

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Stanley Barcham - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:31 **Okay Stan we're recording now, can you give us a brief introduction please about your life, starting from where you were born?**

I was born in Leeds England in 1920. 16th of November 1920.

01:00 I left England when I was eight to come to Australia with my Mum and Dad and brother. Therefore I haven't got a great knowledge of England. In fact I am more Australian than English of course. We came here, we started in Sandringham. And Dad started a little business, watch making business,

01:30 in Sandringham. And things were pretty grim because we had got into the parts of the Depression at that time and work wasn't easy to get. And I can imagine Dad struggling from one thing to another and poor old Mum. We had a little place in Francis Street, which was a little weatherboard place. But we always had a meal on the table that was the main thing.

02:00 And I am the eldest of three brothers. I have got my youngest, Peter he is up in Queensland now, and I and then there is Geoffrey and Kenneth, and as I say I am the eldest. And unfortunately

02:30 now poor old Geoff and Ken the two in the middle are in wheelchairs. Have been for about thirty-five, forty years. With what they say is MS [multiple sclerosis], I don't know what it is and neither do they, but that's what they call it for something to call it. They are both in homes now and I don't know how long they are going to last, it is hard to say.

03:00 But of course now that my eyes have gone on me I can't drive the car so I get very little chance to go and see them.

**Stan I will have to.**

Well I started we went into camp at Rokeby with the 46th Battalion, that was the beginning when I joined up,

03:30 then I went to Darley camp, then I became the 39th Battalion and did most of the training in Darley. And then in the beginning of 1940 I suppose it would be they took us to Bonegilla

04:00 and from there we went as far as I can remember to the ship, the Aquitania and headed for New Guinea. And from there of course we were at the Seven Mile Drome [Port Moresby] and that's where it all began.

**What did you do after that?**

Well we had quite a time in

04:30 New Guinea. We did a lot of digging holes, that's where the name digger comes from I think. Drome defence and all of that sort of thing.

05:00 What will I say? We did a bit of unloading the ships that came in, we used to go down there and help unload them in groups. We I am trying to make this into a story that makes sense.

05:30 **Okay Stan you're probably still giving us a little bit too much detail for now. What happened after that?**

Yeah? Okay well we went to the Kokoda Track. Started off at Koitaki, one of the big places up there of the owners up there, I don't know what that was. They turned it into a hospital

06:00 eventually. And we headed for there and from there on we were sent up the Kokoda Trail in groups. I got, I suppose you want the long story short? I got up as far as Deniki

- 06:30 and that's where I got wounded in the leg here. And came back thanks to the angels they call the fuzzy-wuzzies, they brought me back. And I seemed to have got over that pretty well because it wasn't long before I went to Sanananda and Buna and Gona.
- 07:00 Whatever. And in that area I finished up getting malaria of course and got taken out of there, and basically about the strength of it. Because when I got back to Moresby they put
- 07:30 me on the hospital ship Wanganella and I went back to Sydney, and that's about it.
- Excellent.**
- There is not much detail in that though.
- No that's all right we are just looking for an introduction now we will go into a lot more detail very shortly.**
- Oh I see.
- I take it you actually were part of the battles in Sanananda, Buna and Gona?**
- Yeah.
- You fought in all three?**
- Well yeah. You wonder sometimes with the fighting business.
- 08:00 The fighting part of it because you never see your enemy often, and then they say, "Right we're getting out of here." And you get out of that stinking fox hole and walk back and think where are we going now you know? I often think
- 08:30 people that you meet, fellow you meet. Now I came home in a Hudson bomber from there, miserable as you can get from malaria of course but there was a young American fellow, he must have been younger than me, I don't know, but he used to worry about me. He used to worry that I, he used to say, "Are you all right now? Are you right?" and he would see that I got out of the aircraft at Moresby
- 09:00 and he took great care of me and so on. Amazing isn't it? I didn't know him from a bar of soap but he was very attentive. He should have been in the medical set-up I think because he would have been a fine fellow, that's just by the way.
- That's fantastic, shall we just go back to the,**
- Beginning.
- 09:30 **Beginning yes. Tell us about your parents, their background, what they did.**
- As I said Dad had a little shop in Sandringham, Mum was a very devoted Christian lady I must admit. And of course being an adventurous young lad the only thought that came into your head was great we will be able to get into the army and go here, there and everywhere, all
- 10:00 of the ideas that you get.
- Your father was he in the First World War?**
- Yes.
- Well tell us about his service in the First World War?**
- Well he was the 5th Norfolk regiment and he served in Egypt and Palestine and that sort of thing. And when he returned to England. Of course a darn sight different situation than it is in Leeds and
- 10:30 poor old Dad he suffered badly with the chilblains after being out of there. And that's when he said to Mum, "Look we have got to get out of here, this climate will kill me." And they booked for America Dad and Mum, but they came into a quota system with the Americans and so that's how we finally, Dad said, "We have got to go somewhere" and so
- 11:00 we came to Australia. That's all there, I don't know what they did, I was only eight years of age. And that's how we really came to Australia.
- Can you tell us about what your dad would have told you in his war stories?**
- Well he was to do with poison gas. He was a sergeant and I don't know,
- 11:30 they all had gas masks and everything, you wouldn't think they would take them to Egypt with them would you but they had. Whether they ever struck any or not I don't know. That's all he ever told me about it. I have got photos of him on a camel, under a sphinx. He went to Jerusalem sort of thing, with Allenby's men.
- 12:00 Allenby's Force. And from there I think the war came to an end and Dad went home. As far as I know this is brief because it is hard to remember what he did tell me to be candid. Few years ago you know.

Poor old Dad, he has been gone about forty years now.

12:30 What else do you want to know?

**Did you dad find it tough during the Depression?**

Yes I think they did find it tough.

**Can you tell us more about that?**

Well I was only going to school and I didn't know much about it myself. What went on with the family, regards with work and that, you didn't know much about that, you just came home and your dinner was on the table

13:00 and you just helped with washing up and all of this sort of business. Went out to play, only a nipper you know. But I did, Mum you could tell that Mum was having a struggle though because of the financial situation. They used to get things from different neighbours and that, they were very good to us. But as I say we always had a meal on the table which was pretty good,

13:30 and I think that a lot of this was due to the prayers of my mother.

**What's your background, you're Protestant?**

Yeah, Brethren Assemblies. Yes poor old Mum was very genuine. Of course we being kids, we went to Sunday

14:00 school and all of that sort of thing and knew the basic truth of the scriptures. But as I say you're young in those days and didn't think a great deal of it, should have done I suppose. I knew that mother was always a mother of prayer. And there is more things brought by prayer than this world

14:30 ever dreams of you know and I can see that in a lot of my experiences in New Guinea. But I didn't realise it at the time, it was years after I thought gee how did I get out of so and so and that sort of thing. Where are we now?

15:00 **We're talking about the Depression, I am not, just for now I would prefer not to go towards the war. I would like to just find out a bit more about your experiences in life.**

Yeah well it was a struggle for Mum and Dad but being a youngster of about eight you weren't familiar with what was actually going on. You went to school and came home as I say.

**Did you see any sussos? Sustenance workers?**

15:30 No I wouldn't know what they were those days, the school was only up the road anyway. I know other than walking down the beach or playing around that's all we knew. There was no money for bikes or anything those days. And I know Dad's little shop, I did a little work down there for him

16:00 painting it and one thing or another. It was only a little shop, how he managed or what he actually earned I have no idea, I don't think it would be much though because things were a bit grim as I say. But he did a bit of wood carving at one stage, how long and where that was I have no idea, but that up there you will see the initials, you see the

16:30 carved initials up there? Dad did those. So he was pretty good at wood carving and that sort of thing. He told me once that he did the pews of a church, you know on the pews of a church sometimes at the end they have a rose or flower set into the woodwork well they're hand carved, and he did a lot of those. He must have done

17:00 I don't know where. No idea, they would have to be before they were made into pews I should imagine. I have heard him talk about how he walked from Sandringham to the city every day I couldn't imagine that. Because they never had the money for the train see? But that may have been the time that he was doing the wood carving I don't know.

17:30 I know he never had any illnesses or anything. Poor old Dad I never remember Dad getting sick.

**Oh you have cut your leg, pause for a moment.**

How did I do that? Where are we?

**During the Depression years**

18:00 **what would you do for entertainment? You and your brothers?**

Oh nothing I can't remember anything like that. We used to play footy with the kids in the street, made huts in the garden you know. things like that. I don't think we went out very much. I don't remember. I think we went to the pictures,

18:30 later on when things got a little bit better we used to go to Saturday matinees and things like that. Yeah, you know the theatre?

**Sure.**

Sandringham theatre which is no longer there now, that would be about threepence to get in.

**Do you remember the films?**

Now you're asking me something mate I think Tarzan and things like that you know. They used to have the

19:00 series that go for weeks, and they used to have a series every Saturday you know . And when we could we would go down I never remember going very often but we would sometimes go down. And then there was the footy, used to go to the football. What we used to do, we would get lemonade bottles and sell them,

19:30 used to get threepence I think. Then we would go and get threepence of stale cakes at Adams, which were only day old cakes. Then we would go down to the football ground and we would climb over the back end of the toilets and get in for nothing you see? I remember that. Them were the days mate. That's what you did more or less for a bit of company you

20:00 know. In the summer you went swimming and all of that sort of thing, go down every day during the holidays, go down to the beach. They talk about all of this sun stuff to put on you for the sun, we never had anything like that. We used to go down and get a bit red, so we would leave it for a while and put a shirt on for a while, never worried you much.

20:30 Although when we first came out from England, this would be 1928 I can remember the first summer I got really burnt, you know you're like this oh God. I will never forget that, but you did that once, you didn't do it again, you woke up to it you know, finish up with your back like a tomato you don't do that again. But as for the

21:00 business they have got now, you have to be careful with the sun and have hat and glasses on, we never had anything like that, but we had a lot of fun just the same. Yeah.

**What about girls were they an important part of your life?**

Not at that stage. We had a girl I remember a girl on the other side of the road and when we

21:30 used to come home from school we would be kicking the footy from one edge of the street from the other and she used to join in. She could kick a footy as well as we did. Then if we went down the beach and went for walks or whatever she would come with us, never thought anything about it. Take a bit of dinner, and I had a little four wheel truck and we would cart that with us.

22:00 Never went great distances, but we knew where there was a little park you know, where we could sit in the shade and have a bit of lunch or something like that. And we enjoyed ourselves in the honest sort of, well the innocent sort of way that we lived in those days. I am talking about 28 to 30, years that is.

22:30 They were pretty innocent years. I met my wife really early in the piece, this would be 1936 or something like that. Like the girl that used to play footy, she used to be around. And Mum would have her to lunch or tea or something like that.

23:00 And then one of us would walk her home, she lived in Hampton, but there was nothing in it. And that went on for a few years, and I remember nineteen, when the war came the last time we were in Darley camp before we were in New Guinea or went up that way that she came with Mum and Dad it was a stinking hot day and we had a

23:30 little bit of a, Mum brought a cake and that sort of thing. Gee I don't know. The cake got a little bit soft that day I remember, but however. I used to write Mum and ask how she was, but as for

24:00 writing to her I never thought of it, funny isn't it? Yet we were married for sixty-five years.

**Now some of the schools you went to?**

Sandy state school.

**Before Sandringham where did you go?**

Oh I went to Harehilds in Leeds but that was only in the very early days,

24:30 that would be, oh I went to school up until I was eight I suppose. That would be about two years there I suppose. That's about I can remember of that, I can't remember much of the school.

**You must have fond memories of Sandringham School? That's a state school isn't it?**

Don't know about fond, yeah it was a pretty good school and as I say it was just up the road from our house.

25:00 Then I went to Brighton Tech and did a bit of art class there. I would have liked to have done more but money was tight in those days. Mum couldn't afford to keep me going any longer. Had a little job at the

end of the, after school, went to the fish shop and used to take

- 25:30 orders on my bike. Which I had bought, how about that I bought a bike. But I paid it off with taking fish orders to different people. Five pound nineteen and six for a Healy bike, wasn't bad brand new, how about that.

**Sounds like a good deal.**

Well it was a lot

- 26:00 of money in those days. Five pound nineteen and six and I paid it off at, oh I got seventy-seven and six a week working for the fish shop. Which wasn't bad I suppose really, you would get down after school and you would take the orders and off you go. Of course they had to be done lively because they were for tea time you know.

- 26:30 They were all delivered. Used to wrap it up in white paper and then they would put newspaper around it. Where do you go from here?

**Well tell us about the rabbits, rabbits were an important part of the Depression years?**

- 27:00 **Food, what sort of food would you eat? Rabbits of course were a part of it?**

Yeah we had rabbit. But I wouldn't be able to say what we had really other than knowing that there was always a meal on the table, we never missed out. That's for sure. Mum got lambs fry and things like that. Of course in those days coming from England

- 27:30 mum went to the shop and asked for a bullocks heart. Because in England you could get a bullocks heart and that was quite a delicacy, anyway when we went there they said, "What do you want them for we chuck them out." So we used to get them for nothing at one stage. Then they woke up to it and it cost you about threepence and sixpence for a heart and so on. Then they cut them out all together.

- 28:00 But I remember that the likes of lambs fry and bullock heart and so on. Bullock heart is quite nice, I would eat bullocks heart now, it is quite a delicacy. Nice tender meat in it. But how Mum prepared it and that I wouldn't know anything about that. Vegies of course there was always a few vegies about. We had an old

- 28:30 gardener stayed with us for a while and he used to bring home a few vegies and we had a few he started growing in the garden and that so that was a help. What else do you want to know?

**What about bread and dripping?**

Fried bread and dripping, fried bread was good I used to like that coming home from school had bread and

- 29:00 dripping and salt on it. I didn't mind that it was all right. Mum used to, of course you kept all of the drippings off the meats and things in those days. Yeah. And then of course we went to our Sunday school every Sunday and got up to a bit of mischief as you usually do.

- 29:30 **And what was Sunday school like?**

It was all right, I didn't mind it. In those days of course it was boring as far as you were concerned, you had to be dressed nicely. I remember Mum bought me a blue suit and I went down on my bike, I hadn't had the bike a long time and I whizzed around a corner where they had a little bit of gravel over the road,

- 30:00 and off I came and took the knee out of the pants and did that cause some strife. Oh dear.

**Your brothers what did they do before the war? Were they older than you or younger?**

No I was the eldest and as I say Peter he is now up in Queensland,

- 30:30 he was the younger. But he was in, he was the go-getter of the family, he had a go at everything. He went onto the machine business like motor cars and that and engine reconditioning and so forth he was pretty good at that. And

- 31:00 then he went into cladding, you know weatherboard cladding, aluminium windows, yeah Peter is a pretty smart guy, no doubt about him. And then he built this place up in Queensland he built a house in Harvey Bay and then sold it and then bought this place in Torbanlea, which is out of Maryborough Queensland, about forty kilometres inland. I have

- 31:30 been up there a couple of times but I wouldn't like to actually live there because although it is a nice property and, it's too far out. Nobody around much you know, but he doesn't seem to mind. He liked Queensland, I didn't like it I had a couple of years up there.

**Can you tell us how when the war started**

- 32:00 **what you knew of the build up? Did you have any idea the war was going to happen?**

Dad filled me in for what I didn't know. Oh yes you got all of the news used to get the BBC from London and so on you know and things looked pretty grim you could tell.

32:30 I remember going down once, I was about seventeen or eighteen I suppose, and the fellow at the recruiting office told me to go home to my mother. I was insulted actually. But I joined up eventually and went off to camp.

**So before the war did you know anything about the**

33:00 **First World War at all?**

Only what Dad told me, I had a few war books. World War I books that Dad got me and I read them about Gallipoli and the Somme and all of that sort of thing, shocking war. And I used to think to myself gosh I hope the next one is not going to be like this. Which I reckon that World War I was the worst of the lot for loss of life.

33:30 **And that didn't deter you in any way?**

No you never thought about it, you thought more it will be a chance to get out and go around. Well there was never any money for travelling around anyway in the early days. And an opportunity to join the army and see the world sort of business was what you thought.

34:00 So that was all right.

**Was the spirit of Anzac or Anzac Day for that matter was that an important event for you before the war?**

Oh yes I thought that that was a terrible thing that Anzac business.

**You didn't like it?**

Well they made a shemozzle of the whole thing didn't they? They landed at the wrong beach and all of this sort of thing and I thought God help the poor buggers, it

34:30 was shocking.

**What about Anzac Day?**

Well Anzac Day I am talking before I joined up. Oh you would go down and stand and listen to cenotaph and things like that. That's the local you never went into the city of course and they used to have, what's his name silly old twit.

35:00 Doctor used to come around in his old World War I uniform telling us all about Anzac at school and then we had a bloke play the Last Post. And then he would say, "Now what are you kids doing on Saturday?" "Oh we're not doing much sir." "Well if you get down to the theatre you can get in for nothing." "Hooray!" he used to shout all of the kids to the theatre

35:30 Saturday afternoon. Oh dear, amazing isn't it? We used to look forward to him coming so we could get a trip to the theatre, he was a funny sort of an old twit. Funny thing when I joined up, you know you go to Lancock Street and you go for your medical and all of this, he was the one that was there.

36:00 Trying to think of his name.

**What about Empire, was the Empire important to you before the war?**

Britannia rules the waves and all of this sort of business, yeah sort of. We felt proud that we had a big navy and all of that sort of thing and all of those red parts on the atlas belonged to us.

36:30 Yeah that played a part in it, you were proud of your heritage, there is no doubt about that. And of course you were always a bit pig headed English. You woke up to that after a while.

**What about the monarchy?**

37:00 Oh the king and queen yeah. But more the dear old soul that has died now, King George. Yeah that played a part in it, you were proud of your heritage, there is no doubt about that. Wasn't it king and queen when the war broke out? They were a good couple, her father, like the king before him. Queen Mary was a stuck up old twit I always used to think but however. They did a good job during the war and stuck at it.

37:30 It was a shame when he died that was sad that was. But the Queen we have got now I don't know when she is going to give up she doesn't seem to want to does she? Who else has she got that's the question. Charles is about as good as nothing. He should have never had [Princess] Diana, I reckoned that ruined that girl's life.

38:00 She should have had nothing to do with the Royal family, that was a sad thing.

**With the newspapers and propaganda the government would put out films about things that were happening around the world? Did you know much about Adolph Hitler? Did you read**

**much about him in the newspapers?**

38:30 Oh yeah frighteningly so. God blimey, you used to think in those days that, how you would hate to live in Germany and have to do all of the things that the German youth had to do then. Join up and go to these "strength through joy" camps, God blimey. They had it tough those young fellows that were joining up in Germany.

39:00 But they really had a magnificent fighting force there is no doubt about it. But when you look back and think of how lax we were, shocking wasn't it?

**When did you decide to join the militia did you have to join it?**

No I just walked up and put my name down.

**When was this?**

39:30 Oh I suppose it was about 1939, 40. 39 it would be wouldn't it?

**When the war started?**

When the war started yeah.

**Tell us where you were the day the war started?**

I was in Sandringham.

**And what were you doing?**

Oh doing a bit of work I would think in those days.

40:00 I was working. I would be working in Sandringham then. I was in the painting and decorating and that sort of work. And I was getting about five pound nineteen and six a week then, something like that. Yeah I would be working then. That's one of the reasons you joined up to get away

40:30 from blooming old boss and that sort of thing. Out of the frying pan into the fire wasn't it?

**We will pause there for now.**

## Tape 2

00:31 **Okay Stan we're recording again, I would like to ask you now just a bit more about your pre war life, can you tell me when you were at school what kind of things did they teach you about the First World War?**

Mostly the Gallipoli they had at our school, that was about all. But not really much in the war.

01:00 It may do more now with the Second World War, but I don't think the youngsters heard much in those days, all they would have heard would be from their father I think.

**Did you have any, apart from your father, were there other men around that you knew either relatives or men in the street who had been involved in the First World War?**

Not many no because

01:30 we had come from England and we didn't know anybody really.

**There wasn't anybody that you saw, maybe amputees?**

No.

**Well what was your impression then, given that you went to Anzac Day and you learnt a little bit about it at school, what did you think happened in the First World War?**

Well you found out that we lost a lot of ships

02:00 and we had a lot of battles in Europe, we knew about that and Dad told me a bit about that. That the casualty rates were enormous and you wondered why this had to be. And one of the things that was mysterious was that Kaiser Wilhelm and them and the Queen were more or less relations. And you wondered how the Dickens do they get to the stage where they are

02:30 fighting one another. Hot heads. It's a shame isn't it?

**You say you learnt a little bit about Gallipoli from school?**

Yeah you learnt a bit about Gallipoli but not very much, not in the school curriculum, there was very little on war as I remember it. I learnt a little bit about Gallipoli and that was through my Dad

03:00 he would read me little bits that he would find. And that was the only time you really heard about it.

**Well given that the, tell me a bit more about what your father told you?**

Well you would ask him different things and he would be able to tell you.

03:30 Like Zeppelins, big air ships and I would say, "Well what did they do with them?" "Well some came over and bombed Britain." In their way of doing it, I don't know and I said, "Well they would be an easy thing to shoot down surely?" but whether they shot many down or not I don't know. And then you heard of Baron Richthofen and his flying circus.

04:00 His fighter aircraft, they were doing a great job and you were wondering how our boys were getting on. And you get the impression that the struggle went on, and although the Germans seemed to be better prepared than we were, which they usually were, we seemed to overcome it in some ways. Amazing isn't it?

04:30 **What do you mean overcome?**

They sort of overcome the deficiencies that they never had this or that, same as the Second World War you know? The desperate deficiencies we had in arms and ammunition and aircraft and all of that and yet we struggled to get through it is amazing isn't it?

05:00 So there you are.

**Did your father talk to you much about his own experience?**

Oh a little bit, not very much. As I say he was in the business with the gas, and that sort of thing. He knew several. He palled up with a few, they had a few Arabs in their area

05:30 where they were and they seemed to be pretty friendly sort of guys. He told me about the bloke that got into bed and there was a snake in his bed and he said how they had to ask him to keep very still and they grabbed the sheet and pulled it off and grabbed the snake you know, all of that sort of thing. And scorpions he told me about the scorpions

06:00 they had there. Not a very comfortable thought. And you wondered about these countries that had climates like New Guinea and that. God you think to yourself, I would hate to be there. The only thing about Egypt was, there was no trees, like in New guinea you had too many of them. They had it

06:30 pretty hard though I reckon in Egypt. But Dad didn't seem to mind the heat, he seemed to settle down pretty well to hot weather somehow. He always did. As I say I never saw Dad sick in his life until he got diabetes at the end of his life and that was the end of him. Pretty fit old boy he was. He never got

07:00 back to England, I think he would have loved to go back but he never did. Of course those were the days where the only way you would get back to England would be by ship and it would take about five weeks. Which was, that's reduced to days now. But no he never got back. He had a brother that was in the

07:30 flying corps as they knew it in World War I, the Royal Flying Corps but I never met him I don't know much about him.

