said, "Yes, we'll have you," you know. And that was in early '39, beginning of '39 actually. And so I was doing what they call home defence forces, drills in the hall
- 10:00 at the town, you do a camp outside, we learnt to slope arms and work on weapons and all that sort of stuff, it was quite good training. But the main thing we learnt about was discipline and how to get along with each other and there was about 50 of us in the company of Echuca. And in 1939 we were doing our usual
- 10:30 camps when the war broke out. And they called us out and said, in the company that we were and, "The war has commenced who would like to serve full time in the army?" you see so most of us stepped forward. And so anyhow the some, (UNCLEAR) I joined the Australian Military Force in the Commonwealth Force,
- 11:00 whatever they called that, the AMF, the Australian Military Force and the Citizens' Military Force [CMF] and I don't know which way it balanced out but, anyhow I was in it permanently and they broke up the 38th, that was the 38th Battalion we broke the 38th Battalion and I became a light horsemen, at the ripe age of 17, 18. And we were stationed in Bendigo.
- 11:30 A big plums men hat, I will show you one of those after. And the leggings and jodhpurs and all the rest of this (UNCLEAR) cowboy, we all felt so bit you know. Anyhow we did various exercises around Bendigo and I remember one exercise where an officer was supposed to have reconnoitred with the area that we walked in and he hadn't and we were told at night
- 12:00 time and we got through this fence and we'd hear a yook every now and again and when we came out the other end of the exercise we were about four men short. And so we had to wait for daylight to search to find these men. Well that paddock that we were training in was full of bottle mines as they called them, you see the hole was about 3 foot cross in diameter and they were about 20 foot deep and they sloped down the sides and they
- 12:30 were round about 8 feet in the bottom and they had water in the bottom. And some of these boys fell down in these holes you see, so eventually we fished them out the next day and they were up to their waist in water all night. So they had quite a wet what would you call it, introduction to wartime affairs.

Well then they mechanised us, we never had horses.

13:00 We used to play but we did, and John (UNCLEAR) after and

So you used imaginary horses?

Very imaginary, do you want that now because I think it is an interesting little story. We all had the plums in our hats and we had jodhpurs and we had our bandoliers and we were dressed like light horsemen. And in Bendigo they had this big parade ground.

13:30 Beautifully slandered and you used to have to rake it and one side was two rows of stables, no horses. Over the other side was the barracks and the mess hall, and the mess was a parade area. Well the bugle would go at roveli, we'd throw on our, we'd all had flannel shirts which was the thing of light horse,

14:00 jodhpurs with braces on them instead of belts, so we would all fly out with our boots on, undone of course, you would never have time to lace up your boots, the jodhpurs were undone and just down the bottom, you had your flannel on and you pulled your jodhpurs on and just button them at the top and you had to go over and look after your horse. And so you went through the process of combing the horse and grooming it,

14:30 feeding the horse, watering the horse, speaking to the horse, patting it, all these silly things you know, and it is absolutely unbelievable you know but we did the drill as set out, just in case we got horses. We never had one horse in the battalion in the regiment. So anyhow then when we had cleaned the horses up, fed them and watered them and put the rails back up and closed the doors of the stable.

15:00 Go in, we went back then and we had to clean up and we got ready for our own breakfast you see. So anyhow we had an early morning breakfast and then we would have to get dressed in full reg [regalia] to go on parade when the bugle went and so we all race out on parade with our leggings on, and the whole bit, got box and dice looking all soldierly and

15:30 pretty in the sense. And the parade, call out parade, break up and attend your horses you see, so we would go and put the bridl on the horse, fix it all up and we'd put the saddle on the horse, and tighten the synchs and all things like that, talk to the horse all that time, patting the neck and taking him by the reins near the bit and you led your horse

16:00 out, and you walked out with your horse, his head level with your shoulder, and you led him out on the parade ground and then when you got out there you would line up and there would be, "Get over, get over, get over further, get your bum over," you know straightening your horse up. So we stood there in this mode. All holding our horse. And the commanding officer of our company at that time, he had to do the same thing. And

16:30 after a lot of speaking to attention and all that sort of thing and him making all sorts of noises he would say, "Troops be prepared to mount," so we had to prepare to mount, so you would be standing straight up and you'd reach up and take the plummel and you'd turn slightly towards the horse so you would lift your leg up and put it in the stirrup and the reins were in the right hand, left hand by then and you've got hold of the plummel you see.

17:00 And then you had to lift your leg up and cock it over the horse and sit in the saddle and then straighten up and sit straight on your saddle you see. Tremendous imagination and you would sit there holding the reins you see. And the commanding officer would say, "Troop prepare to..." What was it? "Troop, prepare to move on forward command," something

17:30 like that you see. So we'd all sit up on our horses, and carrying on and making horse noises and whinnying and going on and slapping the horses to be quiet. And then he'd say, "Troop forward," you see, so we'd all stand down, we'd count our feet step one, two, three, four. And that was one for each leg of the horse, and then we'd move forward. And then he'd say, "Troop by the

18:00 left, left wheel," you see. So you at the front of the horse, you'd hold your horse, and you would just move around slowly while the rest of them were coming around and walking across, riding your horses, imaginably of course and we had broomstick guns, wooden guns and big plans and somebody would carry out these childish exercises as they are now but they were fun you know and

18:30 anyhow we never got any horses so they mechanised us and they, in Bendigo this was and they commanded all the trucks in Bendigo the fruiter trucks, and graziers and wood carters, they were all different trucks, all different colours, badly maintained and this was our mechanised regiment. So they used to take us off to Harcourt and places like that in the Victorian Ranges for exercises. Well

19:00 half the trucks never got there, they kept breaking down and what have you so eventually the field horses arrived and they were just for limbers for carting machine guns, because we had machine guns. And we got some reasonably good trucks and we headed down to Martha and that is where we camped there for the first time, tent city of soldiers this is

19:30 early 1940 and so we moved into this tent camp. And we used to do limber training, we did hot fires, they call it at Rose Bud where the artillery is shooting over your head, what have you and we are charging around these limbers to set up our biggest guns. And my brother, of course was a rider, in other words he rode the left hand horse, there is two horses in the limber.

- 20:00 Now there is no springs in the limbers, there is a combination of two limbers. And they were about I suppose 6 foot square or thereabouts but they were just solid timber and about a foot high. And the back limber, the back that is where the foot break was or the hand break, you'd leaned over the side and you wound the break when the horse, was singing out break break, and you used to hurt the skin underneath the
- 20:30 arms, so you learnt to get over and hang over the back and work this thing with your feet. And with this silly charging around the dunes at Rose Bud we turned a few limbers over and fortunately nobody got hurt, but the horse rider who was the boss and he used to swear and cuss and carry on about your stupidities but he was the bloke that rode the horse you know and supposed to steer these things. But so when we finished there we came back and the
- 21:00 engineers had dug a complete First World War trench system as in the Somme; opposing forces, barb wire, entanglements, the whole lot (UNCLEAR) and so we are doing, as kids really, we are doing First World War exercises and we did those for some weeks in the winter. It was raining like blazes, cold as you could get and the trench warfare was proper trenches
- 21:30 as built in France, quite deep and duckboards which were floating on wet sand and because they fill with water and then you have your step to get up on so you could see over the parapet so as you could shoot at the enemy you see. And in front of you was all the wire, three big coils of it and other peg wire which was made up of barbed wire and you put it in poles in the ground and
- 22:00 you put it always but you knew your way to get through your wire, the enemy didn't know that way, he had to try and knock your wire down but so we the forces were say 100 yards apart. And they used to set off these big explosions in the sands and the dunes there between the two opposing forces of imitation artillery. And we were set out on night
- 22:30 patrols to listen and bring back information in regards to the enemy. And quite often you would be going through and there be a great bang and there'd be a bloody great hole appeared and explosives would go off and so you work on the assumption, lightening doesn't strike twice, so you get in that hole and you'd eye ball the country through the night and listen, you are seeing through your ears really because it is pitch black, and you hear a noise, and you are to stay quiet.
- 23:00 Now this night I could not contain myself, I thought you know there is something there. So I said to the patrol with me, there are six men, I said, I made indications that I could hear this noise over yonder and tapped him on the shoulder, and as soon as you tapped each other we paid attention to whoever the leader was. And so this noise got closer and closer and we jumped out and grabbed it and wrestled down the whole and gagged it and it was a bloke, you know, of the opposing
- 23:30 team. So we were not supposed to take any action whatsoever, evasive fighting you just reconnoitre you see. So we captured this guy and we took him back to the lines. Well the trench warfare thing, the whole of the front line was trenches and then it went back on other trenches, they dug into the ground and then you
- 24:00 came to the second line of defence, and back further you came to headquarters line you see, so you had three rows of trenches, joined up by oh what would you call them, they were sort of dug paths you know 6 foot deep. And we dropped this, we bound and gagged this fellow and took him back through the lines and he was screaming through his
- 24:30 gag and carrying on so we get him back to headquarters and present him to our CO [Commanding Officer] as a POW [Prisoner of War] you see. A prisoner of war. And so when they ripped the gag off him he was blaspheming, going on, he was really rotten about it you know but he happened to be the commanding officer opposing forces sticking his nose where it wasn't wanted and we captured him. And
- 25:00 he said, "I am you know colonel whatever." I couldn't give two hoots what he was, but anyhow our CO said, "You are a POW, that is it, so you are out of action." He was very upset and furious you know. And I expected I'd run into this fellow again I'd cop hell, I never fortunately, I missed him. But the, it was a hard period of training and we were dressed in overcoats down to our
- 25:30 ankles. First World War type. And we always carried ten peniken on our belt and the .303 rifle with a bayonet. And you'd be out on guard duty, well you'd be up behind the trench, I might add the officers had dugouts, they had comfort, they had a fire going, what have you. But you'd be out in this cold at night
- 26:00 you'd have several guards on duty and you'd walk up and down and reverse and go back like the grenadier guard type thing, lumping these bloody 303s around. And as I walked up and down my beat, I felt something warm and it was freezing cold, so I thought geez that is nice you know. So I parked myself standing there over this warm spot.
- 26:30 And this hot air was coming up the side of my great coat, and I thought this is great you know and so I just stood there and whenever I had to move off to meet them I'd go back to that point and then I heard a noise and I did the right thing and said, "Halt who goes there?" you know and ripped me bayonet down and carried on. And (UNCLEAR) of these soldiers rum officer, I didn't drink rum in me life, I didn't smoke, I didn't drink. He said, "Unzip

- 27:00 your pannikin," and he you'd do that, he was an officer, a soldier and he'd 'glug, glug' with this big demijohn on, he put a couple snorts of rum OP rum in this pannikin, he said, "Drink that soldier, it will warm the cockles of your heart." Well I got it near my nose and the fumes went up me nose and I sneezed, and when I sneezed I stepped sideways, it blew me off me feet and I tipped this rum out accidentally and it went straight down
- 27:30 where I was standing where the heat was coming and that was the flue from the fire that the officers had in their own dug out you see. And as it went down there it vaporised and when it got down to the fire, boom you could feel the whole, all these officers in their underpants came flying out wondering what the hell hit them, well I cleared off, I didn't want to see what the results were. I left my posting. But this went on for
- 28:00 about four or five weeks in the army warfare. And then we did, this is before 39th, this was the 17th Light Horse I was in. The first unit I was in was the 38th battalion infantry and then the 17th Light Horse. And then we did force marches that crossed the peninsula. I don't know the name of at the peninsula, Port Phillip Bay and the one
- 28:30 across the next one going, well across the bite, towards the bite. I don't know it went across Wilson's Promontory or what it was but it was all Turkey ,bush, it was too high to see over and too weak to climb on and we had our force night march from Warrington across over this peninsula, which was quite some way. And we are
- 29:00 staggering through this coarse bush and heading in the general direction, it is pitch black, and we are off on our sections and we had the blue force was going to land at the beaches where Flinders Naval Base is you see in that bay there, so anyhow we just carried on something through these bushes, one of the boys, we were all privates now, one corporal
- 29:30 was leading us. And someone said to me, "Jim where is the corporal?" and I said, "Well buggered if I know, he is around somewhere," and it was so dark you know. And I couldn't find him, we had lost him you see, so we were milling around there and I said to the boys, "So what do we do now?" and they said, "Well someone has got to be in charge," and I said, "Well lets put someone in charge," and they said, "You," you see, and I thought, "God," you know. So I became in charge of the section, there is nine men, eight and myself you see
- 30:00 and we had lost our corporal. So we carried on and being a country boy I had a fair idea of direction and I headed off into what I thought was the right direction and after much walking, falling and stumbling through these ditches and what have you we get to I could hear the sound of water, waves crashing on the rocks and what have you so we head in that direction. And I found a place, see it is amazing when you
- 30:30 are in night time and you come to the ocean there is a big raging water like that, there is fluorescent light, you can actually see you know. And when I came down to the beach I could see this cliff to my right and I though well, that will be good that will deflect the wind away from us. So we accidentally parked there because I thought it was the best place, it was and so to keep comfortable, a bit more
- 31:00 comfortable we dug a ditch and threw the sand towards the ocean and we settled down in this ditch we dug and we put our rifles on the bank and then we were all hungry as blazes so I said to the boys, "Have we got any money?" So we had two and four pence halfpenny between the lot of us you see. So I said to one of the lads, "Can you see two lights right down the, on the beach there?" He said, "Yes." I said, "It
- 31:30 might be a town, would you volunteer to take this two and four pence halfpenny down and buy us some food if you can," you see. So off he went with the money and he came back with a double loaf of bread and a tin of jam. So it would be 3 in the morning, 3am. And so we gorged ourselves with this bread and we opened the jam with our bayonet and so had bread and jam on the beach there you see. And then we promptly
- 32:00 laid down on our backs, with our hat over our eyes and decided to have this little snooze you see. And this water started breaking over the top of us and the next thing an officer come along the beach and he said, "Who is in charge here?" And they all said, "He is." They all pointed at me. "Very well done, very well done," you see. And he marched on, he said, "The cooks will be along soon for your meal." And dawn was just
- 32:30 breaking when these two fellas come along and they got a big dixie, that is a big pot, hanging on a pole like Chinese fashion, both one end of each other and they are carrying this big pot of stew and I don't know where they cooked it but we weren't hungry but he opened dixie and he put a big scoop of this stew in my dixie and I looked at it and he did the other boys
- 33:00 and I looked at the other boys and I said you know, "We will (UNCLEAR) a bit," you see. I'm a bit suspicious about this, so I had a look at it and there is a big blob in the middle of mine and there was stuff there I could eventually figure out there was grass, and there was bits of leaves and there was sticks and the big blob was a piece of horse manure. When they were coming across apparently with the stew they had tripped and fallen over and spilt the stew and they just scrapped it
- 33:30 up off the ground and put it back in the big dixie you see and of course a lot of the other boys who hadn't had bread and jam they ate it but as soon as they all left the, cook and they left, we threw ours in

the sand because we weren't hungry, we weren't eating horse shit for anybody. So anyhow and then the dawn broke and we won the battle, which was a non battle and so we got back

34:00 and when we got back they pinned two stripes on my arm because we were the only section in position accidentally I might add to repel the enemy. We had dug a trench and we had a buffer in front of us and we had our rifles lying on the sand point seawards, 10 foot waves bashing out out there, so we were close together, we were a good infantry, good section you see, we were first class.

And you had supper?

Yes.

34:30 So anyhow we went back, marched back the next day and half the battalion was missing, they got lost in the peninsula, terrible country, there is all beautiful homes out there now. But they turned up a day later and what have you and we were tired and beat up and when we got back on the Mornington road that goes around the bay the Rose Bud we were dragging our feet and what have you and then the band came along.

35:00 And that is when I appreciated a military band. And they started to beat up a tune, and that was you know a full march tune and we all picked ourselves up and we shouldered arms, slopped arms and we went marching off, we marched the rest, we marched a mile and a half, our fatigue had gone but we were able

35:30 to stand upright and march properly. So we marched back to camp. You stopped at the camp and you took your boots off and your socks and you walked through a long trough and that was condi crystals. That was a cure for foot rot, so we all had orangey yellow feet you know. So every time you went off on a march you come through these condi crystal baths and but then the

36:00 it wasn't long after that but that I was seen a notice, I was going down to the CO company commander's office, John Burrows, major, and there was a bit of paper on the notice board, I stopped and read it and it had volunteers are wanted for joining the 39th infantry battalion. And I thought this is something

36:30 new you know, so I went in to seen Major Burrows. And I forgot what I went in for, all I wanted was a pen and of course I seen this notice and I said to company commander I said, "Can I have your pen sir?" and he looked up and he said, "What?" I said, "I have come to borrow a pen sir." He said, "You must have come for another reason." I said, "No sir I come for a pen, will you lend me a pen?" And so we were arguing about this pen and he wanted to know why I wanted it and I said, "I just want a pen sir," that is all.

37:00 And Captain Merritt, he was Captain Merritt and he was 2IC [Second in Command] and a very straight up and down fella. And he come in and said, "What is going on here?" And I said, "Well I just want the major's pen." What do you want his pen for?" And I said, "My own reasons." And he said, "You don't get a pen until you tell me what you want." And I said, "Well sir there is a sheet of paper out there on the notice board that says volunteers required for 30th Battalion

37:30 or whatever." He said, "Yeah that's right." And I said, "Well I want to put my name on it." "You want to transfer to 39th Battalion?" I said, "Yes I do." So John Burrows and that is the commanding officer and he went out followed Merritt and myself and we put our names in order, our commanding officer put his name down, John Burrows captain, major whatever he was, then Merritt and then me this corporal.

38:00 And then when I went back there was quite a lot of the boys said, "What have you been doing?" so I told them so they went and put their names down you see, so we are all machine gunners and that is how E company was formed. In the 39th is one company more than any other battalion and like normal it was headquarters company then A, B, C and D and

38:30 with our inclusion into the 39th battalion it was E company was added to so we had five companies of troops in the 39th battalion. We are the only company battalion as far as I know in the Australian army that had five companies and we weren't attached, we were part of a battalion and that is the way we formed up and we did our training and

39:00 that is when we first got the name chocos soldiers. And the camp we went to back at marsh I should say, and you get the names mixed up, back at marsh, I think it is a camp Cowl was a town or vice versa I don't know. But and it was a big camp and it was divided there was of one half and militia the other half, 39th Battalion

39:30 you see. Ours was a 'dry' camp [free of alcohol], there was no beer, we were too young to drink. And the other side was a wet camp AIF [Australian Imperial Force] they could drink. And that caused a little bit of disharmony. And so the argument started backwards and forwards, open camp, but you didn't cross the line, imaginary line so there was many arguments and whenever we went into town these big AIF boys used to pick on us little

40:00 AMF [Australian Military Forces] soldiers and we'd have fisticuffs in the street and all this business, who was a better man, so you had to prove yourself, anyhow the usual saying was after that was, "You chocos, you chocos," you see and you know what are they talking about, anyhow it turned out they said you chocos and when somebody said, "What do you mean?" They'd say, "You'd melt under the heat of battle," you see, and that made us a bit cranky. And so we proved

40:30 ourselves in the streets of Cowl. We done over the AIF a lot of times but. Are you ready to.

We are just at the end of a tape so we will stop there.

Tape 2

00:31 **Ok Jim we will take a step back and we will get back to this point where we were just at, if you could, what is your earliest childhood memory?**

My earliest I think would be about, that I could really put my finger on, I was a four year old, beyond that I couldn't, I can remember snippets but not enough. I had elder brothers, they used to keep me in my place, that is all I know.

01:00 They were bigger and stronger than I was, and they used to call me skinny or curly neck because my hair used to go back in a little curl. And I was a flea bite of a kid you know, but I was all sinew and muscle because I used to fight my way all the time because I was a mollydooker or a left handed. And the strange thing happened when I went to

01:30 Echuca State School for a while, got into so much trouble I didn't like it. I came home and told Mum, "I'm not going to school no more," and I think I was about a five year old and she said, "But you've got to go to school son." And I said, "The teachers they are all bullies you know," and she said, "Well you know how to look after yourself." I said, "Yes but if I hit them I am the bully you see." So anyhow they, Mum said,

02:00 "Well don't worry about it we will send you to the catholic school," you see and I thought catholic school for god sake. Anyhow it turned out I went to a catholic school and I was about two weeks there. And I had lovely little blue suede trousers on and blue shirt, and long socks and shoes. The best I have been dressed for god sake you know. And playing in this common area,

02:30 this gravel yard and this kid knocked me over and I tore a little hole in my trousers but we had a lot of dirt on us too from the sand and as you went in the school the nuns were standing in the doorway and they would have the full smock on and arms folded as they'd say and as I walked in you had to give your name and you'd go in, she called my name and she whacked me across the backside with a stick you see.

03:00 With the cane and I spun around and I said, "What was that for?" and she said, "You've got a tear in your pants," you see, so she whacked me again so I kicked her in the shins, walked out, run out, went home. Mum said, "What are you doing home?" And I said, "I had an altercation," I didn't use that word, "with the teacher. I am not going back to that school," you see. I was very headstrong. And I

03:30 said, she said, "What did she hit you for?" And I said, "We were playing in the yard and I tore my trousers," and I said, "She hit me so I kicked her in the shins and so I left," and she said, "Oh you didn't," and I said, "Well yeah." I didn't know then that I was a Catholic. Apparently during my early period when I scalded myself, one of my near life things and I still carry the

04:00 scars down my left arm and down my right, down my right arm and down my right side here. And apparently I pulled a kettle of boiling water over myself and so I had third degree burns down my right side and so they put me into the hospital there to mend, they tried to mend me and I had severe burns like that and so fear of me dying and so

04:30 I had to be christened as a policy those days and Mum was a catholic, all the rest were Calvinists. So Mum had the priest come in and christen me as a catholic and give me my last rites and all this sort of business, this is what I was told, I can't remember it of course. But I was quite a long of time in hospital getting these burns fixed up and stuff and it will come good. So then being

05:00 a catholic saved my life I suppose. The thing in that was my first, or my second serious thing in my life before I got this pneumonia and when I was born my sisters, elder sisters later told me because Mum told them. We didn't know where babies come from or anything like that, but the girls spoke to Mum a fair bit when they were born were able and I was born with a

05:30 vale over my face and Mum said, "Well you will never drown," and I said, "Why, why won't I drown?" She said, "You were born with a veil over your face," you see. So apparently it was some sort of membrane when you are born over your face which was indicated in the old times if you were born with that you won't drown. So I remember when I first learnt to swim. It was

06:00 on the Murray River and my Dad and his Uncle Ern go out in their dinghy and they had me with them, going up in the middle of the river and Dad grabbed me and threw me in the middle of the river. And I had never been in the river you know. And he and Ern talked along and I am floundering around the middle of the Murray River and floating down stream and eventually I started to

06:30 swim and when he seen I could look after myself he hauled me back in the boat, he said, "Good you can

swim now." It was a hard lesson I can tell you, still I didn't drown so the membrane must have been working.

Was he a hard teacher?

Well you know you had to learn to look after yourself because living in those times you lived in a circle of 'you know we're better than you' attitude. There

- 07:00 were superiority types of things you know, there was the upper crust, the lower crust, this side of the line, that side of the line sort of thing so when I started roller skating as a young fella and me this Oliver beautiful auburn hair and I used to skate with her. And her mother used to sit up and watch us all the time and we became figure skaters, on rollers
- 07:30 and very very good friends so three or four times a week we met and did our roller skating. And I went further afield in roller skating and I became a captain of (UNCLEAR) for hockey, fast skating competitions I won those. We went out, we were very daring and so we went out of one bit of bitumen road and we swept it with brooms about a quarter of a mile long a bit over.
- 08:00 And motorbikes at that time and older blokes had them and we had a towrope like water skiing so we had this fast drag racing thing you see. You'd hang onto this bit of wood and you'd squat down with your roller skates and then he'd start off and when you got so he'd open this throttle and go you see. And who could do the fastest quarter mile you know.
- 08:30 Well 60 miles an hour is very fast when you are floating on the bitumen and if you felt like you were falling you'd let the rope go and when you fell you tore skin off everywhere you see and I wasn't about to fall and so I became fastest on a tow and I skated to Bendigo, 56 miles on the roads to play hockey. But that is how keen I was on skating. And whenever my Mum wanted something across the street I'd put on my roller skates and
- 09:00 I'd skate over the street and I used to get into the trouble with the local people because I was always skating between them and into the shops on my roller skates, pick up what I wanted and hawking back down, so I had a lot of fun with me roller skates. And surprising only the other day, it is sort of how your memory comes back, and I was watching the TV and Caloundra down the road here, there is a roller rink down here apparently and they had a thing
- 09:30 on TV the oldest roller skater was at Caloundra, he was 76, and I said to Mum, "What a load of garbage, I'm going to go down there, I'm 82 and I'm going to have a go and see if I can beat the old bloke." Well you should have seen her, she was up me like a rat up a pipe. She said, "You can't do that, break your hips and all this sort of business," and I, "Oh, it is a thought." But anyhow that sort of
- 10:00 brought back the memories of the skating but there was bike racing but I wasn't any good at that, I was too little. I had my own bike, I built my own bike, I got a job at Malvern Star and just to work for him and for him to teach me how to build a bike. So I made my own bike, I called it the Ace and everybody wanted my bike, the Ace, they had to fight. And every winter
- 10:30 we made canoes. The Murray flooded every spring, beautiful big floods, and we used to get sheets of iron, galvanised iron and make canoes out of them and go up the roads and pinch the tar off the roads and melt it down in the fire, get all the stones out of it and use it as a pitch to plug up the holes in the canoes you see. And this galvanised iron thing. So we'd sit in the bottom of the road and when the floods come
- 11:00 away we'd go enjoy ourselves you see. And you'd park your canoe somewhere and some bugger would pinch it and you'd have to start all over again, because the Murray would be a mile wide you know and main stream but the floods were magnificent, I loved the floods. And anyhow my cousin Gus, we used to rouse around together and we seen this beautiful canoe,
- 11:30 like you know proper canoe parked in the bush, so we nicked that. And we are rowing along the river with this canoe, I've got a photo of it laying around somewhere, and so we are going along and of course the people that owned the canoe, it would be quite expensive at that time, reported it to the police, somebody pinched their canoe. So we got from Moama and then we had to go down the Murray Bridge and I suppose it would be a mile and a half
- 12:00 down stream and we got to Echuca wharf and it was quite big, they were all three decker wharfs because of the height of the floods and the Murray River steamers and so we tied this thing up at the wharf, next thing the police come down and they are trying to find the two kids that were seen with this canoe you see. But Gus and I were hiding under the wharf, right up at the
- 12:30 back end, the embankment of the wharf. And there was only about 2 foot of space and we see the police down there searching around piles looking for these two bandits sort of thing and so we stayed quiet up the back like little mice until they went but they knew who it was you know and Gus and I were always copping it, if something happened, blame Jim and Gus for god sake you know. So in the whole matter of things
- 13:00 Gus and I were, we were good friends but he never would come to my aid. I got into a fight, he'd shoot through you see, and when he'd come back he say, "So how did you go?" this sort of racket you know.

So anyhow we gradually grew up the hard way. I jumped a couple of rattlers, trains, just to experience it. And went to Bendigo 56 mile, jumped another one come back and we used to go

- 13:30 rabbiting together, to earn a few shillings or pence or whatever and you know when you are small and you look out on the plains and you see a hill that looks like a mountain you know, so we used to go out rabbiting Gus and I. Mum would say, "Where are you going?" "We are going out to the mountains." The Echuca area was flat as a pancake but this little and when you are growing up you find out it is just a bump in the
- 14:00 ground but when you are that far above the ground yourself, it looks like a mountain. So we used to camp up there over the weekend, and we had ferrets and we lived in a mud hut, an old mud hut built back in the previous century and we camped in that and there was a warren outside there and we'd shove our ferrets down there and we'd get rabbits and we'd knock them and take their skins off them and what have you
- 14:30 and fork their skins up for drying. We knew all the tricks and when we'd take our skins to the furrier he told us about water rats. And they were protected, he said, "Don't let the police see you getting water rates, because I'll pay out more money for water rats skins than rabbit skins," you see. So we decided to go water rat hunting, and we never knew what a water rat was, water must be in water you know.
- 15:00 So anyhow we did see these things, they were quite big swimming in the water, so we made a trap for them and it was, we got jam tins and they used to open with the old opener you see and not quite off so we devised this trap and you with a nail and a bit of wire, you punched the hole in the bottom of the tin
- 15:30 and you had a hook on the piece of wire wrapped around this nail and that wire went back and was tied to a root of a tree, and you pushed the, you had a bit of cotton wool in there and you put aniseed fluid on it and you pushed the lid on, so you had the tin and the lid was shaped back you see, water rats like the smell of aniseed and they'd go in and they'd have a suck on that and they'd go in and they couldn't get their heads out, the tin would jam and choke them, cruel isn't it?
- 16:00 So we got quite a number of water rats that way, and so we'd skin them and we would take them up to the furrier and he seen us coming and he shook his head, "No go away." So anyhow we waited and there was a policeman come by and he saw this policeman and they were always on the prowl the police, there was no, you did wrong, you got a good kick in the coyote you know it is as simple as that, the big number 9 boot,
- 16:30 bang get home you know. And we had a permanent bruise because we were kicked that much. So anyhow we went and seen the furrier and said, "Well you know do you want the water rat skins?" He said, "Get your rabbit skins and they are turned inside out and they are dry." He said, "When you dry your water rat skins, slide them in." He said, "I will know which by touching, which ones have got the water rat skins in them." He said, "That way you see we can beat the authorities." I said, "Ok."
- 17:00 So he was a big crook, he turned us into crooks but we got paid quite handsomely for our rabbit skins which had another one inside a rat skin you see. So that is the way we went and to earn a few more pence we used to pick wool off dead sheep in the paddocks, it was sheep country, and when they were almost, the flesh was nearly off we'd collect their bones and bury them
- 17:30 until on an ant nest until they were cleaned so we (UNCLEAR) bag full of bones, we'd probably get threepence for those at the bone at the fertiliser factory. The wool, they used to buy the wool off us in bags of plucked wool. We used to get horsehair off the barbwire fences and we'd sell that, and this is the way we used to make a few pence through the week.
- 18:00 And I took on tomato picking at Chinese places down the road and I was going to school at the time, state school at Moama after I finished this episode with the catholic school. So I used to go down early morning in the spring, or in the winter I should say. And uncover tomatoes, they'd be covered. The Chinese had a way of
- 18:30 growing tomatoes, they mounted the dirt up, and all the trenches would be irrigated and they dug the, they threw the tomatoes in hothouses, manure and urine that was the fertiliser and the glass, well anyhow the planting time had come and they'd carry them out on their little shoulder sticks and trays, one in each
- 19:00 hand and they'd drop these tins into these where they'd dig this area with a shovel and a hand full of bone dust that is fertiliser and they brought the dirt around the tomato. And you put boards at the back into the snip of the soil and then bags on top of that. They were sack bags cut lengthwise and sewn together, 30 foot long you know, and the width of a sack bag.
- 19:30 When the cold nights were on during the winter, later winter early spring, you come along and threw a bag over the tomatoes so it was protected from the cold and in the morning you went down and uncovered them you see. So and quite a depth out of it. We could roll a 30 foot length of bag by just flipping back and the whole thing was like a wave, it would come back
- 20:00 only about that wide and we'd finish that, and I'd get a couple of shillings for that and I picked tomatoes and what have you on the weekends, and I picked tomatoes, beans, carrots.

How did the Chinese community assimilate with the rest of the community?

