Australians at War Film Archive

Roy Walsh (Walshie or Tiger) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:40 **So Roy, can you tell me why your family actually moved to Australia in the first place?**

Well, yes. Dad had served his time in the First World War. In the artillery, he was actually in the, in the

01:00 'Old Contemptibles' [self adopted name by British troops in WW1] there after the war had finished. Then, after he had come home, and the opportunity was there to, to come out to Australia, on what they called the group settlement schemes. It wasn't an immigration scheme in those days, it was just group settlement.

And, so he decided in, in 1923. Incidentally I was born on

01:30 the 10th of May, 1923 in Plymouth, England. And Dad and Mum came out here with my two sisters and brother, four of us at the time. And in 1923, November 1923, so I was only six months old when we came here. And our allocation was in Denmark, down in the south west. And, of course they gave Dad a pick

02:00 and a shovel and an axe, and a little bit of turf there, and an old shanty he built. But he wasn't the farming type. We were there five years, and when I was about five, four and a half, five, he decided to move up to Perth, to work

Do you remember anything about Denmark?

Oh not a great deal, no, not in the early days. I do remember we, we lived near a river there, and we were always

02:30 down by the river, and that type of thing. But not a great deal about Denmark, no.

Are you the youngest in the family?

No, no. I was the… It finished up there was 12 in our family. Yes, I, as I said, I came out with my eldest two sisters, my brother, myself, there was four of us. And then I, we had a brother Dave, Eric and, and a sister Marge.

03:00 That was seven of us. Later on when I was nine, my mother died, and my Dad used to get people in to look after us. People wanted to put us in a home, you know, and that, cause he had to keep us, but we were pretty resilient, and we did all the things we had to do for ourselves, my older sister mainly. And, anyway, they, we had a lady came, a Mrs

03:30 Smith, and she was our housekeeper type, and then Dad and her got together, and they finished up they got married, and we had another seven.

Gee.

And that was Dougie, Frankie, Billy, Shirley… and how many have I given you, four.

04:00 Doug, Frank, Shirley, Bill and I can't remember the other one, isn't that funny? Anyway, we finished up with twelve, and my eldest sister married early, and we finished up with eleven. When we left Denmark, we moved up to Bayswater, into Garrett Road, Bayswater, and we rented a house there,

04:30 it was a little old house, next to the old Chinese market gardens there.

Are you about nine years old then?

Round about, not quite then. I was five when we moved there, and then I attended Bayswater Primary School there, or more or less bubs [Infant Class] when I first started there. And oh one of my experiences there, in first bubs, was the fact that we used to have paper cutting classes, with those

05:00 blunt end paper scissors, you know. Anyway the boy in front of me, he, he had a jumper on that his

mother had knitted, and these little pieces were hanging out on it. So I decided to take them off and I snipped them off, but unfortunately I'd cut some holes in his jumper. And next thing I knew, I was called up before the headmaster, Mr White it was at the time, I didn't know why I had to go there. But, he held up this jumper and he said, "Did you

05:30 cut these holes in this jumper?" I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Why did you cut them?" I said, "I don't know, but there were little pieces sticking out and I thought I was cutting them off, I didn't know I was cutting holes." "Oh," he said, "You know it was wrong, don't you?" And I said, "Yes, Sir." Anyway he said, "You know what I'm going to do now?" And I said, "No Sir." He said, "Well, I'm going to give you six cuts [strokes] of the cane." So in those days, unlike today, over here, Mr White put me

06:00 across his knee, got the cane and give me six cuts with the old cane. Got up, and he said, "Now, will you do that again?" And I said, "No, Sir." So, that was the end of that saga. So, that was me first time at school that I got disciplined, and I made sure that I didn't do that again. But when I said that we lived in Bayswater, we lived next door to the old Chinese market gardeners, we were the last house in the street, and they stretched right through to the railway line. And

06:30 spent a lot of time growing up there in the market gardens. We used to help them with their, when they were pulling their vegetables for market, and they'd throw all their odd looking carrots and things behind them. And they were the ones that we could get. And then we tied the carrots in bundles of threes, then in big bundles of twelve. We used to carry them, chuck them in the well for them, and all that type of thing, you know.

Were you getting paid for that?

Oh no, no, that was just something to do, we just got the free veggies [vegetables] and that, every now and again. And, and that used to be,

07:00 you know, quite an experience for us and a bit of fun doing that.

Was, was that on the weekends or after school?

Oh after school and weekends. Because the market days was usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and they picked the days before those. I always remember a guy at the end near the railway line, the last of the market gardeners there. He was a chap called Sui-Sang, and he had a white horse, that's all I know about him, there, yeah.

07:30 Another experience when we lived there, I suppose you might be interested. In those days, the dunny [toilet] was down the back. And they used to have the old pan system, and then they had the horse and cart, which used to come around, and they were double-deckers, you know, one and two, three storeys high. And they used to stack the pans there after they'd collect them. And one day out the front, for some reason or another, I don't know what happened, the horse has bolted, and down Garrett Road, as far as

08:00 our place down to the railway line, was quite a mess there. And that was one of the funny instances I can remember growing up in that street. And, anyway, from there, we moved to Maylands.

Just before you move to Maylands, what were the market gardeners, were they Chinese?

Chinese, yes.

And what were they like?

Oh good, good, yes. They were always pretty friendly and they'd sit in their little huts, and they had them long

08:30 bamboo pipes, with the water gurgling. I presume it might have been; now I know. In those days, whether it was hash [marijuana] or whatever it was, but I know it used to gurgle or what have you, and they'd pass it round to each other, you know. We didn't know, they were just smoking their pipes as far as we were concerned, smoking their pipes of peace.

What sort of subjects did you enjoy in school?

Well I wasn't a very good pupil, really.

09:00 Like, I was still pretty young when I left Bayswater, and I went to the Maylands Catholic School when we moved to Maylands, and we lived next door to the old Maylands Hotel. And, well, I used to like a bit of history and that type of thing, you know. And I used to mathematics and that, weren't too good in those days. And, actually, I left school

09:30 at 13, and then the truant inspectors got onto my parents, and when I left at 13, I got a job in a grocer shop.

I didn't know that they had truant inspectors.

Oh yes, in those days they did, yes. Anyway they got onto my parents, and I had to go back to school, so I went back to school till I was 14. And when I was 14, I left there and then got myself a job at R.E. Arnolds, in the factory.

Just going back to some of your

10:00 **schooldays, did you play any sport?**

Oh yes, anything that was going. Not a lot. I went to Maylands Catholic School and it wasn't like the state schools that had organised sport masters. Although we did have one which we used to teach us footy, we used to play footy with. But not the normal cricket and that type of thing. Cricket and that with us in those days, hockey, like a group of us would get together after school, we fashioned old hockey sticks out of, out of tree branches and

10:30 what have you, make up our own teams, get our own goals, and, and play hockey like that. Cricket was on the footpath, we'd get an old fruit case and put it up in the middle of the footpath, and, a piece of picket or something for a bat, and that's where we played our cricket.

Did you do any swimming at all?

Ah, yes, yes. At a place called Caledonian Avenue, which is not far from here over in Maylands. I learnt to swim there. As a

11:00 matter of fact, there's a bit of a story about Caledonian Avenue too. I don't know whether you remember Evelyn de Lacy or not. Evelyn de Lacy was an Olympic swimmer, with a guy, breaststroke guy, Percy Oliver. My brother and I were down there one day, and we weren't very good swimmers, and we were trying to get out to this log. Anyway I was first and I just as I was starting to gulp, my brother came out and handed me his hand, and I pulled him out deeper too. And we were both gulping,

11:30 and next thing, two big hands grabbed us and brought us back to shore and told us not to do it again, and that was Evelyn de Lacy, and then she started to show us how to float and do that sort of thing. So after that, that log became pretty easy to get to, we'd take a run and a dive, and swim over to it, and that, that was it. And my greatest triumph, I suppose, in those days, was when I really learnt to swim there, was to swim across the river, and get to the other side, which we did.

12:00 Yeah, that's most of the swimming that. Of course, in our latter days, was Crawley Baths was down around the Swan River, you know, Crawley, Crawley Bay. Well they had Crawley Baths there, and we used to go there and do swimming there, and that type of thing.

Was that a real social thing?

Yeah, yeah, everybody went there, yeah, every man and his dog went there.

Just as well you knew how to swim by this stage then.

Oh yes, yes we were darn good swimmers by then.

12:30 And then we used to ride our bikes out to City Beach, the old Plank Road, down Cambridge Street, then you got onto the Old Plank Road. Then the buses used to follow behind, and if the bus was coming behind you, and you were riding down the Plank Road, you had to get down to the beach before the bus caught up with you. Because they were switchbacks in those days, like that. And then we used to go to Scarborough after that, and we used to do all our swimming out at Scarborough, mainly after the war actually. But, yeah, that

13:00 you know, we made up our own fun and all that type of thing.

With such a big family, did you have any duties that you had to perform as part of being in that large family?

Oh yes, yes, yes. We all had our jobs to do. And well, we had three fig trees, a mulberry tree, and another nut tree there. And we used to pick the mulberries and pick the figs and put them in these

13:30 little cartons, and go around the sell them for threepence a punnet. We used to have the old strawberry punnets if we could get them, and fill them up and sell those. Firewood and coal, we used to go to the Maylands railway yards where they loaded the coals into trucks and shovels in those days. And what came over the side of the truck, they never bothered picking up, so we used to put in our bag. That

14:00 was the coal that used to go down to the Maylands brickworks. And the wood the same, the mill ends and those sort of things, same thing. I think occasionally they'd throw a shovelful over the side on purpose, so we'd get those and… We used to have to, you know, bring those home, and that was our, our firewood and all that type of thing. We had to chop the wood, and light the fires and everything. As a matter of fact, talking about firewood, when we were down at Denmark, this finger here,

14:30 we had a chopping block, and on that chopping block was a butcher's cleaver which Dad used to use to chop the fine morning wood with. Anyway, brother Mick said to me, "Roy," he was five, I was three, "Put your finger on the block and see how close I can go." Well that's how close he went, and that was the result, off went the end of my finger. Which he did me a favour really, because at school

15:00 I was one of the top marble players at school, I was able to hold that marble in there with no restriction from the end of the finger there, and when I left school, I had 600 real reals [type of marble] in those days. I put ten alleys [type of marble] up to one boy's real real, and I proceeded to knock his real real out, and then get my own back after. When I left school, I left 600, 600 in a bag to my younger brother,

because he lost a lot, didn't he?

15:30 But fortunately too, this helped me get into the infantry, into the army, I had sufficient to squeeze the trigger. If I hadn't had that trigger finger and being right handed, I might have been something else, transport or mortars, or something like that where you didn't… But I was a rifleman.

When you had your finger cut off, where did they take you for…?

Oh well, Dad took me to the hospital, or to the doctor down there, and he wanted to take it off at the first joint here. My Dad wouldn't let him, he said no,

16:00 he said, "I think you'll be able to fix it up." So he said, "Well, it's your responsibility." He sewed up the end of it, and that's it and that's why the nail now grows over. Because there is the first joint, and it was just forward of that, that it was cut off. And that was the only attention it got, and that was the result. But it never affected me at all.

Still worked and was great for marbles.

Oh yes, great, yes.

Very funny.

Well there was only one guy

16:30 in the school in the finish that could beat me, or I could beat him. His name was Kingston Smith, this fellow's name was. Whenever we had a game, everybody stood around the watched us play, yeah.

You mentioned that your mum died, and you were probably about what, nine years old?

Yes.

That must have really caused some tragedy within your family.

Oh yeah. Well naturally, she was, she was a great loss, you know. It, but

17:00 we sort of, I'd say we got over it pretty quick, because we were a pretty close knit sort of a family, and we had each other, I suppose you might say. You know, and our activities and all that sort of took you away from grieving and, and, and that. You didn't sort of sit down, you had too many things to do and that. Naturally, I always remember the night she died, I went

17:30 to the pictures [movies]. I came home and Dad said, oh, he wasn't there, but my elder sister said they'd taken Mum to hospital. And anyway in the morning when I woke up, Dad was there and they were crying and everything and said well, "Mum's passed away." you know. And of course, I tried to cry with them too, you know, as much as I could, type of thing. Yes, but then I went up to the greengrocers where I used to do a bit of work for them, and go on the

18:00 trucks with. Anyway, I always remember sitting there outside on the doorstep which I'd always do, because if I did any odd jobs, odd jobs, they'd give me an apple or something like that, you know. And I remember saying, "My Mum died last night." you know. I feel more sadder now than I did, did in those days. It was just sort of something that happened. But like everything, I got over that and so did the family, you know. I think we got closer together and

18:30 today, well I've lost my elder, my two elder sisters, my elder brother and two other brothers, or another brother rather. No three brothers and two, five of them have gone now. And I'm the elder brother that's still, still around. But in those early days too, you said did we have any chores to do. Well, yeah, when I was 12, I got a job with my brother selling in the

19:00 Daily News office in Perth, selling the daily newspaper. I worked for quite a few years selling newspapers in Perth, for the Daily News office which was down in St Georges Terrace. And Bill Martin was the boss down there, and we used to go after school, and we used to get paid twopence a dozen. But in Perth in those days, it was a newsboy on every corner really, all the hotels, all the main street corners,

19:30 Town Hall opposite there, around there, Town Hall and Stuart Dawsons opposite, they were the main places where you… Palace Hotel was another one, was a good spot for selling, you know, and that. And we used to get twopence a dozen, which is two cents today. But I'd take home two bob [shillings], which is twenty cents. On twopence a dozen, you sold on average of about six, six dozen papers. And well, this is where I met my best friend.

20:00 Don Angwin. He died two years ago now, in '97. We were selling papers, and I was walking back to the tram one night to go home, I had my two bob. And he came up beside me and he said, "How are you going?" "Not bad." He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Oh home." I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "I'm going up to Corner House." Well Corner House was opposite the town hall. It was

20:30 a little shop, it sold pie and sauce and that type of thing. Everybody went there, they had little stools there, everybody had a pie and sauce for twopence. And, well as a matter of fact today, the last time I was in town, I think there was a McDonalds, McDonalds there, there used to be bank, now there's a McDonalds there, so it's a food stall. But opposite there, everybody went to Corner House. Anyway Don

said, “Look, I’m owed sixpence tip,” he said, “I’ll get a pie and sauce.” He said, “I’ll buy you one.” And I said,

21:00 “Oh gee, would you?” And he said, “Yes.” So he bought me a pie and sauce, and from that day on, we were great mates. We did everything together, we joined the cadets together, which I’ll tell you after, we went through the war together, and it was only three years ago he passed away. Sixty-five years we were mates, we went up through the war together and everything.

It’s a wonderful story of meeting up with your best mate.

Oh yes, yes. That’s how we met. And I did the eulogy

21:30 at his funeral and that. And I had to relate that story.

It must have been very difficult to get through.

Yes, yes, he was, he was a great mate. His photo’s up there with me behind there. Donald Arthur Angwin was his name.

So you, you’re quite busy. I mean you’re selling papers, you’re working at the market gardens, you’re picking up coal on the side of the railways, plus you’re doing little duties around home like chopping wood.

Yes, oh yes. Well as well as selling newspapers,

22:00 I, well they used to have a green Daily News in those days, they brought out only on Saturdays, but it came out late at night, and, and it didn’t come out till after nine o’clock. And it was after the pictures came out. And I used to wait and sell that too, as well as selling my own papers. You knocked off at eight o’clock at night, then if you wanted to sell the green Daily, you had to work on from nine till after the pictures came out to sell those. And

22:30 do you know the Gledenning buildings in Perth there? It’s on the corner of Hay Street and William Street, Gledenning buildings –

Got you.

A very old building there, it used to be opposite Economic Stores there. Well, I was selling there one night, and they were only just building that building then. And outside in those days, most of the builders they, they used to have a night watchman. And this guy had his little shed on the side of the road, and of a night-time,

23:00 he’d light his fire and have his little fire going and that there, and his goodies and that because he was looking after the building. And I was selling papers there and this night I had my papers. And it was after eight and the pictures had gone in. And he said, “What are you doing now, son?” I said, “I’ve got to wait till after the pictures come out to sell the rest of me papers.” So he said, “Well, why don’t you have a bit of a sit, sit down and a bit of a snooze in me wheelbarrow there.” He says, “I’ll tell you when the pictures

23:30 come out.” So I said, “Oh good, yeah thanks.” So I dived myself down into his wheelbarrow there, and he put an old bag behind there, and I had snooze there. And when the pictures came out, he told me and up I’d get, and then sold my papers. And then after that, it finished, and I’d walk up to the town hall, that’s where all the rattlers, all the trams used to leave, come up from the [UNCLEAR], then went in all different directions. And everybody gathered there, and that’s when you usually had a pie, pie and sauce or something, before you

24:00 went home. And that’s just a little story about, you know, selling papers and that. Friday nights, we used to go to the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association] Perth and we used to do our gymnastics there.

Oh, what sort of gymnastics?

Oh everything. Whatever it was, we used to do it there. Even played marbles in the swimming pool, when they cleaned the swimming pool, on the floor. It was a bit awkward because they were always downhill there. Well, they used to teach us boxing and everything there, and

24:30 then they had the news boys boxing championships, and they were held at the, at the Unity Stadium, that was a stadium in Perth where most of the wrestling and boxing was done there. And now, our news boys boxing championships was to be held there. My brother, he used to sell papers and do everything. What I’m repeating now, he used to do the same, because we used to sell together and do everything. And anyway they wanted a

25:00 boy to fight this biggest boy in the place named George Stone, see. And anyway, the boss there, he couldn’t get anybody to fight him. And he said, “I tell you what, Roy,” he said, “If you fight him and beat him,” he says, “I’ll give you ten shillings.” And I thought gee, ten shillings, all I’ve got to do is beat Stoney, see. So anyway I said, “Right.” So on the program

25:30 that night, it was ‘Waltzing Walsh’ versus ‘Sockem Stone’, that was the main fight of the night.

How old are you at this stage?

Oh, at that stage I was thirteen and a half, something like that.

You're still pretty young.

Oh yeah, yeah. So it was 'Waltzing Walsh' versus 'Sockem Stone', and I came second, he beat me on points. But he had more bruises than me, he had a blood nose and I never, see, so I reckoned oh well, Stoney beat me, but he came out

26:00 second best. And anyway we were presented with the trophies on that night. The main trophy was a big cup which Stoney got, and I got an engraved fountain pen, that was for was second prize, presented by Sir James Mitchell, the Governor of Western Australia. He was there and he did that. That was the first time I ever shook his hand. The second time was when he presented me with my Military Medal.

How wonderful.

After the war.

26:30 And that's what we used to, used to do after work, after papers and that on Friday nights, and that was the things we used to do there. And then I got an ordinary job, you know, I worked in RE Arnold. Oh they, they used to make milk cans and all that, and I used to have to walk around with this big blowtorch to heat the tops for them, to put the sweatbands on them and that sort of thing. But the worst part of the job they had these big acid baths.

27:00 And you used to have to put all the pieces in there, to clean them up before they galvanised them. And I got acid on the lungs in there, and I got pretty crook. So my Dad, oh they sent me over the park to lay down there at this stage, when I got crook and that. And then I went home, and Dad said, "Well that's it. You're not going to work there any more." So…

Is it a progressive thing, or is it just almost an accident that happened once?

Oh well, I got, I got,

27:30 I got a lungful of the, well working in it all the time, working amongst the acids, you didn't have masks or anything like that. And the continual enclosure and that just affected me and made me crook [ill]. But not enough to affect me lungs actually, I never had any long terms effects from that, or that sort of thing, but, yes.

Your dad put his foot down?

Oh yeah, yeah. That was the best thing he ever did for me, I suppose. Although my Dad was a pretty good Dad,

28:00 And... Anyway, then I left there and I worked at a tyre place, Western Tyres in Milligan Street, Perth.

What were you doing there?

Oh, I used to fix punctures and change wheels on cars in the old days. And, I nearly got my head blown off there too, one day. Cause we used to have the trucks used to come in and, and they had the wheels with the split rim on them. It's a split, you wouldn't know them. They're a split rim that

28:30 once you put the tyre on, you put a rim on, then you put the split rim, which was a, forced on and that locked the outer rim on and then you inflated them. Well, the mistake I made this day, I forgot to deflate the tyre. You're supposed to deflate it before you, you take it off. And I had to change the tyre on it, it wasn't punctured or anything, but I had to change the tyre. And I forgot to, to let the air out. And of course I used the tyre lever and 'bing', it popped. Fortunately

29:00 the tyre lever went past me, but I got the blast from the, once the tube exploded, and I got all dust and everything over me. But fortunately for me, the split rim finished up putting a hole in the roof, so I could have lost my head in that one. So I worked there for a while longer. Then a job came up at WA Netting and Wire Company in Leederville.

How old are you by this stage, are you

29:30 **about 15?**

I was, I was just going on 15. My brother was already working there. And I answered an ad there for a sweep-up boy. You always started at Mellick Brothers, it was Mellick Brothers WA Netting Company, you always started as a sweep-up boy there.

What, what does this wire company make, obviously wire, but in, in, how does it end up?

Well, it ends up wire netting, in those days it was fencing wire.

30:00 Wire netting, there's a netting department. And in the early part of the war, they made the barbed wire. Anything to do with wire. Well we used to get the, the wire, in what they call rods; it was as thick as your thumb nearly, from the eastern states. And they, they were drawn down through, what they called, a wire drawing machines, it stretches it virtually. It goes through a die, and it stretches onto what they call a

30:30 head, off a jenny onto a head, stretches, then it'll go through another machine, which, through a smaller die and it keeps actually stretching it right through to, from a thick twelve and a half gauge, right down to 22 gauge, for very fine, wire you know, tie wire and that sort of thing. But my job there when I first started, there was 100 boys went for the job, and this was how it used to be in those days just for sweeping the

31:00 floor. Anyway Mellick, Mr Mellick, had a penchant for getting people. He had a funny attitude. "Don't want you, you can go. Don't want you, you can go. You go over there, you go over here." You'd be there at lunchtime. Come lunchtime, he'd go for his lunch and come back, you'd be hanging around. This is how I was that day. And it finished up there was three of us left. My brother was

31:30 already working there, I didn't tell him me brother was working there, didn't mention it at all. Anyway, at the end of the day, there was three of us left, and he said, "You've got the job." this other boy, he said, "You've got the job." He said, "You two," he said, "You'll be the next two on, right-o. I'll let you know. Leave your name and address." So I left me name and address, and that was about half past four in the afternoon, I suppose. And about half past five, I got a telegram

32:00 to say to report for work the next morning, he'd changed his mind on the guy he'd selected, and he gave me the job. That's the type of guy he was. So I rolled up next morning, so I started work sweeping floors in WA Netting and Wire Company. And the worst part of the job, you used to have to start work at midnight some nights, cause it was, they worked shiftwork, all the time. And that was the time you were able to get to the machines, apart from sweeping the floor, because you had to keep picking up the odds of wire and put them in bins and everything.

32:30 And I used to have to grease the machines. You had grease nipples on the side; you undid them, filled them, put them up and made sure the grease was there, that was part of the job too. And then I progressed from there to what they call, dinny boy, in the wire galvanising. Wire galvanising was a big machine, you started off on dinnies up here, and it worked down, went the wire was drawn down onto heads that went through a

33:00 lead bath which annealed it, went up through a tension drub, down through water which cooled it, out of that through an acid bath, out of that through water, and through water again. And then out of that, went into the zinc bath, down under a burn, through wipers which wiped them clean, onto a, through soluble oil, then down onto these big, big headers, 14 of them used to work, just roll up the wire on them.

33:30 And there was three of you on the machine, I was dinny boy, you put the new coils of wire on. When you put a new coil on, you never stop. In those days, early days, you made a loop in that, and you had about 14 feet to walk from here to where you put it through the grate, so on that way, you'd make a loop, put it there, tied it, lifted it and put it through. Then you pressed a button, number seven, number six or what was coming down, and the galvaniser would look up, and he'd have a look and he'd wait till the knot came down. Coming through these

34:00 forks in the front, he'd have to gauge it coming underneath, lift it through the forks, then put a new wiper on, and away she goes. When it got onto the head, there was another guy that was on the heads, he was called the header. He'd separate the new part, and cut it off. And then when you had a lift, that's when you took them all off. Well they, the galvaniser and the boy used to do that. Well I progressed from there. From there

34:30 was when I joined the army and cadets while I was working there. But it was from there when I joined the cadets, I joined in 1938. I put, you had to be 16, I was 15, this mate of mine, Don, he'd joined, the 11th Battalion Cadets in Francis Street, Perth. He said to me, "Roy," he said, "What about joining these cadets?" He said, "It's good,

35:00 you get a good uniform and everything." He said, "They give you a rifle, and what have you." He said, "You do drill and everything." I said, "Yeah." He said, "But you've got to be 16." he said. And he wasn't quite 16 himself, he said, "You've got to put your age up." So I did that, and went there, 15, put my age, so I was a year older. At 18, you were in the militia proper, up till that it was the senior cadets. Which was fortunate, well not fortunate, but

35:30 it gave you something to do and it gave them something to come into the services, because everything was volunteers in those days. The regular army was outnumbered by volunteers in those days. And we had weekend camps down at Swanbourne Rifle Range, we used to do rifle shooting there and drill, and all that type of thing. All like the big fellows used to do. And I was finished up I was made a corporal in the cadets.

36:00 And as the years rolled on, and I was 17, and I became 18. And then at 17, to them I was 18, and then I was in the militia proper. Well in those days, the war in Europe was started and things were getting a bit grim. And they were recruiting and what have you. Well by that time, I was a first class instructor, because our weapons in those days were very modest. They were the old

36:30 Lewis gun, which was a World War 1 weapon, which was a very odd one, they had about 18 stoppages on that. They had the MM [medium] machine gun, and, and our support gun was the old Thompson submachine gun, that the gangsters used to carry. Used to hold 50 rounds on the top. And when you had them you thought you were Al Capone [famous American gangster] or one of those guys. And you, you had your own .303 rifle, and we had the three inch mortars and the MMGs [medium machine guns], and

37:00 that was your main weapons in the battalion. And, at that time, they were, we were, they started three months in and three months out. You did three months training in Melville Camp down in South Street was where all the camps were along there. And, and three months out, which was good, because you worked for three months and then you went into the army for three months and that was

37:30 nice in there, you know, something different. But even in those days down there, well our artillery was horse drawn and anything that was done by horsedrawn carts. And we had to build our own roads around Melville Camp and all that. We used to go to those limestone pits up at Carrington Street, all round that area. It'd take you one day in the old limbers as they called them, horsedrawn limbers, fill up the truck, the cart rather,

38:00 and come back and do one and do another load in the afternoon, all that type of thing. It was, those three months in and three months out. Then I was sent to an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] school out at Guildford and I got me stripes then, so I was a corporal in the cadets then, didn't take long to get a, become a corporal in the seniors.

What sort of things did you have to learn to get through NCO school?

Oh well, they taught

38:30 you all about weapons and that type of thing. And it took it on, on mainly, you know, on fieldwork and map reading and that type of thing, you know. And your general ability to be able to handle men and be able and relate and do the things, and that type of thing. Oh well, I was always a pretty aggressive sort of a guy, so I don't know, I always got myself out of trouble, I suppose.

39:00 **How long did you have to do the NCO school for?**

The NCO school, that went for, what was it, six weeks that was, down at Guildford. I think it was six weeks, it might have been five.

Did you have to live in a barracks there?

Yes, you were in a barracks there, yeah. It was the only place you went to, when you got a night off; we used to go across the paddocks down to the Guildford Pub for a couple of beers, and that, in those days.

39:30 **You would have to been too young to do that.**

No, started to have a beer in those days. The older boys were drinking, and that's when they taught you to drink and even have a smoke. So I started smoking. No, and then, of course when I'm back in the unit again, well our job, our prime job was mainly instruction, because they were bringing in new recruits from the country and everywhere, and then we were all put on, when the Japanese came

40:00 into the war, we were all on fulltime duty then, we were in permanent.

Just rewinding you back there. After you've come out of NCO school and you start doing training, is that back at Melville Camp that you're training people?

Yes, back at Melville Camp, yeah.

What were the conditions like in Melville Camp?

Oh, they were pretty good, you know. We lived in tents, and the food was pretty good there, it was quite good actually in Melville Camp. Our worst time was when we

40:30 went on the track. When I say we went on the track. Our time was served in Melville Camp, and what we were doing there, as I say, we were training recruits and training our own guys, and I was training blokes twice me age, you know. At my age, 18 and that, I was training blokes 30, 40 and all that type of thing. But I got through it all right, because I knew more than they did about our weapons, you see. And, and as I said, the weapons in those days were primitive,

41:00 until we got our Bren gun and Owen gun later on.

Tape 2

00:32 **I think you were telling Denise [interviewer] about the conditions at Melville?**

Yes, I said, yeah, they were very good at Melville. The food was always pretty good, I always know Sunday night, if you were in, in camp, and you didn't get leave, you always had nice pieces of fruit cake there, had there. And we lived in, in tents, and the floors were duck boards, like boards on the floor, and you slept on

01:00 palliasses [straw mattresses]. Every now and again, they were filled with straw, but every now and again they'd get some new straw, and you'd, because they'd get pretty flat after a while and you know, that's where I learnt to sleep on my stomach, I think. Because you couldn't sleep on your side because

your, your hips were that sore in the morning, you know. I always, always slept on my stomach, even when I got to the islands, I used to sleep on my stomach, even when I came home I used to do it. But those, those days there, not far from Melville Camp,

01:30 about three or four ks [kilometres] down the road, was Welby's Wines, that was quite a good place for the guys to go and get a nice, cheap bottle of wine, you know. Because five bob a day, blokes couldn't be, you can't be too fussy. Some of them used to get pretty chirpied up [drunk] on it there. And I wasn't into wines in those days; I only really had the occasional beer and a fag [cigarette].

What would you do after a few drinks down at Welby's?