**Well given what you heard from your father, having been to Anzac Day and what little you were taught at school, was your overall impression of the soldiers in World War I as heroic or was it a time of great tragedy?**

08:00 Yeah well they were heroic we thought but they had a tremendous amount to put up with other than the war, like the rain and the mud. It must have been shocking. We used to often think about that. It's all right to have a fighting force but it is nice to have them on good ground instead of mud and everything, I know

08:30 there is not many that have pleasant situations to fight in, but it seemed such a terrible waste of lives in like the trenches and things, they could fill up with water and you could drown in your own trench, a shocking thing I thought.

09:00 **Can I take you back a bit and can I ask you do you remember actually coming to Australia, the first time you arrived?**

Oh yeah I came out on the Largs Bay the ship the Largs Bay. There was me and my younger brother Ken and my mother because Dad came out with Mum's brother earlier. I suppose it was about six months or so earlier.

09:30 I suppose they came out to establish themselves to a certain extent. And we lived at Black Rock at one stage which is north of Sandringham. Don't know whether you know Sandringham or Black Rock do you?

**Yeah I do.**

Yeah we were there and then we found a little house as I say in Sandringham. Took a little while for them to settle in I would say poor old Mum and Dad.



10:00 Awful shock coming from England to Sandringham, it was very primitive in those days, I remember our street was sand it wasn't even formed in those days.

**When you arrived on the boat what was your first impression?**

That would be hard to say.

10:30 Looked a very orderly place, everything seemed to be, of course the sun was shining and it was a lovely day. And as far I was concerned I thought the ship trip was marvellous I loved every bit of it. I had a pair of shoes bought for me and some little horror threw one overboard I will never forget that Mum was very upset about that.

11:00 No that was a real good experience coming out on that ship. Travel is not like that now. That was travel, was like more or less a holiday all of the way. Because everything was so easy and everything, not so much now.

11:30 **Do you remember when you crossed the equator?**

No I don't remember that, but I believe they had a bit of a, some sort of a ceremony, but I was a kid I wouldn't know.

**Did you get a certificate?**

No not in those days that I know of. But I believe you do get that. As I haven't been that way

12:00 for many many years I don't know. But I liked the boat travel I reckoned it was beaut. I like to travel on anything that is about thirty-five thousand tonnes and over. Under that I am not so happy about.

**So when you first went to school here it must have**

12:30 **been quite a bit of a culture shock for you?**

Yeah. Things that used to get me was holidays, this time of the year there would be Bill and Jem and whatever the boys were and they used to say, "Well I am going on a holiday I am going to my aunty's you know?" and I used to think to myself, "God I haven't got a relation in the country. Nobody and yet all of those kids can go to their aunties and uncles,"

13:00 and, yeah, I will never forget that. Couldn't do much about that though could you?

**Did it make you feel a bit lonely?**

Yeah you did feel a bit lonely.

**Were you homesick for England?**

No no I never felt homesick but I did feel that times of holidays where this kid and that kid would go and see their aunty and all of this business which I didn't.

13:30 Thought it would have been lovely, somebody that lived up the country that you knew. But it never turned out that way. Well naturally there was no other relations here. Mum was Irish and Dad was English how about that? Strike a light.

14:00 **In what way?**

Oh they are real go-getters, I know Mum, if it hadn't been for Mum I don't think Dad would have got on as well as he did because she was the one, she would be the one behind, the driving force you know.

**What religion was your mother?**

Oh she was Brethren Assemblies.

14:30 In Hampton, we went down there. Oh there would be people and I found, I still am Brethren and as I say you know what they're like when something comes up when you lose your wife or you're very ill or something like that. They come to the fore. I remember the shock of Mum's death, my wife's death came

15:00 there was a couple of them came from our church with a great big glass bowl and it was lunch, dinner you know, beautiful steak and kidney thing, and they didn't have time to put it into the plastic things that they have. They have a bank at the chapel where they have dinners for people like myself would be. And

15:30 they brought it just straight out of, wrapped it up in towels and brought it over it was piping hot. I thought it was beautiful to do that you know. Stick it in the car and come all of the way over here with it. I enjoyed that. But that's the sort of thing you find, they pull together. They have been marvellous, like this lady who is going to have me for tea tonight. They're wonderful people.

16:00 Thought we would like to have you for tea before Christmas, how about that? Because I usually say to

them now don't forget cut up my meat for me won't you or I will make a show of myself. Oh there is nothing worse then when you get half way through a piece of meat and you think you have cut it, oh God.

**So when you were a boy did your mum take you to church every Sunday?**

16:30 Yeah well that was, we were force-fed. That was the early days you know how kids are yeah we went to church but we used to play up a bit I am afraid, nothing to my credit. However that was, we used to have one bloke who used to love climbing on the pine tree out in front of the church. And his poor old mother used to be standing looking at him wondering if he was going to come down, head first that is.

17:00 Little sod never did, used to climb up like a little monkey they were. I suppose that happens with all kids, they start off you know, you get discipline at your ordinary school and I suppose you think the lax discipline at the church is good you know? Gives you a chance to play up a bit. But you get over it.

17:30 When you grow up you get a bit of sense, sure do. Where are we up to?

**I was talking to you about religion and I was going to ask when you were at school were there many different kinds of religions?**

Oh well there could have been of course you wouldn't know. We used to have the religious instructions. Dear old Mrs Daniel used to come around

18:00 I think it was every Tuesday morning, something like that .Dear old soul she used to take us. There again you see, we were horrible kids, some of us would nick out and get in the garden and sit in the garden or play alleys out, we wouldn't be seen and the poor old dear would be speaking to

18:30 whoever was left in the class. And we didn't realise as I do now what a dear old soul she was. You know they're pretty good, they keep on regardless which is a marvellous thing. No you look back and think of those dear old souls.

**Do you remember any conflict with the Catholics?**

Oh yeah

19:00 we used to have a bit of a go, but not much, not like Ireland. We were pretty good really. I don't remember many Catholics at our school because we had the Catholic school on top of the hill anyway so I don't really know what, no I couldn't remember any actual fights between us. You had a go at them and that was about it.

19:30 **Did you tease each other though?**

Yeah, Catholic dogs sit on logs all of this sort of business but you didn't have any idea what you were talking about really. You didn't have any idea what Catholics meant, nor did they have any idea what we were. I think it was just a sort of thing that was natural. I can never understand how they get so wound up in Ireland and that, it is pretty serious isn't it?

20:00 **What about different races?**

No not in those days we were a white Australia then. No I don't remember any foreign kids in the school. Of course this was early days, this would be 1930's, 34.

20:30 **Do you remember any different races around the area ever?**

No I don't remember them. Oh we had the Rubensteins that had the grocer's shop next, a fruiterer's shop next to where Dad had his shop. They were nice enough. Young Rubenstein God he was a terror of a kid, always giving his mother a terrible lot of strife but they were decent

21:00 you could go in there and they would give you a fair go. Yeah they were all right. And the Chinese laundry a bit further down. This is early Sandringham I am talking about. And I think he brought in a watch or something for Dad to fix and Dad fixed it for him and there wasn't much to it and he let it go you see, well we were never without,

21:30 what do you call it? Chinese ginger. You know little jar, with a little lid on it full of sugar and Chinese ginger. Get that every Christmas, it was nice I used to like that. Yeah they are very nice people when you get to know them, well he was anyway. Of course that's all gone now.

22:00 Now, where are we up to now?

**Well we were talking before about the things that you knew about World War II before the actual war broke out, can you remember any of the newsreels that you saw at that time?**

Yeah well of course I had aunts and uncles over in England and we used to worry

22:30 about the bombing and all of that sort of thing. Because Dad's sister she was in London and the aunties were in Leeds, but not very much did they have to say. Because women don't say as much as men do, and they were mostly aunts. Didn't know any of the others.

23:00 But you worried and all of that sort of thing and you wondered about it. In fact at one point I thought gee I wish I had the brains of a decent fighter pilot I would join up and go over you know. But that wasn't in my lot I don't think.

**Do you remember any newsreels or posters encouraging people to join up?**

Yeah, your country needs you.

23:30 Oh yeah all of those sort of thing were out . Amazing how they used to have the recruiting drives and all of the fellows would go and we would see them all march away.

**Describe a recruiting drive, what were they like?**

Oh well there'd be recruiting drives as to Australia needs you, think of those over there fighting for you, you should join them.

24:00 **Is this a bloke on a soap box?**

Yeah let's get this war over and done with. And he made a lot of sense I must admit. And of course we as young fellows, I though he was right you know? I suppose the Germans kids were getting the same thing to them too.

**Where did this happen?**

Oh Sandringham.

24:30 I remember them having a big do outside the station there, where the people could gather around.

**What sort of things would he say?**

Oh much as I said, Australia needs you and that we want to get this war over as soon as we can and get our fellows back. It was more to the effect that you should join up to fight for your country.

25:00 The more of you go the sooner you all come back, you know all of that sort of business. I don't know whether it worked out that way or not. And the posters they put up.

**What sort of posters?**

These, your country needs you sort of thing. Some bright characters

25:30 used to write along the cemetery wall, "Wake up your country needs you!" Yeah , had that written on Melbourne cemetery I think, where is that Hawthorne Road isn't it that one on the corner there? The old Melbourne cemetery.

**I know the one on Hawthorne Road.**

Yeah well that's the one I remember seeing it, "Wake up your country needs you!" not a very bright thing to do but you know what they're like.

26:00 You get graffiti characters now. Silly isn't it really?

**Do you think the writing was aimed at the people walking past or the people buried inside?**

Yeah you wonder that don't you? I think it was, they were onto the join up sort of thing, I think that was the general impression.

26:30 **Funny place to write it.**

Yeah. Like that film, did you ever see the film Four Feathers?

**Sergei [interviewer] has seen it but not me.**

That was a good film Four Feathers. Where they all join up and this one fellow he wasn't too keen he was a very studious

27:00 type of character and his friends the other, sent him feathers. And then he finally joins up and he went over to Sudan this was the time of General Gordon and all of this type of thing you know? And how he gets himself to the stage where he is a native, you know he wears a turban and he has got his

27:30 lips, bit weird sort of character. And the things he got into, God blimey. And he found out all sorts of things by being a good listener and they only thought he was just an ordinary native dog as they call it and he went right through the war, and he got many a

28:00 thrashing and all of this sort of thing. If they had only known it was him. They didn't know it was him, and how he finds out certain things from the Arabs and that they were going to attack the British positions. And he hears these different things and how he sort of portrays it to the British in some way

28:30 and he mentions it you see? And they tell him to buzz off you know but they take it in and think about it

and then he confides in them who he is and it was quite a good yarn that, Four Feathers. Good movie.

**Okay. Can I just remind you to be careful with the cord there?**

29:00 What is it playing up?

**No just be careful not to play with it because it records every little squeak.**

Haven't had any further trouble with it? You wouldn't know until you play it back I suppose?

**We can hear it as it goes through.**

Oh I see.

**Now given that there was a lot of enticement and encouragement to join up, you were pretty keen to join up weren't you?**

29:30 Yeah well I was going to join up anyway. It was one of those things that I thought oh yes I will join up with the rest of them. We should all do our bit. Dad's been in it and he would think me pretty awful if I didn't go in it. You felt that kind of thing with your family sort of thing, especially your Dad that was in the earlier war.

30:00 That was easy enough. He was with EEF which was the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. World War I. I had a lot of those stamps, I don't know what happened to them they would be worth a fortune now, that's beside the point.

**Well you tried to join up before you were eighteen?**

30:30 Yeah, "Go back to your mother." He needn't have said that really because I was old enough to join up. However, he said that. But it wasn't long after that that I went and joined up anyway.

**And what was your parents' reaction to you joining up?**

Oh you know what mothers are, she was very upset and Dad said I would be all right.

31:00 It is hard on parents anyway because they don't know what's going to happen, well none of us know what is going to happen really, but it was hard on them. And of course I was working then and bringing in what I could to help the family which was

31:30 something they were going to lose.

**Where were you working at that point?**

Locally, because I was in the painting and that sort of thing and you got jobs all over the place.

**Just odd jobs?**

Yeah.

**Labouring and so on?**

No I was in the painting business but I had only just started sort of thing. And oh well

32:00 you know that the ones that start off they get all of the rubbing down and the dust and the cleaning and all of that sort of thing. And I was quite glad to get out of it. Yeah.

**You said your father took you aside at that point and told you a bit more about the war, what sort of things did he tell you?**

Now you're asking me something.

32:30 I can't remember what he actually said to me. But I think he was quite proud that I had joined up. He said something like, "Keep your head down." This sort of thing. Poor old Dad,

33:00 he was a very quiet sort of a character poor old Dad and you never really know deep down what he is thinking. I suppose it was, he was wondering how things were going to go as you all do.

**If you can't remember exactly what he told you, can you tell us what kinds of things he told you? What was he trying to put across to you?**

33:30 Well it is such a long time I am darned if I can tell you that even I couldn't say really. I couldn't remember what Dad said to me. Other than just wishing me a safe time and all of that sort of thing.

**Did he tell you any horror stories?**

No, no.

34:00 Dad usually told you as it was. Yeah.

**Did he give you tips?**

Oh he gave me tips as regards to looking after yourself, as regards your daily washing and all of this sort of thing. Do it as much as you can, sometimes you can't get to the water.

34:30 To wash your face or your hands or whatever, do it as much as you could, the usual thing. But I think you already worked that out for yourself and you took every opportunity you could cleansing yourself if you could get at it. Especially in New Guinea.

**Did he give you tips on how to stay alive?**

35:00 No nothing like that that I can remember, poor old Dad never said much.

**Did he give you any tips on how to deal with the army?**

No, I don't think he did no. I can't remember that.

**I am just interested because it is very unusual that blokes from the First World War ever said anything about their**

35:30 **experience.**

As I say he told very little I know Dad told us little bits about his, he said what amused him once was the Frenchman trying to get on board the train at Cairo, and they were never too happy with the French, the British. Every door he came to they kept him off you see, they kept pushing him off and as the train was going it finally got the stage where he couldn't get on it at all, they left him behind.

36:00 Something he had done to them I think it was. He had been a bit smart alec to one of the women in the British forces, must have been a Red Cross nurse or something like that and they took offence to it and so they kept him off all the way along the carriage and he missed the train all together. Yes they weren't too happy about the French.

36:30 Don't think they're too happy about them now either, from the last World War. War is a horrible thing.

**When you joined up what did you think was going to happen to you? Where did you think you would end up?**

Well you were never that far ahead, you lived from day to day

37:00 and training and all of that sort of business.

**I am talking about really before you joined up, before you actually went in, before you were called up? Did you think you were going to be sent to France or Germany or? Did you think you would be fighting Germans?**

No you wouldn't know that you just took every day as it came which is the only way you can. Whatever

37:30 you had to do for that day you did it from dawn to dusk. No every day, excuse me. Used to be funny at where was it, Rokeby camp, it was only really beginning to be a camp and they had nothing in the way of facilities. But they had an oval and they had a showers that belonged to the footballers,

38:00 whoever used the oval and all of that. All cold water mind you. So we had to get a shower somehow so we used to run around the oval and our towels and that and one would strip off and get in the shower you know, and come out all dry, "Right oh." And then the other bloke would be running around and he would get in.

38:30 Get up a bit of a sweat going around the oval, only way we could combat the cold water I have never done it since. They were the good old days.

**It would be bracing.**

Yeah I reckon, yeah. Funny thing I met the, they had a band that used to wake us up of a morning, get you out of bed and that and I met

39:00 the chap after the war, he was in decorator supply company in Hampton. "God," I said, "You're the bloke that used to wake me up with that damn bugle of yours of a morning." And the band would come up and down the.

**How long was it between the time that you joined up to the time that you were actually called up?**

39:30 I don't think it was very long. What you mean joined up the army? Went into camp and then went away.

**Did the day that you joined up did you go into camp the same day?**

No I don't think so because we went to, do you know Lancock Street Brighton, there was a big drill hall there.

40:00 You had to go there for tests, how you were and everything, had any deficiencies as regards to, had any illnesses, all down the illnesses and all of this sort of business. And they fitted you for, no I don't think

they did. I don't know whether that was where they fitted us with our clothing or not,

- 40:30 I forget now. Because I think we went to the camp and had that, I am not sure about that. It is too far to remember because if I went to Rokeby camp that was only a beginners camp, you know one of these, more or less like getting ready for a picnic, they had a few tents up and things like that.
- 41:00 Bit of a cookhouse and that and as the chaps came in and so the camp started to grow. But whether we got our uniforms there or not I have no idea. I can't remember that far. I have no idea where the uniforms came from. I remember going through and getting measured for all of the boots, the socks, the pants and uniforms. Where that was I have no idea. Could have been in Lancok Street I have no idea.
- 41:30 **Okay we'll just pause there we're at the end of a tape.**

## Tape 3

- 00:36 **All right from the time that you were called up where did you first go for training?**
- Rokeby. That's that little camp I was telling you about. We weren't there that long, that's up near Seymour and then we went to Darley camp which is back at
- 01:00 (UNCLEAR).
- Okay well tell us first of what you were doing at Rokeby what sort of training?**
- Oh this is going back. This would be the trying to knock sense into you, which is your right and which is your left you know, marching and all that.
- You had a uniform by then?**
- Must have had, yes I think we had our uniforms by then.
- 01:30 **How did you feel about your uniform?**
- Oh it was all right but it was always a bit of a slovenly sort of uniform I reckon. If they had brought out something more like the English battle dress I would have been better off I think. That was the top, the buttons here you know like a jacket and pants, that was a good idea that.
- 02:00 But ours, come right down with those stinking big pockets, horrible looking things always looked slovenly, always looked like they wanted to be ironed or something. The Americans had the right idea, and the Germans, beautiful uniforms they had. But well a uniform doesn't mean a thing I suppose.
- Were they practical though?**
- Yeah they were practical all right. You could go through scrub and all sorts of things and it
- 02:30 very seldom would they tear. The material was good stuff, it wouldn't tear or anything. I never found it did.
- So after Rokeby you went to Darley, tell us about Darley and what you did there?**
- That was a well established camp with a big Nissen hut, was it Nissen hut?
- 03:00 Yeah I think you call it Nissen hut. Not those half round things, they were horrible things I never went into those anyway. Yeah it was a big camp Darley. With its, excuse me. Most of the, well all of the camps were set on concrete blocks. Because I went up,
- 03:30 well years and years after the war and they just had the concrete blocks all sitting there I don't know whether they dug them all up or not, but they were the bases of the huts that was a good camp. The only thing was, it was a bit higher than the surrounding, the hill went down from the camp and it was a bit windswept. You know you got a wind
- 04:00 and you got all of the dirt and everything come through. Most camps are the same when there was a wind. Because they have got to be kept clean and nothing grows on the parade ground and when the wind comes up you get all of the dust blowing into your huts, yeah.
- And what were the living conditions like?**
- 04:30 Well I thought they were not too bad. Because we had palliasses, you know the bags full of hay, big things. And you went and stuffed them full of hay and spread it out and they were good. Later on we got the little camp things, they were all right.
- Stretchers?**
- Yeah the little stretchers, they were good. But I never had any trouble with the sleeping conditions.

- 05:00 With any of them, I think it is a case if you're tired you will sleep anywhere, when you're young it seems to be the case, it is different now. You can fall asleep here listening to something, wake up and go into bed, you know? You go into bed and damned if you can sleep. It makes me mad that, lying there you know?
- 05:30 Twelve o'clock at night you're still lying there. They were good I enjoyed, that's where I reckon they should get that national service going. You take us young blokes a lot of us, we were pretty well behaved I suppose. There was always those that weren't. And you get into camp and you're under orders and you do as you're told
- 06:00 and you learn to look after yourself, you're told how to make your bed up and how to fold your blankets when you get up in the morning, and leave them there and the inspection officer comes through and says, "Hey get that bed made so and so!" And all of this thing, aggravating I know but when you go through it you realise this thing is doing me a lot of good. And it does it makes a big difference to your life, a bit of discipline.
- 06:30 Of course there is always the idiot who sort of overdoes it you know. You get them like that but you can ride over that once you get to the stage where you feel as though you're beginning to learn something. We didn't learn enough though that was the problem, that was the tragedy of the whole thing. They once asked me if I wanted to be a corporal, and I said, "No there are fellows in this unit far more experienced than I am."
- 07:00 You get fellows that lived in the country where they are used to a rifle like they would be a walking stick. Shoot any darn thing. And there was us that came in and never saw a rifle until the day we went into camp. Wouldn't have a clue. I remember the business when we all pulled it apart and everything. It was only the first time we had ever learnt of anything like that.
- 07:30 And we were in, the war was well on the way then. And here we are fiddling around .and when we get to New Guinea there they bring in the Bren gun, in boxes. I had never saw a Bren gun. And you're supposed to pull them out and use them. It is like buying something and they forgot to give you the instructions you know. God it used to annoy you.
- 08:00 They, oh these are the sort of things that they were far behind and it used to worry you that here we are going to meet these Japanese, and they told us how they all had glasses and couldn't shoot straight and all of this nonsense. What we didn't realise, well we did after a while, was that they were professionals. They had been through China and everything already.
- 08:30 And they knew exactly what they were doing. Where has he gone? He has disappeared.
- Just popped out to the car, he will be back in a minute. I wanted to ask you, you talk about the discipline of the army, did you adjust to that**
- 09:00 **well at first? You went from a fairly loose school and you were talking about going to church and you know skiving off outside, how did you adjust to having a sergeant major coming and standing over you and all of the shoving and lining up and all of that business?**
- Well you had to put up with that you weren't too happy about it. But the business of the Sunday school, of course you're only a kid, eight, ten, twelve.
- 09:30 1934 I was fourteen. Well you gradually got sense anyway. But when you got in the army it was a different thing. They had supplied you with your clothes, and they were going to look after you and they were going to see that you did the right thing. And if you don't do the right thing you're not going to become an army, you're going to be a rabble.
- 10:00 And they used to have lectures and that sort of thing, you got it into your head that you had to learn to live like a soldier otherwise you would be a dead one. And there was lots of things you learn that you appreciated in later life. You always get the
- 10:30 clown who has been to Duntroon and he thinks he is a blinking general. Funny characters, but taking it all around I didn't mind it really. What I used to worry about was we weren't getting enough real training as to the things we were going to need, with regards how to approach an enemy without him seeing you.
- 11:00 We did a bit of it but not enough of it. You had to crawl through the scrub and make sure you didn't interfere with the grass and all of that sort of thing. As much as possible kept yourself so that no one would notice the parting of grass and that sort of thing, when you were learning to get
- 11:30 through it. If you did they would know you were there.

**That's something you learnt later?**

Yeah.