Very good really. The, our area, they were mostly vegetable growers, at Moana this was and they used

- 20:30 to go over and play the fan tan to the cheek the whatever they did when they got together at night time but they were all nice fellows as far as I was concerned. And I worked with a bloke called Ar Chow, and there was Ar Wong he was the next garden area. And the bloke named chambers he had the rights of the river, the big pumping system, so he used to sell them the water you see, irrigation. And so
- 21:00 this Con Sang, he wouldn't employ us, he wanted to do it all himself you see. So we took amaranth to this, if Ar Chow had us why won't he picking tomatoes, so we used to wait with Ar Chow and his two other chinamen with their two big hats and they'd get out picking and we'd come along with our buckets and we'd climb on the board, these ladders of wood they used to be stacked up after the spring when the tomatoes were
- 21:30 growing and stuff, they grow tomatoes against the fence, so we used the green the tomatoes have a look over this fence, see old Wong and bomb him with green tomatoes you see and he would swear at us in Chinese but old Ar Chow was getting the blame. Ar Chow was blaming him for throwing tomatoes at him so the two Chinese had fights with tomatoes across the fence, but
- 22:00 but they used to come along with their wagons with vegetables, house to house and so you'd either get fresh vegetables, you had threepence for a sugar bag. And I used to get mine for nothing because I worked in the Chinaman gardens, Chinese gardens. And Ar Chow favoured me, he I must admit that, he made me chief packer of tomatoes. So I had to boss these other boys around, these bigger boys, do as you are told I am chief
- 22:30 king pin you know. If you wanted a pee, lets be straight about this, you peed in the bucket not on the ground because they used that with the scrapings they used to get off the bridge and cattle manure, horse manure and sheep manure. Because it was an access for sheep from New South Wales to Victoria and they had sweepers on the bridge the council's and they used to sweep all this stuff down the bridge and put big boxes
- 23:00 on the side, the Chinese would come along and they'd buy it. They'd take it back to their vegetable gardens, mix it with the urine and make their fertiliser, you know good hot stuff. So all your beans and all this were growing in pee and crap you see. But it was quite interesting, so all through the, my young days, I was never short of money, I always had a couple of
- 23:30 pence and if I was really down and out and I would put a penny in my pocket and a nail, and you'd walk down the street, you got any money oh yes, and the nail and penny would bang together, the nail and a penny, "Can you lend me some?" "No, you're not getting any." You always made out that you were wealthy you see. The upper crust always looked down on us kids a little and every opportunity they got
- 24:00 they'd verbally abuse us literally and we'd verbally abuse them back in the gutter way properly, you see, we'd swear at them call them all sorts of names. So Friday night was our night out for shopping, and formed little gangs as they do everywhere and cause mayhem in the streets by running amongst the people and just messing about and stopping and patting babies on the
- 24:30 head when Mum didn't want them because they were upper crust kids which pat their babies and act the fool. And the Salvation Army band there and just outside that was a big grocer shop and just outside that they had bags of tomatoes or spuds outside and we used to pinch some of those spuds and stand back and throw them at the salvation drum, the Scotsman would beat his drum and next thing boom on his drum you see. Well the police would come, sneak up behind us, big number 9s and
- 25:00 boom into the backside, "Get home you little rascals," you see. So over a period of time, we had bikes, we had roller skates you see, we used to get out, child fun, it was fun we called it we never caused anybody any real harm and they wanted then the police and the government decided to get together and do something about getting these kids employed you see. So they created
- 25:30 a camp, a forestry camp and they said when they rounded us all up, about 15 from Echuca and there was about 30 from Bendigo and others from, all over the place you see. There was about 200 kids, we went into this camp at a place called Gunbower Island out at Gunbower. So anyhow
- 26:00 they set up an army type camp there, tents and a big mess up and what have you and the OIC [Officer in Charge] and a couple of gangs and we, our job was to, they issued us two axes a stone and a pair of boots and we had to pay, and we had to pay for the boots, 25 ar 12 and 6 a pair and it took a fortnight's wages to pay for those boots, and then they kept us, they fed us and what have you, allowed us to
- 26:30 swing axes and cut trees down, thinning out the forest, and there was a method in their madness. So the forest was higgledy piggledy crooked trees what have you, so the rangers used to go through and mark the trees that had to be chopped down. Any thing straight you'd leave you see. Well I was left handed as I said and I'd swing this axe and I'd beat the hell out of these trees and run around, and my cut was going spiraling up the tree because I was left
- 27:00 handed, I had no idea. So this ranger bloke comes up and taps me on the shoulder and he says, "Stop, stop." I stopped and he said, "Which hand, that is no way to chop a tree down," and I said, "I've got an axe and a couple of that is the way to do it," and, "No," he said. "Which hand do you wheel a

wheelbarrow with?" I said, "What?" He said, "Which way do you wheel a wheelbarrow with?" I said, "You can't, you got to use both hands." He said, "That's the way you chop trees down, you use both hands." So he taught me

- 27:30 how to use my right hand on axing and change over left and cutting a proper stump you see. So you cut the trees down and you cut them into guard board which is 6 foot lengths, you pile up the debris which you burnt later and you stumped the toe of the stump had to be level with the ground and the heel was four inches at the back and you backed off the back of the stump so when the old stumps come into pick up the guard wood they wouldn't bust their tyres.
- 28:00 And I stayed at that job for some months and I was getting, I liked it, I liked it very much, I liked the discipline. And it was about 25 miles from home and I used to ride my pushbike home for weekends. But I was always keen to get back so the whole camp was designed to clear a forest, but to try and instil discipline in kids and it worked,
- 28:30 it was really good. I would say 99% of them come out much better kids than they went in. It wasn't a boys town thing kind of thing, you know you got paid for it and you got fed which was the main thing about the whole system and you got your weekend off to go riding home if you wished and what have you. And they wanted me to join the forestry when I finished and I said, "No I don't want to be in the forestry," because I went further a field,
- 29:00 I went this fruit hawking thing when I was 13, I had double pneumonia, I just got over that, and I was up in my bedroom and I was feeling very sorry for myself I suppose, I was sick actually and the doctor came to see Mum and we lived at the old rambling house. I woke up, I heard the voices and Mum and this, I didn't know it was the doctor until I had a look and he said weak
- 29:30 all I heard was weak heart. And I seen the doctor, and that blew me away you know because I got the feeling he said I had a weak heart from this pneumonia you see. So anyhow that is when I decided I would go out and roam and that is when this fruit hawker came round at this critical time and gave me a job as a
- 30:00 hawker so I was out on the road, every, I went back into camp in Bendigo and we sold all our truckload of fruit, we didn't go back until we did that. And so it was variable, it might be five days on the road and back to Bendigo and pick up some more apples and go off in another direction too sell them. The Lindree family out at Bendigo controlled the fruit industry the hawking industry of the whole of Victoria,
- 30:30 there was three brothers and they had a system which I learnt and I said to Les who was my boss and I said, "How much a week do I get?" and he said, "Well that depends on yourself. He said, "You get a basic wage, you do what I do for Dad and what me brothers do for Dad." I said, What do they all do for Dad?" and he said, "Well we sell two for Dad and one for us." He said, "Now I'm your boss you sell two for me and one for yourself," you see.
- 31:00 And so every third case of apples that I sold, that was my money plus me two pound a week that I was getting off him you see, so I was bringing in a good wage. And so I mean I was growing stronger, I could go out and fight, I could throw apples at the enemy and carry on. But all in all it is when I questioned Mum about this heart business she said, "No he could have ended up with a weak heart." And if I could have
- 31:30 heard the could have, I wouldn't have gone fruit hawking, sell your life in change you know. So consequently I didn't have a tough youth, although it was the Depression I made every day count. I did roller skating, bike riding, work and travelling and what have you.

How were you cured from pneumonia?

Don't know, I was six weeks I think I was in hospital

- 32:00 and all I remember was the taste of liquorice powder, I can still taste it today. And I think it was liquorice powder more or less to keep your bowels, stomach working and what have you, but you got over it yourself, I don't know how they did it. But I was so close to death it wasn't funny you see.

How did you get it?

Well it was summer and it was Boxing Day, I don't know which year, but I went swimming

- 32:30 and we had floating pontoons or swimming pools in the Murray River. They were made up 44 gallon drums and timber and they were good things to swim in, fresh water all the time. And the Boxing Day show was on and I went over there and just pulled my shorts over my wet trunks. So I went to the show grounds over at Echuca, Boxing Day
- 33:00 thing and now whether the wet shorts over my trunks, trousers I don't undo my shorts, but I felt rather feverish, so I wasn't feeling well at all so I just wondered off my brother Jack who was one of my best friends, he was in the 39th with me and what have you, but he was redheaded and freckly and I was black headed and clean faced, and we used to call him monk.
- 33:30 But we were good mates but anyhow he was looking for me and I was screwed up in the mind completely, I didn't know where I was, I was suffering dizzy turns and feeling ill. And he found me

behind the horse stalls laying in hay and so he said, "What is the matter brother? Come on, get on your bloody feet." So I said, "I don't feel well, Jack." He said, "Come on I better get you

34:00 home." So they got me home and Mum got the doctor and I had double pneumonia. And so six weeks later I come out of hospital. It is just one of those little things that happen in life so I took it in my stride and you don't dwell on these things. But I had you know lots of close incidences during my young life but I rode with the punches and the accidents I had,

34:30 I cut half me foot off with a great glass bottle, opened my foot up. And it took several stitches to get that fixed up and another time I stuck a tomahawk, get the bone you know tomahawk, mad left hand and it skidded into my shin bone and I rode home about half a mile with the tomahawk sticking out of my shin. Poor old Mum she used to, oh god.

35:00 **You mentioned a couple of times that you were left handed, what kind of implications did you have at school with that?**

None. They taught me how to write right handed. The moment I picked up a pencil with my left hand whack on the knuckles so you pick it up with your right hand. So I became ambidextrous I still can't write left handed but everything else I can do left handed and right handed so I got good use out of both sides of my body. But my daughter I think Anne is left

35:30 handed, and a few in my family are left handed, the Gentle family, my mainstream family but I became right handed so my change of hands I play cricket right handed, I play golf right handed, I kick a football with my left foot, I roll, I throw a stone or throw a ball left handed,

36:00 when in the army I could shoot from both shoulders, I learnt to shoot left handed and right handed. And generally speaking when later in life, just after the war and what have you I was getting a home together what have you I found a corner in my house that you want to fix up, you couldn't do it left handed you could do it right handed you see just the way the corners were and what have you. And it served me well. And whenever I got tired using my left arm, I would just change over to my right

36:30 arm you see. It was quite interesting.

Would you say that you enjoyed school?

Yeah to a degree and all I went to school for, later in life I worked this out and I got a certificate, a Leaving Certificate or some damn thing after 6th grade, and I was in more trouble at school than Speed Gordon I was always mucking up you know.

37:00 One of the things, the teachers then you got a cane, a caning you see, and you deserved it, you accepted what punishment you got, and you knew why you got it, see you didn't do it again if you could help yourself. But this girl in front of me she is teachers pet. Oh you know teacher, teacher spoils, "How are you going with your sums?" All this, this is giving me, why don't you ask me. So anyhow while

37:30 she put her hand up and she wanted to go to the toilet which was outside, so while she was out I had some flies that I had in my little tin and I put them in her ink well, live flies, and we used, the ink wells were in the middle of the desk as two people on either side, ink well in the middle and pens with nibs on and you dipped them in your ink and you took it down and wrote it on your pad you see. Anyhow this girl came back and she is all very prim and proper sitting like with her dress under her butt you know

38:00 and sit up nice and straight and sit and look at the teacher with a silly grin on her face and she would start, she would do this in the ink well and put it down and of course there is a fly, she'd pinned the fly you see and it crawled across her page, her essay page, she had almost finished it and she started to cry you know. And the teacher come down the headmaster he was a bloke, and he said, "What is going on?" He called this girl, I don't know what her name was I haven't got a clue and

38:30 "It must have been Jimmy Waters he put this fly in my ink well and it crawled all over my work sir," so he said, "Come out here," whack right across the stern end with a bloody cane you know. And I said to him, I said, "How do you know it was me? It could have been somebody else and I've got to cop the punishment." And he said, "Well I give you another one for telling lies," so he belted me again across the bum, so I had three whacks across the bum you see.

39:00 So there was always a get even situation, so bullying from the teachers or pupils was a thing that wouldn't be tolerated by anyone who had a bit of guts you see. And I was little and everyone tried to bully me and I defended myself, quite boldly at times too. I was a south paw [left handed] and they didn't know it, and throwing a right hand this way. It's hard to do.

39:30 And I hit them in the snorter [nose] or something and that was it, once you hit them in the nose that was finished you know, they couldn't stand that. And the girls used to carry on a fair bit and I did a dirty trick on a girl, I mean dirty in several ways. But this girl oh she used to be a pain in a butt and every time I walked around she would call out, "Teacher blah, blah," I was forever in trouble with this girl.

40:00 And so down below in the school yard there was a bloke that had eggs, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and all these rotten eggs he used to, there was a heap of rotten eggs about 4 foot high in his rung you see. So I went out and I picked up a couple of brown, real brown eggs and she had a pushbike, so I did

the unbelievable, her seat had a slot in them and I lifted

40:30 the seat up and I sat one of those eggs on the seam of her seat you see. And she used to get on her bike and she would flounce her skirt out so it flew out the back and landed on the mudguard and she would pedal home and when she did that and sat on her seat this egg burst. Well I was a mile away when it happened I travelled that fast. I wondered what it had done, it must have burnt.....stop

41:00 **Is that it?**

Yeah stop that for a minute, but I can still see her my god, her father and mother come up to my Mum and Dad and they abused them about me and oh god I got into no end of trouble about that, she had a burnt pussy for many years, oh god the things I used to do. But anyhow, they are not the sort of things you put over camera.

41:30 Dad said to me, "Don't act the fool." I can't help it when you look that way you see. Anyhow we can start again now if you wish, I got over that.

Tape 3

00:33 **Had your dad served in World War I at all?**

No he was too young for that and too old, I will show you a photo later with the family at war in the army. But I want to go back to how I learnt to defend myself. I was a south paw and I used to get more beat ups than I beat up you know. Because I was a south paw, I'd

01:00 throw a right hand, swing, like if I was trying to give them a cold you know, swing both arms around. And this bloke 'Fatty' Males he was a breaker and he grabbed me by the ear before the coppers [police] got me and kicked my bum. And he said, "I want to talk to you," so I went up and he was a good friend of my father's and I think my father put him up to this. And he said, "It is time you learnt to defend yourself properly," and I said, "I can handle myself the way

01:30 I am, I can handle myself quite well." He said, "You get more hidings than you do dinners." I said, "That is not hard to work out is it, because I don't get many dinners." And at that time you know you had a slice of bread and what have you but that is another story. But in the Depression, but he took me, he had a gym in the back of his bakehouse and he taught me orthodox fighting you see, that is Queensberry rules [fair fighting], left hand fighting job.

02:00 And so where I was where I'd lead with my right hand because I was ambidextrous I was left handed, I had to learn to lead with my left hand and it took me six weeks to break that habit of punching with my right hand first instead of learning the old queensbury rules way you see. So he taught me in six weeks and timed me automatically to use my left hand as a forward

02:30 punch and that took all my little enemies by surprise you know. They'd walk up ha ha and boom, end of argument you see. And I became quite a proficient boxer over a period of time. I was still too young to go into the ring, it was before the war. But Fred had a gym there and I had a great old time boxing, he had a ring and all and I learnt a lot of boxing, tricks of the trade

03:00 and what have you boxing you see and so that served me well in those years and Freddy Males he became the captain in the army and we went overseas together but prior to that this Val Males, Oliver Val Oliver she married his son and became Val Males you see. Val was my

03:30 dancing, my skating partner. I had four women in my lives, there was Val my dancing partner for skating, I had Betty, Betty Brown, as a girl I could associate with, understand each other and sit down and have a good conversation, sit down and laugh a little and what have you, there is no fancy work in this business you know, not like today first thing up the leg that wasn't on

04:00 we were gentlemen although we were below the tracks. And then there was a Joan Arbursnott. Her name was Joan Pinkerton, I met her at Cowra, she was a nurse, a training nurse at the hospital in town and of course there was Beth my wife a lady you see. So these, we stayed friends, I lost track of Val

04:30 after the war and I think she is still alive, she is about my age, I must find out because she is a great girl and we would have a lot of reminiscing about our skating with her. I think Betty Brown died, a pity because I could to talk more with Betty. Joan she married and became an (UNCLEAR) and she lives up at Harvey Bay, we have been friends for years and years. Since

05:00 1941 was the first time I met Joan and after I was married we stayed with them where I worked and what have you but they were the four women in my life outside your mother of course and your sisters, but my sisters were sisters for god sake, whether I wanted them or not I had them you know, but my Mum oh she was something out of this world, big lady. It is a strange thing as a kid, you never knew your mother was pregnant, you know, we

05:30 never knew about that babies you know and more or less believed they come up out of a cabbage patch

or some other thing you see and suddenly a new baby would appear on the scene and you would wonder where it came from. No great curious, another kid around the block you know. But and so my eldest brother he was a pug, a boxer eventually, and he used to have his training, did his training with us as Jack was next and then there was me and then there was Len,

- 06:00 there was four brothers at that stage, and he used to use us as a punching bag you see and get us in the ring and outside the house where we lived. And Dad would sit there with his pipe and watch this business with his eldest son showing his younger brother how good he was, anyhow we were supposed to spar you see. And I remember, my brother died, this eldest brother of mine died two years ago and he remembered this to the day he died what happened to him there one
- 06:30 time. And I told him not to hit me too hard, and he disobeyed that command, he belted me in the side of the jaw and knocked me fair off my feet you see, so I called him all sorts of things, I pulled me glove off and he could see danger and he took off around the house you see and I am chasing him, if I had of got him I would have killed him you know because I was a ferocious bad tempered little kid I was, anyhow I was after him and he was too fast and he is
- 07:00 running and as I went around the corner there was a piece of chain laying on the ground, links about that big and I picked it up and I am whirling it around my head like that and he looked around the corner of the house to laugh at me and I let go of this chain and it wrapped around his head and met in the forehead and knocked him cold as a cucumber. And he remembers that to the day he died and he said, "The day that you downed me with that chain I will never forget it, how you did it I don't know." But
- 07:30 you know these sort of things happen and my brother older than me Jack who I went overseas with, he was quick tempered too but it was Gilbert that give him a hard time and running away and Jack was the, first thing on the table was a fork and he picked it up and threw it and it stuck in the back of his leg, Gilbert copped all this, but he was a bully to us
- 08:00 and we brought him down to size. But when I learnt boxing as a kid I became you know a more or less a favoured mate because I could handle myself you see, and then I quietened down, I did not pick fights after that, after that I never ever picked a fight. If anybody picked a fight with me they suffered the consequences, I very very seldomly lose you know. But
- 08:30 so anyhow this defensive system I had mechanised defence, I learnt all sorts of dirty tricks you know and I could run by a bully and kick both legs underneath him before he knew what happened. I was only little you know but I was never bullied. And in the few sense of the word. See it surprised me today that kids leaving school broken
- 09:00 wrecks because they have been bullied, verbally or physically, well we went through tougher schools than they did but I will say the teachers had more control. But out on the schoolyard you became your own defence system you know. Be it a female or a male that attacked you physically or verbally you attacked back, and that was it, it was the law of the jungle and it worked it was good, we all grew up to be pretty stable kids, and they were able to control
- 09:30 a lot of things and the, we used to go down the Sandy Point or Bowers Bend on the Murray River, carry all our gear down there and swim with the family and across the road was Echuca and that was where they used to swim, but neither side would cross the river because if you did there was a punch up and up behind us were Chinese market gardener, grape vines and all this, watermelons and what have you.
- 10:00 And I'd get to the Echuca kids I would annoy them and cross the river and yell out them you know and they'd say, "We're coming to pinch some grapes," and I said, "Ok you can come over and pinch some grapes," you see and disappear and I'd go over and tell Arch some kids were going to pinch their grapes and they'd sneak up through the bush with their bags and dig us some grapes you see and old Arch Harvey would be waiting with a Saltpeter gun, shot gun. And he would let them get some grapes and as they were stepping through the fence he would blast off in the distance and hit them in the bum with some peters
- 10:30 and they'd drop all their grapes and go screaming back across the river and so we had free grapes. And these are the sort of things you worked out for yourself, but it was all in fun, a bit tough at times but nevertheless it was good.

What are some of the things you used to make, you talked about the trap for the rats, what else?

Well the, my early days of, actually I was doing a lot of

- 11:00 drawings and I was going, I meant to say earlier, I left school when I was 13 but what I found about school was not an education in the when the Romans landed here there and everywhere and what have you, that had nothing to do with it. I learnt, I went to school and I learnt to think and from there I could, me maths, my own
- 11:30 geography situation, the Australian situation, I thought Australian and English, languages and things like that, the English language, proper spoken English language blah blah blah all the proper grammar. I just learnt that automatically. After I left school I educated myself, I learnt to think in other words when I went to school, and so I became quite adept at lots of little things.

- 12:00 And I remember Dad bought me a box brownie camera and I worked in a camera shop and as I say my Dad was a photographer and so I didn't know what to do with this camera so I took it over the street to Echuca and I took photos of people on the streets you see as a kid. And so I it was a 116 I forget 116 I don't know what the size
- 12:30 was but it was a box brownie. And so I'd take the films home and I used to get the films off the chemist, he didn't know it but I got them off him and I'd take these photos you see, and I take them home and Dad was a photographer and he had a dark room and I'd help him, up and down. And you hand developed the reel and when it was dried you cut and you did the printing by hand you see and the copying
- 13:00 and you had high palm developer and what have you and the washy water and you stuck it onto celluloid frames so when they dried they just buckled and would fall down and you'd end up with the glossies. Well they used to take these over, and I took all these over and the chemist I worked for I asked him if I could put these in his window. And he said, "What for?" and I said, "Well people might want to see themselves in photographs you see,"
- 13:30 it was candid camera time sort of thing. And "Yeah," he said, "but I want 10%." I said, "Righto." Well I sold hundreds of photographs you know and I used to, I was outside taking photos and the chemist said, "Look you work for me you don't work for yourself, you get in here and wash these bottles," but so I became a candid camera man and I turned out a lot of good photographs and I learnt photography from my father. But
- 14:00 making things we used to make billy goat carts, not billy goat carts, but the kid was a billy goat. We had no billy goats to put in them. We used to road race in these things and of course the pushbikes later on, you know rollers when we were kids, we made toys, you made your own like rolls, like how to roll syrup tins full of sand with a bit of wire through them and cotton reels
- 14:30 we used those, we used to have them on a stick and you wrap string around and you make a propeller to fit on top of them and you get them in a heave, you know a little propeller toy you know fly in the air, boomerangs, cross boomerangs and all these sorts of things we used to fiddle and muck around with you know. And I learnt to build my own bike, and you were able to repair bikes for other kids if they had trouble, as long as they got the parts for me. But
- 15:00 generally speaking I suppose I was a natural kid (UNCLEAR). So I used to draw a lot and my younger brother who was a little bit you know sooky. I used to call him sooky, Len, and as soon as you called him a name he'd cry you know. But he was a good fella and so Dad brought this Broady Mac art course,
- 15:30 used to be New South Wales and it was done by correspondence. And he gave it to Len, my brother, my younger brother. I said to Len, I was only talking to him this year about it. He was up reminiscing, he is 20 months younger than I am. I said, "The worse thing you ever did Len was to not finish that Broady Mac course that Dad
- 16:00 bought." He said, "I don't remember that," and I said, "Yes he bought it for me and he said he gave it to you, you used to sit out on the footpath and design the sand into gardens and things like that, it was an object of creating a scene." And I said, "He brought this Broady Mac and you took it and you learnt to use it." He became a master painter but he never carried on the Broady Mac art course,
- 16:30 well I would have loved to been able to do that because I just had this instinct for drawing, and I suppose before paint cans came in I was a charcoal boy you know. Things on walls with charcoal, I'd draw faces and trees and all this sort of business, anything at all that was going. As for the inventing little things myself at my stage I didn't invent anything of any sounding success, only things to play
- 17:00 with and what have you. My inventiveness never came out properly until after the war. And but, but no my childhood life I wouldn't swap it for anything, it was very very interesting and so full, I had such a variety of things I had done and then of course with the army I was fully fledged I was a grown boy, you know I had a
- 17:30 brain that I could use. I didn't depend on anybody else, I was very independent. I was never selfish in my eyes, anything in Depression times that I earnt I would just keep a very small portion for myself and I would give it to Mum for the rest of the family and I became, I had the wonders, I never stopped home, I never hid in my mothers skirt and all the
- 18:00 rest of the family said I was Mum's favourite. Well you get a smack, I've got a scar on my head here. I walked up behind Mum one day and went boo, she had a big frypan in her hand and she went clunk, split me head open, well she broke down in tears and I am sitting there against the wall blood pouring down my face, she fractured my skull she did. She split it right open here, still carry a little scar.

What did you think of authority and the school and police giving you the number 9?

Well we were treated like

- 18:30 if a policeman said, "That is enough go home," we'd say, "Right," we'd go home but not as far as he thought we'd go home. We would deviate somewhere else and carry on again but the general authority was teachers, what have you, they were the boss you know in their own way. They stamped their

authority on us. But if we wanted to break out we had the right to do so as human beings and so we were never

- 19:00 really under the thumb of anybody. And I remember the time that this Harris he was a school headmaster, he whacked me a few times with the cane and I didn't deserve it, if anything happened in the school, there was two of us that got the blame. There was Gussy Olson my cousin or me you see. And we knew the people that were doing it, the trouble, but you never dobbed in mates and so I would get a smack across the back of the legs or the bum or across the hand, the fingers with the cane. So Gus and I thought
- 19:30 we would put an end to this so we broke into the school. And there was a fire place in the school a mantle shelf and what have you and we found where he hid, had all these canes hidden he used to get them from north somewhere, and they had a knob on one end and they were about that long and he had a good grip and they were about as thick as my little finger and boy he swung those down on the tips of your fingers, it hurt you know. So anyhow we got these canes and we tied them in a bundle and
- 20:00 hung them off the mantle shelf over the open fire and put a match to them. And when you lit them they smouldered, so the whole weekend these canes smouldered right up to the knobs. Monday morning hanging on the window, on the hearth of the fireplace was a big bunch of knobs of cane, we had burnt the lot of them you see. And he looked at us around and he said, "Well I hope you fellas have enjoyed that because I have an unlimited supply," he came out with a bundle
- 20:30 that big. And he used to smoke a pipe. And it was a stone pipe and he used to knock the dottle, that is what you called it the ash and that out. And he'd smoke them so long and he would throw them in a heap. Well the kids grabbing the pipes and going and stuffing them with grass and anything at all and smoke them like the headmaster you see. He was teaching us bad manners, but he had the most polished boots you have ever seen in your life
- 21:00 you know. He had forever, tanned boots and beautifully polished. And he set an example in dress, authority in his own way, without being over zealous about it and he was a good teacher, like it doesn't matter who you were, which row you sat in. Like if you were bad you sat in the front row, where he could see you. If you were good you sat further back. The better you were the further back you sat you see and this grading thing.
- 21:30 And I was quite often in the front because I was always in mischief, if there was someone in front of me and I would do something like a drawing pin on the seat or something like that you see. So he would say, "Righto up the front," you see. And kids would say ha ha ha, they know I didn't put the bloody drawing pin there, they put it there themselves and made out they sat on it. All these little tricks but I copped them and I got my own back. It was pay back time sometimes, I never forgot.
- 22:00 No but that period of my life, the police, I was friendly with them and there was an incidence there, there was a blacksmith shop in the town and we used to go up and help him with the big bellows, and Gus and I used to pull the big bellows for him and when he was doing horse shoes and what have you and there was a loft in it and we went up sticky beaking and we found hundreds and hundreds of rounds of ammunition from the First World War
- 22:30 stuff, we used to snip this and flap our pockets and take it home. Where we lived there was a cellar under the house, Dad's workshop. And there was a vice and a bench and we used to pull the, tie the, or clamp it the lead part with a pair of pliers and pull the case off the bullet, this black powder and we would fill the bag up with black powder. Well we had it there for a long long time and we didn't know what to do with it you see. We had all these empty cartridges,
- 23:00 we used to get rid of them we kept, pissed them out at the blackfellow's, blacksmith's place and anyhow I was up at the post office, and there was telephones and we used to ring the exchange, the exchange was across the river and it was cheaper you see, so you would ring on this pick up the phone number please you know ha ha ha ha. Just hang up you see, just kid stuff you see. And anyhow
- 23:30 the coppers come along and this postal man must have warned them or something, and they kept, the police station was just down the road and horse yards and what have you and he caught Gus and I and he gave us the foot in the backside that you wished to think about you see he said, "Now bloody go and behave yourselves or we will send you to Boystown." They used to frighten us with this 'Boystown'. We never knew anything about what this Boystown was you know. It was a thing they made up, anyhow
- 24:00 we sulked about this you know and we connived and what, we are we going to do about these coppers you know. So this black powder popped into our minds. The police station was a long building and it had a big horse yard out the back. A great big one and where the prison van would go across the concrete gutter over the bridge over the gutter you
- 24:30 see. So I said that is what we will do we will break their gutter. So we took the black powder up and we undid the top and gradually pushed up under the concrete slab and left a trail of black powder and got the thing right up the middle you see. And right down around the corner there was boxthorn hedges, black powder is fairly slow burning so we struck
- 25:00 a match and shot off down behind the box thorn hedge you see. And the next thing there is this ungodly boom you see, well never heard anything like it. Well I took off like a shot rabbit straight home, I wasn't

hanging around, just down the end of the street you see and Gus disappeared beyond the blue yonder, I don't know where he went. But anyhow the next day the policeman is down home and I am hiding in the bedroom and Mum said, "Can I help you Constable Sergeant?" he said, "Yes I want to see your

- 25:30 son Jimmy." She said, "What has he done now?" He said, "I'd like to have a yarn to him, I don't think he has done anything yet until I prove it you see." "Jim come on out, come on out, Sergeant wants to see you," and of course I was guilty as all hell you see. And the Sergeant said, "Why did you do that?" and I said, "Well, you kicked me bum," and missed (UNCLEAR) straight away and he pin pointed me and he said, "Righto, I want you to come and see the
- 26:00 damage." And he took Dad up, and when that explosion went off it destroyed a whole width of concrete, you know kerbing and the concrete bridge little part of the gutter you know. Broke windows in the police station, big concrete blocks on top of the roof and one hell of a mess. And the horses were carrying on down, the police horses in the stables, they were all frightened to death with this big bang and we created havoc
- 26:30 you know. It was because we didn't know any better and we didn't know what explosives would do and so anyhow. He said, "Well, I am copping it, you've got to cop it now, do you want to go before a Judge and be tried for a criminal act?" and I said, "What other options are there?" and he said, "You clean up the mess you made." He said,
- 27:00 "Where is your cousin Gus?" and I said, "I don't know I haven't seen him." He said, "Do you have any idea where he is?" I said, "I don't have a clue." I said, "Hiding in a bush anywhere at all." He said, "Righto I will deal with him later." He said, "I want you on the roof pull that concrete down." And he said, "I want you to go and pacify the horses, comb them down, water them and what have you and make sure they are ok," and then he said, "I want you to rake the yard." And he said, "You will
- 27:30 do this for the full weekend." That was my punishment you see. So I am walking up and down with this big rake, raking this sand and I just got it finished and the constable walked out, he walked with his big number 9s right across it. Get on raking the yard, you see so I had to rake it again and again and again and they kept walking across it you see. So I just bit my tongue and did what I was told and kept raking, I was so bloody tired, after two days of this.
- 28:00 So the Monday came and the sergeant said, "You are an obedient boy, he said, "You have paid, you have done your punishment." He said, "Don't ever do that again where ever you are." He said, "That is the most dangerous thing anybody could ever do," and I said, "Well Sarg I didn't realise that this black stuff was so bad you know," and he said, "Where did you get it?" and I told him, so they confiscated all of these bullets out of this old bloke, all these bullets, he didn't know they were up there.
- 28:30 And that was the end of that and Gus came back about three weeks later, and they put him in the can [jail]. The local can you see, so he was in the can for three weeks, and then he was made to sweep the yards and do what I had to do and he blamed me for it. So we fell out for a little while but came back together again. I suppose that was one of the worst things I ever did as a kid, was blow up that footpath. And you know you did little things and you
- 29:00 didn't mean damage. Sometimes damage happened and you were not aware of what you were capable of doing. And some of the things that we did were a bit shocking but we felt very very bad when we hurt anybody by being foolish, playing games and we would feel real bad and we were up front in coming along and saying we were sorry we did it you know. And we would usually go to the parents
- 29:30 first and tell them that we were sorry we hurt your little daughter or boy or whatever. And they said, "It is ok, thanks for saying sorry and don't do it again if you don't mind," you know. And so we stayed friends with people and I was a 'harum scarum' and Gus was sort of following in my footsteps, but that is the way we got through our early lives, up until we got into the army. And so, so when
- 30:00 I was in the army it was a different kettle of fish. You are amongst grown kids. We are all at that stage we were 16, 17 whatever. And so we are doing rifle practice, how to strip rifles down, how to march and all this, drill hall, which was a skating rink also. And so we became, and we could get out on the street after a while and we were proud to march
- 30:30 as a group in the main street of Echuca, a lot of the kids there were in the army and people that were, upper crust also as we called them, they were in there. But they always had the stripes with the pips, us little under links never, so the discrimination carried on in the army and but I enjoyed army life in those periods. And I thought it was a wonderful thing to be because discipline. I had learnt discipline in the
- 31:00 forestry carried over in the army, it paid off and I so I was taught disciplines of all sorts and when we shipped out to go to overseas on the Aquitania, this Freddy Males that I mentioned earlier, he was the Victorian amateur champion boxer and he got disqualified for a dirty trick punch, that was a back hander
- 31:30 like forward then back hand and so he and I created a, see Aquitania was a big ship, she was 45,000 tonner. A lot of troops on it going to New Guinea, so from out of boredom we decided we would create a lottery tournament. So all the fellas that wanted to be in the boxing business well we, I was,
- 32:00 Fred was to mark your names down, I was to test them. If they didn't come up to scratch, they were

scrubbed you see. And I always tested a bloke hit him in the face once with gloves and if they didn't like it and they shut their eyes and covered up they are finished you see. I never hurt anybody. But I suppose one day I could go through 20 or 30 blokes and sort them out and create this boxing tournament on the boat on our end of the ship. And I believe there was another one down the other end too. But

32:30 it was the sort of thing you did. And I never seen Fred again after we landed in [Port] Moresby, I never seen him again from that day on, I never ever seen him again, I don't know what happened to him, he was a captain in the army in the first instance when we were in the militia. Before the war and he carried his captainancy through when we went away on the Aquitania. And I don't know, he has got to be with the 39ths

33:00 but then again his name is not on the register you see, so he may have been with someone else. So you want anymore I don't think I have got any more kid stuff I want to tell you.

Move on with enlisting, because I am sure we could sit here all day and talk about your childhood, it sounds absolutely. Ok how did the Depression impact on your family?