Oh, just

02:00 come home, go to the cot. We had a YMCA hut there, but we didn't do much there, you know. Mainly, you got leave from there, you know, and mainly it was weekend leave, most nights you were in camp because you always had duties. Either you were on guard duties, or. Our particular camp anyway, because see, my brigade was the 13th Brigade and in that was the 11th, 16th, 28th, there was originally

02:30 44th Battalion. But our three battalions, 11th, 16th, 28th were all in the one brigade, plus headquarters, brigade headquarters too, they, they were also stationed down there. They had a, a particular company there they formed called E Company, which I was sent to also, to do some instruction there. That was for, E Company was for all new recruits, just coming in, you know. And it's funny, you get these new recruits, they didn't

03:00 know how to put their hat on properly, and what have you. And of course teaching a lot of these guys to march, and in step, was, was, they used to square gate, you know, so the one leg wrong, type of thing, and to make sure that they coordinated the left foot, and the back foot back, we'd get a stick in their hand, and if they went wrong, the stick would poke into their legs, you know, to remember them, they weren't marching properly. And, you know, all that type of thing.

03:30 The main thing was discipline. That's what was drummed into me when I went to the NCO school, was discipline. And I was always, that was always my bug bear, and that whatever I went in life, was discipline. Discipline means instant action to all orders, and that's it. Then, and was always taught that if you didn't, it could cost you your life, and your, your, your mates life. So no matter what you were told to do, whether you thought it was right or wrong, you did it.

04:00 Instant actions to all, all orders, discipline.

Were you a tough instructor, Roy?

Pardon?

Were you a very tough instructor?

Yes, yes. I was very tough in discipline, definitely, yeah. I, it was drilled into me when I was a young guy. As I say, I joined at 15, and I learnt the army life pretty early. And I realised you know, yeah, well that's it, you've got to do as your told. And I grew up doing as I was told. I never got

04:30 too many hidings from my dad, but I got one when I didn't, when I deserved it. No. I was asked once to talk at an Anzac showdown at Irwin Barracks, down at Karrakatta there. One night, they were finishing their, the recruits had finished their year's training, and they were splitting up. And some were going to Canungra, and I'd been to Canungra and I was able to talk about it, and tell them,

05:00 and then I made my theme of talk to them, was one that I've just said to you, was discipline. And I said, something that I think is most essential in anything.

What was your reputation as an instructor at Melville?

Well, as a pretty hard sort of a guy, yeah. Well I was also a PT [Physical Trainer] in unarmed combat instructor also. And later on, I'll tell you later I did the school in Frankston, Victoria in unarmed combat. So, I could

05:30 fight, we had a boxing instructor down there. As I said, I did fighting in the new boys. I did, we had a boxing instructor at Melville there, a guy called Jack Sorenson there, and he used to teach us some boxing down there. So I think when you know you can defend yourself, you can talk, talk to back it up, you know. And I must admit, it didn't always work; I bluffed my way, you know, it's better

06:00 to walk away from a fight, you know, than to have one. But if you have to have one, well, that was it.

So you could walk the walk and talk the talk?

That's right, yeah. I think if you can walk away without fighting, you, I think you win it better. Yeah.

I'm just imagining, you were quite a bit younger than a lot of the boys you were training.

I'd be one of the youngest. Well, I'm now, I'll be 81 in May, and I'd be one of our youngest, yeah.

Did the older boys like being told what to do, by

06:30 **somebody younger?**

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I always threatened with a charge sheet, but I must say, all my time in the army, I never put a guy on a charge sheet, never had to. In Darwin, we took them behind the old showers and punched them a bit. If they insulted my intelligence, well that was me they were insulting, not the army, so they had to deal with me. Once or twice, that was all, you know.

07:00 But no, they called me 'Basher Walsh' at one stage, but I wasn't a basher. I wasn't that big, I was just big enough, that's all. But as I said if you could bluff your way out of something, you'd do it.

What kind of training were you doing at Melville?

Well basically, we were training for Australian conditions, because at that time the Japanese hadn't come into the war, you see. And we were fighting for actually, more or less the war was in, in the Middle East,

07:30 and our 9th, 7th, 8th and 9th Division of first guys had gone, gone to the Middle East earlier. And incidentally, the, the, well the 9th Division of Western Australia, they were trained; a lot of the guys in those div, battalions were trained by guys like myself. Because, and a lot of our NCOs and officers from the CMF [Citizens' Military Force], which was in those, or militia,

08:00 were not only the instructors, but they also went away with them, as also their, their NCOs for their battalions and captains and, for the platoons and that type of thing. So they benefited from what we, we did early in those divisions, because they were taught by us. But funny enough, when a lot of them came back, we were still here in West Australia, and they came back from the Middle East,

08:30 and they referred to the CMF as chocolate soldiers [choccos]. Chocolate soldiers, meaning you melted in the sun, type of thing, you know. But they forgot their backgrounds of who taught them first, and where they gained all their knowledge from. And what officers and NCOs that led them, that came up through the CMF, their first, you know, they classified. Because they'd been there, they were the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. At that stage, we were still the CMF,

09:00 we weren't AIF. That meant that, we, we had to turn to WX [Western Australian Army 'X' number] to be eligible to go to, to serve overseas. So from Melville, when the Japanese came into the war, well then Western Australia became a different proposition, or Australia became a different proposition. Singapore had, Singapore had fallen,

09:30 the Japanese were making their way down the Pacific, and they had captured Rabaul, and they had also bombed Darwin, and the vulnerable portion of Australia was the West Australian coast. And that's where our job came in. We were then, from Melville we were a mobile force. We went to Bellevue, up through the Chittering [?] Valley,

10:00 through, up, worked our way up through to Dandaragan. And from Dandaragan, most of the troops, which was what, only a couple of hours drive from Perth. And that Durian [?] Bay area, Dandaragan was nearer to there. And we were stationed at Dandaragan, and from there, that's. Well actually that was the worst camp we were ever in, in Dandaragan. We had to put with fleas, flies, scorpions, redback spiders.

10:30 One of the worst things we got there was the old kangaroo tick. Every time you went to the shower and that, which wasn't very often there, you didn't get too many showers there, a shortage of water, we used to draw it from the well. If you got a kangaroo tick on you, you'd have to get somebody to either get a hot needle or a cigarette butt, and hold it centimetres from, from his tail, and get him to back out. Otherwise, if you didn't, then, you'd,

11:00 slapped him and he broke off and his head always stayed in. And if his head stayed in your flesh, you got a very nasty ulcer. So we had a lot of trouble with those, the kangaroo ticks. Those were the conditions there, we used to get one gallon of water per day per man, perhaps, there, that's what it was. And we got a lot of sores, I've got one here, bark hill rot, that sore there I still carry. It was called bark hill rot, through, through not being able to wash correctly up there. And this was only three hours

11:30 from Perth. Our food was terrible, the food that we got there was abominable, actually. It was called toughening up, you know. But no such thing. My idea, you don't take bad food, bad conditions to toughen you up. You've got to be toughened up for the time when you won't get those, when you've got to have those bad things. And, and you've got the ability and your body's got the ability to, to be able to put up with all that. Yeah,

12:00 that was my, my version of it, there was a lot of ways to toughen me up, it's not only building muscle. But from Dandaragan -

Can I just interrupt actually, Roy. Can you describe the camp that you had at Dandaragan, and the sort of patrol work you might have been doing?

Well, the whole brigade was at Dandaragan. We, we were at a certain, certain position on the Dandaragan Road there, and we lived in tents. All our toilets were below ground with thunder boxes [toilet superstructure]

12:30 on the top, and I'll tell you a story about those too. And we, our training was basically training through the scrubs, and attacks, and dawn attacks, day attacks, and digging slit trenches, and knowing how to revet them and all that type of thing. And of course, we breakthrough came; we were on coast watching duties then. We moved out to Durian Bay for periods of time,

13:00 and we coast watched from Durian Bay right through, up through to, nearly to Geraldton. Crisscrossing and passing each other, and camping out there because that was a vulnerable part of the West Australian Coast. Because at that time too, Mr Menzies [Australian Prime Minister] wanted to, he brought in the Brisbane Line. Which, I don't know if you've heard of the Brisbane Line, did you.

Yes, but I wouldn't mind hearing you explain it to me?

Well, the Brisbane Line was, what he

13:30 wanted to do was have a line through from Queensland right down through Australia, down through to South Australia, and leave West Australia to its own devices. In other words, if the Japs had taken West Australia, they'd defend Australia from the eastern part of Australia, see. So we were here. That's what they called the Brisbane Line; you were over there on your own. Now the 13th Brigade, our brigade, was the only real

14:00 fighting brigade in Western Australia at the time. And they were very highly trained troops, they were all. Our, our brigade was, was, by the time the war finished, we didn't do a hell of a lot of fighting, while we went away, but we were always the back-up, we were always a, a mobile force, ready for anything. But was never really thrown into, into the deep end from the start. Well as I gave you the early part of our days, and training troops and that and we were CMF, then

14:30 from Dandaragan as I said, we did this coast watching. And then from there -

Can I interrupt you there Roy. How were those patrols, when you were coast watching, organised?

Oh well platoon-wise, you'd have sections, you know, three sections in a platoon. And my section would be to go three ks up the coast, and then three ks back and just observe and see any disturbances or any landings had been.

15:00 Because the Japanese knew our coast like the back of their hands. Of a night-time you could hear, the little islands out there, you could hear the throb of motors, which we found out later were probably the motors of submarines charging their batteries on the surface. Because, of course during World War 1, the Japanese were our allies during the war, and they used to use our West Australian coast too at those times. And they had all maps of our coast, and they knew it better than we did, I think.

15:30 And that. But that was merely surveillance there, just to see that there was no landings or anything, prepared landings or anything like that.

I've actually heard there were a couple of sympathisers shot on some of those patrols, and a couple of girls were arrested up there?

No, not to my knowledge, I don't. But there were sympathisers, they were, they had an idea there were fifth column [spies] working. They called them fifth column in those days. People that were, were actually working for the Japanese

16:00 and sending information. Because they used to, they used to jam our radios and that type of thing, and that could only come from submarines and things like that, even though they're sophisticated, equipment in those days weren't that sophisticated, but that was the story that used to come from there. And one of our patrols, well this was before we got out to, to Durian Bay there. We were to do a dawn attack one morning on Regan's

16:30 Ford. I don't know whether you know where Regan's Ford is, that's out from Maura between Maura and Durian Bay. And Regan's Ford is a ford that goes, the main road that goes through. And we were to attack Regan's Ford. Now, we started off early in the morning and it was very overcast, fog and what have you. And we had our forward scouts moving forward, and the idea was when we reached, we were to attack and capture Regan's Ford. We had guys stationed there,

17:00 and we were using blank ammunition, or we were issued with blank ammunition which we used to use on those things. Anyway, unbeknown to us, there was a report that a Japanese landing party had landed at Durian Bay, and they were heading in the direction of Regan's Ford. And overnight from Perth, a small commando unit had been sent up to the area of Regan's Ford, to see if they

17:30 could locate anybody in that. Anyway, our scouts were going through. Word came back to halt, something going wrong up front. Our forward scouts had met these guys that, from the commando route. We had passwords, and of course, they were asking each other for, we asked them for the password and they couldn't give it, and of course, luckily the guys sort of woke up there's something going wrong here, you know. They

18:00 shouldn't be talking to us like that, they don't sound like Japs, or anything. They said, "Who the bloody hell are you anyway?" They said, "Who are you?" They said, "Well, we're the 11th Battalion Don Company, why?" They said, "Oh well, we're the so-and-so commandos. We're up here looking for

Japanese." And we said, "Well, you'd better call it off, because we're attacking Regan's Ford. What have you got? Live ammo?" They said, "Yeah." We said, "Well you'd better tell your mob to pull out, because we've got blanks."

18:30 So that at the end, right there and then, there could have been quite a catastrophe. If these guys had been at Regan's Ford, and we'd attacked it with blanks, they're sitting there with live ammunition. That was, was really a blunder, that one. We should have been notified that they were in our area at the time. But that's one patrol that could have been a very disastrous end there for us.

It could have been a disaster. I don't think the blanks would have…

Oh the blanks wouldn't have even scared them, let alone, so these guys are

19:00 missing all the time. Yeah. So it, well it, even out at, we didn't have live ammunition, even when we were out patrolling the coast actually either. Some, some did but they weren't game to issue it then, you know, because guys get a big trigger happy and that type of thing.

As I mentioned to you Roy, in another interview a veteran told me that there were a couple of girls

19:30 **arrested at Moore River, called the King Sisters or something?**

No, I don't know about them, but that could have been on, yeah, as I said. There were, there were stories, there were fifth column in the area, and strange lights were coming on, on, even on land, as well as, and out to sea of a night-time. And they were saying they, they could have been signalling submarines, you know. That troops were in the area. And that was our, our job at the time, just

20:00 was reconnaissance work, just to... And then, and then after that, when things eased up in New Guinea there, the Japanese had been halted on the Kokoda Trail, and things slowed down, and then the, the threat to the West Australian coast became less, and then Darwin became the main focus. Well then, we were withdrawn from Dandaragan and we came down to Bellevue

20:30 in Perth here. And we had to spend a bit of time there. I went up to Northam Camp, I was sent up to there for three months and trained rookies there for three months. But I was getting a bit, you know, jacked off [irritated], we wanted to get into the fight, see. Anyway, then I heard that the unit was moving, so I was in the 13th Training Battalion then, so I immediately put in for a transfer straight back to the unit, which I did, I got back to my

21:00 old company, Don Company, because I knew all me mates there, and that. And then we went to Darwin. Now to go to Darwin, we had to board the train here, cross the Nullarbor, and we went to South Australia, to Quorn, there then we boarded the Ghan [train] then. And the old Ghan now is pretty dear [expensive] to travel on, but we travelled it for five bob a day, then. We caught the Ghan,

21:30 went to Alice Springs. And then from Alice Springs, the staging camp was there for Darwin. And then you boarded these big trucks, these long, open, open trucks for the four day trip to Larrimah. Now each day we travelled on those gravel roads, you can imagine the dust coming from the trucks, especially the back trucks and all that, after every day, you'd come to a staging

22:00 camp. And that's when you were lucky if you got a, got a bit of a wash, and you spent the night there on the trucks, next morning. That went for four days until you got to Larrimah, which is up in the Northern Territory. And Larrimah they had an overnight train that took you to Adelaide River. So you boarded the train at Larrimah, then to Adelaide River, and from Adelaide River, they had the miles camps, which were so many miles from Darwin.

22:30 And our camp for our, my battalion, was 51 mile from Darwin. So you got on your trucks and went to the 51 Mile. And when we got there, then we had to establish our own camps, it was all new all over again, clearing scrub, there wasn't too many tall trees there for much, much protection. Low scrub and everything. And we lived in tents there, but everywhere you went you had to clear your area, we lived in tents until later on,

23:00 we built some wooden huts there, with pandanus palms surrounding, type of things in there.

How did you clear the area?

Oh just our bayonets. And we had, we had picks and shovels and all that type of thing by that time. That was about the only way, we cleared a parade ground area. And, but our, our basic tents, were virtually, the area we left as is, we only had little tracks to your tent, because they were under what shelter was there.

23:30 As, as camouflage more or less. But over behind us was the fighter [air] strips, and the, and the bomber strips were all further down, Fenton and all these, Rum Jungle. They were down from us there.

Rum Jungle?

Yes, Rum Jungle, yes. That was, they're still called, Rum Jungle there. It's not that they had rum there, I don't know why they ever called it Rum Jungle, they might have had a distillery there, I don't know. But, yeah, we. It was all very, very hard work, and our

24:00 work in Darwin was the same thing again. Getting used to the conditions up there, digging trenches, and, and reinforcements and all that. Because well Darwin became the focus then, you see. And the troops, more troops started to arrive. They had the ack-ack, we used to get the bombing raids there, but they used to mainly, not bomb not so much the, the troop areas, but the Japs always came over and they bombed the, the airfields. But they always used to bomb them

24:30 at a very high altitude. And they never had, I don't think, had a great success with their bombing raids there. What was, it was 64 raids on Darwin, and the areas through, throughout the war. Apart from that first raid on Darwin, that first raid on Darwin was what, 1942? Now that, the guy that led the raid on Darwin, I can tell you a bit about him.

25:00 He was the same guy, his name was Mitsuo Fuchida, he's the same guy that led the, the raid, the air, aircraft raid on Pearl Harbor. And he's the same guy that led the raid, the first raid on Darwin. When he raided Darwin, he took his bombers in first, the heavy bombers; they all came from those aircraft carriers. They had four aircraft carriers those Japs, which they dominated the Pacific, and that's how they did it.

25:30 He bombed coming out, rather than being caught bombing in and getting caught inland by our fighters. But we never had that many fighters at the time, at that time. We had Wirraways and obsolete ones and we had some Spitfires and that, in those, in those times. The Spitfires were the ones that, that certainly helped out in the finish there, and that. But that's how he did it, going out. But at that time when he bombed, when they bombed Darwin, they could have walked in any time. Because there were hardly any troops there in that '42, most of them were headed

26:00 south. Well, in those days, the army, navy and air force always had to converge with each other, before they made a decision. And when that raid was on, the first raid on Darwin, the, they got a message from Thursday Island, that there were 80 planes approaching Darwin. Now, word came through

26:30 to Darwin, and by the time army, navy and air force got together, they said, "No, it's not, it's…" I think they said it was nine Kitty Hawk fighters that had been out on a, a mission out around the Timor Sea. So Darwin did nothing about it until the bombs actually started to fall on Darwin. That's, that's the whole story, that one there. They didn't take, didn't take... Actually there was one plane didn't hit Darwin, I believe the guy bailed out over Thursday Island, the Jap. He, he must have been

27:00 a bit of a wooser]a sissy], cause apparently he parachuted out of his plane, unless he said there was something wrong with his engine and took the easy way out. But that same guy, Mashito Fushida, he led, he led the raid on Darwin and he led the raid on Pearl Harbor.

I'm told that the Darwin raid was actually larger than the Pearl Harbor bombing?

Oh no, not really, I don't think. Because there weren't, there were a lot of ships, there was over 40

27:30 odd ships in Darwin Harbour, but they, they'd returned because they, they were on their, actually on their way to the Pacific, but after the fall of Singapore and that, they, they returned to Darwin and they were still in the Harbour there. And that was fifth column again; the Japanese knew that those ships had returned to Darwin Harbour there. And of course, what

28:00 did the damage there after the bombers did the damage, was their dive bombers and their, and their Zeros. And those, there were planes; nine planes that had been out in the Pacific which they said were those that were returning. But they, the Japs shot them down soon as they landed; they destroyed them on the ground. There was a couple of them, they woke up to what was going on, and they head up, got up above the clouds, and stayed up there actually, while the raid was on. But one of them actually did, had to

28:30 come down, and they destroyed him. And another one, actually, I think he shot down one of the planes, and that, then landed safely himself, after, after most of the raid had gone. But that's there side of it, that's not my, not our, not the army side of him. But that, that's just going through the history of Darwin prior to us getting there, and what was going on. And then, and then of course, the Japs, with the Americans had come into the war then, and of course, we had the benefit then,

29:00 of American Liberators [bombers] and those sort of things, that were also using the, the heavy airstrips in Darwin which were prepared for them and that. And they used to do their bombing raids then over the Timor, and were able to get, get, well they had a footing then, you see. And they were able to do the same over the eastern states, there. And the Battle of the Coral Sea came after that.

How long were you at 51 Mile Camp, Roy?

Oh we left there in,

29:30 what was it November, November '44, for New Britain.

So how long were you there?

We went there in '43. 1943. And we got one leave from there. We were there, what 12 months, and things eased off a bit. And then they said, well you can go back to West Australia for, for leave, it was after 12 months, it sort of shocked us a bit, but this is great. So we went on the Duntroon,

30:00 I don't know if you remember the Duntroon, you probably don't remember that. That was a ship that used to do, take people on trips, you know, like the, they do now, type of thing.

Like a passenger liner?

Yes, it was a passenger liner, yes, the Duntroon. Which was good, because for the trip back to Perth was to go from Darwin, through the top end and around Australia, rather than do the West Australian coast, which was, they

30:30 considered it was easier to go from Darwin to Perth down the West Australian coast, but they chose to go around the other way.

Why?

Because they reckoned it was safer. So anyway, because it was all submarine activity up here, and. But it would have been safer, I think, anyway, but that's what the powers that be. And of course, who is in charge of the mess fatigues on board the Duntroon for the trip back, Roy

31:00 Edward Walsh. I had to, I had about a dozen other guys, but we go on board first and I had a cabin, it was a two berth captain, and third guy slept on the floor. Well I always had a bed, but the other two guys had to alternate on one on the bed, one on the floor each night, each night. I was in charge, so I wasn't going to go to sleep on the floor. So, but we had a bit of problem when we left Darwin, the hawser broke on, on the ship, and

31:30 the tug shot back and sprung the plates on the ship. So they had to nurse that around the top end, and we pulled in at, at Queensland up there in Townsville, and they had it checked over and did a bit of temporary work on it. Then the next stop was down through to Sydney, and we came into Sydney on a list like this, it was taking water. And then in Sydney, well we got a week's leave in Sydney while they had to repair the ship.

32:00 We were taken out to a place called Rooty Hill, a nice old name there, where we spent a week there; we had a bit of leave in there.

Did you run amok in Sydney?

Oh yeah, yeah. But we were able to get some grog [alcohol] there, you know, drinks. But the pubs used to close at a certain time, and you used to buy so much and put them up on the shelves all around, and by the time the pub closed, it was littered with beer, but you couldn't drink them, our eyes were too bigger than our bellies, I suppose. We were a bit silly too. Anyway,

32:30 yeah, so, back on board, and around, but we, before we got to Freo [Fremantle], we had to go one hundred miles off course, because they'd had a submarine scare up at Geraldton way. So we went a hundred miles off course before we got into Fremantle. Came into Fremantle there, okay, No trouble then, and then to Karrakatta, and then we, we had our 21 days' leave here, I think it was, something like that.

Just during the voyage, what kind of things were you doing during the day?

33:00 Oh, just bludging [lazing] around the ship.

No training?

No training. Oh yeah, well they had to get up, the guys had to get up, I didn't have to do it. We did our work, our job, my job was to, each meal I had to gauge them, you count each bloke through, you know. What did we have, three and a half thousand guys on board, and, or a bit less. Then the first day three, next it's two, next it's one. Seasickness. It didn't have the stomach.

33:30 Well what you did, you told the cook how many, you know, still, how many had gone through and he know when to throw another cup of water in the soup, or put a few more eggs on, or something like that, see. So, he, he did that. And anyway, but it was more or less a bit of a rest, actually, yeah.

The grub [food] was all right?

Oh good grub, the grub was well. The, the bunks were like that underneath, but we, I had a cabin, see, so I was pretty comfy on there.

34:00 **Any grog on board?**

No, no, no grog on board, no.

Any two-up [gambling game]?

Oh guys always were able to chuck a couple of pennies up some time or other. Yes, yes, I suppose there was, I can't remember off hand, but there would have been, yeah, yeah, tossing a few coins around. We, even up in Darwin and there, the same thing, the, they used to have the usual two-up going on there. But then after the leave,

Sorry, how did you spend, you had 21

34:30 **days' leave, is that right.**

Yeah, yeah.

How did you spend those days?

Oh, just meeting each other in town, in Perth, and having a few beers and going to dances, and, of a night-time. Mainly, you'd go to town nearly every day and meet the guys in the pubs, virtually, you know.

Which pub?

The Globe. Well, we used to go to the Globe Hotel, and its still in Wellington Street there. You know the Globe Hotel there in Wellington Street? That was Don Company, my company. All the boys from Don Company, always drank at the,

35:00 the Globe. There was another pub, I forget the name of it, just down a bit further, and the A Company guys used to always drink in that one. But if we wanted to drink, we always went to the Globe Hotel, now it's a backpacker's thing. But that was our stamping ground then.

What would happen if another company rocked up at your company's hotel?

Oh, it didn't make any difference, but they did too, you know, blokes do. But most of our guys, that's where they assembled. They drank at other pubs anyway too, of course. But that was our, more or less our, well

35:30 Don Company, my company, more or less. Not the battalion, you know, there were a thousand guys in the battalion. Four, four companies plus machine gunners and all that. Well in your company, you've got over a hundred odd guys, and they didn't all drink either, or anything like that. Well, they had their own things to do. You didn't go every day. You stayed home some time, you had to be with the family a bit, you know. Do those things.

What sort of time did you spend with the family?

Oh well, just mucking around. My brother had a motorbike and I used to,

36:00 learn to ride on his motorbike and that. He used to run it on kerosene, it started up on, on, what was it, it wasn't petrol, what was it? Oh he got a bit of petrol now and again, but oh, rationed petrol. But he used to run it, once you start it up on petrol and got it going; you'd turn it over to the kero [kerosene], you used to run on the kero. Yeah.

I've never heard

36:30 **of a bike that runs on kero before.**

Oh yeah, yeah. You heat them up, see once it's heated up and that, and, they'll run on the kero, or they did then, those bikes. I don't know about these modern ones now, whether they would or not.

So was it cheaper, was it?

Oh well, you couldn't get petrol, see, petrol was rationed. Everything was rationed. Petrol was rationed, tobacco was rationed. I've got in there now. I've got four actual, well these were after the war, you got these. Four actual one gallon petrol tickets in mint condition, for, which, you got,

37:00 you had to go and get your ration of those, and that was your petrol to put in your car after the war.

Where would you go and get your ration tickets?

They had a rationing place in Perth, that you used to apply there and get them. And also tobacco too, you got, tobacco was rationed also. You got a tobacco ration ticket; I've got my thing in there for a tobacco ration ticket, yeah.

That's a bit grim.

It was, yeah. But everything was rationed in those days, it wasn't available.

37:30 No, they, they were things you lived with. Some blokes didn't smoke or anything like that and you got their ration tickets. Especially in the army, you know, some didn't smoke and you, you gave them your beer for their baccy [tobacco] or something like that, you know. You didn't get much beer in.

So there was a bit of trading going on?

Yeah, well Darwin, beer there was only, it was, it was a bottle of beer between three of you, per week, per man, perhaps. So it didn't go far, and it was usually accumulated and you might have,

38:00 might have three bottles coming to you over a period of time, and, and then the point was trying to cool them off too, you know, to get them cool and that, and drink them. I had my 21st birthday in Darwin, and I had a four bottles lined up there, that was the celebration for my 21st birthday.

Whereabouts did you celebrate?

Oh just in the company lines, and then tent. Or in a little hut there we had there, at that time.

What happened?

38:30 Oh nothing, just got half stung [drunk], I suppose. Yeah, the officers used to get their, they used to get their whiskey and that, but we only got, we only got a beer. It was eastern states beer mostly, which wasn't a bad drop. But no, you didn't, you didn't worry about it there actually, you know. Water was the main thing you drank. But all, well we used to have to do hundred mile route marches per day, per week rather, in Darwin. That was part of your training. You could do it over a week

39:00 period, and we used to do four 24, 25 miles per day, over a, a seven day period to get our hundred miles in. So we'd start off very early in the morning, it might be four o'clock in the morning, and, and just after lunch you'd, we'd have our 25 mile in.

That's a bit of marching.

It was a bit of marching, yeah, yeah. But, I suppose that's why I've got crook knees today.

What other kinds of things were you doing, all that time you were in Darwin?

39:30 Oh, we made our, our basketball courts. We, we, that's where I first started to play basketball up there. We cleared an area there, we cleared a big area for a football field, where we had our big canteen in Darwin there, a big canteen, but it was a dry canteen, you could only get cool drinks and, and that sort of things, toiletries and all that there. And but that was our main footy field with all sticks and stones and everything in it, and

40:00 you know, we played the Victorians. In another one we built there near the canteen too, and Northern Territory championships. I didn't play in that of course, wasn't good enough in those days. We had some big name footballers, thought. Oh, Bernie Naylor, I don't know if you remember him here. He was a top class full forward here in West Australia. Green and these guys. But yeah, well basketball was my main, my main thing. I played basketball up there.

40:30 And well after the war, I, we started basketball here in West Australia, down the Claremont Showgrounds, actually, a gang of us. We got, I played with a team called Combines, used to cost us one and six to play down at there. That was before they ever built Perry Lakes Stadium. And I coached for five years down at the police boys' [club] down here, basketball.

So you were pretty serious about your basketball then?

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

I'm just wondering Roy, while you're in Darwin, where you doing any

41:00 **kind of patrol work, or -**

Well, yes. Well, all our patrols were mainly bush work, and, and river crossings also there. We, the Adelaide River was our main source there, and that was where I got my, what I call, they call otitis externia, now my crook, my right ear, they called it Singapore ear there. We used to do river crossings, crossing the rivers. We used to make out of two rifles, your packs and things and your

41:30 groundsheets, you made them into a raft. And you used to float them across the river, and one would hang on, or you'd both kick your feet, and we had guys from Kalgoorlie and these country towns, who couldn't swim. They never used to have swimming pools in those days, or anything like that. And one of my jobs was to teach some of these guys how to swim, or to, sort of float. And that's how I got this crook ear, we used to do it in the, in the lagoons there, the stagnant lagoons, and that's where I got, I got my

42:00 crook ears from.

Tape 3

00:34 **Just at the end of the last tape, you were, you were talking about Darwin patrol work, and the fact that you training some of these blokes who couldn't swim, to get across the river.**

That's right, yes, at, and we were, you were saying about crocs [crocodiles] and that. Well what used to happen before we did our river crossings, we'd get the engineers in, and they would use gelignite and blow the river up and down,

01:00 200 or 300 hundred yards each side of our actual river crossing. That was to scare any crocs away, because the Adelaide River was pretty, pretty grim in those days for crocs and what have you. But no, we did our crossings quite okay. And or course, not only that, we had some inflatable boats there with guys sitting there with rifles also, just in case any crocs came. But that was the idea, because they're the conditions we were supposedly

01:30 supposed to be fighting in, see, so we were still training in Australian conditions. At that stage, we

weren't designated to go to the islands at that point, so…

Sounds like pretty rough conditions that you were working under, though.