**But that wasn't something you were taught at the beginning?**

No well I think, well we never had the time did we to get all of this knowledge. I used to think too you

get fellows that were in the army before the war, militia and that sort of thing.

12:00 I don't know it was such a marvellous, I don't know that they got a great deal of training, but they were a darn sight better off at the start than you were you went in and you knew nothing. They went in and it was just a step up from what they had been in. I reckon that would've made a lot of difference. And that's why I reckon they are mad with this national training business. Even if I hope they never use it. At least three years say of camps say, certain camps during the year.

12:30 These youngsters could go into and it would make a tremendous difference, you wouldn't have the hoodlums getting around. Useless character, graffitiing walls and like that because they have got absolutely nothing to do. They reckoned Satan finds things for idle hands and by gee there is no doubt about that. But you did you felt that you weren't

13:00 there was a lot of things you should have learnt or should have known before you went into action. That's what I reckoned.

**Now you joined the militia first?**

Yeah I was in the what they call them, the choccos they called us [chocolate soldiers, derogatory name for the militia or CMF].

**Who called you choccos?**

Oh that was the old story wasn't it?

13:30 It didn't last long we came to the business where they wanted you to, "Are you going to join up the AIF and become a VX number?" " Oh yeah I will do that." I became VX.

**When did you join the AIF?**

Just before we went to New Guinea.

**At Darley?**

Yeah it would have to be at Darley camp.

14:00 Yeah have to be.

**When you say that they called you choccos who do you mean? Who called you chocco'?**

Oh well you used to hear it, you know. I have never been actually called it to my face. But people talking, "You know them blokes over there? They're choccos" VX people that would come in, you know AIF but it didn't last long. As I said, "Do you want

14:30 to join up to be a AIF personnel?" and well I did I said, "Yeah I don't mind I will join up" and signed it and became a VX number and that's all there was to it. When you're all going the same way what difference does it make. Seems silly to stand by the fact

15:00 that you were a chocco and you were going to stay one you weren't going to get into this VX business, silly really.

**What battalion were you with initially?**

46 Battalion, Brighton Rifles I think they called them. As I say I wasn't that long with them because that was at Rokeby camp which was just a little camp starting up. I don't know after I left they probably

15:30 made a big camp I don't know. But I know when I got to Darley was VX, felt more comfortable, felt as though you were AIF battalion that was it. The VX, the choccos you seemed to be a, you felt as though you were a bunch of school boys or something, well I did I thought if you were going to be in it you might as well be in it properly.

16:00 The only thing I would have wished that there would have been further training but we didn't have time for it I suppose.

**Apart from choccos was there anything else that you guys were called?**

No, not that I know of. No I don't think so. I don't remember anybody saying to me, "You should join the AIF and be done with it."

16:30 But that was the way I felt about it, I might as well join the AIF and be done with it. And that's what I did, same as the whole lot of us, we all got our VX and our bands around our hats, because we only had a little band around the hat, khaki band around the hat with a little thing sewn on.

17:00 Insignia. But then when you got the proper, I forget what they call those things that you put on the hat. They were nicely made, tucked in and came around like that at the front, went around. But you felt as though you were in something then. I don't know I did, perhaps that was me. But when you were choccos you felt like you were from a college or something



17:30 you know all of the college kids, you weren't really what you were supposed to be that's what I thought it was. I don't know I could have been wrong, they were probably as good as me anyway. What is it they say, if you're going to be in a thing be in it and do the thing, don't half do it. And so when I got into the AIF I was quite comfortable, it never seemed any different

18:00 as regards to what they thought of you. And so we went from there. As I say the one thing that used to worry you was the fact, when you used to hear about highly trained people, you wondered about us. I mean we were learning even when we got to New Guinea there. As I say with the blinking Bren guns bringing the things out and letting us have a look at them, I have never seen the darn things in my life before.

18:30 The Owen that was a nice little gun. The Owen gun they were great. Not a great distance but they were good for close quarter. Deadly little brute, simplest thing in the world you could make one up yourself you know. Clever fellow thought them up.

**Now when you were at Darley how did you get on with the other blokes?**

19:00 **Did you make friends?**

What do you mean?

**Did you get on well with the other blokes?**

What AIF?

**AIF or militia. The blokes around you did you make friends with them or did you have fights or?**

No, no we just concentrated on our daily, well I did I just concentrated on what had to be done day by day. Sometimes they took us out to the butts for rifle shooting and

19:30 in fact we went out there on Vickers machine guns and that sort of thing. That was good I enjoyed that, there wasn't enough of it that was the trouble, and they used to send down hot boxes with our lunches, they were good.

**What was a hot box?**

They were a big box about this size and they would be like a vacuum thing. You would pull the

20:00 lid off and they were all in there hot, soup and that sort of thing. They were great. They would put all of the soups and everything in and the tanks and there would be cake even, put in there and shoved down. Taken in the lorry out to the butts, they called you in for lunch, you had a better time out there than you did in camp I reckon it was good fun.

20:30 Another dear old Major Burrows, he was a great old guy but he went crook at me one day because I was on the machine gun and they said, "Give it two second bursts." Or something like that, which was brrp, brrp like that see? And of course I was still doing it and he is yelling out, "Who fired that shot?"

21:00 And it was me see? And he said, "What's the matter?" "I can't hear you." Because when you get behind the thing, brrp like that your hearing, you can't hear. I couldn't hear a word he was saying, amazing isn't it? However he was a great old guy.

**Has it affected your ears in the long run?**

Oh no. It was only momentarily as the Americans call it.

21:30 It was just one of those things. But the noise, because you have got the thing here like this you see? And the sudden noise cut out everything else and you were deaf you couldn't hear what he was saying. "Who fired that shot?" Just as well there wasn't some bloke walking in front of me though wasn't it?

22:00 Oh this happened quite a bit in the early times even with rifle some of us couldn't hear. Of course I know now when they go to butts in ordinary rifle ranges they have the things on, you know ear muffs, which is a good idea.

**How long were you at Darley for?**

Oh I don't know, about four or five months I suppose. No three

22:30 or four months couldn't be any more than that. I wouldn't be sure.

**And then you went to Bonegilla?**

Yeah. And then we, I don't know where, I think we picked the Aquitania up in Sydney, you would have to wouldn't you?

**How long were you in Bonegilla for?**

Oh I suppose I was there for a couple of months or so I am not sure of that either, but that was a nice camp.

**Tell me about the conditions there?**

23:00 Oh they were good. They had the steam kitchens they had them. All of the cooking was done under steam pressure, how they done that I don't know. But the meals were good and everything. Of course the blooming migrants have taken it over now I suppose. But that was a great camp that.

**Did you do more training there?**

As far as I know. I think we used to do a few route marches and that sort of thing.

23:30 And we used to do night stunts. That was funny those night stunts. You would go and you would be creeping along and you have got to sort of catch the other mob you know? And you would be creeping along and you reckon they are over there and everyone is going along nicely and all of a sudden there is a couple of cows come down to look. Of course they knew it was us then. Very inquisitive animal a cow.

24:00 You hang around where he is he will walk away from you but when you sort of settle down and do what you're doing, he has got to come, or she has got to come over and have a look and of course that gives the plot away. Funny that. But they were good stunts actually. But again of course you only had about one a week and when you come to think of it it wasn't enough but you didn't think about it in those days.

24:30 But looking back over it, you often think of how desperately incapable we were of doing certain things compared to fellows that had been in it before the war sort of thing and knew exactly what to do. You found too, World War I blokes they were pretty

25:00 cluey.

**Were they officers these World War I blokes?**

Yeah most of them yeah. Like this old Major Burrows he was a nice old guy.

**Did they give you any tips?**

Oh yeah they were

25:30 very helpful for those that wanted to know different things, they would only be too pleased to help you out.

**What sort of things would they tell you?**

Well they would pick you up on things you do that weren't the way they wanted them done and you knew that they way they wanted them done was the right way sort of thing, you made a boo boo and so on.

26:00 They were fellows that had experience. And you often wished you had the experience that they had. Like from military aspects of being able to have done these things before the war. As I say before someone called me in once

26:30 they wanted me to be a corporal, and I said, "Not me, there is blokes out there that will know more than I will ever know." they had been in it longer than I had been in it. Because I had a sergeant in our hut. And he used to tell you things that you would never had up to date, and you knew that he had been in it long before you were in it.

27:00 Had a distinct advantage over you. I often think of that American soldier, what was his name now? Anyway he had his own farm in America and he was a crack shot and all of this sort of business, he cleaned up about forty Germans once. They were in a position where they were, there

27:30 were these tanks kept coming at them, and he got rid of them. He got a purple heart in the finish, I can't remember his name now. But see he had all of the experience on the farm of shooting and dodging and tracking animals and all of this sort of thing. The ordinary person like myself

28:00 never had a chance to try it out, not even when I got into the army it was too late, I never had the time. If you had been in say twelve months in a camp you would have learnt a lot of things that you never learnt, like these fellows knew.

**And the other fellows in camp were they country boys or blokes like yourself?**

No like myself but as I say you would get a few sergeants and that like this

28:30 chap I had in our unit. Stewie Graham he is a nice guy, dead now. But he was one of those that had been through it in the early days and he was well ahead of me. Apart from the fact that he was a sergeant you can tell, oh it would have made a lot of difference I think if

29:00 you had gotten onto these things in the early days. It's like everything, like even in your job, you know where you meet fellows that have been in it long before you have and how they can do things different to you do because you haven't even learnt haven't even known the way to do the

29:30 thing. But they have been in it longer, and well they learnt things that you have never heard of. And I think you have got to be in a situation especially like an army for a good while before you can really learn all that has got to be learnt. I know you can never learn everything but you can

30:00 learn a lot. And it was such a pity that, you know you wouldn't say that we were a crack division going into action, do you know what I mean?

**Can you think of any examples of things that they told you? Things that you learnt from more experienced blokes?**

Oh not off hand I can't no.

30:30 But they were, there is lots of things they used to tell you, they used to say to you, "You can do so and so a different way if you do it this way." And you learnt things like that. But what individually they were I couldn't remember.

**Now you trained on various guns?**

Oh Vickers and that yeah.

31:00 **Which was your favourite?**

I liked the old Vickers that was a beautiful piece of machinery and you would take the lock out and you were able to get it down like this and strip it and then put it all together in such and such an amount of time. Amazing what you could do after you had a bit of practice. All of these things were great

31:30 things that you knew. Especially when you got to mechanical contrivances where you could strip them and put them together without having to look at the, knew exactly what had to go into what. Because you knew there would be some cases where you wouldn't have any light to do it anyway, and you would be able to do it in the dark. That was good training.

32:00 Do you know they got a Zero that came down in Moresby somewhere and it had a machine gun in the front of it and they took the lock out of it and it was exactly the same as Vickers machine gun. How about that? The old Jap had it all. Of course he would have got a Vickers machine gun and learn exactly the same thing,

32:30 amazing isn't it?

**And you learnt how to use a 303 I presume?**

Oh yeah. Even that though, you I suppose they never had the ammunition to be allowed to let you go too far. You enjoyed what you could. Well I knew at Darley a lot of the rifles

33:00 were First World War, they were all right, we got new ones it the finish. Oh dear, then you never got a great deal of practice on the thing you know? You with the foresight and the tip of the backsight you had to get that right

33:30 before you did any good. All of this took time. You'd think oh that was good and we went to the butts and we did so and so and you were getting real good at it. But that was it, you would go a fortnight or so before they took you back to have another go. And I can understand that a lot of ammunition would get used up teaching you, well that's the way it is I guess.

34:00 They couldn't do it any other way. I often thought they must have made billions of blinking bullets. God I bet there is some lead and stuff in the soil in places.

**Were you a good shot?**

I don't know whether I was or not it is hard to say. At the butts

34:30 I did fairly well, but you would love to be able to improve on it you know? "Put another one up and let's have another go." But you can't have another go, so and so, you only got one go each you know? Whereas I say you get the bloke on the farm he is doing it day by day he gets absolutely perfect at it. That's the way it was I guess.

35:00 I suppose these blokes that learned at Duntroon [Military College] they were great guys, that would be a military college there, that would be a different thing all together. You would get theory as well as practice too. The practice part would be all right. Never been to a military college would have loved to have gone. Even to see

35:30 how they perform.

**Now you were at Bonegilla for a couple of months?**

Yes I think it would be that yes.

**Did you get a chance to go home before you embarked?**

No. I said goodbye to Mum and Dad at Darley,

36:00 as far as I can remember that is. But no, we wouldn't have gone back from Bonegilla to home. No. We went to Bonegilla, Sydney and off you went.

**So you did get to see your parents though?**

Only at Darley, when we, well we were actually packed up ready to go then. Because it was soon after that

36:30 it was my birthday I think, the 16th of November I think Mum and Dad came up. I don't know even if I was there Christmas, I can't even remember that. It wasn't much time. No that was the last time I saw them, the only time I saw Mum and Dad again was when I came back from New Guinea.

**What was it like saying goodbye to them?**

Oh wasn't too good really.

37:00 But you didn't make a big thing of it because you thought oh well it would be a great adventure and all of this sort of thing. The wife was there, was the girlfriend. Yeah said goodbye to them all and that was it. They had to get the bus to go to the train out to Bacchus Marsh.

37:30 I think I saw them off on the bus, it was a stinking hot day too, you know how you get that blooming hot weather and that howling north wind it is not a pleasant business. Never worried Dad much but the weather never bothered Dad much. Hot weather that is. Yeah that was the last I saw them.

**Was your mother upset?**

Yeah a bit.

38:00 I think mothers do it is natural enough. You felt sort of, you could feel that you were very sorry to be leaving them and that sort of thing, but I am off on an adventure and that's it. Good job you have got no idea of what is ahead of you.

**Did you think there was a chance you might not see them again?**

38:30 Well that never came into your head but it was a possibility of course. A lot of them never did see their mothers again.

**Did you get any last pieces of advice from your parents?**

I possibly did but I wouldn't remember them now.

39:00 No I don't.

**From Bonegilla you went up to Sydney by train I presume?**

I think so yes I don't remember much about that, I suppose we went to the Sydney cricket ground.

39:30 That's where we were camped once before. And then they took us to the ship.

**What were your first impressions when you saw the Aquitania?**

Oh great. God blimey, massive thing, beautiful. I loved it I reckoned it was fantastic on that ship. We used to get up on the fore decks there and keep an eye on the water and all of this sort of business, and a destroyer would come on each side.

40:00 You know it felt comfortable to have them around. She was a big ship, she would be a sitting duck. I think she got through the war all right though the Aquitania. Of course they pulled into Port Moresby at night and unloaded everything, and got out before the morning. They were thinking of the bombers coming over.

40:30 And that was great. Really was.

**All right I will pause you there because we're at the end.**

## **Tape 4**

00:31 **Yes can you tell us about your voyage on the Aquitania?**

Well I loved it myself. Then we used to have the boat drill and yours truly used to find a spot in one of the life boats and all asleep for a while. Never went on a boat drill, I used to watch it from where I was, forget it.

01:00 No that was great. I would hate to be in a situation where you were torpedoed though I couldn't imagine anything more terrifying. That must be a terrible situation. No the, food I can't remember much about it it would be pretty plain. But we all got fed and I had no complaints with it at all I enjoyed

01:30 the trip as if it was a peace-time trip. And as I say the destroyers and that escorted us all of the way. And it was great gladly we got there in one piece, and as I said they unloaded it all that night. And we were gone I suppose and got well clear of Moresby before

02:00 daylight came.

**How long did the trip take all up?**

Oh I couldn't tell you how long it would have taken? I suppose it would have taken the best part of a day wouldn't it? A day and a night it would have to be. No idea on that to be candid, too enthralled with the trip to be worried about how long it took.

**Was the whole battalion on board?**

02:30 As far as I know yeah.

**The 39th?**

The 39th yeah. And then of course comes the typical sort of shemozzle. When we all got off the ship of course we marched, where to I haven't got the slightest idea. And we oh, yeah they took us to an area and then we bedded down.

03:00 Now this would be like a paddock you know. Nothing, just laid on the ground, just laid your ground sheet down and laid down and your hat and such and angle as your pillow, a jumper on it or something, and then covered yourself over to keep those damned mosquitoes off, there were billions of the brutes. I don't know what sort of a sleep I ever got I can't imagine. Anyhow we woke up the next morning

03:30 and I think we must have continued to march because I couldn't imagine we went to the Seven Mile Drome that quick. I can't imagine what that was. However we finished up at the Seven Mile they called it. And there we spent several days pitching tents and making defensive positions, you name it.

04:00 **Were you asked to unload any ships or anything like that?**

Well this was after we were settled into Moresby of course and groups were sent down to unload the ships and there were a lot of natives that gave us a hand and all of that sort of thing. Because a lot of it was man handled there wasn't much in the way of cranes

04:30 or anything at Port Moresby.

**There weren't any cranes at Port Moresby?**

None that I knew of no. of course unfortunately some of the boxes of biscuits got broken and you couldn't just leave them lying on the wharves could you? So when we got back to our camp we had bickies and chocolates and all sorts of nice things. Hate myself when I think of things like that.

05:00 But then we settled down to the hum-drum business of drome defence. I think he has gone outside?

**Drome defence?**

Drome defence yeah defending the Seven Mile Drome.

**So what sort of duties did that involve?**

Keep on the machine guns and

05:30 spotting an aircraft. How would I be today I can't see a cloud let alone a blinking aircraft. And then we went out on you went and dug trenches and all of this sort of business, camouflaged tents and all of this sort of thing.

06:00 And the little cookhouse. Its funny you know, we weren't there long and the cookhouse was say up there and we were down here and we did a lot of, work and that, we did a lot of sitting around as I can remember it, just watching and waiting and all of that sort of thing. And you got to the stage where you couldn't stand up. And when they gave you the cookhouse

06:30 call, I have done it myself, I don't know about other blokes, but got to the stage where instead of walking up you were crawling on your hands and knees part of the way up, you were that absolutely pooped. And I don't know whether other blokes heard about it but I heard they called it tropical inertia. Where your muscles couldn't take it any longer, you

07:00 don't have the energy to walk. They soon fixed that too let me tell you, they had us marching and they had us digging more flaming holes. That was all right, we got over that but what caused it I never found out. Whether it was the unusual climate compared to the usual climate we had in Melbourne. Although we had been up in Darley and places like that and gone to Bonegilla

07:30 and that. I can't understand it but I know that's what it was. You were that weak you couldn't walk up to the cookhouse.

**This is just in Port Moresby?**

Yeah this is in Port Moresby at the Seven Mile Drome. Whether it was a reaction of the time that we had to walk or march to the Seven Mile Drome and eventually start or not, I can't remember.

08:00 But I can remember it was a sort of a strange thing that you couldn't stand up and you crawled part of the way. I don't know what it was. Wasn't a sickness or anything, just a weakness. As I say, I think it alarmed them a bit, I suppose there were other ones I don't remember. But we did, a lot of digging of holes and

08:30 stuff. Digging in New Guinea is not like digging in Sandringham or anything. It is not just beautiful sand. It is nothing but rocks and gravel, a lot of volcanic stuff. And we dug these blooming holes and I think we got over it which was the main thing. But going down and unloading the boats was quite interesting, I enjoyed that.

09:00 Until the day I wasn't allowed to go, that was a strange thing wasn't it?

**Were there any air raids?**

Oh yeah they had air raids.

**Tell us about that?**

Oh you mean on the drome itself?

**Well where you were, on the docks and on the drome?**

Well on the drome defence they used to come in and raid us with bombs and machine guns on the drome itself.

09:30 I had a nice, you know the beer mugs the nice glass beer mugs someone got me from Port Moresby hotel because they bombed that once. And I had that and it was a beauty and we used to have that sitting outside my tent. And the stinkers came down and filled it all full of holes. And I was crooked on that. Because if it's hit with the daisy cup shattering sort of bombs it can put little holes even in glass

10:00 without actually breaking the thing you know. Funny that. I was crooked on that had to go back to the old tin mug, the shaving mug. And they're horrible things to drink out of. Because the tea has got to be darn near cold before you can get it to your lips the metal is so hot.

**What were the other soldiers like from other units?**

10:30 **There was the 53rd militia?**

No we kept to ourselves mostly, I never met any from other units. I,

**Even when you first came to Port Moresby you never came across other soldiers?**

No I remember speaking to other fellows but I wouldn't remember what battalion they were, they could have been other members of our own battalion I don't know but we mixed pretty well.

11:00 We had these groups that went down and unloaded the boats and as I say it came the time when I went to, the officer came up and I said, "Well sir when do we go?" and he said, "You're not going." And I said, "Why?" "No" he said, "I want you in the cookhouse, you get some gear ready for these guys that are going down today."

11:30 I said, "I thought I was going to go." And he said, "Well you're not going and that's it." All right I am not going, I was really crooked on that. However the Macdewey came in and they had to unload the Macdewey and they were in the holds and everything when the Japanese bombers came over didn't they. And of course what they do they pull the boat out into the area away from the wharves to make it a harder target

12:00 and to help and protect the wharf itself. However the Japs got good that day and they put a bomb right down the hold, blew it to blazes. Sunk the Macdewey.

**What was it a cargo ship?**

Yeah it is still there I would imagine.

12:30 And a lot of our fellows were on that unloading, and one was not, me.

**Were there 39th Battalion fellows on that ship?**

Yeah they were. Out of our own unit. Like they had gone down and I wasn't going with them. I used to go with them and this day I didn't go. I would say that was the hand of the

13:00 lord if ever there was one. My mother was praying for me is the only thing I can think of. Because I never, you know the first thing people say oh you were dodging it to get away from it. I wasn't dodging I was dying to go down because there is nothing more monotonous just sitting and waiting for planes to

come over that don't come over. And you're sitting there all day. Anything is a chance to get

- 13:30 away and go somewhere, going down to the wharves was ideal, fantastic. I enjoyed every bit of it it was great but I missed out didn't I and I would have missed out forever if I had have been on that ship. That's something I will never forget. And if ever that was the hand of the Lord, Amen to that. I will
- 14:00 never forget the look on my officer's face when he saw me, as if to say, "Well what do you think about it now?" Actually it had nothing to do with him, I think that it was all much higher up than him, however that was the way that it went. And then I, I will tell you what is the worst thing you can ever get I reckon, you can
- 14:30 have the malaria that's miserable enough. But you get dysentery. God blimey I reckon that was the worst thing I ever had in my life. I finished up with dysentery right and they sent me to a place where they had dysentery patients which was affectionately called Dysentery Dell. Never forget that. Dysentery Dell. And you got to the stage where you couldn't
- 15:00 walk to the toilet, you got so weak that you used to crawl to the area which was for the toilet, which was more or less as far as I can remember nothing but a channel in the ground because everything was so loose it didn't matter. Then you crawled back and waited for the next lot. And I was there for a while.
- 15:30 And they brought in a, it had them worried really, they brought in a, I have never found out what it was. To look at the medicine it is like water, but it tastes like a sweet salt. And they gave us a couple of tablespoons of that I think it would be twice a day or something. By gee it fixed me, fixed me good. By gee I would like to find out
- 16:00 what that was, I wouldn't mind a dose of that now when you get an attack of diarrhoea or something. However that really fixed it and I think they were very pleased that they had found something for this dysentery because it was beginning to worry them something. And as far as I know I was back at the unit fairly well after it, I suppose I was there another week,
- 16:30 I am not sure couldn't tell you. But I know when I got back I was fixed. That was another thing I could never understand and that was the fact that I got over things very easy, very quickly. You know these tropical sores, they're nasty things, I had a few of them. And what they do the doctor gets the skin and he peels it back like that around the sore itself.