Very tough,

33:30 that is when I did more good than ever, I was always out, my ambition was, never do anything for nothing, unless it was for your Mum or your Dad you see. So whenever I did any jobs I expected to be paid something for them a loaf of bread or a threepenny bit or whatever the case was. But I was always able to make money and I always gave it to my mother because I understood more so than my other

34:00 brothers and me sisters at that time, the difficulty that Mum and Dad were having feeding a big family and I didn't fully understand. I understood enough to say I will chip in. And the country boys were harder done by than the city boys you know. They had opportunities to do their thing, whether they pinched stuff

34:30 or not I don't know, but I'd work in market gardens, I brought home vegetables and whenever I got a six penny bit I would give it to Mum. And as long as they could go to pictures Saturday afternoon, matinee which was threepence I was quite happy, everything else I earnt in various ways like selling those photographs and working at the market gardens, fixing up bikes and all this sort of business I always gave all that money to Mum.

35:00 And even when I joined the army, I sent my deferred pay to me Mum and I would get my shilling, I would get five shillings a day, but my other brothers were doing the same thing and we never really knew how tough it was but you got up in the morning you had porridge, I still eat it, only night times now, and everyone took their turn cooking the porridge. Some didn't

35:30 know how to cook it, they would burn it and they would get thumped. Crib time, midday if you got a slice of bread and jam you were lucky, usually you would go down and get some fruit off a Chinaman or something like that and eat it. Because they came round with their fruit carts and they gave a lot of stuff away, to the, because they were growing it and they didn't want to make any money out

36:00 of the poor and all this sort of business, so we ate the fruit. Night time was what we called the three piece meal. It was three slices of bread on the average and we, one of them, the nicest lot was beef dripping on a slice of bread about an eighth of an inch thick. Like beef dripping it is cooked and it goes the juices of the beef and it is real 100% fat.

36:30 Pepper and salt on it and that was a really nice tit bit. And then you'd have golden syrup on one and jam on another or you just ate it straight but quite often as not I had a habit I used to go over to the bake houses and I was always a scruffy looking fella you know, bum out of me pants and had a bit of dirt on my face and if I wasn't like that I would make it like

37:00 that and I'd go in and say have you got any stale pies, got any stale cakes and you know they used to give them to me, broken biscuits from the grocer shops and so I made my own way in life and I took a lot of stuff home to the family and what have you but it was, it wasn't tough for me, I didn't feel it tough at all because I didn't know any difference. But it must have been very hard on Dad because he was, he

37:30 was a top photographer and he couldn't carry out his chosen trade and he had to work as a labourer, he only got so much work a week and they had to work for the dole type of thing. And all they got was a chit and what a couple of bob and he'd go and get a bottle of plonk [alcohol] and have a slurp at that you see, not that he was a drunk but anything like that but they had to have some relief. I found later

38:00 it was Dad's release from the worries he had was to have a drink of wine and sometimes he would get a bit drunk, but he never knocked us about, he never hit me Mum, not in front of me anyhow, I never knew him to hit me Mum. And he was a good man and he was very inventive, and wherever he, as I said he taught me how to develop films and all this business. And when he decided to build an everlasting

38:30 battery, I thought oh god damn it you know. So I was on the chase for pickle bottles, they had to be a certain height and a certain diameter, so clear bottles. I went around and I found them, I nicked them and I bought them and I got them the best way I could, about six dozen of these damn things. And the back room of the old house that we lived in was his workshop, so I was the only top gun in this group, building this

- 39:00 battery, he didn't want to kill all his kids. So he built this big board first with light fittings on it, lots and lots of globes. And he started to build this battery and it was four bottles high from about me to you across and two bottles thick you see. And all these wires going in them with gafos I learnt later on electrodes were gafos. And he got
- 39:30 this thing whole completely built and he put charge into it and charges of electricity with a hand thingo. And it started the electronic action in this battery, this big battery and the lights just got brighter and brighter, he had lights all through the house and they just got so bright you know, and he couldn't stop it, he couldn't stop it creating electricity. And the next thing he threw me out of the room
- 40:00 you know reels and he jumped out himself and everything blew up, blew a big hole in the roof. That was one experiment that failed. It was a good idea but it had been, if you managed to control it, nobody would be burning coal today, it was electricity so you see he had the game sewn up you know. He was a very inventive type fellow. But anyhow you know that is how life is and he taught me a lot and I appreciate
- 40:30 it and I didn't think any better guy walked on the earth as he did, proud of me Dad, proud of me Mum, proud of me family kids and all and we all got along good and we fought as all families do fight but if somebody picked on the family they had to deal with the rest of the family. We were very family orientated. Right.

Tape 4

00:31 **Yeah what was the scenario with your mother changing your birth date?**

It was quite interesting really because in the sense she saved me as being a POW in Singapore. I was actually born in 1921. I didn't find out I was a 23 year old. I didn't find until I was 23

01:00 that I was a catholic for starters, she told a couple of white fibs [lies]. But the first one she made my age 22, 1922 which made me too young to join the AIF. And in her own wisdom somehow or other she saw that I would be in deep crap you know. So I couldn't join the AIF so I joined the militia and so I missed out joining with (UNCLEAR)

01:30 who were all captured as POWs as you all know over in Singapore as you all know our history. So I went through the war born 15th of the 11th 22, right through. I was a year older than I realised, so out of the frying pan into the fire so to speak you know. So from one ghastly deed into another. So I

02:00 when I was in the 38th battalion incidentally that is the colour patch, I will just put those there so we can see them. It is a red, white over red oval and that was the the force that I was first in, in 39 January 39. I might add that the army or the government never ever recognised the services as when I

02:30 joined it. My army life started as far as they were concerned permanently in 1940, that was wrong, I was permanent at the beginning of the war mind you I volunteered for full time service and then war broke out. So anyhow.

Where were you when it was declared?

I was in Echuca and they reformed the 38th Battalion into the Light Horse Regiment.

03:00 You see the 17th light horse so I was in that.

Just going back a step, what were your reasons for joining the militia [Citizens' Military Force]?

Well 1939, early 39 I wanted something positive to do, outside what I was doing and it was another step in the direction that I wanted to take, not to be in the army it was nothing it was but a disciplinary type of thing and I wanted to learn all various, lots of various things I had a curious

03:30 mind. And so I was interested in guns and then therefore the navy, army and air force had guns and I wanted to learn what I could about all sorts of things and end up in the army. And because the other two rejected me I could have been air force or navy if I had of been tall enough, but I wasn't tall enough.

What about patriotism?

Patriotism well look we were a nation of 5 million

04:00 odd people and we believed in ourselves, we believed in well not so much our country or anything like that, we were closed units, we believed in our districts and our way of life sort of thing you know we had no real allegiance to the queen or country, we didn't understand that sort of rights you know although at school we always

04:30 stood to attention and sung 'God Save the King' before the school because we were told to do it that was part of the school. And so I didn't join the army for any particular reason about patriotism, I think I joined the army because I wanted to get into something that was more fulfilling than what I was doing.

05:00 And I was old enough to do it.

You mentioned a couple of times that you felt like you needed discipline?

Yeah.

Why is that?

Well the police incidence I mentioned was one of them. That was over the top. I felt I was getting out of control in certain ways. I became too vocal in my criticisms to other people, I became too violent tempered in lots of things, I was quick

- 05:30 tempered fleet of foot sort of thing you know. And it was another direction that I could go outside of roller skating and shopping for Mum and bugging around. See every town was in, cloistered on its own, every other town was a long long away, there was no motorcar. So 56 miles, Bendigo the next city, the only city I knew at the time. That was a long long way away and
- 06:00 a little town, next, the littlest town next to us was a place called Rochester it was 18 miles away, so you didn't venture outside your own town except when I was fruit hawking. I got to know that there was a bigger world out there than Echuca and Moama which were two towns either side of the river one in New South Wales the other in Victoria. And the, see the river barges and all this business, I rode all those things when they were
- 06:30 logging and what have you and stealing rides and swimming the rivers all the time and we were just about run out of exciting things to do as kids you know around the area. And joining the army I suppose it was the back of me mind the possibility of getting out of my own environment into another environment, see we were in these townships that we lived in, we were more or less isolated in those
- 07:00 townships unless you had a vehicle or you decided to shoot through which some of us did. Not in our family anyhow. And a lot of people did go a little bit off the top and pack a swag and shoot through and become a hobo or whatever the case may be but I tried that life and it was, a swagman, it was all right but you got more shumps than you got yeses you
- 07:30 know and bag a bond and you were called all sorts of names and what have you and a swag on your back and a frying pan and a black billy and camping under bridges and it just wasn't my scene you know. A bit bloody cold in the winter. And I jumped the rattlers or the trains to experience those and how to beat the railway employee business they used to beat the hell out of people jumping rattlers you know with watties
- 08:00 so we used to play games with them. And with the flour mill, the wheat we walked all over the flour mills, we played on top of the great stacks of wheat bags and when we would get chased down, we'd get, we'd feel victimised and so we would climb these bags like rats up the top you know. And they could never catch us and we used to trap them Gus and I and we had a pocketknife,
- 08:30 always carried a pocketknife. And when they'd swear at us and chase us and whatever we would just go over the side of the big thing, we would just slide down the whole stack of vertical bags, we were able to do it and then we would slice the bottom bag with our pocket knife and that would cause one big slide of fall of a whole row of two bags, and if these (UNCLEAR) chasing us, these grown men chasing us got to close to the edge they would have went over the edge too and they
- 09:00 learnt to leave us alone you see but these are mischievous things. So anyhow they got me, caught me one day and wheat is tipped down through a grate from the bags and goes along conveyor belts and goes through crushes and all this, makes flour and what have you. And these pits they had were quite deep and got down to the grid, they would be way over my
- 09:30 head you see and they'd tie a rope around your chest and throw you in the pit you see. And you would be fighting away and losing battle, it is like quick sand in the wheat you know the harder you struggled the deeper you went, and when you were half full of wheat they would pull you out. It used to make you so cranky and so mad and we used to try and emulate the grown men, they didn't want us to do that, they wanted us to find our own way I suppose but it was
- 10:00 that was tough times and we took the tough times as good times. And we didn't discriminate, these sort of things happened and that is all there was to it you know. And so my next venture was to go to army and see what I could do with that.

What was your parent's reaction?

They were with me all the time, whenever I got in serious bother Dad dealt with me. I'd report to Dad.

10:30 **But their reaction to you joining up?**

Oh no no great deal. They said well that is your decision and we are happy for you. In the draw there I have got a photo of my Dad and four brothers all in the army together in the early days, they all joined up. They all joined, Dad got booted out because he was too old, he didn't like it. He didn't like it a bit. And it is funny when we were in the light horse.

- 11:00 We were in the 38th Battalion together, all of us, and I've got a big photo of that somewhere and so when we went down to Mt Martha in the 38th we were broken up into the light horse in Bendigo and went back there. I was, I had won my stripes and when we went on leave home my family, because my father was in charge of me I was the senior
- 11:30 officer in the group and so we would go home on the choo-choo train [steam train], across to Moama to where I was from Echuca to Moama I was in charge the other blokes all of us were in charge of a higher officer when we got to Echuca, there was a lot of boys in Echuca that joined the army. And so I became chief in command going across the bridge, so I used to line them up at Moama station and say, "Right left right left right left right," down the bloody street,
- 12:00 like a bunch of waddling ducks, away we'd go you see. They were all left right swinging their arms and there was Dad and my eldest brother Gilbert and then there was Jack and then there was Len and of course I was out I was leading I was one between Jack and Len you see. And the moment I opened the front gate, Dad walked through and he said, "I'm in charge now son." "Ok Dad." We'd all take our hats off and get into civvie
- 12:30 street [civilian life] and go out and enjoy the, what was ever going on in town you know. But I learnt pretty strong discipline in the army and I liked it and I must have liked it enough but when I was in the Light Horse back in '40 it wouldn't have been much into '40 either. In 1940 they elected me
- 13:00 to go to officer school in Geelong. So I went down to Geelong. I was a corporal and they billeted me into the Eureka Hotel in Geelong and there was I suppose 30 or 40 people in this officer school, no rank in an officer school, everybody was just a private sort of thing. And that was
- 13:30 my first taste of authority of any quality. And this officer school and so anyhow I did what I had to do, I passed all of my exams, I wasn't a lunk head you know a lot of it is practical stuff and the theory came easy to me and because I had a brain that was receptive and any questions on field tactics and things like that I could remember quite clearly, quite distinctly you see. Book learning was a lot of it
- 14:00 too. And then we come to the practical side I had my own ideas, which you were entitled to and so when the officer school was just about finished and they were doing the final, what would you call them cathics on sand dunes, sand table on a sand table and heap the sand up and they'd put a couple of false bushes here and they'd have tanks and infantry
- 14:30 and all these little figures. So they had these, they were all working at it and working out combats and all this sort of business so anyhow I was one of those lads that didn't agree with it you see. So they asked me what would be my idea, this is the final study of the thing you see, of the tactics I would use in certain circumstances. And I took the cane and I just wiped that flat. And I
- 15:00 said, "That does not represent the war that we are about to fight." I don't know why I said it but I said it. And they said, "You have destroyed our battle thing." I said, "Look it is sand, it is models and the rest." I said, "This means nothing, we should be learning battle tactics of a different nature, not what they are doing over in the Middle East, we are not going to the Middle East, we are militia," you see. So anyway I got into a bit of bother over that
- 15:30 but anyhow they wanted to hang a pip on my shoulder as a junior officer and I know, I said, "I won't take it," so that was my first officer training school.

Why, why didn't you want to take it?

Because I wanted to be close I suppose when it is all boiled down, I want to be close to my men. And this theory that I had worked out in my head early in this caper the closest you could get to your men,

- 16:00 a group of men is the corporal. You looked after ten men you see. If you went to Sergeant you had 33 that is three corporals and 30 men. If you went to a lieutenant, you were isolated, you come into officer school, officer group that is a big jump from the private ranks to a sergeant, the corporals and the privates went to one mess
- 16:30 the sergeants went to a sergeants mess and the officers went to an officer's mess, that was segregation of a great nature you see. Well I always liked my fellow man you know, no matter if they were beaten over the head it or anything like that it didn't matter. So I decided I wanted to be with my men and that is it, finished you see. And they accepted it and my decision was that. They could have put pips on, I would have thrown them away and they knew that. They knew what sort of temperament I had.

Did

- 17:00 **the other men respect you for that?**

Well I think so, nobody had any bad to say about me. They were a bit, "Why not you silly so and so, look at all the money you get." I wasn't interested in money you know, it didn't, I didn't care. I was getting my five or six shillings a day and when I was a corporal I got another shilling so what more did I want you know.

Where there any particular mates that you were doing that for at the time?

No I did it for myself and because

- 17:30 my section, my first section I had in charge of that was when we went over, I told you earlier in this night march across the peninsula and that is where I got my two stripes and back in the 40s and those boys looked up to me. They decided that I should be their leader when we lost our corporal and that sort of sunk in. That I had a quality there
- 18:00 that the boys were prepared to lean on, so I thought so be it you know and so I accepted that offer and so I became their commanding officer of those one section of men. It changed because people would transfer and what have you but the moment I lost two I'd get two and I would encompass that little sphere of influence of mine, and I worked on this principal. It served me well.
- 18:30 But nobody had, there was only one bloke I had an altercation with and that was a company superior major and he was a bit of an arsehole anyway you see and everybody despised him, didn't like him and he really got up my nose, superior officer, for god sake just because he had an extra stripe on his arm and a crown he thought
- 19:00 he could stand over me, no bloody way. I wouldn't take crap from anybody. And I was not insolent. I put my views across, and they usually accepted that because to kill my independence it was the worst thing they could do. Which they did do eventually. Anyhow I remained a corporal and I became a sergeant and when they gave me the third stripe later on I just tacked it on.
- 19:30 I didn't sew it, just a running thread and every time I did something wrong I said, "Well don't bother, there is your stripe take it back." I just pulled it straight off my arm. And I demoted myself so often it wasn't funny.

What they kept giving it back to you?

Yeah later on they'd say, "You are worthy of your sergeants job again." It was a game as far as I was concerned, accept it give it back. But I had my own way of doing things in the army, I you know

- 20:00 my disciplines were the same as command, I obeyed orders from a higher echelons I looked up to my sergeant and respectfully he use to look at me with a quality you see. And the officer he became an encompassing body and he was the peak of the platoon you see. But he designated
- 20:30 his authority to the sergeants, the sergeant. The sergeant designated his authority to the corporals and the corporals and the corporals designated his authority to nine men. See what I am getting at. So I had a love of that little group of men I was in charge of, right through the army. And that served me well, I threw away rank twice, I went to office schools and I threw them away, I passed each time and I refused the
- 21:00 ranks and that particular time the last one I was up in Moresby out side Moresby I might have been a lieutenant minimum full lieutenant on the battlefield type of thing so I refused it because it took me too far away from the boys you know. And although I was younger than them, I was older in the sense in the head you know and that is
- 21:30 where it all, for me where it worked.

At this stage when you were still in the militia how was your thinking, how do you think your thinking was different to theirs?

It wasn't. I discussed with my boys militia or not, I never laid anything on them that I wouldn't do myself. So quite often just in normal tactics in the field outside at war

- 22:00 I would ask them what would they do in a certain circumstance. Say for argument sake we, it only takes seconds to do this you see, but you've got to take that hill you see. There is bush on it, there is grass and there is rocks and what have you. And I'd say, "All right Jonesy, which way would you go?" "Smith," so and so and they'd all say I'd go left, I'd go right, I'd go up the middle and I would split the difference and take the majority and say right
- 22:30 that is way we'd go and bang and away we'd go you see. And they all fell into line. So the obvious way that they determined was the way I was thinking anyhow because the, it was just instinct I had for survival you know, because it saved my life several times, the same tactics. And I wouldn't have been here today if I had of been an officer.
- 23:00 I wouldn't have been here today if I turned AIF at that time. That is why I stayed, that is when militia, and that is where the age thing came in you see. So I can thank my dear mother for saving my life and being a POW. I wouldn't have copped a slap in the fact from the Japanese in a million years, no bloody way. I reckon I would have had my head knocked off the next day because I would have bopped one of them you see. And I was very self reliant and independent and I didn't
- 23:30 like someone outside my influence bossing me about, I wouldn't cop it. My feeling I wouldn't have lasted a week as a POW in later day thinking, the way my mind works and so I worked on that principle all my life, still do. It works, take it from me it works.
- 24:00 **I was just going to say that you must have earnt a lot of respect because a lot of them followed you when you joined up with the 39?**

Oh yes yes I did the the boys of the 39th the whole of them, whether they were mine or anybody else's we were all volunteers at 39th and the fact that we were all volunteers

- 24:30 was a big thing in itself, like there was nobody dragged in, kicking and screaming, we were all volunteers and therefore we were all one big family, broken up into smaller families you see, companies and so on. But we all respected each other, there was no get out your rotten you know so and so and so and so, there was none of that, but that was AIF well stiff bickies
- 25:00 we used to fight them in Cowra. But and that is when I first met Joan Arbursnott or Pinkerton in Cowra. And it is funny. There was a mate of mine and he was in my platoon, in my section (UNCLEAR). He was a Swede and he was from Albury and he was an ex pug from Jimmy Sharmon's road show
- 25:30 and he was my right hand man at the time and so we used to go out together and he was a big lumpy fellow and he spoke in a squeaky voice, which they used to belittle him about you see so he would go, sneak out of camp; 'ackwilly', AWL, some call it AWOL [AWL - Absent Without Leave] American ways and all this, we call it 'ackwilly', AWL. And we'd get out of camp and go into town, and I didn't
- 26:00 drink and they'd give me a glass of water, I wasn't aware there was vodka or gin in it you know. And of course I goggly eyed and so when I got like that 'Chawky' always looked after me. And so we'd walk down the street and AIF, I would pick a fight with the AIF blokes, Chawky would be right behind me, I would pick a fight with a big black fella, you mug you
- 26:30 see. And he'd throw a punch at me and I'd duck and Chawky would come up and flatten him you see. It was a done thing, he never woke up.

Why did you pick fights with them?

Oh you know they were opposition, they were AIF, we were militia. They picked more fights with us than we did them. We had our wins and our losses. But I remember they got Chawky in terror one day. He was three parts molo, he used to drink a fair bit.

- 27:00 And he had his belt undone and they ripped his jacket down and pulled it over his arms so he was more or less a straight jacket, and they started to beat the hell out of him you see. And I took my belt off and on your belt you had a clip buckle you see a (UNCLEAR) belt. And I shortened that twice around my hand and I went into them with that, left handed, my steel clip on my hand, bar clip and I cut a few heads,
- 27:30 I am not going to see them kick the crap out of my bloody mate, no way in the world. So they steered clear of me from then on because I said oh he is mad you know. Of course I was mad, looking after my mates, he is the best man I ever had and Chawky thanked me for it because they were kicking his ribs in you know, buggers and but they were AIF, after all they were allowed to do that to a choco but that is the sort of guy I was. I was straight up and down, I didn't.

When were you first introduced to this divide of the

- 28:00 **chocos and the AIF?**

At that time.

At Cowra?

Mmmm. See we were militia, we never associated ourselves with AIF and because they formed up in other places. But when the 39th was formed, we had to train somewhere so Cowra was a training centre, AIF were being trained there and messed there. A big bunches of 8th Divvy [Division] and then was the 39th. So

- 28:30 they out numbered quite a lot, it didn't make any difference. All the AIF blokes weren't mad, they were good guys you know but there was always a couple of soke heads that wanted to beat the crap out of whoever they came across, but you will have to excuse my. Beth said don't carry on the way you do.

Jim I've heard it all before.

Yeah but anyhow the thing is though that we got along generally pretty well with the AIF.

- 29:00 Except that few rotten apples, you know and we accepted their insults, and we proved them so damn wrong, you know in the later dates in Kokoda and what have you. And there is books been written about the 39th. Everybody has got a story to tell and it is not necessarily all their own story. They try to broaden it well it is not the sort of thing you can broaden.
- 29:30 Because you have got to remember that all units are made up of cells, you got 9 privates and a corporal, that is a cell, in my mind you see. So three cells make a platoon and three platoons, three cells of platoons make up a company and so on you see. So I sort of divided them up into each groups and the officers on the echelon and
- 30:00 the corporals you know three of one of a sergeant and one of an officer and so on down the line you see, or up the line. But I just had this thing I wanted to stay with my group, whichever group I had. Now I fell on my face a few times in my earlier days, but most times I picked myself up and re organised my

mind but I had a, I wasn't materialistic,

30:30 the thing is and I wasn't militaristic either. Like the thing is I was a free thinker which I toed the line but sometimes I did not like it. And I let them know after I toed the line that what they said was wrong and I got myself wrapped a few times over that. But after they sat down and thought about it they knew I was right anyhow but they

31:00 couldn't back down because they were senior rank you see. But generally speaking I control my life and I didn't want to, anybody else to change my way of thinking you see. I have always been the same I just stuck through it thick and thin, I have ridden this way all my life. It is quite a way of life I've got and I am so

31:30 damn independent now it is not funny. I give into my wife of course, she is a sergeant major. She was a sergeant cook you know in the air force. But no that is the way it was NCO I was quite happy.

What kind of training did you have at Cowra?

Mainly field training and a bit of marching, not a lot of stuff because that was

32:00 a wash out, we used to play in these cracks in the ground. But nothing great it was mainly the disciplines of sloping arms and ordering arms and a few little skirmishes and things like that. But I had most of my training prior to the 39th. And the battle at Crecy made the [Australian] Women's Weekly, I don't know why it made the Women's Weekly centre page

32:30 fold you know. The Battle of Crecy when we wiped out Crecy, not we. I claimed part of the deal because I was in the organisation of the blue force that wiped out Crecy and they hated the army ever since. I think if you went to Crecy again now and mentioned the battle of Crecy, they would throw you out on your ear, even after all these years, because we made a mess of the town. And not me particular

33:00 but all of us and the company, the whole lot of us you know. And it was a full on type of blank cartridge bullet, but someone introduced a few live rounds, and a few people were killed our boys and others, not civilians. Because it was a battle of war, there was thousands of troops involved in this thing and it became quite heavy going and serious.

33:30 Because it was like it was a full on battle, a bit like our trench warfare you see. But you are given some, in all these battles, imitation battles, training battles, there is something unforeseen in everyone of them, you can't predict exactly what is going to happen day to day because someone will sneak something in and create havoc whatever you know, not

34:00 that they are crazy, it is just they want to see what happens, what happens if this happens you see. And just they might just out of sudden inspiration oh I will throw a bomb in there you see and a stick of gelignite and see what happens, well or I will throw a grenade in the fire, just the way of life. The army brought out I would say the best in me, the best character.

34:30 The thing I like about even all these years that have passed since the war, the older I get the more vivid my memory has become of the hard times and a few soft times in 39th. We are still a unit, we have never broken up, we have been an organisation since we left New Guinea and came back and formed the association and we all have one very

35:00 very sad part in our heart of the 39th and that is the non recognition by the government over the years. They never recognised what we did. The blood we spilled and the time we held the Japs [Japanese] back we never got any recognition to this day. But that is a later part of the story, it is sad but boys are dying with as I say holes in their heart because they are not fulfilled because they never got that recognition for what they did.

35:30 And it is sad and I think the politicians of today should go home and hide under a pillow to be ashamed of themselves to do this to a bunch of boys who put their lives really on the line. They had no idea what Kokoda was like and (UNCLEAR) nobody gets the idea. All the people have walked over and saw to try and better the times that 39th did haven't succeeded in doing it. And they really, and they had native carriers

36:00 and they still wonder to this day how we did it, I can't think how we did it either. Grime, guts and determination is all I can put it down to. But that is that part of the war. But I don't want to particularly dwell on that right now.

Lets go back to training, can you be a bit more specific about what type of training like for example what type of jungle training?

None. Here, no jungle in Australia

36:30 love. Our training was in the field down south. We are Victorians, we trained in Victoria, we didn't venture in New South Wales it wasn't part of our country, because we are Victorians. And anything outside Victoria were foreigners you see, because the 'Mexicans' you know. So we did skirmishing in training that is when I was in the light horse more than anything

- 37:00 else not the 39th and we did lots of field training, lots of exercises generally, close marching and all sorts of exhibitions in Melbourne to excite the local populous, close in marching and stripping down guns and blind folded and all this business you know and
- 37:30 bren gun training. We had to carry Bren guns, we track vehicle. But mainly speaking our infiltration, how to crawl through long grass without someone knowing you are crawling through long grass. How to hide behind a bush and not let anyone know you are behind a bush, how to camouflage yourself, and all these things you know. And to be able to read the signs of
- 38:00 you see I had the dubious honour, I suppose you call it dubious honour that is all it was. I was asked to cross a valley in Victoria, don't know whether it was Seymour or somewhere round there. And this whole group of a couple of companies of people, of blokes, had to try and spot me, and it is a knack, you know the thing is the grass
- 38:30 is about so high. Now if you crawl along through grass you will be able to see the grass right and say that is him going there. But if you get down low and crawl on your belly like you were taught to do and you are waiting for the wind to blow it would move the grass when you crawled. When the wind stopped you stopped you see. So I was able to cross that valley without anybody picking where I was. It is just the, what would you call
- 39:00 it, training, self training, you thought, you thought about it you know and when I was instructing with weapons I always taught the men, this is previous to 39th again, I was an instructor in small arms and new weaponry and I always taught the men what could happen if they
- 39:30 did not follow the true sequence of using that weapon and what damage they could do like a nills bomber, a grenade, a hand grenade, how many parts of metal were on that. And once you pulled the pin and you let the lever go it is three seconds and you are meat. The power of them and what they were for and the boys anti tank rifle,
- 40:00 I taught on that and the pier this was the British idea, this was before the American bazooka come into the thing. The British had a thing called a pier a small self propelled rocket. And I was in imitation artillery with explosives and I did lots and lots of things in the army you know, generally. And now when I went to 39th I felt that I was pretty well trained, and quite a lot of us were. It
- 40:30 came out of the earlier forces. So when we went overseas as we called it. And that is another dirty trick.
- We might just stop there because we are at the end of a tape.**
- Ok.

Tape 5

- 00:31 Okay. See the 13th Brigade was formed 1941. It consisted - we were the only troops in Australia literally. All the men had gone overseas. As RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] you know. There's old people left and young people. And the 30th Brigade was formed. Now it was three battalions. One from Queensland
- 01:00 which was the 49th. One was New South Wales the 53rd and the Victoria was 39th. And that's the 30th Brigade of Militiamen. And, Papua New Guinea was a protectorate of Australia, that was part of Australian territory and we were to go over there as a garrison force.
- 01:30 Now when we landed - we went over in the Aquitania - there was other ancillary troops involved, I'm just talking about the 39th, 53rd and 49th - part of the 49th went over some months before us and they were working on the airstrip which became Jackson's airstrip. The main airstrip of Moresby at the moment. And they were in the Garrison force. And so we were (UNCLEAR) going over to the Garrison Force
- 02:00 group you see, not the fighting force. And we were never given the garrison force medal. If we came back and went to Thursday Island or outpost we got the Garrison Force medal. But we never got it for going in the Garrison force over in New Guinea, which sits a little bit crooked in my mind. I don't like that attitude because we were Garrison force. And, after
- 02:30 leaving Victoria - to be taken out of Victoria - okay it was summer but we were used to that type of weather, hot and dry and boxing day of '41 we left Sydney on the Aquitania and 3rd January we landed at Moresby. And the ship couldn't get in the harbour so we went down the nets and things like that, the small boats into Moresby. And we had no supplies, our supply ships got lost on the way somehow rather.
- 03:00 So we ended up with a ground sheet, half a blanket sort of thing, towel, five rounds of ammunition type and we were - and the food we had on our back. And bully beef and dog biscuits and stuff like that you see. Well we were - I think we marched from Moresby Harbour, Moresby town - we still had the expatriates by the way, there were still people there. And along
- 03:30 a road to where they built the airport, a track where they were building the airport - 7 miles in the heat.

There was no tents, nothing. Well you see that was one of the hardest wrenches from good life to bad life I ever met in my life, ever hit me in the mind you know. To be thrown out of – come out of Victoria a place I understood backwards to go into another area, that was absolutely climatically different.

- 04:00 It was hot, it was humid, it was wet. Oh it was, you know, mosquitoes by the countless millions and no cover. And it was just out of this world. And very few books are written on that first 6 months in Papua New Guinea and it was a horrible time. And the fact that we were all green horns from Victoria to go into that system was just unbelievable.
- 04:30 You know the mental, what do you call it – shock of going from there to there, under a completely different environment. A complete reverse to what we're used to. And living the way we were – we – it was just so terribly vicious to us. And consequently a lot of the boys went down to malaria, dengue fever, dysentery and all sorts of diseases.
- 05:00 And you know everybody over there. And of course the bombings started, Japanese flying over later on started bombing the hell out of us and we were defenceless. We had some ack-ack [anti aircraft] guns there that, three of them or something that fired their cartridge or shells about 19,000 feet. The Japanese always flew about 21,000 and we were completely – had nothing to defend ourselves against bombers.
- 05:30 So they started oh a couple of weeks after we got there the bombs. And pretty well every day, there might be a day's break here and there but almost consistently. And the Japanese'd come over and bomb that airstrip which we were around and which we were trying to build. And I remember the first bomb. Even today. It just felt like it landed right on top of my tin hat. It was the most fearsome thing you could ever wish to see. You know you're
- 06:00 sitting in your pit and the signal of the bombing days – there was no sirens. It was three shots from a rifle and that was continued along everyone knew – just the three quick shots. And then another three quick shots you see. We knew there was air raid on you see. And so get in our pits and being, what we were, E company
- 06:30 were machine gunners. And so we were given the dubious honour of being the main defensive of Moresby Airport. And around that was infantry with Lewis guns and we had no aircraft – we had three old broken down Wirraways there. And a couple of Boston Bombers that never flew. And the Japanese had complete control of air time you see. So anyhow our garrison force thing
- 07:00 became several types of battleground. It's living, eating and surviving generally in that torrid situation and suffering all the bombings and strafing of fighter planes. It was quite a frightening period. And eventually you got hardened and, oh a bomb, oh righto. You see, I don't care how
- 07:30 much trouble you get into, it's terrible the first time. It happens the second time it's not so bad and so on, you see eventually become blasé about it. And that's the way we were with the bombings. Quite a few of the boys didn't succeed in doing that of course. And so I was – talking about myself and my own group we were mentally set in the short time for these bombings. And I remember an incident, my brother Jack was with us in this thing
- 08:00 too. I had, I was in charge of 5 Vickers guns and there was John Burrows, I mentioned previously and there was Captain Merritt. They were two (UNCLEAR) of OSN [?], he's adjutant. And they were in their forward pit, an old shelter and I was in my OP [Observation Post]. Had the five Vickers guns up around in a semi circle on the hills covering a fair bit of the end of the strip you see.
- 08:30 They fired a Strarpy [?] with raids. And whenever the three shots were fired we were straight over the back of the hill where we were camping in the grass, straight over into our gun pits, into our positions, ready to take up the honourable business of fighting the terrible enemy you know. And so anyhow it was all la de da. It was get out there
- 09:00 sit and wait and cop the bombs and then go back and rest you know. And day in and day out this kept going. And our meals were bully beef and biscuits or goldfish in a tin, anything, you know powdered egg and bloody terrible food. And I can't eat tinned fish even today. But a packet of bully beef and a packet of biscuits, dog biscuits – they were hard as board, rocks you know.
- 09:30 Well that had to last you for days as emergency rations. The cooks tried to cook these biscuits and make porridge out of them and they were just like gravel. They'd soak them overnight and they wouldn't get any softer. And then they'd cook them and they wouldn't get any softer. So you were still munching on hard biscuits for – stewed biscuits for breakfast sort of thing you know. And they –
- 10:00 we didn't have messes as such, we ate in the field. In your little groups, wherever you were you know. And there was no lining up at kitchens or anything like that all. It was just – you were on your own, you did your own thing. And as long as you got your supplies which were very meagre. And so anyhow we survived this sort of trauma and
- 10:30 this particular day the Zeros flew in and started to attack the place. And it was about the third fighter strata raid that we'd been through and so the third time we were where we should've been and quite happy to have a go at them. First time we were all under cover – to hell with them you know. And these blokes lining up in aeroplanes, shooting at us, to hell with them. But I can laugh about it but I can feel

sad about it too.