Oh very hot, yes, the flies and, and the dust, and, and that, was very humid conditions too, you know. And we were, fortunately we were able to have our khaki

02:00 shorts, Bombay bloomers they called them actually, they were that big. And, khaki shorts and that we'd wear. But khaki up there didn't go too well, because often the scrub would be burnt and all the high grass when it was burnt, was black. And when you had to work your way through it, all this black charcoal was all over your clothes and everything. And you know, it, it was. All our, all our conditions, mainly, you were, there was always something as I mentioned

02:30 about Dandaragan, the things you had to put up with there, all irritating sort of things. But you got through yourself, but it was up to your own humour you made, and sort of, things that... I was, I was always a bit stupid anyway, so.

What, with playing a few pranks?

Oh well, I wasn't saying playing pranks. But I was always trying to make somebody laugh or something like that, you know. So, if you want … see if you didn't do

03:00 that up in the islands, you went troppo [mad].

Sure. Just wondering, you were mentioning the conditions at Dandaragan were pretty unfortunate. Was there any sort of group of men that would say well sorry, this isn't good enough, or -

Well, that did happen. A little later on actually. The, some of the battalion went on strike, believe it or not. They, over the

03:30 food, the conditions and the food. Because it got to a stage there, where being an NCO, we couldn't go on strike, but we had to still maintain the discipline and that type of thing, and carry on with the work. But they just wouldn't come out on work, they, they demanded that the colonel be replaced. They, they, they put a petition through to the brigadier who's in charge of the brigade, that, well that's our own particular battalion,

04:00 that the, the colonel in charge there, I won't mention his name, but they wanted him replaced. Because he, they weren't standing up for the men. We should have been getting better rations. Conditions were okay; you had to put up with certain conditions, but the rations we were getting. As a matter of fact, you mightn't believe this, but the day we left Dandaragan, we got ham sandwiches. And

04:30 in those ham sandwiches, when you undid them, there was, there were maggots. And we scraped the maggots off and ate those ham sandwiches. Now that was, that was one of those things that, that came out of this too. The strike didn't last long, only about three or four days or something, but it was just more or less a, a physical protest you know, about the, not so much the conditions, it was also the conditions. The water, see the water for us at Dandaragan had to be drawn from a well,

05:00 three kilometres around. And we were supplied in our company lines by water trucks. Water trucks would come to our, our, our company kitchen and load up there, and we would get, as I said, a gallon of water, per man, per day, perhaps. Now with that gallon of water, you had to wash yourself, your clothes and your equipment, and that type of thing, and it, it wasn't sufficient. And as I said, I was hoping at times that we'd get rain, because near us was a creek,

05:30 and when we, when it did rain, the creek was running and we used duckboards there, and we were able to get down there and have a bit of a 44, not a 44, four-gallon tin hanging up, tip water in with holes in the bottom and have a, have a bit of a shower and that. But I'll tell you one story there that happened, which the water came into it in the finish. We were on church parade one Sunday morning, and

06:00 my mate, Don, he was given the job with four men, to burn the latrines. Now our latrines were, we called them thunderboxes. Separate boxes with a lid. And a little bit of a tin roof out, very, very meagre. And what we used to do is take these thunderboxes off,

06:30 pour kerosene in them, and, and light them and burn them out every occasion, you had to, to cut down on the smell and all that type of thing. That was the primitive part of it. And you never had bore holes or anything like they have today, and all those sort of things. Anyway, what Don did, he thought oh well, we won't take the thunder boxes off, we'll just shoot down to the, to the transport and get some petrol. So they did that, they got some petrol from the,

07:00 from the transport, and poured it down the thunderboxes, lit the paper and chucked it down, well you know what sort of explosion went on there. We were on church parade, we hear this explosion, we thought the Japs had landed, you know, oh crikey. Everyone raced up to Don Company lines, and there's these blokes, the thunderboxes were all blown over, how they didn't get killed I don't know. And they were covered from head to toe in you know what.

07:30 And not only them, the tents around had it on them, and in the tents it had gone through the open flies

of the tents, what a mess. And these guys had to go down to the transport and get a truck with no canopy on the top, just a framework, and they stood in the back of it, standing there hanging on, and they drove them around to where that bore was where they used to draw that water, to wash, to wash themselves down. And they came back nice and clean

08:00 of course, but we had to wipe and scrape and no water to wash. And I, our tents and all that, that was terrible, that particular thing. It was only in our company lines, and our, our immediate area. But what used to happen there also, we used to have to fold our blankets in threes, if you got two blankets, you had to fold them into threes and stack them

08:30 on top of your palliasse. And what used to happen, the blowies [blowflies] would blow the seams, yeah, you'd come back from your day's march or whatever you'd been doing, and you'd have these lines of maggots in the seams of your blankets. And you used to, the only thing you could do was to just get your bayonet or whatever it was, and scrape them off, then you couldn't. Because we couldn't wash our blankets and that, you have to use them all the time, you were sweating and everything of a night-time, you can imagine what the, what the blankets smelt

09:00 like after a while. And that was one of the other things with the conditions. So, we said well it's not good enough that we have to fold them in threes, at times. So what we did, and as a compromise, was fold them in our groundsheets, and then roll them over and yet still the blowies seemed to be able to get in and do the same there. They're the conditions that we, we had to put up with, and that's like I said, led to these guys,

09:30 in this protest. And of course, we did, our colonel was relieved when we came back to, to Bellevue, before we turned and headed for Darwin. And it was then, that we turned, my mate and I, that was when you could turn to AIF, but being under 21 you had to get your parents' consent, at that time, believe it or not. So Don and I, we were

10:00 Thought, "Oh well, we'll nick off tonight." We'd just got back to Bellevue; we were watching the sergeant major, he was getting dressed and that. We said, "[snow shire's [?] is getting ready, he reckons there's no leave, but he's getting ready, he's going all right." So we said, "We'll shoot through," so we did. I lived in Maylands and so did Don, and we got off at Maylands over here, and went home and got my Dad to sign the papers, and Don did the same. And when we got back down to camp, they'd had three tattoos, or a tattoo was when

10:30 they checked to see where everybody is, and mark you, and we were marked down as AWOL [AWL – Absent Without Leave]. And unfortunately for us, we still had our new colonel, our original colonel, and I think after the strike thing, he had a thing in for people, and we were reduced to the ranks. We lost our stripes, we had to tear them half off, easy off, three at a time we walked in, guilty, reduced to the ranks, and

11:00 the sergeant just ripped the stripes off, that was part of the demotion, see. So we were privates again. And anyway, but we still carried on doing our sectional work as we were before, even though we were demoted, somebody had to do it, so we still did it. And when we got our new colonel, Colonel Bunting, he called us up and said, "I know you had a raw deal, reinstated." So it was only a month we lost our stripes, and we got them back again.

That was lucky.

11:30 Well yes, well they, I mean they had to have NCOs on strength, and we were the most important ones, we were the ones that, that keep the show going, type of thing.

Just with what you were saying about the flies before, sounds like it made the conditions one hundred times worse, they sounded like they were in plague proportions, the flies.

Well, they're bush flies, see. West Australia is renowned for its bush flies. You get them everywhere, no matter what. You get a little bit of

12:00 sheep dung or anything on the ground, and that, and you'll get, you'll attract flies. Most of our flies now, on easterly breezes, breezes come in from the scrub and that kind of thing.

We know those flies pretty well.

Well, it's the old Australian salute, isn't it?

Am I correct in thinking that there was some sort of an escort duty that involved some Japanese?

Yes, yes.

Can you tell me about that?

Yes, when we were at Melville Camp.

12:30 Yeah. It was just when the Japanese came into the war. There was 40 of us selected as guards, and I was instructed by, my lieutenant to select ten from my company that I thought were fit enough to becomes guards for a special job. They didn't say what it was or where we were going, or anything. And we

thought, “Well, here’s a chance, we’re going away.”

13:00 So I got these guys and the lieutenant and finished up 40 of us, we headed down on a special train to, down to Harvey to the concentration camp there, or the internment camp there, and we picked up 190 Japanese internees. They were going to be transported to Loveday Internment Camp up in the Blue Mountains. So we

13:30 picked those up the in train, and we had a special train, escort right through up through to Parkeston, outside Callan in those days. That was when the, the gauge changed. We had to change trains and then get on, transfer onto, every time the train stopped, the guards got out each side, lined each side. Well, these were people that were gathered virtually from say up Wyndham, Broome and all those places. Mostly older people, they weren’t actually Japanese POWs [Prisoners of War],

14:00 they weren’t Japanese fighting men. They were all internees like they interned a lot of Italians and all those, but they used them working on farms and everything. But these ones, they were just considered dangerous if let loose, I suppose. They could have been some of the fifth column. So yes, we, we took them across the Nullarbor to Adelaide and then up through, to the Blue Mountains to Loveday Internment Camp there, and dropped them off there, and came back into,

14:30 down back into Adelaide. And they gave us two weeks leave in Adelaide, before returning to Western Australia, which was good; we had a good time in Adelaide.

What did you do in Adelaide?

Oh well the bookies [bookmakers] there once picked us up in their cars, and took us out through the Barossa Valley for a day, through the wine, wine fields and all that, you know, come back pretty pie-eyed [drunk]. We weren’t used to, pretty young in those days, weren’t used to drinking grog, especially wines and those sort of things and that.

15:00 Oh no, we were on leave each, each night. Except we were, the camp that we were in there was the Showgrounds, and we did have to do guard duties of a nighttime, and that. But the other times there, we’d mainly go into the rubbety-dub [pub – hotel], oh and we met a few girls here and there.

I was going to say, surely there was some girls along the way.

Yeah. Well I met once nice one there, she was, it was a funny thing too.

15:30 I met her this day and she said, “Why don’t you come home and, and have tea [dinner] with us?” Cause in those days see, used to be all lights out at night, and doors and windows barred and everything, you know. And I said, “Oh yeah, I’ve got nothing else to do, okay.” So I went out there, and she lived in a flat, I always remember, it was number 3 Park, Parkview, St Clare Flats,

16:00 Parkview, Parkside. And she lived with her mother in the flats. Anyway, go up there, the doors, you know, knocked on the door, and of course all the lights had to go out, and all that. When you went in, when the lights go out. I stepped in and said, “What’s going on here?” And a voice says, “What are you doing here, Walshie?” And I said, “Hanson?” There’s my old mate Ralph Hanson. He’d met this girl’s aunty, he was a bit older than me, and so was she.

16:30 And he was inside. And, “Come to pinch my girl?” and we pretended we were having a bit of a, “Oh no, carry on.” Anyway, they realised that we were only mucking around, and yeah. That was one, one funny sort of one night there. And we used to just go to the pictures, and you know, and of course we had to go to camp every night and went on duty. We met them, had a meal somewhere, or something like that.

17:00 There wasn’t a heck of a lot to do, but we enjoyed a fortnight there, then came back to Western Australia. And then, I got a job there then, which wasn’t a bad job, I was sent to the Maylands Aerodrome, over there, which is still there, which is the old police academy. And I used to go down there as a kid during the war, before the war rather. I was sent down there with a bunch of guys, I had ten blokes under me. My job was to get them to

17:30 build, to reinforce with sandbags all around the, the wireless portion of the, the aerodrome there. And also as guards, we had to set up, we had our Bren guns by then. Bren gun and machine gun posts which we did in the big ditches around the, around the drome there. We were there for a while, and we wanted a beer, well Frank Skipper was a good swimmer, we used to put a pack on his back, swim the river and go to the old pub over there

18:00 at Rivervale. And Sandringham pub there. Get half a dozen bottles of beer there, and swim back over the river with a pack on the back. I used to give the boys leave every now and again, you know, they didn’t know, they didn’t know I was giving them leave and that. But, but I used to give them leave and that there. We had our own cook and everything there. But yeah, we was there, I was there for what, of a couple of months, I suppose.

Sounds like a bit

18:30 **of a holiday really.**

Yeah, yeah. I was always able to, be, well I don’t know… I got junkered in for something, but. In those

cases it worked out. That trip over east was a good one, as I say, and a good experience and got away from things. And down there at Maylands Aerodrome was another one. And in Darwin, well, we were selected there before we went to New Guinea, for the, to go to Canungra

19:00 Jungle Training Course.

Now we haven't talked about the Canungra jungle training course, have we?

No, no.

No. Well maybe now's the opportunity.

Well, that came in for our training. Our training as around in Northern Territory, our training was in Australian conditions, Northern Territory conditions etcetera. And then the word was that we could be going to the islands, which was good. So there was 40 of us selected there, officers and NCOs.

How did they select you?

Oh just Roy Walsh from Don Company, so-and-so and

19:30 so-and-so. They had so many from my company, from different companies. And then we went by truck down through to Mt Isa, then the train down through Broken Hill and down through there to Canungra. And we did the Jungle Training Course there.

What was the reputation at Canungra, like before you arrived there? Did it have some sort of a reputation?

Oh yeah, Canungra, Canungra actually was a pretty tough, tough school to go through, but to us, it was a

20:00 piece of cake. See they sent 40 officers and NCOs that were 100 per cent trained troops. We knew every weapon there was, we knew whatever you had we could do it, whatever drill you had we had it. The only thing we didn't know, was the, that when we marched and we did days through the rainforest there, which was semi-similar to jungle conditions. But for the rest of it, it was, to us, it was a piece of cake, because

20:30 they used to go out and, they were used to taking raw recruits. To raw recruits it was hard. Cause when we landed there on the train, we got out, the kit bags and everything and of course, the big burly sergeant major there, the first thing he says is, "Right-o, you're at Canungra now, and this is where the fun starts, hard work begins." And to get into Canungra you go over a hill like this, and down. "Right, there'll be no transport for you, you'll pick up your gear and you'll march to Canungra."

21:00 That's all right, packs over our shoulders and away we went, we marched down to Canungra, to the camp. We were in this, what was it, 40, 14th Training Squadron or something they called it, and. But life there, was as I said was pretty, the hardest part was climbing over the hills, and we hadn't been used to the mountain parts, but we were fit enough to do it. You know, we, it was no trouble at all, marching and that, we were just fully trained to do all that sort of thing.

21:30 And then they might go out in the scrub and say, "Today's a lesson on stoppages on the Bren gun." or, "HE36 grenade." or, "We've been teaching that for years." You know, the instructors there, some of them were already back from New Guinea. And they'd say, "Oh well, you guys know all this, just sit down and have a smoke and enjoy yourself." And we'd sit there and waste time, a lot of time. But the last four days they do like, you go out

22:00 and you live off the land. Wherever you can, type of thing, which we did. We went to farmhouses and bought eggs and bought a few things, and we did our own cooking, we even got a, blew up an eel in a pool with a 36 grenade. It worked lying along, along the ground it was about eight foot long this eel and you couldn't pick it up, it slipped through your hands. So we all had to get there and say, "You ready?" Then all toss it out, see. We cut it up, yeah, we cooked that. And also up near the

22:30 rabbit-proof fence, on that march, we got a big python, all nice good white meat, cut the python up, one of the guys knew how to do it all and cook it all.

How do you cook a python?

Oh just over the fire, the same as you barbecue anything. Same as we did with the eel. Well, we finished, oh, it was a four day thing, three and a half days we were ready to come back to camp. And we sat outside camp there, for four hours.

23:00 The instructors said, "Well, we can't go back now, makes it hard for everybody else, you know. But we'll just stick around and we'll just march back after." So when it was time to march back, then it got tough, and said, "Right-o, tighten your slings, you're gonna march back at, at the full slope." and all this. We said, "Suits us, right-o, slope arms, right-o boys, we'll put on a show." So the word went around and we marched back into camp like we'd just gone out. And, well

23:30 actually, they were, they knew what we were, and they knew we could do all those things. And as a matter of fact, they chose us to put a demonstration in; they had a blitz course there where they set us all around the blitz course. Actually, we'd done the blitz course when we'd been there before, it's where

you go up ropes, down, climb through down wire, fire, guns over your head, and all that type of thing. Well they set us in different positions around the course, and they had this

24:00 military mission sitting in a hut on the side, watching all this type of thing, they could gauge it all in the area that it was in. And at the, as soon as the gelignite, we were all gauged what we had to do, as soon as the gelignite went off, everybody jumped into position, climbed the rope, or did what they were doing where they were. And oh, that was a great thing. So to reward us, they, they gave us, let us have an eighteen-gallon keg to celebrate on the Sunday, before we left on the Monday to head back to Darwin again.

Cause you did such a great

24:30 **job of it?**

Yes, they were so pleased, because of all they said we could have an eighteen gallon keg in the, in the lines, and we could buy in food if we wanted, extra food and that. So they rewarded us that way. And, yes.

What were you living in, in Canungra?

We were in huts there, yeah. But most of everybody was in huts there, in Canungra there. But the terrain and everything was mountainous you know. For people that weren't used to marching and that, and you know, especially wearing army boots and that.

25:00 **How did the jungle like conditions affect you?**

Well, it was only thing, well it was a bit humid there, that was all, a bit like Darwin virtually, you know, but we were used to that type of thing. But no, the only thing you had to watch is, was if you went to the toilet or that, you didn't wipe your behind on a certain leaf, because it had all these fine, little prickles on it, and they were very hard to remove, once you did

25:30 that. So we were warned against those sort of things. But, no, it was easy really.

Were there any other blokes that you saw from other places that were rookies, that didn't make it through the Canungra training?

No, we were more or less on our own. That was our squadron that we were with, we were in our own groups, all the other groups well, we had nothing to do with them, they did all their own thing and that, we did our thing on a daily basis, there was no leave or anything like

26:00 that, you know. Nighttime was letter writing, or listening to the radio or something like that playing…

Sounds like…

…playing cards, we used to play cards a lot you know, about all you did. That's all we did when we were on those trucks going to Darwin, played cards all day on the back of the tracks. That's all you had to do, there was nothing else to do really.

Sounds like the conditions at Canungra were far better than Dandaragan?

Ah yes, yes, the food was good there, yes, the food was good. Dandaragan. No, Dandaragan

26:30 was the worst in the world definitely, as I said, it was less than three hundred ks from Perth, but. No, Dandaragan was good. I mean, Canungra.

Canungra.

Canungra was good, yeah.

What was your reaction when you found out about the fall of Singapore?

Oh well, Singapore's gone, and the Japanese are on their way down, and where are they going to be next? That was the thoughts. You know, our

27:00 prisoners, our men had been taken prisoners. As a matter of fact, the 2/4th Machine Gunners that were captured, mainly, I've got a list of everybody that was in Canungra in there, including all the Indian forces, British forces. Cause there were a 156 000 taken prisoner there, and that was, that was a shame and a shock really. We couldn't understand how it happened, that 156 000. But the point was, they had to surrender, because it,

27:30 I don't know whether you've been to Singapore and been to the Battle Box in Singapore, at all.

I haven't been there, no.

They've got a place there called the Battle Box which was the actual battle room where all the decisions were made, before the surrender. And they've got in there, a group of men, all dressed up, like generals, and they had, all the generals and everything, that collaborated with one another and discussed what they were going to do, whether they would surrender or not.

28:00 Well the reason they surrendered was because their water supplies was cut off, the Japs, the Japs had

cut off on the peninsula, and they had no supplies coming in from the sea or anywhere like that. And they had to think of the civilian population, and all that type of thing, all that had to be taken into consideration. And that was one of the reasons, that they, it was no good trying to fight their way out, because they didn't have the water or anything to sustain themselves. So it was, it was a dead loss.

28:30 The Japs had done it the right way, see. They'd come in through the peninsula up there, and cut it off. Half the time the guns were facing the wrong way, anyway, they're facing out to sea, instead of up into Thailand there, and those places. But no, they're the things that sort of came to you, and that. And we used to get there, and little newspapers and that'd tell you what was going on. But no, that was it, Singapore had gone and all those people were captured, and there was that many troops that wouldn't be available, and what have you. And

29:00 by that time of course, then later they moved down to, to New Guinea, and the Kokoda Trail, and of course, the Japanese landed at Buna and Gona there, on the eastern side. And they landed there with four hundred bicycles. They thought the Kokoda Trail was a four lane highway. That's how they moved so fast down the, Thailand and those places on the roads and things, they rode on bikes, they moved down fast, and

29:30 consolidated and, then their troops came later, these sort of crack troops, and they'd fought in Korea and all these places, and China. These were the top forces, and they'd been used to jungle fighting and all the rest of it. But they got stopped by the 39th Battalion in the, in the Kokoda Trail, by a, the 39th Battalion were a militia battalion. They were what they called the 'choccos'. And they stopped the Japanese. And that's the reason the Japanese stopped. And they are the reason the Japanese were

30:00 actually not driven back, the Japanese got right through to Imita Ridge overlooking Port Moresby. And their lines of communication from Buna and Gona on that side were, were being jeopardised, because the Americans and the Australians had landed in the Markham Valley, were fighting that side of it. And they had the problem of trying to get over the Owen Stanleys, they didn't have the support and the weapons and the food,

30:30 they were starving themselves by the time they got there. And had that, they had the troops and everything, if they'd done it first instead of trying to go through with their fourteen transports and the Battle of the Coral Sea when they were going to attack Port Moresby, they'd have done the Kokoda Trail, they would have had it, they didn't. So they had no option. But they put a new commander in up in Imita Ridge, it was to make an attack when he got to Imita Ridge, they'd gone.

31:00 The Japanese were gradually, but they were leaving the force to fight, while the others escaped. And General Horii, that commanded them, drowned on the way back. He was crossing a, one of the rivers which was always in flood on the bottoms of the Owen Stanleys, they were torrents, on a raft, and he overturned, the raft overturned and that General Horii, got drowned. And he was in command of all the forces on the Kokoda Trail. And he used to ride

31:30 a white horse, he'd sit up in the mountains on this white horse, and watch his troops through the jungle pass. And of a nighttime, with flares and all that, that guy. Yeah.

How closely were you following the war in the Pacific when you were still in Australia?

Oh well, we could only go by sit reps, situation reports and all that type of thing, you know, and what everybody else was learning, you know. We didn't get a heck of a lot. We,

32:00 as I say, there was the Battle of the Coral Sea, they had those fourteen transports, and that, they all come from the Rabaul area, see, there, that's where we were finally heading for ourselves. And actually, the, the turning point in the Pacific was the Battle of the Coral Sea. I don't know whether you've heard of the Battle of the Coral Sea, you heard of it?

Yes.

Yeah, yeah. Well the Battle of the Coral Sea was what changed, in my opinion, apart from these fourteen transports

32:30 that were sunk, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, those ships never saw each other, they fought each other over horizons, and was fought with planes, and that's how the, the navy fights, you know, out of range, so they can do with their radar, and all that type of thing. Well those fourteen transports never reached New Guinea, so they never had that reinforcements there either. And as I said, the 39th Battalion stopped them. And they were all boys, 18 and 19 and 20, they were

33:00 militia kids, the same as we were when we started, but they happened to be in Port Moresby when the Japs came, and they were the first ones put on the Kokoda Trail. When they were relieved, those boys, their clothes were rotting off their bodies, they were. And when they relieved them, and, and the colonel in charge there, when we saw them, he, he was devastated, the condition those kids were in. But then came some of the 2/16th Battalion came back from the Middle

33:30 East. And they got a lot of credit, which they did, they fought on the Kokoda Trail as far as Kokoda could, Kokoda was only a village, half way between that side and this side. And that was the Kokoda Trail from there on. But the, most from the Kokoda Trail further on was the Owen Stanleys, like this, you look across here, you'd be there tomorrow afternoon if you were lucky, by the time you went down there and came up the other side. But they actually fought them back, but they were rear guard actions

as far as the Japs were concerned.

34:00 They were dying like flies. They were even to the stage, by the time they got back to Buna and Gona on the other side a lot of them, they were eating each other, they were cannibals. They ate a lot of our guys, cut them, cut pieces off; they found them there, in old, in their camps, still burning on the stove with a hand in it. And they were eating bodies, and they were eating their own, they even piled their bodies up as rivets and camouflage, camouflage in front of their bunkers, that's how bad they were.

34:30 So they were, they were badly beaten there, and that's where, that's where everything stopped.

Were some of these stories filtering through to you at the time?

Oh yes, yes, yes, we, we were getting all the atrocities that were happening, and. We, we didn't know about the Tol Plantation Massacre until we got there and I saw it, and I've got photos in there of the bones and what have you. And of course, after those atrocities you

35:00 found out about, there was no holds barred, of course. Couldn't take prisoners, you couldn't hold them, you couldn't trust them. Anybody you found in the jungle, had to, had to go…

Just going back to the little timeline that we try to get a plan on. I think we're basically up to the time, where I think you were departing for the Pacific from Sydney.

No, to Britain, from Darwin.

From Darwin. Okay. So if you could tell me what happens?

Well, after

35:30 we'd came back from Canungra there, the words were, "We're moving." We weren't too sure where we were going. So we loaded on the, on a ship named the Jane Adams, which was a Liberty ship. Most of the ships they transported in those days were Liberty ships, I believe the Yanks built them upside down, but they were only built for more or less one or two trips, those ships, they were that flimsy and that. And who was in charge of the mess fatigues going across, Roy Edward Walsh.

36:00 Once again. And yes, we boarded the Jane Adams and we sailed up around through the top end of Australia. And then we, when we were around the top end, it was passed around the ship that we were heading for New Britain. Which New Britain is, was Papua New Guinea. There's New Guinea proper, New Britain and New Ireland, they're all part of Papua New Guinea. And we were heading for

36:30 New Ireland. Cause the campaign had finished at Lae there, the 2/28th Battalion had landed at Finschhafen and attacked on Lae there. I saw that in '83 there, where they'd landed there and everything, I went back there in '83. Well we landed at Jacquinot Bay.

When you say, sorry, you were in charge of the mess.

Mess fatigues.

Mess fatigues. Can you tell me what that actually means?

Well that means you've got a group of men that are

37:00 designated to work in the kitchen, help serve, clean up the dishes for every meal, breakfast, dinner and tea. And my job is to round them up, to make sure they're there to do their job, which is hard to do at times. I'll tell you the last part of that later. But that was my job, you see. And I used to round them up each morning, make sure they were all there. Because we were on board first, once again, and we were in one particular

37:30 area in the ship. Going up on the Jane Adams, we had bunks one up above the other, about five or six high. And you know, our small area would be here, and all the guys were there. So right-o, we're ready, and then, and get them ready for the different shifts, breakfast, dinner and tea. So we did that till we got to Jacquinot Bay, and then once we got there, they, we used American landing craft then, to, to ferry us

38:00 ashore. Once we got to shore, then all the hard work started again, with clearing the undergrowth and the scrub and everywhere, to put your tents. Well we couldn't do enough in the first few days, we had our two man tents, small ones, with two men, you put two ponchos together, which was your raincoat virtually, and two men just crawled in for the night, until we'd been there, established a bit, till we could get our bigger tents, and put them in under the

38:30 coconut trees, etcetera.

Did you have any special equipment that you were issued with because of the jungle? I'm even thinking about you know, uniforms, you mentioned waterproofs.

Oh, we had jungle greens by then, dyed jungle greens, they were, if you washed them, the dye would come out. But yeah, we had jungle greens. Or actually when we first landed there, it, we actually had, we didn't have jungle greens, we had our khakis. And then later on, we were issued with our, with jungle greens.

39:00 Green hat and with tin hats, we still had our tin hats then too, which was hard, and that's what we trained in up in the Northern Territory, tin hats, you know. And in the jungle they were no good, they made too much noise, 'clang, clang', they were too heavy, they'd, they'd fall off, and all that type of thing, got knocked off. But yeah at Jacquinot Bay, we well, our job really started there again, once we got established with our tents and everything, it was learning the, how to use the jungle, action on first contact and all this

39:30 type of thing.

So this was for the first part of time that you were, this was a training, sort of session?

Yes, we were training up forward of us at Wide Bay was where the fighting was going on, which we were to go up to later on. But Jacquinot Bay, well we had to establish ourselves there, everybody would pass through there virtually. The Yanks had landed at Gasmata earlier and worked away, but they gave the bottom part of the island away, it was virtually from Jacquinot Bay, Wide Bay then Rabaul was the next jump.

40:00 And, well we used to do our patrols out on the tracks also from there, the jungle tracks and training. And I was designated to set up, which I'd learnt at Canungra, was one of the things, action on first contact. I had to set up a little area, up in the, I found a track up the top, and the little area I cleared for, actually before that. And you'd go along, and action on first contact was when you first fired upon,

40:30 how you spread out, and what you did, if you found a body, you never lifted it and what, you put a vine on them and got back behind a tree and pulled it, turned them over all that. All that type of things that, cunning things that the Japs used to do, they'd booby trap their bodies and all those sort of things, you know. That's what I learnt along the track.

Who was training you in this sort of...?

Well at, at Canungra, these are the things that came out. They used the, at Canungra, they were using,

41:00 well this guy that was demoted, General Bennett, he got demoted and sent back to Australia. And the books that General Bennett wrote on jungle training and jungle fighting of the Japanese, were invaluable, they were the books that we were using for when we got there. Yet this guy, he left, they demoted him. Oh I forget what is was for, but he was a pretty good

41:30 general, we had General Blamey, he was.

You'll probably have more to say about that in the future.

Oh I didn't have much to do with him, but he, Blamey, I think he landed in New Guinea once, the same as [American general] MacArthur did. MacArthur only landed in New Guinea once, MacArthur was going crook because he thought the Australians were taking too long to clear the Japs out of New Guinea, see. He didn't even know what the Kokoda Trail was like. Thinking those blokes should have run over it in a couple of days, or something.

And they didn't.

Tape 4

00:32 **So you had a first contact station, did you say that, is that what you called it, Roy?**

Where's that?

When we changed tapes, you were setting up a station on a hill where you were doing first?