- 17:00 Makes it bleed and then he puts the ammenby on it and wraps it up. And I had them but I got rid of them.

#### **How did you get tropical ulcers?**

Well if you cut yourself for instance which is easy to do it used to form an ulcer and it would gradually get under the skin. You get that in the tropics, horrible place.

- 17:30 And as I say they pull the skin back around because the skin used to get loose and the germ used to get under the loose skin so they had to peel the skin back and then they put the ammenby tablets or ammenby powder that's what it was, and then wrap it up. Gee a couple of days there where I was, some of the boys were very bad, some had to go to hospital with it.
- 18:00 No I was pretty good, must admit that. Then we went down to Bootless Inlet. I don't know what time it was between the, or how we came to go to Bootless Inlet but we went down there and they had the bright idea of putting machine guns in the mangroves. Damn silly as that. However
- 18:30 Bootless Inlet was a pretty little place, I enjoyed it really apart from going down and working in the mangroves amongst the stinking flaming mosquitoes. Stinking places mangrove swamps I reckon. But one little fascinating thing I thought was the red crabs. They were red with black tipped claws and they looked beautiful, and they used to go for their lives as soon as they saw you. But I would have loved to have had one and kept him.
- 19:00 Stuffed him or something. But he was a beautiful little fellow, only little about that big, hundreds of them. Anyway I couldn't see the sense in why they did this, I don't know whether it was just to keep us working or something I am not sure. But the mangrove swamps are down here there is a hill goes up here to level out Bootless Inlet, what would they do if the machine guns were turned on the incoming
- 19:30 troops, the first thing they would do would lay their guns to blow those blooming machine guns out of the earth. And not only that but the ones that were on them would have to go up the hill to get out of it. They would be sitting ducks. I thought that was a stupid idea that. However it was all over, and I think they disbanded the idea but we spent sometime down there.
- 20:00 We used to go out swimming and go out in the lakatois, a lot of fun there. Funny you know when you go swimming in Port Moresby it is like getting into warm water. It's never cold. The only thing is when you come out you're sticky you know with the warm water,
- 20:30 it is nicer when it is cold, and you get used to it. But not with the water in New Guinea it is warm. You can walk in, you know how water takes your breath away? Nothing like that. Just warm.

### **Did you see any wildlife?**

Yeah you always had to have your rubber shoes on when you went into the, well we used to have deck shoes and we had them on when we went into the water.

- 21:00 In fact they told you to put something on your feet anyway because of the coral which was deadly, and also they had these, about that long and he looked like a red saveloy you know? And you put your feet on it and they break, and there is all of this white stringy stuff that comes out of it
- 21:30 and if it gets on your skin it is like runner, you can't get it off. Dreadful stuff that was. Just as well we had these shoes on, and we used to keep our eyes open so we didn't step on these things because they used to all come up this white stuff. Yuk. Dreadful things. Used to be nice out there on the lakatois,
- 22:00 floating out there on the lovely clear water and you could see all of the coral underneath. You could see them then and think to yourself I am glad I am not down there. It's funny you know you would get down there and the bombers would come over, blokes would be saying, "Get back!" "Oh don't worry about them they will never see us up there, they're not worried about us." They weren't going to pick off an ordinary little boat. When you come to think of it, it
- 22:30 wasn't that that would be the need to panic, it would be the fighter escort. If they had fighter escort, not always did they have them but sometimes they did. They would sweep along the water line and they would soon clean you up. However we were fortunate and we didn't have any trouble that way.

### **How frequent were the Japanese bombing raids?**

- 23:00 Oh they came in, I thought they came in sections, you know there would be two or three raids a week. Because they couldn't do too much of it because they had to come a fair way. They would be about two or three raids a week,
- 23:30 I reckon about twenty Mitsubishi bombers. Isn't that marvellous we have Mitsubishi cars, they had Mitsubishi bombers, same crowd. But you could see them you know with their silver wings and you could always see when they let go of their bombs, all of the little trickle of white caught in the sun you know? And you could hear
- 24:00 the phheew. All right when you can hear them coming it is when you can't hear them coming they reckon is the problem.

### **How devastating were they?**

Oh they let got a lot of them onto the drome but they, I think bombing dromes is not much of a help for either side. I don't see how they can do much unless they smash up aircraft.

- 24:30 But often the aircraft would know they were coming so they would clear the drome see? They would go out. And the bombers would come in and blow the blazes out of it but they got back all right so I don't know that they did a lot of damage to that particular drome anyway.

### **Seven Mile Drome?**

Seven Mile. Yeah when we first got there, there was a couple of these Junkers there, the German Junkers, you know with the corrugated iron look about them?

- 25:00 They have got the corrugated iron sort of,

### **At Seven Mile Drome?**

Yeah they belonged to the gold field people or something I believe. Yeah big three engine job. They disappeared after a while I don't know what they did with them. I couldn't imagine them, they would be no good for they would be sitting ducks, they must have got rid of them somehow I don't know where they went I never saw them after that.

- 25:30 They used them in the goldfields apparently, there was a lot of German nationals there during the war. Just read a book, when I say read a book, on the tape there, what was it? Let me think. Nervous my Feet or something like that.
- 26:00 Its all about, talks about they were New Guinea officers in the behind the lines, they were patrol officers and that and this bloke was only nineteen twenty years of age, and they were behind the lines in
- 26:30 Lae and Salamaua and that. They had a lousy job.

### **Were there any Aborigines in the 39th Battalion?**

No I didn't see any, I wouldn't think so. Unless other people have, has anybody else mentioned it in their experiences?

- 27:00 Because I haven't I never saw any.

### **What about the anti-aircraft defences, tell us about?**



The Bofors. We had one lot on the hill behind us, strike I don't know I remember the bombers came over once and there was not a sound from up above

27:30 and they sent officers up to investigate and these blokes had got onto a whole lot of apricot brandy when they were down in Port Moresby and they were as full as bulls. Never forget that. They could have blown that blooming gun pit out of existence. But they didn't know about it did they? The Japanese of course.

28:00 **I am surprised they got away with that?**

Oh they bombed the hotel or something in Moresby I was never there but they got a lot of the stuff out, drinks and that. I never took on that sort of thing much. Tell you what someone brought I don't know where it came from, it was in a glass case,

28:30 it was a pair of scales that they used for measuring or weighing gold. Beautifully made thing we used to have it sitting next to our camp. And Dad was a watchmaker and jeweller, I wrote and told him about it, I said that they got a pair of scales here I don't know how it came about

29:00 but I would love to have it. At home, you would love it. Beautiful piece of work that. Got smashed all to pieces I suppose.

**Were you being trained at all while you were in Port Moresby? Infantry tactics or anything like that?**

Oh no we did a bit down at Bootless Inlet but not much.

29:30 **What sort of training was that Bren gun training?**

Something like that as far as I can remember. But any training with ammunition was off, I suppose they wanted all of the ammunition they could keep. Yeah.

**So you weren't trained properly as far as weapons training was concerned?**

30:00 I think we could have done with a lot more, no not really.

**How long was the 39th Battalion in Port Moresby for before the Kokoda Track campaign had started?**

I would have reckoned we would have been there three or four months before, more than that probably, before we went to Koitaki and along to

30:30 the track. As they call it. Yeah.

**So do you remember when the battalion was first given orders to start marching from Port Moresby?**

Oh as far as I can remember we were taken up by truck up to Koitaki which was the beginning of the set-up.

31:00 And in we went. That was a nicely equipped place that, they had built in the refrigerators in it, where they kept all of the meat. Like walk in refrigerators, like butcher shops. Well done.

31:30 I had to laugh one day we had a it was a grass hut where they used to keep all of the army tucker in, spare tucker, they would take it out when they want it. And one of them went out there I think he was a, one of the cooks I suppose, went out there with a lantern to bring back some food and stuff and next

32:00 thing up goes the, the thing caught fire. Wow. There was tins going off, bang, bang, and it burnt it right out and we lost a lot of food there, so they got all of the natives together and got them to go out and hunt for wild pigs and bring them in.

**Where was this Koitaki?**

32:30 Koitaki yeah. That was the best thing that ever happened, we had pork and all sorts of thing, we had plenty of vegies and the pork was great. I will never forget that. The natives thought it was the greatest thing that ever happened, they would be able to go out hunting and bring in these little pigs and slit their throats. They loved slitting throats those characters. Struth.

33:00 They brought in all of these little pigs and we had pork it was great.

**What do you mean they love slitting throats?**

They love the hunt. They would bring them in and slit the poor little buggers throats and lay them out for the cooks to butcher them and everything. Oh dear.

33:30 Gruesome little sods when they get going those natives. Good hunters though. By gee I don't know where they got the pigs but they kept coming in.

**How did you find your interaction with the natives up to this point?**

Oh we thought they were great guys. They used to come to the camp

34:00 and some of them used to do washing and that sort of thing. And we would get them to take our shirt or whatever and wash it for us, they probably washed it in the sea I don't know. Anyway they would come back and we would give them a couple of tins of bully beef or something, they used to love that. Money was no good to them. These youngsters I think that used to do this they

34:30 were part of the early days of the Church of England mission up there, missionaries you know, because they were honest as the day was done. We used to go out, we might go doing a bit of pick and shovel work and the natives would be waiting outside the tent for us. And you would have your things in there, you would have your watch on your bed or something like that.

35:00 They never touched anything. There would have been no way you could have ever traced it if someone had stolen it, but nothing was ever stolen. Not where I was anyway. They were great young fellows. They used to bring in fish too. You know these beautiful fish about so big gorgeous coloured things, and you think to yourself

35:30 am I going to eat this thing it looks too good.

**What was the difference between the natives next to the coast and the natives inland?**

Well you couldn't tell that because of the simple fact when you were inland you couldn't tell whether they were coastal natives working for the army, but in taking them all around they were pretty good guys. You would say, "How far to the next village George?"

36:00 They were all George you know. And he would say, "Too far." Great help, picked up too far from somewhere.

**Once you got to Koitaki what took place after that?**

As far as I can remember they got us into units to start on the Owen Stanley Ranges.

36:30 Got your equipment your haversack and your rifle and your ammunition. And away you went. Pouring rain. Every evening you would reckon it was going to rain, about five o'clock down it would come and it would rain for most of the night. So you always had your ground

37:00 sheet with you, they were the greatest things in the world those ground sheets I reckoned.

**What was the first day like when you marched from Koitaki?**

Wasn't too bad you were pretty fresh then. And as to whether it was up or down hill I couldn't remember, but I remember when you're going down hill you're going down hill for about two hours or so, and when you get

37:30 to the bottom you can't stand up. You just collapse and gradually you have got to get your legs to move again and away you go. Always wet. Always muddy you know. I reckon the blokes whoever they were that

38:00 put all of the steps there were fantastic characters, because they did they put steps, oh pieces of wood about so long I suppose .but however they did it they all seemed to be stuck pretty well and they held on. They didn't slip, because if they had slipped you would have gone a sixer.

**How high are the Owen Stanley Ranges?**

38:30 Oh no idea. But they were pretty high you imagine because you seem to be going up hill for a couple of hours you know, up and then down.

**Which was harder down or up?**

Down I reckon.

**Why is that?**

Well you could slip or that sort of thing and when you hit the bottom as I say your legs were useless for a little while.

39:00 You sort of crumpled like a heap. Of course you had a pack and everything on your back which didn't help much. When you got your legs going again then away you would go. You would be about five or ten minutes because you were pretty fit, but you would be about five or ten minutes if I can remember you would stand up and gradually

39:30 get your muscles to work and this sort of business but that the effect of coming down. And then usually you walked straight for a while through the kunai grass which was well above your head and stinking hot and you would be sweating like a pig you know? And then you start up the next hill and you would be freezing,

40:00 by the time you got half way up you'd be shivering you know? Wonderful thought. This time you're covered in mud and everything and you didn't care anyway, not much you can do about it.

**Which was the first town you went to?**

Oh no idea. Wouldn't know, little villages yeah, natives tried to do the best they could for us.

40:30 Trouble is they had their huts up on stilts from the ground. And they used to keep a little fire going down below and the smoke used to always be coming up through the slats, because the floor is only slats. And your eyes would be always watering. They would call you in and give you something to eat, "What do you want to eat and that?"

41:00 And God you couldn't put up with for long, this smoke coming up all of the time. Kept the mossies away but I don't know whether it did any good for the rest of you, you wondered if the mossies would have been preferable to the smoke. They were great guys, they did what they could for you a couple of sweet potatoes and yams and that sort of thing. A cup of something to drink, I don't

41:30 know what it was. It was warm anyway. And then away you go again. So on.

**Okay we have run out of tape now.**

## Tape 5

00:30 **Speed. We're talking about moving up the Kokoda track from Koitaki right up through the small villages you passed through. I am interested to know more about these villages, can you tell us a bit more?**

Not a great deal because we got to them mostly in the dark,

01:00 and they would try to pull us in for something to eat. And then we went on because as far as I can gather you used to sit against a tree with a ground sheet around you and that's it unless you were on guard. But no, of course there were no women about, like native women. They were all gone, never saw any of them.

01:30 **Why is that?**

Oh they had been sent out of the way because of the Japanese. I don't know where they went I suppose villages that the Japanese weren't likely to get to. And I know they weren't around and that's what I heard they got rid of all of the women out of the way, which is a good thing really.

02:00 And they had the police boys and everything about. I think they had a lot to do with organising the stretcher bearers. But they could be savage characters those police boys with their own clan.

**Tell us about this?**

Oh when the biscuit bombers came over they made

02:30 several drops that were a failure more or less. And they got the boys to go out and pick up what they could. And I remember there was one young fellow he had a tin of bully beef and he hadn't given it up. God they weighed into him with sticks and that. I said to the sergeant, "Hey, hey." But he said, "Oh leave it we don't touch that,

03:00 they do their own discipline." I thought he was going to kill the poor character, whaling into him over a tin of bully beef. Any that we had were intensely loyal I thought and they did a good job, because there was nothing to stop them tossing you down a ravine and clearing off because you would never find them.

03:30 They knew the bush better than we do. Wonderful people I thought.

**Were there any of them that were not very loyal to the Australian?**

No never heard of it, not in this area. They said there was a few not very loyal up around Lae and Salamaua and that they were a little bit doubtful of them. Only the case, well they saw the Japanese

04:00 coming in by the thousands onto the beaches from where they were. And there was only about two or three patrol officers up behind, of course the natives could only see what was the hope of two against all of them down there? And they had a bit of a job to keep them loyal. And the bombers coming in to bomb Lae and

04:30 Salamaua and that did help to change their minds a bit. It was very dicey. I believe a few of the patrol officers were killed because of natives dobbling them in sort of thing, which is sad but that's the way it is I suppose.

**What about, did you have any Papuan Infantry Battalion scouts with you at all?**

05:00 Only police boys, little groups. They were good though I believe. There was one group that I think our mob sent them out to clean out any Japs that were around. But bring something back to let us know that you had got them.

05:30 Well out come a pouch with ears in it. Got the Japs all right took the ears off them to bring back as souvenirs or to say that he had killed them. You know things like that.

**How long did you have to walk until you met the Japanese?**

06:00 **How many days walk was it from Koitaki to Deniki?**

It's hard to say really. Because time never meant a thing, I suppose about three or four days we were walking.

**Up to Deniki?**

Yeah well it was this side of Deniki that we formed up and as we headed toward Deniki that's when I got shot.

06:30 **Were you expecting the Japanese before Deniki?**

I believe they were. Of course like I say you can shoot and you have got no idea where they are, they got shot and had no idea where we were. It worked in both ways but, I sure didn't know who hit me anyway. Pretty hard going.

07:00 **Tell us what happened that day when the Japanese attacked Deniki?**

Well we went forward and I was one of the three here and there was others further down the track, and we just kept an eye to see what movement we could see. And that's the time I got shot through the legs here. It was just like getting tripped over, you went flat on your back. The velocity from a bullet is

07:30 unbelievable you wouldn't think that a bullet could tip you up like that. And it wasn't long before they called the medic and took me in and gave me some morphine and along came the fuzzy-wuzzies and raced me down the hill, so the Japanese must have been getting pretty close and that's all I remember of them.

08:00 Well the morphine was beginning to work for a start. Yeah.

**What were you told about the Japanese soldier?**

Oh you know the little bloke with the glasses that couldn't shoot straight. I can vouch for the fact that he can.

08:30 Lots of silly things come up you know.

**What about the size of the Japanese soldiers?**

Yeah well they were supposed to be smaller than we were but we had one bloke charged into the camp one night and he was as big a bloke as I had ever seen, about six foot odd.

**He charged into the camp?**

Well he sort of wandered in I don't know if the stupid Nip knew where he was going.

09:00 They shot him. And he staggered about and finally fell over. But he was a big fellow. Don't know where he came from. Didn't apparently have anyone with him. Whether he was an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] or not I don't know, wasn't near enough to see that. Amazing isn't it?

09:30 See there again was the result of my mother's prayers again. See I was whisked off, amazing isn't it? Because I was the least that get to that medic centre that gave me that morphine and the doctor was there and that.

10:00 And they had to get and they lost the lot. Sad when you think of it, all the things that you have lost. But rather marvellous that I was fortunate enough to be taken out just in the nick of time. And they're things that I find hard to explain.

10:30 The Japs weren't that far behind.

**Who carried you to the medics?**

Oh I couldn't tell you that. Dragged would have been more like it. You had to keep your head down, might as well drag you along sort of thing. I think I had shorts

11:00 on I forget now I imagine I would have it was pretty hot. Those morphine tablets, morphias tablets are pretty good. About the size of a five cents piece they are. And they certainly put you out.

11:30 **What happened after that?**

Well there is a lot I don't know because I was out and I was on the stretcher, when I came to they gently let me down onto the ground and one went and got a great big fern and held it over to keep the sun off me and the others stood around and had a bit of a smoko, and muttering, I couldn't make out much.

12:00 Then up we go again, off we go. Terrific guys. Sturdy little guys you know. They would have to be or else they would slither and slide all through the mud, but they managed to get through all right. I think they have got special feet.

**How many guys carried you, was it two or four?**

I think it was four,

12:30 I am not sure though, because you're on your back you can't see, only when you look over the side and see the drop down, that worries you a bit. Because there would be nothing to stop them just chucking me off there and buzzing off, no one would ever know. But they didn't for the simple reason it wasn't in their hands to do it. So there you are I got through and I was very thankful for that.

13:00 **Did you know their names?**

Oh no we never knew their names. Funny you know we had a ship called the Logos and it is a Christian set-up and they go all around this big ship with testaments and bibles and all sorts of things to different countries. And a few of them came to our chapel

13:30 when they were in Melbourne. Some were old blokes, some were young blokes and I said to one fellow, "I wonder if your grandpa brought me out of the Owen Stanleys on a stretcher?" of course he wouldn't know, I just wondered when I saw them there. You wouldn't even know if he had. It would be interesting to meet

14:00 those that actually were responsible for these things but I suppose they are long gone now. Because they were fairly, well they would be older than I was those guys. Well they looked older, I suppose you can't tell much with natives. Anyway they got me out and it wasn't long before I got to the first station which you might gather was a Salvation Army hut. Terrific guys I will tell you.

14:30 **Where was this?**

Oh it would be on the track somewhere, don't ask me where.

**Isurava?**

Don't know wouldn't have a clue. It could have been a little hut on the side. I know they gave me a cup of tea and I think I had a tin of pears or something. Ate the lot.

**I had no idea the Salvation Army were on the Kokoda Track?**

15:00 They were there all right. Anywhere where there is any need the Salvation Army is there, you have got to give them credit for that they are marvellous. That's the same in Buna and Gona there, as the blokes tagging along with this tin of cocoa or tea, "Give us your cup digger." "What the dickens are you doing here?" "Give us your cup!"

15:30 And he was off. Amazing fellows, give them great credit. They were there when you wanted them.

**So could you hear the sounds of battle in the distance?**

Oh yeah you could hear the crack of rifle fire and so on but of course the further away you got the less you heard.

16:00 Yeah. Of course I missed a lot of the last of the battle. Where are we up to, page ninety-six chapter five. Funny if that was right. Is he still there

16:30 Can't see him? Oh you're there that's good.

**Okay well we're recording now.**

What do you mean we're recording now, you were doing that all along weren't you?

**No we stopped the tape because of the phone.**

Oh the phone that's right, forgot about that.

**Now tell us about the wounded, were there a lot of other chaps who had been wounded who were being taken at the**

17:00 **same time?**

No I couldn't tell you that anyway because as I said I was taken out, given morphine tablets off I went. Where the others were I wouldn't have the slightest. I didn't come good for about an hour or so I would say. Those morphine they were great, wouldn't mind having a few of those when I can't sleep. They were fantastic.

17:30 **How would they take you, so you mean when it was raining as well?**

Well yeah weather doesn't come into it, they have to get you out. Fortunately I don't think I got wet I was pretty good. I felt all right, I didn't feel wet or anything. What they do with your gear and everything, I have no

18:00 how they got down or where it ever finished up I don't remember. But ground sheet and that seemed to get them from places and put over you and that.

**Were you disappointed about not being able to see the Japanese?**

Yeah I no sooner

18:30 gone down to Kokoda I would have liked to have had the opportunity to go right down. But then again you might never have got there I suppose, it was out of my hands, that's the way it went. But I would have liked to have kept with your mates you know.

19:00 But there was a few worse off than me believe me.

**What about your close friends in the 39th Battalion? In Deniki did they end up surviving?**

See you go out of a stunt like that and you're shot. And they put you up on a stretcher and they take you back

19:30 and you have no idea what goes on from then on, who got what, shot or otherwise. That happened with others that I met eventually after the shemozzle. "What happened to you?" and you say, "So and so, and you?" "Don't know of anybody else."

20:00 Its all you and getting out, that's all it is.

**Sorry you were going to say something?**

The sad thing about it is when you read about all of the trouble that is going on up in New Guinea now

20:30 and you wonder what a shame it is with all of those guys that did such a sterling job during the war. Of course a lot of them have passed on by now, I don't know why it has to be but it had. What were going to say?