- 11:00 And the trials and tribulations of the whole thing but – anyhow these Zeros attacked the strip and so we opened up with our Vickers gun and a Vickers gun fires 250 rounds a minute sort of thing, as fired guns go. And flat strap. And unfortunately for the blokes the other side of the strip if a zero dived down we were after a Zero. Anybody the other side got in the road of our bullets that was stiff shit, you know. But we
- 11:30 sort of kept their fire up if we could. Because Moresby – the strip is built into sort of low hills over here, high hills here and the strip. Well not high – when I mean high, twice as high as this house. And so that's where we were. And anyhow this swearing it was hot on. You know the zeroes were taking and our guns were belting away and the swearing was coming down. And from the far end, I knew it was my brother Jack's pit, you know he was swearing
- 12:00 a blue streak and he was really hot. Anyhow when it – all they last is, you know 30 or 40 seconds or a minute at the most you know, it's all finished. Some of them lasted 10 seconds, it depended on the circumstances you see but anyhow, John Merritt, the Major, he told Bill to get onto me and find out who was doing all the swearing. And to be paraded. So anyhow when they finished
- 12:30 the firing guns I said, "Righto." I just say, "Arms down, back over the hill," you know and they'd just go back and do what they were doing before. Well anyhow I had to get Jack my brother and parade him before the two officers, senior officers. And I said, "Stay as you are Jack." He never had a stitch of clothing on, he was caught short completely you see. And he's
- 13:00 red headed, and he's freckly and he's fair skinned you know. He was a different breed to us in relation to his skin and that. You see well he was the number one gunner and as he's firing all the cartridges just coming automatically out of the gun are hot as all hell you know. And they were hitting his body all over, I mean all over and burning him you see. And he's dancing barefoot and this bloody thing at the same time and he was swearing about that you know. And so I
- 13:30 paraded him before these two officers and I said, "Private J.F. Waters." I said, "He was the one swearing." And I said, "The reason is obvious to me as to why he was swearing. Take a good look at him." And you'd swear he had the measles. He had these thousands of burns all over him, you know, hot spots. And they said, "Righto." I was corporal. They said, "Righto corporal dismiss him." No more said. But they got the message.
- 14:00 To Jack's embarrassment. Jack said, "You didn't have to do that to me." I said, "Well it was either that or get hard labour doing some other damn thing, digging a pit somewhere so be happy about it you know." But later I had a discussion with Merritt and whatshisname about the man screaming and swearing. "It's part of the drill," I said. "In relation to their nerves." I said, "That helps them." "And if you can yell and scream and you're firing a gun," I said, "at a moving object like a plane
- 14:30 it does give you relief from tension." And I said, "And I like my men too much." And I said, "I don't think any of them stepped out of line." "They step out of line I'll deal with them." So anyhow they sort of woke up to the war thing and we did that a lot on the aerodrome. And then John Burrows a major – they sent him home because he was too old
- 15:00 but he could walk the legs of any of the young fellows. And then Merritt took over. So we eventually ended up at Bootless Inlet. It's the only piece of beach on Bootless Bay and just before the Coral Sea Battle. They suspected there'd be a landing at Moresby sometime by the Japanese. And they didn't know if they'd come via the Coral Sea but we were put on beach defence. You see that's the long village
- 15:30 at the Southern end of Bootless Bay, and ours was Bootless Inlet, just a small inlet. And the Wong family, natives they lived there, it was their village. Old Ma Wong – had a bit of Malaysian blood in them. And her daughter, Leika she used to bring bananas to us boys and they had a tradition, if they had
- 16:00 one grass skirt on with a slit down the side they were open for suggestions, marriage or whatever you see. And they didn't want her to have two or three grass skirts on and so on. And Leika was only a young girl. But she, you'd get from here to her away from her and that's enough. Because the stench of coconut oil and all – and she'd sit and yarn and laugh and talk in her own pidgin. And we
- 16:30 understood it and she'd give us a hand of bananas or a coconut or what have you, you see. So the Wong family and the platoon that I was with, with Ted Money, my lieutenant of the platoon, he was killed on the first raid. Japanese bomb went down the funnel and landed in the board room and blew him and several officers to kingdom come.
- 17:00 And we – mate of mine cracked his skull – it's sort of – in tragedy you can see things as funny you know. And George Harley was his name and he was my scout later on, he was in my section. And George and I we were detailed to do boat unloading you see, wharf duties. This was the sort of way they were treating us you see.
- 17:30 We were to build an aerodrome, we were to unload ships. We weren't training or anything like that. We were just literally all green [inexperienced] in relation to this sort of thing and we had no reason to like the army because there were no tents and we were being eaten alive by mosquitoes and people dropping dead, and we were getting dysentery and you know it was just out of this world. And this was

the garrison force, we were a fighting force you know. So anyhow the

- 18:00 whole thing was – it's tragic in a way. But that garrison force was never recognised. Not that the medal's anything, it's just an extra medal – it's just a piece of tin you know. But they didn't recognise it as a garrison force. They encompassed that in the Pacific Star. And I feel that the whole 39th Battalion were done out of a medal they were entitled to. It was a garrison force medal.
- 18:30 By reasons far beyond my imagination, I don't know what it was. But I remember – see I had – there was three Bren carriers on our platoon at Bootless – one at Bootless and another couple around further. And the – a few things happened prior to this but, we were told to take them down to the wharf and
- 19:00 run them down, run them out of petrol on the wharf. Then they'd be loaded onto a boat to go around the point to a place called Buna you see. So we dutifully did that, we run them out of petrol and my carrier, Bren carriers the first on the sling and then there was, it was to belay out get the carriers off the wharf because there's a raid coming. Well my ruddy carrier's ten foot in the air. And the winch man just let it go – boonk – it bounced
- 19:30 on the deck, and they weigh a few ton you know. And so then we had to drain petrol out of trucks that we could to put into the tanks to drive them away out of danger. We didn't want to lose our carriers. So anyway that's the sort of military thing goes on times. And the idea was on that ship, we were to go around to Buna and meet B Company of the 39th which had gone over the track and they were to set up the garrison camp at Buna and we were to join them.
- 20:00 But the Japs decided to land in Buna you see. And that was the start of the Kokoda battles through there. But up till then we were garrison force and we were never recognised for it. We had – oh no – there was well over a hundred air raids dropped on us. Yes that's bombers alone.

Where there high rates of casualties?

Not a high rate. Like bombing never wins a war.

- 20:30 It frightens the bejesus out of you you know that's all. It's the boys on the ground that win wars. And the strafing of Zeros or like any fighter plane – it comes roaring out of a valley at you and lets fly with a barrel load of bullets in seconds. You know you don't know whether to climb a tree, hide under it or what you do. You know and the bombing – no but you had no control. You could shoot at a Zero because he was low. A bomber
- 21:00 21,000 feet, you couldn't shoot him. We just had to cop what he dropped. And fortunately in most cases he was going for the air strip. But there was misses of course, they're not always spot on, they're scattered. And bombs were landing every which way. And they were always 250, 500 pounders. But the first – when I
- 21:30 got – the second lot of bombing I started to recognise what was about and I'd open my eyes and look you know. It took a lot of mental effort to do. But – and I can still see that string of bombs landing and I was amazed at the colours in those bombs. All myriads of colours, rainbow colours coming out of it you know, plus the dirt and rocks and what have you. And one hell of a bang every time you know. And then you'd get boom, boom, boom, boom.
- 22:00 And you'd have this row of bombs running down the strip.

Was this day time or night time?

Day time. And – all day time bombing except once. We had one night bombing, just one big bomb. But we had no air cover, we had no aeroplanes to go up there and beat the hell out of them you know. And we had no guns that reached that high. So they were free to keep their formations – always flew in a V formation and just came in and dropped their bombs.

- 22:30 So they just had a free go. And Tokyo Rose – that was the 'Goebels' of Japan – the misinformation person sort of thing – we used to listen to her on the radio and she'd say, "Why don't you boys from Victoria go home. We don't wish to see the streets of Moresby running red with your blood." Now that was – 'Viet Cong' in Moresby obviously, you see.
- 23:00 She knew exactly we were doing all the time and she used to put this message over and we used to sit around the radio and say, "Up you Rose." If she'd heard us she'd have just laughed. But – out of – you can't avoid the fact that there was a lot of fear, but you had to over-ride the fear to be brave – you know not to be brave but to cop what comes – we never run away. And
- 23:30 so the – you had to conquer your fears, and still have them, retain your sanity. And – but not get into a panic, never run you know. Just go off and tuck your head down or whatever the case is because you'd be very unlucky if a bomb landed on you if you're sitting against a tree you know, he's not going to knock that tree out, he's after the airstrip and you realise what he's all about. But a Zero's a different thing, the fighters. And I nearly
- 24:00 got killed by a Zero. And, the – a lot of people – 39th fellows don't believe it but it's a dead true story otherwise I wouldn't tell us. As I say I had these five Vickers guns and when the word come that there was, planes in the area, the only planes in the area would be Zeros.

- 24:30 I couldn't hear anything, I couldn't see anything and I always made my guns - I said, "Well wherever I am follow me but keep about my head. Just swing around and follow me." And right on the ridge I had my (UNCLEAR) down at 50 yards or so and then Merritt and Burrows, they were just down a little bit lower. Gun on the ridge and there was a big tree and there's like a - and I can still picture every bit of it. And other guns were in a circle going back towards the strip.
- 25:00 Semi circle. And so me being in charge of the guns I said, "Well I'd better get out and have a proper look around." And my trench was about so long and so deep. So I got out of my OP as I called it and I walked up the hill and it was quite barren, except for this big tree and a few little bushes. And I could hear a noise, I couldn't see it. So all the guns
- 25:30 are facing my way because they just followed me as I went. And I had terrific vision, like I could see out here. I can always still see it today. And out of the corner of my eye way down I seen a glitter. And I turned and there's a bloody Zero sneaking up the valley. And below me just on top of the tree tops he's coming along at slow reeves and he's just zooming up you see. Well soon as I seen him I just went like that with my hands.
- 26:00 They all knew there was trouble coming. And this Jap he seen me. I seen him - he was oh, from here to the kitchen away from me. In his bloody plane coming up at me with a grin on his face. I can still see the bugger you see. Anyhow when I give the signal and he was below the hill coming up. And so I turned to run back to my OP, to get back to my OP
- 26:30 and out of the way of the boys guns, to give them a fair shot. And I didn't remember any more. For 15 minutes or so. But I was back in my OP and Merritt and Burrows were trying to get my tin hat off my head. And I was bleeding in the nose, the mouth, the ears and my tin hat had changed shape. They're usually oval when you've got them on, and mine was that way. And the back below the bumper knowledge of your head
- 27:00 there as they call it there was a groove that'd be that deep - you could fit your thumb in it - right along the back of my tin hat. And that's where probably a Japanese 50 calibre bullet out of his gun - when he had a shot at me and I turned it hit the back of me tin hat and that's how close I was to having my head blown off. And that bullet has - when you've worked out the thing later on
- 27:30 went up in the trees and dropped a limb out of the tree - blew a limb off the tree, big limb off the tree which fell down on top of Snowy and Frank, two of my men on the gun. And the Jap flew straight over the top of the gun and they stitched him from front to back, through the leaves. You know didn't have to swivel, just let him right, fly over the top of the bullets and he crashed on the far side of the strip. Well anyhow, it was only - see it's so unbelievable that I kept the tin hat as evidence. I had
- 28:00 it as a souvenir and it got pinched on me. And it was bright steel. They painted the tin hats and this was just bright shiny steel where this bullet went through. And so I lost that just before - when I went in the 7th Machine Gun Battalion, someone pinched it.

What was your reaction immediately after that?

Well I don't really know what happened to me. How I got back to my trench I don't know.

- 28:30 Because I was hit and I must have still had enough verbs in my head to say, well get to there you see. But all I know is when they pulled the hat off my head, oh God I felt like it was going to blow apart. And I had a bad case of concussion sort of thing. But there was no medical or anything like that, you sort of copped it and carried on. But
- 29:00 I had a tremendous headache after that and it was only - about 3 years or so that I had a fall out the door here. I had what they call drop downs and you don't know you go down you know. And I banged my head on the concrete, that woke me up, pulled me out of whatever I was in. And so they sent me for an x-ray and I got the x-ray plate up in my bedroom there.
- 29:30 And when the doctor read it she said, oh when they did the x-ray - ancient fracture. And it runs from there right around the base of the skull right up over me ear there. You see. And when I hit me head on the concrete it split it up there a little bit. And that's how close I was to having my head blown off you know. But lesson to learn as you go along, keep your bloody head down. If they're going to come up the valley come up the valley, to hell with them. But
- 30:00 no I never - adopt that attitude. I was, the thing - he caught me by surprise and we caught him by surprise so we did win. He paid the supreme sacrifice, I only got half a sacrifice. But the, the cause and effect of these things has a bearing on your whole life. They hang in there those things. And so many people
- 30:30 like they, they want to talk about things and they were not really there. In their minds they were. I let everybody have their dream, I don't scoff at anybody's thoughts. If they've got a thought about what they did, what they're supposed to have done but don't steal my thunder. What I did I know what happened and
- 31:00 that's all there was to it. And you see when we were at Bootless Inlet the Japanese used to send the Zeros in and slowly fly along the waterfronts along Bootless Bay and this is before the Coral Sea Battle you see. And we were told not to fire on them and we would have Vickers guns set up at Bootless Inlet,

in slots in the mountains, in the hills, cut in. And

- 31:30 they'd just go straight past, here are you, straight past the barrels of our guns, we could've blown them right out of the sky but we were told not to fire. So anyhow this flight came over this day and there were seven, nine, not too sure, Zeros and they came over the Moresby way and heading towards Bootless Bay. And there was one sultry .303 shot from away away over on Bootless Hill. The
- 32:00 where the rest of – like parts of battalion were you see – troops. And this plane on the end, smoke started to come out of it and it veered away and this Japanese parachuted out and his plane crashed in Bootless Bay. Bootless Inlet's here and Bootless Bay runs around you see. And at the Wong Village there was a family lakatoi had arrived. That's an old family thing,
- 32:30 runabout, it had sails. So we commandeered that. There was Lieutenant Money, myself, Snowy Hensburger, Frank Kinder. Now they're the blokes that were on that lakatoi without a doubt because I was with them and they're my men and I was Lieutenant Money's man you see. They were all his men. So we got the native boys to sail us across the island and let the family and bring up back to where this Jap was
- 33:00 in the water. We could see him. And in the process of us going over there he'd undressed all his uniform, heavy gear, flying suit and things like that. And he had an olive green under overalls on. And he kicked off his boots. And he had cropped hair, you couldn't grab his hair. I tried to grab him by the hair and pull him in the boat. And every time I pointed the gun at him he put his hands up in sync you see. And we all had pistols for god's sake.
- 33:30 We'd nicked somewhere you know. And so anyhow eventually we skull dragged this bloke the back of his overalls and pulled him in to the lakatoi. And he was bleeding out the side here. And he had a cloth belt around his overalls. And I took the cloth belt off and I put it around my own waist. So I was able to have a look at his wound and straight up through this fleshy part you know. And he was
- 34:00 having a bit of a whinge and a moan and going on because he'd been shot. And he – like bullet from there through to there – and apparently that bullet went through the cockpit, hit – through him and straight up into his panel of his aircraft and set on fire, blew the oil on, whatever you know. And he bailed out. Well when we got back to Bootless Inlet
- 34:30 as we're going back someone laid a field of fire down in front of us – Vickers guns and we ignored it. And the second one was laid down and we ignored that, we just kept sailing on back to Bootless Inlet. And Ted Money stood up there with his 38 and he fired three or four shots, bang bang bang at them and they never fired again. And his bullets wouldn't have went the length of this house but, they got the message. Leave us alone. So we took this fellow back to Bootless Inlet. Now Ma Wong's
- 35:00 grass house was on a high stilts. And she was a very stately old lady. And she had quite a big family. And when we came ashore the only thing we could use as a stretcher was a bit of jetsam we found on the beach. It was an old type of PMG [Post Master General's Department] ladder which is made of oregon pine, 3 by 1 and a half, and there's wire right around it and around the rungs so you see. And there were
- 35:30 two or three of those missing. And it'd be oh 15 foot long, I wouldn't know the exact length. Well Snowy Hensburger, he's from Fitzroy and he was a very well built young fellow, tall and slim hipped. So he took the front of the ladder, put the Jap on the – strapped him onto the stretcher, sort of half strapped him on. And I took the back of the ladder, back end you see.
- 36:00 And the next thing old Ma Wong screams out down the steps, screaming her ruddy head off and she's got a knife from here to you long, a bit machete and she's got it raised up over her bloody head. And I said, "Strike me pink." And she made a swing at this Jap and I turned the ladder you see. And poor old Snow at the front end, he had it on his hips and away he went. And the Jap flew off and she cut that three by one and half plus the wire right in half with one stroke. She was going to cut that bludger in half one way or the other you see.
- 36:30 She got pulled off. And then a vehicle came along and the bloke introduced himself some time –oh a fair bit back now that he was the driver of that vehicle – I don't recall him but I know there was a vehicle and a driver. Who he was I haven't got a clue. Anyhow there was – so we had to take this Japanese prisoner to headquarters which was a smelter
- 37:00 house at the back. And so we took him back there and this driver, and Snowy and myself and the Jap prisoner and the driver you see, so he as driving the vehicle. So we took him back to headquarters and this snotty nosed orderly in the thing. "What are you fellows.... you know," So anyhow we said POW and
- 37:30 the – he went and he got his commanding officer who came out. "What have you got there for me boys?" "POW Sir, Japanese airman we shot down. We pulled him out of the water, he's wounded on the right side. He's yours now." And anyhow he says well put two other blokes out and they took him inside see. This Jap POW. And this orderly said, "Oh this is the time to break out the brandy."
- 38:00 Medicinal brandy. So he said, "Gees that'd be a bloody good idea." He said, "Not for you pair of queers, get the bugger out." Well that was an insult. I never forgot that bugger. I wouldn't have drunk his brandy anyhow. But he was the first POW that was taken. And I believe you know from hearsay and a bit

of reading that they got a lot of information out of him and they brought him back to Australia. Where airports were in Rabaul and

- 38:30 New Britain generally in the island. But it's hard to tell what they get out of these POW's and - but anyhow we were to get a mention in dispatches. The lowest of the lowest orders. MID - Mention in Dispatch. In other words, written in a diary. And we never got it. I suppose they thought it wasn't worth it.
- 39:00 Maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was. It doesn't matter. People have got it for less than that. But the general trend like when the Coral Sea finished there were two - this is according to American off the big aircraft carrier that bombed hell out of the Japanese, beat up,
- 39:30 oh what's the name of it? Anyhow one of their big aircraft carriers. And I met him two Anzac Days ago in Brisbane. He was on the ship and I asked him. I said, "Look something in my mind I'd like to find out. Nobody has been able to tell me." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Well you were in the Coral Sea Battle." He said, "Yes definitely." I said, "Were there any Japanese troop ships in
- 40:00 that convoy?" He said, "Yes there were two and they were fairly big. He said, "When the fighting broke out they shot back through to their base at New Britain." So that was the, that was the invasion force it was turned back, that Coral Sea thing you see. But then that's when they decided to have another pronged
- 40:30 attack on Moresby. They were prepared - the Australian troops were prepared for them in Lae and they'd been reinforced there and the brigade that landed there the Japanese got wiped out. But the main force landed at Buna, they come overland to take Moresby and that's where we came into the show. Well we held the Japanese there in that position - at Kokoda and that general area. There was no names to the mountain ranges to me.
- 41:00 I didn't know any of the ranges, they were just one range after another. And I arrived over in ...
- Well we're just at the end of a tape...**

Tape 6

- 00:34 **We'll pick up from Bootless Bay. Did something with the Vickers and that there, in the defences?**
- Bootless? Yeah. There was a hill there at the back of Bootless Inlet - I'm not talking about Bootless Bay I'm talking about Bootless Inlet which is the Southern End of Bootless Bay. And the
- 01:00 - if you looked at a map of Moresby, coastal towns from Kila Beach and a long headland goes out and sweeps back and that's Bootless Bay and then right at the end of that there's a sandy little inlet, that's the only piece of beach of it, that's Bootless Inlet. Now up the back of that there's some low hills. So we tunnelled or dug through those and roofed them over and put our Vickers guns
- 01:30 on platform behind slits in there. The idea was to - if aircraft would come over - see it's known from the First World War that a Vickers gunner is 3 minutes whilst he's in action you know, because that's the first thing they pick on. So we were protected under the earth in a guns pit sort of thing. We
- 02:00 never used the Vickers out there of course, the Japanese never landed. But one of the curious factors of the whole thing we built - went out in the water and put in barbed wire. And all these foolish ideas. Anyhow hard slog in driving mangrove sticks on the low tide out in the water and threading them with barbed wire and what have you and, barbed wire fences along the beach.
- 02:30 And a bloody great big drop gate for the opening so the fences were from one end of the beach to the other. And then someone came up with the bright idea the mangroves there were stumps or the stems of them are about that round you see and they grow pretty well horizontally - was to cut off the protruding limbs of the mangroves and nail boards on thee things but don't cut the
- 03:00 bushes off the far end which were out over the water. And that's where if the necessity arose we would take a Vicker gun out on this platform you see. And then that idea was given away because they realised the Japanese would be in steel barges and it'd be useless trying to shoot an object with steel that you couldn't do anything about. So, they
- 03:30 decided there'd have to be a squad of men, two or three men, to go out there with sandshoes on and a pair of swimming trunks which are normally the army underpants type of thing you see. Small haversack with full hand grenades. And as the Japanese barges were coming ashore, this
- 04:00 was all the theory you see, good, sounds good in theory. All the Japanese barges which are coming ashore which was the obvious landing place for the Japanese if they invaded outside Moresby itself. Was to swim out with a haversack of grenades and throw them into the barges you see. So anyhow the - they wanted us a volunteer and they pointed straight at me you see. The loved me.

- 04:30 And I said, "Righto." So we had a couple of practise runs and it worked quite well but there was no Japanese barges there but threw them at rocks you know. So I counted for say six barges but there are 600 of the bloody things or whatever. But then a problem was getting the men off the beach through the wire and beyond. The last man out was to cut the rope of the drop gate you see. And who was to be the last man out.
- 05:00 Yours truly. So how do I become the last man out? So I have to sit on one of the ends of one of these inland on the start of the platform track in the mangroves and see that everybody gets through the gate you see. When everybody gets through I'm not to make a mistake because anybody locked in there'd be stiff shit you know. So I - so as soon as everybody was out I had to rush out and take this
- 05:30 rope that held up this drop gate with my bayonet. And the big drop gate'd drop down and stick in the sand. That would of course block the Japanese for a while while the mortars are - somebody's decided to pound them whatever you know. It was the most ridiculous system I ever heard of in tactics but that's the best they could come up with. And surprisingly at that time I don't know whether everybody received it but I know our platoon did and I had one
- 06:00 was I should have kept it - was a mud drawn map. You know what a mud map is. A piece of paper with a scrawled pencil on it and it showed you the Fly River, the Fly River up here you see. And Moresby up here and a track meandering its way all the way down the mountain of Fly River and crosses on the track, buried ammunition, buried food etc etc you see. And there was sort of no distances between the crosses.
- 06:30 And they weren't aware that the Fly River mouth was 100 miles across. But we were to get back there, man any canoes or whatever and row back to Australia. Now you know, absolutely ridiculous but still more or less that's the way it was going. And that's the way we were to extricate ourselves out a situation we couldn't handle. Never happened thank God. Otherwise
- 07:00 we would still have been up there. But they were the general plans of Moresby. Fortress Moresby. The forces of the Japanese got to Moresby - they walked through it in five minutes and then the whole thing taken over and all the airports and things like that and, be thumping hell out of Australia you see with landings and all the rest. You hear the Japanese
- 07:30 never intended to land in Australia - that's a lot of garbage you know. But anyhow that period we were getting all this metals thrown at us by the bombers and Zeros and what have you - we had to wait it out and see and then of course this fiasco of the creation - I told you Lieutenant Money got killed in a boat, my platoon commander. Got another one - don't remember his name to this day, show how much I loved him.
- 08:00 But going across the Kokoda, the B company went over and we were going around to set up this post in Buna. And the Japs decided to land. Well the 39th battalion were the fall guys for the track. Maybe we were - and the 53rd
- 08:30 partially came over also but some reason happened - I won't go into that that's their business. But the 39th are the ones that were able bodied - you've got to remember that there was malaria, there was dysentery, there was dengue fever and God knows what else. There was a lot of blokes very very sick. The dysentery crowd they used to live on Lightening Ridge we called it and all you could see was bare bums running across from a shack, tin shack
- 09:00 to another tin shack you know. And so there was quite a lot of dysentery around. And we were named the 'Mice of Moresby' because we used to burrow in the grass to shelter ourselves 'cause we had no tents and that at the time. So we became known as the 'Mice of Moresby'. And in those early days when even the white people up there called us Kanaka's - you know bloody insult.
- 09:30 And eventually - their background - ex patriots. But so the war went on and then they landed there and then over we go to B Company and they strike the Japanese a few miles inland from the Northern Edge. And they come at a bit of a halt with the Japanese - that's the first time shots were fired at each other. So they started to feed 39th men over the
- 10:00 track company by company. What was left of the company able to go. The total I think somewhere around 440, 420 men, boys - went over the track. But you could only go single file, it was a track it wasn't a bloody trail you know. And when you're going down, you get a truck up to McDonald's Corner, got photos of that, I'll show you that after and
- 10:30 then some said they had trucks to Owers' Corner. Well maybe they did, maybe they didn't but I know I had to walk. And I was the last company that went over the track. And we arrived non stop. We were held at - oh gee I can't think of names - old gardens area, Lake Sari or something for a day or two.
- 11:00 But then the battle had started then - before it was like just a hit and miss thing you know and a testing battle, see how many's where and what have you. But the kids of 39th we were sort of spread through the scrub and we weren't hanging about for anybody. So we were on the move all the time. And the Japanese didn't know what force they were against so they were unable to count us you see. But we could guess their number.

- 11:30 And by accident we did things that the Japanese didn't expect us to do as soldiers you see. But we got a name from them being one of the best troops ever come along the track. And so part of B Company, what was there was up there. And then I forget the sequence of order they went up there but E Company was the last.
- 12:00 And we arrived at a place called Danagee, on the 3rd August when the fighting got really cracking. And prior to that the Kokoda which is a plateau, a rubber plantation, owned by Kinesill. The Japanese had come in and there were only remnants of the B Company and two or three B Company fellows are still, oh buried there. Their remains might be down at Tarmarla now I don't know
- 12:30 but the headstones here, the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels, etc. And the unknown. And the - there was a big plateau it was sort of pear shaped and that was the rubber plantation. And up from the house and heading northwards you go down over an escarpment and down onto a creek, see and that's where all the natives that worked for Kinesill lived down there
- 13:00 in all these huts. So it was good barracks in a sense for the Japanese. Well they went up and the pulled the Australian flag down and put their own up. And they vacated the plateau and went down over the side, back to the bivouac at the bottom. In the meantime - get this right - it was C Company I think. I can't remember. You know I've got to estimate here. It wasn't B but I think it was C.
- 13:30 They did a circular movement through the jungle around the plateau to have a look and see if the Japs were there you see and there was none on the plateau. So they went in took the Japanese flag down and put the Australian flag up. And so the Japanese - two or three hours later or whatever. One peaked over the ruddy edge and seen the Australian flag hanging
- 14:00 up there again you see. And of course that upset him apparently and he went back and told all his mates and so the battle of Kokoda commences. And the 39th held the Kokoda for two days and that's where, that's how we remember our Kokoda day. 10th August, the beginning every year, 10 and 12th.
- 14:30 And that's very very superior forces the Japanese. And so they pushed the boys out eventually, after two days. And then the battleground anarchy which isn't mentioned very much, surprisingly, was quite ferocious. And that was some of the areas that I fought in. And everybody's own little cell as usual.
- 15:00 And out of my platoon I think I had five, six men at the most. But the, the central command - well I don't know precisely where it was I'd say it was central to the track you know. But so Danagee itself was on the track but it was a mountain on its own
- 15:30 and the creek in the front went south and another went north. So some of them went up the southern side of the track which curled around again. Went past what now becomes Isurava Ridge you see. And so in the melee, the fighting I took the other track up the creek you see. Me and my few men.
- 16:00 And we ran into all sorts of trouble along there too. Which I don't want to go into details on that but I think it was too close to the heart thing. And so after picking up three men, my brother, another bloke called - who was it? Oh God isn't it terrible when you can't think of these
- 16:30 fellows? Oh I'll think of him after. Then we made - we cut our way through the jungle. Excuse me I'm a bit hoarse. But all this firing, you know there was this tremendous firing up the way we were facing which was south easterly direction and there as a lot of firing up there and we were heading towards that you see. And we went down the creek again, it was too rough along there so we went up the creek bank on the southern side
- 17:00 of the creek. And then we cut our way through the jungle and we came on to an Australian fighting force which was 2/14th. And so we attached ourselves to them with the rest of - remainder of the 39th Battalion. Well we started our fighting - I started my fighting, the others started earlier - 3rd August
- 17:30 and it was more or less non stop until the 27, 26th, 27th August - three weeks roughly and for some it was longer. All up I suppose it was bit over a month. The 39th held the Japanese back. There was only 400 plus of us, no more. The Japanese were taking in full strength. Brigade strength minimum of 2,500 men so we were well out numbered.
- 18:00 All we had was .303's - we had to leave all our biggest guns behind because they were too heavy to carry in the jungle and too awkward. We were issued with a Tommy gun that's an American chopper [helicopter]. Useless, we threw them away. They were seizing up in the high country ...

What was causing that?

They were too fine a machine and they used to seize up and get cold you know. So we had the .303's and the old Lewis gun, a couple of old Lewis guns, First World War things.

- 18:30 And pistols of course, the officers had pistols, a couple of the blokes snatched pistols from somewhere. But pretty well that was our - and grenades - that was our armourment. We had ordinary uniforms on which stood out in the jungle, the green of the jungle like the back of a bus. All khaki and it was very hard for us to try and hide ourselves from the Japanese
- 19:00 because they were really trained soldiers. 'Shi-te Hi' Division it was called and General Horii led that. They landed their full division, 13,000 men on Buna see, going to Sanananda and they pushed on ahead.

Well that few weeks that we kept them at bay, the -

19:30 it was the thing that - well myself I say - it's the thing that saved Australia. And the 39th boys say that because the Japanese as it turned out after history - they had ten or eleven days rations. Now that was to come over (UNCLEAR) and take Fortress Moresby, a full division of it. A brigade of men had taken Moresby as far as I'm concerned. And they had 70 or 80,000 men at Rabaul

20:00 sitting there waiting and they had a full air force. And there were three major airports at Moresby that had been built and they would've taken those easily. And they could've - this is all hearsay you know and theorising - and they could've landed there in force after taking Moresby and flown onto Australia and bombed the hell out of the Northern Australia and landed there too. But because - a bit wide open somehow - Brisbane Line Company

20:30 another thing I was going to say - but that's the general theory of what was to happen.

Before you had contact with the Japanese soldiers at Kokoda what was the reputation of the Japanese army?