Action on first contact, yeah, yes. I was training, that was my, my section of it. They, there had others where they had different things going on, you know, dummies would shoot out, and

01:00 guys firing and that type of thing, you know, jumping behind bushes and everything. But mine was action on first contact. It was action on first contact with the Japs, the Japs had, they'd move forward, as soon as they met contact, they'd fan out, they'd go wider, they'd find your flanks, go round, isolate, come in and move on, leave that to deal with what was in front, while the rest would be moving on, that's how they, there tactics were for moving

01:30 quickly through the jungle. That's how a lot of our guys got lost in New Guinea, they isolated, and they got away from the main track into the scrub, got lost, some were lost for weeks, but that was action on first contact, yeah, that's how they worked. And I was teaching our guys the same principle, was if you meet the Japs, they'll be out on your flanks, you had to watch your flanks.

I imagine it would be quite a worry if you were overrun and surrounded like that?

Oh well yes, well this

02:00 happened. See at this stage, we've learnt from what the guys had originally, I'd say most of them had learnt on the Kokoda Trail, how they were treated there. You know, we, it's, those guys, as I say, did it the hard way, and we're there, we learnt from their mistakes or not their mistakes, we learnt from what they learnt, and we knew something about it, for our own benefit of course. But, you know.

So what could you

02:30 **do to counter their circling?**

Oh well, in that case, you'd have to try and, if you were outnumbered, well you'd have to try and go backwards. And then they'd be waiting further down the track and ambush you, and that type of thing, you know. You'd have to fight your way back. It was so condensed see, the area of fight, it's not like open warfare, you know. Not like Middle East or somewhere like that, it would have been better, in Darwin and those places where we had plenty of land to move around in, and all that.

03:00 **When did you have your first contact, Roy?**

It wasn't till I got to, to Wide Bay. I, while we were at, at Tol, not Tol, at Jacquinot Bay, what they were doing, the fighting was going on at Tac, at 14/32nd Battalion were engaging the enemy at Wide Bay, that's where they were at the time. And what they were doing, they were recruiting,

03:30 or getting NCOs from the backward companies like us, or the rear echelon we called them, not backward. And, and sending them up, and joining them to get their first class action, you might say. Well I was sent up, as one of those, as an observer, to observe, so. The last battle was going on, or going to be performed at Bacon Hill,

04:00 or Mount Sugi as the Japanese called it, at Waitavolo Plantation in Wide Bay. And I was sent up with a group, and they were also from the 16th and 28th Battalion and I was from the 11th. And officers from my unit too, but I was attached to 17th Platoon as a 14/32nd Battalion, that was my, my goal was to be with them on the attack on Bacon Hill and Mount

04:30 Sugi. And that's what I did, when we, when I finally got there.

How were you moved forward?

Oh, we moved, we went up on barges, moved up on barges to Wide Bay from Jacquinot Bay, overnight on barges, and landed at in Wide Bay, behind the lines of course, and then moved forward to the particular battalions where we were, and I was with the 14/32nd. And then,

05:00 when the, I was there a day, and then.

What kind of defences did they have there?

Well they didn't have any, apart from; it was mostly all patrolling work, mainly there. You had you, well you had your, you, well we didn't have slit trenches there, there was foxholes actually, you there, you had your outer limits of them in your battalions where they were. And you had your companies forward, also first contact companies. And from there out, patrols

05:30 all the time. Well that's what our job later on, as I say. But this particular instance with the 14/ 32nd, we moved across the Moondei River in boats, the boats they had to move across, they were fast flowing the rivers, they had ropes stretched across. And the boats would be turned side-on and the tide going would take you across, and they'd turn it the other way, and the boats would come back, that's how you got across. And then we had to move up to our starting position.

06:00 Where we were going to be, start our attack on the hill. That was on the night, and then.

What were you thinking at this stage?

I thought, "Oh, we're going to get stuck into it now some time." But, you sort of, well a bit apprehensive of what was going to happen, you know, you didn't know whether you were going to get slugged or what you were going to do. But the jobs to be done and here's a chance to, to get stuck into something, you see. So we were in position, my job, our job,

06:30 I was attached to Don Company actually, the same company as my own company. Don Company was 14/32nd.

Good omen maybe.

Good omen, yeah, it was too. So I was attached to 17th Platoon, there was 33 of us started off. And in the morning, well the first thing was the, at the given time, the artillery opened up, and they put a twenty minute barrage on the hill, and what happens then they lift, they lift their range and when their range lifts, well then the infantry

07:00 moves in. And that was our job then. Of course the Japs know this, they know once they're being bombed, and when they know, once the range lifts, they know something's going to be happen, it's sort of, it's only natural, see. And ours was the left flank; we were to go round the left flank and, which we did. And we got pinned down, and on our first attempt to try to, we were to come up the left ridge, and the others. Well first of all, before we started off,

07:30 had to go on the track to move round, there was a Captain Butler from the 28th Battalion, he'd copped it first up. He came up with us, from our 28th Battalion, and he was lying on the track dead. I passed him, poor fellow, he'd, he'd copped a blast right from the jump, and, "Well, that's the first one gone." And as I said, we moved round the right, we were pinned down by.

In an instance like that, do you just keep moving?

Oh yes, you leave them to the stretcher bearers or, you can't do anything about it.

08:00 Anybody injured like that, well, unless it's in your own mob or vicinity, you leave it to, there's always a stretcher bearer coming behind the, you hope. Cause most platoons have stretcher bearers with them. And they attend to anybody. Anyway, we were pinned down there.

How did you become pinned down?

Oh, their machine guns and their rifle fire.

What was your position?

I was laying down in the scrub by that time, we were all

08:30 lying across the bottom, and then this machine gun was sitting in front of us there on the left flank. And their, their spotter was looking around the tree every now and again; his head would come around the tree. I really don't really want to go into the complete details. I just gave him a fright, that was all. And that fixed the gun up for a while. And anyway.

Sorry, what do you mean you gave him a fright?

I shot him.

09:00 To put it bluntly. Anyway, there was others, we were just having a pick off sniper, I was considered a forward sniper then, and they, the Japs were actually moving across in front of us too. And you can only get a pot-shot now and again, but you had to be careful, because they were up and we were down. And it was quite open in front of us, because it had been cleared for their vision of fire, and also our artillery, the trees and everything had been

09:30 busted, you know, you get a certain amount of vision. Our officer came up, our captain, and he was standing up, and I said, "Don't stand there, Sir, you're in full line." 'Bang', the next thing, over he went. See he got popped off. So, anyway, that, once the machine gunner was down, we moved around further.

How did you get the machine gunner down? When you say once the machine gunner was down, what brought the machine gunner?

I knocked off his spotter.

So that brought him down?

10:00 They had, he had the gun on fixed line, and every time he spotted a movement, is when they opened it up, see, they sprayed with it. And anyway, we moved around to the left flank further, and the same thing, we, we struck the opposition and we decided to stay there overnight, by that time. And no further attacking was to occur. Because during the night we were bombarded with grenades, and fired from rifles, and what have you.

10:30 **So there's wasn't much rest had.**

Hey?

Didn't have much rest.

No, no, it took me all night actually, to dig about a two foot hole. You had to get down below the ground as much as you could; there wasn't much protection and that. Anyway, the next morning they got at us again, and they knew we were there. And -

11:00 **Can I just interrupt there, sorry, Roy, were there any casualties there that night?**

Oh yes, guys were getting wounded right, left and centre. And in the morning, the lieutenant had gone forward. Anyway he got shot, shot in the stomach. And anyway, that's when I went forward and gave the machine gun a burst, and fixed that up, and got him and brought him back to my slit trench again, and then called for the

11:30 stretcher bearers to fix him, he'd been, been shot in the stomach. And that's the action that finally, had my Military Medal. But to me, it was something that everybody does, everybody had a job to do, and anybody would have done it. But he was an officer, and those sorts of acts have to be seen by officers, and well, other things that I've done too, of course. I don't want to go into all the details. But I bought him back, and more or less saved him,

12:00 from further danger of being under fire and grenades. And then we moved.

Sorry, if I can just hold you there Roy. What danger were you under when you went forward and rescued him?

Oh, being shot, of course.

But can you maybe, put it into perspective for me, the danger you were in, in that particular spot at that particular time?

Oh, just didn't think of being shot, just went forward and got him, because he was in the open, and he had to be brought out, back from there. It, they're

12:30 not things you've got time to think about, just do it. You don't think about these things, all finished. You don't get frightened till it's finished.

How far forward was he?

Oh, oh, of our position he was about twenty yards in front, I suppose. And, well not quite twenty yards, twenty or thirty feet, I suppose.

How did you assess the situation before you rescued him?

Oh well, just, he was down; I could see he was down, and wounded. So jumped

13:00 out of my little foxhole I had, and retrieved him.

In an instant.

Yep. And brought him back and called on the platoon to rise around me, open fire on the, on the gun, which was eliminated, and that, that settled that little bit. And from there, we moved.

Sorry, I was just wondering, how did you eliminate that machine gun?

Oh, the guys with, with the Bren gun, old Cactus, a guy there, that

13:30 was in my section, he opened up, with the Bren gun. And it was only the one gun that was holding us up there. And, called for covering fire, and when I went forward, actually, and that opened up on it, and that protected me, of course, too. And, well, you don't know it's doing it, but, you know. Anyway, when that little bit was over.

It's not over yet. When, when you got him back, what kind of attention did you have to give

14:00 **him, if he was…?**

Oh I lifted his shirt and he was all busted in the gut here, and I just, all I could do was, I had our bandaids, and put that on it, and just called, yelled out for stretcher bearers. Anyway.

How was his condition apart from the wound, was he conscious, or…?

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. He said, "Thanks, mate." "Don't worry, it'll be right." He was in a bit of pain and that. But, anyway, we were moving off then, and

14:30 I had to leave him there. And, of course, the stretcher bearers, as I say, would later pick him up, couldn't do anything with him, you can't carry him with you.

So you just left him there by himself?

Because we had to, had to move on, yeah.

What was the pressure on you to move on?

Oh no problem at all, we had to keep moving. Our job was to; they'd discovered a track up a spur. Where we were going on a face portion, and this spur was on a, it was like a hill leading up, you know.

15:00 And halfway up that, we got ambushed again. Because there, they were settled all around there and they opened up again with rifle fire and everything. We lost more men there, and that, they were dropping off. And I don't know, I kept getting missed somehow. You could see little sticks getting blown over beside you and all around, and bullets crack. Then we moved on further and there's a kitchen, Jap kitchen, there's a guy in under there, in an, under, under a mosquito net, screaming

15:30 out something or other about being sick or something like that. And anyway, I think about everybody shot him. Funny enough, we went to ground just there, and this is how silly Japs are. A little later on while we were lying there, before we had to move on again, we had a pause. Two Japs come up the track on the right hand side, with their dixies [pails], they were evidently going to this kitchen to get some food, I suppose, you know. The full, while the bullets are flying, these guys are doing those sort of things.

16:00 Anyhow, we had a guy there with a gun, and he opened up on those guys. And anyway, then we got further up and come to a tunnel, and one of the boys shot in there with a phosphorous grenade. But silly bugger, he let it go while he was still in the tunnel, instead of plonking it in from the outside, and he come out looking like Al Jolson [blackened face], you know. A phosphorous grenade, it's not, it's

explosive, but it, it doesn't fragment like a metal 36 grenade. And then,

16:30 we had to keep moving then, because we were just getting to the top of the ridge, where the Japs were. We got up the top there, that's when all hell broke loose, there.

What happened then?

There were bullets flying and everywhere.

Did you go to ground, or…?

Oh yeah, we went to ground there, and that's where I lost me two guys. A guy called Cactus, the one that had the guy I mentioned down below, and his best mate, was a guy called Kirby. Cactus went down, I saw him go down, and there was a Jap in a foxhole.

17:00 In the head, he got him. And Kirby was going forward, and I yelled out to him to get down and back, but too late, he got there, and the Jap got him too. I pulled out a 36 grenade, but somebody got the Jap with a, with a phosphorous, which, well it sort of burnt him alive in the, in the hole, actually. And then another guy got, I don't know whether it was a dumdum bullet or, or what. He'd been down, he'd gone down a little gully and a bit to the right there, and he,

17:30 he's come screaming up and his chest was all open, and I had him on the ground beside me. Where I was laying, the Japs used to have a little crap hole, where they used to excrete into. And I lobbed down right in front of it, and it was the best smell I'd ever had. Anyway, this guy came back, and I used his bandaid, but it wasn't big enough to cover, I could see in his chest, you could see his heart and everything going, you know. I ripped off the sleeve

18:00 of me shirt, and covered it over then, put, well put the bandaid on first, then yelled out for stretcher bearers. And then, oh, it was not only me, it was the rest of the platoon and that, were there. And once we'd got to that position, well that was it, we'd, we'd staked out our possie [position] there. And we were too, it was only, the sergeant and myself and, and twelve other ranks left out of our thirty three, two NCOs had been wounded, and I was

18:30 commanded to take over the, two of the sections, what was left of them. The sergeant had six and I had seven.

What time frame had you lost all those men in?

Oh well, it was late afternoon by, by the time we'd left in the morning, by the time we'd walked all day, and got to there, late afternoon, and we had to consolidate for the night there then. We started to dig our trenches and that, there was still further to go

19:00 up the ridge. Because the other advancing troops that were supposed to come the day before, were, didn't come any further than where Captain Butler was, was, they didn't advance any more there, it was only our movement that was around the back. Anyway, we were there overnight, and next day, the Japs opened up with a mortar that was, apparently was in a tunnel. But they weren't ran-

19:30 fortunately for us, they weren't ranged on our, where we were on the top, they were ranged on the, on the spur that we came up the next day. And they were causing a lot of casualties there on bringing up, on guys that were bringing up ammunition and stores, and, and things through to us. Because we'd cleared that portion. And this, but every time the gun opened up, so would our artillery open up, see we had an artillery range also. We had two artillery

20:00 forward officers with us, and they. What they do is, they get a few shots fired, and, sort of, get your range; they had to guess where this gun was, more or less. Or this mortar, it was causing the problems there. And the way we were coming to, as soon as a mortar, a bomb went off, a mortar exploded, they'd let another one go. You could hear them start, they make a, a hollow sound when they shoot a mortar off. So you knew that was coming. And when the last one

20:30 exploded, you wouldn't stick your head up until, you waited a while. Because they, while they were exploding they were letting another one go. The same as the artillery, when they were firing, when they were exploded, then they would fire, fire again.

Thinking that you wouldn't hear them.

Yes, that was their tactics, you know. But this, they finally got this; I had in mind, of going myself and going back there, but, anyway.

What would you have done, in your mind?

Well, knock off the bloody,

21:00 I wouldn't have known where it was, I'd have to have gone back to find it with a couple of blokes, see if I could locate it. But anyway.

So you'd get a Bren gun, or something?

Yeah, Sergeant's his name, "No way, we'll stay here, let the artillery do the job." Anyway, they must

have got it. But after the show had finished, it was found they had got it. What they were doing, they had it on a railway line, had it in a tunnel on a spur, and they were bringing it out the front of the tunnel on the railway line.

21:30 And it was modified sort of a, they used to do that, they used to use artillery, not artillery shells, naval shells and that, they used, they made homemade sort of bombs out of them. And they used to fire some of them with lanyards and that, there was one on our hill when we got there next day. And they, so they got it when it was out actually, and it had blown it, off the, off the rails and down the, down the embankment, so that fixed that up.

Good timing.

Ah, it was, yes. Well

22:00 they were ranging in on it, where they thought it might have been, and they did cop it. Anyway, then the next day, we were to attack the rest of the hill and we moved up there, and the Japs had gone overnight. And, but they'd gone down on the right flank, the day we were down below there. There was a group of them down there late in the morning, another crowd of them down there. But where we were, at the rest of the top of the hill, well we'd captured the whole lot by then. That was it, that was Bacon Hill taken, and we stayed up there for

22:30 three days, and before we moved back to base.

How, how did you spend those few of days up there?

Oh, just sitting around in case we got attacked. They had bunkers there and that sort of thing. And they, as I say, they had a mortar there too, that they used to fire with a lanyard. They go back down a hole, the lanyard was to the hole, and they, they used to

23:00 shift them, elevate them like that, they weren't a modern thing. They were a modified thing they'd made up themselves, apparently, but they were devastating. But from then on, the Japs had apparently moved back then, and they'd moved right back towards the Baning Mountains. And there was no more open activity, like we'd had on Bacon Hill. That was the last main fight there. From all the times from then on, we, well from then, as far as I was concerned,

23:30 I went to base, and then I went on barges back to Jacquinot Bay, to my battalion.

What happened when you got back to base, Roy?

Oh well.

From Bacon Hill, what happened when you got back to the base?

Oh well, we just okay, took count of who was there and who wasn't there, type of thing, who was missing, and that. But we'd started with 33, and finished with 13, so, they were killed and wounded, and I was lucky I was one of those that weren't killed.

How was morale?

Oh well, pretty low, because a lot of them were there mates and everything. I didn't know too many of the guys

24:00 myself, as I say, I was only sent there as an observer. But these two guys, Kirby and Cactus, I sort of got attached to them in a short time, you see. And their names are now in the War Memorial in Canberra there, I went, I went there once and I read their names, which was pretty sad, too. But yeah, when I got back down.

Sorry, was there much talk about the fighting on Bacon Hill when you got down to base?

No, no, no. The show was over, that was it.

Anyone get a

24:30 **slap on the back or...**

No, no, none of that went on, no everything was sort of okay, the jobs been done, lost a lot of boys, and you know, what's the next move, type of thing.

Did you get any recognition for your actions at that point?

Well yes, well it wasn't till I got back, I got back to my unit, that the unit received a, I received a, oh the colonel called me up, and he'd received a, a letter from the major in the,

25:00 of intelligence of 14/32nd commend, I've got the letter in there now, commending me on my, on my actions during them, the fighting etcetera, etcetera there. And that. And I think from that commendation from him, I think things must have happened then, because as far as the Military Medal was concerned, I never thought anything about that. It wasn't until 1947, I was sitting on me motorbike in Wellington Street, waiting for the wife to take her to

25:30 lunch one day. I was discharged in '46, this is '47. And two reporters came up to me and said to me,

"Are you Roy Walsh?" And I said, "Yeah." They said, "Congratulations!" I said, "What for?" They said, "You've been awarded the Military Medal." I said, "What for?" They said, "It's been announced today by Governor McKell," he said, "and the King," that was the King George the, what was it 5th or 6th, that was in charge then, "have graciously acknowledged…" and that's the first thing I ever knew that

26:00 I'd, anything like that had happened. I thought crikey me, no. So I thought, I didn't even know. I've got a piece out of the paper there, "When interviewed today, ex-Lance Sergeant Roy Walsh, said, 'It was nothing.'" What else could you say? So, yeah, that was the first thing I knew about that. I was, like I say, there's a lot of blokes did a lot more than I ever did, and just that one particular action, which was recognised, and there's not much you can do about it.

26:30 **I'm just curious Roy, when you got back down to the base from Bacon Hill, did anybody mention your bravery to you then?**

No, no, no well nobody knew anything about, much about it all then.

Everybody had been too busy saving their own skins?

Oh, more of less, yes. Cause I was then, it was our own group, our platoon then, which, you know. And, the rest of the company that I was with, well they were in the base camp, of course. They were, with, the phone's ringing, they

27:00 can ring.

Do you want to answer it?

No, no.

That's finished now.

Yeah, yeah. Then as I say, later on that was our job from Jacquinot Bay, we moved up to Wide Bay, and we leave the 14/32nd Battalion.

I'm wondering if before we move on Roy, you could tell me a bit more about the couple of men that you saw fall earlier that day at the attack on Bacon Hill, the couple of gunners?

27:30 **Cactus and?**

Cactus and Kirby.

Yeah. How well had you got to know them?

Oh only in, only in the three days that I'd met them when I first went up there, yeah and, you know. It was Cactus and I was in front doing the sniping, when we first fired upon. You know. They were just nice guys, that's all, and I was in the section. See, there's three sections in a platoon, and a…

You had

28:00 **those few days to bond, and…**

Yeah, yeah, it doesn't take much.

All right, what happened when you left the base?

Ah…

You went back to?

Went back down to my own unit at Jacquinot Bay. And from there, we, it was our turn then, a, a couple of weeks later, to move up and relieve the 14/32nd Battalion. That was our prime job then, so we

28:30 took over their position. Our, my company, Don Company, landed at a place called Kalai Plantation. We were there to protect the, what was it, the 9th AGH [Australian General] Hospital or something that was there, as a protective thing. And the other for, troops went forward to the forward positions that were being occupied, 28th Battalion were already there, that was the other, and the 16th Battalion, we were a brigade remember. Three lots,

29:00 we were only one company that went there, the rest of our battalion went further into Wide Bay. And it was from there that we did a, a patrol, KA1 patrol, I've got a list of, of patrols there. It was a four day patrol, we had to move out around behind, to get the extent of the Japanese positions and their forward movements and that. And it was during that four day patrol, that we,

29:30 well, me mate, I nearly lost me mate on, on the first night of the patrol. We went, we lobbed at a place called the Yaris River [?], we were being followed actually by a Jap, and a boong [indigenous person] and a dog. I was set off, I was dropped off to put an ambush in, and, which I did. But it didn't come. And that night, when we'd settled down, every night you settled down and you settled in a ring, one section covered that, you covered that, and you covered that.

30:00 You sort of, and then before you settled down for the night, you cleared your front. You went out and cleared your front, see it was clear, or set any booby traps you wanted to. I'd done my front, and Tiger

Lyons the other section commander did the other, me old mate Tom across the Yaris, did that side. And while he was over there, this Jap over there, and, and had a shot at him. And we heard the shot from our side, didn't know how many were there. As it happened, it was only the, he returned the fire, and

30:30 apparently he hit this guy, he was behind a tree. But, the bullet went through his beret, we were wearing berets at that time, and it grazed, he had a graze mark along, a burn mark along his beret, very nearly knocked his hat off. And then he jumped into the river and swam across. And then he came through my position in the kunai grass, calling out, "Shilling, shilling, shilling!" That was our password, we always had a password for the night, and we

31:00 choose shilling because the Japanese couldn't pronounce an 'l', they'd say, "Shooing, shooing, shooing." So, it was 'shilling'. And I said, "Come in here you silly bastard, before he blows your head off!" He knew it was me. I said to my section, "Hold your fire, it's Corporal Angwin." Anyway, he came in, plonked down, you know, so but as it happened it, that Jap disappeared in, in overnight anyway, apparently, if there was anybody else with him. Then for the rest of the patrol, we…

Just before you tell me

31:30 **about the rest of the patrol, Roy. When you'd come back from your action on Bacon Hill,**

Yes.

to rejoin your old platoon.

Yes.

Were those boys curious to know what you'd done, or…

Oh yes, they wanted to know what happened, and everything, and I was able to tell them what I'd done and what was going on and what to expect, and all the rest of it, you know.

What was their reaction to your story?

"Oh, gee, how'd you do that?" "I don't know, just did it, and that was part of it, and that's just how it, how it goes.

32:00 "You're gonna expect the same possibly as we go further through." But that's all I could tell them, you know.

So were they behind you when you went out onto this patrol?

Oh yes, oh yes, yes. Well, I wasn't in charge of the patrol, a Lieutenant Backhouse, my lieut [lieutenant], as a matter of fact, I was with him yesterday, he led the patrol, and…

Who was in your section?

Oh geez, Des Flanagan,

32:30 don't ask me to name all the other guys, crikey. Sid Ralph, Sid Ralph's still alive, Flanagan's still alive, most of the others are all dead. Tiger, Ozzie Campbell he's gone, Jack Sampey's gone. All, most of them have all passed away. Cause I said, most of the guys were all older than me, virtually, in, in those days. And a lot of them died early, very early, you know.

33:00 Twenty years ago, fifteen years ago, a lot of them. One, one of my particular mates, he had a farm down, down south, he died in his sleep, he died with, without his boots on. He always reckoned he wanted to die with his boots on. Con Townsend was his name, yeah. Apparently he died in bed, so he didn't have his boots on.

33:30 But you could only explain what was happening, and what to expect and, you know.

Did you have any Aboriginals in your…?

Yeah, yeah, my. That's the other two, yeah, number one and two on my Bren gun was Arthur Fogarty and Georgie Logan, they were both quarter-caste Aboriginals. They were num, number one and two on the Bren gun.

Were they good gunners?

Oh yeah, they were good, yeah.

What sort of relationship did they have with the rest of the blokes in the…?

Very good, yeah. We used to call them black so-and-so's, they'd call you white

34:00 so-and-so's, swear at each other. We'd drink with them on leave. Oh they were, they were just ordinary guys. They were just the same as we were, colour didn't make any difference, they were pretty good blokes.

Good soldiers?

Oh yeah, good soldiers, yeah. They're both dead, they both came from Narrogin way.

They came back?

Yeah, met them after the war, yeah. Yeah, because our actions after that, were mostly patrol work. There wasn't, we didn't lose hardly any at all in our battalion,

34:30 because at that stage, once that area was taken control of, at Wide Bay, the 36th Battalion were straight across, which was 40 mile, 46 miles across, which was a neck. Wide Bay was like that, Open Bay was like that. And we held that across there. In front of us, we thought there were 38 000 Japanese to 40 000 Japanese. Wasn't till

35:00 after the war had finished, the Japs were in the Bayanee Mountains [?] and the Rabaul area, there were 93 000 Japanese contained in that area. We only had 4 000 fighting troops, across there. We were sitting ducks. If they hadn't of dropped the atomic bomb, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you now. See what happened, apparently MacArthur wanted a full scale attack on Rabaul, which was impossible, it was an impregnable.

35:30 And apparently Churchill and Roosevelt vetoed it. They said no, it, they are, we've got command of the Pacific now, which they did have, after the Battle of Midway. We'll isolate them from the ocean, and we'll keep them bottled up across the neck. So our job from then was patrols, which, we had skirmishes and patrols and fights with the Japanese outposts, but they had no reasons to

36:00 come forward and we weren't allowed to do any more attacking. Jammer Bay, up we used to patrol up to what they called the Unamicci [?] River, five mile on was Jamma Bay, we knew there was 10 000 Japs there, if you wanted a fight, you'd have to go to Jamma Bay and have one. But we weren't allowed to go over the river. Lamingi Track was another one, up Lamingi, there was up to 5 000 was reported to be up on, at, stationed up at the Lamingi. The NGIB [New Guinea Infantry Battalion] boys used to go

36:30 up there and have a ship, foot, shoot and scatter up there, and then blow through.

Who were the NGIB boys?

New Guinea Infantry Boys. They were always under, under the control of a white officer, but they were highly trained Kanakas. And they were all armed to the teeth, and what they used to do, go in and have a big shoot-up, and blast everything and then take off.

37:00 This Lamingi Track, we used to be down, in the finish we were down at the bottom of there, that was our base down the bottom there eventually. But we had a place called, after we'd got back and moved up and we took over.

Well before we move forward, maybe you can finish telling me about the four day patrol, that I interrupted?

Oh yeah, yeah, well the four day patrol, well okay. Well we followed this Jap to, to the river, the

37:30 oh what's the name of it, God, now my brain's going. Anyway, our job was to cross the river, patrol the other side, if possible, find the extent of the Jap forces, have contact if necessary. We couldn't cross the river cause too much was flooded, we couldn't go across and do the, patrol the other side, so we, we did the patrol up this northern side of it, we were supposed to go to the southern side, the eastern side of it rather, we stayed on the southern side of it.

38:00 And then we went right through there, through the day, found nothing, and at the end of, four o'clock in the arvo [afternoon], we said well, we'd better settle down for the night. So we crossed a U-part there, but where the U-part was in the hills, was all the smoke and fires where the Japanese fires and that, were burning things and that. We snuck across this open path and went up the top of this hill, or mountain it was.

38:30 So we settled up on the top there, we found a, remnants of a track there. We had a NGIB with us, named Illip, actually on that patrol. He was the one that found the track, he could see where the, the blaze trail was, you know, the sticks had been cut off, you blazed a trail or marked a tree, or something. Yes, and Illip led us up there, and then we settled down there for the night.

It must have been hard going getting up there.

Oh yeah, yeah, it was all pretty tough going, yeah, pretty rough country.

Hours of climbing?

39:00 Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. You'd walk up two and skid back three. And see our boots were useless too. Because you see, our army boots had sprigs on them, metal sprigs, brass sprigs, they used to fill with mud, they finished up like skates, they were all full of mud, you know, and you'd slide on them. Every chance you got, you got a stick or something and you'd get the mud from out underneath them, so you'd have something to grip on. The Japanese were smart, they had a boot, they only had

39:30 feet in and a toe, it was like a moccasin. And that, having the toe, they had grip, and yeah, that's how, they could walk, and in, through the jungle, that's how they could move so fast. With these type of, of

boots they had. You could always tell their footmarks, because it only had, it was like that. Front toe sticking out, yeah.

That's quite bizarre.

Yeah, yeah, you'd always know their tracks, like a big hand mark like that. So that patrol,

40:00 we, on that patrol, there was a bit of controversy of where we found this engine. I thought it was before we hit the Yaris, when I put an ambush position in. Cause they were to go ahead and I was to wait in the, half an hour in the ambush. If nothing happened, catch up with the patrol, further up the track. Well nothing happened, nobody came, so I waited my half hour, and I reckon was there, while they were waiting for me, they went off track and discovered this aircraft engine.

40:30 Which at the time was just an aircraft engine, you know. Anyway.

What sort of aircraft engine?

Well, it was just an aircraft engine, with you know.

You couldn't identify it.