**You were being carried out on a stretcher, what happened once they took you to that town?**

21:00 Well as far as I can remember, I think a day or so, the bandage was tight enough on your leg, you found that you could walk all right and when they had the bandage on of course that stopped it bleeding. As it ripped through the muscle it didn't do much damage to anything else so I found that I could walk pretty good.

21:30 Bit of a limp but not bad. So how far they took me before I started to walk I have got no idea of that either. I ended up back at Koitaki I think but I am not sure. But that would be the direction that they would take me.

**Was it at this point where the 2/14 Battalion came?**

22:00 I would have loved to have seen that where they got the Howitzers there on the other side of Koitaki and they rigged them up on the hill, that must have given the Japs a hell of a fright. They more or less, well some of the Japanese they more or less let them have it point blank, that must have been pretty grim I reckon.

22:30 Be it Japs or no matter who it was it must have chewed them up somewhat. They would be 9th Divvy [9th Division] that came up.

23:00 I remember one 9th Divvy bloke was talking to one of his mates as we were coming out and he said, "God these are only kids!" I will never forget that. Well I was only twenty-one, just turned twenty-one.

**So you did see some of them when you got to Koitaki?**

Oh just passing

23:30 I never got to know anyone or anything.

**They were passing by?**

Yeah I suppose they were all too busy to be worrying about anything else but what was ahead. But I think it was the artillery that turned the tide as regards to their advance, I think they realised they weren't going to make it. But of course they ran into all sorts on the way back I believe.

24:00 **Can you tell us what the soldiers of the 9th div looked like physically?**

Well they looked bigger than us was all I thought. Well I am, I am not very tall, but they were good strong looking characters. They were of course an older battalion. We were only young.

24:30 **Did they look like they had been to the Middle East?**

No you wouldn't know they were wet like everyone else. When you get a situation like that where it is raining and blokes are passing, they could be anyone you wouldn't even know. I mean colour patches and all of this sort of business

25:00 there is a green ground sheet over their heads or whatever and they are only too glad to get going to where they're headed for and get a bit of shelter and that sort of thing. Tell you what it rains up there and it rains. We don't know what rain is like here to what they get in the jungle, no wonder jungles are lush,

25:30 God they ought to be, rain every night and everything. Torrential place. Somebody said to me, "Are you going to go back and have a look at the battle fields?" and I said, "No I don't want to go back anymore."

**So what happened once you got to Koitaki? You could walk by then?**

As far as I could remember anyway.

26:00 I finished up back in Moresby again and that's when we, what's his name that digger? What's our leaders name?

**Blamey [General Sir Thomas Blamey]?**

Blamey, that's where we met him. What a pig of a man he was.

**So you met him at Koitaki?**

26:30 No we had a line up at Bootless Inlet at the end, that's where we had a parade there and he turned up, and he was pleased to tell us, "It is not the man with the gun it's the rabbit that runs away." Lovely type of character he was.

**So you were at the speech at the time?**

Yeah the officers were very upset about that.

27:00 **Was the remnants of the 39th there?**

Yeah there could have been other battalions that had been up in the jungle I don't know but we were there anyway. I heard him carry on about it. He is a pig of a man I reckon. Fancy saying that to guys, some of them on crutches, and some of them not much better off. It is a wonder someone didn't pick him off you know.

27:30 **Why did he say that?**

Oh I think it is just the man he is, not is, was. He was not a very popular police commissioner or whatever he was in the early days. Stories of him and all of his carrying on with brothels and all that, you heard all sorts of things about him. But I must admit I met

28:00 his wife once, she was a very nice lady, what a shame. Met her after the war too.

**What was the reaction amongst the troops?**

Not very good.

**Can you tell us a little bit more about that?**

Well the only thing I can tell you is that they weren't very happy with what he said because it was a sarcastic and

28:30 a nasty thing to say. More noticeable was the officers nearby, they weren't too happy about it. You could hear the comments, you know, "What does he think he is talking about?" you know. And I think he made a very bad impression. I see it is written up in the Kokoda and Back,

29:00 the book I have got in there about this very indiscreet thing that he said.

**Tell us what you actually saw in the troops and heard, in front of you and next to you?**

Well most of us were really disgusted with the

29:30 way he carried on. Instead of giving us some encouragement he did the opposite. You would have thought that at least he would have said to us, "Welcome you back from your army experiences, it is good to see so many of you have come back and it is sad that so many haven't." Anything like that. But to start carrying on talking about rabbits and things that was ridiculous.

30:00 I don't think MacArthur was too wrapped in him either. Not in that particular, I don't think he heard that I don't think but the two of them never got on too well I believe.

30:30 **Were the soldiers also instantly saying things when Blamey said that?**

Were they what?

**The soldiers next to you were they saying things to themselves?**

Calling him rude names.

**Were they shouting out aloud?**

No, there was nothing I can remember of that but I know there was an unsettled mumbling going on.

31:00 **Did Blamey hear this mumble, was it loud enough?**

No, I don't think so. It is a wonder someone didn't put a bullet through him fair dinkum. Wouldn't have helped I suppose. But he wasn't popular that's for sure. There was no need for it, that's what the troops were more or less agreed on, that it wasn't necessary for him

31:30 to have spoken like that. He didn't do his own popularity any good. He didn't help, that's for sure. Good job that he wasn't saying it and the war was over or somebody would have charged and knocked him off his perch I bet.

32:00 He died a few years after the war didn't he?

**I am not sure actually.**

I think so, two or three years.

**Now being in the militia you would have been I take it amused that you were a chocco?**

Well I wasn't anyway I didn't know if some of the others were.

32:30 But oh if somebody said chocco you didn't take much notice of it.

**Who would say that?**

Oh I don't know who would say that really, usually it would be other members of the force I guess. But I have never been in a situation where they started carrying on and working themselves all up, I am glad to say.

33:00 There is more in life than worrying about that. Anyway it wasn't long after that that we sort of had a bit of training and refitting and finished up at Sanananda and Buna. We forget Blamey and all of his stupid rot.

33:30 **So all of the people got on after that between the AIF and the militia?**

Oh yeah I think it died a natural death myself.

**After Kokoda?**

Well after the war there, because there was a lot of fellows that were like I was, choccos as they called us and had changed over. And you forgot all about it. There was too much other stuff to worry about than calling one another names.

34:00 Should have never been I don't think. They should have never encouraged it, they should have just made it Australian Infantry [Imperial] Forces and when you went in normally or naturally were AIF, while they had that, I will never know why they bothered to have it, didn't seem any sense in it really, two distinct different groups.

34:30 Even some parts I don't know where, they had some very bitter arguments and fights over the same thing. You would have thought that they would have made sure that was all over before the war started wouldn't you? But they didn't.

**What took place for you after Koitaki?**

35:00 What down at Bootless Inlet?

**Sorry yeah Bootless Inlet?**

I think they re-equippeded us, well we needed equipment. I don't know if there was much training or not. They sort of built us up we had exercises and all of that sort of thing. You were brought physically back to what you

35:30 should have been and then we finished up going to Buna and that, relieved some American division up there that they got mauled a bit I am afraid.

**Did you receive any training at all before you went to Buna?**

No we did physical jerks and all of this sort of business, but as far as I remember, I might have had I don't know.

36:00 But it is a long time ago see? Little things like that don't seem to register sometimes. The only thing I



would say was that they got us to the stage that we were feeling okay, you got fed properly again, instead of the bits and pieces that you had on the track. I felt New Guinea that you never really had,

36:30 if you got just the normal meal you were all right. You were never hungry sort of thing, well I wasn't anyway. Weather like this you're never hungry really, even dinner today I only had a small little pie and a bit of ice cream and a bit of cake and a drink of tea that's it. I don't know what it will be when I get to tea tonight, they will probably feed me until I pop.

37:00 Anyway we headed off that way, this time we were taken by transport. That was pretty good.

**Plane?**

Yeah.

**Where did you go to?**

Well I don't exactly know where the airfield is, I don't know where Popendetta is, whether that is in the Kokoda area or, no it must have been Popendetta I suppose

37:30 because we had already taken all of that and cleaned all of that up.

**It was near Buna?**

Yeah but it was a rotten flaming place that was wrecked ships out there and there was all of these thing bobbing about, didn't know what they were.

**Where was this?**

Buna, Sanananda beach. And the things that were bobbing up and down were drowned Japanese.

38:00 They had swelled up and come to the surface, we used to say it is not exactly Bondi is it. God struth stinking place. And we dug a fox hole not far from the beach itself, I suppose it wouldn't be any further than that

38:30 down a road a bit, to the next road. From the actual beach itself, and there was a machine gun nest over here, the Japanese had, and they don't know how they did but they blew them to pieces, it was a big machine gun too. It had probably done a lot of damage but they had got it eventually. God blimey when they blow you up they blow you up don't they?

39:00 These explosives.

**Was this a woodpecker [Japanese heavy machinegun]?**

They were a vicious looking thing they were. Anyway I was digging a fox hole there and I found a sock, but the thing that made me drop it like a hot potato was that there was a foot in it. I will never forget that.

39:30 He has gone to sleep I think.

**No.**

Oh you're awake are you?

**Your eyes are terrible.**

They're not that good I know that.

**Tell us what Popendetta was like before we go into Buna?**

The airfield, Popendetta?

**You disembarked at Popendetta didn't you and then you marched to Buna?**

40:00 Yeah well I don't know whether we marched or whether we just went into the scrub in long lines, I can't remember that, I got on with a corporal or a sergeant I can't remember but we palled up together and finished up together in a fox hole together.

40:30 Stinking hot blooming joint. You have got a shirt on and shorts and boots and socks and you're sitting in this stinking fox hole wondering what you were there for anyway because nothing is coming in because everything has already been bumped off. Anyway we were there for a few days as far as I can remember. I remember the Salvos come in at one stage and gave us some cocoa and stuff.

**I will have to stop you there**

41:00 **because we have run out of tape.**

## Tape 6

00:31 **I would like to take you back a bit,**

Where are we at Popendetta?

**Well I would just like to take you back a bit and just ask you a bit more about moving up from,**

Bootless Inlet when we went to Buna, Gona?

**No taking you back before you went to Deniki, from Port Moresby going up the track the thousand mile steps**

01:00 **can you tell me just a bit about the terrain? And what sort of track it was?**

Very very wet and muddy, and as I say if it wasn't for the guys that put the things I don't know how the diggers would have got on. I couldn't see how you could ever get a battalion of troops up there,

01:30 well you would all have to carry picks or something to pull yourself up because it was nothing but slime. And whoever put the steps in they were marvellous, whoever did that it must have taken a long time. They would have sorted them, they were all about that wide, all of the way up, in fact I think they were about that wide actually.

**Were they split logs?**

02:00 I think so I think they were sort of split logs, round about that round. And they were put there like that with two pieces to hold them back and they were properly done, because if they weren't you get one of them to slither and the whole thing would go, you would go all of the way down and knock everyone else over. It would be quite disastrous I imagine. But as it turned out we were very fortunate there

02:30 and we got up. It was a rotten place at night, I hated night time because you couldn't see that much in front of you. You know how the jungle goes black and they mean black. Strike a light and you go on guard duty and you have got to keep an eye on what goes on, but I often wondered why we went on guard duty for the simple

03:00 reason that you couldn't see him and he couldn't see you anyway. No way could you see them, you could hear but you couldn't see. And that caused a tragedy. Because the guard in our little group this night, he heard a noise and we heard it too, someone moving around, "Halt who goes there?"

03:30 'Its all right Fred', he says, "I am coming through." Of course the Japs could say the same thing you know. We said, "Who are you?" he said, "You know me. Yeah I am coming through." Anyway he got to the stage where he couldn't take the risk and he shot and killed one of our own fellows. That was a tragedy that was, wasn't his fault, just one of those things that happened.

04:00 That poor devil, he went out of his mind. They sent him back as far as I know, what happened to him after that I do not know, but these things do happen unfortunately and it is something that you never forget, but that did happen. And unfortunately it wasn't a Jap it was one of ours.

04:30 I don't know why it was that there wasn't some password that he could have said. He never thought the other fellow was there to shoot or something, he might have just gone to the toilet somewhere and was coming back you know. When he said, "Halt."

05:00 'Why? What do I want to halt for I am coming through.' This sort of thing, God blimey. They say the trouble was the Japs got up to the same tricks and you couldn't take chances, so that poor devil was killed.

**Did you know either of them well?**

I never knew them no. I met the

05:30 fellow that did it earlier, he was , I thought he was a bit of a nervy bloke, he got a few mosquitoes in his net one night and he got a match to find out if he could find them. Of course set fire to the jolly mosquito net. Got it out quick but he got a big hole in it so he had to screw it up. And I thought to myself you silly twit, why did you go and do something like that? But I

06:00 think they sent him right back, in fact I wouldn't be surprised if he finished up in a home or something his whole features seemed to change. He showed the terror in his eyes you know, a sad case that bloke. But these are the things that happen in these situations. We had a young fellow in the cookhouse too, what did they call him, Tom

06:30 or something. And he happened to shoot himself in his hand or something if I remember rightly. And all he wanted was his Mum. He died. Don't know the whole story but it was very sad because he was only a young kid. And they got him down but he died.

07:00 It was almost like a suicide really, very sad that.

**So he shot himself in the hand to get sent home?**

No I don't think so. We had one fellow that done that, but this fellow wouldn't have done that. It was an accident he had with his rifle,

07:30 he was a pathetic sight, shouldn't have happened. But they calmed him down and everything and they had him back, never saw him anymore. But I heard he died.

**From that wound?**

Yes and the condition of his thoughts and everything. He dropped his bundle poor kid.

08:00 He wanted his mother so badly. I know one bloke shot himself through the hand and the blooming doctor pulled the flesh over and stitched it while he stood there.

08:30 It was a foolish thing to do of course but it takes all sorts doesn't it? How are we going chaps?

**We're going very well.**

Where are we up to anyway?

**Well we were talking about the conditions as you walked up the track towards Deniki, and I want to ask can**

09:00 **you describe the environment, what sort of bush were you walking through?**

Well apart from the hideous business of climbing these mountainous mud heaps, on the level, when you got on the level and you would walk a mile perhaps on the level, it was absolutely magnificent.

09:30 They had these great big vines and they would come down and they were all covered in green and they would hang. God they were marvellous, different colours. And then you have got these butterflies. And oh gee, and where the trees had died across the track they would be about that thick and you could press them like a sponge, they were like a sponge they were that rotten and they were that full of water,

10:00 they just remained like that. If you didn't jump over them or hop over them your foot would go right through them. All covered in moss looking absolutely beautiful you know, it was a marvellous site, nature is a wonderful thing. You used to feel that it was a shame that we were going to muck it all up you know?

10:30 But that's man for you. Smashes everything up. The butterflies and that they were absolutely magnificent. These great blue ones about this size, you know iridescent blue. I think the little devils used to know you were on to them because they used to go over onto a prickly bush or something and you couldn't go any further anyway. You could

11:00 have got them if you had nets and all of this business.

**Not the sort of equipment you were carrying?**

No I think everything looked after itself, same as the birds. At night one of the most nerve wracking things was those blinking, you know that make the noise, you know those, "Beep!"

11:30 like that all of a sudden. When you're in the dark and you can't see a thing, God! Frightened the life out of you, "Beep!" "Ewww1" if they ever wanted to make ghost stories that's the place to start. But as I say apart from that absolutely magnificent was the

12:00 canopy of the green and everything, beautiful sight I thought, just to look at. To tread through was a different story.

**What other sorts of animals did you see?**

Well strangely enough not many animals were around, I didn't see any as a matter of fact. Seen plenty of birds, those beautiful birds they have got up there.

12:30 I think the animals cleared off when the explosives come along that's the end of them I think. They tell me there was a few sea snakes or water snakes in the rivers, never struck them either. The rivers were beautiful, stone cold you know. We used to swing on a vine

13:00 out to the middle and drop. Couldn't have been snakes there but we weren't worried about them much.

**So you did stop for a swim every now and then?**

Not very often, that was early in the piece before we actually got into the situation, cleaned up a bit. That's as far as I can remember anyway, could have been, these are all sort

13:30 of little thoughts that come in. where they fitted in I couldn't tell you. I know that the rivers were beautiful and cold. And as I say we got on a vine and go right out in the middle and drop. They would be about four feet deep most of them. Fairly swift. You can manage all right to get back to land again, because being about four feet you

- 14:00 could put your feet down and guide yourself straight. Yeah great. But that wasn't for very long I am afraid. I don't know how we got on, I often wonder how we got on for shaving and so on. I know when we were in camp in Moresby we would get a bit of a soap and go down to the river and scratch it off. I
- 14:30 found it very hard, the shaving part was very difficult. Because I used to get all sore under here. In fact I have never used a razor since, I have got an electric now. In fact my David got me one of the latest shaving, you know the ones they have got now with the double blades and everything, and I tried
- 15:00 it, they're good all right. But no still got little bits of blood and that came off everywhere. So I said to him, "You better take it back." I love it, I reckon the razor is the only way to go but if it affects your skin no. Because I have got a friend and I asked him if he found it easier with the electric and he said, "No I can't use the electric that makes my face too sore." So there is the other side.

15:30 Amazing isn't it? Rotten job anyway but I wouldn't like a beard.

**Now from the time you left Port Moresby walking up to Deniki, how long were you up in the bush for?**

Oh well I couldn't tell you that I wouldn't know.

**Around about?**

I think it would be about

16:00 two days, two three days to Deniki I reckon, it's a long way and we were on a pretty slow pace too.

**What were you carrying?**

Well you had your pack and your nine pound stinking rifle and I think this is when we had given up gas masks they were no good, and tin hats were out too we didn't bother with them anyway we only had our felt hat. I remember that much.

16:30 **You didn't think it was worth a bit of protection on your head?**

No we didn't think they were any good. Different if you were, I couldn't see the sense in them, not only that, they are the sort of things that if you are going through undergrowth you can hear them. You can hear the things knocking on the steel helmet, it puts you away. Whereas if you have got a felt hat it is different.

17:00 Hats fur felt as they called them. I don't think there was any necessity. But I thought too in the end, nobody had this, well I don't know whether anybody bothered with it. The tin hat, after that you often wonder what happened to all of the tin hats and all of the gas masks there must have been millions of gas masks made in

17:30 Australia and in England and that and never ever used I know we had them at Darley, we had a bit of a stunt at Darley. Stupid officer standing at the bottom telling us all to run down the hill and he took photos of us. God struth. They were a damn nuisance those things. We went through the gas school business, putting them on and you get a whiff of mustard,

18:00 no it wasn't mustard gas it was that other stinking stuff, the ordinary gas that makes your eyes water and that.

**Tear gas?**

Tear gas, that's awful stuff that, can't understand why they can't stop a riot with that stuff, I suppose too much is dissipated. Well if you get a whiff of that that will put you out of action for a while. Well your eyes, you know.

18:30 Once your eyes go you're not feeling too good. But the mustard and phosgene and them we never had them, never had a chance to try them out. But we went through the gas school business of you go into this canvas thing with your eyes open so you get it in, you know and you, oh struth. You get out of that go into the air and open your eyes and flicker

19:00 them around, I don't know whether they had drops for us I forget now. But it gave you an idea of what it is like, that's all they wanted to do, to let you know what it feels like if you don't have your gas mask on and you go into an area that has tear gas. Thank God we never used them I hated them gee whiz. I reckon World War I was a lot worse than this one in a lot of things like that.

19:30 We talk about mud, what about the mud that they had? They were swimming in the stuff and then the trenches, I always gave great credit to the World War I boys, reckoned they had it harder than any of us. New Guinea included. I know it was bad enough to be up there but I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be in it up the here somewhere.

20:00 Stinking mud. Yeah.

**Tell me when you stopped at night how did you camp?**

Well it is hard to imagine now but we used to sort of gather around and we would have our

20:30 blooming ground sheets over our heads and down our backs, and someone would have a tin of soup or something like that. And we would open it and just pass it around and have a spoonful each until we were out of it. Stone cold of course. Oh God. And the same with a bit of bully beef. We all carried biscuits

21:00 so we had a biscuit, but fortunately I don't know you never felt ravenously hungry which was a good thing really. Probably the weather had a lot to do with that.

**The heat?**

Although sometimes at night could be freezing cold. But no I never felt rally hungry all of the time.

21:30 There was always something, if you chewed a bickie or something it seemed to satisfy me, I don't know how others were, you couldn't do much else.

**Did you ever get any food from the bush itself?**

Never touched any of that, bananas when I saw them or paw paws.

22:00 We came across a paw paw farm or village or something. The village was deserted and there was these paw paw trees around and they were just asking to be eaten. They were beautiful I made a pig of myself that day. And they had a little black bee, sod of a thing. And when you're eating it he tore around here,

22:30 he never stung you, but of course the nourishment because you have broken the skin of the paw paw.

**So you just let the little bee run around and clean up?**

A little bee all right. Couldn't get rid of the little brutes. All around. Probably swallowed a couple of the little sods.

23:00 But if you ever want something to work your insides, bowels not working, paw paw will do the trick for you. God blimey.

**Gets you moving again?**

I reckon. What amused me was that we found this village that was deserted and all of these paw paw plants and we all got stuck into them and I often wonder now where the dickens was the enemy? Could have been anywhere. We got stuck into the paw paws and forgot all about the war.

23:30 That was amazing that. Because really they could have set a trap you know. It could have been serious but we got out of that pretty well. But the thing that annoyed me, I went to Queensland and lived for a couple of years up there, I said to the wife, "Let's get a paw paw, they're beautiful," and I brought one up the street, brought it back and cut it up and it wasn't anything like,

24:00 arghh! I said, "This is nothing like it." She said, "It is nice though." "Not as nice as the ones I have had." I think what happened was that the ones we had in the jungle were ripe and they were allowed to get real ripe, not like most of the paw paws you have got in the shops in Queensland, they were probably picked before they were really ripe.

24:30 They weren't as good, no way they were as good. And the bananas were beautiful although we were told not to eat the bananas or the paw paws either. Apart from the Kokoda Trail of course but the paw paws and that that were around Moresby and that we were told not to touch them they were the food of the natives and we got enough feeding our own without feeding them as well. So we were

25:00 banned from eating the bananas. That would be en masse of course, you can pick one off and eat it, in fact one banana is about all you can get down in one go I think. I love bananas they're nice. That's what it was.

**Now when you camped in a spot how did you sleep?**

Yeah good question, raining all night and that.

25:30 Oh I don't know you sort of slept with exhaustion I think. I think we most sort of sat up at night because you weren't sure where you were, it was that pitch black, you weren't sure where you were sitting for instance. You felt all around and that, but you wouldn't be game to lie down, I always felt that there was going to be that much

26:00 rain that you would finish up flooded you know. I sat against the tree with the thing over me, brilliant. But we must have got a certain amount of sleep because otherwise we couldn't have kept going. But I am not sure how we got on in a lot of cases, because the natives couldn't

26:30 accommodate us, I don't remember sleeping in a native hut or anything, may have done I don't know. As I say it is a fair while ago now. But anyway. It was good to sit down anyway after pushing through the mud. You never worried about your wet socks or muddy feet,

27:00 you just stopped where you were and sat, or tried to sit, and put a ground sheet around you and got drowned, mongrel of a place.