Well, we were lined up and told that we would be fighting men smaller than ourselves that wore bi-focal glasses. So one of us could handle 10 of them. The buggers - a great

21:00 number of them were over 6 foot tall. They were good soldiers, they were big soldiers too. And very efficient and they had different gear to what we had. We wore the big old army boots, horseshoes and the heels and slip and slide everywhere and we'd stand on the stone and it would ricochet around the place. They had a sort of a slipper with a toe in it and a foot. And laced up over and you could creep through the jungle quite

21:30 soundly. And sandals I should say. And they had camouflaged uniforms. We had tin hats and felt hats, they had a cloth type cap and - so they were pretty well invisible whereas we were standing out like a country dunno you know. And they had - their armourment was woodpeckers, that's a heavy machine gun. They had

22:00 mountain artillery which they carried in, in pieces and set up. And they had light machine guns and small 2 inch mortars. So they had a fair armourment plus the grenades against our pitiful thing. But as it worked out them not knowing how many of us there were, they did not expect to strike opposition in the Kokoda track. And that was their biggest surprise. And the

22:30 they couldn't calculate how many they were facing, because we were spreading out so far. Wherever they went there was Australian troops, 39th blokes in the way somewhere you see. We were just sort of scattered through - we kept moving, you had to you see. In mud and stuff on your clothes, to darken the khaki. And this was going on day in and day out and you weren't getting any sleep. You'd doze off sitting in your tin hat

23:00 or if you had your tin hat you'd sit in that and have a doze, or squat beside a tree and have a doze but you couldn't sit around too long because they'd be onto you you know. And there was a couple of incidents of close hand to hand fighting. And - but nothing you couldn't handle because it was a few men against a few men. Because the Japanese were equally as surprised as we were. And after they'd focused themselves on

23:30 the track and worked out roughly what men were against them, which they might see as 4,000 men, they felt that they had the game sewn up. And so anyhow they miscalculated so instead of 3,000 men there was less than 400 of us by this but we were all over the place like ants and we never stopped still. As I say I went north, west

24:00 sort of business and others went south east and around and on the track and away from the track. And they were scattered around although the nucleus of our battalion was at Brigade Hill they called it you see. But - and they had radio link or telephone link with Moresby. But they couldn't drop us food or ammunition or anything like that because either too

24:30 cloudy or there was too much Japanese aircraft about or whatever and they wouldn't fly in. They couldn't fly in, and I don't blame the air force. They did their best and it wasn't good enough but - so we very smartly ran out of dog biscuits and bully beef. And I'd read somewhere - some of the blokes found tins of jam, okay good luck to them they were lucky. I never found any tins of bloody jam. So back to eating native food. Taro

25:00 root and stuff like this and, so we gradually thinned out and starved out and the constant concern of fighting and aware of being - quite aware and awake all the time wore us down. And so we got thinner and ragged and more exhausted as time went on. And the time we hit this Isurava area - that's when the

25:30 2/14th arrived. On 27th August, that's right. And 2/14th - well by then we were bugged - absolutely shot to ribbons you know. We never hardly had a breath to stand you know, able to stand up straight. We were haggard and hollow eyed and bugged completely. And if the 2/14th hadn't arrived then we would've been wiped out, there was no two ways about that.

26:00 But you can theorise, you can do all sorts of things. But the thing is that we - and they just arrived

there. But I know the 39th Battalion in its infancy as we were, young fellows were able to hold the Japanese back for all that time, to get 7th Division back to Australia and up there you see.

26:30 And if we had decided to melt under the heat of battle and shot off in the scrub they'd have been met probably in Australia somewhere you see. But that's all theory. But the battle up there is something very few of us concentrate on because it's - too close to the bloody heart really and we've all got doors shut in our mind.

27:00 To keep these thoughts locked away. We don't like opening them, they're too scary. And they don't go - don't give a bugger which 39th bloke - if he said he wasn't scared he's a bloody liar because we were all shit frightened, you got to be. But we didn't stop fighting.

How was the ammunition situation?

Oh lousy. I think - oh most of us ended up with three or four rounds of ammunition left by the time we got to Ishiraba

27:30 where the 2/14th were able to supply us with ammunition.

There was no resupply in any of that time?

No well they dropped supplies but they'd always landed in the Japanese country. And we were scattered there was no hope that they could drop food parcels or ammunition or anything like that, for reinforcements down in our spot because it was pretty deep in the jungle and it's the start of

28:00 The Stanleys [Owen Stanley Ranges], it's pretty rugged country.

Was E company in contact with Italian HQ [Headquarters] during that time at all?

Oh no not all the time. We were - see Merritt my commanding officer of E Company, he was in charge for a while of what they called the Maroubra force which is a formation of the troops that were remaining in that area. Later on he was taken over by another

28:30 commander. But I joined E Company at that time in battle. Because we had a lot of fighting down that creek. And I don't know who else was down that end but I know me and my buddies were. And so we increased our numbers by three, that was my brother, Dan and the other bloke - they didn't belong to my

29:00 section. My brother was in another section but he was up there for two days pinning down mortar fire. And I was able to get him out with us and we came back and we joined the - see the battle of Isurava didn't last long because the Japanese attacked in big strength. And we'd pass through the 2/14th heading - the remains of us heading back

29:30 to Moresby - back over the Owen Stanley's when this horrendous firing started behind us, and we could tell the Japanese fire, we could tell the Australian fire. And so - ones that were left there that weren't included we turned back and went back to help the 2/14th. Landed on our left flank and some (UNCLEAR) come in and we were relieved and sent back out because we were completely buggered. There

30:00 was nothing left inside you know. We were robots.

How was that initial contact with the 2/14th made?

Well surprise. And exhilaration sort of thing. We were not aware that we were going to be reinforced or relieved. We had no - there was nothing about that at all. When we left Moresby we were on our own. Nothing about the AIF because

30:30 they weren't in Australia, nothing about anything. We went over on our own, that was it. Which makes it rather suspicious in a way. MacArthur was going - some of this is going to be edited because I speak my bloody mind. MacArthur was the supreme commander and Blamey was his 2IC in charge of Australian troops. And the way I look at it

31:00 we were sent over there purely to do the best we could. As for returning I don't think they expected reinforcements to get here quick enough for us to come out or any of us to come out you know. And it got pretty well that way and another two or three days the Japs would've been all over us you see. But surprise

31:30 was the main element when we seen the 2/14th. Fresh troops. And full battle order ready to go you know. And we were in rags. Our clothes were all buggered, they'd gone rotten on us and our boots and we were haggard and dull eyed and what have you. And so when we passed through them there was great, you know, sigh of relief I suppose. But - so when

32:00 we went back to help the 2/14th - they were getting attacked. Oh the 2/14th copped hell. And...

What sort of reprieve did you get between meeting the 2/14th and then ...

None. Like actually we passed through them and we just got a bit down along the track and we turned

around to give them a hand because we didn't see any other troops except - and the 2/14th was diminished in numbers because of illness.

- 32:30 And so the ones that were there were in a sense, a bit like the 39th, they were cut back in size but they were full of up and go you know. And they were going to kick ass as the Yanks [Americans] would say. But the boot was on the other foot. That's how the retreat started. And, so we moved then
- 33:00 when that great battle started, the Ishiraba battle we went back right to Moresby. Now we went over the Owen Stanley's, first we came back over and walked over - twice - well the second time coming back was tens times harder than the first time you know. So when we got back to Moresby we got fed up, I mean fed, up as I am now.
- 33:30 Washed and bathed and new clothes and rested and, did more exercise things to bring us back to A1 and the Australian troops, every one of them that were available went up the track and even cut in what they call the 'Golden Staircase' to drag 18 pound artillery pieces up to Iribaiwa Ridge.
- 34:00 And if they'd got them up in the early part it'd been great. If we got all our Vickers guns up it would've been great but we never you see. Everything was too late. So the whole of the Japanese, the Horii Division got to Iribaiwa and reading, I did read Horii's diary
- 34:30 - Horii died, drowned at the creek going back, one of the creeks. But the batman says in his book that - or his diary that he had - he could see the lights of Moresby - that's been the searchlights you know. He was in view in Moresby when he got a message from Tokyo to 'return to redouts' and we'd be going to go to Sanananda - hopefully we'd be picked up you see.
- 35:00 And so he retreated. And the Australian troops followed him back and so it was - the Japanese overstretched their lines, the Americans cut the supply lines apparently - all this is what I've read - I haven't gone into it deeply, I'm not interested but, and so the Japanese were forced and the 13,000 died at Buna, Gona. But they were dug in there and there was no
- 35:30 way of them getting and their backs to the sea. Part of the 39th was involved in that - they sent up a brigade, they flew them over - I think 110 of them went over and 27 came out. So the 39th copped it pretty good, whacking right through. And we felt that we'd done more than the job that we were sent into do. Like after all we were militia
- 36:00 and we were garrison force but we were able to hold up a big force of Japanese for those weeks to allow reinforcements to come back from overseas. But we never got any recognition. And the 39th - well we got back to Moresby and all that business was diminishing over the side. They were going to take the 39th
- 36:30 back to Australia you see and did anybody want to join the AIF. Well I wasn't really in the AIF actually and so I went over the submachine battalion and there's a whole battalion of Vickers machine guns. Pity we never had those that time. Gees they've got a tremendous fire power. But anyhow we - the 39th came back to Australia and the 39th was
- 37:00 struck off the order of battle, no reason given. And that's the hurt. That's why - nobody knows why. There's all sorts of insinuations and things like that you know but, and as far as I'm concerned if there's one man left in the battalion that battalion should not be struck off the order of battle because it still exists. There were quite a number of 39th blokes
- 37:30 still existing. Some were transferred to other units and others decided to wear their own colour patch but no grey at the back of it. Grey signified second you see. And so they were copping a little bit of flack here and there, insults and what have you. From the people that didn't know about us and, but the - well I went to
- 38:00 the 7th machine gun battalion AIF I was still a 39th bloke. As were a lot of the 7th machine gun battalion and a lot of them come out of E Company you see. But to be just wiped out politically like that was a bit of a blow. And it's written in the books you can read them anywhere, dozens and dozens of books written on this crap you know. And
- 38:30 Macarthur he decided to call it the trail. It was accepted by the Australian Government and enforced here and there - it'll never be anything but a track to us, always was, always will be. And it's not Americanism and that was an American victory - there were no Yanks on the track, at all. There were a few over at Buna, Gona Sanananda where they get up there but there was none on the track. So you know that's the story of the 39th.
- 39:00 And so when I ... you want anymore about the 39th?

Tape 7

- 00:30 The 39th that is right we got struck off the order of battle and they came back to Australia and I've got

a photo somewhere, the remainder of the 39th march in the second second battalion up in the tablelands. All Australian troops landed in the Atherton Tablelands. And so we came back there, some

- 01:00 machine gun battalion had left, after a couple of brief actions up top and when I say up to, up in New Guinea which is irrelevant and so I was training down there, training my men up in the mountains there, the back where the dam is now, the Kairi lake or dam or whatever you want to call it. And the hills at the back of that, that is our training ground and
- 01:30 we were still training doing our same tactics as was before. When I was pulled out to, somewhere along the line, I don't know quite where, whether I had leave when I first come out of New Guinea I cannot for the life of remember, I think I was
- 02:00 because I met Beth in 43, so it would have to 43 that I first met her. So I must have went down south somewhere and then back up. I know I did some training instruction at Seymour, I can't place the time, you have these lapses and then I came as I
- 02:30 say the 7th Machine Gun Battalion and then I got shifted to Cowra. I was an instructor at the (UNCLEAR) I was there for possibly six months. From there I lost my two stripes eventually and then I went back up to New Guinea, I met a brother, my younger brother he was
- 03:00 in Bougainville I wanted to go over to him. My eldest brother by the way is at armoured core over in Western Australia and I wanted to go to Len over at Bougainville my younger brother and so I created a few waves I would say along the way, I assume with my military career. And maybe the price got up with me, I do not know, maybe I just got me rattled I do not know what happened.
- 03:30 But I was still a fully fighting soldier, I was fit, I was able and capable and willing you see. When we got to Moresby, I was pulled out of there and put in the 6th AGH [Australian General Hospital] hospital, they gave me a broom, to sweep the wards, I told them to go and get nicked I am not sweeping wards, that is it period, I am a soldier not a bloody warden and
- 04:00 so then after a roughly a week there disobeying orders, they put me in an ambulance, took me out to the airport, put me in a plane and flew me over to Lae. And shipped me off to 7th AGH you see into a ward up there which was I still maintain it was an experimental insulin ward. And I was fighting mad by then you know. All I got was you'll be sorry mate,
- 04:30 you'll be sorry, I can hear all those voices still. And there I spent three months under insulin treatment in a caged ward. I saw things in that ward which were absolutely unbelievable, suicides and things like that. And after and that was 1944, 45 and after I came out of there
- 05:00 late 45 I came home. They said to me the war ended me in 45 and they said to me would you like to go to Japan, the occupation forces. I told them where to go. My spirit had been broken from this insulin treatment I got from this bloody hospital. So I eventually got, encouraged them to send me home for leave. I told them I had enough of their bloody army, I have done the best I could, you treated me like
- 05:30 crap, so get me home and get me out. So when I got back to Australia to just out of Ipswich I don't know what the name is.

Redbank?

Redbank, thousands of troops in there milling around, and I had a wife there and a baby there in Brisbane. And I said to them, "How long have we got to hang around this joint?" you know in similar words. And

- 06:00 they said, "You can't go anywhere you are B2," and I said, "What the hell is B2?" they said, "You have got to go for assessment for a pension," and I said, "What a load of garbage," you know I said, "Give me a break, what have I got to do to get out of here?" they said, "Declare yourself A1," so I said, "Ok I am A1," I was out the next day. That is where a lot of the Second World War diggers made a mistake. We should have stuck in there
- 06:30 and gone for these assessments and they all would have been on a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension]. You see, anyhow that is broadly the whole set up and that section of the war was the finish was the hard part for me and being sent off to a bloody psychiatric ward which I say was experimental. I never heard of it before and I never knew of the psychiatric wards
- 07:00 until I think it was 1949, 48, 49 might have been later than that 50, when I had a break down in Cook Town and they sent me down there and they put me in a psychiatric ward. I had the name you see and that psychiatric set up was nine not bad, B not so bad. Not so good.
- 07:30 Nine, eight not so bad, C cage, you see. So I never went down from nine. I refused flatly to accept any shock treatment, I suffered insulin treatments.

Is this the first time or the second time?

Second time. First time is in New Guinea. But three times throughout my early days up there in Cook Town I

- 08:00 ended up in Greenslopes because I was nervous energy and I was just wrecking my system and they'd send me down there you see. And but it wasn't hard to take, they still had me on TPI while I was down there and I was still getting my wages up top so what the hell I didn't care you know I was getting paid both ends and enjoying it. But when the whole thing finished I went back to my trade, which was electro-plater. I'd learnt that before I went to
- 08:30 war in Melbourne. And I went back to that and I lasted six months, seven months something. And went down my wife and I. We were living in Melbourne and so it was so cold in the winter this particular winter. What year are we in 46. And I thought, oh union troubles that were
- 09:00 going on, typical Australian problems and I wanted out so I quit my job and sold all the furniture I had for \$100 quid, sold all that to my brother Jack who survived a few years longer. And it cost me 46 pound 10 shillings for my wife and my baby and a couple of ports to fly to from Melbourne to
- 09:30 Cairns on the milk run up and down you see. And my wife's mother lived in Moresby. So we decided to go up there for a weekend, a week to see her and that week turned into 40 odd years you see. I wouldn't say Cook Town was my salvation. I was able to address the problems greatly that I was suffering with. There was all this what would you call it,
- 10:00 mistreatment of the army I would say of the army against an individual. I couldn't see the reasons for them treating me the way they did because I was a well trained soldier and I don't give a bugger what they say I could, I was prepared to take on the Japs on again and all I wanted to do was go over and help my brother and save his bloody life too you see, but it wasn't to be, he lived through it. He hated every minute of it, he didn't fare too well with it either you see.
- 10:30 But the thing is, poor old Lenny was conscripted into another battalion. But so up in Cook Town I was a workaholic that was my trouble, could not stop working.

What work did you do up there?

Well first I was a electro plater as I told you and there is no such thing up in Cook Town. I got a house I rented for a shilling a week.

- 11:00 Cook Town was broken down on its last boot, last leg, back of its heels ready to fall arse over head. There was about 300 people there. And it is down the scups there is no electricity, no roads in or anything like that, no electricity of course. So it was back to basics there and I made furniture out of kerosene cases and washing dishes out of 4 gallon
- 11:30 kerosene cans, split them diagonally and making washing bowls out of them. Washing facilities were, there was an old copper I found somewhere you know and a couple of rocks. And so we did it hard and we lived off the land, wallaby and a bit of plain turkey, a few ducks. Because the work I was doing wasn't earning me any money, it was earning me beer if I wanted it. And I was in the bar
- 12:00 and this barman said, well the bloke that owned it Ronnie Solomon said, "Any idea where I can get a plumber?" and I said, "Why?" He had an old two storey pub built there since 1880. And he said, "There is a drip through there coming right through the second floor right into me bar here," I said, "Yeah I am a plumber." I got a ladder and I climbed to the top of this rotten old building and there were six sheets of iron on top of the other. That one leaked and somebody put a sheet on top, and another one
- 12:30 on top of that, so the leak was still down here so it was quite simple. Keep one good sheet, throw the rest to the crap house and put the good sheet in place you see, stop the leak. So I think I got three or four beers for that. And then he said, "Do you know a carpenter?" I said, "Yeah I am a carpenter," he said, "You are a carpenter too?" I said, "I am, anything you want me to do Ron no problem," I said, "Why?" He said, "Well come up stairs." So I went upstairs and Bet had a brother
- 13:00 who had paralysis, he was only good on one side. And so as you walked, you walked down the hall quite firm, you walked on the upstairs floors into the rooms and they just went like that you see. White ants had eaten all the bearings off you see. He said, "You reckon you can fix those?" I said, "I will have a look," and all I had was a hammer and a saw. So I saw a hole in the floor
- 13:30 I could poke my head in there and have a look and see all the joists had been eaten off. So I found more timber of a similar nature down the yard and I started to pull the boards up and splice the timber, natural thing to do you know, lengthen the timbers, replace it eaten by white ants. So I stabilised his building for him. And when I went to Cook Town I put me name down, because I knew I was going to stop up there for the, try and get a job
- 14:00 in a post office, the council of main roads, saw mill and the railway, the short railway running up there. So anyhow I just potted around doing a few repairs, an old lady wanted doing up her floor, full antique furniture and I said, "Where will I put the furniture?" And she said, "Don't take it to the other room, the floor is rotten and I want it replaced," but you know she has got all this furniture in it. So I stacked all the furniture into the room
- 14:30 and then cut a quarter of the floor out and replaced that and you know I had a long board and a short board and so on you see. And I carried all the furniture back over to where I had done and then done the rest of the floor you see. And she was very very pleased. And she said, "There is only one fault," and I said, "Why what have I done," she said, "I haven't got any money to pay you," that would be normal

don't worry about it. She said,

- 15:00 "You can have any two piece or three piece of furniture that you want," so that would be the best gift that I could get you see. And that threw the kerosene case out of the house and put a chest of draws in the house and what have you and made Mum's life a bit happier and then so I sort of advanced from there and I got a call from the main roads
- 15:30 and they said, "You asked for a job with main roads," and I said, "Yeah," and they said, "Are you a bridge builder?" and I said, "Of course builder," I wouldn't know a bridge from a pack of cards you know. And they said, "Well are you foreman quality?" And I said, "More than foreman quality believe me," they said, "Well ok," they said, "Endeavour Bridge needs to be rebuilt." "Oh yeah."
- 16:00 Endeavour Bridge was about 150 yards long and the bridge was 900 foot across. Anyhow we started the Endeavour Bridge and I had an overseer and he was drunk at dawn. He used to drink OP rum as soon as he got out of bed. Just the sort of overseer I wanted because I didn't know a barnish pole from a, you know never had a clue about a bridge. So I promptly picked his brains as I went along.
- 16:30 He'd say, "Did you do so and so?" And I'd say, "Yes," and he said, "I don't bloody believe you," and I said, "If you don't believe me go and check," he would go check and he said, "I didn't think you did it," I said, "Yeah well that one I didn't do but I will fix it up right away," see so he let me, I led him down the garden path. So I learned to become fully qualified bridge building you see. So we finished that bridge. I had to go and pick me own
- 17:00 crew. And the youngest bloke in that crew would be 48, you know all the old men. None of the young blokes wanted to work they were all on booze. A lot of POWs up there, come home and went up to Cook Town to get away from humanity. So it was a rest home for a lot of ex diggers a workhouse for me. So anyway I was three parts across the other big bridge when this overseer got up my nose. So I was sick
- 17:30 I had the dengue thrown back on me and he abused me so I just grabbed him and threw him off the bridge and said, "I quit," you know, no problem, got a lift home. And they couldn't do anything about this dengue [fever] I had, they called it 'Pernishal' fever it wasn't. It was dengue same thing, locally. And so that was on the Wednesday. So I was in bed for two, Friday night was pay
- 18:00 night. I went down to, when I reported in sick Wednesday night, Wednesday. And they said, "Is there anything that old Jack wants?" hew as the overseer, so I said, "Yes a barrel of axe handles," they said, "What?" I said, "A barrel of axe handles, he wants them." "what's he want a barrel," I said, "Look don't ask me what he wants them for, he wants them, get them," see. There is 144 axe handles in a barrel you see.
- 18:30 So Friday night I go to collect my pay. Old Jack is there, he is sober, the only time he was sober was to collect his pay. And he said, "Why did you get all those axe handles for me for?" I said, "Well I don't know Jack I am sure you can use the bloody things," I said, "Take them off your costs," I said, "If you've got nothing else to lean on except a bottle you might be able to handle an axe handle and lean on that you see." He called me all sorts of Bs under the sun.
- 19:00 That 144 axe handles come off the price of doing the bridge you see, his budget. And he said, "I will see you Monday," and I said, "No I don't think so because when I threw you off the bridge I meant it, I can't cop blokes like you," and up went up the road a bit and a bloke in a yellow van pulled up said, "You applied a job for the airport," and I said, "Yeah," and he said, "Start Monday," and I said, "But," and he said, "No butts."
- 19:30 "Be there Monday or don't start at all." Well I was getting 8 pound 3 a week in the bridge foreman and which was pretty good money those days. So I started on the Monday while I was still ill. And I was on three months probation there and swinging axes and what have you and cleaning drains and all the muck jobs in the world and I dropped over 2 pound a week to go
- 20:00 there and I knew that the moment we finished that big bridge, they would send me up the peninsula you see and I would be away from my family, and I didn't want to do that so I stared in the airport and I got me ok after three months and I stayed there for 27 years. And so I worked at the airport and I bought my wife a hotel, which was Hillcrest.
- 20:30 And in 1972 I broke my bloody neck. And then I built her home up in the hill, I built that before I broke my neck by the way, the house. So I was crippled up for three years.

I've got to ask, how did you do it?

Well I just took it.

How did you break your neck?

I was in a hurry as usual, knock off time and they passed a law in the

- 21:00 Commonwealth that nobody was to lift more than 45 pounds without assistance you see. So I want some star pickets and there was a 100, and 10 picked weighed 45 pound, that particular length that I wanted. So anyhow the carrier came in and he dropped this 100 star pickets on the apron of the workshop, the office. It was Friday and I was a hurry

- 21:30 to get the plant fixed up and checked thoroughly and the weekly supply of fuel things like that to do me books and what have you. And the windscreen of the truck was a bit dirty and I thought I will go and give it a wash and going out to get a rag and what have you, and this star picket was sticking out on the concrete apron and I grabbed it to ease thinking it was 45 pound but it was another 145 hanging
- 22:00 on the end of it, something had to give you see. So I happened on one foot, I was standing on the stone and slipped bang on the concrete you see. And I laid their seeing the stars and counting them, bloody hell you know. And I just laid there and I had a habit of mentally examining my body when I'd fall, so I started to look at my feet, that big toe feels funny you know, it is buzzing like
- 22:30 bugger, I wonder why it is doing that, so anyhow everything seemed all right so I got up and I didn't have a lot of feeling in my leg so I knocked off and I went into hospital and they said, "You better we will do an x-ray on you," you see. Well they had the oldest x-ray machine there ever was. It didn't show anything but they laid me on a door out on the veranda of the
- 23:00 hospital and I stayed there for the weekend. So they said, "You better have another week off," and I said, "No I will go back to work, work is piling up," so I went back on the Monday and I started my correspondence which was a Monday morning job and I picked up the pen and I started to write and my hand got over there and me bloody pen stopped there. And I thought what the bloody hell is going on here. So I picked the pen up and started and it just wouldn't go, the pen just disappeared
- 23:30 over there and me hand went this way and I thought bloody hell so I pinched me arm, no feeling you know and round the back of me neck, moved me neck and it just creaked and groaned and shit I got giddy. So I rung them in Cairns, there was a direct line to Cairns and I said, "There is a plane coming in this afternoon and I want to be on it because I have injured myself." I have had a fall and I said, "I am not feeling what you would call top of, No 1," you know. They said, "Ok we will put a note on the
- 24:00 board, airport is closed," I said, "Good," which is procedure. So I went out of Cairns, I seen the CMO Commonwealth Medical Officer and he said, did x-rays and what have you and he said, "You have got an impact fracture of the 6 and 7 vertebrae," and I said, "What is that?" and he said, "Broken neck," that is what it means, and I said, "Oh shit," and he said, "I will send you a specialist," you see. "But first we have to do more x-rays," so he did a heap of x-rays
- 24:30 and same answer came out, then to a specialist and he said, "Oh we will have to operate," and I said, "Woo back," I said, "I will be in anything but that, what is this operation bit," well the doctor he was opposite, I was sitting there he had bloody hands about that long you see. And he said, "We will have to go through," and he is pointing "Down
- 25:00 through the side of your throat to the back of the spine and get some calf bone over from Canada," I don't know why they get it from Canada, he said, "Weld that on the back of your spine inside," and he pulls this great hand out again and he said, "Three months later we will have to open you up down the back and put calf bone down there and weld that into your spine." I started to laugh you know and he said, "What are you laughing at?" And I said, "I have just had a picture flash before my eyes"
- 25:30 he said, "What's that?" I said, "Well look at the size of my neck." "Yeah," I said, "Look at the size of your hands, plates of bloody meat a foot long and you want to stick those in my throat," I said, "No way." He said, "No it will be all right," and I said, "No it won't I'm not having an operation," it is my jurisdiction if I die I die and I said I think I will survive. Which I did do and so I had I was
- 26:00 in very very severe pain for four years altogether. And the physiotherapist nearly killed me accidentally. But these things happen so I pulled through after four years, I was able to move my neck. And one of those lucky things happened that I seen my own doctor and
- 26:30 he said, "You have got arthritis from your broken neck same thing because you have damaged your spine completely," what happened the arthritis grew on a flat platform and must have had a quick turn and a split and I just turned there was a nerve, motor nerve on the right side it was caught on the spurs on the vertebrae you see, so it was locked in there but this smoothness
- 27:00 of the arthritis stopped me from hurting myself. I couldn't put my head back and I had to be very careful when I bent down to pick something off the floor and I couldn't turn my head more than that you see, but I was right I learnt to control it. So if somebody spoke to me from behind, I just did an about turn and say what did you say, I wouldn't look over my shoulder. Anything on the floor that I wanted I looked down and then I would squat and pick it up. So I trained myself to
- 27:30 do the right things and I was able to, it is still crook you know, but I will never, I will never be 100%. But anyhow I forget even now, it was 1972 and I still forget, I throw my head back and I get the woosies and I feel sick and you soon learn to go back to original ideas. Anyhow I was getting up to the
- 28:00 retiring age and I was down in Melbourne and my son was there, he was in the Commonwealth. And he said, "What do you want to do Dad?" And I said, "I want to find a solicitor of some sort to find out, I said I am near retiring age, whether they are going to pay me out in retirement age and finish this rot you know because I am not doing to have an operation. Even when I was in Perth they wanted to operate
- 28:30 and I said, "No," and we travelled Europe and Africa for about 12 months with this neck of mine and

whenever I was crook she just went off on her own you know, Tarzan's Mrs, go off in the wild. One thing about her, she seen all the best spots and when I was well enough she took me to all the best spots, I never saw any crap, she showed me all the best. And so anyhow I went to see this solicitor and he turned out to be a

- 29:00 Commonwealth law solicitor not crown of course solicitor, Commonwealth law. Someone dressed me up in a bloody suit and give me a brief case and all this sort of rubbish you know. So you go up like a fox (UNCLEAR) to see this fellow and all I had in this brief case was me last pay slip. See and he just grinned, I put it on the table and he
- 29:30 looked at it. And on my last pay slip, it was what it was full, this sheet of paper you see. And he said, "Leave this with me, see me in a fortnight, "All right, what is it going to cost?" He said, "\$20." So I pay him the \$20, went back two weeks later I was in my own clothes, no brief case, thought I'd give up all this dressing business
- 30:00 go and see this solicitor bloke. So I go and wiz up to the 14th floor or whatever and walk in he said, "I've got good news for you," I said, "Oh well it will be the first time in a long time that I've had good news," and he said, "You have been accepted by the Commonwealth to a disability until you die," I said, "Oh for gods sake, why don't they just pay me out and give me a break," you know and they said, "Nup," there is the letter you are accepted for this disability for life.
- 30:30 And there laid the trap. The compensation payment went up, it was equal to half my wage, which was pretty miserable at the time. And it rose incriminates, cost of living, for three years and then they cut it off and from then on I have been getting the same amount of money all those years and all it does is reduce my old age pension.
- 31:00 I never had that but I entitled that to life unless I die, when I die I get the full pension but all in all up in Cook Town I was able to let my mind go free and I invented things and played around with all sorts of things, particular solar energy. And I built the first solar heat, heating system in Queensland Australia as far as I know and that was in 1954.
- 31:30 I read the other day that solar heat was invented in 1955, funny isn't it? But the last solar heater I built, 90 people had a bath, a hot shower without either, without mixing the water with cold you know and the last few I had to turn the cold water off so it was a pretty good test.
- 32:00 The ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] country hour, they used to come up, a little tape recorder, have a look at me work, sit me down. How it worked, what it did blah, blah you know, how much did it cost 110 quid and all this rubbish. And then 4CA the local channel it came up and they did the same thing. Funny how radio stations all do these things,
- 32:30 they still do copy each other. So every time ABC put it over I got a cheque for 2 pound 10 or 2 pound 5 or something or other. And the commercial station paid me 1 pound 15 every time they put it over the air. But when it got to 110 quid they both stopped. That is how much it cost me to build it. And I didn't patent it because I had achieved what I wanted to do and I went
- 33:00 onto solar refrigeration and I worked that out to my own satisfaction, I knew I could work it, and it was quite good so. And I thought well I've got hot water, I can do refrigeration. Then I will go onto air conditioning you know. And then I thought why. I know I can
- 33:30 do it why go any further. I get a letter then from Townsville University opened, and they just opened a wing of solar energy and asked me if I would go down there as chief instruction on and the invention of solar energy exportation of sun and solar energy for the high school, the university my answer was no no, no go. So I left them to it and
- 34:00 I built 40,000 rain water tanks, methods of pumping them up full and using water at the same time, I put lay over rooves on instead of ridge capping and invented how to do low profile rafters and which are all in use now. And I did a lot of things. That have never been done before.
- 34:30 And they are all in use now, but I never took credit for anything, I did what I wanted to do because I wanted to do it. And also I used to do a lot of spearing, underwater photographer and what not, so I invented a, instead of carrying a big bazooka around I invented a little pistol for sharks, and it is just made out of roll steel, detonator and a sharp point and just
- 35:00 point it at the shark and press the trigger and the spring was hard enough to send the shaft into it and the shaft went in and it crunched on a detonator and a blew a big hole in the shark you see. Some bloke wanted to look at it and that's the last I seen of that, he took it with him. Made all my own concrete blocks, I started to make concrete blocks up there and did that. So one thing led to another you know. And I built a nice big home up there
- 35:30 and after 40 odd years I felt a bit crook and I said to Beth, I was building a golf course for the council for the town, I started the bowling greens, so I built tennis courts, all voluntary. We started tourism up there, re- started the RSL [Returned and Services League], I was president of the RSL 46 and then when I got sick a couple of years later it closed up.
- 36:00 And Beth got it reopened a few years later but I was no longer interested. There was one thing about it,

I had been a over well, over 54 years now with the RSL and (UNCLEAR) I have been everything, Secretary, Treasurer, President. And I felt

- 36:30 that you know things weren't quite right and the time was right up there to sell and I came down here and built this place as an owner builder, it is all steel and about 6 months later I had a heart attack, a massive heart attack, before I was a 69 year old, and I was dead when I got to bloody Yandina, but science pulled me through but didn't pull me brother through, there must have been 50
- 37:00 of the remaining 39th blokes that died of the same thing, clots. Slammed into their hearts, mine came in the back way thank god you know. My brother dropped dead and his mates dropped dead.
- Do you have any theory for that?**
- No I don't. But I, it is rather strange, I don't have theories for what happens to a person's body you know but it is strange the same thing happens so often
- 37:30 to the 39 fellows. So many are just dropping dead at this, you know we have lived a fair while and beyond our three score and ten sort of thing. A couple died of cancer but most of them just dropped dead bang you see and before they are 70. And now a few of them have had bypasses you know. But I don't know what caused
- 38:00 it, they don't, they weren't able to tell me. And I said to the doctor when I had mine, Prince Charles, I was in there for quite a long while in intensive care, and when I was coherent I saw all these in and out business I suppose, I was supposed to have died about 13 times or something I don't know. But you didn't know, one thing about it, take it from me, when you are dead, you don't know a thing about it and it
- 38:30 doesn't hurt. When you are, it hurts when you are heading towards that area that is when you really think you know. Once you fall over that way you don't have to worry, and it hurts when they bring you back too. But the so you know I had these drop downs now, I don't know what causes them, the doctor doesn't know what causes them but it was only recently that I
- 39:00 went from. That was 19, 1988 I think and all I got was a 100% disability pension from the, pretty well up to that before that happened and they accepted my whole pulmonary system and they never increased my pension, disability. And so anyhow the welfare officer took me through and they got me an EDA [Extreme Disablement Adjustment], which is
- 39:30 \$40 more you know. But the thing is, I am getting along ok. People think we should get the TPI, well if we get it we get it, if we don't I don't give a shit you know. If the government want to be that way, that suits me fine. But that is a general run down is there anything in particular you want to know. Stop?