No-one could identify it, no at the time. But many years later, with my best mate, we figured out, we now figure out it, it was Amelia Earhart's engine [female flier who disappeared], off her plane. And there's been a lot of searches since. Well the lieutenant, who's alive now,

41:00 well we've got our maps of everything, of that area, of that patrol, it's been. We've got all our maps; I've got all the maps and everything in there. And this guy's from Queensland now, an aeronautical engineer from New Guinea Airways, he's been in seven times now, following our track to try and locate this engine. But there's been a lot of logging going on in the area, and the Japanese have done a lot of logging there, and there's been, of course, all that rain and that all over the years, and landslides and everything. It's very hard

41:30 to discover it, wherever it is. But I thought it was down before the Yarris, they said it was further up the hill. But, but it was only just my mate, he was looking through certain things of where Amelia Earhart had disappeared. That's in 1937 she disappeared, 1936, 37. And she was flying to Howland Island, and never got there, returned and they reckon she went down in the Pacific, and that etcetera, etcetera. I never…

Tape 5

00:31 **You were saying that you're not entirely sure where this engine is, but there's been a lot of plans to be able to find it?**

Yes, we've got the area that we traversed on that four day patrol, and it's somewhere in that area and we've got a reasonable idea, one and two positions where it is. But as I say the difficult part with the chappie who's going in now, he's doing it on foot, you see. And with all that logging and

01:00 everything that has gone on, to discover anything in all that heap of rubble and what have you, is very difficult. Well my son, he went to New Guinea for five years teaching at the university in Lae with his wife, and he taught cartography and surveying. And he, his idea was, the only real way to find it would be with sophisticated surveillance equipment, heat

01:30 finding equipment which would have to be done from helicopters and that type of thing. With that type of surveillance you can pick up a two bob piece, anywhere around.

Thermal imaging.

Yeah, well. The first, actually the first search was made by the West Australian air force, they were flying around Australia with that old aeroplane, it wasn't a Douglas, it was a, one of those, something like the

02:00 Douglas Aircraft. They went in, but they only went up the river, they didn't go up the tracks that we were on, they'd never have done it, not the way they did it. And this guy, he's doing it, you know, with his pack on his back type of thing, and he sleeps out and all that type of thing. But he's had other guys with him and that. But he's now hoping that he'll get finance through an American firm.

02:30 There's a millionaire in America that's interested in it, and if he can get the finance, he wants this, there's only two of us left, actually from the patrol. As I say, Backhouse and, and myself. My mate, he's gone and, and Doc Nurse, his photo's in there, he was a platoon sergeant, who, who they'd seen it, they'd taken a plaque off this engine, you see, this is where the evidence came from, at the time.

03:00 And that plaque went in with our patrol report, and numbers were taken off that plaque which my mate had written on his old little plastic do jar. And he, and the map we'd used for patrol, he had it tucked in underneath, and it wasn't till later, when, a few years ago now, about eight years ago, I think it came to

the fore. But he put the map out to take a, a proper carbon copy off it, that he noticed these findings, and

03:30 it's an engine number there. And this engine number apparently, coincides with, what could be the engine number on her modified Lock-, see it was a Lockheed, Lockheed Electra that she was flying, with a Wasp engine. And it was a modified engine, a six hundred horsepower modified engine. And well that plaque showed, that that, number, and, but that plaque disappeared with the patrol report. And when we went to New, to Canberra,

04:00 and Don went through the archives there and we couldn't find it, there was pages missing out of the report and what have you, and. But that plaque disappeared, nobody knows where the plaque went to after the patrol. And that, the number there does coincide, that six hundred horsepower engine coincides, and also another couple of numbers there too, which could be her plane. Cause this guy, he's an aeronautical engineer,

04:30 and he's worked it out, that she left Lae, fully laden, to fly to Howland Island, but estimated that Howland Island was overcast, she lost it, she couldn't find it, and was forced to return to Lae. And he worked out, he, the fuel that she carried to get to, back to Lae, she would have to fly at a certain height at a certain speed, and do certain things etcetera, etcetera, to be

05:00 able to use, to have enough fuel to get back to Lae. But he's worked it out that methodically that he reckons when she was heading back to Lae, she was heading actually for Rabaul, for the landing strip in Rabaul, and mistook Wide Bay, see Rabaul is an open cut, and. And mistook Rabaul, ah Wide Bay for Rabaul, and ran out of fuel. And because then the,

05:30 the boys saw the propeller. Now the, he works it out if the propeller was facing a certain way that way or this way, we would know whether the engine was going when it crashed or whether it was feathering, which means the engine was dead. Whichever way, he's that fine in his thinking, that's the way it was. And apparently I think the engine was dead, they'd worked it out, which way the propellers were. So he's, he's been like a bull, you know, chasing its tail, and

06:00 he won't, he won't give up on it. And he's spent a lot of money and if it's ever found of course, the publicity and that, that would surround it. Well he reckons now, if he gets this backing from this American thing, he wants the Lieutenant Backhouse, Ken and myself, to go, to fly over to Rabaul and then they'd land us, lob us there by helicopter. We wouldn't be able to do any marching, I wouldn't with me, with my knees and that, and neither with Ken, he's just…

06:30 I just went yesterday, as I said, and I've got to get me knee done again next month, so.

Why did, why did anybody think to actually take the plaque off the engine? Cause I'm just imagining that there would be quite a bit of plane wreckage around the areas where you were.

No, no, no, it had apparently gone through the trees and more or less the engine and the cowling and that. And the plaque was on the cowling, which was the only metal part, was. In those Wasp engines,

07:00 they have a cowling on them, and then they've got all those like wasps, they're like small engines, you might say, but they're cylinders, I suppose, that's the type of engine they are. That's the only identification they could see, that they took off it. They didn't know if it was a military plane, or what it was. But since they've been searching, they've located a Liberator and a couple of other planes, the

07:30 remnants of those that they didn't know were there. But there was no known aeroplane that was missing, in that particular area, from the American Air Force or the Australian Air Force. And it definitely wasn't a Japanese plane.

So you certainly have some evidence to suggest…

Well there all, well yes, that's all the evidence we're going on, that it happened. Until it's actually found, well, nobody's going to know, really.

08:00 **When you say you went and had a look with your mate Don, back through the archives in Canberra, and there were pages missing, what's going on there?**

I don't know, I didn't go in; they would only let Don in. The, they let him in there and they let him look through there, only through a certain portion of it there, see what information he wanted. But he couldn't get anything at all, actually.

What was?

The patrol reports there about the patrol, and the actual patrol and what happened, and about him being shot at and that, on the patrol, and that thing. But there was no evidence

08:30 there, or a report, or anything about a, about a plaque taken off an engine, or an engine that was found.

And you know that the report was made?

Oh yes, yeah.

What possible explanation?

Well, there was a lot of controversy over the disappearance of her, there was a lot of stories came out, a lot said the Japanese had captured her. But I couldn't see it, the Japanese weren't in the war until '42, and this, she crashed in '36,

09:00 '37, so the Japanese weren't involved in that thing. Some said they, they saw her being burnt at the post and all this type of thing, you know, there were all stories came out. They found shoes on a deserted island out in the Pacific somewhere, they reckon was hers, and, well Captain Noonan, or Noonan her navigator actually, when they left Lae, he was half stung apparently, liked his drop. He was the one that was with her, her and him. And also the boys noticed on

09:30 top of the cowling portion there was a little observation thing, which they said was on her plane, which they used to use to take daily readings or something, from the top of the plane somehow. That was just those few interesting things that suggested it could be it, but that's just another side of the equation, that's civilian life now.

I find it interesting though that there were pages missing out of the patrol report, and there was some

10:00 **sort of level of security that was still there in relation to…**

Well, a lot of things happened after the war. Coal was a big thing, you see, before the war finished, you see, Australia wanted to do, when the war finished, Australia had a big idea of doing deals with Japan and supplying Japan with coal. Money came into it, deals were to be made, you see.

10:30 It was, it's like today, the same thing. You've got to; we've got to keep our imports and exports going, don't we? We've got to appease people, we've got to keep on their side, you can't accuse people of anything. And the same in those days. I'll give you a story about Rabaul, what happened when Rabaul was first attacked. Prior to the, they knew it was going to be

11:00 attacked, Rabaul, and then Rabaul was only, there was the 2/22nd Battalion, there was only 1 500 of them, plus a company of New Guinea rifles, an artillery battery and some anti-aircraft plus nurses, and doctors and that type of thing. They were very undermanned virtually. Well prior to the Japanese attacking Rabaul, the commander, the powers to be, the

11:30 civilian command, had an idea that they had 500 people there that they wanted to try and evacuate. Well as it happens, one day prior to the bombing, in the harbour sailed a Swedish ship called the Erskine. And this was come to, came in to load copper up, so this was great. We can get this ship, and we'll be able to evacuate our

12:00 500 people that we've got lined up here, I think it was 700 but they had 500 to evacuate if they could. So they sent a text through to Canberra, and our prime minister at the time, forget his name, anyway. "Could we use the Erskine to evacuate these people?" Text came back, "No, the Erskine must load the copper up. The copper is a very important cargo."

12:30 So no evacuation. The next day, the Japanese came over and sank the Erskine while it was loading copper. So the Erskine didn't get away, the Erskine, the copper didn't get away, the Erskine sank and those 500 people didn't get away either. A lot of them went on the Montevideo and Moruya later on, after the Japanese captured Rabaul. And that was torpedoed by the Americans on its way to Japan, and all those people on board that ship, died.

13:00 They, the Jap, the Americans didn't know there were civilians on board from Australia and what have you. The same as they had a ship there with 500 prostitutes onboard too, they were sending back, and that was also torpedoed. They were girls for the troops. No, that's what happened with the Erskine there, that, they wouldn't allow it to load. And of course, most of those would have got back to Australia.

13:30 After the Japs landed there, well, the, hundred, fifteen hundred troops there had no hope at all. They just fired and fired till they ran out of ammunition and the guns ran hot. Then they had no option but to move down the coast, and that's where we come into it again, when we were, I was, we were at Tol Plantation. That was the mass massacre at Tol Plantation. The Japanese caught up with the, those

14:00 people that'd got away from the war down at Tol. And they marched them off, ten at a time, into the jungle, either bayoneted, shot them. And murdered 156 all together there. And when we were at Tol…

And how far away were you camped from Tol?

We were at Tol, actually. Waitavolo and that was Tol. Once the, our intelligence section, and this was located and handed over to them, the area

14:30 was cleared, as much as we could, not to disturb anything. And we were in that area.

Why, sorry, why were you in that area, what was your mission in the time?

Our camp was all, our area, that was our area of movement. And Tol was right on the coastline, right there. And that particular portion of it, I'm told, was, all cordoned off and all measured, measured off. This was after the war had actually finished really, that all this was

15:00 done there. And they, there was skulls, holes in them, cracks in them. Boots with wire around and fishing lines tied around them with the bones still in them at the bottom of coconut palms. The coconut palms all scarred and that, where they'd been bayoneted through with their, thumbnails hanging down on wire, up, up, coming, up in the palm trees, where they had been

15:30 tied up, and used for bayonet practice. All the evidence was there of the massacre at Tol Plantation. They, after the war, they, I think they got a couple of guys that were mixed up in that particular business, and when we left Rabaul, they, they were hanging these guys. But that was all cut out too, no more hanging, no more killing, these blokes have got to get back to Japan, because I told you about the coal deal, business was going to be started all up again, and we don't want any

16:00 of that business going on, hanging their guys.

What sorts of reactions did you have from all the men, when you came across these pieces of physical evidence of the massacre?

Oh, devastation, devastation, yes. We'd received reports of what had happened, and wasn't till after the discovery of all this, that the evidence that came from those that had written about it after the war had actually finished, about what had happened to these guys at Tol.

16:30 Some had survived and got away, and natives issued them with other reports of what happened, and that, everything. So no, that's the evidence that came out there, that's the evidence was still there. And to my day, I always wanted a, a memorial to be put at Tol. They put memorials on the Kokoda Trail, two or three or four, memorials elsewhere, but I would like, and they've got a memorial

17:00 up in Rabaul. I would like to see a memorial put at Tol Plantation, to honour those 156 that were murdered there, and the reason it's there.

Course yes. Were a lot of those people civilians?

Oh yes.

They were all civilians?

All were civilians and army civilians and everybody, yes. Even natives too, were also included in that.

Did it surprise you?

Well not after the stories we heard,

17:30 what the Japanese were doing. Earlier in the piece, you know, I said we used to get our daily reports. The atrocities the Japanese were committing and the things that they were doing at Milne Bay, for instance, there. They'd get a person down, they'd fill them up with water, with a funnel, and then roll, roll logs on their stomach, across their stomachs. Well they're stomachs were full of water, and this type of thing. Men, they'd hang them up by their arms, stripped, and they'd beat their testicles till they fainted, with sticks,

18:00 and this type of thing. They're all the things that used to come out and we used to, New Guinea Gold was the name of the paper they used to publish, and these things were printed in there. And they were things that were happening, you know. They used, the atrocities, they don't like to talk about these days. But that sort of things were gong there, and of course, no holds barred if you ever got the chance. And then

18:30 the war finished. Do you want? Oh well before that.

We need, we probably need to rewind a little bit, cause we kind of jumped ahead with your experience across the Tol Plantation. When you finished talking with, or half finished talking with Julian [interviewer], he left off on when you were on the four day patrol.

Yes, yes.

Sorry, I'm just a bit (UNCLEAR). Why were you doing the four day patrol, was it for a specific reason?

Yes, it was to find out the extent of the Japanese penetration down, or what, or

19:00 were there any camps still operative. Just, just a genuine reconnaissance patrol to find out what was the in the area, and what was on our left flank, virtually, you might say, yes.

Cause I would imagine that would be a fairly dangerous sort of thing to be doing?

Well all patrols were, yes. Cause I mentioned before, from then on, no more Australian participation and attacks, all our work, once we got to Wide Bay, after that, were all patrol work.

19:30 We put standing patrols out with companies, I was, was. Like after we came back from that patrol to Kali, where we started from, then our company moved further up Wide Bay, to a place on the coast called Marupa Mission. And we were right on the coast at Marupa Mission. And our job from there was patrolling to what they called the Unamiki [?] River, which was about ten ks up

20:00 the track. And we'd put patrols at the Unamiki River, platoons, well it was three platoons in the company, we'd go and stay there three days, be relieved, and then we'd come back to base. And at base, we'd do the initial things of getting water and that around the place. Plus different things around the camp and all that type of thing, that had to be done during the day. You had your same patrols close in. But they were the main patrols. We'd go to the Unamiki River,

20:30 as I mentioned before, five, six kilometres, ks, miles further up was Jammer Bay. If you wanted a fight, you could go there. But we weren't allowed to cross the Unamiki. There was one platoon of, 16th Battalion went across there, prior to us getting there, and they were ambushed one morning and they lost five men. They had their guns stripped down actually, cleaning them all the one time, it was their own fault. You only clean one gun at a time. If you've got three, one cleans one,

21:00 the other twos alive, and then so on. They had the five down, but that's another story. But, but we would go to the Unamiki and stay there. And on one occasion the, it was more of less one of the last occasions we were there, we got flooded out. The river came up that high; it was torrential rain and all the slit trenches, foxholes all just full of water. They are full of water at the best of times, anyway. Full of water, and we had to move back. And we were supposed to be

21:30 relieved on that day by another platoon. So we signalled back that we were coming back, and they said, "Well that's okay, you can keep coming back, because we've sent your relief up by barge, and they'll land on the coast, and come in from the coast into the track where we were." Well as it happens, it was that rough, they tried to bring the barge in, which they should never have done, and the barge got chucked up onto the reefs, and finished, that was it. We didn't know this

22:00 till later, but for us. We came to the first river, and that was in flood, couldn't get across. So Backhouse, that's the guy that I'm talking about, Ken, he decided we'd chop a big tree down, take it across, and then we'd go across on that. So I thought, "Oh that's pretty hard doing." I said, "What if I go down the river with a couple of guys, and see if I can find another crossing." He said, "Yeah, well okay, you do that, but we'll keep chopping." So I

22:30 took two guys down, and we, I did find a crossing, there was another big tree across, further down. I went across, came up the other side, and I'm here, and I called out across that there is another crossing. And Ken said, "No, don't worry, we've nearly got this through now, we'll have it over in a minute." So we stood there and watched, anyway, sure enough it started to fall. But what he didn't take into consideration, all the vines were tangled up in the top part, and as the trunk went, the rest got caught, and it all came down straight.

23:00 The tree went across virtually, but the, the stump of it went across, but the top portion and everything all crashed down on top of all the guys. The guy named Bluey Thompson, one of the boys, copped a, one big branch across his back, and that fixed him up. And by the time they came out of the tangled mess, I thought, 'God love me, they'll be dead.' But they were okay, but, except Blue, the rest were scratched and torn and that. And Ken said to me, "Well right, you're that side of the river, you head back to base, and tell them we're

23:30 coming in with a wounded man, we'll try and make it today, if not it'll be the morning." So I say, "Okay," so I took my two guys, and the first river I come, came to, she's in flood too. So I said, "Well okay, it's going to be pretty tough here." So what we used to do was just hang on to each others scarab, bayonet scarab. So we slung our rifles over our shoulders, and I said, "Well, well, I'll go first." I said, "If by chance we get swept away, swim like buggery to the other

24:00 side and grab whatever you can and we'll see what happens." And as it happens, I got halfway across and the same, it did happen, didn't it? I went and the others went too, I was the first to come in, the other two guys, fortunately, well one got in and I helped to pull him out, I got out first. And then where's, I forget who the other guy was. And now we could hear this coughing and choking, and we went down a bit further, and here he was, hanging onto a branch, he's going under the water like this, we pulled him in. So we came back to the track,

24:30 and back we went, and got back to our base and told that what was happening. And anyway, these guys didn't come in till next morning, they, overnight, and of course, we told them what happened and then they said, "Oh yes, the barge is up there too, it's gone aground, and those guys are in." So I said, "Well, they've got nowhere to bivvy [bivouac] there, because the place is washed out." So that finished up, well, we had to bring our defences position back from the river after that, in

25:00 between that and the one I got washed away on, on the high ground there. But that was right up on the river there. But that's all we used to do, have to patrol there and do that. And any time you stood out on the river, you could hear shots up the river, the Japs had it surveyed all the, surveillance all the time there. And a lot of the companies there went over or moved down there, and they got shot up. And you got the occasional skirmish.

You must have had to be on alert constantly?

Oh yeah, all the time, yeah,

25:30 Well every time you went on patrol, well you had your scouts out forward, and you, you moved in line, you know. But one silly devil, one day there, we're getting along, and he's playing with the trigger on his

Owen gun, and all of a sudden, it went off. Of course, the idea is as soon as there's a blast, everybody disappears off the track, each side into the jungle you see, action on first contact. Anyway, we found the guy playing with his, with his, with his gun and he let if

26:00 go off, so. Just those little silly things, you know.

Does that sort of thing come out of nervousness?

Oh, oh just, bit bored, I suppose.

What's it like to be in that forward scouting position?

Oh no, not too good, you're the first guy up front. The, the Japanese, we knew what their tactics used to be, they'd let your two scouts go through, then wait till your main body comes through. And somebody up further, they'd always have somebody up further there with your scouts, but we used to do the same.

26:30 When I set that ambush up, I had somebody to it was only supposed to be a Jap, a boong and a dog. And I said, "Well forget, forget the boong and the dog," I said, "Just leave the Jap to me." So, they, we didn't see them. But no, they just let the scouts go through, and then do the main body. It was always that, you were on toast, all the time. We knew the Japs were the other side of the river, but you never knew when they were coming down. That's why these were patrols,

27:00 were doing that all the time, right across the island. As I've said, we're from Open Bay to Wide Bay, that area was patrolled. And on the Open side, a little cunning move that the 19th Battalion were doing there, they had barges over there, they'd go down, there was a little headland there, they'd go down, they had these barges, they'd come up loaded with troops, come round the headland, drop them off in full view of the Bannings, where the Japs had observation posts. Drop them off, light fires in

27:30 the bush and what have you, march down overnight. The barges would go back empty, they'd all load on the next day, back they'd come again, same blokes, on the barges, they did that for, oh months. But they were there, they kept coming up and down with the barges. Course the Japs watching and that, they were thinking it was reinforcements. They reckoned we had a division of troops on that, that's why they never bothered on coming down. And yet, we only 4 000 troops across there, and as I said, when we finished the war, they had 93 000.

28:00 We didn't think, we only thought they had 38.

It was lucky misinterpretation.

Yeah, yeah, but that's what they did, and that's how they fooled them, that was a great bluff.

Did you ever use any trackers when you were on scouting patrols?

Trackers. No, no. We, as I said that patrol we did when we, we found that engine; we picked up the NGI bullet boy. But a bit later on,

28:30 when you say trackers. We, we were at Marupa Mission, and then we went to the Moondei, and took over from B Company. Actually, we came back to base; we spent a bit of time on the Marupa Mission. We came back to base; we were supposed to have a week's rest. And we were only there a day, and the next day the Japs had set up a nest of guns on,

29:00 opposite B Company lines. Up in the hills, they had their guns up on tripods. Cause they were firing down, because the camp was at the bottom, and they'd cleared some of the bush for line of fire, and fired on B Company. Well that day, we were supposed to be back for a week, we went out the next day, followed their sig [signal] lines, we found their sig wire, it was all wrapped up and twisted up, the Japs had been behind them actually and wrapped it all up. Then we were actually sent out,

29:30 it was raining like mad that afternoon, you know. And we got there to their company lines, and we reinforced them for the night, and no more firing or anything, the Japs had nicked off. And then our colonel came out next day, and he went back, and we went back. And then, we were only back another two days, and then we went out and took over from B Company. And they came, they came back, we didn't get our, our full week's rest there. But then,

30:00 when we went there, they employed this, well not employed, I don't know how they got this platoon of NGIB, all these Kanakas, and we did a four day trip around, trying to track and see what we could find out, where these Japs came from. Those boys used to do it, we were as happy as Larry, because when we'd stop of a night-time, they'd, they would, they'd wander around in the dark all the time, those blokes. You could have a good night's sleep because you knew no Jap was sneaking anyway when they

30:30 were around the place. We never found anything, or we… oh we found remnants of where they'd been and huts and all that type of thing. But they'd moved well back by then. But that's the only time we ever really went out with a, a platoon of them, they usually worked independently themselves. As I said, they used to shoot and scatter up the track. And that where we were, when they were fired on, was called the Lamingi Track, and that's what I mentioned before. If you wanted a fight, you could go further up there, where they used to hit. And

31:00 we started to put standing patrols further up the track, then. Before, we, we just had them down, you know, down the bottom end. So they'd stay up there for a couple of weeks, and, and get relieved. Well

that's where I was, when the war finished. Up the Lamingi Track, on that standing patrol, when they dropped the atomic bombs. And we had two artillery men with us, because, we were within range of

31:30 them. If we got attacked at all, we could call on the artillery to bombard in front of our positions, that was the idea of them. Anyway, that night, when they dropped the bomb, or after they dropped the bombs when the war finished, which was, that was on the 15th of August, it finished.

You wouldn't have known about the bomb at the time, though?

We'd heard about it, oh yeah, yeah, well we had our radios and wirelesses and everything, yeah.

32:00 **Well what did you hear, over the radio?**

That the Japanese, that the Americans had, oh, there was a lot of stories. I didn't know what type of bomb it was, they said a particular bomb that exploded the atmosphere, I thought, you know. The whole atmosphere went up, wasn't too sure what an atomic bomb was, never even heard of the darn things, you know. But when we found out they'd dropped one on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and it had wiped out so many people in one

32:30 blast, you know, we were devastated. Cripes, what sort of bombs are they going to next? But, as I said, they had to do that, because the Japanese were prepared to fight all the way back to the shores of Japan, they didn't care how many people they would have lost or what, they were still determined to fight all the way back. And to save millions and millions of lives, they had to drop those bombs to let them know, "Okay,

33:00 'bang', this is what's for you, if you don't stop." So they stopped, didn't they. So that's what finished the war, and as I said. But my worst part was, we had to stay in that position for another two weeks, after the war had finished, my platoon. And we could have been shot any time within that two weeks, that was what our thoughts were. Because we were the forward listening post, you see, first contact. Because they weren't sure whether there would be kamikaze

33:30 attacks by Japanese who weren't prepared to throw the war in, reckoned they wouldn't be prepared to give it up.

Who were you hearing that information from?

Well that's, that's what was relayed to us from headquarters. That you had to stay there, because on account of these, maybe these kamikaze attacks might start. And Japanese that might not have known, they'd been in the jungle and not known about it, and still wandering about thinking the war was still on, which a lot of them, I think, did do, were hidden, didn't know it had finished. So that was our job

34:00 to stay there. Then when it, we got the message relayed through to, we were returning to base because we were going to take up, we were going to move up to Rabaul and take over the surrender from the Japanese. And they said, "It's time now to go back to base." and, through we went like Bondi Trams, didn't we.

What did you; well what was your reaction when you found out that the war was over?

Oh just relief, you know. Gee, you could get a good night's

34:30 sleep, without having to put a guard out, you know, which we'd... cause we used to stand to an hour before dark, and an hour after, before sunrise, and an hour after dark, every day you were in the islands, that was your stand-to period. And then you had to, all night long, out in your patrol posts, you, every two hours you had to relieve your gun pit. So you didn't get, you could never get a good night's sleep, you were always tired

35:00 and that type of thing. It was two always two men on together of a night-time, on watch. Because, the reason being of a night-time, you'd see something move from there and it'd move over there, you know, you'd know a bloke take it, "What's that?" "Oh, nothing. That's a tree. That was there before." you know, type of thing. Because, yeah, no, the relief was the, oh gee, not going to get killed any more. We, you know, can have a good night's sleep, we might get some good tucker for a change. Oh our food wasn't too bad.

35:30 **What sort of rations were you on when you were out there?**

Oh tinned, tinned bully mainly, baked beans, that's where I got to like to eat baked beans. Everything was three man to a tin, three man to a tin of bully beef, three man to a tin of baked beans and those type of rations. Biscuits, of course, hard biscuits. But we used to soak them a bit and soften them up a bit, and that.

It's not a lot of food.

Oh no, no, not a lot of food, it wasn't roast beef or anything like that. You couldn't shoot rabbits or

36:00 anything like that, if you wanted a feed. No you had to go. And of course, we did get some bread, they were able to, they set up bakeries and we got some bread or buns or type of thing. And Aeroplane Jelly I think, the jam, was. And the egg was dried egg you had to mix with water, and make up egg flip or, not egg flip, or egg, that was you egg anyway. So, no the food, you got away with that all right, yeah.

36:30 **You mentioned before that the weather conditions were pretty horrendous, and you were in trenches that were completely filled with water. How did that environment affect how you could operate?**

Well, you were wet constantly; you were wet all the time you were there. Doesn't matter what, it was either through perspiration if you were back at base, or if you were out on patrol, you were always going through creeks and rivers, and that, and you never took your boots off to, to cross them. You just walked through them,

37:00 and that was it. Your feet was always wet. Your, your head, if it was raining, you had your poncho on, to keep the rain off, you sweated underneath them and it was just as bad. And that, that's why we got the berets and we had our slouch hats on occasions, we used to use slouch hats was good to keep the rain off your head, type of thing, you know. Tin hats had gone long before that. And, but, no, it was, mosquitoes

37:30 you know, the, and dysentery and all that type of thing, all those diseases that were there. See I got malaria, I had malaria but it didn't catch up with me there, we were on malaria tablets all the time. Malaria caught up with me six months after I was discharged. I, cause I was still taken Atebrin tablets up to a certain time cause you had to. Once I stopped taking them, well malaria caught up with me, and I was in hospital in

38:00 1976 for fourteen days with malaria. So I can't give blood now.

How does that work, when you, you can't give blood because…?

Oh, I'm only ninety-five per cent cured, I was on Paludrine treatment, that was the treatment for malaria, and it's ninety-five per cent cured, that five per cent, you can't give blood, you might transfer it. But my son, when he went to Lae, I told you he was there for five years, he contracted malaria there, when he was over there. Whether he got it from mozzies [mosquitoes] then or got it from me, I

38:30 don't know, probably mozzies, I think. But, no, night-time, long sleeves, your sleeves were always down to here, you always have to roll your sleeves down of a night-time, but even in the jungle in the day time, the mosquitoes were bad enough, you know. In Darwin, and here with flies and those sort of things there, mosquitoes. Well the leeches were bad too, you'd get a stinging on your leg, even though you had your putties on around, you pull your pants up, and there's a

39:00 couples of leeches on your, on your leg, and, or on your arms or even on your body they were. Lay down of a night-time, leeches seemed to get in there, you'd get an itch and you'd have a look, and next thing you've got a leech on you. You know, aggravating things, but, you know, they were things you had to put up with, you know, it's just not army life, "G'day, g'day," and all the rest of it, they were very devastating things that sort of got on your nerves and that. But it was only your own humour and everything that sort of

39:30 keep you going, you know. You knew you had to keep going, there was nowhere to go, you couldn't go home, you couldn't catch a tram, you couldn't go and see anybody, you were just there, you had to be there, you didn't know how long you were going be there, and you didn't know when the sun was going to come up or not, or whether you were going to cop one, one day. It was just that anxiety, I suppose. But that was life there.

Just going back to the wet weather conditions, was there any

40:00 **sort of skin infections that you would get from being constantly wet?**

Oh yeah, yeah, tinea, tinea especially, especially in Darwin the tinea was bad. As a matter of fact, we used to, it was my job, and NCOs' jobs, they used to have foot, arm and crotch inspections on your, on your blokes. One morning it was your feet, they'd come out with their boots off, and you'd have to check their feet for tinea. A lot of blokes wouldn't get them treated you know.

40:30 And you'd send them down to the RAP, the Regimental Aid Post, and they'd, they'd put mercurochrome they used to use, red or, or blue mercurochrome. And next morning, it'd be arms, check under their arms. And the other morning it'd be the crotch, and anything you found on them, righto, down you go and get it treated. But, you had all those infections, yeah. And constantly being wet too, you know, your feet was all, well even though

41:00 you carry a spare pair of socks, you could never, you could never get 'em dry. You'd take them off today maybe and you'd put them on damp tomorrow, type of thing, if you wanted to. But often you didn't take the boots off, for those three days that we'd be on patrol up at the Unamiki, you'd leave your boots on and your clothes for three days anyway, you wouldn't take them off, until you got back to base again, and you were able to take them off and have a swim in the river, you know. And you were able to do those things back at base with a bit of immunity, have a

41:30 swim in the creek, but that was the only fun you got there, swimming.