**In the early evening before you went to sleep, did you have any light at all?**

Light? No. oh no. Never had any light.

27:30 **Any candles?**

No never had anything like that. Lice would be more like it than light. Although I never had any of them really. You had, oh you had a few of them things that stick on you and suck your blood, but that's about all.

**What about ticks?**

28:00 No never felt any problems with things on your body. I don't know why I guess you just kept going so much you know. Luckily no. I suppose if we had have been given accommodation in villages and that we may have got more than we bargained for I don't know, you wondered about that.

28:30 Because the dear old native is generous enough but I don't know whether he is clean enough hard to say. Probably learned a lot from the war like everyone else I suppose.

**What sort of gun were you carrying?**

Me? I only had my old 303 I had.

**Was there a Bren gun in the unit?**

29:00 Yeah I believe there was a Bren gun. I had an Owen gun at one stage I couldn't tell you what stage, don't know what stage. They were a good little gun though. I know when we got to Buna and Gona there the poor Americans they were really shattered, we walked up to the trenches where these blokes were and they were screaming at us to get down you know,

29:30 get down. And we were sitting on the edge of the parapet and said, "What's the matter with you blokes? There is nobody around here." And he was absolutely shattered this bloke. He gave me, he said, "You better take this." "No", I said, "You will want it more than I will." Pearl-handled automatic I should have held onto it I regret the thought that I didn't grab it. It was a nice thing that, so big, pearl handled automatic.

30:00 But I don't know, you don't worry about things like that, you think to yourself, poor devil he has got to get out of here, and back to his family if he is lucky, he had better hang onto it. Gee I would have loved that I have often thought about it. There would be no way in the world I would hand that in.

30:30 **In walking up the track what were you actually wearing at the time, what sort of uniform did you have on?**

Oh we had the shorts and the shirt and the felt hat and the boots and socks. I don't know whether we had gaiters or not I forget now. May have had gaiters because of the thorns and things that were around, probably did have I don't know. Can't remember that, that would bring you up to about there wouldn't it?

31:00 That's the canvas gaiters like the Americans had they were good.

**Were any of the blokes without a shirt?**

No I don't think so, I met a wounded bloke coming back he had no shirt on and when he used to breathe, there was a hole there somewhere and blood used to run out every time he breathed, every time he

31:30 took a breath there would be a little bit of blood run out. Marvellous how they keep going some of these guys. But I suppose they fixed him up eventually.

**What did you have in your pack?**

Oh that's a good question too. I think there was a,

32:00 things like socks and a first aid bandage, if you cut yourself or something. Wouldn't be any good if you got wounded but oh yeah I don't know whether we had underclothes or not, might have had a pair of underpants or something in there. Not a great deal, but just enough to help you if, oh probably had our lines in case it got cold. Could have had them I don't know, can't remember that.

32:30 There was enough in it to stagger you carrying the damn thing. I think it was the big pack we had, don't think we had the little one. And we had the belt around there with the two pockets you know, and the ammunition and the rifle.

**Did you have grenades?**

Yeah you could get them or they would issue them when they thought you would need them.

33:00 But only then. Because they could be a bit of a nuisance, they could be deadly if they got away from you. In as much as if it was caught on a branch and flicked it and you didn't know it, you would be blown to smithereens. They were deadly things they were. He has gone to sleep I think.

**I am wide awake. You have got to stop saying that.**

33:30 **You're going to get us in trouble.**

You're lucky I haven't gone to sleep mate.

**Oh no we're going to keep prodding you all day.**

Where are we up to?

**Well we're still climbing up the Kokoda Track.**

I thought we left there and got that commander who was a blooming idiot telling us we were rabbits and

**We have done that but I am taking you backwards.**

34:00 Are you?

**I wanted to know how it felt to be on your way to meet the Japanese?**

You never sort of thought of it much. You were more interested in keeping in your group and getting to a certain part, so you had to go over there, the whole problem was that you could be shot at and you wouldn't know,

34:30 well no one ever knew who did that. I got shot, through there, somewhere there isn't it? Through there and it came out somewhere here. So I was really fortunate. What I could never understand was the velocity of that bullet, it took you right off your feet. Lie you flat on your back. I couldn't get over that.

**Exactly how did it happen, what was going on at the time?**

35:00 We were sort of moving cautiously forward, tree to tree, bush to bush sort of thing. Oh dear. Bang!

**And it knocked you over?**

Did it? Sure did knocked you right off your feet. You go down like a pole axe I couldn't get over that.

35:30 It came at such enormous strength to push you right over, trip you up. Amazing isn't it? That's what I say you feel sorry for the rabbit.

**Was anyone else shot at that time?**

Oh two or three I believe but I am not sure how or where they finished up.

36:00 As soon as you're shot they take you and bandage you off and you're off. I think I was about the first somehow, I saw the doc sometime later and he said, "You were the cause of me losing all of my instruments." And I said, "What are you blaming me for?" and he said, "If you hadn't have got shot there I would have lasted a bit longer behind that tree." Oh dear.

36:30 **Now before you were shot, was that how you were moving the whole way up, were you moving from tree to tree very cautiously?**

Well you do it pretty cautious, yes you keep out of the open as much as possible, you're never sure where the enemy is that's the trouble, no idea

37:00 where the enemy is. Sometimes you will stop and keep still and try to hear some kind of sound. Even the click of a rifle or somehow kicked a stone or something like that. Give you some indication if there was anybody there but no, the old Jap he was a professional he was awake to that I think. Of course you had to remember these guys were professionals.

**Were you moving single file?**

37:30 Oh possibly I am not sure now but I should imagine so yeah.

**Did you have a turn at walking forward point?**

Yeah.

**What was that like?**

Well you feel as though you are really on your own. But where I actually was or what actual

38:00 part I was taking when I was shot I wouldn't have any idea. All I know is I got shot. Damned annoyed about it too, really puts you down.

### **Why were you so annoyed?**

Well you sort of get away from all of the things you had been used to, the mates you have got and everything, and you're out of it

38:30 and they're still going. I suppose it is silly to look at it that way but that's the way that you did. And but then again you have got to thank God that he got you out of it, because that's the only one that did get me out of it I assure you that. There again comes mother's prayers you see? The answer. "Prayers of a righteous man availeth much," as it says.

39:00 The saying is that there is more things wrought by prayer than this world ever dreamt of. And I believe that. There is no doubt about it. I have heard time and again different things that this has happened.

### **39:30 At the time when you were shot, did you think about God then?**

I thought about my mother. Oh dear, no I am afraid I didn't I wasn't what you would call a Christian lad at that time I am afraid. But the thought of mother praying for me, "Yeah that's a good idea Mum good on you." That sort of thing. But not deep down you don't worry

40:00 about it or think about it which is one of the sad things you have got to admit. No I am afraid we have a very merciful God otherwise he would have finished me off long ago, but that's the way it is there is no doubt about that. Anyway we got back to, where are we now? Are we going back now or are we going to Sanananda what are we going to do?

**Well look we'll pause there because that's the end of the tape.**

## **Tape 7**

### **00:30 Okay you, we are recording again, you were going to tell us about the natives?**

Had this native on the side of the road, I am walking towards the village you see, I must have been on my own this day, this was in the Moresby area. "What's the matter George?" "Oh", he said, "I buggered. Taubada [boss] I buggered."

01:00 I had a couple of Aspros so I gave them to him and I said, "Look take these George they'll fix you, you will be as right as rain." I will never forget that, Taubada. When they bombed of course they got little bits and pieces too and we got some scent and that sort of thing and when they came around we would give George a bottle of scent

01:30 to take to his wife,

**Stop for a moment if you need to stretch or anything. If you're going to do that it is no good while you're talking. We can't hear if you put your hand over the mic. So you can continue the story.**

So you would give him a scent or whatever you had and he would come around the next day. "George I can smell you coming up the track, what have you done with that scent?"

02:00 he had put it all over himself. "That was for your wife, you're supposed to stick to the beetle nut you know." They were great guys, used to take it all in good fun.

### **Did you learn a bit of pidgin?**

No never got a chance. Oh gee that damn shoulder is sore. I have a lot of trouble with my shoulder, I have been over the physio and that but oh I don't think

02:30 you can do any good with them somehow. "I know doctor I am getting old." I say to him.

### **Now tell me did you smoke?**

Never, never ever tried it. I think poor old Dad put me off it. He only smoked a pipe but he liked a cigar now and

03:00 again and I used to suck, Mum used to love the smell of his cigar and I would say to Mum, "He is burning off again." No I could never stand that so I never took to it, I am not sorry I didn't anyway.

### **Did you get a cigarette ration?**

Yes I used to get a lot of, "Barch what have you got in the bag under the bed?"

03:30 I would say, "Have a look." "I would like to buy a few packets." "No take them, I didn't pay for them it's the Red Cross." So they would clean them all up you know.

### **Did you ever barter them or sell them?**



No never believed in selling them. They were given to me by the Red Cross and I would pass them on. I used to say, "Well I don't want them if you want them"

04:00 Yeah I had quite a bag, a pillow case of the darn things at one stage. "What are you hoarding under the bed there?" they would say. "I am not hoarding it I have had them for a while. Do you want them or not?" And they would have a look through, "Yeah I will have a packet, give a packet to," "Go on." You know.

**What about drinking?**

No never took that on either. It was funny though when we were up at Atherton Tablelands

04:30 we went on a decent sort of a hike, it was about fourteen miles I think. But it was a beautiful day and it is a fantastic place up there I reckon, one of the nicest places I have ever been to. And you go through big tall trees in the jungle, well forest more than jungle. And we came back and about two miles from the camp they had hot water showers rigged up.

05:00 By gee they were nice, they were terrific, I don't know how they did it. They had some sort of a gas burner going to keep the water going, I think that's how they did it. But they were a good hot shower, and you would strip off, and they had duck boards and you would go in here and have your shower. "Five minutes.!" Right oh, so you soap all up you know, and then you come out and dry up and put your shirt on and pants on

05:30 and boots and everything. And we were all ready and the band comes out from the camp which is about a mile away I suppose, and they march us all in looking clean, strike. But it was beautiful you felt terrific. And when we got into camp there, "Bottle of beer just come, stone cold for all of you blokes." Oh marvellous. I got one too,

06:00 and they're all looking at me see. "What are you looking at?" "You don't drink do you?" "Tonight I do." And I took the top off it and drank it right down the whole lot. Never took a feather out of me I enjoyed that bottle of beer. Then I went and had my tea and I felt as good as anything. And they're all looking at me you know, "Barch what are you doing? You'll kill yourself."

06:30 'Get out of here, you're not getting this one," they couldn't believe it. You only do that once in a while though. Usually we would go into a city, like Bathurst for instance. Go in there and you would have a nice meal and then they want to go to the pub and, "I will come I could do with a drink." So you had a glass and that's it.

07:00 They would say, "Aren't you going to have any more?" "No I came here to sake my thirst and I could not drink anymore. What's the good of drinking if I am not thirsty?" "Oh come on." "No I am not I am going." I had had it. So I never went anymore, I never went, only the one. I could never understand how they could drink, drink, drink and drink. If you didn't have a thirst, you couldn't have a thirst to that stage.

07:30 One glass of beer is as good as you'll get, two even but no more. One was about the best that I could get through. See you'd get blokes like, that bottle of beer that I drank they would drink two or three, that brother of mine up in Queensland he can drink a couple without turning a hair, although he is not the boozing type, but he makes his own up there, got about fifty bottles of the home

08:00 brew and it is very nice too. We used to have one every night before tea. Now I can drink that, I could drink a glass of that. He used to say, "Would you like another glass?" "No I am right mate." But he would carry on and have another bottle.

**In New Guinea did you get a beer ration up there?**

No I don't

08:30 remember that I don't remember the beer ration. I couldn't imagine us getting it up there.

**Did you ever get any rum?**

No I can't remember that either. No I don't think we had any, I can only ever remember the old tea. And I used to hate it in the blooming metal, you know the old metal cups we had in the army with the handles that fold back. God I hated those things.

09:00 The tea would be all right but the metal that it was in would be so hot you couldn't put your lips on it. Many a cup of tea I chucked it out and went and had a drink of water the water was all right up there. Old New Guinea I suppose it is a nicer place now than it was though. It would be interesting. I would like to have a look around Port Moresby.

09:30 That would be all right I reckon, but things are not too good up there are they? See they're sending a force of police up there to organise things, from here, did you see that in the paper?

**I have heard about it.**

Or on the news. That will be interesting.

**Just getting back to,**

Yeah get onto the story we will be here until three o'clock in the morning.

10:00 **Tell me when you were going up the track knowing that the Japanese were out there somewhere,**

That's a worry.

**How was morale?**

Oh tense more than anything else. You were sort of tense, you didn't know really how you felt you just

10:30 oh I hope I can get to there without someone shooting me and so on. That's the way I felt. But you took extreme precaution. What with where you walked and what you listened to, all of that sort of thing. Sometimes the Japanese would walk into the same problems we would walk into. They would find

11:00 that we sort of made no noise and they didn't know we were there and they would be coming straight at us. Same thing with us. Yeah. Where does it all end? That's a saw I take it, what with a blowfly?

**Yeah (UNCLAER) so how did you keep your spirits up?**

11:30 I don't know I just, I don't know how I did that you just felt from day to day you were all right and you never talked much about it, you just did what had to be done and that was it. Don't know that you worried much about it. If you were going to get through it you would get through it, you would live a day at a time and that sort of thing. That's about all you could do anyway.

12:00 **Did you talk to each other much in the evening?**

Oh yeah talk about it and wonder what they were doing at home and that sort of thing. Not a great deal. You would sometimes meet and you would go to a village and there would be some fellows that got in a bit earlier you know? And someone would sing out your name. "Is Stan Barcham there?" "Yeah." "There is a fellow over here knows you he wants to talk to you."

12:30 Turned out to be someone that Dad had as a customer in his shop at one stage. And I sat down and had a yarn with him and asked him how he was and his wife and everything. This particular night I did this and little did I know that he was going to die the next day. Because you don't know these things do you? Yep he died the next day that bloke.

**How did he die?**

13:00 Must have got shot somewhere along the track. Little bit higher up than where I got shot and it killed him. That's what it amounts to though. If they had shot me a bit higher up it would have killed me. If I would be down behind the tree looking around, like down they would have shot me through the skull because it would have been the same level.

13:30 Never know do you? But that's the way it was you know. "Where what's his name?" "Oh I think he copped it today as far as I know I haven't seen him." And so and so, "Oh he was wounded he went back to such and such." And this talk sort of went on you know. But not to a great extent past your unit,

14:00 which is just as well, well you didn't know. If you had have known it would have been pretty sad, all of the different ones that had gone that you thought was still alive sort of thing.

**So you had come under fire before the point**

14:30 **where you were actually wounded?**

No not a sound. Not in the area I was in I don't know if down the road they might have had I don't know but not where I was. My shot was the first one.

**But you were saying the other bloke got shot before you did? The bloke that knew your father?**

15:00 Oh he was in a different unit to me, he was nothing to do with me at all, I just met him in this hut you see, this native hut. They would call us in and we would sit around and they would give us a cup of something, I don't know what it was, but if you wanted it. And they did that. Yell out, "So and so is he here?" "Yeah I am here." And so on because it was all dark you never saw much, they had the glow of the fire but that was about all.

15:30 No he was in a different situation to what I was in poor devil. I remembered him he used to come into Dad's shop, he was an Englishman actually.

**You look pretty tired.**

Me?

**Yeah are you okay?**

Yeah I am all right. You get weary of doing nothing, that's part of the business when you have got no way to fill

- 16:00 in the day with reading and things like that. You can listen to stories and that but that doesn't get you anywhere. Go for a walk around the block or something like that. But it is not the same as it used to be where you would go down to the garage and make something or whatever. I used to make little cars for kids and everything too. Don't think I ever will again. Trouble is you can't
- 16:30 see if you wanted to measure something. You wouldn't have a clue where you were. Like you can get special tools that are made specially for the job, but you want a fortune for them though. It would be all right if you were in the business of making little cars and toys and that
- 17:00 but if you're not in the business it is not much business having it. Because it costs you a few bucks. They have a spirit level that you put on a piece of wood and you turn it like that and when it is level, dit, dit, dit, dead level. And it stops when you go off the level. And then they have got talking blooming things.
- 17:30 I have got a talking watch you know, how that works I have got no idea. I have tried to figure it out but I can't. It is only about so big. You crash it and it goes ding. "It is now ten fifty five a.m." you know. How the dickens does that work. No matter when you ring they will give you the time.

**Well I will get you back on the track so to speak.**

- 18:00 Yeah sorry I got off the track.

**That's all right. So on the track I want to talk about when you were wounded now, when you were actually shot, did you pass out at all?**

As far as I know no, only time I passed out of course was when they gave me the morphine tablets. Morphia I think they called it. Little pink tablets about as big as a five cents piece.

- 18:30 You take two, I think it was two. Drink of water and by the time I got out of the first aid I was getting a bit weary going down the track. Just as well because you didn't know anything about it. But no they were marvellous those. They give you about half a dozen and you stick them in your pocket and take them when you want them,
- 19:00 they were great.

**Do you know of anyone that took them when they weren't wounded?**

I wouldn't know that no. They would be lucky to have enough to give them to you when you were wounded, they didn't keep a great amount of stock, because when you're up at the front line, if you lose something you lose a great deal of stuff, well say you just keep what you can manage

- 19:30 then you're not going to lose a great deal. Lose enough of course, instruments and things like that. Can't do much about that.

**So you were taken back by stretcher with the fuzzy-wuzzy angels?**

That's what they called them yeah.

**Tell me about the journey?**

- 20:00 When I came to you mean? A bit rugged I tell you, those boys don't muck around. Those boys are great they're so sure footed they are going a fair pace, and you are thinking to yourself God this is muddy and everything, it only wants one of them to trip and I'm off. But no they know what they are doing and let you have a bit of a blow. Well they have a bit of a blow too. They have a smoke and that.
- 20:30 And if the sun is shining on you they go and get a big leaf and put it over you. Fantastic characters.

**Did you talk with them at all?**

Oh thanking them and that but you couldn't say much because you couldn't understand their language. But they knew that you appreciated them and the rest of that. Love to meet them again it would be marvellous.

- 21:00 That's probably not possible it is about sixty years ago isn't it? This getting old is a rotten idea I reckon. That's why I tell everybody I am thirty-eight. It does help.

**Now when you were going back down the track did you see any other wounded?**

- 21:30 Oh as I say the bloke with blood coming out of his lung here. A few of them. Mostly they were walking because you wouldn't see those on stretchers anyway. But I really think though if they had have wrapped it tighter I could have walked. Although it is hard to wrap here because it slips down you know. However they did whatever had to be done.
- 22:00 It wasn't long before I was walking again, they stitched a bit, but the stitches broke out. I don't know what the strength of that is, it doesn't look too good now, nothing marvellous, but it is healed that's the main thing.

**I have heard some of the wounded had to crawl on all fours?**

Oh there was worse off than me. I was one of the very fortunate.

22:30 **Did you see some of these blokes?**

No never, I wouldn't like to have done either. No, there were some terrible situations I know. I suppose the Japanese had the same I don't know. Of course they had different guys, they would sooner kill themselves than be caught. Even bandaged up.

23:00 **Now when you were taken to a first aid post and had your leg fixed up, how fixed up was it? Did you have any lasting damage or pain?**

No no I, they bandaged it nice and tight because it was bleeding all over the joint. But they bandaged it.

23:30 It was only a flesh wound really when you come to think of it, and I was as I say very fortunate that it was. But whatever you get there is nothing you can do about it and as I say I was fortunate enough to be able to walk again. And it didn't go through the knee, if it had gone through the knee it would have made a mess of things but I was pretty right.

24:00 Well right enough to go to Sanananda and that. And when I was up there I never had a bandage on it so I must have been all right. Often wonder about that because you know in the tropics things take a heck of a time to clean up. They get, oh tropics are terrible places for anything to heal,

24:30 and I often wonder how come that it healed so well, but it did I suppose in about three weeks it would be as right as rain. Amazing isn't it? So I was pretty fortunate there in more ways than one.

25:00 **Now when you were recovering did you hear anymore about what had happened to your unit?**

No. You never heard much when you were going back because everything was scattered around . They attended to you and the old Salvos looked after you, and they looked at you and then you went past the first aid,

25:30 'You're pretty right.' And so on and away you went. But it wasn't long before I was walking, it must have been a very short period because I don't remember more than one trip on the stretcher, I don't remember any more I walked into one of the Salvo's hut and he gave me some pears and a big lump of cake, they were beaut.

26:00 He opened the tin of pears and I ate the lot, tin about that big, juice and all. And then I had this lump of cake. Where they got it from I don't know, amazing people. And you could go and get yourself a drink of tea or cocoa. They always seemed to have the things you needed the old Salvos.

26:30 I go to a Salvo's men's breakfast every month and it is great to meet them, only up the road here. My wife was in the, she used to go to the ladies' fellowship, and we used to go all over the place together. Take us in buses, go, we have been to the farms

27:00 up the road here and all of that sort of thing. Where are we up to now?

**Well after you were fixed up you went to Popendetta?**

That's right yeah.

**Tell me about the march down from Popendetta, you marched to Buna or was it Gona?**

Yeah no I don't remember that.

**Don't remember the march?**

No I don't I must admit that. I remember getting there.

**Was it Buna or Gona?**

27:30 It's hard to tell which it was close to the water which might have been Sanananda I don't know. Sanananda probably. But that would be hard to tell, anyway they're only just villages in the, and we got into this area dug ourselves into this comfortable foxhole. Good job the woodpecker had been silenced

28:00 otherwise it would have been the end of us all. And I think that's what must have caused a lot of American casualties. We lost an officer just as soon as we got there I believe. I don't know who he was but he was shot and killed, we had only just arrived so that was a bit grim.

**Could you hear fire when you arrived?**

You could hear it but I don't know where it was, it wasn't my end anyway.