Tape 8

- 00:35 **What can you tell us about when you went to 7th AGH in Malay?**
- Well I, I was more or less bundled on this aeroplane for 6th AGH, 7th AGH and they told me nothing.
- 01:00 In my own mind I was fit, strong and I was healthy. Still prepared to do what I had to do, what I was taught to do but I must have stood on a lot of toes on the way, victimised me. That is the only way I can see it. But I was put in this position not because of something wrong with me it's because something was wrong with somebody else you know. So I was able, when I got off the plane they said, "This is your hospital," and I said, "Why do I have to go to hospital for?" They said, "You got to."
- 01:30 So an orderly led me up the steps and all the boys sing out "You will be sorry you'll be sorry," and I said, "Yeah I've been sorry all my life, I can't help it," you know. Come back with some sort of a silly answer and they put me in this ward. And I had a good squiz at it when I went in, and it was arc mesh, covered in outside and inside were the rafters were made out of logs and just a bit of,
- 02:00 a peak roof on it, the floor was concrete and the beds were all army beds, nothing flash in those, better than palliasses and no bed at all sort of thing and there was two biggest men I have ever seen, orderlies, dressed in white clothes. And they were there and there was, a seen a couple of sisters, and just a lot of blokes lying around laughing and
- 02:30 playing cards and what have you, it's afternoon, fairly late afternoon and everybody seemed to be top of the pile so get out in me pyjamas and everything is ok until the next morning and I am shaken awake at 6 o'clock in the morning and they said, "Are you ready for your needle?" And I said, "What needle?" They said, "We are going to give you a needle," I said,
- 03:00 "I'm not a sick horse, what are you doing, what is going on?" They said, "It is all right it is for your nerves," I said, "There is nothing wrong with me bloody nerves," so anyway they were here to do it, so they thumped this needle in my arm and it was instant because I found out later. And it sent me a bit woozie, I was only out, just a light daze you see, and they said, "Go to sleep and don't get out of bed."

- 03:30 It is all right for them you know, I am laying there and just wondering what this is all about and a bit startled, the next thing, the other blokes have been in there longer, they were getting much heavier doses of insulin, more than three parts through their course with this insulin thing and they were yahooing and running around through the ward and climbing up the walls and jumping off rafters and you know it was sickening to watch. And these two big orderlies just stood outside the cage door
- 04:00 where all this happened. I thought bloody hell what is this, the first time they went on they kept. I don't know whether it is my pigheadedness or what it is, I thought ah this is not for me, so I grabbed the edge of the bed. And when I grabbed the edge of the bed, you must remain like this until you are ok every afternoon. So that was my position.
- 04:30 Next morning they introduced a higher dose, I still didn't go off to sleep, lunchtime they come in with orange juice, tin stuff, and a feed of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK or something like that you see, for your meal. And after you had that you were ok, and I didn't know what this incidence was, didn't have a clue. So they kept increasing the dose so the more determined I was not to do what I had seen out there with the other boys, you know, diving off
- 05:00 rafters, I wasn't in that, I wasn't suicidal anyhow I just took a death grip on the bars on the bed and so whether they tried to undo my hands or not I don't know. All I know that my hands were very very stiff every morning when I woke up. I just had such a grip on the side of the bed, I was a passive patient I intended to stay that way you see. So they kept increasing the dose, increasing the dose, but I remained
- 05:30 passive I just didn't go to bed.

What was your decision to remain passive, what?

Well they didn't. I'd seen what was happening, if I wanted to do what they did, I didn't want to do what they did, like jumping off rafters, running around screaming, hurting themselves and what have you. This is what insulin does apparently, it robs you of your sugar or something or other and you become a little bit crazy and

- 06:00 it fiddles with your mind. And I didn't like that at all.

Was there ever a consultation with a doctor at all?

No. Just shoved up there. I came straight out of the training camp where I was at Cowra. And they said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to go to," the actual, we were in between intakes you see.

- 06:30 And I used to help the clerk in the office at the end of the thing to give him a hand, because there was a hell of a lot of paper work to be putting thousands of troops through you see, young fellows and I, I did feel sorry for those kids, so I trained them the best way I knew how, how to stay alive, that was the basis of the whole thing. Do your job and stay alive yourself you see and
- 07:00 life, the field work I did I was trying to impart on the younger soldiers you see and CSM [Company Sergeant Major] come up and I had about 50 kids around me I suppose and he stood me up in front of the kids and he said, "You are not teaching these kids the right way," and you know it took me by shock and I said, "Excuse me will you step over here
- 07:30 please," so we stepped away from the kids on the playground and I said, "How dare you come into my instruction course and belittle me in front of all those kids, they lose their confidence when that happens," he said, "You are not teaching them by the book," and I said, "No I'm teaching them by experiences, plus the book, I know the book backwards, the book doesn't tell you everything, I am telling these lads the true facts of war, how to stay alive"
- 08:00 "You do as I say," so I smacked him in the mouth and dropped him you see, and I went back straight to my kids. But he was just an arrogant bloody pig. And when I dropped him all the kids just clapped. When I say kids, they were my age, but I am old in the head. But anyhow that course finished, and there was just instructors in the camp and Beth was in town
- 08:30 and I thought I will go and see her for the weekend, and I climbed over a few barbwire fences and every officer, instructing officer of the camp wanted to get into town that night. And coming back I was caught three times by the provos [Provosts - Military Police] climbing, I was climbing the barbwire fences and I was always caught on the top wire. "Rank, number and name of soldier," you know. And every officer in the whole
- 09:00 instruction battalion were caught AWL. Without leave you see. What the hell it has happened to me before but then, well there were a lot of rumours going around between the ranks, you know the officers. This is no good this court martial offences and all this business. And I thought oh I must be a gone coon for smacking that bloody CSM in the mouth you know.
- 09:30 Anyway, bloody, I said to myself you bloody deserved, I'd do it again, so anyway I had to go up and see the CO and he had a little picket fence, and a little gate and a little shack, the next thing this CSM has got a fat lip. And he has got two privates with him, fixed bayonets and all this crap you know and he said, "Attention, James Waters," so I say, "Go and get nobbed who are you?"

- 10:00 He said, "You know who I am," and I said, "Well who are they?" He said, "They are your escorts," and I said, "Read your book, you are out of line," and he said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Go and read your book you are out of line," again. And I said, "Take those two lads away and come back with the proper answer," you see. So I just lay there reading you see. And he came back with two corporals,
- 10:30 he had read his book, equal to or above the rank. So anyhow I said, "I am glad you are getting the message," you see "Oh you are a smart arse aren't you?" And I said, "Yeah yeah," I said, "I am a little bit wiser than you think I am you see," so anyhow he said, "Quick march," and I am just dawdling along behind two bloody corporals, bayonets and all this racket, they are looking at me thinking shit what are we doing. And I said, "Relax fellas you won't get into trouble you just do as you are
- 11:00 told." So they are quick, they are ahead of me, I am dragging along behind the back and of course the CSM gets up to the gate and he opens it and I just flip over the fence you see, it is only that high for god sake. So I walked into the door of the CO's office ahead of the CSM and he came rushing in, the two guards with me, they got to the door and I am sitting on the corner of the COs desk.
- 11:30 And this CSM says, "Stand to attention when you are addressing a CO," I said, "I am not addressing him yet, I am about to," he said, "Stand on your feet and stand to attention." "Oh yeah righto," so I stood up and I said, "Now what?" The CO said, "CSM," he said, "What's going on here?" He said, "I am (UNCLEAR) Corporal Waters for punishment sir," and he said, "On whose authority?"
- 12:00 And he said, "The order has just come out," he is a base boy you see. So the CO said, "Oh is it for being AWL?" And he said, "Yes sir it is." "Nothing else?" "No nothing else sir," he said, "Oh well, Corporal would you like to be tried by me or a court martial?" "Oh sir," I said, "You are a good as guy any, you'll deal with me," I said,
- 12:30 and he looked at me and he shook his head and said, "Thank Christ for that." And because I had all the charges brought against me you see. So anyhow he said, "Oh I can't do much for you corporal, I will have to de rank you," I said, "Well what the hell take them off I don't care, I've had them for a long time, they come and go," and he said, "Well de rank to private," and I said, "Well thank you sir, were you AWL?"
- 13:00 "Yes," he said, "I have come from a major to a captain," everyone was de ranked. I couldn't go any lower you see, there were no lance corporals running around, so everybody was demoted one rank you see. We all had to be. So I am wondering around the camp and they said, "Well what do you want to do?" And I said, "Well I can't instruct the troops because I am a private," I have still got the corporal stripes, I haven't bothered to take them off. Why should
- 13:30 I you know. I'm not worried. And they said, "Well you can't sit around doing nothing," so I said, "Well I'll get a job," so I went and seen the quartermaster you see. I said, "Have you got a job for me?" "Oh yes Jim what happened," I said, "I have got to get rid of these hooks," he said, "When I change my uniform, get a new uniform." "Oh Christ no sooner said than done take those," so he give me a new uniform you see. So I said, "What do you want me to do?" And he said,
- 14:00 "The kids, the young fellas are bringing their laundry in here," and he said, "I want you to be my assistant as a laundry man," and I said, "Is it good," he said, "Bloody oath its good mate," he said, "You will more than double your bloody day's pay here make up for lost time." And I said, "Ok I will let you show me the ropes," you see so in come all, (UNCLEAR) they all got dirty laundry and they all know there's a (UNCLEAR) store does laundry it was organised there.
- 14:30 So he would go through it all pick out the laundry from the kids bag and check his notes that were in there, underpants, singlets, socks blah blah blah. All correct time up ok Jones away you go. Pay for them on return. So he said, "Well that is the first bag, second bag, third bag," and I said, "What do I do?" He said, "Throw them in a tub and wash them, put plenty of starch in there.
- 15:00 Oh Jesus, you should have seen them, starched socks and starched singlets, starched underpants. He said, "You've got to iron them too, make them real stiff." Well they got all this starched gear back and before they opened the bag they had to pay this quartermaster you see and he shared the profits with me. And an hour after they got them, "Sir." "Yeah what is your problem?" "All this stuff is starched." "Starched,
- 15:30 corporal private or whatever you are why did you starch their clothes for?" "Oh I don't know," I said, "I thought I was supposed to, that is the way you did the laundry." "Well you've got to un starch their clothes." "So you take these clothes and unstarch them and call back tomorrow, they will be unstarched and dry," and he would charge them again. So and our time come
- 16:00 the and they said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to go to Bougainville, transfer back up to service," I said, "This is a little bit beyond me," I said, "I will better off up in the islands," and I said, "I've got a brother up there, I want to look after if they can," and they said, "No sooner said than done." So they trained me up to Cairns and I got on the Sunderland flying boat with about 20 other blokes and we flew over there sitting on the mail bags and landed up at
- 16:30 Moresby. There must have been 2000 people, soldiers called out and trained this morning and so I appeared with my full kit and they were calling out names for different stations to go off in different war zones you know. It eventually come, I am standing on my bloody own. And I heard Solomons and I never

heard my name. So I went up to the officer in charge of this bloody set up and I said,

17:00 "Excuse me sir, did you miss my name?" He said, "What is your name?" I said, "Private Waters." "Oh yes yes," he said, "No you're not going to where you want to go," I said, "What do you mean, I've applied for Bougainville, why can't I go to Bougainville?" "Oh no no you're going to hospital," I said, "Hospital?" "Yes," he said, "The 6AGH down here you need to go to hospital," I said, "What for?" He said, "They're the orders."

17:30 That's the first I knew of it and that is when they give me a broom and I told them to shove it in their coyote. Send me to Lae for no reason but to put me in 6 AGH, they didn't no pre medical on me. Someone made a decision that I was good material for experimental work in a bloody hospital. That is what I reckon it is, that might be struck off the record you know when they hear it but that's my

18:00 opinion because I had no reason to be in a psycho ward.

So can you remember how far those insulin injections got and how you sort of came off and got out of there?

I was on them about 3 months I think it was. This is a guess I am not sure, because you are never sure of anything when this sort of thing happens to you, I don't know how many days, but I am estimating about 3 months. So when it was all finished I was completely

18:30 washed out, they had broken my bloody spirit and I just had a yearning to go home. And everybody else in that ward was sent home bar me, I was sent to Madang and so I went to Madang, I wasn't feeling very bright about that either you see because I thought why, the question why was in my mind. So I went off to Madang. They were just starting the 10th Division,

19:00 so they attached me to the 10th Division. They were a lot of old pompous officers and over aged nurses, or sisters you know and what have you and a few, oh, I asked around the place and so I walked in there and previous to that like, I had dandruff and I had it bad when I come out of hospital, I never had dandruff in me bloody life you know.

19:30 And during my training at Cowra, the psychologist put your men through and determined what they were good for in relation to the army. I used to go up with my group and sit there while they were all put through you see to see if my estimation of their capability were right you see. And mostly they were pretty good. But this one young fellow he come up and he said,

20:00 "Oh, you'll be all right for the pioneers," you see and (UNCLEAR) pioneers so he said, "You'll find out. Pioneers," you see so as he walked out the door I said, "You stand outside," I went to the psychologist and I said, "Sir you're mad, I don't like saying these things to you because you are supposed to know your job and I said undoubtedly you do but you have made a big mistake with this lad," and he said, "What do you mean?" And I said,

20:30 "He can't put his putties on straight, he wouldn't make a good pioneer, he can't dress himself properly," but he attended anybody that had a sore foot or a blister or a splinter he was there to help the lads I think he should be in the medical corp, that is my opinion, I said, "Would you please reassess him?" He said, "Well I have assessed him," and I said, "No it's

21:00 wrong Sir you are doing the kid an injustice." "All right send him in I will reassess him," and he assessed him to the medical board you see and that was it so. When I came out of hospital and went to Madang, I went and seen to this dandruff I went and seen the MO [Medical Officer] or the what do they call them RAP and this orderly was there and he said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "Well I've got bloody dandruff real bad and you know it is like snow"

21:30 and he said, "Wait until I get the doc," so anyway this young fellow come out and he looked at me and he said, "Is this Jim?" I looked at him and I said, "Hey hang on a minute, what is this Jim business?" and he said, "You're the bloke that struck me in Cowra," in whatever the training camp, we'll say Cowra.

22:00 And I said, "I don't recognise you," and he said, "Remember the lad," he said, "That you held back and had me reassess the medical," and I said, "Oh yeah yeah I do remember you," I said, "How did you get to where you are so fast?" he said, "hard study," and he said, "Quick passes thanks to you, now what's your problem?" I said, "Dandruff," and he said, "Right ali cologne and olive oil and plenty of it," and he mixed it up

22:30 that big "Every time," he said, "Shake it up and wash your hair in that and the dandruff will be gone and you'll smell beautiful," so he was right. But I think the psycho didn't like what I did there.

Have you ever thought that maybe it was the psych guy that dobbed you in?

No it could have been any number of them because I stood on a few toes. And I think I only stood on them because I felt they were doing the wrong thing, that is all. But as I say I had this fixation

23:00 about what was right and what was wrong and the I went through all the hard yards and the 39th and what have you. And in my mind without a blemish and I did more than I was expected of, the whole of the 39th did everything beyond the call of duty, I don't give a bugger who knows it but they did,

everyone of them should have got a VC [Victoria Cross] for what they did.

- 23:30 And so anyhow when I went to this Madang thing, I was just fed up, so I was rowing out, I found a little boat, and I would ride out to one of the islands and throw a line over the side and have a fish, no bait hook, but just get away from people you know, just meditate. And someone would say come on we are going home, so I would go in, you got to help the
- 24:00 cook. So you know the bastards. I went up and seen the cook and I said, "I've got to help you." "Oh you are the volunteer are you," and I said, "Volunteering for nothing, I have finished volunteering you can second me to be help if necessary," you see he said, "All right I second you as my helper," I said, "Ok." "What are you doing?" He said, "There is a big party for the officers and the sisters tonight," I said, "What
- 24:30 for?" He said, "It is a full moon," and they always like to have a big feast up before moon sort of thing. And he said, "Look out there at that ocean isn't it beautiful?" and I said, "Yes it is isn't it?" and I said, "Full of bloody blue bottles too," he said, "Look at the swimming pool down there," he said, "What would you like to do?" and I said, "Oh I don't know," he said, "What about mixing the drinks?" I said, "Yeah I'll do that," so he gave me every type of spirit you can think of
- 25:00 couple bottles of orange juice, lime juice and what have you and he said, "Mix a cocktail," so the boys outside I went out and I seen a hole in the wall and I said, "You be there and I'll shove a bottle out," and I said, "Only half bottles," but I said, "But take them away don't drink them here, there is only a limited number." So anyhow I start mixing these cocktails you see and I put half a bottle of scotch in and I put a cork in and throw it out this hole to the boys you see, and so on and
- 25:30 gin and what have you, but I mixed up that big bowl of cocktail stuff you see. I am flat out carrying it, I put it in the middle of this party table and in come all these men and women and full uniforms, all done up like (UNCLEAR) and I said, "Would you like a drink madam?" "Love one," ladle fill the glass there you are, "Would you like a drink madam?"
- 26:00 so I served the cocktail drinks all around you see, it was sweet but I didn't charge them dynamite you see. And their dinners came I served those and I did the right things, I acted properly and I just watched them and they were getting sillier and sillier so I served them more drinks. And the CO of the camp he was a big fella "It is a beautiful night," he says, "We have had wonderful
- 26:30 meal," he said, and he said, "I feel light headed would you, last in is lousy," and he rips his clothes off and he roars down the beach and he hits this ocean where this swimming pool was now at semi-low tide was now full of blue bottles. Oh he hit that, I never seen a bloke. His gut hit the water and I reckon he went back like that on the sand you see and in the meantime and all the sisters and things like that, they charged in the
- 27:00 water and all these blue bottles, oh I never seen a mess all your life, they are laying on the beach screaming and going on, well I raced up to them, the kitchen was just up a couple of yards, we got a gallon of vinegar and I said to the cook, "Have another bottle ready for me," I said these bastards have learnt a lesson I think. So the old CO that was giving everybody a pain I left him to last, he was the first in and last fixed and
- 27:30 these poor old girls you know and I said, "Now when I pour this vinegar on you," I said, "You will things white on you, don't touch them," I said, "That's because they won't hurt you anymore. They were the tentacles of the blue bottle, so I poured the vinegar on them and sure enough white tentacles down there, I said, "Now leave them be and the pain will stop after a while and then we can remove them," so I looked after each one of them and the medical officer came down and give me a hand and
- 28:00 so the CO he was rising and screaming "What about me," I said, "I'm coming to you now sir," I was almost out of vinegar and I poured it on his big gut you know and he said, "That is a relief that is a relief, what happened?" and I said, "Well sir some people call it stupidity," he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well you are in the tropics," and I said, "It is high moon,
- 28:30 high tide has been in," and I said, "It is half out and the blue bottles are busy always are on a full moon you see so," I said, "So you dived in a pool full of blue bottles I said a very stupid thing to do really you have to pay the penalty." And now I've got to flight home two days later. So at least one paid off. And that is when I ended up at Redbank. But when they called me in I never had
- 29:00 dry clothes everything I do by dogged I dunked them in the water and I hung them soaking wet on the line. They called me in and they said, "Pack your kit you are going home," and went to the CSM, the quartermaster and said, "I haven't got a stitch of clothes, everything is on the clothesline wet." "Oh no problem all new stuff," I was re kitted, but that was the
- 29:30 end of the line of the army for me, I had given them six years and I got paid in their little bit of hell. I wasn't, you know it took me a fair while to be aware of what happened, particularly when I went to Greenslopes a couple of years later, after being in Cook Town I worked myself
- 30:00 to dropping position, and I was losing weight and the doctor wasn't happy as anybody and he said, "I better get you off to hospital you don't look good," he said, "You could end up being short tempered,"

and I said, "Oh well what the hell, what's new?" so he organised me to go to Greenslopes. What's happening I'm all hot?

So you are in Redbank and you're with the bong happy doctor.

Yeah

- 30:30 and so my discharge was a chit 4 pound 19 and 6, a train ticket to the city, take it to such and such a store in Adelaide Street or Queen street whatever and get yourself a suit. So I go in there and I walk into this store and there is just thousands of these blue pin stripe suits, racks and racks of them.
- 31:00 I walk in and he says, "What size sir?" I said, "I wouldn't have a bloody clue mate," he gets a tape and he measures me, "Oh your so and so size," he goes to the rack, he said, "There you go, have you got your chit?" 4 pound 19 and 6, that is my discharge from the army, army boots and blue pin striped suit and me hat. And that was my official discharge. The march homes and
- 31:30 all that people go on about are a whole lot of rubbish. The only ones got to march are the 9th divvy really but they all went to Melbourne and the rest I've related but the, it made me disappointed in the services but I do and it sticks in my mind and not only my mind but every 39th member, few admits it to himself or anybody else, we were treated like
- 32:00 dogs you know and that is all you can say about it. And I can't understand and see they have the hide to give us that badge, where is that disc that one there, now that's the 39th official badge, militia badge you see, 39th special mission badge. Now on the
- 32:30 back is the battle on us it gives the time we were raised, October 41, special tropical service as independent battalion from volunteers serving on a battalion, embarked Britannia, Aquitania 26/7/41, union strength 1500, first wide
- 33:00 troops to cross the Kokoda trail, they've got trail instead of track, first unit to face Japanese in Papua fought unsupported 23rd of July 42 to 27th of August 42, unit totals, total strength 5th of September 1942
- 33:30 when relieved at Efogi as 185 all ranks, reinforced, total reinforces 800, readmitted, re committed to Buna, Gona December 42, unit withdrawal, withdrawal from a battalion 20th, withdraw from Sanananda
- 34:00 23rd of January 43, five officers, 27 other ranks, removed from the order of battle July 43. Battle honours awarded Kokoda trail again, Kokoda, Deniki, that is where I was, Isuvara, Rada Creek, Templetons Crossings,
- 34:30 Buna, Gona, Sanananda and Busa River and various parts of the Pacific area at a later date, and that is about as long as, and that is how long, was in the tombs of the memorial in Melbourne and yet we are not recognised, I can't work it out.
- 35:00 **Can you tell us about the dreams that you had after the war?**
- The dreams, they are rather difficult, you know they are pretty ferocious, the, you sort of fought all your battles, these doors open until you learnt to shut them properly. And little things would prompt you even the words said in normal conversation would open a door and that is when
- 35:30 your problems started again. And through the night you would do that same thing over and over and over again. You would see those pictures, you would see the faces you know. You wake up in the morning exhausted. And you go through that less and less until you shut that door again. It took about a week of concentration to close that door, but every now and again people want to open it, particularly
- 36:00 psychologists and psychiatrists you know and all this business, but I didn't want them opened because they gave me too much grief. I lost some good boys there and I have lost a lot since and the thing is some of the boys that I am with now, I never knew them up there on the track, but hell they are good mates you know. And the 39th boys all stick together like glue, you know
- 36:30 we are a unit and sometime back there was moves made by a Tasmanian fellow on his own bat, he wrote to battalion headquarters and he wanted to put the 39th case before the government. And they wrote back and said, "Do what you want to do but don't contact any 39th we don't intend pushing our own barrow," you see.
- 37:00 So he dropped out, he couldn't handle that sort of treatment. Now I've got letters in there from a bloke from the 9th Divvy he's up here just above Rockhampton at Iwasaki Resort area and he rung me one day, it was four or five years ago, and he said, "I would like to take up the fight for you fellows to be recognised," I was the only 39th to make him cry and he said, "Is it
- 37:30 ok," and I said, "Listen mate you are your own man," and I said, "You can take up the fight for me, I'm a 39th bloke I don't talk for the rest of the crowd because they don't like the idea of us pushing our own barrow you see but take it up on my part by all means, use my name as a 39th," well he wrote dozens of letters of which I have got a fair few inside. He didn't get answers from them.

- 38:00 And last year, that was Kokoda, the man of, the face of Australia service person was picked out by the present Minister and was my mate Jimmy Cant, he was a corporal with me in Lieutenant Money's platoon. And Jim seen the Kokoda track and all this business and he's got a blanket rolled around his neck,
- 38:30 and he has a tin up hat on his head with some leaves on it, he has got this pensive look and he is looking up in the sky, I was there when that photo was taken and he is looking up at the bombers coming in and that is a magnificent picture. So he was, that was the face of the Australian digger last year. And this bloke rang me up and said, "Oh I see you have been recognised," and I said, "No Dave,"
- 39:00 I said, "that is just the face of the ANZAC [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps]." I said, "We haven't been recognised, we have never been considered for anything." And you know you wonder what it is all about. We had no debriefing when we come back. I think that is why so many of us have nightmares, we were never debriefed, we learnt to kill over a period of time. We didn't
- 39:30 learn how to unkill and how to fit back into civvy life. Well a great number of us never fitted back for years. But that is why I went up to Cook Town, I knew a that a lot of return soldiers are there and they were of a kind and so we were able to lean on each other. And when I came out of Cook Town I was able to answer, or talk to any civilian and I learnt
- 40:00 up there the funny way of the Private Hotel, there would be groups of people who come in the plane and they would all be engineers or builders or whatever you see, surveyors. And each time they asked me if I wanted to join in their little group for a drink and conversation and I would say "No thank you," I would walk away. And Beth, I could see the look on Beth's face, why don't you bite the bullet you know and talk
- 40:30 about it. So I was sent down to Cairns and got heaps of books on mechanical stuff, or service stuff there was books on plastering, carpentry, there was engineering and surveying, I bought all these big volumes you see, it cost me an arm and a leg. And when a group of people in and they would start talking I would listen, they might be mechanics or whatever the case is, and I grabbed the appropriate book, open it up and look
- 41:00 at different chapters, just the headings, I had a tentative memory. And they would say come and have a drink with us and I would say righto. Go up there and they would say something. And I would say "Tell me about so and so will you, I just can't grasp the meaning of this," and they would spill their guts. And I got information I never dreamed of, I was prepared to listen, but only because I read the first words of that chapter and I learnt the first chapter and plus chapters after that. And I pulled this same old trick, time after time
- 41:30 after time. And I was able to do all the things that I did by myself you know. I learnt a lot of secrets, trade secrets that way and I was gradually able to free myself up. But every now and again. Am I stopping?

We will just get you to stop.

Tape 9

- 00:31 **I just wanted to you about when you left 7 AGH did they say anything to you when you left there?**

No they didn't say a word.

Have you suffered any long term health problems as a result of your stay there?

Well I reckon that it broke my spirit. Because I had a very strong heart, strong fighting spirit. And I think that is the reason I ended up, once this insulin treatment, maybe it done me

- 01:00 good in a sort of a way I don't know, it made me move from Melbourne and go to Cook Town you see, from a full good trade to nothing, and so I was at a loss what to do, that is why I started all these projects in Cook Town. I wouldn't have done those if I had of been completely rational, I feel. On the other hand I married one of the finest women in the world bar none.

- 01:30 And she has been my weeping board ever since. She pulled me through it.

Can you tell us about how you met Betty?

It is strange to say it, it was one of the strangest, most lovable get togethers I've ever seen. I was at a loss end in Brisbane. I had just come back from somewhere, I don't know where, I had been away somewhere. I was always getting recalled to bloody duty. So anyhow

- 02:00 I was walking around Brisbane and I looked up I had nothing to do and I seen this lonely WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] standing on the central railway station in Brisbane you see. So what is she doing up there, so I walk up and I have always been a bit forward that way you know. And so I said, "Excuse me why are you standing here on your own for?" "I am not on my own," I said, "You'd be

waiting for a yank I suppose," you know

- 02:30 "As a matter of fact I am," she had the bluest eyes you know. And attractive, cap on her head and she looked real good and I just thought it just clicked you know, and I could feel her you know she just had an aura all of her own. And I said, the train pulled in, I said, "No yank got off the train, I tell you, you can't trust the yank,
- 03:00 there will be no yank will come. "I will wait for the next train," so wait for the next train no yank. I said, "How many trains are we going to stand by on the station here for this bloke that is not coming?" she said, "I think he will come," I said, "I don't think he will come I have told you twice he will not come and he will not come, I haven't seen a yank keep his word yet, now would you like a cup of coffee?" she said,
- 03:30 "Only if I can pay for myself," and I said, "You can pay for yourself I don't care, lets go and have a cup of coffee in Adelaide Street it costs tuppence a cup." So we had a cup of coffee and I said, "Well will I see you again?" she said, "Well there is a dance at some joint out in the valley will be coming to. She said I'm stationed at Sandgate I will be coming to that dance with madam," her boss was madam, if you had a boss madam now
- 04:00 you know and I said, "Oh, crikey, a hot house. So I thought well in for a penny in for a pound, I went to this dance, there was all these WAAAFs, a lot of them were good looking but they never had that aura you know. And I went around and said hello to a lot of them and give little cuddles here and there, but no feeling, you know. And so I said to madam, "May I have a dance with
- 04:30 Sergeant Burns?" "If Sergeant Burns wishes to dance she can, but don't leave the hall," I said, "Ok." So we had dances you see. And after dancing a few dances I went up to this madam again and I said, "Do you mind if I take Sergeant Burns out for a cup of coffee?" She looked at her watch and says, "As long as she is no more than half an hour," I said, "Thanks very much." "And you abide
- 05:00 by the rules," and I said, "I always do, don't worry madam she is quite safe." So Beth takes me and we go outside and we come to our first restaurant you see, dim dingy, she said, "Come on this will do we have only got half an hour we have got to be back," I said, "No no not in here," there is blokes going in, blokes going out, she said, "Come on this is good enough," I went in and I said, "Beth it is not good enough," they brought the cups with lipstick
- 05:30 around the rim. I said, "Look it's a brothel," she said, "So it is a brothel, what is a brothel?" And I thought oh my god what have I got here you know. So I knew I picked the right one, so eventually I said, "Look we have got to leave come on," and the women that was serving us was pregnant on top of that and it was a brothel, the frontage was a coffee shop you see. So I said, "Come down the road," I really skull dragged her down the road until we come to a decent
- 06:00 place. "Now we can have a cup of coffee and see what we are doing." And she said, "Well what was the matter with the last place?" And I said, "It was a brothel," and she said, "What is a brothel?" I said, "Come on you must know," and she said, "I don't know what a brothel is," and I said well, "It is a sex shop." "What do you mean?" Oh Jesus how do I phrase this you know. So I went on and eventually our half hour was up and I had her back at the dance and
- 06:30 so I took her back to the dance and I said, "Can I see you again?" And she said, "I am based at Sandgate if you want to come out there you can see me," see what we can do, so I said, "Ok," she wasn't playing hard to get, but she was just naive you know. So I got on a train and it took a million miles to get to Sandgate, it was forever and ever and her camp was right up the other end
- 07:00 towards Hornibrook Highway Bridge you see. So away I go I plod all the way up there, and get up the guard gate and this air force bloke says to me "Can I help you Sergeant?" And I said, "Yes I would like to talk to Sergeant Betty Burns, she is a cook in the officer's mess." "Well," I said, "Listen I want to talk to Betty Burns in the Sergeant's mess if you don't mind."
- 07:30 "Get on the blower hey." After all they were only bloody privates how dare they. So anyhow and this apparition came running down thing all white, white coat white trousers, flour all over her and she said, "You've come," I said, "Yes but I am having difficulties of getting in," so she spoke to the guard and she said, "Come on," she took me off to the officer's mess you see,
- 08:00 where she was doing dinners for these pilots and what have you. So anyway she turned, she brought me a little bowl of those little sausages, what do you call them?

Savoys?

Yeah little savs, little ones, they have got a name, but anyhow a little bowl of them and a little bowl of sauce to chew on them you see, while she went and changed and got out of her work clothes. And this little

- 08:30 WAAAF came and sat beside me and she said, "How are you going love, how are you going?" And I said, "I'm all right," she said, "Can I have one of those?" I said, "You can have them all if you want to, after all they belong to the air force, you can see the blue stripes on them you know," she said, "Are you having a shot at the air force?" I said, "No no I wouldn't do that I'm a soldier," so we are talking away and Beth came down and I looked up at her blue eyes and they were almost green.