Tape 6

00:31 **Roy, we were talking about the forward post, just after the war.**

Yes.

Was it Lemino Track?

Lemingi.

Lemingi Track, sorry. What were you doing up there?

Well, we were the forward listening post there, we were up there for first contact, in case the Japanese came down. We were in contact with our company through sig lines, and anything untoward was to happen, well we were to signal straight back to our company, the company would then

01:00 signal back to headquarters, which was battalion headquarters, which was back further. So we've got the battalion headquarters back there, your company and then your outpost. And then from your outpost, sometimes you do extra patrolling. But usually the, this was a standing patrol, a standing position, where you just wait for anything to happen. The Nips come down, well that's first contact. Then it

01:30 goes to second contact, back to headquarters, but from that first contact, if anything happened, we have two artillery men there, and they get directly straight back to their battery, and they can call immediately for artillery fire on section 1, 2, 3 whatever they've got on their books, and that's when they can bring fire down in front of you. That gives you that extra protection.

What was your daily routine during those couple of weeks?

Well,

02:00 mainly just sitting around and looking. We did have a little, a little creek used to come out up where we were, it used to just come out of the stonework in the hills, and trickle down, we used to get a lot of fresh water from there. We'd used to go down there, fill our water bottles and fill the other blokes' water bottles, that was just a little job to do, and bring them back full, and, so guys would have their own water bottles, you know, just little things like that. Cleaning your rifles, cleaning your weapons, you're always cleaning your guns, because they were

02:30 always subjected to moisture and things like that. And they, well the barrels rust if you don't keep cleaning them. We used to have a little pull-through with a bit of oil on it, which was always, especially on the rifles, you had a little thing on the end where it was storage for your oil and your little pull through. They used to say "What's the weight on the…?" There was question you used to ask at Neerey Creek, recruits, "What's the weight of a pull-through?"

03:00 They'd say, "Oh a couple of ounces, three ounces." You'd say, "No, the little piece of brass on the end that you put down first in your barrel." That takes the cord down through your barrel, and you pull it through, that's the weight.

Were things winding down at this point?

No, no, not really. When we were first there, not until the, we heard that the war was over, had finished,

03:30 and we still had two weeks to go then. It was, you were on tenterhooks, hoping that nothing would happen, you were a little bit more tenterhooks there, I suppose, thinking well if anything happens now and you get shot, you're a bit unlucky, you know. So, you were hoping that, well you didn't know it was going to be two weeks, but it was two weeks we were there anyway, before we got the all clear.

What was your morale like?

Oh pretty good, yeah; the guys were pretty good at that stage. They knew the war was over, but you had a certain amount of

04:00 anxiety that it wasn't really, you know. You were a forward observation post, and you'd be first hit if anything happened, so. There was just that bit of a doubt, that's all.

Can you describe what was at the forward post?

What was there? Well we had the artillery that was with us, they had their little dugout there, and which was, we had our own little foxholes, you had them camouflaged and that, you had your little two man tent just behind it, type of thing,

04:30 camouflaged, that's where you slept in of nighttime if you got a chance to have a bit of a sleep. And you had your gun, you had your machine gun post forward, and there was always somebody in that, you had to take your two hour shifts on that. While the others were resting or doing something, you still had somebody just a bit forward of you again, like, although you were here, you still had somebody again out forward. Might have been thirty yards forward of you, two guys, and they were

05:00 just first contact again, to let you know to get ready, and that type of thing, you know. So you were always on the alert all the time.

What was the relief when those two weeks were over?

Very, very good, very good. And when they said, well right, it came through on the wireless that we had to return to base, battalion headquarters, we were going to go to Rabaul to take over the surrender from the Japanese, and

05:30 you can pack up, bring everything with you, and return. Through like Bondi trams, as I said before. Couldn't leave there quick enough.

You told us a story earlier about there being some cold beers waiting for you?

Oh yes. Oh that was when we came back from Marupa Mission. Oh no, I beg you pardon, no. That was, on that occasion, yes, we were coming back to base, then we had to come back down the track further, and

06:00 cross the river, the Moondei River, which wasn't very wide at that time, it wasn't flooded, just as well. And the, they met, a ute [utility truck] met us there with a few bottles of beer. As I said, we sat in the water up to here, having a drink, had a bottle each there. We should have had a lot more in storage, but the guys got at it while we were away, yeah.

So you were lucky they saved you any.

They saved us any, yeah.

06:30 So that was that. And we had to demolish our camps, all our tents had to be, that's whenever we moved, all our tents had to be pulled down, folded up, tent pegs all the rest of it, stacked, tied, what have you. You had your own, you know, which was your own tent, usually you had eight guys to a tent. And you, wherever you went, you had to re-erect them, and that. You had your tent, and that was it.

07:00 So we had to do all that, because that had to go with us, we went on the Manora from Wide Bay up to Rabaul.

Just before we take that trip, there must have been a hive of activity going on?

Oh yeah, yeah, everybody was moving, everybody was doing something. Well the whole battalion see, was moving. So that's nearly a thousand guys with all your equipment, all your guns, and that includes all your headquarter company gear and everything,

07:30 it's all got to be squared up and boxed, and what have you, what they have. That all goes with you.

What was morale like then?

Oh it was good, yeah, yeah, everybody's laughing and happy.

Had everyone's moods lifted?

Oh yes, the tension had gone. Nobody's shooting at you, you were able to walk around without having eyes in the back of your head working too, and, you know. No, it was just the, the atmosphere was just starting to

08:00 lift, and well we. I suppose you, you would say we didn't really, or from myself, didn't realise really until we got to Rabaul there, because once we landed there in Rabaul, same old thing. We had to clear a place for ourselves for a while, before we got the Japs doing the work for us.

What was the trip to Rabaul like?

Oh good, that was, it was more or less an overnight trip on the Manora, it was a big ship. And we went aboard

08:30 by barges, and then of course we had to wait till the barges were lowered, and in the water, and then we had to come down the gangplanks. I've got photos in there of us coming down the gangplanks and in the barges, and they ferried us ashore. And of course, when you got ashore, the Japs were driving their own trucks around; they still had their own trucks on the road. They had big compounds built there, which the Japanese were housed in, and they'd built all their own compounds, which they'd been living in. They were just

09:00 there, I mean, only a couple of strands of wire around the place, they weren't going anywhere, they were happy too. I think the war was finished, and we had no trouble at all from them, you know. Except funny looks and all that type of thing. A lot of them had monkeys, too, as pets and we didn't know the difference between the two actually, yes we did.

So were they good losers?

Oh, well it's a case of have to be, yeah. But I think possibly they may have been

09:30 a bit apprehensive of what they might have expected from us. They were very cruel themselves and

were used to being cruel. Cause I'd seen, after we'd been there a while, their officers hitting the NCOs, NCOs slapping the face of the privates. And every time they'd slap somebody, he'd spring to attention and bow, and that was it. You did that to one of our guys, and he'd punch your head off. You don't just slap a guy's face, but that's what they used to do, that

10:00 was their discipline. And no, they. And we always had an interpreter there with us most of the time. But they, a lot of them understood what you were talking about too; quite a few of them knew good English. Especially over at New Ireland, when we went there later on.

What was your attitude towards the Japs?

Oh well, our, ours was, you know, we couldn't forget what they'd done and what have you, and we never got to

10:30 the stage I suppose, where you were falling over them or anything. They, you were pretty abrupt in what you wanted them to do, and that. And through an interpreter you might, or if the officer didn't speak English and couldn't understand, you'd say what you wanted and that type of thing. And they would pass it on, you know, to them. We got those, them eventually, putting up tents and all that type of thing. You did the nana [lost your temper] sometimes with them, one guy would pull and one would push, and the tent wouldn't

11:00 go up properly. You'd say get rid of that fool. Number ten, it was either number ten or number one, I think they learnt that from the natives. Number one was good, and number ten was no good.

Did you see any aggression towards the Japs?

Oh yes, the Indians, of course, in Rabaul, they had, what did they have, 500 miles of tunnels, all throughout the Rabaul area and the mountains, 500

11:30 miles of tunnels they had there, big enough to take trucks, and cars and the likes, themselves, down underneath. They all lived in tunnels around there. There's now, there's, there's, I went back in '83, the, the tunnels are still there, or it was still then in '83, with five barges in it. This was, tunnel was six hundred yards from the water. They used to bring them up on railway lines, drag

12:00 them up with winches on railway lines, and into the tunnels. Because they had a lot of bombardment and that in the early days and that. And there's five barges still in one of those tunnels, all rusting away. And everything they did was in tunnels. And of course, they got the Indians to, to do a lot of that work for them up there. Not so much the natives, so much, but a lot of the Indians. And what we used to have to do, was to try and keep the Indians away from them, because

12:30 where we were, the road was running past us, where we eventually camped, and that was near the water. And outside, the truck stopped one day, the Japanese was driving his own truck, and he allowed the bonnet up and was standing up on the bumper, looking in the engine, and this Indian came and shoved him in the rump, and boom, pushed his head in, and oh, he was all cut and everything. Had to doctor him up a bit, yeah.

13:00 But that's what they used to do if ever they got a chance, they would, they'd slip into them and kick them and punch them. And that's all we had to do, we didn't mind whether they gave them a few extra punches, then we'd stop them. But, no, not a heck of a lot, but that's the only ones. Our blokes didn't. There was one thing we had to do, with our colonel, which I wasn't agreeable. But when we got there and settled down for a while, they formed, we formed, two

13:30 two lots of guards, I was in charge of one lot and a guy, Sergeant, Byron, Byron Smith, was in charge of the other lot. We, that was our guards, and we'd be on duty one time, and they'd be on the other. And they were responsible for the working parties, we used to get 80 guys, Japanese come to our big compound that we had there, this was like a bit marquee, this was later on, after we got

14:00 there. And we'd get 80 guys for working parties. The first thing we did with them when we got them there for working parties, around our area where we were, they used to grow their own peanuts, the first time I knew that peanuts grew under the ground, peanuts and sweet potato and that type of thing. And for fertiliser, they used to use their excreta from their low, little what's her names, but they'd store it in forty four gallon drums.

14:30 And our area where we were was all these forty four gallon drums. And the first thing we got them to do was to dig a big hole beside the drum, tip the drum into it, and then cover it up. That got rid of that. Those were the things we did first with them. And then we'd get them each day, go out with working parties, different guards to do different things, they might be digging out palm trees,

15:00 coconut palms, and that to clear areas, and that. Most of the trees they were digging out were mostly ones that had been blasted and they were only stumps and that. We made a couple of basketball courts, and it, it wasn't big enough to make a footy field up there in Rabaul, though. Because the ground was all pumice, it was pretty loose, all pumice stone there, because it was three volcanoes working when we were there, Vulcan, and those, they went up only four or fives years ago,

15:30 Vulcan went up. They were smoking when we were there. And they were all; you were always looking across at them, because they're the ones that blew up in 1937, killing 500. They were having a big sing-

sing there, and the old volcano went up and killed 500 of them. The blast from the volcano and the gasses and that, killed them. And the whole sea went out too, apparently. Because the whole Rabaul Harbour is

16:00 an extinct volcano. There's no depth to it, actually. It's over 40 odd ships they say are down there somewhere, down in that harbour.

Sounds like a pretty impressive sight?

Oh yes, yes it was. But you see, now it's destroyed it, I said it's about seven or eight years ago, those volcanoes erupted and they wiped out Rabaul, Rabaul was only more or less one street virtually, where the town

16:30 was. That's why originally after 1937, that Rabaul was the capital of New Guinea. And then they shifted all their administration to Port Moresby. And that's where they administer Papua New Guinea from now, Port Moresby, but it was in Rabaul.

So is Rabaul physically changed now?

I haven't been back since '83, but it is now, since that last eruption that they've had, yes, apparently it's completely destroyed the town, but it'll probably come back.

17:00 If there's no more eruptions that is, but there will be nothing in the way of township or anything built again there. They've shifted it further around, Kokopo way, which is around further, it's like this, down there, they, they're built a town further across, rather than right in, inside there. That's where the airport is, right, just in line with the volcanoes there. When I went back there

17:30 in 1983, it was on volcanic alert yellow. We lobbed there on a Saturday, flew there from Lae, the wife and I, and at night, we had an earthquake. And you see, volcanic alert three, well it goes up, yellows the last one. After that shakedown, all the natives, they're all leaving. We're…

You must have been feeling a bit nervous there yourself?

Pardon?

You must have been feeling a bit nervous yourself?

Yes, oh yes, crikey yes. Because we'd been down

18:00 for a Chinese meal, there was a little Chinese place there that opened up, and, that's in '83, and we had a meal. And I bought a carton of stubbies, not stubbies, cans of drink, beer there. Carried them back, and we were renting an old mission house that was there, was still there. We were in the second storey of that, and when the whole thing started shaking, I thought, "Crikey, I've had too much of that grog already."

18:30 So that was all, that was the only shake we had. And that was on the Saturday night and we were leaving on the Tuesday, you know, you know, I was glad to get out of there on Tuesday, because we'd hired a car too. And we were up the, right up the end of Rabaul Harbour here, where the volcanoes are, and to get out of it, you've got to go right around like here, you know. We were near the airport we were.

Sounds like an anxious couple of days?

Yeah, it was, yeah.

Why had you chosen to go

19:00 **back for?**

Oh, because my son and his wife were working in, in Lae at the University there. She was teaching English and he was teaching surveying and cartography. And we stayed with them for a month. And while we were there, we caught a little boat called the Beau Maris, it's a big barge that goes. Oh no, we flew up there

19:30 that's right, and we got the Beau Maris back. The Beau Maris is like a big barge that goes from Lae to Rabaul, and it comes back the other side of the island and delivers stores and people and all that thing. When we left on the Tuesday, nearly half the population of the natives left to, cause they got off at different places going back down to Lae again, at the different, where they live and that, they were getting out of the place, see, in case it really went up. So.

Did you attempt to

20:00 **visit any of the places that you remembered from your first visit to Rabaul?**

Oh yes, went back to my old, where we first landed. That was our company and our battalion headquarters there, and where my company was. We had a bell there, a big bell that we used to use it for mess parades, ring it. The Japanese apparently had it, and used it for air-raid sirens, and that. Anyway, when I went back in '83,

20:30 where our possie was, where our camp was, there were, it, they'd rebuilt a church there. And I saw the father in the church, and I had a photo of this bell, and I lost it when I fell in the water down at naval base. Anyway, but, and I showed it to him, I said, "This bell, Father." I said, "That's not the one you've got in the front there." I said, "This bell was here outside.

21:00 The church wasn't here then, of course." I said, "It was in this position when I was here in '46." And he said, "It's still here." He said, "It's up in the belfry." And he got two of the Kanakas to take me up into the belfry, and sure enough, here's the bell sitting up in there. And I said, "Here's a photo of it." and I showed the boys, they were mystified. I, marched up along this place, '45, '46,

21:30 I spoke a bit of pidgin English in those days, you could talk to them.

Do you remember a bit of that pidgin English?

Oh a certain amount of it yeah, they call aeroplanes 'big fellas balleuf', you now, balleuf is aeroplane. You say well, one of the boys used to say, "Big fellas balleuf, he come along, he stop along on top," that means he fly. "Japan man, him he come along," he said. "He drop kior all the same dynamite." Well kior all the same dynamite, dropped a

22:00 bomb. He said, "Kanaka boy come frightened, he pull em out cock but I'm infallic and he pitty pit all the time." That was a saying. But oh yes, a lot of their pidgin English talk, I knew.

Did you have a bit of fun with them?

Oh yes, yeah, they were very. Well the Kanaka, the Kanaka people, they were, they were, even the blokes they wouldn't bathe in front of you in the nude, they always, or even the Japanese for that matter,

22:30 they used to tuck everything behind them, and that, like that, and cross their legs and that. Well the ones we had in the compound, we used to let them go down each night after they'd worked around, and let them have a swim and that.

Sorry, is that the Japanese or the Kanakas?

Well, the Kanakas. Well, when we, we didn't have that many in Rabaul with us there. But no they, they weren't in town, what you might say, mainly there. They were,

23:00 more or less back out, went back to their villages and that, after the war finished. Cause that's where they, they couldn't grow much in Rabaul there, they had their gardens and all that up in the mountains and everything, out in the mountains and that, that's where they lived.

So you're, you're saying that the Japanese were pretty modest when you had them there?

Yeah, yeah, that's right, yeah. But our colonel, every time we got a new lot of aides to work, we'd have to bring the commander of them, whoever he

23:30 was, a major or that, and take him up to our colonel. And he had an interpreter with him, we'd have to stand the Japanese in front of his tent, outside, and give him a shove. So that when he got through, he retained himself and he'd come to attention, and he'd have to bow. But I didn't like doing that, but that's what our colonel insisted, that was the only thing, was to, don't just

24:00 walk him in, just shove him in and you say, "Right, you've been spoken to now." And he'd have an interpreter there, and the he'd tell him what was required of him and his men while he was there, and what duties they would be, to do, and he'd be answerable and that type of thing.

Were they pretty disciplined?

Oh yes, yeah, oh they did, they did what they were told by their own officers, and us too. Because we, we would go through their guys, yes. Anything as I say, they did something derogatory, you told them,

24:30 he'd slap their face, yes. Well we had one bloke, Rogers his name was, he was a bit hot-headed bloke. He had a, some guys, he was bringing down bamboos down from the hill down below. And this officer, anyway one lot of bamboos he, they didn't bring down, it was their last trip for the day. And he went crook at them, and the officer laughed, and old Rogers, he punched him. The bloke was wearing glasses, too. Anyway, I was in charge of the guards

25:00 that day, and the, the major in charge of him came up to me and apologised to me for the actions, for the actions of his officer, he should have known better, and, and that. And of course, I got onto the, the guy that was in charge of him, Rogers, and I asked him what had happened. And he told me. And I said, "Why did you hit him?" And he said, "Well, he laughed at me." I said, "Well, he was only smiling." So that didn't suit Rogers, so he swiped him. But you weren't allowed to, you weren't allowed to brutalise them at all, you couldn't take

25:30 anything off them, you couldn't take their fountain pens or anything. They had a lot of fountain pens and watches and things, which they'd probably taken off other people and that, a lot of them too. But what we used to do, get the old, get the old butts on the back, cut the back off them and put the tobacco in the tins and swap them, for maybe a watch or a fountain pen. We wouldn't give them a fag, a smoke, they'd be dying for a cigarette, you'd light one and smoke a little bit and then chuck it on the

26:00 ground, I wouldn't hand it to them, and then they'd go and pick it up and pass it around to each one, have a, and do that, you know. No, we didn't hand it to them, we didn't do that.

What about bad mouthing, would they bad mouth?

No, not really, no. Us to them, you mean?

Yes.

No, not really. Probably under your breath and a few things you might have said, they wouldn't understand you anyway, half of them, you know. You could call them what you like and they'd laugh and bow their head, and think you were giving them a compliment.

26:30 **So considering the atrocities they'd committed, they were treated very respectfully?**

They were, oh yes. I think they might have been a bit, you know, stunned with the fact that we weren't aggressive or anything. Because they were always told, and we were told that they, they were told, that if the Australians got them, they'd cut their hearts out and they did all this, and cut their throats, we were those type of persons, you see. And I think they were a bit relieved to think that they didn't get that treatment at all.

27:00 **Who had told them that?**

What?

Who had told them that the Australians were that brutal?

Oh their own officers, and people. This was the messages that we used to get that their officers used to tell them that was happening. Apparently some of the POWs and that had, had told them, or something. But, no, actually, they were treated well. And over on New Ireland, like from Rabaul after a while working there for a while, getting these things done,

27:30 we then, a group of us moved over to New Ireland, which was another island the other side of Rabaul Harbour, around, quite a big island there. We were at the Lemingi at the bottom end, that was where our company headquarters was. And there was Lemingi, another place up further, and then there was Kavieng. Kavieng was where the big naval base was during the war

28:00 on New Ireland, that's where all their naval forces were. And Mat and I, we used to go up there and get the Japanese, they all had all their weapons, all their rifles and everything, were all stacked and bundled, which they were informed they had to do. Then we'd get them to, they'd load them onto trucks, take them down to the barges, load them onto the barges and then we'd go out into the big bay,

28:30 when we'd get so far out, over the side, all the rifles, all the guns and everything. Their tanks, get them on the edge of the cliffs there, some of them, get another one behind them and push them over. Up at Kavieng, I wasn't up there, our other platoon was up there. They'd get them to drive them out onto the reefs, the tanks, and the guy would jump out and they'd keep going, and over the edge of the reef and 'goggle, goggle', to get rid of them. The guns were breached, the engineers would put charges in the

29:00 guns and breach them and fracture them, so they couldn't be used again. All the scrap metal merchants came in, in the finish, I suppose, after we left the bay.

Did they?

Yeah, well yeah, there was a lot of that. But where we were at Lemingi, the, it was the barge, it was where the barges used to come from Rabaul, to pick up, to pick the remnants of those up there, that's why we were there too, to see that those guys were going back on the barges. Organising the, our own guys were doing it all, driving the barges and loading them on, and they were

29:30 taking them back to Rabaul where they were being stored in their big compounds there, for their, ready for their departure back to Japan.

What were those compounds like?

Oh, big, great big long huts they were, with thatched roofs and everything, and more or less wooden beds in, or you know, type of beds in, what they used to sleep on, they didn't sleep on much. Big long, all we had to do, we just had to leave them there, they weren't going anywhere, they were just waiting to,

30:00 to go home themselves.

How were they fed and -

Oh, that was their trouble. That was. Well, they were given rice and things like that, they, that's about all they were given. Basic rice and things like that. They had some themselves, but not a lot. See that was one of their problems there, they were isolated there, as I said before. They weren't getting any outside assistance because they were blockaded from the sea, see. So whatever they used was, whatever they had,

30:30 whatever they got. And they got, they captured a lot when they first captured Rabaul too, because there

was hundreds and hundreds of tonnes of rice and that stored there. I forget how many thousands of bottles of beer was there when they captured Rabaul.

Was this Japan beer?

No, Australian beer. Yeah. Oh yeah. They, they did all right then, but over the years, of course, as I said, there in the mountains and that, they had to grow their own tucker, they used to grow these sweet

31:00 potato and all that type of thing. They'd get the, the Kanakas to do the growing and all that, as well, they used to just get in from their gardens when they wanted it. But no, at New Ireland there, as I say, it was a bit of an eye opener there, having to get all this stuff destroyed, and loaded onto the barges and just dumped. And it was there that I met these two guys, called, I called one Pinocchio and one Ned Kelly. They used to, we used to get

31:30 some come up to our actual camp where we were every morning, we'd get about six or seven of them. They'd do our washing, we'd leave our boots and all the boot polish and everything outside, and they'd polish our boots, and they'd wash the clothes, dry them and fold them up, and they'd put them at the end of the bunks at the end of the bed, and we'd pick our own out, cause we had our names on a lot of them, we knew it. Yeah, got them to do all that sort of work. And then in the cookhouse, used to get them to clean all the old dishes and

32:00 all the pots and pans in the cookhouse. They did all that, because what was over, they, we didn't want, they took it home and ate it anyway. They did all right on that score.

With all the dumping of the old equipment, it sounds like an incredible amount of waste?

Oh it was, yeah. Well see, the same with all Australian equipment and everything, most of it was lend lease, all the wagons and everything, they all had to be destroyed and that, they couldn't be used. They, they were all bought on lend lease, lease basis, and they just couldn't

32:30 be kept and used, they just had to be destroyed.

Can you explain the lend lease basis?

Well not completely, I don't know the full extent of it. But when I say lend lease, they lend it to you and you lease it for a certain amount of time. But when it's finished, you give it back or destroy it, you just don't keep it and use it. That's the way I interpreted it, lend lease, you know, and that, that was the idea of it, none of it was never taken back home like, they never loaded it on ships and took it back to Australia.

33:00 Most of it was destroyed, except maybe our own tanks, we didn't have many of those over in New Guinea. You couldn't drive them there much, there wasn't enough room, you'd get bogged too quick.

Was there much souveniring going on, Roy?

Oh yes, yes. Quite a bit in the tunnels and that, there was a lot of rifles and things like that left in the tunnels. And a lot of the navy boys when they came in, they would wander through and go up behind us where we were, were was a lot of tunnels. They used to go in wandering through there, and

33:30 they'd pick up these rifles and that. They weren't supposed to, but they'd have them tucked down their strides and they'd be walking stiff legged back to their boat, and that type of thing. Yeah, but most of their stuff was stockpiled and that. And personal gear they had, well, we didn't take that off them and that. It was only mainly their army equipment that was taken off them.

What other items were popular?

Well, nothing really, I suppose. A Japanese sword

34:00 occasionally. Well mine, our first mob that went over to New Ireland bought a lot of this back with them, and we had first choice of it, you know, they weren't captured or anything, it, it was handed in. I was fortunate, one of the boys bought me back the bugle and the sword for me, and a dagger I had, and a pair of binoculars. But you had to get an intelligence 'okay' for you to bring it home though, which I've still got in there, the intelligence,

34:30 the sign that I could take home. You weren't allowed to bring home any guns, any of their guns. Over in New Ireland, I had to, I had ten to dispose of, big German Lugers in the big pouches. And I thought, God, because we had a boat over there, it was a lifeboat actually off a ship. It was double pointed end. We had an outboard motor there too that we'd souvenired, and one of the guys built a little

35:00 square on the back with a little outboard fitted on and that. Anyway, the lieut said to me, "Roy," he said, "we've got to dump them." H said, "Take the boat out." He said, "Get a couple of guys," he said, "and dump those Lugers, will you?" So I said, "Gee, yeah, right-o." So I said to one of the boys, "Okay," I said, "we'll chuck a couple of bricks, stones in there, in the boat there too, will you." He said, "Why?" I said, "I'll show you when we get out there." So I did that.

35:30 So we took the Lugers out on the way out, and put them in the buckets, and the, the stones, unbeknown, I should have woken up. They were pumice stones, and they float see. Put them in, put them in the pouches, and when we got out, threw the pouches out, you know, and the darn things were

floating on the top of the water. But after a while, the pouches started to fill with water a bit, and then they gradually went under. And I said, “Oh, thank goodness for that.” And when I came in, I said, “We’ll leave those in there.” and

36:00 which we did. And then later on went down and got them, and dished them around. I had one myself, and all the other boys took one each. But I never ever got it home, as a matter of fact. When I got back to Rabaul, I sold it to, to a guy for a dozen bottles of beer, no, ten dollars, ten pounds I got for it, that’s right, ten pounds I got for it. And I gave the ten pounds for a dozen of bottles of beer off one of the guys who didn’t drink.

They’re meant to be beautiful handgun

36:30 **aren’t they?**

Oh yes, big, they’re a big, you know, a big German Luger, you know, they’re a beauty. But I had another little one, it was a 32 automatic, fitted in the palm of your hand like that. And like a dill, I swapped that on the way home, onboard the ship coming home with a, one of the Yankee sailors onboard for a carton of smokes, Camel cigarettes, yes. But it was, I thought well, I, they reckoned

37:00 they were searching everybody back in Australia, and anybody who had it, but they didn’t search us when we come back, anyway, so I could have bought it back. But I only had, I had about five bullets for this little one, but I had about ten bullets originally, but firing it you couldn’t hit this wall if you fired it from here, that small, it was so inaccurate, you’d have to hold it up to your head to shoot yourself. But yes, those little things. But that was a couple of things that happened over there. But we just…

Just…

Go on.

What were you going to say?

37:30 We got a text over there, to arrest a sergeant so and so. So my lieut had gone back to Rabaul and left me in charge. And so my job was each morning go down to the compound, I’d take, we had an air force guy who was an interpreter, Japanese interpreter, I’d take him with me, and I’d inspect the camp. And we used to have a burn, bash and bury thing, you burn, you get a tin, you burn it first, you bash it, crush it and you bury it.

38:00 That was a, excuse me, that was for against malaria. So any tins that get water in them, malaria, the mosquitoes breed in it, and you’ve got, next thing you’ve got more mosquitoes and more malaria. So it was burn, bash and bury. So I used to go round the camp and any tins and things, I’d say to the interpreter, “Tell them to get rid of all that, bury this and that.” and they’d be running around, like the proverbial blue bum flies. And anyway, we got this text, arrest sergeant so-and-so.

38:30 He, he was a member of their own military police; they’re the only ones that kept their weapons. Anyway, we went down and saw the, the major this day, and asked about him and he said, “Yes, he’s here now, he’s ready to go back to Rabaul, he’s in the camp now, that sergeant.” So I don’t know whether somebody had said he’s on his way back from over there or not, but they were holding war crimes in Rabaul then, and they were hanging them. They didn’t hang

39:00 too many. So I went down there, and this, here’s this sergeant, I said, “We want to put him under arrest, and when he goes on the barges, he’ll be kept under arrest and handed over to the authorities when you get over to Rabaul, it’s all been arranged over there, when you get there, we’ve got the barge number and what have you, and he knows what he’s got to do.” And this bloke, oh, he went white. They’re yellow usually, but this guy went white. And his own

39:30 blokes, they had to take him, they got and they gave him a rough old treatment, grabbed him, dragged him out, the poor cow, he, I felt a bit sorry for him, as I looked at him. But he was up for atrocities against the Chinese. And the Chinese were just coming back to there, too. That was one of the things I had to do too. Most of them were up at the Matani [?], that’s where they lived, and they were coming back from Rabaul, because they were prisoners of war, virtually in

40:00 Rabaul, they, they were in camps and missions down further, out of Rabaul. And they were coming back and being transported back to New Ireland again, and back to their own villages. We went down one day, and had dinner with their, one of their families, you know. I used to go up, although I was based at Lemingi at the bottom, I used to go up and, and when anybody came, I used to drive the truck sometimes, you know. And the trucks there, used to, well it had no brakes, darn thing,

40:30 used to have to get the guys to put water in the master cylinders until the brakes worked, water compressed in the cylinders, they weren’t too good, but they worked something, because they didn’t have much gear over there. But yeah, that’s one of the jobs we did there. When we came back, that boat I was talking about, we got the barge, the guys said, “Well okay, we’re going, we’ve got our own.” Well of course, the Americans were driving the barge, or

41:00 our Australians were driving the barges for us, and we towed it back to Rabaul, and we had a big, when we got to Duke of York Island, which is just out of Rabaul, the guys there had a big outboard, oh it was a top one, it was about this, you know, I forget what the horsepower was, it was about a hundred and twenty or something. And we took that back with us. And we used to have it parked near where our

camp was. And on Sundays, we'd take a burn around the harbour in it, and that. And this day the

41:30 Water Police, our own Military Water Police, called in, pulled up as we came in and said, "Where did you get the boat motor?" I said, "We brought it back from New Ireland with us." "You can't have it." "You can't have what?" He says, "You can't have the motor, you can have the boat." We said, "Well, the boat's no good without the motor." He said, "Well, that's your fault." They said, "We'll take the motor," so one of the guys took the motor off, and they took the motor. And when they were backing out,

42:00 I kicked the boat out and said, "Here, you might as well have this too!"