28:30 As I say we talked to these Americans, they seemed to be shattered as far as I could see. When the morale goes they are pretty hopeless, human beings. And he said, "You better get out while you have got the chance. Go for it" And the fellow that wanted me to take me the pearl-handled automatic, and I said, "No you keep that nice and handy." And I

- 29:00 don't know what happened to them whether they got out or what. But we took over, in fact the fox hole we got into must have been one of theirs, I don't remember that either. But they are rotten little sods of things to be in, it is like a first attempt at being in a grave. The strange thing that happened there when we got out, we weren't there
- 29:30 that long, but we were ordered back to base and what it meant was we got out of our fox hole, got our gear on and rifle and that sort of thing and we walked down this track. And the corporal, I think he was a corporal with me, and he said, "How are you?" and I said, "I am okay why?" and he said, "Oh I don't feel too good." "You don't? Why?"
- 30:00 'Well.' He said, "I don't know. But", he said, "I don't think I am going to be able to walk much further." I said, "Give us your pack and your rifle and I'll see what I can do, I'll carry it for a while. And you keep going" "Well", he said, "All right." So he went on a bit further, I suppose about half a mile or so, and he said, "Look I don't think I can go any further." So I said, "Look I will get a
- 30:30 medic for you, you lie down there," and it was grassy, you know. I said, "Lie down there and I will get a medic for you, and see what he can do. I will see you back at base." "Thanks for taking my gear", he said. I said, "I will leave it here with you and you will be right." So anyway they came over and I never saw him anymore. He died of scrub typhus.
- 31:00 You talk about the hand of the almighty, how did he get it and I didn't? We were in the same fox hole and the little mite that bit him never touched me. And yet we were shoulder to shoulder, knee to knee. It was only a small fox hole.
- 31:30 Somebody said, "Oh he might have got that getting there." No he wasn't, it doesn't take that long for the scrub typhus to affect you. That would have affected him in, at the greatest twenty-four hours. And he died. Never heard of him anymore. Makes you think doesn't it? I went on, and they found out
- 32:00 I had malaria and stuck me in the plane and took me back to Port Moresby. So there you go. Miracle number three. So I consider myself very fortunate.

**Did you know this bloke before?**

No I never knew this fellow before he was a nice guy, I liked him quite a lot. We were together I suppose a couple of weeks.

- 32:30 But real nice sort of a fellow, darn shame. And then when I got back to Koitaki, was it Koitaki or was it further on? It was hospital anyway I was in this AGH [Australian General Hospital], I had malaria and that. And there was a fellow there he was a pretty fit looking joker but he was a bit of a mental case you know?
- 33:00 And I said to the sister that was there, "What is the matter with him?" and she said, "He has got scrub typhus." And they were very sad because he was a very athletic young fellow, he had won a few races in New South Wales wherever he came from. And the sister said, "Look I wonder if you will stay here?" she had to go
- 33:30 somewhere, she said, "I won't be long." And I stayed and kept an eye on him and that and when I came back he was gone. And the sisters burst into tears. Blimey. They're the things, not only bullets, it is things like that.
- 34:00 You know, the fit just go down. Phht. Goes out like a light. That was a terrible thing that scrub typhus they took a while, I don't know that they ever got the hang of it, but I heard that the natives used to find where the scrub typhus, the tick, bit into the skin of somebody they knew, and they used to
- 34:30 gouge it out like you would gouge a bit of you know a bit of bruise in an apple, that's what they used to do and they reckon that used to save a lot of lives. But you know our doctors, "No that's only his idea." I don't know I reckon they had the right idea myself. So I don't
- 35:00 know how they overcome it, I suppose they have overcome it now but that little tick certainly caused a lot of strife. I often think of those sisters, nursing sisters with tears in their eyes, that was quite a sight. Lovely ladies too.

**Just going back to the beach for a moment, tell me about the fox hole that you were in?**

- 35:30 **Did you dig this hole yourself?**

No I don't think we did I can't remember digging. It is sort of black soil there because it's, oh caused by volcanic sort of stuff. All of the beach sand is all black. Horrible blooming stuff. That's what they reckoned it was.

- 36:00 **Tell me about the nights that you would spend in this hole with the bloke?**

Yeah well we had several nights in it apparently. All you could do was wrap yourself and sit there you couldn't lie down really but sit up one end with a blanket around you and your thing over you. It was warm, quite warm up there.

- 36:30 And you wouldn't freeze as far as I can remember, although I believe it does get cold like in Moresby at times. That's what happened the poor devil. I think he was a bit older than me I am not sure. But he was about my build. Gee you wouldn't believe a bloke would go down that quick would you? Frightening when you think of it.
- 37:00 The thing I could never figure out was why the tick never bit me but bit him. That's what they found out, that he had scrub typhus and he died.
- Did you get to know him well in your time in the fox hole?**
- Oh not really. We used to talk a lot and all of that sort of thing, just idle chatter I don't think I ever, I might have got his name I am not sure
- 37:30 but it wouldn't matter I would have forgotten it by now. All I know was that he was a nice sort of a guy you know. Such a blooming shame he had to go but there you go.
- The time you were digging a hole and you found a foot tell me more about that?**
- That was a bit further on I was digging around looking for,
- 38:00 I don't know what I was looking for but I found this sock and pulled it up. Oh God. Probably the rest of him was a bit further down I am not sure but I didn't bother to find out. Because I think after the battle there they must have buried what was there, buried the Japs, just dig a hole and bury them. They had a bulldozer there at one stage.
- 38:30 Somewhere, I don't exactly know where, but they had a sign up, eighty Japs buried here. They would dig a hole like that you know and chuck them in and fill it up. That's about all they could do anyway. Couldn't have them hanging around because the smell was something awful, nothing worse than the smell of a dead body. Blimey.
- 39:00 So that's about it.
- Can you describe that smell for me?**
- No I don't think I could I don't think I could put it to anything I couldn't really. Fish stink when they are on the beach and they have been there a while, a bit like that with a human with it. It is a dreadful smell.
- 39:30 Dear oh dear. But then I as far as I can remember I went back in a plane to Moresby, little tin seats all along the side of the plane, no cushions or nothing. Sat in there
- 40:00 and I got out at Moresby there, the Seven Mile and they put me in a, I think I went to the unit, I forget now anyway I finished up B class, and they put me on the hospital ship Wanganella. And I headed for Sydney. Brisbane I think.
- 40:30 **We'll just pause there, the end of the tape.**

## Tape 8

- 00:30 **Okay we're recording now Stan, were you involved in all three battles? Buna, Gona and Sanananda?**
- Well I would say I was there. But I don't know about being in the three battles. All I remember is the time in the fox hole
- 01:00 and then we got out of that and they sent us back. I think where we went to relieve the Americans they got out and I think the battle died down and I think they took us out and that was it.
- Didn't the 39th Battalion have the honour of assaulting one of the, completing the Kokoda Track I think it was Gona or Buna?**
- 01:30 Well that's a long way from Kokoda.
- That's where the Kokoda track leads to.**
- Yeah you go down to Kokoda township and then you walk along the beach right around to Gona, Buna and this was to Lae as far as I know. But I don't think they were connected in any way.
- 02:00 **Did you get involved in any fighting with the Japanese there?**
- Not there I didn't, one they pulled us out that time as I say we walked back and mate died and that was it I got put on a plane and sent back to Port Moresby.
- Have you seen a Japanese in combat at all?**

No I am like many of them who never saw them.

**What about Japanese POWs?**

Yeah we had a couple of them in

02:30 camp at one stage. But of course they couldn't speak our language and had nothing to do with us and they were picked up shortly and taken to a compound I suppose I never saw them again. What they did with them I don't know, whether they

03:00 I suppose after the war they sent them home as far as I know. They didn't like getting captured though. Sooner kill themselves funny way of looking at things isn't it?

**Do you think they were extremely brave?**

I think so yeah, in a fanatic kind of way.

03:30 They have got a different outlook on life altogether to what we have. They considered the fact that you get captured as a dishonour to their families and their families don't want to know them. Don't want to see any more of them. And that's why they're not interested in going back home full stop.

04:00 They got a chance they would kill themselves, peculiar aren't they?

**Have you seen dead Japanese soldiers?**

Yeah not a handsome looking creature dead or alive. Smelly creatures.

**Whereabouts did you see them?**

Well I saw them at Gona and Buna there was a few lying about, few swimming in too. They used to call it Bondi but it is nothing like Bondi.

04:30 They sank a transport off there and a lot of them got killed and they floated ashore. That's what made it such a foul smelly place to be. I don't know who would be responsible for cleaning up all of the big fat Japanese balloons that were coming in. I don't know what would have happened the sharks never had the decency to eat them. So they couldn't have been much good.

05:00 I suppose they buried them eventually I don't know. I would hate to have a market garden up there you never know what you would dig up would you?

**Were you, do you regret that you weren't involved in any actual fighting with the Japanese?**

Oh no I just find that

05:30 you go in and you do whatever you're told to do. And that's it. If you're fortunate enough to come out well you are very thankful and you leave it at that. There is not much you can do about it, you can't run the show yourself, you're under orders all of the time and that's the way it is, if they told you to do whatever you did it.

06:00 **You were saying before that you saw a Japanese machine gun nest get blown up with the Japanese inside?**

No it had been blown up before I got there. Soon found that out it stunk like nothing. No that was at Buna, Gona, somewhere along there.

**What else did you see that you haven't told us?**

I don't know if there is anything,

06:30 I have told you about the ships that were sunk out, they must have been Japanese transports. And the poor devils that got washed ashore, finally floated ashore .that's about it, stinking mess. I suppose it will be a hundred years before all of the transports and everything are rusted away. I suppose they are still there.

07:00 **You were saying about the Americans being shattered?**

Yeah they ran into badly there apparently. I think if they had a few more Japs there they would have overwhelmed them completely from the sounds of what I heard. I don't know. However I think they lost heavily in that particular area I don't know but I bet they were glad to get out of it. And we took over and as I say we lost an officer

07:30 soon after we arrived. I don't know who he was or anything.

**How did he get killed?**

I don't know how just heard that he was killed soon after we got there which was a shame. Yes there is no accounting is there?

08:00 It is a shame though that you, like myself got through it but like that friend I had at Sanananda that

died of scrub typhus I reckon that was grim. Get through one part and get killed by something altogether different.

08:30 **Was he a good mate of yours?**

Never heard of him before, we were just assigned to one another for the trip but he was a nice guy I liked him and it was a shame to see him go that way.

09:00 **Did you speak to any other Australian soldiers that had been in the battle for Gona, Buna?**

No I didn't I got this blooming malaria and the two of us went down. As I say one bloke died and I was assigned to an aircraft and finished up in Port Moresby. That's as far as I can remember it.

**You were saying before about the Americans, what was their physical condition like after the battle they had had with the Japanese?**

09:30 I only saw two or three of them in their fox hole near where we were and they were very down in their spirits. And I only hoped that they got out in the finish because they certainly looked like they had had it. I think the Japs must have come

10:00 in force and given them a big surprise.

**Was there a lot of dead Americans on the ground as well?**

Never saw any dead Americans. So it must have taken place a few days before. However it is not a very pleasant thing is it?

10:30 **Have you ever seen acts of heroism?**

No not really.

**Never?**

Never, I can't say I have no we just did,

**Courage?**

We just did whatever we had to do and that was it.

**But you must have saw something that was surely courageous if not heroic?**

No I can't say I did.

11:00 No that's about it I think, I don't think there are any others.

**What about chaps that had gone troppo?**

Oh yeah that's a sad story that. Yeah. That is a real thing troppo.

**Well tell us about what you had seen?**

Oh we had a bloke, we went to Charters Towers on the hospital train I don't know how we come to be on that by the way.

11:30 Anyway they had this great big bloke and they did a damn silly thing, they had an airport at Charters Towers and they came out with a couple of Tiger Moths. Must have been young pilots or something, and they started going like this to the train, you know coming down on the train. And this poor devil

12:00 was troppo and he went mad and stuck his fist through the mirror, and there is a little sister about this big trying to get him to the stage where she could give him a needle and quieten him down. Well blimey. She finally did quieten him down and put him in the cot. He was a sad case that bloke, I don't know what happened to him afterwards but I heard that they reprimanded these two lunatics

12:30 that did that. That's all about all there is to that story I am afraid. But I know when I got to Sydney I was sent to Concord Hospital and I still had the malaria and they, a lady nurse, a lady doctor came around,

13:00 and you know they examine you with that thing all over you like this? You know the stethoscope? I got a fit of the giggles and she got real mad and said, "I am not going to do any more I will leave you." And off she went I will never forget that. But when you get a cold thing on you it tickles you know?

13:30 I was all right anyway. That's where I had tripe and onions, that's a beautiful hospital that Concord was then anyway. Concord Hospital.

**Were you happy to leave New Guinea?**

Yeah more than happy.

14:00 **Why is it that you were withdrawn earlier?**



How do you mean?

**The 39th Battalion was involved in some of the heaviest fighting in Buna and Gona?**

Well I don't know, we got there a bit late I think that was it. There was a branch of the 39th that must have got there earlier because there wasn't much doing when we got there.

14:30 Still that was to say you go where you're told and do what you're told and that's it. I don't know what it was but as I say there wasn't much fighting where we were so it must have been over in that section. I think it took a while to clear them out completely.

15:00 **Were you aware that quite a few Australian soldiers had committed suicide?**

No I didn't know about that I thought the blooming Japanese had the suicide priority.

**Could you see that,**

Concord Hospital.

**No, no I was asking,**

15:30 **before we get there if you could tell us if you had seen or heard of cowardice?**

Oh the suicide you mean?

**No you responded to the suicide but have you seen or heard of examples of cowardice in battle?**

No I never seen anything like that. Glad I didn't anyway.

16:00 No nothing like anything like that.

**One thing I did remember could you understand why soldiers did commit suicide?**

Oh yeah of course we would.

**Tell us why?**

Well suppose the poor devil is badly injured crawling along trying to get away from the Japanese, it would be easy to shoot himself

16:30 through the head and give it all away. I imagine something like that could have happened.

**But what about blokes who hadn't been injured who had seen their mates get killed and reached a state where they just killed themselves?**

It all depends what mental state you're in I think.

**Do you see a soldier's mental state as being fragile?**

No I think that they are pretty solid otherwise they couldn't possibly do what they do. I

17:00 think we were pretty good that way I must admit. We had a, when we first started off there was one fellow I think he had too much to drink. I don't know whether this was when we got to Popenetta or to Koitaki or not. But he refused to do it and I saw the doctor come out and he actually pulled out his revolver and ordered him.

17:30 To do what he was told to do. I couldn't tell you exactly what the story is but I remember him taking his revolver out and I thought good God a doctor going to shoot a patient, this will be something. I don't know what happened to that guy, I think he might have been a mental misfit or something. That's the only thing I ever saw apart from the bloke that

18:00 shot himself through the hand there. Damn fool thing to do.

**Did you ever come across any conscientious objectors?**

No.

**Or pacifists?**

No I had a mate that was a non-combatant but he got into the medical situation and they sent him to Milne Bay. That cured him I think.

18:30 But he did all right. He got home and everything and did a good job up there and everything. But he wasn't going to raise a rifle to anybody. All depends I suppose, where are we now?

19:00 **In Sydney.**

Sydney, what are we going to do in Sydney? I told I went to hospital.

## **Concord.**

Yeah I disgusted the lady doctor by getting the giggles when she put a cold thing on it. She left me then. Then the sister came around and said, "Are you hungry?" "Yes sister I am very hungry, I have had nothing to eat since I left the ship." And I always remember Mum would have nothing to do with tripe.

19:30 Never had tripe in my life, well she said, they have these big trolleys in Concord electrically heated with all of the food heated inside with trays. Beautifully done. "Well tripe and onions." "Oh." "Are you hungry?" "I am hungry give us it." I ate it and I had another plate of it, it was beautiful.

20:00 Gee I was hungry that day. Just shows you doesn't it? If you don't try it you don't know what it is like. It was beautiful. Have you ever tried tripe and onions?

### **You're making me hungry right now. Oh no. Might try it tonight though for dinner.**

I think they have got a turnout at our church, tripe and onion, that's right tonight I think it is. No Saturday night I think it is. They asked me if I was

20:30 going and I said, "Oh I don't know about that."

### **Well we're getting off the track.**

Yeah we are. I like tripe and onion, that's it. Go on.

### **Got to stick to the track, can you just pause for a moment. All right now I am going to take you back from your time in New Guinea, back from the hospital. I wanted to ask you about that time you spent**

21:00 **some time in a fox hole, it is hard for me to imagine that's why I am going to ask questions about that time. What was it like to be crammed into a little hole with one other bloke?**

Well it was not comfortable I can assure you, you kept your head down. But luckily it didn't last long from what I can remember because

21:30 I think the flow of the battle had gone one. And we were just there to, we had relieved this American section. They were moving out, we were moving in that was it.

### **About how long were you in there for ?**

About a week I think, not too long. Because they took me out and this fellow as I said the one that died and marched us back, not marched just walked back to the aerodrome.

22:00 Could have been Popenetta I am not sure. I suppose it would be. I was as miserable as a bandicoot with this malaria but he of course was worse off still. Yeah I think that's about all there was to it. But as for the fox hole it was a miserable experience,

22:30 and the black sand got on you and you felt as though you had been under a car or something. Terrible stuff.

### **You were in there day and night?**

Oh yeah you never got out of there apparently, as far as I can remember. This is going back a long time of course you were supposed to stay there until you're told not to and that's just what we done.

23:00 Whatever happened around us other than the knowledge that the Americans were evacuating and our boys were getting in I don't know. So they must have got our blokes in and them out and they must have said, "You blokes in the fox holes out on the edge you can go." That's all I can think of I don't know.

### **What were you supposed to be doing while you were in the fox hole?**

I suppose you were to stay there and pick up any stragglers that came along the beach at night, Japanese of course.

23:30 Because you never knew that ship was in, and some of the dead ones floating in. How do you know some of the floating in ones weren't alive? I think that was the general idea.

### **So did you put your head out?**

Oh yeah we just sat there looking out. We had to keep an eye on what was going on. Fortunately nothing was apparently.

24:00 **So you just had to keep watch?**

Yeah it was like a sort of a guard point I think.

### **Were you bombed at all?**

Nobody came bombing us or nothing no. They had the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] came along before us and sprayed the whole joint a couple of times along the coast there.

- 24:30 What were they Beauforts they called them? Or Beaufighters weren't they? "Whispering death" the Japanese called them because they couldn't hear the darn things coming.
- You said that it was a miserable experience?**
- Yeah well it is, the smell is enough.
- 25:00 **Were you scared?**
- No not really, there was an odd tank around there I believe, got cleaned up the Japanese had there. I never saw that either. The place was a mess, smashed up trees. Rotten business, see everything destroyed.
- 25:30 **Were there many bodies around?**
- Well there was quite a few in the water. I don't know on the land I suppose they must have buried them on the land, but there was a few in the sea.
- Can you describe the scene for me, paint a picture?**
- What of the wreckage and the slowly floating bodies? Of course they swell up.
- 26:00 After they have been in the water of course they come to the surface and then they float, like big beach balls. I don't know we had nothing to do with that sort of thing, but when they hit the shore they went along and dragged them in and buried them I should imagine would be what they do. I don't know who or what that comes under, engineers or something I suppose
- 26:30 I am not sure. Perhaps not. But there would be some crowd that would be responsible for burying them and that sort of thing but that's about all they could do, wait until they come in and chuck them in a hole and bury the brutes.
- 27:00 **You say the coconut trees had been shot up?**
- Oh yeah I think they were flogged a bit you know like brooms that had been slashes you know, flogged. The poor old palm trees were in a hell...
- Did you ever see any evidence of any kind of atrocity?**
- Not in our area, nothing like
- 27:30 that. Don't think the coots had time to do things like that.
- Did you hear stories about things that had been done to soldiers?**
- Not in that area, never heard anything. I didn't know anything about that until I came home and read about it, I didn't know of any atrocities and that.
- 28:00 I think the worst persons in the world would be the prisoners. In Changi and places like that I reckon that would be shocking. To be so helpless would be terrible I think. You were going to say?
- I was going to ask you how you felt about the Japanese?**
- Oh
- 28:30 we hated their guts of course but when it comes down to it the poor devils were thrown into it and that was it. They, their stupid religion and they have got their head of state and he orders them in and they have got this fanatical business of die first for your country. You feel sorry for them the poor devils.
- 29:00 Yet when you go there they are as nice as pie to you that's the funny thing about them.
- But at the time you were fighting them did you hate them?**
- Oh yeah you hated the sight of them because they were the cause of you being there weren't they? As for New Guinea we used to say, "As far as New Guinea is concerned they can have the rotten place."
- 29:30 **You mentioned that when you were shot, you knew what it was like and you felt sorry for the rabbit?**
- You sure did.
- Tell me if it came down to it, if you saw a Jap running along the beach, how do you think you would have gone? Would you have been able to shoot him?**
- I would have done that all right. I don't think that would have worried me, because I had a sniper's rifle once, and there
- 30:00 was a, from here to the corner I could see this shovel coming up like this. And I said to the fellow, "Give us a rifle I reckon that's a Jap down there." They're beautiful things those sniper rifles, you put them up and you get the square you know, put it right on the, phew. He never came up again but you never knew

whether you hit him or not.

30:30 Never forget that I would have loved to have that rifle, you couldn't miss. They are beautiful things those, you know with that lovely, you know sight, telescopic sight on it. Now of course they have got the one that puts the red light on you haven't they? Blimey.

**Where was that?**

You know that laser beam.

31:00 **Laser sighting. But where was it that you used the sniper's rifle?**

Where was it now? That was somewhere, God where the dickens was it? I am not sure where that was. It would have to be up in the hills I suppose.

31:30 I don't know where that was, but I remember firing it, having a shot. Thinking to myself I better come down in case some character spots the sniper and has a go at him. I think that was along the coast somewhere at, no. Somewhere in the

32:00 Sanananda or something area. I don't know it is a long time. But what he would be over there for I don't know. I know I borrowed the rifle and had a go at him. I hope I made up for the scar he put on me, even now.

**Did you think about it at all, to kill another human?**

32:30 No, no it was a war. No I don't think I thought about it that way, it is like, you know these mongrels that can invade your home? I can never see the difference between it and a blinking war with the Japanese. You want to get rid of him you're going to fight to the death to get rid of him ,

33:00 and if he dies well that's his fault he shouldn't have been there in the first place. Which is about right I reckon. But this business with how they carry on with the justice, I reckon we have got the worst justice in the world. I mean you can go to gaol for causing him injury for coming into your house. I reckon that's ridiculous isn't it?

33:30 How the dickens can that work out? If he didn't come he wouldn't have got killed. And he shouldn't have been there in the first place. But they make a great thing out of it and you can end up in gaol.

**Well I can't justify that I am afraid I can't explain it.**

Why is that?

**Don't know.**

The old bible says an

34:00 eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and I think if we kept to that we would have justice. A fellow goes out and he shoots another bloke's wife, he is entitled to be shot. Never mind about courts or anything, you saw him shoot him, bang kill him that's it. But they carry on and they find out why he did it, and they make every excuse possible that he didn't mean it, God struth, it

34:30 seems so stupid to me.

**Now can I ask you, the scene that you described at the beach, Buna or Gona or wherever it is, where the trees have all been shot up, and there is masses of bodies floating in the water and half buried on the beach,**

Bondi beach as we called it.