- 09:00 And she looked at this girl and she didn't have to say a word, she got up and pissed off. And she said, "Do you want to take your these little sabs with us and we will go for a walk out the main gate," and I said, "That will be right," so we walked out and the guard said, "Well don't go too far away, you know strict orders you can't leave camp
- 09:30 area but I will allow you to sit out there on the waterfront in view," so we sat with our feet over a wall and we talked and we sort of made arrangements for this you know see you again and what have you and 10 o'clock come and she had to go in you see. So I just took her hand and I said, "Well I will see you later, I have got your address I will write you letters."
- 10:00 And then I had to walk all the way back to Sandgate, it was a tiring night you see. So I get back to Sandgate and I lay on the seat at the station for a train to come and I got hungry and I walked into the little town of Sandgate and there was one set of lights on and there was a butcher shop. So I thumped on his door and he said, "What the hell do you want soldier?" I said, "I want something to eat," he said, "I've got nothing," I said, "You must have something," he said, "All I've got is a sausage one of these big
- 10:30 German sausages," so I said, "Well give me that," so I've got this bloody thing over my shoulder and I'm gnawing on the end of it you see. So I get out on the platform again and I get tired and I laid my head on the sausage and I went to sleep. And the train came, so I picked up me big sausage and got on the train and ate a bit more and a couple of other soldiers got on another station and they said, "Where did you get that from, we are starving?" And I said, "Well have a hunk," you know.
- 11:00 So I shared me big German sausage, it was about that round and about that with a lot of boys you see. But unbeknown to me when I was laying I had this big red smear down the side on my uniform. So I was staying in the showgrounds and I was called out on parade, a check in the morning for roll call and the officer in charge said, was it a corporal at the time or sergeant, it doesn't
- 11:30 matter, he said, "What is that on your neck and the collar of your uniform?" I said, "What is that sir?" because I hadn't undressed when I got to the dorm. And I said, "What," and felt something greasy, oh hell. I will go and change he said don't worry. I took my shirt off and looked at my face and I had all these greasy red up over and you should have seen it, and didn't the boys give me bloody what are they, they seen it, but they never said anything the mongrels you know.
- 12:00 Anyhow from then on out of small acorns big trees grow you see and so I was coming down 43, must have been 43, 44 and I met her in Toowoomba and I had a moustache,
- 12:30 coat collar turned up, greatcoat, hat on my head. I walked past her four times she never recognised me you see, I thought I wonder if she is looking for me or looking for somebody else and eventually the station ended, there was nobody else on the station, just her and this bloke with a mow. And she walked up and she looked at me she said, "What are you doing with that thing on your lip?" "Hello darl and how are you," oh god. So that
- 13:00 has to come off first off you see. So we stayed in a hotel that night and I had to shave this mow off and what have you, and after we got off the train she said, "So what are we going to do now?" and I said, "I think we'll get married," just like that you see, she said, "What?" And I said, "Will you marry me?" She said, "When?" I said, "Now if possible for god sake I am likely to go tomorrow," she said, "Righto," so we were
- 13:30 married on the 13th of June (UNCLEAR) and we had to get a telegram to Cook Town (UNCLEAR) police but authority for Beth to marry she was too young under the age of 18 or whatever the hell and the, in the meantime, this is probably the 12th or something of June and there's all this hurry hurry business and she seen her commanding
- 14:00 officer and he said, "Well we will have to get the padre," and all this shenanigans going on, we will get married in the officer's mess or will we do this or do that. And so anyhow the minister, the local minister came to the party and he said, "Why not use my church?" "Good idea Reverend, very good idea," and Beth used to help in her off days, go to this restaurant across the road and help this lady over there with the cooking and serving.
- 14:30 So anyhow this marriage was on and anyhow authority eventually came through from Beth's mother. It is ok with her, you see, pretty slow flying pigeon really, you know so, I had an army uniform on and I borrowed a couple of clean shirts off the girls and all the boys, air force blokes and there was three yanks there you know.
- 15:00 And we get married in uniform and as we are coming out they are all standing there to attention with bottles of drink of all sorts at their feet, so we walked down this long parade and went across the road to the restaurant with all these officers and what have you with their bottles of booze wishing us merry, happy and the Australians are kissing the bride and I said to the Yank "Not you," Australians not Yanks. I didn't like yanks with women.
- 15:30 So anyhow we get in there and it was so jam packed tight they shut the doors. And this lady Beth worked for put on the breakfast or whatever you want to call a wedding breakfast, and it was chokcers you see and she paid for the lot. And there was a thunderous knock on the door. Somebody opened it and four army blokes burst in, they have got sugar bags over their shoulder full of bloody beer "We

- 16:00 are not letting our mate get married," I didn't know them from a bar of soap, they were army I was army so we were all mates. So anyhow they were allowed in but they said to Beth I didn't hear it otherwise I would have done something about it. When you have a toast drink it straight down because if you sip it, it will make you drunk. So the night wore on and I was tired and half sozzled and Beth was lolly legged and I thought Jesus you know and I said, "Come on mate we have got to get back
- 16:30 to the pub," and they had done up the main bedroom as a bridal suite you see. And Beth reckons, I know it was right believe me, the boys down there they drilled a fine hole through the ceiling of the lounge room up through the floor, untied the string on the wire mattress of the bed, on the bottom of that inside the lounge they put a little bell and the idea every time the bell
- 17:00 rang they would have a drink. We are lying there, Beth is really rotten you know. She is gargled drunk and she said, "Can you read this to me?" A book on marriage and sex you see, so I am reading away, oh before I got into bed I thought I better do the right thing and put my pyjamas on do this and I, my pyjamas were in the draw and I gave them a heave and the bloody chest of draws fell on me.
- 17:30 The buggers had taken the chords and tied them to the back and when I give it a heave I wore the whole lot. So I got my pyjamas out and got into bed and Jesus I banged my head. And they have got my army boots under the pillow. So I eventually got to bed so I got this book and I was reading it, I got interested in it, it is quite interesting to read a book on sex you know. It is written in such a daft sort of a manner. The next thing she is sound asleep and the boys are dying of thirst down below
- 18:00 and I didn't give a shit, so I dozed off and we woke up in the morning and I said, "Look I have got to get into the train I said because my call duty is on." "Ok," she got dressed and she took me to the station and we got to the station and I said, "Have you got any money on you?" she said, "Why?" "I'm broke I need some money," she said, "Well what
- 18:30 for?" I said, "Although the boys have made you an aluminium wedding ring, or a stainless steel thing I would like to buy a wedding ring for you but I've got no money," she went through her purse and she said, "I've got 6 pound 10 and I said thank you very much. Now she give me every penny she had 6 pound 10 shillings. And I said, "I will pay you back for sure," you see. So I bought the wedding ring for her and then I went tootling on overseas you see.
- 19:00 And when I came back that photo that wedding photo was taken 12 months later, it is just there in Brisbane and that is why she got Aaron lilies only thing we could find that had come off a coffin But it was the most unusual wedding that you could possibly have, there is no hurrah about it, there is no worrying about this that and the other where, just a lot of good friends, we had a wonderful time and a lot of those people
- 19:30 were more than thrilled with that, getting married and we both you know filled the requirements. And as I went off to war again and I came back to teach in Cowra and then I, she went aquilly on her way to Sydney and did a side trip to Cowra and
- 20:00 contacted me and said she was in Cowra and she is in room so and so of such and such a joint and so I go in there and she has locked herself in an upstairs room, she has got the shades almost drawn shut and she is peering out there and she is in uniform. And I said, "What is the matter?" and she said, "I am terribly frightened of the SPs [Service Policemen]." I said, "What SPs? The secret police?" she said, "No, service policemen,
- 20:30 I am AWL." And I said, "Oh you poor old thing. Where is the SPs? I will go out and deal with them you know." I couldn't see anybody in the street at all. I said, "Look you can't sit in here all day, go out and enjoy yourself, take your bloody uniform off." She said, "I haven't got a dress anyway," so this went on you see. So I came in as often as I could and I walked into the (UNCLEAR) outside and there is this picket fence double pickets
- 21:00 you see. And she is against the fence and this guy has got his hands, now you have got to picture this, what would you do. So there is your most beloved fresh married girl between the arms of a bloke, leaning on a fence talking to her. So I walked up tapped him on the shoulder and went boom. I said, "Leave my wife alone. Don't ever...", Beth said, "But I was only talking to him."
- 21:30 I said, "Never talk to a guy like that. It is very offensive to me." I said, "He had you in a very compromising situation." I had to educate her you know, but anyhow. She was so frightened about this AWL business. I went to see the CO and said, "Can I have 10 days' compassionate leave?" He said, "Why?" I said, "My wife is in Cowra and she is AWL and she has got to get to Sydney you see." "All right, I will give you 10 days." And
- 22:00 so we spent several days at Bondi, got to know each other and then I went to the 'WAAAFry' as they called their joint, and I walked in and this lady officer said, "You can't go in there," and I said, "What is that?" She said, "You can't go in there." I said, "I will go where my wife goes. Back off," you know. And Beth went into madam's office and I followed her in and
- 22:30 she said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I am here to protect my wife. Why, have you got anything wrong with that?" She said, "No, all I want to do is give her a discharge." She was actually called from Brisbane to Sydney to be discharge and she went ackwilly and oh dear poor old darling, frustrating you know. But anyhow it all ended well and 12 months later of course we had this marriage made in heaven sort of thing and I still owe her 6 pound

23:00 10.

So what are getting her for her 60th anniversary?

6 pound 10 shillings proper notes of the year of which I borrowed them I have got them in there and they will be presented to her on a plaque, I have been paying interest on this 6 pound 10 for nearly 60 years and I think she deserves her money back and I said to my daughter, it will not be the end of our marriage. I said, "I have just got to pay this debt."

23:30 So I keep telling Beth about this debt and she says, "Don't be silly, don't be silly you have more than given," I said, "No no no I've always been a man of honour I have borrowed 6 pound 10 I will give you 6 pound 10 back and she says "Righto righto." But that is the way it goes, but we have got a marriage made in heaven. And she been a staunch, she has been my all you know, when ever I

24:00 come apart, she was there with a shoulder to cry on and I did cry a lot in the past. So she I don't know how I could do without her. I threaten to kick her out or leave but it is all a gaff you know. She said, "You will only last an hour," and she goes crook at me, she said, "I am only doing, you taught me everything I know, I am only repeating what you taught me," and I might say to her, I have never called

24:30 her a bitch in my life you know. Because I think it is an insulting word and I say, "Oh you stupid old fool," she says, "What's up with you silly bastard?" but no we have had three kids we have six grandchildren and one great grandchild now, we are happy very happy. We sleep apart because of sleep apnoea and I snore too much.

25:00 But we got side by side beds, hydraulic beds but you know that's, I had my fatal heart attack 11 years ago now. And she stood by me all the way through and helped me out at the hard parts and it has been good. I am quite happy with the set up the way it is.

Can I ask you about when you were told you would go over, go

25:30 **over the Kokoda Track what did you know was ahead of you?**

Nothing, never had the slightest clue. When we were training up there, there was Sirona Gorge, we went up a place called Hornborn [?] Bluff, it is a big bluff that sticks out on northern side of the Gona River and when you are standing that's 15 hundred foot I suppose

26:00 When you are standing on top of that you look out there and you see this mountain range going over 10,000 feet and just a big blue range you know, the blue was actually green you know but just atmosphere, and you looked at it, thought nothing about it. A lot of people think you know the range goes up, the range goes down. But it doesn't

26:30 it is, and we fell down as fast as we climbed down we tripped and flipped you know it was so wet and miserable, roots and one of the most dangerous part was the entrance of going in before you hit the big valley at the village name, here we go again mind blockage. But it was almost a sheer cliff of 2000 feet you know

27:00 and you made you way down, across this valley and then you hit the range itself and it went up into the ridge, and (UNCLEAR) ridge. They weren't ridges to me, they were just hills, mountains to climb under great difficulty, they had no names and later on of course they told me this was Imita and I said, "I wouldn't have a bloody clue," they had no names, and those names came later. The golden

27:30 staircase wasn't in. A lot of people talk about the golden staircase but that was put in a later date to try and get artillery up on the range, the ranges you see. But that hill, climbing that golden staircase, a 1000 steps. One up two back kind of thing clambering up and it was like that.

What were the physical conditions like?

Mmmm.

What were the physical conditions like?

Well we carried everything on our back

28:00 it was wet, raining all the time. Soaking wet, and you are covered with mud you are slipping and sliding, worse conditions you could probably dream of. And cold, we were up in the high peaks, very, very cold of the nighttime. But the idea is to keep going and it took us 7 days to walk over that 70 miles, 75 miles. And some took

28:30 10 depends on circumstances. But the rear end. We coped the sticky end because the track had been walked on so much and so it was very slippery and dangerous and you were always falling down but you were grabbing a bush to save yourself sliding and what have you but you could talk to your mate across there and it would take an hour to get to him because it was just you know straight down and straight up, you have to cross a

29:00 creek. It was quite a shock to the system. I have never been a mountaineer for gods sake, I learnt the hard way you know.

Bit different to the hills you climbed as a kid hey?

Oh crikey yes, those mountains with the rabbits on it oh god.

What about the decision not to take the Vickers, what was that based on?

It was too heavy. See we could never get it up there and it takes 9 men to run a Vickers gun. The gun

29:30 one man could carry the barrel, someone in the company to do it you know. It took one man to carry the tripod, a man to carry the water cans and all the others ammunition boxes and the whole thing was well in excess of 50 pounds. I don't know the exact weight now, but I forget. The tripod was three legged, you would have to put it on your shoulders and carry it

30:00 two legs and one down the back but you had a pack on your back and it took six men and the whole section of nine men to run that Vickers gun. Just excuse me, I put a photo, it shows you a full Vickers crew and that is the reason it wasn't we couldn't take it over the weight the inconvenience, so we were all given 303s. When we were told that we were going over

30:30 the track E company on the defensive of the drome we had these Vickers machine guns mounted on tripods and the whole 360 degree spin. And when we were told that we were going over the top to forget the Vickers guns grab your rifles. So we did that. And we formed up, and they took us up the track to McDonalds Corner and we walked from there

31:00 onwards and some of the boys later on said to me, "Were you in E Company?" and I said, "Yes we were in E company." "What did you desert your guns for?" I said, "What are you talking about?" he said, "All those Vickers guns were just slightly swinging in the breeze on their pivots, there wasn't a man manning them, were they your guns?" I said, "Yeah they were our guns," he said, "What did you desert them for?" I said, "You work it out, they were no good where we were going."

31:30 And he seemed to be ashamed you know the Vickers guns be left like that and I said, "Well there is a mountain out there 13,000 feet, 1300 foot high," I said, "Try carrying it over the top of that, you will get the message," I said, "Never say I deserted a gun because boy you are asking for big heaps of trouble you see." So we went as riflemen. Now our training as Vickers gunners came to naught in the end.

How many days rations did you

32:00 **actually leave with?**

Rations. Well had a tin of bully beef, a couple of tins of bully beef and biscuits each I suppose, each one of those didn't last very long, by the time we got over there our bully beef and biscuits were gone. We picked up a couple of stray bits of supply lying around. And then we were eating taro roots and bananas, anything we could get our hands

32:30 on, but the rations were getting less and less all the time. And that is when the thick of the battle was on when we started you know we started to get very thin and poor because we didn't have time to eat, there was nothing to eat simple. Some of the blokes picked up tins of jam, I would have loved to know how they got those because I would have loved, I would have eaten the bloody tin and all I was so hungry. But hunger is just another feeling and so you, you know you tighten your

33:00 belt and don't worry about it. The more you worry about it the worse it was. And it was purely just another discipline.

Considering what you went through did you feel like you were trained adequately?

I felt like I was trained adequately but not for mountain fighting. There were no mountains in Australia worthy of the Owen Stanleys, even Kosciusko wouldn't come up to it you see, because of the jungle. You see Victoria, Mt Victoria the highest point in the mountains

33:30 it used to get snow at the top of it. It wasn't the mountain so much it was the unknown and the dangers for every step you took. People said the views must have been great and I said, "Yeah toe of my boots looked the same every step I took," because that is what I watched was toe in me boots, I didn't look up around at anything else. My feet were pointing down, I walked and I watched

34:00 my boots and that was the way we walked. We didn't have time to look at the bloody scenery you know, and, undoubtedly, it's beautiful country, I have seen photos of it, but not as I seen it. If only my boots could tell, if my boots could tell the storey they would be able to tell you all about it but I couldn't I could show you photos of it and you know the roughness of the valleys and depth of the gorges and things like that. But

34:30 what it looked like, all I know was the green mass, water dripping off it all the time, miserably wet, miserably cold and just going into the unknown.

Once everything started apart from having to worry about your own hide, you must have been worrying about your brothers as well, how much of an extra burden did that put on you?

None. My brother joined the army with the same purpose I did. Therefore he had to suffer the same

- 35:00 complaints as I did. We didn't worry about each other. All this business about brothers being divided in war a lot of poppycock [rubbish]. Like the thing is we joined the army to do a service and we took our chances. If I tried to look after him someone else is going to get hurt or wounded you see, or killed or vice versa. So although we were in the same company we were separated in the platoon you see. And
- 35:30 but when I found Jack up in the, up in the hills, when he come out of Deniki, his boots or his socks had grown into the flesh of his feet and his boots had rotted, his clothes were in complete rags, he was covered in mud and around him were two inch mortar shells that never exploded they were everywhere they were sticking in the mud.
- 36:00 And Donohue was the same, there was three of them up there. And I don't know the third one, but they, I said, "Well you will have to join us," I said, we were hell a better condition than we were because they had been two days laying out there getting shelled all the time you see, fortunately the shells weren't going off. And the people responsible for shooting, they never went back home
- 36:30 either you know and because we cleaned those up. And that was one of the fortunate things of the battle, the way it turned out for me you know I went down the creek, the opposite direction to the others and something was holding my hand I don't know what it was. And going along I heard this pop pop every now and again. You always tell the sound of two inch mortar, or any mortar really but two inch we never had any mortars, they'd (UNCLEAR). They took two inch over
- 37:00 and some were three inch. We never had, see mortars couldn't be taken because they were too heavy also base plates and that. And the bren wasn't being introduced for quite a while after and the owen gun, it didn't come in till later so we just had a tommy gun which we just cast aside, too heavy to carry, the pans of 45 bullets were too heavy, they jammed at critical times so we got rid of them. And we relied on our 303.
- 37:30 and a bayonet and a few grenades and that was it. Well when we were walking, sneaking along this creek, jungle trail, you, you've have got to imagine, there is just so many trees, leaves, you can only see from here to you if you are lucky you see. So every move you made had to be, you had to be very aware, there could be a Jap right behind that little bush you know, because they were camouflaged, we weren't. By then we were muddied up and our
- 38:00 clothes torn and we were sort of camouflaged you know. And stopped the boys, and they said, "What are you stopping for?" I said, "Listen pop." "They said yeah we heard that," I said, "That is a Japanese two inch mortar," and I said, "It is down there," so anyhow we made our way down along the creek quietly and there is four Japanese and they and
- 38:30 they are popping some mortar you see so we had to deal with them in a hurry and finish them off so there would be no repercussions. They were out of their territory a bit too you see. Their main force was further over, so we cleaned them up and. I went down and had a look at the two inch mortar and where the barrel was pointing. And I said to the boys "I wonder why the hell they were firing these mortars for you see," there is still a fair few mortar shells there. And so I looked up and I said, "Come on we will go out this way," so I followed the general line
- 39:00 through the scrub and up and over creek and up the slope to the top of this ridge and there is a bear patch up there and that is where my brother and two other fellas were pinned down with these mortars and so we extricated them with care because there was unexploded mortar bombs everywhere. And then we made our way back down the slope through a bit of very heavy jungle to the creek again.
- 39:30 Followed that along and then we heard the firing and then we cut back up to the jungle and broke our way through the scrub to come out the flank of the rest of the 39th.

Just stop for a tick and we will change tapes.

Tape 10

- 00:31 **Was it that constant of being on edge for such a long time, was that the hardest part?**
- Yes. You are on tender hooks all the time. I you didn't keep aware, lets face facts we are all scared shitless put it that way, but you didn't let that sway your devotion for what you were doing.
- 01:00 If you weren't frightened you were a damn fool. So we all had that very scary feeling in us and the when you took a deep breathe you took it very slowly, you didn't make noises, you didn't crack , you didn't yell, you didn't do all these crazy things that yanks do because you don't win a battle by exposing yourself to any fire. But the anxiety of living or dying was there
- 01:30 because you see it is just a matter of quickness of eye or what have you to save your life. You didn't fear a Jap that pop up in front of you ready to shoot. And they always had these long rifles and they bring them to their shoulder, I always fired from the hip, never on my shoulder at all I just, like pointing your finger you know and bang, I had this man out of sight.

- 02:00 I had ten rounds of ammunition in this thing on the beach when I was first going over and I kept it up until I ran out of ammunition pretty well. But how many I killed I have no idea, whether I killed any of them I do not know and I do not care. But I scared the living daylights out of a lot of them I'd say that. It was kill or be killed, that is the sort of war it was. There was no prisoners taken on any side, we couldn't afford it you see. The
- 02:30 Japs aim was to injure as often as possible I'd say so there would be more people, less people to fight, more to look after the wounded and it was quite, it was fairly often at a night time you would hear a voice saying "Johnny, Johnny come and get me, help me help me," you know, but it was a bloody Jap imitating you see. And if anybody was foolish enough to go out to look for Johnny Johnny he would be a Johnny Johnny too. The
- 03:00 Japanese were bloody fine soldiers I will say that for them, but we were cunning little rats, mice of Moresby just, we were determined to do our job and come out a live and we would not run, we had to retreat through pressures but as I explained this to others. It is a wonder the Australian command didn't wake up because
- 03:30 whichever country they took from the southeastern campaign they took from the rear door. So why would they attack Moresby from the front door, when the back door was open you see. I didn't anticipate them coming over the Kokoda Track but that is what they did. And that was their main thrust and it was wide open because the narrowest part of New Guinea in that highlands country and to Moresby
- 04:00 and they had a clear run. And once they got to the top of the range. See where they landed the (UNCLEAR) is not in the middle of the island they are more on the southern side so where they landed they had a quite a long flattish area to come through with few little hills and before you hit the ranges after you got to Kokoda was the centre of the island. Of course from there to
- 04:30 top of Orana Gorge is the ranges you see. So we had to fight in the mountains all the time, the Jap had a good run in the first instance coming across from his landing point. So they were able to put in a lot of gear and carry more gear more ammunition, more food and what have you but they were well supplied,
- 05:00 we were under supplied. But what we had we made use of. The idea was to save your ammunition, if you shot make sure you were successful you know, don't waste bullets, we never had them. But ok yes we were scared. It is the only way to be a soldier, be scared see.

How did the daytime differ from the night?

Really no difference see there was noise of the night time, the Japanese made noises

- 05:30 to keep you awake to exhaust you, they'd call out go on but they would probably snooze and somebody else would have a spell of doing that and so on but we were woken up on a regular basis. We'd shut our tired eyes and bang them wide open again you see. And so we sort of got a dazed sort of a rest. So the fight sort of continued the daytime
- 06:00 you could see a little bit further in the scrub that is all. And at the rubber plantation that is a different story and you had a better view through the trees because it was plantation all planted in lines and you could see from the face of Denikey looking straight down the rubber plantation because that was in the flat country so to speak and you could see Japanese patrols moving out in different
- 06:30 directions. And they worked on a sort of a pencil movement but the jungle stimmid them and the same as it stimmid us, if we heard a Japanese patrol over there we would go over there and they would close in here and we had already gone from there and were gone over there, so we would be able to attack them from over there you see. This is the game that was played accidentally. They played their own game any better at simple as that
- 07:00 only they just had too many troops and too many supplies. But no the fear of god put in us we were all literally all nervous wrecks but we were still able to stand and be, stand up and be counted you know.

When you say we played the game better than they did?

Accidentally.

What is it, what was it that made us play it better?

Well we were young. We were not trained in this sort of tactic, that is the way I

- 07:30 put it anyhow. See the Germans used the pencil movement with their tanks and all this business and you don't realise what a pencil is until it happens and the formation is to come in on two sides and grab you in the middle sort of thing. But in the jungle it is very hard game to play. And in my case, personally speaking you had to be aware of a
- 08:00 small Jap patrol coming across in that direction through everything, you would hear a mutter or a stick you know. So you would obviously think that he knows your there, so you would quietly move away. We would move back and around over here and when the Japs got to where you were and make a bit of noise because that is where they thought you were you see and you could catch them in their own trap. It happened with me several times.

- 08:30 But it happened to a lot of boys like that, purely accidental and that is all it is, it was a peculiar way of fighting and every man, little group, we lived in a little sphere of our own. That is the way I felt. There was no thing of country, there was no Mums and Dads you just lived in this little pocket you know. And with a few mates and that little bubble of protection is around
- 09:00 you all the time. So we supported each other, morally, physically what have you. And the when, it was put in good text when there was an interview by one of the officers on Kokoda airport. I don't know what his name was, anyhow the commentator says, something about, "Why did you fight here,
- 09:30 was it king and country?" and he says, "No it was because we were there," that says it all, that is what we did. We fought because we were there. We didn't expect to get in such a hell of a mess and lose so many men and wounded and sick and sorry and a lot of people died from exposure you know it was a terrible bloody thing. But all these galas sat at the back and their officers below and tried to demand that Kokoda Track was a bit like
- 10:00 Summer play, that was a gorge with 20 men to hold back 20,000 you know in the Greek mythology history. It wasn't it was saddle in the mountains, it was 20 miles across literally and it was all up and down, up and down, there was no gorges to, as such you know straight through the mountains, nothing like that at all you just went straight up and down mountains and ridges.
- 10:30 So it was all sort of you know up and down, up and down the mountain, and they were steep and slippery and you had to find a way up the other side, you never climbed straight up you sort of had to go this way and work your way up the top. And no sooner you would get to the top and you would find that you would have to go down again, and no ridges, in the true sense. But every now and again you would come to a smoother area where you would walk a couple of mile with no effort.
- 11:00 But then suddenly the ground would disappear again you see. And when Templeton took his first group through, that is the B company, he created Templeton crossing as 1, 2, 1, 2 but the track has been changed now, that is not included in the track, he swung to the right going up and he cut in over the range and there was two creeks, he camped at and crossed at you know
- 11:30 so they were Templeton's crossing and that is the only track we had to go by. And they were really native pads and when you think about how the natives lived, they all lived on top of peaks, they never lived on the low country, they live in the high peaks. And they do that for several reasons, safety, health and against possible attack by other tribes you know. It's a wonderful country
- 12:00 Papuans, nobody could from Australians, it's (UNCLEAR)

When you speak of that bubble that you lived in can you tell me how mate, talk about mateship when it is under that sort of pressure?

You are so dependent on each other, we were one end of the. Our ears, our eyes protected each other. This is only the simplest way

- 12:30 I can put it, it was a feeling of mateship, the bond was there you know, they were being so so thoroughly aware in a group, we were able to over a lot of problems you know. Because someone would hear something and suddenly you would go and we were all aware, what did he hear, what did he see you know. We didn't talk because once you started cracking sticks and
- 13:00 talking you would give your position away, so you sort of kept quiet and plodded away the best you could, quietly you'd sneak along and did what you had to do. I didn't come out of that bubble of safety as I call it until I rejoined 39th at Isharama that is what held us together.

Did you

- 13:30 **at any time that you weren't going to live through that?**

No not really. Actually the the thought that went through our heads, all our heads, but mine particularly was we will never get out of here, how can we get out of here because it is impossible. We weren't aware that we could be relieved. We had no inkling of that. And

- 14:00 so all this pussy footing around the jungle and we were just getting weaker and weaker all the time and the Japs were getting stronger and stronger with reinforcements. Their idea was to get us out of the way so they could get to Moresby you see. But we kept getting in their road. And we were prepared to lay our lives down obviously, there is no other thing you could say. See we had one of two objects, not objects but positives. We went either, we went over there,
- 14:30 we could have been like the choco soldiers that they said we were, melt in the heat of battle and just disappeared into the jungle either side. And that would have opened the door for the Japs to go straight through and they would never have found us. Or the other side we fight and depend, like our own independence we fought, because we were in a situation where we needed to fight to survive. So we could have gone in the jungles and let them through, but that wasn't
- 15:00 our nature. We were Australians and it is a battle I would never like to see rein acted or repeated anywhere because the. See even if you have seen a DC3 or seen some parcels being dropped in little parachutes it would be all right

- 15:30 but gee you couldn't see, it was so overcast all the time and the jungle treated us so hard every now and again little clearings but there was cloud and the pilots that flew the DC3s over or the Douglas's well they had no idea where to drop supplies. And a lot of supplies dropped at the rear end, the Moresby side into the openings there but they were so back from us we couldn't go back for them,
- 16:00 we had to keep going with what we had. And we dug out that extra energy to keep doing what we had to do. And if I had any other thoughts on the thing I would do the same again because it wasn't my duty. It was because I was there and I was there to do a job and I did the best I could.

When you fellas

- 16:30 **were just about reached the end of your tether and hit up with the 2/14th some of the blokes must have been just overcome with emotion were they?**
- We were oh yes. Nothing nicer to see a soldier with a fresh uniform on you know. We were all. Look we were so exhausted but I dare say tears did run down our face. But we were so bloody exhausted we wouldn't know, we were just skin and bone.
- 17:00 We heard various comments and they were all, you know not derogatory remarks whatsoever and they looked like bloody ragged heroes and all this sort of business and good job mate and you know things like that. But every time somebody passed a good, you had this swell of emotion you know and that give us that little lift to get one foot after the other and keep moving on.
- 17:30 **That that previous grating that had been there between the AIF and the militia did you feel that die that day?**
- It died there and it reappeared its ugly head later after the Kokoda Track was all finished. And when the remnants of 39th, that includes all the reinforcements, there wasn't a lot of us left, 1500 strong we went over and there was 800 Rios and the minimum was 800 Rios
- 18:00 But the thing is that when they, the 39th, it didn't happen to me because I turned AIF and I went to machineguns right in Moresby. So I stayed up there and they went home in July or something back to Australia, it wasn't until late August that I went back home to Australia and the boys there that didn't turn AIF, they
- 18:30 were told they were going to another battalion you see. And that is where the crap hit the fan again, those bloody choccos you know, bloody 39th who the hell do you think you are, all these sort of remarks, the boys were telling me about it. It didn't happen to me. One bloke he is dead now right he is a good bloke and he said, "They give us a hard time," but he was one of the proud men that carried that patch right through his life
- 19:00 moth eaten and the whole lot and somewhere laying in a draw I have got it here, he sent it to me, his wife gave it to me. But he died of cancer. He ended up with a big ulcer in his stomach, didn't know he had it and when he got home he was not feeling well. And they opened him up to fix, they found he had cancer, open up to fix, because they had to wait in those times. And behind the ulcer, about that round there was cancer
- 19:30 you see. Well, that eventually killed him. They cut him right down there and right across there and Ron and his wife rung us, they lived out at Redcliffe and asked if we would go down at this particular time, about four or five years ago or less I don't know. And May and Ron were sitting there and I said, "What is the problem?" and they
- 20:00 said, "Well," Beth was with me, "We want to know what you would do in our position?" and I said, "What is your position?" and they told me about this cancer. Ron can either go into hospital, more operations and blah blah blah you know might have 6 months to live or live a life style he chooses to live you know. And I said, "Listen don't ask me, I am not in that position, I can't give you an answer, that is for you to decide
- 20:30 what have you thought about it?" "Oh we thought we would have a good lifestyle," I said, "That is your decision," they said, "Would you do it if you were in Ron's place," I said, "Hard decision to make I would, I would not want to lay in hospital, be chopped up just for the hell of it experimental thing no way," so anyhow he went out and drunk his few beers and ate meat pies and he lived for a couple of years more you see.
- 21:00 And he came in here on his way from seeing his kids up at Tincan Bay and Beth was sitting here and Ron and I were very very close mates, although we weren't mixed up in the 39th you know, in the battles. But anyhow we sat around and commiserated a bit and talked about this that and the other. When we got to the door, Ron said, "Geez Jim," he said, "Thank god I knew you"
- 21:30 he said, "Come here and give me a big cuddle," and Beth couldn't understand it, and I give him a big cuddle back and I said, "Look Ron you'll be right mate, she'll be right," anyway they went. And Beth said, "I have never seen two men cuddle like that," I said, "Beth this is mateship, this is what mates are all about, we console each other," and I said, "If we had of kissed and made up and cuddled and helped the other we will do it."

- 22:00 You see I said, "We are too good a mates," and when his funeral is on and they were bordering on about this and that, boring old funeral you know and May his wife said to me "Jim get up and say something," you know. A few 39th there so I went up to the pulpit and I said, "I would like to say a few words on behalf of Ron and May, it has got nothing to do with his previous life or his present life.
- 22:30 It is his future life I am going to talk about." I said, "Ron is up there on cloud 39, he is looking down at us at the present moment, and he is having a bit of a chuckle." "Join me later mates, don't be in a hurry but come and see me." I said, "That is that man," I said, "That is the sort of guy, he is sitting up there with his legs crossed with all his other mates just not beckoning but just
- 23:00 giving us the message they are waiting for us," with that I got down from the pulpit, everybody give a bit of a clap you see. I wanted it to end because May was suffering too much you see with all this rot they go on about, going through your life and saying he worked this he worked that, he did a good job, we all do that, we know that, but we have to know the feelings in the proper sense you know. You have
- 23:30 to read a great script, previously made out, this is what we need you to say, we regret the passing of Ron, I said, "It doesn't come into it for me I don't like funerals." I said, "What I needed to say I loved the man and I want to be too glad eventually to be up there with him," and I said, "I hope he hasn't shot through by the time." But no life it's,
- 24:00 it is so hard to explain complete mateship, it is such a deep thing and I said to Beth one day I said, "You're me mate," she said, "What did you call me?" I said, "Mate," she said, "Why did you say that?" I said, "Well I class you as a mate a true mate,
- 24:30 like I do Ron, all the others," I said, "Be proud of it, I don't call mates easily," I said, "I love you you're my wife but you're me mate," I said, "Be proud that I called you mate because I don't do that to anybody else," she said, "I'm pleased about that," she told May and May said, "Well Ron said that to me too," you know.

Can I ask you some other things about Blamey speech?

Oh don't bring that up.