Tape 7

00:32 **You were just saying that you had to have some fun sometimes, so you were talking about a bit of a fishing expedition?**

Yes, that was when we were done at Rabaul, at Jacquinot Bay, yeah, when we made this lakatoi [canoe] as we called them then. And we'd go out on Sunday morning, and we used to, well sometimes we used the grenade, other times we used a small stick of, piece of gelignite. And well

01:00 we, you'd see the fish breaking the water up on the reefs, you know, and then often we'd call in at the native camp and pick up a couple of boys, and they'd come out with us. Cause if we blew them in deep water, we used to send them down to get them. Anyway, this morning, we went down there, and there, what we took which we thought was gelly [gelignite], was some stuff called Quarry Wannabell [? phonetic], which was an explosive the same as gelignite, but unbeknown

01:30 to us, it floated. And this is Sunday morning, you see, and everything's quiet. And we, we tossed it where the fish were, you know, 'boom!' on top of the water, and gee, well the people back at the camp, everybody back at the camp, when they heard it, they reckoned they thought the Japs had dropped a bomb. This is before we went up there. We paddled like mad for the shore and got underneath the trees on the bank there. But we used to get a lot of fish, that was one funny incident.

02:00 Then we lost the canoe, we used to patrol right around the coast, to a river, I forget the name of it. The, our captain, Captain Geek [?] his name was, he had an idea of getting our stores, instead of carrying them, to take them on our lakatoi and get a couple of guys to row them across. But they, the trouble was, instead of following the shoreline round, they cut across all right, but they had

02:30 that much weight on it, and the waves got them out there, and it swamped the boat. They were lucky, one of them swum ashore, and the other one still clung to the canoe, and just before dark, they happened to send a barge out, and they happened to find this guy, he was still clinging to the thing. Of course, there was Noeys [Noah's Arks – sharks] around there too, you know. But no, no, we got him, but that was the end of the, the lakatoi, she's gone, she might still be floating around there. But,

03:00 no, that was pretty good. I used to have a thing with one of the native boys down there too, this is getting away from New Britain, of course, I mean New Ireland. I used to have to take the guys on patrol through, and give them action on first contact and what have you. And this boy, at a native village, he used to call me Master Oose, he couldn't say Master Walsh, it was Master Oose, and Turaloi was his name. And

03:30 I used to say, I used to get him to get the coconuts, the green coconuts and leave them at the bottom of the trees. Because when I got that far with me guys, it was more or less a turning point to come back. We'd cut the tops off with the machetes, and drink the milk, you know. But then I would take cotton and needles and things like that, and leave it in its place, you know, it was a swap job. And that was pretty good too. He got something,

04:00 and we got something.

Did you get on well with the natives?

Oh yes, they were good, when we did come into contact. Not a great deal of contact with them, actually. They did all our carrying and all that type of thing, yeah. But they didn't live with you or anything like that, they just did their job. Oh no, they're very friendly people, they laugh all the time, you know. So they're pretty good, they take a joke. But then, they, I was blonde then, believe it or not, and they loved, they loved blonde hair.

04:30 And my hair was number one. Master hair number one. And what they used to do, they had the, New Guinea had these store places there, NGIB, New Guinea Infantry Battalion stores, and they used to sell these guys, what do you call it, that dyes your hair,

Bleach?

It wasn't called bleach in those days, something like bleach,

Peroxide?

Peroxide in bottles,

05:00 this peroxide, and they used to put it on their hair, trying to make their hair go white. And they used to all put flour and all that sort of stuff in their hair to make it, they had a beautiful head of hair, all that little sort of curly stuff. But no, they used to want to make their hair white. So, but outside the ANGAU [Australia and New Guinea Administrative Unit], was the name of the stores, ANGAU stores, they had great big piles of these peroxide bottles outside, the empty bottles where they'd bring them back and toss them on the fire. They must have made a lot of money out of them, or kina [local currency], or whatever they charged them

05:30 in those days, I don't know what it was. But a lot of them got paid in those things, they paid them in salt and those type of things, that was more beneficial to them. Well they had nowhere to spend money or anything like that, you know, it was a trade type of thing. In New Guinea proper, they did a lot of that with their carriers that they had there, a lot of, they had to use a lot of carriers over there, over the mountains there. And they paid them in salt, and half a pound of salt for a days work, was good for them, they,

06:00 they loved that. Yes, anyway, and as far back as, going to New Ireland again there, well most of our work was nearly done there. And, or as far as, when I say nearly done, there was still a lot of dumping and blowing up to do, but we, we spent our time there. So we returned, we took the boat, as I said back to Rabaul, and oh time was getting by there, the days were going past. And we were

06:30 into the New Year, and.

How did you celebrate the New Year?

Oh, I don't know, very sparsely I think. Happy New Year and that was about it, yeah.

I just thought there might have been an extra bit of celebration, considering the war?

Oh, we might have had, we might have had an extra bit of beer ration, or something like that, I think. We never had much. Our food started to improve there. We, we started to get supplies coming in; they were able to fly supplies in. And better, a bit better food, and that type of thing.

07:00 And we used to bargain with the natives too for fruits and veggies and that, outside the Q store [Quartermaster's Store], there. They used to come and bring them there, and lay them out on the ground, bananas and all that type of thing, and we'd swap things for them, and give them money, their money. We had a bit of that at that time; I forget what their money was there, kina or something. No it was mostly on a trade, barter basis. One Jap there too, he died,

07:30 digging one of our big latrines there. My guys were on guard actually, or at least one of them, and they were organising the digging, and the side fell in, and it trapped him, and he was... When I got there, they were slowly digging him out. Like if it had been our blokes, they'd be digging frantically. But they were digging a shovelful and putting it there; another bloke would dig it there and put it there. And when they got to him, he was leaning against the side of the pit, and the force of it all,

08:00 his hand had broken the, the actual top off the shovel. Well you know how thick a shovel handle is, and that. See it was all broken off. They got him out and oh, they were thumping him and everything, they had him in a little hut there, and but he didn't revive unfortunately, him bugger up finish, so.

Bugger up finish?

Yeah, that's what their natives used to say, "Him bugger up finish." yeah, that's it's, he's had it, he's gone.

08:30 **Julian actually wanted to ask, what sort of arms did the Japanese have?**

Well they had their rifles; they had their machine guns, the same as we had. We had our Bren guns, they had their crackerjack guns there, and they had small arms, like we did, you know, side arms and that, mainly rifles. They had long, very long thin barrelled rifles they had, pretty accurate shots too,

09:00 their rifles and that. But we had the old .303, which was a much heavier weapon to handle. And they had their woodpeckers, they called their, their machine guns, which was similar to our LMG [light machine gun] machine gun. That's what the 2/4th Machine Gunners had, actually the 2/4th Machine Gunners landed in Singapore without their guns, because the ships turned back. They used the 2/3rd Machine Gunners,

09:30 machine guns. We finished up with some of their machine guns back in Darwin, and actually we took some of their, our machine gunners, we had a machine gunners platoon, they, they used those machine guns in, in New Britain. So they finished up getting there after all, with our, our crowd. No, their weapons were more or less similar to ours.

Was it pretty even as far as that was concerned?

Oh yes, yeah. It would have been nice to have some of the modern weapons they've got today,

10:00 what these guys have got to fire. But you see, the point was no matter what weapons you had, there was a problem, you had to carry your ammunition. You see with a Bren gun in a section, each, you've got a

platoon, and my platoon was 16 Platoon, and in a platoon you've got three sections. Your corporal in charge, and you've got the rest of your men, nine, there's usually ten of you. And they're in bunches of threes, so ten, there's you yourself, then the others are three lots of three.

10:30 And each of those had an Owen gun and a Bren gun, and the others were riflemen. But everybody carried in their pouches extra magazines for your automatic weapons, for the Bren gun. Because the Bren gunner and his offsider couldn't carry it all, so you carried the extra magazines for the… Magazines used to hold twenty-five .303 rounds. Our original weapons,

11:00 I told you earlier in the piece, were the twenty, the Thompson sub machine gun. They hold fifty rounds, they were forty-five, they were a forty-five slug, they were real heavy, they were, to carry.

Still with what you were carrying, you were pretty weighed down?

Oh yeah, most of the time, yeah, yeah, you always carried down. Because you always took turns, on marches and things like that, especially in the Northern Territory and everywhere, took turns on carrying the gun. You passed the gun down the line, and everybody had their

11:30 turn of carrying it, because it's the heaviest weapon. Everybody else had the Owen gun, you had a sling and that was over your shoulder, so it was easy to carry. But, but your Bren gun, the machine gunners and that, of course, they, they all took the gun apart, they took the barrel apart, and, and the stand and that apart from it. And everybody carried within the section carried a certain portion of it. You, mortars were the same, mortars had a base plate, you know, with a heavy plate, and they had

12:00 a barrel, everybody carried a portion of it. That's where the Japanese got caught up on the Kokoda Trail, although they had mountain guns. They used to take the wheels off them, and they would manhandle their mountain gun wheels and the gun. And of course, the big shells they used to fire too were all heavy ammunition, so they had to carry quite a lot of gear too. So they, you know,

12:30 well they had a lot more men than we had to carry them, too.

On average, how much weight are you carrying when you're out on patrol?

Well I suppose, most times, it all depends what you're on. On our, that patrol that I did mainly, that four day patrol there, well we were pretty heavy laden there, because we carried a lot of extra ammunition on that one, because we were a fighting patrol as well as a reconnaissance patrol. Well if you're a reconnaissance patrol, you might travel lightly where you don't fight, you just reconnoitre,

13:00 find the situation, if anything happens, you get out. But if you're a fighting patrol, you fight, fight out as much as you can, and then you've got to take that extra ammunition and get, get the stuff to do it with. But that's, that's quite a problem. I suppose, you'd be carrying, at the best of times, you'd be carrying eighty pounds of gear all the time.

That's a lot.

Yeah, but you'd only have half a blanket, anyway you carried, you didn't, you weren't any more than half a blanket. That wasn't used half the time. A spare pair of boots if you were lucky, a pair of

13:30 socks, a pair of underdaks [underpants] or something. Though you wore them for days. You got a spell somewhere in a creek or a river, well you washed them. But, no you were pretty heavy laden down. Especially in Australia, up in the Northern Territory and, and that. You had packs, and you were, apart from your packs, you had side, you had your side packs too, which you carried the gear in, the extra gear in that. You had your rifle, you had your

14:00 bayonet and scabbard and all that type of thing. The boots were heavy too, those heavy boots, they were pretty heavy to trudge along.

Would that be one of the most difficult elements, going on a long patrol and then having to carry that much weight?

Oh yeah, yeah. Well you see, in, in, on the Kokoda Trail they were able to hire the natives there that did a lot of the carrying of their ammunition and that. Even the, even the Meris [indigenous women], the ladies, they did a lot the

14:30 carrying too, they used to carry it on their heads, you know. But they, they're fleet footed, you know, they knew how to handle the tracks and all that. But, and they used to bring in, carry the stretcher bearers and all that type of thing, and… They were very careful, no; they did a heck of a lot of work. They had their traitors amongst them too, a lot of them betrayed Australians and that to the Japs in the early parts and that. But a lot of them were dealt with by their own guys; a lot of them were shot by our guys, too.

15:00 But, because they were also in links, keeping in with the Japanese too, on their side of it. But the majority of them, they were, they were with us. Because you see, New Guinea and New Ireland, New Britain were Australian mandated territories. Australia, see when they attacked New Britain and, and New Guinea, they were virtually attacking Australia. See people say Australia was never attacked. But the first time they attacked New Britain, they,

15:30 they attacked Australia, because it was an Australian mandated territory. It was administered by

Australia. See it was only handed back to them, I mean, so many years after the war, which they administer themselves, cause they can't administer themselves, because they're too corrupt. They, oh yeah, they, everything's on a payback system in New Guinea. They, the police, they'll arrest somebody put them in the front door, let them out the back door, otherwise their family will come back and belt them up

16:00 or do something. The worst thing you could do is kill one of their pigs or something, because they'd kill you if you happened to kill one of their pigs.

When the war crimes trials were happening in Rabaul, did you get to see any of that?

No, no, no, never saw any of that. They built special scaffolds and they got in special people. I think they, they built scaffolds, I think in Australia, and transported them there. As I said earlier, they, they hung I think about

16:30 four or five, and then, I mentioned that coal deal coming up and things were starting. And then the, they were told, there would be no more hangings and there were a lot of people who then got away with their war crimes. They start cutting out the tribunals and things they had to find these people guilty. And I did read there, there was one captain of a ship that was there,

17:00 once, he was being transported back to Japan, which they were doing with them all from there. Gradually putting them on their ships and sending them back to Japan. As soon as he got onboard his ship, he became captain of the ship, you know, as free as the breeze. But.

So in, in your opinion that was, the actual war crimes trials in Rabaul, were handled badly by the Australian government?

Yes, they were handled badly, yes there were never carried right through to the fullest. Not like, say the German

17:30 ones, the Nuremberg trials and all those, they, they were all difficult, and they were. But they, they petered out too, but they got a lot more of those people. But with the Japanese, well a lot of Japanese would have got away with a lot more things that they weren't reported, and not everybody knew everybody. See the guys from, that were captured in Singapore, would know more about them, because they were three and a half years captive there, you see. And they had to work on the Burma Railway and, and they

18:00 were treated pretty badly there. The same as over in Milne Bay, where I told you where they were doing all those atrocities there. A pregnant women stabbed with a, straight through her and the baby and all, into the ground. They found them laying around with their rifles still through them. Using our rifles, sometimes to do it with. They had longer bayonets than theirs. All that type of thing.

Quite appalling.

Well they had a special force there, and they, they had a lot of Koreans working for them, the Japanese too, and the

18:30 Koreans were much more cruel, apparently, than the ordinary Japs. See the Japs give them the Tols, coolies most of them, you know, they're all three cents short of a dollar and odd sort of things.

With the POWs that you saw that were Japs, did you see a difference between like one sort of Japanese and another sort of Japanese, or were they all the same?

Oh well, some wore glasses and some didn't. Some were tall and some were fat and some were

19:00 thin, and some were. Oh, when we first got there, when we used to go round the compounds, they'd just sit there and look at you, you know, with a surly sort of a face, they wouldn't be waving hello or goodbye or anything like that. And you'd go past, and lift your arm or something and just keep going type of thing. But others, we, ones we had in the working parties and that, they, they were all

19:30 pretty happy go lucky, you know. I think, as I said, a lot of more younger, younger fellows too, you know, they weren't all old blokes, they were young blokes, they were happy the war had finished and they were going home too, I suppose, eventually.

I'm just wondering if you had any sort of quandary about the fact that some of these Japanese blokes who were on the working party, seemed to be normal kind of blokes. But also in the back of your mind, you've heard about a lot of the Japanese atrocities that had gone on. Did you have a problem with matching up those two things?

No, no,

20:00 I wasn't a psychologist; I just took them as they came.

Fair enough.

Yes.

I was going to ask you about, you were guarding the AGH there for a while?

Yes, that's at Kali Plantation there, yeah.

What was that area like, that actual hospital?

Oh well, it was, we went right, actually around the hospital, that was

20:30 further back down, like Kali Plantation was here, our company was there, like a forward protection post, and they were further back down. We didn't have anything much to do with them really, we weren't there for a long time, actually, either, on Kali, before we moved across further, as I said to, over to take over the forward positions there, Marupa Mission, and those places.

I was just wondering if you had any interaction with anybody over there at the AGH?

You mean meet any of the nurses?

21:00 **Yes, exactly.**

No, no, no.

Did you think about it?

No, no, no, didn't worry us. Didn't know they were there, they were probably. Well, there probably would have been nurses there, and that from, captured ones and that, I suppose, that were. No, no, they'd be, they were ours that would have been there. Cause they'd moved up with the first lot. It wasn't a big hospital; it wasn't a big area, because there wasn't much fighting going on there.

21:30 They would have come up from, actually, Jacquinot Bay was the mainstay down there for them, where they were shifted back too. Or they never remained there long; they were flown back either to Lae or to Brisbane.

I'm just considering the fact that you spent a lot of time out there without any female company whatsoever.

Yeah.

Was that, was that difficult?

No, not all, no.

Just didn't think about it?

No. Didn't see, oh well you'd see the Meris now and again, when you, after the war and that, but no, didn't really think. Some of them looked good,

22:00 and some looked ugly. That's a pretty leading question, isn't it?

Yes it is.

I don't know what the other boys thought, but I was all right.

When, or a few tapes ago, you mentioned that in some of the battles, you thought the Japs were pretty silly. Did you actually think that they were

22:30 **lesser soldiers than yourselves?**

No, no, no. We knew that they were fanatical, they'd fight to the finish, yeah, yeah, they did what they were told, we knew that. They'd, they'd feign death and lay there with a grenade underneath them, that was all the things they used to do, and that type of thing. You couldn't trust them, no. No, they, they were told to do something and that they did it, and that was it.

Sounds like that breeds a certain amount of respect in your mind.

23:00 Oh yes, well in one instance, I found out after the war, how their mateship is. When I went to Lae in '83, I met a, a guy who was a philanthropist, I think that's what they call him.

A philanthropist.

Yeah. And I met this guy, and he actually stayed there through the war, the Japs left him alone this fellow, he got on all right with them in Lae. And he was telling me a story about a doctor that was there. The doctor was telling him that

23:30 this Japanese fellow had lost both his legs, had his legs blown off and he was in Lae. And when the Japanese were driven out of Lae, and went up to Madang, they got out and went through the mountains up to Madang, a lot of them died of cold, actually, up in the mountains. It was too cold, and believe it or not, and died

24:00 of the cold and lack of food and malnutrition and that, cause I mentioned about them not being able to get supplies over there either. And he said when he got up there; he said this guy without any legs was there. He said there's only one way he got there, he was carried there by his mates. So they had a, I would say, the same as us, they had their mates and their friendships,

24:30 you know. And yet in the battles and that around Buna and Gona, they used their own dead mates, because they were dead. So they used them in the revetments for, for protection and that type of thing, because they had no other thing to use, and packed them with mud and that type of thing, you know, and palms and that type of thing.

Doesn't that horrify you?

What?

Using your mates, as...

Well, well, yeah, we wouldn't do it with our blokes, no, no. Our blokes would be buried

25:00 in a dignified manner. But no, no to them, that was it, they were dead, and that was protection for them. As I mentioned, they were cannibals there, there too. They were, they landed there, I forget, they had about three hundred horses too; I think, when they landed there. And they ate all their horses eventually. I mentioned that General Horii, he, he used to sit on his white horse. I don't know what happened to his white horse in the finish, they probably finished up, making white horse whiskey out of it, I think they, they probably ate that too.

25:30 But no, they were, I mentioned about them, they came across the camps there, where they had the hands in there still cooking, where they were eating them. They were eating strips off their own people, they were that starving. You know, when you're starving you're frantic, aren't you. So that's what they did. Whether they were their mates or not, I couldn't imagine me starving, and cutting the rump off me old mate, and saying well here are mate. But, it has been done.

Sure.

Not by our blokes, though, not to my knowledge, no. No they, well

26:00 they were cannibals, I suppose. There's a lot of them in, in a way. Their officers and that were more well bred than the average guy, you know. As I say, they, if we slapped our fellows' faces, well then, they'd slap ours too. And the sad thing in Rabaul there, our battalion was broken up prior to coming home.

Why's that?

Yeah. Well, they disbanded. We, we never came home as a brigade. I never, we never came home as a battalion, or a company.

26:30 I, when we were broken up, I was transferred to a construction company there, that was round at Kokopo, the other side of the island. They needed a sergeant round there, so I was the only one from my company and my platoon, that went to that place. All my other mates were broken up and a lot came home with a Captain Wally Kendrick. He came home with a lot of our battalion at the time, that were due for

27:00 coming home. But I was sent around to this place. And no, none of my own mates. And when it was time for me to. Around there, we were, we had the Japanese building, oh the toilets mainly, but they were up above ground, because they couldn't build them down near the water, because it was too wet and that. They used to revet with big logs at the sides, then fill in the middle with soil, then if you wanted to use the loo [toilet], you went upstairs, up there and

27:30 it was all down between the timbers. So I was around there for quite a few weeks. And then the word came through that I was due to go home for discharge. And we came and I was informed that I'd be going onboard first, who do you think was in charge of the mess fatigues? Roy Edward Walsh. It's funny you know, three times I travelled on a troopship, three times I. How it came to be on that last time,

28:00 I do not know, but. It was the Taos Victory was the name of the ship. And that was an American Liberty ship also. And we landed in Brisbane.

How did it affect you emotionally, not being around your mates for that last section?

Oh, I was very disappointed, you know. I had to sort of make do with new blokes there, it wasn't a big company I was with, it was only a small group. But they needed a sergeant, and

28:30 somebody to boss them around, I suppose. And that's where they sent me. But I was very disappointed that, you know, I couldn't have gone where some of my own friends, that I'd been all those years with. You know, that was the most disappointing thing for me. And, well that was one of them. The worst disappointment, or the worst thing that I felt, I suppose. After I was discharged. After I came back to Perth, I still wasn't discharged. I, we

29:00 landed in Brisbane, and we were only there a couple of days, because the crowds before us, had started a real kerfuffle because they'd held them there too long, before sending them on. And they didn't want any more of that disruption again, so anybody. We came up the Brisbane River on the ship, landed there, got on trucks and out to the staging camp there. And it was only a couple of days, three days I think,

29:30 we were on the troops train heading back to Perth. Once again, I did meet a, a couple of me mates and that, not so much from my company, from other, other battalions that I knew that was on that same

train. And when I got to Karrakatta down here, they said, “Well you won’t be going straight for discharge.” I said, “Where am I going?” They said, “You’ll be doing down to the Swanbourne Barracks down there.” And Swanbourne Barracks was at the rifle range, where the SAS [Special Air Service] are now.

30:00 That, they’re just next to Swanbourne, that was a rifle range. Well that was used during the war as army barracks there. I was sent there, I was there for over three weeks, in charge of the guards down there. And I, after spending 18 months away up in the islands, I was sent there for another three weeks. And I used to get me leave and come home, and go back, and after three weeks, they said, “Okay, you’re due to go through for discharge now.” and then I went

30:30 down to, back to Karrakatta, went through the movements of getting my discharge etcetera, then they gave me a free pass for the train, because I lived in Maylands, to catch the train to Maylands. And wouldn’t have mattered if I’d had a free pass or not, I still wouldn’t have paid. And I got off at Maylands, and I had about a mile and a half to walk home, it was the longest walk I’d ever done.

31:00 Tears was running down my eyes.

I’m sure.

I was lost. I was out of the army, me mates had gone, it was the worst feeling I ever had in me life. But after a while when I’d been home, got into town and had a few beers with the boys again, I met up with them again, of course. But that was the longest walk of my life.

A really lonely experience.

Yep.

Now what’s happened to your mate Don, cause you said

31:30 **before that you and he had, you know, started off with the meat pie incident, you know, very early on in your childhood.**

Yes, yes.

So, he was with you for quite a bit of the way, is that right?

Yes well, Don, Don left us in Darwin and was sent down to Cowra, to train recruits down at... A lot of, they were sending quite a few guys down to these various camps to train guys for reinforcements

32:00 for New Guinea. And he was sent down, and he, he spent a lot of time at Cowra. And that’s a big story. I’ve got a book in there, The Officials Secrets Myth, written by James Henderson, and most of it is about my friend Don at Cowra. While he was there, you probably, don’t know whether you heard about the, the Cowra breakout, during the war.

Yes.

Well Don was there, and he had to do a certain job on that particular night, which he did. And after he did it, and came out of the compound,

32:30 he was made to sign a 50 year secret, secrets, Official Secrets Act, which never existed. And that’s why this book’s called The Official Secrets Myth. Not to talk about what happened on that particular night.

What was he supposed to not talk about?

What he did in the compound that night.

Which was what?

I can’t tell you.

There is no Secrets Act, you’ve just told me.

Ah!

There’s no Secrets Act.

33:00 No.

That’s what you’ve just told me.

No.

And you didn’t sign it. And apart from that, it’s more than 50 years later.

That’s well, that’s still his secret, and that’s. If I disclose what happened that particular night, I might be disclosing certain things that would be derogatory to, to army personnel or something. But he had a job to do, which he did.

Well this is an interesting section that we come into here, cause this is what we use an embargo for, which means that no-body can actually access that information for another

fifteen years.

33:30 Yeah, and in fifteen years they can find out. Yeah. But he, he signed that, and never told me in 50 years, never told me what he actually did that night. He kept his bond on what he'd signed.

So he never actually told you?

No, no, never told me. And one of the reasons. Well, it's a long story. When he passed away, in his, Department of Veterans' Affairs, he couldn't write certain things that was affecting

34:00 him, which occurred on that particular night. It stuck with him all through those years. Cause as you know, there was, on that night there, there was, they burnt the camp, and there was hundreds of them, well, killed, trying to escape. And burning bodies and everything else inside, and all the rest of it.

Well why, why did Don keep the secret if he actually realised that there was no such thing as the Secrets Act anyway?

34:30 **Or did he not?**

He just didn't want to talk about it. He didn't even tell his wife. He told me eventually. But as I say.

You just told me a few minutes ago, that he never told you.

No, he didn't tell me for 50 years.

Oh, okay.

For 50 years, he never told me a thing. But after that time was up, he told me what he had done on that particular night. He had to shoot a certain people, which he did, that's all I can say.

35:00 And -

Well see this is very interesting; because this is part of, you know, Australian history. Now Don's dead, he can't tell about it. He probably didn't tell anybody apart from you. So that's a lot of what we're doing here today is actually about. You know, digging up little pieces of information like that. And as you said, it is quite some time ago.

Yeah, yeah, I know. It, but I'm pretty crooked, because they

35:30 made him sign that, and he, in all the years he had his problems, like the last ten years of his life, he had a bladder which, an artificial bladder. And he, certain things there, that he could have said before, which he could have related to Vets' Affairs [Department of Veterans' Affairs] when he was going for his disability pension, and that type of thing.

And these are injuries that he suffered during the breakout?

He would

36:00 have to say how he got them, and what happened, you know. And why he had the trauma. See today, if you're a Vietnam veteran or a Korean veteran, you can say well I've got, it's trauma or it's anxiety. And anxiety is trauma, see. And, and that covers a hell of a lot. And his place, it was that too. He'd wake up every night, sort of

36:30 waking up, seeing bodies and, you know. And what he did was cold blooded, see. Guys weren't shooting back at him. That's what I mean. You don't mind shooting somebody that's not shooting back, that's shooting at you.

He was under orders.

It doesn't matter. You don't, you don't kill anybody unless they're shooting back at you. But he…

Did he feel badly about that?

Oh yes. But at the same time, he was on, wasn't on his own in the compound, he was in

37:00 there with an officer. And the officer was drunk. The officer even went in there with half a bottle of whisky in his greatcoat pocket. And the officer went berserk halfway in there, and he got knocked into one of the side pits, drains, in the side drain, by a Jap that was lurking in there. And I can tell you this part. And then this Jap, Don heard the scream, they were backward, he raced down

37:30 and this guy's on top of him, and he had a piece of wire of some type around the officers' neck. Of course, Don had to reverse the old rifle and bring it down; he couldn't shoot the guy because he was on top of his officer. But he fixed him up. Got him off him, and got the officer out. And the officer was gurgling and carrying on. And then he realised it was barbed wire he had around the officer's neck. Got him out, got him back, then the officer disappeared towards the main gate, they were inside the compound. They were

38:00 put there by a captain. Anyway, Don still stayed there, and later the captain came and took him out. And he said, "You've done a good job, corporal."

So was Don in there by himself?

Eventually, yes. The officer was no good for a start. He came in with a Bren gun, didn't even know how to use it. That's the sort of guy they put in there with him, see. But, no, in all those years, no he did that, and my mate died a horrible death in the finish.

38:30 And that's another story which, I've got with, well not so much Vets' Affairs, but with Bunbury Hospital and Hollywood Hospital and a certain doctor.

You think that it was somehow related to what Don went through at Cowra?

Oh yeah, the trauma and everything that he had there. See you, anything now with trauma with any of these Vietnam or Korean veterans, it's highly, you know, taken and considered.

39:00 And that. And he'd had all that. And this was ignored. See his wife was trying to, after his death; she wasn't even entitled to a War Widows Pension. They knocked her back twice when she applied.

Cause he didn't have overseas service?

Yeah, he was over there with me.

Well that's, that's what I thought.

He was on that, he was on that Kali patrol. He was the one that nearly got his head shot off.

Right.