**Did that disturb you at all?**

35:00 No the damn smell did though, the smell of the thing. You know you sort of thought you would be glad when the blokes got down to bury this lot. I don't know when they did I suppose it would be a while before they got around to it. Oh I don't know it is a rotten business the whole thing, there is no doubt about that. But when

35:30 have got to face it, if we have got to have a war you have got to do something about it.

**Has it bothered you since then?**

No. It has never bothered me, but I often think though if someone gate crashes your home I think you're entitled to resist. To the best of your ability, whatever I reckon.

36:00 I have got a long steel shaft there about so long with a handle on it and a sharp point on the end. I reckon if anybody invaded the place you would have something to resist him, provided he assaulted you first of course, you would have to work that out as regard to what action to

36:30 take. But if he came in and drew a knife well you slam that thing through him wherever it went. Same as if you had a rifle and bayonet you would do the same thing.

**Have you got one of those in the house?**

No I haven't got a bayonet.

**No the sword thing you were talking about?**

Oh yeah it is around somewhere, outside I think. I must get it and bring it in I think.

37:00 Because you're on your own you know. Probably the point is rusted up a bit but that wouldn't matter.

**Now during the time that you were in New Guinea did you ever meet any reporters or journalists?**

No that Damien Parr or whatever his name was he was there but I never actually met him I think I saw him once.

37:30 But he was a remarkable fellow, he got killed in the finish you know, shame isn't it?

**Did you ever see the film Kokoda Frontline?**

No I saw the bits on the newsreels they used to have after the war that was about all. We didn't have TV or nothing then.

38:00 Not in our house anyway.

**Now exactly which point did you get malaria?**

Oh I don't know I think it came up around about Buna and that I think. I don't remember it when I was up in the

38:30 hills, about Buna or something I think because they finished up sending me home.

**What was malaria like?**

Oh like a pounding, attack of the flu, you know you're cold and you're miserable. Oh boy. I was again fortunate because they gave me, they took us to Brisbane, Greenslopes [Hospital] in Brisbane

39:00 and we got these Atebrin tablets, they're the little yellow ones and we used to take those and when the sister wasn't looking we would chuck them out the window. Trouble is it rained and she had a funny idea things weren't coming good and she went out and had a look in the garden and of course where the little yellow Atebrin tablets were the rain spread them like this.

39:30 And then she came around and stood there while you had them, that stopped it. And then they sent me down to Melbourne and I went to Heidelberg and they fixed it. They fixed it good. You had your tablets there and what you do you get the permission to, "If ever you want anything to eat at any time of the day just let me know." So you could have cakes in the middle of the day

40:00 you could have eggs and bacon, I went for malt extract. Had a bit of malt extract. This is to build up the corpuscles in the, white corpuscles to beat the malaria. Certainly beat it I have never had it since some never get over it but I got it and I got over it. Pleased to say.

**Okay we'll pause there.**

## Tape 9

00:31 **All right now can you tell me what did mateship mean to you?**

At a young age or an old age?

**During the war?**

Oh yes they meant a lot to you because even in the early days of camp and that your

01:00 tent mates meant a lot to you yeah. You got to know them and you seemed to be able to pick good ones because you could trust them and all of that. I believe some were unfortunate enough to have those that were untrustworthy. But I was fortunate enough not to be worried about a thing like that. Yeah you could rely on them if you wanted anything special you know.

01:30 And when parents came to the camp you sort of introduced one another and that all helped.

**Was it something that kept you going?**

Oh I reckon it did, you have got to have contact with other humans, that's only natural. You have got to have it.

02:00 **Were there any that you were particularly close to?**

No, we sort of had a general, you know you sort of knew a few of them all together. There was never any enmity one with the other. I enjoyed the company of the young guys, that was pretty good. And older ones, we had a few older ones in ours.

02:30 And one chap I knew early in the piece, I think this was at Rokeby I think. He was, he told me he was a submarine man, lieutenant in a submarine. And we used to have a go at him, we reckoned we can tell you're a seamen, he had to have everything neat. Everything had to be right in his, great guy

03:00 though, nice people to know especially those that are older than yourself because you can learn from them. And he was a nice guy.

**So tell me when you came back to Sydney and then after that you went to Heidelberg, what was it like to be back in Australia?**

Oh good. Yeah it was good that was. I got

03:30 tripe and onions but that's beside the point. I enjoyed that I liked Concord [Repatriation Hospital] that was a nice place and then we went by, I can't remember, I think we went by train down to Melbourne I think, I can't remember much about that. Funny things that go right out isn't it? There are things that slip your memory altogether.

04:00 Probably no great big deal you know, just put you on the train and away you went. But I was glad to get home. And then mother had it all worked out. She had a dinner for me and all of the trappings. "Mum?" "Yes what dear?" "I can't eat a third of that." "Well you must be sick. Do you want the doctor?"

04:30 'No', I said, "I can't eat it all." What happens your stomach shrinks when you go into the services and you find out that meals you used to eat you're never going to eat again in such quantity. And poor old Mum she couldn't understand that. Never forget that. See you went into camp and you first sat down, I

05:00 remember when we first went into our digs and everything and the meal call came and you all went out and the food came out and was put on the table for you. Whatever it was, it was, "God is that all?" and you would have what might be soup or what might be an army stew, which was pretty good really we got pretty good food. And then you got bread and butter and a mug of tea. And you would think to yourself, oh gees I am starving.

05:30 So we used to go down to the canteen and we would get an apple pie and a carton of ice cream, take a spoon with us and we would have one of them each, and we would be right. So this went on for a couple of months, I suppose. Then you get to the stage, "Will we go down and have our apple pie?"

06:00 'Oh don't know about that tonight don't feel like it.' And from that time on you only went very seldom, and you found that what you were getting was all you could eat. Isn't that amazing? I have often thought of that. Which was about half of what you got when you were home. And that's the way it remained didn't do you

06:30 any harm anyway, you ate too much as a kid. I sometimes go out to teas and suppers and they're pretty nice people, wealthy turnout, big long table where there is everything. And I think to myself I wish I was a kid again, I would hoe into this lot. And if I did now I would never sleep. Couldn't possibly. They will say to me, "Why don't you have

07:00 another piece?" "No I will have nightmares if I have that I am not going to have that." And so you don't have it, you can't eat it, it is amazing isn't it? I think it does you more harm than good anyway, you don't want to wear your gut out filling it with food, getting fat and all of this sort of business this is the way it is now. What's next?

**Did you get any kind of official welcome?**

07:30 Where from?

**Like did you get a parade or?**

No I don't remember, only Anzac Days that's all. Like on Anzac Day they used to go right up all the way from the top of Swanston Street, right to the shrine. They don't now. We get in, we from, well we did the last time at the Forum Theatre you know? And go around up the Princess Bridge and over to the shrine.

08:00 That's it, you don't do the other, they cut that right out. Fellows are getting too old.

**What was it like when you saw your girlfriend again?**

Girlfriend? That was a funny show, we were just friends, that was the fun of it. And then she had a friend that her aunty or something had a little hut, little house out at Narbethong. Do you know where Narbethong is? Way out there somewhere.

08:30 So anyway we got the train at Princes [Bridge Station], you know the ones that go out to Heidelberg and that and we went out and we found this Narbethong, and we asked a few people and got a bus and went to this little place and you had to walk through the bush and find this home and the little key

fitted.

09:00 Oh it was only a little joint, so we went in and we had brought some tea and that and we sat in there and had a bit of a fire and that and then we looked at the time and thought, "Gee we had better get home you know that?" "Yeah it is getting a bit late." It was about seven or eight o'clock. We have got to go back and get the bus and we have got to get the train, and that we did

09:30 and finished up getting the last train home I think from the city to Sandringham. You know the thought of staying the night, because we weren't married, never came into our heads. Isn't that amazing. What a world we live in now, that's amazing. All we thought about was getting home to bed, because your parents would be thinking about you and all of this.

10:00 **After travelling half the world and being shot at you were still worried about how your parents felt?**

Yeah well that was it. Poor old Mum she was funny you know, after we got married we lived with her for a while before we got our own place somewhere and I remember we went to a show somewhere at Gardenvale or something, I don't know we missed the train anyway and had to walk home and we got home about half past

10:30 twelve or something. And there was mother out the front, she had been down to the station on her bicycle. "Where have you two been? I have been worried about you, it is getting late. You should be home and in bed" I had to laugh at that, here we were just married.

**When did you get married?**

Oh that was 1972 I think it was yeah.

11:00 I would have to check it all up now, I have had fifty-six years and eight months.

**Sorry, the same girl that you were, she was your girlfriend since the war?**

Same girlfriend amazing isn't it?

**For nearly thirty before you got married?**

11:30 Yeah blimey when you think of it. I knew a couple of girls during the war and that. A WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] girl from Yea. She was funny and had no idea of red light. She would just charge across the road and I would grab her and say, "Hey hold it, you see that light? That's a red light, we stay here until it is green right?" Gee she was funny, she could have got herself killed.

12:00 Now where do we go?

**I am still trying to come to terms with the fact that you were seeing?**

Yeah well I did the right thing, I came home I didn't stay the night right?

**For thirty years?**

Well that didn't matter. No good now I am burnt out. Oh boy. No I didn't, I did the right thing until we got married.

**Why didn't you get married earlier?**

12:30 No we got married, well it would have been a few years after the war wouldn't it?

**You just told me that you got married in 72?**

I am wrong there, I can't remember it now. I was fifty-six years

13:00 married when Mum died which was last December. And I would have to work back.

**That's 47?**

Yeah that would be about right, what did I say? 65 or something.

**No you said 1972.**

Did I? Good Lord. Well you're right now, sorry about that. Wipe that.

**That's all right I thought you went thirty years before you got married.**

Did you scrub that off the film?

13:30 Get the censor when you get out there and clean that up mate.

**The editors can work that out.**

They will have a laugh when they see that. At my expence.

**Now tell me when you came back to Australia, how did you find it adjusting to being a civilian again?**

Oh it was pretty grim, I had a job at Holden's [car factory] for a while.

14:00 Gee I wore the army overcoat for the long time, always seemed to be cold you know. Getting the train with a big army overcoat on and everybody is sitting there with just light frocks on. But after a while you acclimatise down to it and you got over that part of it all right, you felt a bit out of it sometimes. Poor old Mum used to say, "Why have you gone silent?"

14:30 'Oh I don't know.' "You're thinking about something?" "Probably am I will be all right." And then you come good. Don't know why you do these things, must be the past catching up to you or something.

**Well it must have been strange to go from the jungle and running around with a gun and endless tension to calm and peace?**

15:00 God it was I tell you. You're in a different world you know. However you make up your mind to make a go of it. After you get married you have got to settle down and get yourself going. Go to work and that sort of thing. And then we got a car, I got a 26 Whippet first.

15:30 That wasn't a bad car that the Whippet.

**Did you meet up with other blokes from the army?**

Not many no. I started, when I first got back I thought I will go to the RSL [Returned and Services League] I suppose so I went to the one in Sandringham, do you know they were all First World War blokes and they were so clicky with their knowing one another and

16:00 billiards and so on you never got a look. They sort of didn't take much notice of you and I thought oh blow this I am not going to come here any more and I didn't bother to go back. But I thought they were a bit hard on the blokes coming in because it was a case of who are you, who do you think you are, and you felt like you were intruding into their lives.

16:30 **Did you go to any reunions?**

No that turned me right off for a long time. And I went to some turnout that, fellows I got to know he was silly as a wheel, he had a few in and I thought oh blow it I am not going to come to these joints if they are going to get full

17:00 and not make any sense out of them. I might as well not bother so I didn't bother. Never went anymore, but I have been to a few turnouts of late. We went to a turnout in the city, the 39th and I have been going to the march, my son takes me too which is a big help, in the car that I used to have and don't drive.

17:30 And we have a bit of breakfast in there and we go on a march and we have been to turnouts, oh they had a dinner for us in one of the schools in the city, that was very nice I thought that, on one of the nights. Little things like that but I don't go a great deal.

**Did you find**

18:00 **that people had an understanding of what you had been through?**

Oh they were pretty good yeah. One old girl down at Black Rock that Mum knew said, "For you facing up to bullets to keep us safe I will give you this money to get yourself a nice bike." Well for twenty quid you could get a beautiful bike in those days. And I finished up with a beautiful bike, you know white rim tyres and the handle grip and the nice

18:30 frame I will never forget that. Went into the city, it was in a shop opposite the museum, I went in and bought it and walked it down to the station and put it in the guard's van and got in with the bloke in the guard's van and when I got home and got it out of the station I rode it home, that was great I will never forget that.

19:00 **Do people ask you what you have been through?**

No not many. You don't feel like telling many either, you don't bother to tell them because they, you wonder whether they are just nosy or they really want to know some of them. But the younger ones are interested, a few of them are interested. But I don't think they give the schools enough knowledge of what

19:30 went on in the wars, ever World War I and II they don't do it. I hear that in Japan they have got no idea what went on, but they should. I believe there is a move afoot to educate the Japanese it would be a good idea if they did I tell you. You got more to learn than we have.

20:00 **What made you go back to Japan?**

Oh we felt like a trip. We went to England and America and Canada and we went through to Japan, I enjoyed it, it was a beautiful place. I could go back there tomorrow, fantastic place Japan. Beautifully



kept, everything is nice. And we went to, where is it? Where they dropped the atom bomb.

### **Hiroshima?**

- 20:30 Hiroshima yeah and we went to the turnout there and they had a big building like a museum with all the parts and photographs in it of what happened. And it is amazing you know, they were all Japanese chaps there and that, not one of them, they all sort of bowed and that and helped you with whatever you wanted, and there was no enmity against you which I thought was
- 21:00 pretty good. I don't know if I would be that way myself if it was turned around. They were very good, I appreciated that they were wonderful. As I say they asked us to join this Japanese friendship society, and I said to the wife, "What do you reckon should we have a go at this?" and she said, "Well it would be nice while we're here." So we went to this place and they had a great dinner for us,
- 21:30 there was quite a few of us, it was a bus trip to Japan and quite a few of us went, I don't think four did but we went and they gave us a lovely meal. And then they took us, the ladies to one side and the men to another and they decked us out in kimonos you know? I will never forget it. And then they took us to this place which was much like the MCG [Melbourne Cricket Ground], not as big.
- 22:00 This big thing going on with the, show was going on, lights and these fellows with, they have a great big thing, almost like a big garage and it is all full of twinkling lights and there is jingles going on and we went in and I remember the policeman coming up to us and bowing to us. Strike it was a funny show that and all of this sort
- 22:30 of business and they gave us drinks wherever we went, and we had a wonderful time, I enjoyed it, it was great. And then took us home and the next morning we got up in the hotel, and the wife said, "What will we do?" I said, "Well have a bit of brekkie, I wonder what is on telly in this joint?" So I turned it on, and I said, "Hey come and look at this, this
- 23:00 looks like something we went to last night. By gee it is, there is us look! There we go." And we were on television, I will never forget that. It was great. How are you mate? So yeah it was really good, enjoyed that. And then as we say we had a couple of Japanese girls come out, three of them actually, two from one family and one on her own.
- 23:30 They were lovely, never forget them, wonderful girls. We hear from them now and then. Satinai I haven't heard from in a long time. I don't think Mum left me the address of the dear girl so I can't send her a card.

### **When you went to Japan how did you feel about the Japanese?**

- 24:00 I looked at it from the point of view that the generation now is not the generation we had anything to do with. These are a younger generation and you couldn't pin on them the tragedies their fathers did. Anyway we found everything was beaut, they were very good.
- 24:30 Took us to, bus trips and, oh dear impatient characters. They would come to the hotel and they would be there at nine o'clock they would say. And it would be about three or four minutes to nine and the bus would pull up, and I would say to the wife, "Here he is look at him, looking at his watch." We would have to all come down and get on the bus and off he went. But they were wonderful and
- 25:00 they took us to Noritake, where they make all of this china. You know the china stuff?

### **I have to get you back onto track,**

Yeah sorry.

### **I wanted to ask you did you ever tell your family about your war experiences?**

Oh bits of it yeah, David my youngest son he has read

- 25:30 that book I have got there from the 39th Battalion and that. The girls I don't know that they bothered much.

### **What about your parents?**

Oh Mum and Dad of course they have long gone, I told them as much as I could about it . especially Dad, but there wasn't the reading then, that hadn't

- 26:00 come out until he had passed on. So he was more or less quite ignorant of the fact well a lot of it.

### **Is there anything that you learnt from your experience?**

Oh I think that anybody, I am all for the business of

- 26:30 national service for instance because it brings a discipline into your life. I don't believe in getting them ready for another war, but get them into a national service where they can learn something. Learn to handle weapons, learn to do all sort s of things especially discipline. And I reckon it would make a big difference, you wouldn't have

- 27:00 these blooming hoodlums getting around writing all over walls and that. This is the thing, they won't do these things these days and it is such a shame because there is a lot of lost kids out there. They have got nothing to do but go don't to the blooming pub or get in a car and see how fast it will go before it stops in a hurry at a blooming tree.
- 27:30 They have learnt nothing have they? Such a pity, but I will have to see what happens in the future I suppose, how long our future will last I don't know. We can only live a day at a time that's all.
- Now at some point along the line you became more of a believer, what brought that about?**
- 28:00 Believer in what?
- In God?**
- Yes well I made a commitment there and that changed my whole life and my wife was the same. You realise then that this world is not run by
- 28:30 just anybody it is run by the creator of all things and that makes a lot of difference.
- Is this as a result of your experience in the war?**
- No it isn't. I wasn't that way in the war at all, it is only in the years that have gone on that you have suddenly realised that the hand of God has been upon me, there is no doubt about that.
- 29:00 And I have got him to thank for where I am today I mean we have had to struggle, lost my wife and eyesight, but I know that he is still there caring and I have got a future that I didn't have before because I know that he is there and you make a commitment
- 29:30 to him.
- Now can I ask you, war is something that has always been popular for books and films and television, how do you feel about that and do you think here have been any examples that you can think of that have been totally wrong and any that have been totally spot on?**
- Well I think that
- 30:00 they glorify war and it is a sinful thing, it is a terrible thing. Because there is nothing to glorify people getting themselves killed. There is nothing good whatsoever in killing one another, there is no doubt about that. But, I don't know that's about it I think.
- 30:30 Can't think of anything else.
- Can you think of any films that you have seen that you appreciated?**
- Night People was good, did you see that? Gregory Peck he was a wonderful bloke. That was all about the Berlin Wall and they way the Russians handled it. They're a funny lot some of those bloody Russians, they are a deadly lot and yet they are some of the most wonderful musicians in the world the Russians,
- 31:00 isn't that amazing. Well that goes for the Germans too, beautiful musicians. They have a station on Triple Z the German station with their German music, I don't know what has happened to it, but that was fantastic music. You would get it of an evening about eight o'clock, but I have tried and tried again, I will have to find out what's wrong with it. Don't tell me they have taken it off?
- 31:30 Beautiful music.
- Do you know any songs yourself from the war?**
- A lot of the First World War songs were continued on, Vera Lynn and her music was great and then you had the, oh what's the one that got killed in the air crash? Victor Sylvester and all of them.
- 32:00 And In the Mood that used to be always sung, one of the favourites of the boys, In the Mood was always played.
- Did your unit make up any songs or have a unit song?**
- No I don't think so, well they might have had a unit song but I don't remember it.
- Were there any dirty songs or funny songs that you made up?**
- 32:30 I don't know, they may have done but I don't know of it, no I don't think so.
- Tell me did you feel a part of the Anzac tradition?**
- Oh you do in a way, yeah you do in a way. You followed on the poor devils of ANZAC [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps] but I don't think that ours was nearly as terrible as theirs.
- 33:00 Whatever ours was, was bad enough, but those poor devils it must have been a shocking thing, fancy fighting a war uphill, terrible thing wouldn't it? Fellow up the top has got it all over you.

**Now is there anything that you haven't told anybody before, that you could tell us now for**

33:30 **the archive?**

I don't think so. Such as what do you think?

**Something that is too horrible, to think about? You haven't told anybody?**

Well I suppose if you were to put it that way, the fact of a nuclear war would be the

34:00 most horrible thing you could imagine and you trust that it never comes to that in another war. Well we hope we never have another war, but they never use nuclear weapons and all of the things they reckon they destroy and everything. Although it is a funny thing, we went to that Hiroshima,

34:30 to the big museum there. Now the scientist reckoned where the bomb was dropped nothing would grow for hundreds of years. I tell you what we got the shock of our lives. I think you can compare the museum and the gardens at Hiroshima with the botanic gardens here. Beautiful, you wouldn't believe it would you. I was shocked, I thought these characters reckoned

35:00 nothing would grow here. Grew all right.

**Maybe they trucked in soil?**

Well whatever it was they were beautiful. No, I believe they just went ahead and they built the museum part and the cleared it and everything and grass started to grow and they thought, well if that can grow so can something else and away they went.

35:30 I was surprised marvellous it was. Lovely gardens and you know how the Japanese are they are garden experts.

**Now are your memories of war the strongest memories you have?**

Strongest? I suppose you would say that yeah. You have got memories of your dear wife that has died of course that's another thing again.

36:00 **Did you ever dream about the war?**

No I don't go in for dreams now, can't even dream of decent girls even, nothing is working. Oh boy.

**What did you miss most when you were in New Guinea? What or who?**

36:30 You miss your parents and everything of course, that's only natural I suppose. You would like to let your father see all that is going on. That wasn't possible of course things like that. You miss this country, it is the best country in the world there is no doubt about that.

**Why do you say that?**

37:00 I have been to England, Canada is the next best, beautiful Canada, I could live in Canada without any trouble. But they can have the rest. I went to England and I didn't think much of it, I like Ireland, I thought Ireland was a beautiful country. Travelled all around England, we went twice to England actually but I would never go again. I was born in England but I would never want to go back.

37:30 It's a funny sort of a joint to me. I am not one for all of these old castles and this sort of thing. They are all right every now and then bit blimey they take you on these tours and you seem to do nothing but go to castles, forget it. I think London is a dirty old place. Well where do we go from here fellows?

**Well we're right at the end of the tape so**

38:00 **anything that you would like to say to future generations of Australians?**

Well what could I say? Good question that isn't it? It is a matter of I think that this country of ours should turn

38:30 itself towards the creator and realise that without him we can do nothing. There is coming a day when this world is going to go it is not going to always be here. And as it says there in the book there, what does it say? It

39:00 is hard to say what would be the best thing to say to the children of the day, only that if they confess to the man the Lord Jesus and say in their heart that God has raised them from the dead they shall be saved. And if they're saved they go up, if they're not they go down.

**That's fantastic. Well that's the end of the tape Stan. Thankyou very much for all that you have done today.**

39:30 That's all right. Thanks for having me. Are you coming to take this tomorrow or are you going to?

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