- 25:00 That was a funny, well it wasn't funny it was a bit bawdy, I thought. See up in the, this is after Kokoda and all the rest of it. We were all called on this joint parade area on the edge of the hills, Moresby side and they built a little rostrum for General Blamey. So we were all pulled together in our units and what have you,
- 25:30 and we are all standing around like bottles of gin and water and standing. And he started to beef off at the mouth at how good we were and what have you. And we had heard a couple of comments previously how to run like rabbits you know. And that didn't sit well on anyone's chest AIF or anything else. And anyway he is going on saying you have done a wonderful job blah blah blah
- 26:00 you know someone way back and when he took a breath way back in the back of the crowd, this voice. Get back in your box your bull headed bastard you see. Well did the shit hit the fan. He pointed to where I was in my group, the rock heap, this group here whatever battalion it was, this direction, send
- 26:30 it all off even some jumped out in parachutes that never jumped out of parachutes before over the mountains up near shady ridge. So I was in my group so I led my group to rock heap and the yanks had the rock heap and you get up there with your group of men. And this yank came at me and he said, "Hey guys can I help you?" and we said, "Well we were told to come to the rock heap." "Well damn it old man this is the rock heap," and I said, "Yeah pretty good rock
- 27:00 heap you got there," and he said, "Well I can't stand here and gas about it man," he says "I would ask you to move off because we are about to blow," I said, "Ok see you round," we went back to the camp, so the rock heap didn't matter a damn.

What about the other yanks at Moresby before Kokoda?

American Negroes that is all they were. There was a

- 27:30 I don't know if there was any white ones over there or not but mainly Negroes. But this Negro battalion was sent over to finish building or actually building the actual air strip because we weren't doing a very good job because we had wheel barrows, typical Australian thing pick and shovel and a wheel barrow you know. They got end loaders trucks and all the rest of it you see. And so those are, the battalion of those
- 28:00 fellows we are on the hills overlooking the airstrip with our machine guns protecting the airport and they were over this side in a big camp, before the Coral Sea battle. So anyhow they decided that we needed relief and have a little R&R [Rest and Recreation] so they shipped us from that side over to this side of the strip you see. It wasn't usual for this side of the strip to be bombed.
- 28:30 And we had to go round this American Negro camp and there was a valley, about as deep as this room. And across the other side of that there was a couple of tent flies pitched because they had brought in a couple of tent flies in by now. So we are up there having this RNR thing and we've got nothing to do you know. Sitting around bloody doing nothing. But of course you know the old methods I had, if

29:00 you got nothing to do go and train you know, keep up your spirits, learn to do things. So anyhow the officer told me immediately what he, he give me a flare pistol of three flares and so we go across to this camp, sitting down and I said to the boys "We can't just sit here we have got to do some training, we have got to keep up our training." "Oh come on

29:30 give us a break we are training all the time," I said, "No no good resting," I said, "If you forget something it won't be any good you've got to keep on training." "Well what are we going to do?" I said, "I will split you in halves tonight and I want half of you to go down the bottom of this dry creek bed I want you to infiltrate up this dry creek bed to where we will be." "Where will you be?" "Never mind where we will be, that is the idea"

30:00 "You got to come up through the rocks and see if you can get to us without making a noise, a little infiltration exercise you see." "Oh righto Jesus can't we get a bloody rest with you around," and they are Mumbling and grumbling I said, "Look grumble guts away you go," so anyhow we didn't know the Coral Sea thing was getting closer you know. Never, did have a clue, there were quite a few fighter planes in the area at that time

30:30 which I must tell you about. There is a cobra squadron at that time, American. And there was patrol boats in Moresby, naval patrol boats, anyhow I didn't know these things, I was still playing soldiers in the gully you see. So and these American Negroes and they had more 50 calibre machine guns that you could poke a stick at and 30 calibres all mounted on you know 360

31:00 pivots. And so I go down in this gully and we are going to play this game you see. So I am there with my few men and I always said to my men you see with your ears at night time, you know ears will tell you more than your eyes. Because you can't see at night time all you end up with is night blindness. And I said, "Listen up, listen for noises you know

31:30 and see where they are by that direction thing." So we didn't know mind and I got a tap on the shoulder you know the hand pointing pasting my eye down there so I pulled a very light pistol out and the three cartridges and I popped one in and fired it popped another one in and fired and popped another one in and fired you see. So

32:00 I've got three flare lights, lighting up the place like day. Were there was all the boys sneaking up hiding behind rocks just there you see, gotcha. And the next thing there is a bloody sheet of lead flew over our head, you have never heard anything like it. Every Negro in that battalion was on a gun and they were just firing over where those flare light pistols were, just a shit of lead going everywhere, there were leaves, going over the top, fortunately we were you know

32:30 8 foot, 9 foot down. And it stopped just suddenly, and there were aircraft taking off and we could hear boats turning around in the harbour and I said, "Christ what is all that about?" And I peaked and looked over the edge and all I could see was just 50 calibres and 30 calibres swinging on their pivots. I never seen one black man, they all vacated, shot through and I said,

33:00 "Geez what the hell is the matter with that crowd Jesus," shot the hell out of the trees and carried on, anyhow the next day I got hauled over the coals. How did I know that the secret of flare lights was an indication of a landing by Japanese forces on the Moresby side of the country, and I said, "What are you talking about?" They said, "You gave the

33:30 signal of invasion." I said, "I still don't know what you are on about I was there training with my troops and I fired a flare light, I had three cartridges and I fired them to show up where the enemy was, our enemy we were playing our usual game," and they said, "Well you fired in the sequence of invasion that is why all the aeroplanes took off, that is why patrol base took off, that's why the natives fired their guns."

34:00 And I said, "Look I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it," and anyhow it was just one of those freaks of nature you know and I picked the right sequence, there is red white and blue or something you see. And I just fired them as I pulled them out of my pocket and it happened to be the signal that there was an invasion and you know. So anyhow you know I got hauled out over the coals. And said,

34:30 "Oh well you did a good job, it all come out good." And another time there they had a gun pit, a dug out pit competition you see. So I got this particular crew I had several sections, it kept changing you see till I ended up on the Kokoda thing and then it was different. And so anyhow I said to these boys I said, "Line them up," I said,

35:00 "There is a pit digging competition on I said and the best pit is going to get seven leaves, seven days' leave in Australia." "Oh Jesus, corp, that will serve us you see," and these two big boys Mangle Dorfes and Black Wool and all big strong men and a few others there and they said, "What do you want us to do?" and I just drew a line around you know in a shape sort of thing and I said, "Start digging." Well they dug and they had dirt and rocks

35:30 flying in every direction, they were digging, and I had another couple off getting logs and another couple making chairs out of old bush sticks. So we built this dug out and it was a home away from home you know underground and real good. So they were enjoying it and it won the competition. All me section went home bar me, they kept me back. And I said, "Why didn't I get leave?" and they said, "Oh no we need you here,"

36:00 I would have just gone well spat in their eye. Such a blow to my ego you know, I win the competition but I can't go home on leave, the others did and three of them never came back, but they were reinforcements I must admit.

They did a scarper?

Yeah, they did a runner. The others come back but not those three.

You were also going to tell us a story about Jacksons?

Oh yes when we were on the strip on the fence there.

36:30 Kittyhawk 75th Kittyhawk squadron. We were told by the powers that be, "Do not fire on aircraft coming around the headlands as such and such because of the Australian Kittyhawks," you see. "Ok." All officers went slack on our guns. And this is the thing about the 5th (UNCLEAR) sort of thing, Tokyo Rose knew it. Anyhow we are all leaning against our guns, the pits and they're going to watch the Kittyhawks come in

37:00 you see. They come around the headland all right but they never had the Australian emblem on they had Japanese rising suns and they shot the crap out of us you see, machine guns and flames and bloody hell you know it all happened in seconds we never had a chance to get onto our guns you see. And so they give us a pacing and they shot through, bloody hell that is pretty, what is going on around here

37:30 bloody Japs came and it should have been Kittyhawkes. So anyhow "Don't fire tomorrow because the Kittyhawkes are coming," so tomorrow you see. So we are all sort of half a bit suspicious you see. Around come the Zeros, again we were too slow to move because they were on you before you could sneeze, they are so quick you know, beautiful fighter planes. And they paced the hill and they paced the strip.

38:00 And of course then the message come the Kittyhawkes are coming tomorrow, so then they were the never Hawkes. And we were ready. We were all sitting back on our guns and those planes came roaring around that same point, and we were right into them. And the flight that came in, or whatever you call a number of aircraft, you know they've got these funny names squadrons, flights and wings

38:30 and what have you. And they flew in there and they were met with a hail of bloody bullets and out of the I don't know 9, 10 planes whatever, they were never even numbers and I suppose there are three that were air worthy the next day when they finished and Jackson a bullet went through his cockpit and they had steel seats, skidded along the steel seat

39:00 straight up the crack of his backside and up his and his aircraft, these beautiful planes were all shot to ribbons you see. And he was stomping mad, I don't know why, anyhow he called us to attention sort of thing and got us and blasted the hell out of us but he said, "I admire you on your shooting," you see. From then on of course they only put three aircraft up at a time and what have you, but they were never the same, never the strength

39:30 but god they were good pilots. I remember poor old Jacko we shot his plane to bloody ribbons, we expected the Tokyo Rose to say "Caught you that time boys," which he never.

We will just stop there and change tapes.

Tape 11

00:30 **Got some more questions. Can you remember any of the other units that were onboard the Aquitania when you came across?**

Only the 53rd and the 49th and I think there was an ack-ack group but no I don't know, all I know is the 30th brigade, I don't know of any other, I know there was about 5,000 roughly on it and that is when I would have liked to have a camera, because in those cabins

01:00 there were thousands and thousands of names written on the walls of all the troops that had gone overseas. In the Middle East and what have you and it would be a wonderful keepsake because there would be a lot of those fellows that never come back you know. And good clear writing too in all different coloured pens. All names on the panel work, they were great, but I never stayed much in the cabins when I was up there.

What about the CO Burrows when he was sent home?

He was a bit

01:30 upset. He was too old. But I still think he was strong enough to go over the track, because he could climb mountains like a billy goat, he was good, he was a damn good commanding officer. And Merritt was just as good but he was a lot younger than Bill but I can still, they used to call him wild Bill. Stay there, there is pistol blazing

02:00 up in Kokoda you know. And he was a good man, I liked Bill, I thought well I couldn't be under a better commander than him. He was really good, he was a very proud Australian and if any Jap got in his way he would run him over you know he was really good. I liked Bill.

Was there an incident where you had to tackle him?

Yeah he was tackled when he was on a little bit of a clear spot firing his ruddy pistol at the Japs and you know he was right out in the open.

02:30 So I tackled him and knocked him down, come on you silly old bugger you will get shot you know, but little funny incidents like that happened, a bit of relief from trauma.

Where were you when you heard that Darwin had been bombed?

Darwin oh I didn't know Darwin had been bombed until I came back to Moresby.

What did you think of that?

Well I thought it was small aircraft bombing

03:00 you know a small bombing raid, not what it was. I didn't know it was so big, and I didn't find out till years after how many were killed on there in Darwin. And I didn't find this out for ages, I was well away from Darwin. But no we, we had this hang up if you would like to call it.

03:30 That outside our own sphere of influence we had no idea what was going on, we were not told anything, we had no information leaked to us as they say. But the thing is a lot of these fellows have written diaries and they mentioned these things but I don't know how they got the information, where they got it from. I was in a situation where I could have got information, never said and I never carried a diary, and I could have written

04:00 thousands and thousands of a page of diary if I was there, if I was allowed to have a diary. But no didn't have a diary, didn't have a camera, maybe I couldn't afford a bloody camera. All I could afford I had a guitar banjo mandolin. Shaped like a harp and it sat on your lap and you had two little hammers and you played the strings and I used to sit there and play this quietly. And I had my walking

04:30 out uniform it is in a photo up there it was khaki, khaki tie, a lighter khaki shirt it was the walking out uniform of the 17th Light Horse. And a leather belt around the waist. And I took that up to New Guinea with me. Others took other things, like they say tennis rackets or golf clubs, if they did, they didn't know what they were doing. But

05:00 everybody took something, mouth organs mainly and I took this gizmo with me. I never got to use it very much at all, only in the early part when we out at Bootless Inlet having a bit of a rest out there I played a couple of times and then we came back on duty at the airport and we are coping a bit of a bashing there and our ears are ringing all the time from exploding bombs and they said look we will shift

05:30 half of you fellows and you can go over there on the other side of the strip and have a bit of a rest out of the guns and what have you. And so the strip run this way straight parallel, we were along here, so we went over on an angle that way and there was a hill you see, and a bit of a camp set up there, some tent flies and there were pits dug and L shaped trenches. And

06:00 so anyhow we are lulling about there and I had my guitar banjo mandolin in there and I had my lovely walking out uniform you got everything in there, everything. So anyhow the air raid signal goes you see. Oh we are out of the bombing zone. Bull. Bloody Japs decided to bomb across the strip you see. Anyhow we seen them coming and they come in the wrong direction, heading straight, heading

06:30 across our area. Well we vacated our flyers and what have you and into these, I had a big L shaped trench beside my tent and my whole section was in there for that and I was, it was half covered so those boys were all out behind me and I was standing at the front where I could observe what was happening. And the next thing there was this god awful bang you know, dust in my eyes and

07:00 all the rest of it, I am laying there up to there in dirt and there is my guitar banjo mandolin up there flying apart playing in tune, you could hear it. It is marvellous what you can hear when you want to you know and this beautiful uniform floating around in the sky and I am buried up to here, that is all I could see, and I was not interested in how was or how anybody else was, all I could see was the destruction

07:30 of my property. So anyhow when the bomb landed right beside the tent. It blew the tent to pieces and I was on the edge of the crater I missed the blast part it just pushed the dirt back over the top of me. So when some of the fellows got up and went along and saw my head sticking out, they said we will help you get out here. So they dug me out

08:00 and with the officer we found you know an arm hanging out here and what have you. And picked out the live ones and left the dead ones and what have you anyhow we were short one count. And it worked out it was a young fellow that has come into my section. Now this is the strangest thing about it, war is a strange thing, funny things happened.

- 08:30 This piece of bomb as far as I know it is still down in Victoria, my eldest brother had it, I am sure he kept it because you couldn't destroy it and this piece of shrapnel, hit from that bomb, went through my shirt, straight through there, the second bloke around it went through that side of his shirt. So it missed all of us zigzagging through this trench, it got lower as it got down
- 09:00 and the very last fellow right against the bottom of the trench was sideways and it took the muscle out of his leg and buried itself in the bank. So that poor young kid he was transported home straight away while he was in action. And I dug that piece of shrapnel out about that round about that thick, curved, in the middle on the inside NSWGR. New South Wales Government Railways, big iron bomb.
- 09:30 I kept that piece of metal with me for years you know, and then I sent it home and I lost sight of it then but everybody wanted it and I said, "Oh no it is just too good a souvenir this one," you know it was a really good one. But that is another time. I reckon I had a headache after that one for a while too because with a clap of thunder like that right in your face it is a bit terrifying.

Speaking of the young blokes when you were training them at

- 10:00 **Cowra and you had the run in with the CSM because you were training them your way and teaching them life lessons that you learnt, what were some of those life lessons?**
- Well it wasn't my life lessons. I was teaching first off through the book. I would read the chapters out and then I explained what the chapters really meant you know and the like firstly you go through weaponry and what have you and it tells you about the weapons
- 10:30 and you pull them to pieces and you put them together and you clean them and what have you and what you must do with your weapons and remember your rifle number blah, blah, blah, your clothing and anyhow you went on with all this business. And then general discussions come on and I was an active soldier, I had been through a lot so the boys would ask me specific questions in relation to certain
- 11:00 things. I would tell him exactly what I did in that situation you see. And so the general thing I said to those boys in those circumstances, keep your head down, also your bum you know. Eyes open head down. And this is what this CSM heard you know. And I said if you ever want to remain alive you
- 11:30 don't stick your head up because the turkey will shoot it. And that is where, he went for me about it. Those boys I felt sorry I had to train kids, they would go over there and put their lives at risk. And I felt the only way that I could successfully do it was to train them like the fundamental straight through. You don't learn from fundamentals you get to know what this
- 12:00 thing is all about. But you don't get the living experience. You see I tried to imply the living experience to these lads. And told them what war was about, you do what you have been taught and in relation to subjects like this you will come back. You know you do it your way you probably wont. It was a,
- 12:30 see this character moved about and appeared at the wrong times and he misinterpreted a lot of things. Because I wasn't the only other instructor who had been in action over there, Bill Guess was over there too and dare say old Bill rattle off at the mouth and but on the same phrase as I did. Because what is the good of teaching someone just the fundamentals of army life you
- 13:00 know without giving them. See when I went through training I never got any of this, I had to learn the hard way and it was all open training warfare type of thing and from that I learnt a whole lot of things because you never had the hidey holes to get into and so head down bum down, you know flat on the ground. And you could travel pretty, you could travel like a snake you know. But so I was imparting this knowledge
- 13:30 from bitter experience and quietness, quiet meant you never went with your mouth open yelling and screaming let other people do that you keep quiet, play your own game and so apparently this sort of thing didn't go very well. But I didn't give a hoot. I felt sorry for these kids and I thought the only thing I can do is is tell them the truth and go in with their eyes wide open
- 14:00 and know what is ahead of them. That is the best I could tell them. And I don't know how many made it and how many didn't make it because that is the last you see of them you see. And the Donny Hay he was the clerk of our big section of the camp and he passed a few remarks on my method of training he said, "It is the best I have heard," he said, "You are telling the boys really what it is all about," he said, "I have been listening to you," he was a sergeant. But
- 14:30 and I said, "Well is there any other way you know really," I said, "It took me a few years to learn what I am telling them and experience is a hard heads experiences and I thought that was the best way to go about it.

Can you tell us when you were up in New Guinea, what the correspondence situation was like, letters and mail and stuff?

Highly censored.

- 15:00 I used to write my letters home on toilet paper I had no paper as such, I had toilet paper, I could get that. And they said keep that for writing letters because it is easy to fold and roll and so you would write a letter on toilet paper and then you roll it up, punch it into an envelope and shoot it off. Well the censor

people would get it and it would go through the censors and they would cut holes in the bloody thing.

- 15:30 Just snip out pieces. Well another bloke he had a pad and I was watching him write a letter, he was one of my blokes. And he'd make all these letters exactly the same height. And where there was a b it looked like a v and where there was v it looked like an l and so on you see and a d, this is the part that is exactly the same. And he said, "What do you reckon about that corps," I said, "It is pretty good but it is easy to decipher though." "Oh the censors won't
- 16:00 know how to do that," bullshit, they were experts to decipher your stuff and writing you know. Others tried different codes but you couldn't crack it you know. But the letter writing wasn't a big thing in my life up there. Because I knew that if they knew that you were ok, as long they got a letter or my Mum got a letter or Beth or whatever a later period for Beth
- 16:30 but Mum I would say I am ok you know don't worry. Just a simple straight out letter with no battle action or bomb action, you don't mention that stuff to your parents. So I just wrote an ordinary note you know and eventually mail would come back and I would get my mail and read it and "I hope you are doing all right son." But the, it wasn't part of
- 17:00 my life. If mail arrived good luck you know. A lot of people used to look forward to mail but I made the habit of not to look forward to mail. Because you can't expect your Mum to write every day, because you didn't have anybody else to write to me, my sisters and that they were off doing their own thing you know. But later on when after Kokoda finished and the later stages and I was with
- 17:30 Beth well she used to in the bakehouse, she used to send me over cakes, fruitcakes in a box or something about this square and about that high with a lid on. And we would come back from some exercise from being somewhere and mail call, I used to pick up this bloody box and everyone in the platoon followed me "You got a cake," you know or I got a cake.
- 18:00 So I shared it around with everybody because she made some bloody good cakes you know. And wherever I went even Tablelands and all that, cakes would arrive, they were much appreciated by 50 or 60 men. She used to be a popular girl.

When you got sent of to 7AGH did Betty know where you had gone?

When, when I went to, up in New Guinea? No no she didn't know.

What about later on when you were going down to Greenslopes and

- 18:30 **that sort of thing?**

After the war?

Yeah how did Betty sort of support you in that regard?

Well she looked after the house and the family and carried on the business and just kept in contact. She was hard enough to do that, she knew that I would be all right and so I corresponded and I used to ring her up a lot. And of course then it would come along and she used to say "What are you going to do with your TPI?" And I'd say, "I don't know what do you want,"

- 19:00 see. But I always promised her a fridge or something you see or a stove. That is the way we spent our time chuckling and carrying on. Because there was another young fellow in the ward with me and he was only a short fellow, and he landed in hospital about the same time as I did in the same ward you see. So we would get dressed (UNCLEAR)
- 19:30 you can get dressed into your civy clothes after you have had the treatment, you see in the afternoon and you had the weekend off. So anyhow we the Red Cross was across from Greenslopes right across and there was a poolroom there you see. So we'd go down there in our civvies and all these other blokes are in blue pyjamas we used to lean against the door and look at these fellows, if you look at a bloke long enough he will turn and look at you, you see and so we sent messages you know.
- 20:00 and oh Christ, they would say, "Excuse me," out the door. "Yeah righto see you later," out the door and before we knew it we had a pool table, everybody was scared shitless of the 9 ward breaks you know because we were psycho cases sort of thing. But we had the run of the Red Cross quite often. You do these sorts of things for god sake
- 20:30 for fun you know we wouldn't hurt a fly but that is the way we got our kicks and another bloke there he made up with a, he wasn't a very nice bloke, this nurse attracted him. And so you had to go to bed at a certain time to get your rest you see before the needle in the morning, and then you had the afternoon free until that time at night again.
- 21:00 anyway this bloke he come in at 2 o'clock in the morning pussy footing about, he is right next to me and he gets into bed and he is no sooner asleep and they wake him up and stick a needle in him you see. And of course he complained, "Oh a man can't get any sleep here," and he is carrying on. When you know when you are used to the situation and I said to him "Listen you're an idiot, who is this women you are going after every night, what is going on?" he said, "Oh yes is a good

21:30 sort," I said, "Listen why don't you come in earlier," he said, "What and leave her," and I thought strike me for punishment, but there were things like that. And we used to get weekend leave you know go into Brisbane useless time going in there. All this paper blowing around in the street and dust and what have you.

What sort of treatment would you get in Greenslopes?

Oh top, top treatment and they looked after you well.

22:00 I knew what it was all about because my doctor up there explained it to me, the first time, I was a bit weary the first time I went down to Greenslopes after this thing in Lae but when I got down there it wasn't as fearsome. They sort of done it a bit differently, they had open wards, they had nurses walking around, there was no big beefy fellows around they weren't needed because the nurses

22:30 were quite capable of pacifying anybody you see. And the there was only one time that I actually hit a nurse. It wasn't intentional but I was asleep and was coming out of this thing, and I had very ticklish feet and they were sticking out from underneath. Anybody that touched the soles of my feet I used to sit straight up in bed with my hand out. And as they come up and boom you see. And I hit her fair in the

23:00 side of the eye poor little women. And anyhow the, I said, "I am sorry about that, I didn't mean that, but never tickle my feet for gods sake I react," you know. So anyhow there was apologies made and everything was accepted and matron said, "You whacked a nurse," and I said, "Well, I didn't mean to," I explained it to her and she went along with it, she was okay. And then you would have to go to the psychiatrist and all the

23:30 boys, this is after you have pretty well finished the course. "Jimmy are you going to go into the psychiatrist first?" I said, "Yeah righto," I had to go in and soften him up, that was my job. So poor old psych. And so we'd line up on the wall outside and he would say, "Come in," so I would go in and pull out a chair "Your name," he had glasses I'll give him that. And he said

24:00 now I will do some physiological tests on you "ok," he got the paper every day you know, I used to read the funnies and what have you. But he sat over these cards and he said, "Now if you can flip these cards over and put them in the right order," four you see. And today's comic is in the paper you see. So anyhow, he said, "Are you ready?" And I said, "Yes I'm ready." "Finished," he said, "Four and a half seconds, you couldn't have," I said, "Well

24:30 there it is in order," and he said, "Gee wiz," and then he sent over this is a raw shaft test, he said the cards, and he said, "Four there what do you see?" And they are ink spots you see and I said, "Black ink spots," he said, "But there is other things there," and I said, "No there isn't they are black ink spots, that is all it is a card with spots on it, big spilt

25:00 ink." "We will try the coloured ones and see if you see anything in those," so I said, "They are coloured ink spots," and he said, "The object of this lesson is to see if you can see something in the ink bots." "Oh I see yeah I get the idea yes righto," so I sit there and I am studying these things and I move them around a bit "mmm," and I said, "That is very interesting"

25:30 and he said, "Do you see something?" And I said, "Yes I do," I said, "A telephone pole," and I said, "A ladder on it and there is a bloke up there fixing some wires on a post," and I said, "If you follow the wires through to this lot here and there is another pole and he's obviously been there because the wires are attached to insulators and so he started down here

26:00 hanging these wires and he is finishing here," and he said, "What?" And I said, "You try and find them." "Get out," and he would say such silly things like "If this wheel was turning left," there is 50 wheels say up on a chart "Which way is the bottom one turning?" There is a 50 50 chance clockwise or anti clockwise you know, if this is turning anti clockwise this was going to be turning clockwise. Just a 50 50 chance and you guess right you see.

26:30 But I'd do these things so fast it used to drive him up the wall. And he would spend the whole deal and ten minutes after he was so screwed up he didn't know what to do. And he'd get the other boys to come out and each one would screw him up more and. I had a lot of fun in hospital.

Where were you when you heard about the atom bomb being dropped on Japan?

I was in Madang. And

27:00 when the war ended and I was such a mess mentally with all the crap I had to go through at the hospital and this new 10th division was starting to form, it never got off the ground really. And they came up and says we are asking you to go over to occupational forces to Japan. I said to them "No," I said, "The job is finished." "The Japs are finished, the war is finished,

27:30 I am finished and I want out," you know simple as that. My brother he was at Rabaul when it happened and they wanted him to go over to Japan, he told them to go and get, volunteer you see no we were in Madang when that happened.

What did you think when you found out later on what the atomic bomb was all about?

I thought it was bloody beaut mate, the quickest way to end the war. When you rationalise it,

- 28:00 it would have cost not only Australians thousands of lives, all the Americans and all the rest of it because the Japanese were fanatical under the regime they lived under and the code. But every man, women and child would have carried a gun. And I think they did the Jap a favour by just killing 100,000 quick. And the first time the atom bomb has been used, at the present moment it is the last time but it could happen again. But
- 28:30 no I think it was, I don't hold any feelings about the atom bomb. The dropping of that, when you look at the history before these the kamikaze pilots crashing into aeroplanes and into boats and all this business. Well that pulled it up suddenly. And when, I went to Japan in 1974, I went first in 1972 for a pilgrimage back to
- 29:00 Kokoda and I wasn't feeling very good by the time I left there because it brought back too many memories and I said I would never go again. And in 74 we went on a boat trip and Beth was sick and I thought we would go on a 10 week boat cruise travelling all the islands, Japan, it was 10 weeks, 6 weeks, doesn't matter. And so when we were in Japan we got
- 29:30 one of the places, it was somewhere, where the boat pulled in and I heard a voice, I was standing on the wharf, "You want taxi mate you want taxi," I look around, couldn't see, a little bloody Jap "You want taxi mate," talking the Americans have been over there for a while. And he was yapping off
- 30:00 and I said, "Yeah but there is eight of us." "Yeah I got brother," he gets his brother. Anyway he drove us all around in the mountains, where ever we wanted to go, department stores, they were very honest and clean and polite the Japanese. For instance this great department store one of the boys in our group, there is only eight of us all together, no six of us, and filled the taxi,
- 30:30 those two taxis and the Japanese drivers waited for us when we did our shopping and examined the store the big department store and we were in there for an hour or so and then came out and one of the boys had his parcel but he never picked up his change. When he came out he was called over and his change was there for him, gave him his change back, "You forgot your change sir." "Well thanks very very much," and give him a tip.
- 31:00 Anyhow we are driving around and I can't think of his name, it is only a four letter name too, four word name. But he was a character a little character he said, "Were you in the army?" I said, "Yes I was in the army." "Where you fight?" And I said, "New Guinea." "Oh," he said, "You fight in New Guinea," and he
- 31:30 said, "Did you want to die for your country," and I said, "No I didn't," he said, "What is the objects of war?" "Kill you bastards and get home, that is what is was." "Oh much better," he says "Much better." "What are you talking about?" And he said, "Oh they trained me kamikaze pilot, they give me saki and tie a rag around my head and say I come back a little blossom flower," he said, "I don't want to be a blossom flower I want to be me,"
- 32:00 how typical you know and he didn't want to go up there and kill himself with a diver bomber. And but these sort of things. We went up the Nico Mountains.

I was going to say did Japan change your attitude towards Japanese?

Oh no not really. You know you still had this hang up I didn't, I wasn't ever vicious about them. Like when I was

- 32:30 at the Nico Mountains we went up by bus. I was tired and I went asleep and they had about four drivers and they had caps on olive green suits. I was asleep and they were standing at the door and I smelt them. And I heard this Japanese talking and I sat bolt up right in the chair ready for a scrap straight away, but they were four drivers and suddenly I you know, came flash to me I am on holidays.
- 33:00 But that was a bit startling but apart from all that we were politely treated and they had no regrets about it. And two Japanese came to Hillcrest, Beth rang me at work and said, "I hope you don't mind but two Japanese have arrived here," and I said, "No I don't mind," she said, "If you do don't come home for another hour or two until they have gone off," and they had cameras and they are chasing my wife around taking photos of them all the time.
- 33:30 And I thought what strange people.

What are your feelings on Anac Day, what are your thoughts?

Oh deep. That's, they pulled me up one day Channel 7, I was in a jeep. They said, "What is war, what is your impression of war?" I said, "There is nothing worse on earth than war, there is no sense in it, it doesn't prove anything. I am not an advocate

- 34:00 of war and if I could stop a war on my own I would do it," but I said, "I'm a pacifist and that is what my feelings are." And I think war is an abortion of a bloody thing you know. I don't like it, and if I was young I would never volunteer to go. Like my son almost went to Vietnam and I tell you my heart was in my throat when his mail would come out. And I said to Beth, "Oh

- 34:30 god I hope he doesn't, they don't sent him to Vietnam because it was a political war, it wasn't the sort of war I fought in and fortunately his job changed over a defence job and he pulled out, he was a bit sour about it, but after a while he realised that he did the right thing. But no, the war is a hell of a bloody game you know. It is too hard, you never forget it and it is something you live for the rest of your life,
- 35:00 you can't avoid it, it is there. Memories die hard. And the older you get the more vivid they become.
- What do you personally think about on Anzac day?**
- Personally think, I feel proud to be an honoured Australian. I see all those children out there waving flags and there is Chinese and Japanese it doesn't matter, I wave back at them and I wave my hand and say thanks
- 35:30 very much for recognition and what have you. I thoroughly, well it is exhilarating, but not because of the soldiers but I think that so many people would come out and watch the old and bold marching or riding along the street. You know it is a parade that is all it is, nothing to do with the war.
- What about the loyalty of the 39th blokes?**
- If we were any closer we would all be one man.
- 36:00 Very very deep, very deep. We have our Kokoda day, we take our wives down, we take two end loaders with us to shift all the dead Japs and we drink and play merry and Sherwood is our place, they have adopted us in Brisbane and that is the height of the year. That is the 39th in Queensland the get together with their wives
- 36:30 at Sherwood RSL and we are fêted there and we have a great day and anything goes secondary to that. Sherwood is our day, Kokoda Day. And we look forward to it every year and we get some beautiful speakers and they say all the right things you know. And each year the speakers are getting better, they are researching history a little and the last one I tell you what it rattled my nerves.
- 37:00 It was so damn close to the truth it wasn't funny you know and it was you know you get out there and the son comes along and he is proud to be my son and he takes over from me, he marches on Anzac Day because I can't walk the distance, I ride in a jeep. He takes me to the Sherwood and he looks after me and he brings me home, he has a couple of drinks
- 37:30 and he whistles off to wife, his wife comes and gets him. He is one of the boys. He is now an associate of 39th battalion and I feel a lot of sons who are in it are going to take over when us old fellas drop off our perch you know and it will go on, hopefully. But no we are a very very close group. Couldn't get any closer. It is a great feeling. The mateship runs
- 38:00 so big, so big. It doesn't mater if you know the person or not he was a 39th. One of the nicest things that happened to me. There is two of them really but I will tell you about one. I was travelling across the Nullarbor Plain in the Indian Pacific and sitting there with Beth and I said, "I might go to the club car and have a beer," she said, "Ok I will be down shortly I am just reading this book," so I went down to the club car. There was one person sitting in that club
- 38:30 car with a beer in his hand, oh he looked like he was ready to have a punch up, you know he looked angry. So I sat a couple of seats away and I was going to get a drink and I was just thinking about and this bloke said, "Don't like sitting with other people hey," and I said, "I don't mind if I'm asked, I will sit with anybody," and he said, "Come and sit with me," and I thought gees he's in a bad mood this bloke.
- 39:00 So anyhow I go and sit with him, rather attentively if I might add, he looked a bit ferocious to me and he said, "Do you drink?" And I said, "I have the occasional beer," and he said, "Were you in the army?" And I said, "Yeah I was in the army." he said, "Who were you with?" And I said, "39th battalion," and he jumped up like I had shot him and shot through you see. And he comes back with three stubbies, he puts two in front of me and he puts the other one beside himself and he says, "Drink half a stubby,"
- 39:30 so I drunk half a stubby as I was told to do, I was a good soldier and did what I was told to do. And he said, "Right let's drink to the health of the 39th Battalion." I never knew that man from a bar of soap and he wasn't a 39th man he was from some other army group and he was so proud to me, he said he was so proud to meet a live 39th Battalion man. Now that made me feel absolutely you know, blew out. And that happened
- 40:00 to me twice.

INTERVIEW ENDS