And also, that shot busted

39:30 his eardrum. The crack of the shot busted his eardrum. And that's... He came back from New Britain, before, just before the war finished. Because he, on account of his ear. He was sent to Lae, and then from Lae, back to, to Perth, to get the treatment for his ear. And he was back in Australia when the war finished, he wasn't with me when the war finished. So, yeah.

40:00 **So he would have been one of the first people that you hooked up with, when you got the chance?**

Oh yes, yes, yes. He stayed here for quite a while. And while he was in, in Dubbo, he met this, his wife. And they, well he married eventually, he married her in Sydney. And then for quite a while he lived in Sydney, because his brother was there, running a business, and he worked for his brother. His brother had a business with Kelso Wheelbarrows, and Don was a traveller for him. He worked there a lot, before finally coming back to WA, and

40:30 we met up again, and away we went.

Again.

Yeah. Yes, well after, after the Cowra, the Cowra incident, well that was very bad there, yeah. That was Official Secrets Act, and I've got the book in there now, written by James Henderson, and James Henderson

41:00 passed away too, the year before last. The guy that written, just after he'd written the book, he even gives me a mention in the book.

So how many people did Don kill?

Don't know.

Don't know?

No.

Do you think that, that actually affected him for the rest of his life in a really negative way?

Oh the actual, not only the actual what he did, but the, the smell of burning bodies and all that in there, it was a terrible scenario for him

41:30 in there, you know. It wasn't just straight out war, it was like a massacre. Because all those, all those Japs had been, been machined gun on the wire and that, trying to escape. And oh they, one of their guys, some of them that had escaped, killed a, a Lieutenant Lancaster, they beat him to death with a, with wire, rolled up wire. And he had a bunch of

42:00 guys with him, he wasn't allowed to go out with.

Tape 8

00:31 **What happened when you were discharged?**

Well, when I was discharged, as I mentioned, I had that long walk home. They also gave me, I think it was, might have been, thirty shillings or something to buy a new suit with, or something. Suits of clothes. And I had about two weeks' off, I had, meeting with friends and that in, and having a few beers in Perth.

01:00 No three weeks altogether.

Back at the Globe, was it?

Ah, yes, at the old Globe too, yeah. And then one night, I, the next pub up from the Globe on the next corner on William Street, there, what was it the Royal Hotel, is it, on the corner there, is it? I got into a bit of an altercation at the back there, one night. I'd been drinking there with the boys, and I got my nose punched and that. And then I thought to myself, "Gee, Roy, I think you'd better go back to your

01:30 old job." I was eligible to go back to my job in the, in the wireworks. So I thought, "Well that's it, you've had three weeks off. I need the money, need the job." And I'd met Iris then, and, I hadn't, I wasn't married then, of course.

How did you meet Iris?

I met her out at a Scarborough Surf Club dance one night. We used to go out to Scarborough Surf Club; we used to go to the old snake pit [dance floor] there and all that. And I used to kick around with the surf club boys there. Cause during the war, I told you, my

02:00 brother joined me as a cadet. But when I went into the militia proper, and we were called for fulltime duty, it was, the netting company manpowered my brother, and he tried to Manpower me. But they couldn't Manpower me because I was, I was an NCO, I was an instructor. I was more valuable as an NCO, so he was a private, so he was Manpowered throughout the war, so he worked there all through the war.

02:30 So I went back there and saw old Cecil Mallick [?], and me old boss, and said, "I'm back from the war now." And he congratulated me on making it back, back there. And then I started me job there, and me job was back in, on the, the galvanising plant. I started off on the heads then, I told you, you started off on the ginnys, you were head galvaniser, and then you went on the heads, so I started off on the heads,

03:00 where the wire finished. And worked on that for a while. And then, then the guy that was, there was two, two shifts you worked on there. The guy on one of the shifts, he pulled the pin and I got the job as head, head galvaniser on that particular shift, so I was in charge of the galvanising machine there. And that's where, I stayed on that until, I got married,

03:30 and -

How long was it before you got married?

When did we, I got, I've been married 56 years, so how far back does that go? Was it '50, was it married in

'48?

'48, yes, '48 yeah. I got married in '48, and my brother used to say to me, "Why don't you have a look around, Roy, you know, you've been away for a few years, you know, fancy wanting to get married so soon." and

04:00 that. He said, "Look around for a while." I said, "Listen mate, I've been around everywhere I want to go." So, I said, "No, she's right." So I got married. But I wasn't keen on the shift work then, of course, being married. So, and it was a pretty grubby old job being on the wire galvo [galvanising] machine. Anyway, a friend of mine was working at WA Leather Goods down in East Perth, making, made musical instrument cases and guitar cases and all that. Woodworking.

04:30 So, and taxi cases, and all that type of travel wear. So he said, "I can get you a job there, any time," he said, "when you're ready." So "Right," I said, "you get it." So, anyway, it didn't come through straightaway when he said I was going to get it. And there was one came up part time at Johnson's Meat, down in Beaufort Street, down here on the corner of Beaufort Street and Bulwa Street. I lived in Bulwa Street when we first

05:00 married, only up the street from there. So I worked there for three months and Johnson's Meat, linking sausages and God knows what. And the job came up at the leather goods, and then I worked there for five years. As I said, I used to make musical instrument cases, I was handy at woodwork, you know. Guitar cases, and those Gladstone bags and all that type of work there. And then four of us got put off, because the work got slack and that. And believe it or not,

05:30 we had some Germans working there, women and men. And they kept two German men on there, and sacked four of us Australians. And I said to the boss before I left, I said, "I'm not too happy really," I said. "But," I said, "I didn't think that I'd be put off," I said, "and some people like that kept on." I said, "It was only a few years ago we were fighting those

06:00 people." He said, "Oh, that's got nothing to do with it." He said, "They'd find it harder to get a job here than you would." I said, "Well it wouldn't appear that way, does it. I've lost it already." I said, "I've been here five years." I said, "That's okay, it's your prerogative, you can do that." So I left it at that, I didn't want to leave on bad terms. But I was only off for a week, and this job came up at Barnett Brothers, where me old boss used to be. And my wife's uncle was in charge of the despatch there. And he said

06:30 there was a job going there in the store. So straight away, I started work there at Barnett Brothers in the store. 32 years later, I left. I finished up, the last twenty years, in charge of the despatch, there. I worked in the store, and I did two years behind the counter in the shop, and then went back to the store to do the, when they wife's uncle was retiring, and got a job there as the, in charge of the store and running the despatch.

07:00 And that's where I left there in 1983.

That's a pretty sizeable career there.

Yes, yes, I had a good relationship there, yes. I liked the job and that. And well actually my boss wasn't too keen on me leaving. As a matter of fact, I told him, you know I was 60, and I was eligible to retire at 60, being ex-service. He said, "What's wrong with 65?" I said, "John," I said, "my knees are going," and I said, "I am driving

07:30 the trucks on occasion too, because we're short of storemen and, and that," and I said, "my knees won't stand up to it, so I'm taking the liberty, and…" "Oh, all right." He never spoke to me for about four weeks. So I left there what, I was eligible to go in about June, anyway I left there at the end of July, in 1983. And that's over twenty odd years ago I've been retired.

Did you find it difficult, settling back down into

08:00 **city life when you first came back from the war?**

Oh no, no, that was quite easy to take, actually, you know. Things were starting to move and everybody was getting back to normal again, you know. Later on, you, like things were rationed, your, your petrol was rationed, as I told you, and your tobacco was rationed, but later on, things came more plentiful, you know. And those things caught up, you caught up with them and got those. But wages were very low, you know, was only getting about five pound a week.

08:30 And well that's, five pound a week is ten dollars now, see. Ten bob was. But that was quite enough to live on those days, because things were cheaper, everything was cheaper. Your goods and everything, even a glass of beer was only nine pence, which is nine cents, and that. So, no, it wasn't easy because we were both married, and the wife was still working then, too.

09:00 **Where did Iris work?**

She worked at, well at Eagle and Globe Steel it was in Wellington Street, Perth. She was working there when I met her. And later on, after we were married, well she gave up work of course, but then she got a job with a, as a ledger keeper in a tyre place. And I, well I was a little bit crooked on

09:30 life in general, in certain instants. Because when I went back to the wireworks, the, we relied on our wire coming from the eastern states, the wire rods. I might have mentioned it earlier, how we changed it and used to wire it, stretch it down to size it. We relied that coming in from shipping. And the wharf labourers would be on strike. No supplies coming in.

10:00 So, I was out of a job. No wire to run, and so I went, used to go, I went down to the gasworks in East Perth there, and got a temporary job there, shovelling charcoal into bags. And I used to come home looking like Al Jolson, you know. They, because, why you put it into bags, because it used to be distributed round to the hotels and places and hospitals, and that, because they used it for their boilers

10:30 in those days, you know. So I worked there for three weeks, while the strike was on. And when the strike was over, I went back to my job. Now, when I'd left there, as I mentioned, I was working at the leather goods. We relied on machinery there for our machines and that, for the sewing and all that type of thing. And then the coalminers were on strike,

11:00 they were on strike for more money. And no machinery, no work, I was off there for, for nearly three weeks. So I heard that you could go down to the post office, in GPO [General Post Office] Perth there, and get a temporary job, which I did, carting mail, which quite a few other guys did, because they didn't... The sorting room was on the second, on the first floor, there was four flights of stairs going up to the first floor. To get the mail up there, where they used to drive it up in the lift, and no power

11:30 to drive the lift. It used to be manhandled up the steps. So that was my job, was the... When the trucks come in with the mail they collected, on our shoulders. I used to be crooked to think a man spent six years fighting for all this, and here's these guys going on strike for a few bob. And here I am, carting mail up four flights of steps to keep myself in a few bob, to keep a job going. The same as I shovelled charcoal around at the gas works to keep a few bob in me pocket. After fighting for this country. Those things

12:00 went through my mind, you know, and I thought crikey, you know. You worked for five bob a day and

your head shot off if you were unlucky, for all that. And here's these guys. Well, there's a story I could tell that happened in Melville Camp, when the Japanese first came in to the war there. The labourers, wharf labourers went on strike in Freo, and wouldn't load the boats, that's when Singapore fell. We went from Melville Camp to the, down to the wharves, and we assisted down there with,

12:30 with loading the boats down there. They used to load them with the slings and all that, in those days. And we had guys there also, with loaded rifles, which were orders were, any ruckus or anything, they were to fire above the heads for a start, anything after that, it's on your shoulders, what you did. So they were pretty lucky those guys there, cause guys were pretty, pretty angry. Cause guys were over there fighting, they were there, and there's those guys on strike for a few extra bob, and wouldn't load equipment

13:00 for them, on the boats. That was one story I forgot to tell you from Melville.

So I take it, you don't think very highly of the union movement?

So I, I've always hated the, the coalminers and the wharf labourers, cause I reckon they were all parasites. Because in those days when they were required to do their jobs and, and help get things back on the street. You said how was, you know, how did we get Australia back moving again. Well those are the blokes that wanted more money to help do it; they didn't care how many ex-servicemen

13:30 were back on jobs, trying to get back into the business again, and keeping their jobs going. I was one that was off twice, trying to make a few bob, but I still kept myself going by taking those, those cronkey old jobs to do it.

Did it leave you scratching your head?

Well it did leave me scratching me head too. And even today, when I think, of some of the violence that goes on today, and some of the young people, the things that they do, they don't think of the values that have been won in years

14:00 gone by, and how they happen to be able to buy a new bike today, and these type of things, and… It wasn't done just because their dad's got a good job today, or anything. It was done on the backs of people doing hard work and all the ex-servicemen from the First World War, Second World War and, and say Vietnam and Korea, all those guys that did their jobs. And today I feel disappointed that we've got so many people here that disregard all

14:30 those things, and take it for, expect it.

Well I'll ask you more about that in a moment. Did you join the RSL [Returned and Services League]?

Yes, I've been a member of the RSL ever since I got out of the army. I've been an RSL member since I was discharged, actually. I'm a member of the Bedford Morley RSL down here; I'm the president of my own Battalion Association. We run a reunion every year; it'll be our 48th reunion this year. I helped start it, I've only

15:00 missed one reunion ever since. Me old mate was my secretary and what have you. I've been the president for the last five years. Don was the secretary for many, many years, me mate. And I still run that every year in September. I was a member of; I also attend RSL, the Kindred Association Meeting there, to keep myself up with what's going on. I organise our Anzac Parade for the 13th Brigade. We don't have many marching,

15:30 but I do the organising there, and whoever's leading the parade and that type of thing, you know, I still get, still associated with all that. But…

What else is required of you as the president of your association?

Oh that's about all. Just, and well just recently, they formed the Royal West Australian Regiment Association, which they've. The idea of this is to bring in all the serving people today, those that have served and, and discharged.

16:00 And those that are voluntary and pulled out, somewhere to go after they've left the service. They can join one big association, which is usually hold the meetings at Irwin Barracks down there. As a matter of fact, in a couple of weeks time, they've got a, a barbecue on down there for members of the association. I joined the first time they started there. And some of our guys are members there also.

16:30 And I'm, I've been a Freemason for 38 years. I joined Freemasonry, went through all the chairs, I'm still an active member, I still go to my meetings every month.

Are they a secret society, the Freemasons?

Well, they say are they secret, well not really, no, no. You can join, there's no reason you can't join. There's only one thing you're ever asked when you join Freemasonry, "Do you believe in God?"

17:00 Religious-wise, otherwise, it doesn't matter. They say they don't take Catholics. I'm an RC [Roman Catholic]. That's, that's all baloney. No, actually freemasonry goes back to medieval, medieval times. It goes back to the days when they built the pyramids and they built the, their structures, arches and what

have you. And the tradesmen, the stonemasons

17:30 kept the secrets of their trade to themselves. That was the, the type of secrecy that sort of kept into it. They, and, it was always, they say secret handshakes. Well there is a handshake, but that's to recognise a brother by day as well as by night. Nothing secret about it. The King of England was a Freemason. All, mostly your guys that are in parliament, a lot of those are all the same, they're all Freemasons.

18:00 **Do you still, or how often do you meet with the Freemasons?**

Once a month. Or I might go more if a visit another lodge or something like that.

Where's your nearest lodge?

Mine now is out at, out at Greenwood, Kingswood, I should say, yes.

What do you do when you gather?

Oh we just meet and do our business, talk and what have you. What we do inside is, you know,

18:30 it's just between us. But, it's, you say it's a secret, but you've got to join to actually find out what it is. But it's 32 degrees in Freemasonry, I've only done seven, five actually. So there's a lot of other orders you can go into, the crocks to this, and what have you, the Red Lodge, I've only been in the Blue Lodge. So I don't know what they do in the others. The only way I'd find out if I join them.

What are the benefits of belonging to the Freemasons?

Oh, just

19:00 the comradeship, the friendship. I'm in the lodge of sportsmen, and most of our members are sporting people. We've got guys that are prominent footballers and that in our lodge, and have been in our lodge, and are still in our lodge now.

What do you wear?

Wear a dinner suit, and in lodge we wear an apron and a collar. That's to distinguish in your office within your lodge.

19:30 **Are many ex-servicemen Freemasons?**

Oh yes, yes, a lot, quite a lot, yeah. As a matter of fact in Singapore during the war, the guys that were Freemasons in those days, even secretly, held meetings at Changi prison camp. Yeah, they're lodge meetings, they'd, they'd pick the master of the lodge and the different chairs in the lodge. See, you've got to do all the chairs to work to, up to the master of your lodge.

How do you do your chairs?

20:00 You progress up through the chairs each year, as you, you do a chair; you become the master of your lodge. And then you become a past master. A PM.

How do you progress?

Just by virtue of the fact by next year you'll be the inner guard, or the senior warden or the junior warden with senior warden, and then master.

Just based on seniority and time, or do you have to do some kind of initiation?

Just for the time that you're actually

20:30 doing, those chairs are progressive each year. It's just a matter of going on, when they're, not everybody goes on, a lot of people don't want to go on. You, see you can go on or you can stay down or you don't need to go through the chairs, if you don't want to. But I'm a grand lodge officer, also, that's a, called a grand lodge honour. What they call a grand lodge honour, officer.

What are your responsibilities?

21:00 Well my responsibilities are to me lodge, and to me people.

What do you have to, what kind of tasks do you have to carry out as that?

Oh nothing personal apart from donations or anything like that for things. We, our particular lodge, they run a lot of balls now, and the monies made at those balls each year they run them, it goes to charitable institutions.

21:30 A lot of money goes through to the charities, through the lodges. The lodges don't make money.

They are non profit organisations?

Oh yeah, yeah, you only just pay your lodge fees, that's all.

What sort of charities do you support?

Well as I say, the, they used to run the balls and dinners and things at the Italian Club in Perth there for many years. And the Spastics Association, and, and the maimed and limbless, everybody benefits, somebody

22:00 benefits some way or other, whatever they make, the donations go to them. There's a, a village down south, the name goes past me at the moment. Yes, all the extra monies are donated to them. Well they're building the Masonic villages over here, money is, which is collected, goes towards that,

22:30 and it works on a dollar for dollar basis with the government. And that provides homes for the aged, not only for Freemasons, for everybody. They're building a lot of new ones over there now, they've pulled down a lot, and rebuilt them.

A bit of beer drinking going on down there?

You have a beer, we go down south after a meeting and you don't have to drink beer if you don't want to. You drink beer, a cup of tea, or whatever, yeah. It's just a normal function. We call it down south, after your lodge meeting, the lodge is closed,

23:00 we go down south, and sit around, have a few beers and talk and a few speeches and what have you.

Where, down south?

Well down south is out in the, you know, in the function room, that's called south. We have supper and that, you know.

Are the meetings ritualistic, or...

Our meetings?

Yes.

Oh ritual, yes, it's. As I say it goes back in medieval times. It, most of the work is,

23:30 you know, is working tools that the old stonemasons used. Our work is symbolic of those particular days.

Can you tell me what you do during a meeting?

No, I can't really.

So it's secret, is it?

Well you have to be a member to know what actually goes on, yes. It's not, well, it's not. Like the three degrees you, you enter an apprentice, then you're a fellow craft, then you become a master Mason, you've got to go through three degrees. You go through different stages.

24:00 You don't know what its like until you get to that third stage, of what the third stage is. But once you're there, well then, you know what goes on in other ones.

How do you become a member?

Well if you want to become a member, I'd nominate you, and somebody would second you, and then, they form a committee and you're investigated. If you're got any criminal record or anything like that, you don't get in. You've got any criminal record

24:30 whatsoever.

Do you have many new members joining?

Not a heck of a lot now. Used to, years ago. But now, we are getting a few younger guys coming in now, it's, it's not something that suits everybody, you know. It's not a fun and games things. As I said, it's a, it's a get-together and a mateship, and that type of thing. But even our latest, not our latest police commissioner

25:00 Don Porter, who was our police commissioner here. I worked with him at Mellick Brothers, Don Porter. He worked his way up as a constable to police commissioner in Perth here, and he finished up in the, as a Freemason also.

The meetings sound to me like they might resemble ceremonies?

They are a ceremony, yeah, yeah. John Hancock who was murdered, he was a Freemason. Yeah. We got a lodge of justice. See a lot of lodges, and mine's the lodge of sportsmen, sportsmen, lodge of justice, a lot of

25:30 policemen are in the lodge of justice. And they've got a lot of other lodges named different things, and that. Like for instance, Wadjemup Lodge, now Wadjemup is the native name for Rottnest, did you know that?

Yes.

It is, yeah, well. Wadjemup Lodge was formed over there by the Winnit [?] Society. The Winnit Society

did a lot of work over at Rottnest, and that, voluntary work and everything. Then they decided there were guys there were Freemasons,

26:00 of forming their own lodge. And they said, “What will we call it?.” They said, “We’ll call it Wadjemup.” Do you know what Wadjemup means?

Ah, no.

To the Aboriginals. It means ‘land across the water’.

Makes sense.

Yes. Land across the water. So they called themselves Wadjemup. I was over there, in May this year, just gone. I was over there for my 80th birthday as a matter of fact, on that

26:30 particular day and they gave me a bit of a celebration there. And we had our meeting there. We, we’ve had, that’s not my lodge, that’s another lodge. It’s a lodge that I’ve always visited, always gone over there. We stay over at Rotto [Rottnest Island] for the weekend, and we had our function in the tea rooms there. Invited our ladies over there, Iris didn’t go over this time, but, for that particular weekend. Because after our meetings, we go back to the,

27:00 and have our normal, just our normal function in the, in the tea rooms, or what have you. We used to have Kingston Barracks many years ago. And this lodge had their own cooks. And the army were still at Kingston Barracks over there, in those days, and we used to use their kitchen over there.

Can women become members?

No.

It’s a male society?

Yes. Although I believe throughout the world there are certain ones that do have women in, in the, particular type ones, but in our, ours, we

27:30 don’t, no, just blokes.

What has the Freemasons offered to you, or meant to you, that perhaps the RSL couldn’t, or didn’t?

Oh well, well, well, it’s the friendship that I find with the, with my lodge, and the work that I do there, and that. You have certain charges to do. A charge is something that you, like I can read 13 pages, I can recite 13 pages out of a

28:00 particular book off the top of my head. It’s a charge I’ll give you, and not everybody could do that. I can do that. Read 13 charges to you, 13 pages, pages like that, out of a book. I’m lucky, I can memorise it and say it.

Why would you charge somebody with that?

You’re not charged, you give it to them, you give them a story. Everything is a story.

28:30 Yeah.

That’s a pretty good memory.

It is, yeah, yeah. But if we, if a person can’t complete it, there’s always somebody that prompts through, from a book. He’ll give you the words to keep you going.

Are you matched by anyone, with other stories, with that kind of memory?

Oh yes, yes, other guys can do it, yes. But I always get the hard ones in my lodge. Yes.

29:00 **What does Anzac Day mean to you, Roy?**

Oh, originally it didn’t mean much at all. I never marched for quite a few years, so. I didn’t even collect me medals for a few years, and then I decided I’d write away and get them. Because they were saying, if you don’t hurry up, you might not get them. But then, when I first marched. Because a lot of my crowd in those days, when we marched, country people.

29:30 And you only see them once a year. The same as our reunions. We don’t get a lot now, but a lot of them come from Bunbury, Mandurah, Geraldton all the different country places. And you used to meet them on Anzac Day, and Anzac was a day where you, sort of got together again. “There’s Charlie Smith and George Jones.” type of thing. And afterwards you always met a hotel somewhere, sat down, had a few beers and talked over old times, and. It was just a comradeship there on Anzac

30:00 Day. And that’s what they still do. They don’t tell you who they shot, or who shot at them or anything like that. They talk about the good times. And you know, the funny things. And that’s, that’s, also the memory of, naturally, after the parade has finished, you, fun and games. But during the parade and things like that, you remember the guys that didn’t come back, that’s always on the back of your mind, of course, naturally. That’s what the day’s for.

How important is the mateship that you

30:30 **formed during those years?**

Oh very strong, really, very strong, yeah. As I say, Ken Backhouse, my old lieutenant, he's another guy, you know. Still good friends, we talk to each other, and. My mate I lost in the eastern states, old Doc Nurse there, well we used to talk on the phone every now and again. But they're all like me now, they've got their own families and that, and it's only now and again, you know. I'm in contact with a lot because,

31:00 I've got to look at the, the paper every day to find out who's here and who hasn't there, because somebody passes away, and I'm responsible for putting a piece in the paper. We only put it in the paper if they've been coming, not just somebody that you haven't seen for years and years, because people don't recognise or know. But anybody that comes to our reunions and that, mainly now, we put a little piece in the paper, 'Lest We Forget'. And Iris usually makes it out, and puts it through the paper,

31:30 and we do that. And I usually go to the funeral and represent them, if they wish. I've put a battalion flag on the, on the coffin. Or I'll say the ode [Ode to the Fallen], "They shall not grow old, as we are left grow old," I'll do that for them if they wish, you know. While I've still got the, the strength to do it, I just do it, I'm quite happy to, you know. It's all, they're all good friends, and they were, as I say, they're all going,

32:00 I'm one of the younger ones and somebody might say it for me when I'm gone, if I'm lucky.

If you behave yourself?

If I behave myself, yeah, yeah. See, I'm not only over the years, I haven't just been with the RSL, I'm in the Bedford Bowling Club down here. I've been bowling for over thirty odd years down there. But the last couple of years on account of me knees, I've had to take it down a bit.

32:30 Well I originally, I told you I played basketball. Well I coached basketball down the, the it used to be Central Districts Police Boys' Club down here in Coutts Street, I coached basketball there for five years. I had two junior and two senior teams there. And won West, West Australian Championships with them, inter Police Boys Competitions. And when my son started to play footy in the East Perth district, I was with the Bedford

33:00 Youth Club down here, I was there 15 years. Managers, you name it, coach whatever was going, and five years, the last five years I was, I was president of the football club there. And I had eight years on East Perth Junior Council, with the junior football.

Sounds like a pretty good contribution, Roy.

Yes, yes, I did all that, I enjoyed it all. My son came up through the football, that was East Perth district. And he finished up playing in those days,

33:30 they had the, the 3rds and 4ths, 2nds and the league. Well he never made the League, he got as far as the 2nds, he was playing centre halfback in the 2nds and couldn't get a game on halfback flank in the finish in the league, it was hard to get a game in those days. It was, there was a lot of good players around. It's not like today, you know, with so many injuries where you, you can slot into a side. He liked basketball too. Anyway, he finished up tossed them in there, because

34:00 West Perth offered him three games if he transferred there. And he put in an application for it, and he was selected to play for Swan Districts that particular week. And he'd done his hamstring in at training. So that finished it. He said after that, "Well, no Dad," he said, "I'll stay with basketball, I think." So he did a bit of coaching himself in basketball.

Sounds like it wasn't meant to be.

Yes. My grandsons all played basketball, too. They were with Leaming

34:30 Basketball Club over there.

What do you think of the growing popularity of Anzac Day?

Well I think people are starting to realise now, like I said before, people are realising that 'Who are these guys? What did they do?' You know, they're blokes that did something for this country, this state of ours. They gave their lives, those fellows, so that we can enjoy what we're enjoying today. That's the way I think some of them are looking at it, it wasn't just something

35:00 handed to them on a plate. It was something that was hard fought for, and people gave their lives for. And the people are still in Hollywood Hospital, and still staggering around with those war injuries that, that they suffered during those years. And, you know, are the things that are happening today, are things that related to them from their war years. And you know, I think people are realising that yeah, these guys are worth remembering.

35:30 I think our values are starting to be remembered a bit more, you know. I like, Australia Day, for instance, I don't believe in sending off a heap of fireworks and wasting all that money, I think you could spend the money more valuable that way, by putting it into different communities where they could have those sort of things on a minor scale within their own communities. Not a big bust up like they do

there, spend 750 000 dollars, whatever it is, goes off in an hour and a half. What have you got?

36:00 A heap of stuff on the foreshore, and blokes fighting themselves.

A lot of money up in smoke.

Hey? Yeah, well that's right. They don't get much out of it, do they?

No.

You know. The only bloke who'll get a job out of it, is the bloke cleaning up in the morning, after them.

Do you think that the current popularity of Anzac Day is well and truly overdue?

Ah, well, I don't know about overdue. I think, I think it's always been there, and I think people are realising it is there

36:30 and we've got to support it, you know. It's nothing something that's overdue. You know, I don't think it's something that will peter out while there's ex-servicemen, and around, and servicemen, you know. One day it might peter out, I don't know, but I don't think it ever will. I think there will always be somebody to remember. We've got our memorials you see, and they've got to be maintained and, it's like everything else. If you've got memorials, it's something that you've got something to look at, and you say, "Well what's that?"

37:00 In fifty or a hundred years time, they say, "What's that?" They say, "That's in, that's for the guys that served for this country, that you could sit here and sit in your luxury plane and fly to Mars tomorrow."

You were mentioning the young people of today earlier, how do you think your wartime experiences perhaps changed you, and what would you like to pass on to young people?

Like to pass on to them?

Yeah, from what you've learnt out of your wartime experiences?

37:30 Well, I don't say anything from wartime experiences, but I think as far as young people today, if they say they haven't got a job, and they've got nothing to do and they're bored, why not joined the armed, the reserves, Army Reserves. That teaches them to be men, it teaches them discipline like I mentioned before, it teaches them to be something, and be with somebody. And they're doing something good for their country, if it's ever necessary. It doesn't have to be in

38:00 the army, they could join the police force or anything. The army, navy and air force today is a good job for young people. Teaches them, gives them strengths, teaches them to be somebody, you know, there's no such thing as I haven't got a job and I'm bored and I'm tired. They only haven't got a job and they're bored and they're tired, if they don't want to do anything else.

If you had your time again, would you do it all over again?

Probably. I'd be just as silly, I suppose. No, I suppose, yes,

38:30 I, if I knew what I do, if I knew back then what I know now, you mean.

Yes.

Ah, well, I suppose, yes, I suppose I would.

I don't have any doubt that you would.

I may not be so lucky next time. I might not just make it. But yes, I think I would, yes.

Well on that note Roy, I'd just like to thank you for talking to us today. It's been a pleasure visiting you and sharing your experiences.

Yes, I'm glad that I've been able to

39:00 help in some way, and maybe give somebody some encouragement to do things that I did, and that they can do and look after themselves for the future. It's the future of this country. It's a great country and it's worth, worth looking after. And I think our people of today, I think we've got good people, they're not all bad, not all bad at all, no. They're good. And I think if they're governed right, and that's one of the main things. I think, whoever governs the country, I think, you've got to be

39:30 good examples. And I think that this country will certainly, we don't want to become a big country of army or navy or air force or anything like that. We want to be a, a productive sort of a country that can run and keep going for the benefit of the people, and those that come after us. Our kids and their kids. I think that's what we're looking for. Something for the future. Whatever it holds, I don't know, whatever's there.

40:00 But I think it's up there somewhere in that other place where they, they do a lot of things. And I don't mean heaven, I mean Mars and beyond. Once you get to heaven, well you're doing something all the time, aren't you. Oh, well they say they are. No, it's a pleasure.

Thanks very much, Roy.

Good.

Thanks for your thoughts.

Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS