

Australians at War Film Archive

Peter Poulos (Barbed wire) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1357>

Tape 1

00:34 **Okay Pete, we'll make a start now. So if you could start by giving us a bit of an introduction to your life story.**

My name is Peter Arthur Poulos. I was born in Goulburn in New South Wales in 19, the 9th of October 1920. My mother came from Cairns. She was born in Cairns

01:00 and she brought me back to Cairns, oh well, the 'old man' was a bugger to go 'round. He'd buy a little business, he'd build it up and then we'd move onto another place. We were all over the west, everywhere. So in 1933, oh the Depression broke us in 1930. Dad drove out of Blackall in an old Willys Knight [sedan], Mum and I

01:30 and three kids. Broke to the wide world, done the lot. He had a big business too. So we went over to Claremont. Dad's sister was there, married to this other fella. So they gave him a loan of a hundred pound. Away he went and looked, looked, looked, looked, looked, and he finished up in a place called Thangool, in the amongst

02:00 the cotton. You mightn't believe this, but it's true. We would make sixty dozen pies on a Friday, and Monday night there wouldn't be one left and we had to make 'em in a bloody oven that held seventeen pies. So you can imagine the amount of wood we had to use. This little wood stove. Anyway they sent me up to Charters Towers for six

02:30 months and then when that was up Mum said, "Oh the 'chips' [funds] are gettin' a bit low. You meet me in Cairns." So '33 I came back to Cairns. I took me straw boater off and I was gonna sink me foot through it. You seen a straw boater? Those straw hats, flat straw hats. Mum grabbed it. She said, "You might be goin' back." I said, "Alright."

03:00 So they put me out here at Edgehill State School and, oooh that was '33, and even I hadn't turned thirteen, I hadn't turned fourteen and she said, "Your sisters want a piano." I said, "Mum what can I do about it?" Mum went into town here, went in the music shop and said, "I want a piana."

03:30 "Aha", they rushed her. She said, "Steady, steady, steady." She said, "I also want a job for my fourteen year old son." Guess who paid the bloody piano off, or most of it. Oh god. So anyway they decided the old man and his movin' about, we went up to Mosman for twelve month and I had to, I remember that as well as anything; I used to have to sit there of a picture night,

04:00 The old man'd wanna go to bed and I was the chief cook and bottle washer. Steak and fish and eggs. Fish and eggs. Fish and eggs. So then he got outta there and come back to Cairns again. I went to work in a ply mill. I cut me finger there, see and I said, "Right that's it. No more" and I come home. I said to Mum, "I've snatched it." She said, "Oh son" she said, "We need" I think I was gettin'

04:30 about thirty bob [shillings] a week. I said, "I'll get another job." So they called for this job and seventeen of us lined up for it, and I fought the whole bloody lot of them and got the job, and I couldn't even drive a bloody car.

What was the job?

Oh it was XXXX [Four X beer] they had the agency for XXXX and grog and spirits and they had,

05:00 it was Italian mob and they all I'll always remember, "Duo libra spaghetti" that's 'two pound a spaghetti' and I was there three years. Except once. The boss said, "Here take this" the beer came in straw bags, a dozen, fifteen shillings a bag, one and threepence [one shilling and three pence] a bottle actually. He said, "Here take this."

05:30 He said, "Ah", oh, I sorry, I'm jumping [ahead of] meself. I didn't tell ya how I got to be a driver. The old man took me out the road. Every time I crashed the gears, he crashed me ears. That was on the Sunday and I had to go for me licence on Monday. So we frog-hopped and then I got goin' and we drove around

the police station and here's this cop, big copper [policeman] sittin' on, he said, "Oh you're the lad for a licence. Drive in there." So I drove in. "Good." "Back

06:00 out there." I backed out there. He said, "Here, here's your licence." Okay? Sorry I missed that part, but anyway, where was I?

You were doing the driving for XXXX.

Oh yeah I was going, of course, in Cairns in them days there's two picture shows and two dance halls. There's The Trocadero and The Palace and there was The Palace picture

06:30 show and oh, what's the other bugger's name? Anyway it doesn't matter for a minute. It'll come to me, and the pictures finished about eleven and the dances finished at twelve and Cairns went to bed. No one, see? No, none of these night clubs like it is and they start off at midnight. So the boss said to me, "Here take this" he said,

07:00 "And go and deliver it and then don't come back without the money." I said, "Alright." So I get there and I was standing on the back steps looking up and this woman comes to the door. Dressin' gown on. Nothing else. Wide open and I'm goin' like this. I said, "I've got your beer lady" and she said, "Come on in. I said, "No way." Anywa,y took me

07:30 fifteen minutes to get the money out of her and I go back to the boss and by this time I'm frothin'. I said, "Pay me off." He said, "Why?" I said, "I'm not gonna be bugged by frustrated housewives." "Oh" he said, "I'm sorry Pete, I'm sorry. I shoulda told you about that one." Ah so that was alright. We I was there

08:00 three years and I wanted to join the army. When the war [Second World War] broke out in '39 I was keen to go and Mum said, "No." Dad said, "No." I said, "Why not?" "Ah you're our only son and what'll happen if we lose you?" and so forth. I said, "Alright." I waited four months and I couldn't wear it any longer

08:30 and come in with the paper. Put it down and I said, "Sign the bloody paper the pair of you or I'll run away and join up under another name and you won't know where I am." I blackmailed 'em see. So they signed the paper and I went into the army and I joined the army, it was late July and I went into the started in me army career on the 1st of August 1940. Mm. From then on you don't

09:00 wanna know about that yet do ya?

Could we just pause for a minute Pete...

Okay Pete.

There was thirty of us, all local boys, and I was first cab off the rank. QX15221. So the other twenty nine lined up and we couldn't march. We were all we was in our suits with a little port.

09:30 So the idea was that you took the little port with ya and when you got your uniform you sent your suit home to family. So we mar we walked down the road and the crowd came out and they cheered us and followed us to the station and we got on the train and they cheered us again and away we went. Down to a place called Mookarra. Stuck in

10:00 the bush. Half way between Bowen and Proserpine. That's number one. Right. The water for our shower was seventy per cent salt. The only ones that did any good out of it was the canteen sellin' they couldn't keep the hair oil up to us because the hair used to stand up see. There was a lot of lot of men there. So

10:30 we got there and at three o'clock in the morning and this bloke woke us up in the train, "Get out get out. The train's not stoppin' here for long. Get out" and we all out and in the distance was a hurricane lamp just he said, "That's the kitchen. When I get ya up there you can have a cup a tea." We hadn't had nothin' to eat or drink. So we walk up there. We had a cup a tea and he took us into

11:00 a big tent like a marquee and on the floor was the um bags, hessian bags, which they call palliasse [sleeping pallets]. He said, "Grab one a them and" he said, "in the morning when you hear the bugle don't go outside. I'll come back to ya." So in the morning the bugle went, we were all

11:30 awake and here we are sittin' here with our, well some had their coats on some had the suits you know. He said, "Righto come on. I'll take ya to breakfast now." So we went down to breakfast. Breakfast. Oh my godfather. So he took us back up there and he said, "Now I'm gonna put you blokes in your tents" and I drew number thirteen. Six of us

12:00 in thirteen. God they hardened us up there. The first fortnight we run around in our suit. They had no clothes, they had nothing. Anyway finally they the material arrived. We got our webbing and everything else and boots and the tucker. Oh my godfather. Tucker. Would you call it tucker? There was no butter on the tables.

12:30 Ah, you had a bit of bully beef. Ocka [Aussie] this is, mostly made a stew see outta the bully beef. So anyway they hardened us up. We were all jumpin' around like jack rabbits and seventy per cent salt water baths, showers, and then word come through we were shiftn'. Right. I still don't know to this day why the train went back to

- 13:00 Bowen, but anyway we all boarded the train and mighta went up there to turn around. That's right. It probably was. Took us into Bowen and this whole town was, Bowen station's outta town you know and oh the town was out there and the train got ready again and we took off again. So we get down through Mackay,
- 13:30 Proserpine Mackay, and gettin' near Rocky [Rockhampton] and we're all hungry. We haven't had anything to eat for bloomin' twenty four hours. So they had a stew goin'. Everywhere when you when they were movin' us they had a bully beef stew ready and they gave us our dixies [army issue pots] about there's two, about that big. One folds into the other.
- 14:00 One you have your meat and vegetables. The other one you can have your tea in see. Righto. We get outta Rocky and we turn up at the Exhibition Grounds in Brisbane. That's two. 'Fraser's Paddock', exhibition. Right, now the fun starts. So I hadn't been to Brisbane since I was about ten and the boys said,
- 14:30 "Come on. We're goin' to town." I know what they wanted to go to town for. I said, "Well I'm goin' to town to have a look at the place." So the six of us went in. We were walkin' up the street. Big tall redhead got amongst 'em and she said, "C'mon" and the boys said, "Come on Pete we're goin'." I said, "I'm goin' this way." 'Cause I wanted to see the big bear.
- 15:00 They had a big bear lit up with lights on the bridge. Yeah. True.

Which bridge?

The bridge that went across the river there. The main bridge.

The Gray Street bridge.

Yeah. See and I knew it was there and I wanted to see it all lit up see and away they went. Alright. We gotta put them in recess for a few minutes. So

- 15:30 we did a fortnight at what's-his-name and I turned nineteen. My mate one of me one of them was me mate and I was getting two bob [shillings] a day. 'Cause I had three bob a day to me mother to help and he was single. He got his three pound ten, I got me twenty eight bob. He said, "Give us the twenty eight bob." I said, "Alright."
- 16:00 We went to town. Now I'm a non-drinker and we got on, ah, oh hell, I'll tell ya. I had it on the tip of me tongue. Um, gin and peppermint and beer. Oh and then we finished up with another bloke and three girls or three women or whatever ya, and they took us out to their home and I was the only one that missed out.
- 16:30 I'm sittin' on the top of the steps there while the boys are being looked after and this bloke we'd met, he was a sergeant, and he come out and me mate come and he said, "God" he said, "well where are we?" We don't know where the Exhibition Grounds are. We and we got no money see. We spent it all. So he said, "It's right." He said, "Come here you women." He said, "You had
- 17:00 a good night didn't ya?" He said, "Now give the kids some money to go home in a taxi" and one put her hands on her hips and she started to abuse him and he went 'bang' [hit her]. Down she went. The other one raced inside. She came back, I don't know why, but with six bob. She put it in me hand and I closed me hand tight and she pushed me down the steps. Then she pushed me mate down.
- 17:30 So we staggered out onto the road and you wouldn't credit the luck of the Irish, a bloomin' taxi was comin' along. Empty. So we jumped out and stopped him and said, "Look mate we got six bob and we don't know where we are. We've only been in Brisbane two days or something. Take us to the Exhibition Grounds and we will honour you on pay day." So he took the six bob and he had a laugh. He drove 'round the corner and bloody exhibition ground was
- 18:00 there under our nose. So we got out and it was about half past two, quarter to three and we just laid down on the palliasses. We never got a chance to get undressed and the bugle went. We had a major he got he died up in Malaya and he took the whole lot of us outa there and marched us for three
- 18:30 hours. We all come back sober. So righto, the next move was Grovely. So Grovely at that time in Brisbane was just out in the bush you know. It was this is goin' back in the 1940's see. Okay. We get there. First thing, we line up, "Righto. Short arm
- 19:00 inspection." You know what a short arm inspection is? You haven't...

Can you describe it for me?

Hey?

Can you tell me?

I'll describe it for you in a minute. Anyway we line up. He's doin' the, 'cause we six always remembered we were in tent thirteen you know. So we line up and it's our turn comes along and the first bloke goes in. The doctor looked at him. He said, "You go and stand over there."

- 19:30 Next bloke. "You go and stand over there." The next bloke. The next bloke. He come to me and he said, "Were you with this mob?" There's five of them. They were all lit up. They had pox. Oh god. I hope I'm not bein' over the fence. Anyway he said, "Were you with this mob?" I said, "Yeah, but I didn't go with the when they went after the woman." He said, "Show me." Righto. Undid the
- 20:00 fly, pulled it out. He squeezed it like that. I'm telling you truthfully and no, there was no pus or nothing come out. He said, "You're a lucky boy." He said, "They're all got the pox and now they're gotta go into the" they had a special camp for venereal disease apparently. Oh the gods smiled on me again. So righto that's
- 20:30 Mookarra, Fraser's Paddock, Grovely and I got I think I done me it'd be about six months there and I thought, "Oh bugger this walkin'." I applied to go in the transport 'cause I'd driven a truck for three years and oh I walked it in and they said, "Righto" and passed the test and they said, "You're going to Grover [Grovely] to Fraser's Paddock now"
- 21:00 and I said, "Yeah?" They said, "You are now a member of the 8th Division ammunition company." So away we went and that's where we had our medical there and I had a big carbuncle on the belly. I had two weeks in hospital. They went to Malaya and the poor buggers, half them never got back. So that the gods were lookin' after me again.
- 21:30 **How did you get on the carbuncle on your stomach?**
- Hey? Yeah had a carbuncle here.
- Yeah how do you get 'em Pete?**
- Oh they're like a boil. Very similar to a boil, only they're got no head on 'em and it just swells up like a, so righto. I come outa hospital. There I was, a 'lonely little petunia'. The 8 Divie [Division] had gone.
- 22:00 So they said, "Oh well you can go to Redbank now." How many's that? That's about four and I went out to Redbank. We were there about a month and they decided to send us down to New South Wales. A hundred and ninety nine of us, all Queenslanders. Now QX is Queensland. NX is New South
- 22:30 Wales. VX is Victoria and if you look in that paper, I'll show you afterwards, a woman is called ah QFX. Female, Q Female, you know. So anyway away we go. We get down to Goulburn and they dump us in the showgrounds. There's houses all around us and here we are and every
- 23:00 mornin' this major used to get on front of us on a big loudspeaker and tell us what we were gonna do see. So that was alright for awhile and then one night we went to town. I went in with me mates and I I'm as I said, I'm not a drinker. I had one beer and we're standin' there and in rolls another half a dozen of Queenslanders, see. They're down that end. We're up
- 23:30 this end of the bar and the bar maid give 'em the beer and then she turned to come back to us and as she did, she turned her head like that. This hoon had put his hand over the top of the counter, grabbed a bottle a whiskey, shoved it in his shirt. She seen him. 'Course she served us and she went back and there as I say there was only about a dozen of us in the bar and in a very loud voice she said, "You like whiskey
- 24:00 hey?" "Yes." She reached under the counter, grabbed a bottle and whacked him fair over the head. He went down. Out like a light. He had concussion. They had to take him to hospital. So that was alright.
- Did she get her bottle of whiskey back?**
- Hey?
- The one that he flogged [stole]?**
- Ooh I couldn't tell ya, but we next morning we're all on parade. Out gets the little fella,
- 24:30 "You QX bastards come down here think you're gonna run me. I'll bloody well show ya. No more leave into town." There's only six of us knew what happened. The others, oh god. So after the parade was over all the Queensland boys were wantin' to know why we're barred from leave. No leave, no nothing see and the story got out. So one bloke said, "We'll fix this little hoon.
- 25:00 Get dressed. Fully dressed." We got dressed in our uniforms. Lined up, "6 Div [Division] march. March." We marched to the front gate. The bloke standin' there on guard there with a rifle. He put the rifle down when he saw us comin' and one of the boys said, "Just as bloody well you did that mate or I'd a shoved it up your bum." So away we went to town. We all come back that night. The next
- 25:30 mornin' I thought, "Ooh this is gonna be good." He gets up and he said, "Now listen you blokes. I want youse to do this and do that." He never mentioned a word of it and this bloke was in hospital for a bloody week. He had concussion bad. Oh she hit him fair over the head with a full bottle of whiskey. Oh didn't she stop his gallop! So righto. We're there then word comes that we're goin' overseas. We're gonna get to our
- 26:00 units. I was in my I wanted to go 6 Divie. So, hey?

Actually Pete before we go head overseas I just I'm wondering if I could just ask you a few questions about your training and...

Yeah, yeah go on. Sorry mate. I got carried away then.

No, no, no. It's great. It's fantastic, but was this the army kind of life that you were expecting when you signed up?

Well I don't honestly know. See I was young,

26:30 I was nineteen and, oh probably because Mum's brother was in the first war [First World War] and he used to tell me you know as I was growin' up he'd tell me about this and that and everything else and, "Be careful now. Watch that pox." Oh Christ.

So that was one of the things he warned you about?

He warned me about it and

27:00 anyway, oh I like, I didn't, but I was twelve months and I hadn't got away and I'd been in Mookarra, Exhibition Grounds, Grovely, Fraser's Paddock and bloody Redbank. Five camps in Brisbane. So anyway I didn't mind it. I you know, and when I was in Goulburn they promoted me to a corporal, but only temporary.

And why was that? What how did you get the...

Oh I was supposed

27:30 to train these fellas to do their PT [Physical training] exercises. I wouldn't know poop from a blanket. Anyway I went on the boat, as a corporal. Go on ask your questions. I won't tell ya any more of that yet. Or did you want to know?

This is before you went overseas?

Yeah.

Yeah.

About that before we went. So you alright or do you want me to go on?

Yeah, no, no, please.

28:00 Word come through, "Righto you fellas are all" put us on the train. Took us into Sydney and lo and behold, you see it in the book, there she was, Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary. It's there in the book, but the damn things were that big they couldn't tie into the wharf. So they had to put on the ferries and take us out to the boat and I was lucky enough to

28:30 share with another corporal a cabin.

Just the two of you?

Just the two. There were six thousand on board. We had Palestinian police. We had nurses. We had 'skulls', we always called our officers' skulls, and us blokes and I was sittin' at the table and I used to have to dish out two eggs. There was twenty one at my table

29:00 and I don't know how many thousand eggs. Three weeks we were on the boat so the, you can just imagine the number of eggs. So righto anyway that came on afterwards. So they loaded us up and they decided away we go.

Now Pete what were you doing before you went before you got onto the Queen Elizabeth. What sort of, what were you doing once you got into transport for 6 Div? What were you actually doing?

Well

29:30 **Or being trained to do?**

Well mostly driving and breaking up supplies, but we weren't we never really got into that until properly the breaking up business until I was in the Middle East. I'll tell ya about that in a minute anyway. Where was I? So here's me in the cabin. The rest of me crew was all down in the hold.

30:00 One of the blokes come up, he said, "Pete, Pete, Pete." He said, "One a the boys is very sick. Come on quick." So I got up and I went down. Cover your ears love. This poor devil had mumps in the balls and they were like that. Did you hear that? Mumps in the balls like that and so I dived outta there and went up to where the lounge was.

30:30 Oh they were havin' a ball up there, the skulls and the nurses, and I'm standin' at the door and I'm sayin', "I want a doctor. I want a doctor" and they wouldn't let me in see of course, naturally. Anyway this bloke in the end he got sick of it and he said, "What do you want a bloody doctor for?" and I thought, "Well if you can yell, so can I." I said, "Me mate's got mumps in the balls" I said.

- 31:00 Next thing whoever was in charge there sent this doctor fella over to me. He was cranky havin' his evening spoiled see. Said, "Come on down and look at me mate." So down we go. Sure enough. Oh look, it was pitiful to see the size. So I put him in the sick bay. They put him in sick bay and he [the doctor] said to me, "You come and see me tomorrow on sick parade. I wanna see you." I knew he was cranky with me draggin' him
- 31:30 away from the from the mess, you know. In the mornin' I lined up. He said, "How did you know that your mate had mumps?" "Well" I said, "I've seen it before doc. Not once, but half a dozen times." "Alright" he said, "Next time be a little bit more tactical [tactful]." I thought me stripes were gone. Anyway, na [they weren't]. Then, where'd we go then? Oh we went down to the
- 32:00 ah, navy depot half way between Sydney and Melbourne. You know the one I'm talkin' about?
- Ah, Flinders?**
- I think that's it. Anyway we had to pick up an escort. The Lizzie [Queen Elizabeth] and the Mary [Queen Mary] were here and then all of a sudden the Mary took off and the boys said, "Where's the Mary goin'?" "Oh she's goin' to Tassie [Tasmania] to pick up a load of apples." That's where she went, to Tassie. Whether she
- 32:30 went with a load of apples or not I don't know. So we take off and we got this destroyer out in front. Oh that was alright. We went 'round the bottom and Victoria and boy when we hit the Great Australian Bight I thought we were gonna lose the destroyer. True! Oh I've never seen, I'm an old mad fisherman, I've never seen waves and things like it. The destroyer come and
- 33:00 go down and up and down like that. So then finally we made it around to opposite Fremantle. Well we couldn't go into Fremantle because the Lizzie was too big to tie up to the wharves. So we anchor out there and wait for the Mary to come. Righto. The Mary turns up in a couple a days and I don't know, she must have struck it a lot calmer than we did and we take off. Like
- 33:30 that. The two boats goin' thirty knots. That night a tramp boat gets in between us and we all got thrown outta bed. They just parted like a leafs of a book and then they come back to each other again and they said, "Needn't worry about the submarines. A submarine can only do fourteen knots. We're doin' thirty. So they won't catch us." So went right up to the top of Ceylon.
- 34:00 Oh god almighty. I can never think it's probably in the book there and the most beautiful harbour you've ever seen. They talk about our Sydney Harbour, but by the livin' sufferin' Harry, this is a beauty. So we're there a couple a days and we got outta there and went straight across to India and down around over to Aden. Stopped there for a day. Then we went up the Red Sea.
- Can you describe**
- 34:30 **the port at Ceylon for us Pete?**
- The port?
- Yeah.**
- Which one?
- At Ceylon. The one that was very beautiful.**
- Ah well it was surrounded by mountains. Big. The two big two of the largest boats in the world in there looked like small boats. Does that give ya better description and oh not Trincomalee. Is it Trincomalee?
- 35:00 It's in the book. We'll have ta get it outta the book. Anyway we get up to Suez. 'Course we can't get off the boat again. The she can't get into the wharf. She's too big. So ferries again. Ferries again. Take us straight off the boat. Put us on the train. Straight up to Palestine. Place called Jenin.
- 35:30 So we get in there and 'course they said, "Oh well you fellas have come over here. You can't be put over the top of men that a been in action." Take your, take our stripes. So then we did a course. There's a photo there somewhere in 'round here of showin' you of me in amongst a course we were doin'. Righto.
- 36:00 I did the course. I get me stripes back and that's alright. So then they decide to give me thirty no-hopers, I got all the drunks, all the bloody AWLs [Absent Without Leave], the whole bloody lot and we were stuck away out in the edge of this bloody tents.
- And what were you**
- 36:30 **supposed to be doin' with these fellas?**
- Oh well I was their corporal. I had to look after 'em. Take 'em for walks and train 'em and everything. So one morning they were callin' the roll and it was it used to be so dark there we used to have to have a hurricane lamp to call the roll see. "Yeah, present." "Yeah, present." "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah" and along comes the sergeant major.
- 37:00 "Corporal" he said, "How many men are you got on parade?" I said, "All present and correct." "Give us

that book." He had three or five men on the parade outta thirty. "Get 'em out here" he said and I raced into the tents and I tipped 'em outta their beds. I said, "You b's a got me in strife now. Out, out, out." So they lined up. He called the roll. "Yes" he said, "Now they're all present and correct." He said, "You

- 37:30 see me after breakfast." I thought, "Oh." That's the second time I thought, "That's goodbye stripes" see, and 'cause it was payin', I was gettin' about nine bob a day see, and I didn't want to lose it because I was still givin' me mother three bob a day. So okay. Breakfast. "I will report in to the sergeant major." "Now look" he said, "You're a young fella." He said, "I know
- 38:00 you're tryin,'" he said, "But don't let them bloody idiots put it over ya" he said, "they're only usin' ya. Righto..." and he give me a lecture and he said, "Now be careful and keep 'em on the ball." So back I go. "Righto you blokes, get your packs on and away we go." We went and I marched 'em three hours straight and I said, "You can sit down have a smoke now." 'Cause I wasn't smokin' see
- 38:30 and I said, "Now just let's get one thing straight. If you don't want me for a corporal, say so. I'll apply for a transfer and you'll get another bloke." "No, no Pete. We want you. We want you." That was alright. So word come through I was relieved of me position. Word come through I could go to me unit. So packed up ready to go.
- 39:00 Yeah, kit bag everything. On the truck and they said, "No, no Corporal Poulos you've gotta stay here." Oh Christ. I said, "When'll I ever get to me unit?" The rest of them went up on a truck across the Sinai into Egypt and up to the desert and what do they do? Go to bed in a bloody minefield and in the mornin' the Hun [Germans] gets up their ribs and
- 39:30 kills the lotta them. That's me third time. Where's Corporal Poulos? A bit a paper.

So why did you get asked to stay back?

Oh they wanted me to train another batch see, and that's three times now I had. If I went up there I'd a been dead and I had a girlfriend in Goulburn and when

- 40:00 we were, they sent me from there, from the camp, afterwards down to the base ordnance depot in Egypt.

Actually Pete we'll actually pause there 'cause we're gonna have to switch tapes around.

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Pete something you mentioned to Chris about your uncle, your mum's sister, being in the World...**

Yeah.

First World War. What about your dad?

My Dad? My Dad came to Australia from Greece when he was twelve years old. In 1912. Now he got naturalised in 1918. He was only eighteen, so he couldn't a, the First World War was nearly over,

- 01:00 but he did the second war [Second World War], Dad went into the garrison and he was a very good cook and that and they had him in a garrison and they'd be guarding the oil wells, oil things here. They sent 'em up to Cooktown. They did different jobs, the garrison. It's funny, one that bloody sheila wavin' a red flag down the
- 01:30 look. Anyway poor old Dad. They sent them up there and luckily Dad wasn't on guard that night. They had one guard at the front and one guard at the back of the hut where they put thirty Japanese prisoners see, but the silly buggers, instead of facing the door...,
- 02:00 and a course the Jap just come from behind, hands 'round the neck, and then it was off across the drome [aerodrome] and luckily the Yanks [Americans] were awake. They opened up the machine guns and flattened about two thirds of 'em, but Dad that's, Dad was in the garrison and I was in the army, but you see he was young when he came,
- 02:30 he was only twelve and he stayed here 'til he was seventy four then he went home and died.

Went back to Greece to die?

Mm.

Whereabouts in Greece was he from?

Sharigo. You know where Sharigo is? Well that's the name has been changed now and I can always think of the old name, but it's I would have to look at the map probably find it out.

- 03:00 Anyway Dad went back there. His pension was two and six a week. Anyway they increased it afterwards

and Dad used to sit down drinking coffee and they'd come and say to him, "You want a" what do you call it? You know. The other people don't understand Greek see and he used to decipher it for 'em. Oh

03:30 and he was havin' a ball. He was havin' coffee and money and then and havin' a ball. Poor old Dad.

Did you want him to stay in Australia with you?

No. No he's a bugger. He got married three times. Ssshhh. I was best man at his second weddin', but anyway he I don't know. He

04:00 finished up, I remember he got rid of that one. You know how he did it? He made his will up and the thing was that she was to receive one shilling if he died and she didn't want one shilling. She wanted more. She said to get a divorce. Anyway that was Dad and Mum's brother,

04:30 he was in the first war. He was he come back a bloody wreck, but he was to tell me different things and 'course I think that's where I probably got the idea from, to get to move. See Cairns was dead at that time. Two picture shows, two dance halls. I wasn't a dancer. Oh I'd better tell you about that too. Mum says, "Take

05:00 your sisters to the dance" and, see them two up there? So I didn't want to go. I wanted to go fishin'. So I took 'em to the dance and we're sitting there and the girls said, "Go and ask that girl over there for a dance", see. So I go over and I said, "Can I have a dance please" and she went right from the floor 'whack' and nearly knocked me off me feet and

05:30 the girls jumped up and come to me rescue and, "What are ya doin' to our brother? What are ya" "He went the grope on me." She's yellin'. Oh god, oh mighty and they said, "Are you sure? He doesn't go dancin'." See, another fella his initials were PP. He was Peter Panis and I was Peter Poulos and I don't know how she got us mixed up. Anyway she

06:00 nearly broke me damn jaw. She swung it from the floor. Oh dear me.

That was the last time you went dancing?

I didn't go dancin' then until we were in Brisbane at the army camp and I used to go with the boys, but I never danced and they said, "Come on you gotta dance." So they'd grab a girl or a woman or something and, "Come on teach our mate to dance" and I learnt to dance a bit then.

Did you have much to do with your grandparents

06:30 **growing up on your mother's side?**

Yes. I can take you out to a house out there and show you where I stood up against the wall and he marked me height as I was growin'. The old Billy Undy came here from Tasmania. That's why I look at me ankle to see if I've got the chain marks on it, and he started work on the railway line up there when they were building the railway line up the range.

07:00 Two and six a week and get your own shovel. Two and six. They're great ones on all this aren't they? And he used to say to me when I was sixteen, "Go in the railway boy. Go in the railway", see and oh I didn't. I said, "Look grandpa I don't know what I want to do." I said, you know I liked fishin' and foolin' around and

07:30 anyway when he died I went in the railway for twenty seven years. Oh. So that's old Billy Undy and him and grandma are buried out there in the cemetery and Dot's Mum and father are buried out there, but oh I don't know. I've been I've been too lucky. I dunno how much longer it's gonna last.

08:00 True. Honestly.

What about faith Pete? Were you brought up a particular faith?

Faith? My mother was strong Church of England. I broke her heart marryin' a Catholic. Aha, see, but I have no faith. Ah when I was in the Middle East... of course' Mum trained us,

08:30 we used to go to Sunday school and you know and when I got over there and these clowns are runnin' around tryna [trying to] sell you a piece of the cross and everything else, that was it. I just wrote it off and I had to change for Dottie and I still don't go to church or anything now. The only time I used to we had our home around the corner. I used to walk Dottie

09:00 up to church and go back. I'm a real heathen. No I tell ya, honestly you know what upset me? I saw all the churches over there in Bethlehem, Beersheba and all them places and most of them were full of jewels and outside people were starvin' and I thought, "This is bloody religion?" That's it. Finish. There y'a go.

09:30 Now you're talkin' to a real heathen.

What about animals and pets when you were growing up?

When I was growin' up the old man had five greyhounds and a course 'bunny boy' had to do all the

trainin'. The old man was doin' a bit of bookmakin' and we used to have the dog racin' over in the park, but when I was, what was

10:00 it? After the after the Depression I had a dog and a few parrots down in the valley, but well I never had time to worry about pets after that. See I most of my time I was fishing. I held a few championships.

As a child?

No. Well I was only a child I was fourteen

10:30 when I hit here and from then on before I went to the war I used to go fishin'.

Who taught you how to gut them and fish and everything?

I had an uncle from the first war. He had four sons, five sons, four or five sons and the buggers'd never go fishin' with him and he used to wait 'til I showed up and he'd, away we'd go and the boys got their jack jacked-up on me then. They were savage because the old man'd rather go

11:00 fishin' with me than, oh yeah. I hold a, I was the captain, there's a letter there I'll show ya. There's the oldest living life member in Cairns. It's there and I caught, one night; I was captain of the brewery fishin' club when the brewery was goin'; I took this mob out and I pulled thirty

11:30 six fish, cleaned, for a hundred and seventy five pound, all the one type, and now they can't beat that record because the law says they can only catch five at a time.

Well what type of fish were they?

Reds. Small mouthed reds. Small mouthed nannygyte.

What do they taste like?

Oh they're alright. They're alright. Yeah.

12:00 Oh yes and then I, in that album over there there's some photos of some fish I'll show ya after. There's one big Red Emperor there. I won that one by one, I won that trophy by one ounce. He was twenty five pound four ounces or something and the bloke was arguin' with me, so I went up here to get the chemist shop and got it weighed and his was twenty five pound three

12:30 ounces so I won a lot of trophies from...

Did you get an opportunity to do any fishing when you were in the army?

Now you're askin' questions. Look when I went in the army the first time we pulled up, didn't matter which camp it was, and there was five in Queensland, one in New South Wales and a couple over in the desert, the first thing that fell outta my pack was a fishin' rod

13:00 and then when they sent us to New Guinea and I was, I fed the whole company. We hadn't had any meat for six weeks and we got a big dugong and I cut him up and they had, we had dugong and I used to go fishin' every night catch fish.

What does a dugong taste like?

It's just like a bit of

13:30 steak.

Tuna?

Oh no, no, no. It's it hasn't got the fishiness tuna. It's more like, matter of fact to tell ya, there's three hundred there and when the fresh meat arrived and they still gave 'em a bit of dugong. They didn't know the bloody difference. So that's how close it resembled it. Yes, he was about, ooh from here to that chair long and I didn't kill him.

14:00 One of the other boys had thrown a grenade and hit him, but I laid him over on his belly and I ran the knife down both sides of the back bone and took off the roast like that and we hadn't had any meat for six weeks. Oh god.

Funny now that dugongs are a...

Protected, yeah.

Protected species aren't they?

Yeah, a dugong.

Now you said that you had a girlfriend in Goulburn.

Yeah that's the one I was tellin' you about. What about her?

14:30 **You didn't have any other girlfriends then until you met Dot? Is that right?**

Had a girlfriend every town we went. They used to reckon I had a girlfriend from Cairns to Brisbane, but you know just the only, see we were in Goulburn for quite some time and oh, I had a lot a friends, but that was Norma. I was only thinkin' the

- 15:00 other day, I wonder if Norma's still alive, but oh Jesus. I have me doubts. What's it? 1940, sixty is two hundred, sixty three years. Well she'd be about seventeen or eighteen then, so she'd be close to a hundred. I often thought I'd go back and have a look, but anyway I got tangled up with Dottie and that was enough for me.
- 15:30 Yeah. She said and Dottie I was workin' the railway. I came home and I took me shirt off and I had a, only time I ever wore a white singlet. I usually had the you know the, what do you call 'em? The they bluey colour and here's Dottie cryin' I was fifty seven years of age
- 16:00 and I said, "What's the matter?" and she said, "Those two larrikins down there insulted me and told me off" and two blokes from Sydney see. I just slipped me boots off and out I went and I took two of 'em on with a, and they both had knuckle dusters and I'm fifty seven and they're about eighteen or twenty years of age. They split me ear. Anyway finally
- 16:30 Lorraine, that one that got the son, she and her husband were mushin' up in front of the thing and here's me gettin' a bloody hidin' and he jumped outta the car and come over and a course the cunnin' shits, they threw their the knuckle dusters away see, and the cops come. The sergeant knew me from fishin' and he said, "Hey Pete" he said, "you're gettin' a bit long in the
- 17:00 tooth for this now" and I said, "You hold that bastard and I'll have this one" and he called 'em over. He said, "Hey come here" he said, "Where do you come from?" He said, "Sydney." "Right. Now if I were you, I'd get back there as fast as I could. We have a judge here who just loves you bastards that beat up old people." They were gone in two days,
- 17:30 but poor Dottie, I came back and I said she saw me, I had me ear half torn off and blood everywhere and she said, "You fought for me." I said, "You're me wife, love. Of course why wouldn't I fight for you?" Fifty seven years of age, but that's that's war time, ah peace time. That's not war time.

Well what about in war time? Did you think that

- 18:00 **you were quite a placid person in the army or were you aggressive or a go-getter? What kind of person were you?**

Well I was a corporal a couple a times and oh alright. Well look they sent me from Palestine into Egypt to the big ordnance depot. Now you see that colour patch? The blue over white? That's and that

- 18:30 shape? That's 6 Divie. So they said. "Right. Now we gotta job for you. You go with this convoy and we want you to take this bloke, he's never driven in the desert, we want you to take him with ya. He'll do the drivin'." So convoy's cruisin' along the coast there and the bloody Hun gets after us and this poor devil, now this is true. He just literally
- 19:00 froze at the wheel like that. Down went the foot. The convoy went that way and we went this way. Here we are out in the middle of nowhere and I managed to I tried to break his hands. I couldn't. So I found the switch and turned it off and we frog hopped a bit and he let go the wheel and he said, "What do we do now?" I said, "Get out and run for your f'n
- 19:30 life." So we off and when we'd run as far as I thought was safe enough I said, "Down. Cover your face. Put your hands over your face and don't look back towards the truck. Turn your back on it." 'Boom.' Up she went. Oh. Never forget that. So we then we had to find our track back because there's no roads and it's only our
- 20:00 own track where we'd come off the main track see, with all the, and a course in the meantime the convoy had got through see, and we tracked our way back to, we got back to where the all the road was and got a pick up there and went back to the unit. Oh god. Yeah and there again see. I tell ya. The
- 20:30 angels are lookin' after me again.

What about your mum when you decided to join the army? What did your mum give you any special advice before you took off?

No. I was an only boy and Mum said, "I don't want to lose me only son", but I was young and foolish and

- 21:00 eager for adventure sort of business but that was one trip up the desert. Where was the next one? Oh we had to come from Egypt through Palestine with a load up to Beirut. Did I tell you that story the other a while back about the woman droppin' her pants? You didn't hear that one. Alright. So

No I'd like to hear it, but

- 21:30 **just before we go there, because that was your first operation was sent over to the Middle East, wasn't it?**

No.

It wasn't Syria? You...

Syria was, see what the first operation was, when I went up with the trucks and got blown up. This, see this where we were was Tel el Kebir. The big ordnance depot, had everything, and oh there was busted up tanks and all sorts a

- 22:00 things and everything and we had, I dunno why I got kept gettin' picked, but they sent me from Jenin into this joint and I had to go with this convoy up into Syria, but the divie was in 6 Divie was in Syria. So I, "Oh well" I thought, "Oh that's good. I'll see some a the boys" and anyway
- 22:30 we come across the Sinai. See you gotta go across where the canal is very small. You got sand on that side and then it opens out into the big canal. Righto. So away we go and we get to Haifa and a course inquisitive Mick has to go and inspeculate the
- 23:00 local talent and I go up this stairs to this place and this little old fella sittin' there. He said, "Don't touch it" and I said, "Why, has she got the pox?" He said, "No" he said, "Everybody touches it" but curiosity killed the cat. So when she was free I grabbed her and we went into the room. She took her dress off. Undid her bra. Her breasts fell down
- 23:30 and hit her in the belly. I shook me head. She stepped out of her pants and her bum almost dragged on the floor. I turned around and said, "Oh that's it" and I walked out and I never even... I had already paid her... I never even waited for the money back. I just walked out. So we get we take off again. We go up we get up to near Beirut and there's a cop. The provos [military police] have got us all blocked off. "What the hell's wrong?"
- 24:00 He said, "The 6 Divie, bloody louts, got into the French officers' brothel and the town's out of bounds to anybody from 6 Divie." Oh. So I thought, "Oh well bugger this. This might go on" and we were in a South African camp. That's where they held us and these South Africans wore a hat
- 24:30 like ours, only no puggery. Now the wheels of the brain got in movement and they were goin' to town. So I got in amongst about ten a them. The bloody puggery gave me away. Anyway I bought some cigarettes, about six packets a cigarettes when we first went in, and here we are steppin' into the brothel and the provos, 'bang'. They took me up before
- 25:00 the 'beak', their officer, sergeant major he was, and the provo said, "He was goin' in the brothel." I said, "How the bloody hell would I know where the brothel was? I only got here yesterday." See and anyway I looked like gettin' fined. I looked like bein' done and he said, "What were you doin' in town?" I ,and then I felt me pockets. I pulled out six packets of cigarettes I'd put away.
- 25:30 I said, "We've only just come through. We're all the way from Tel el Kebir" I said, "To here." I said, "The boys are outta smokes." Saved by the bell. He said, "Put that man in a taxi and tell the taxi driver that if he gets outta that taxi before he gets back to the South African camp we want to know" and they had all me details. They had me... Hallelujah.
- 26:00 Dropped me at the camp. The next damn day they opened. The city opened up. Oho. If I'd a waited one more day I would anyway it didn't matter.

So what you're saying Pete is that they allowed certain nationalities on one day or people you know, from different countries on one day and then the other day someone else?

Oh no, no. There was a mob of South Africans up there in

- 26:30 a camp and the 6 Divie were up fightin', oh, what's that big streak's name? The general [Erwin Rommel, German Field Marshal]? Anyway they we came through with supplies from Egypt right up to them, but I don't think there was any case of 6 Divie were doin' the job and I think the 9th went up there too. I'm
- 27:00 not sure but we came back. All the way back. Oh god. What happened after that? Oh yeah I got three days leave and I went to Cairo and

Were the brothels better in Cairo?

Well you, don't rush me.

No, that's alright. We'll get to that, but I was just gonna ask you a question.

- 27:30 **Was did the army give you a special lecture on catching VD [Venereal Disease]?**

Oh yes. Yes. We did have occasional ones, but that was early in the piece. Very early in the piece. That was happened in Queensland. We had one there. We had one in Brisbane, but it didn't matter where you went. If you went on leave they gave

- 28:00 ya a 'French letter' [condom] and most of the brothels had an area where you could go after you had sex and wash it and clean up like that, but that didn't mean to say that you weren't gonna get it, see. Ah it just depend. If you didn't use a 'Frenchie' [condom].

- 28:30 **And what about the blue light places? Did you come across any of those?**

Yeah. They all had blue light places but that bloody Cairo. They had a special hotel and the room was like this, but the verandahs went right around you know it was all around. So anyway I took these two blokes into the we went to the

- 29:00 Café Bardia, that was the big night club, and they tell ya how big it was. They had three camels on the stage. Anyway they put on this act and it finished and the madam got up and she said, "Right you can dance now. The girls are available." The boys said, "Look at look at Pete. He's got his eye on that one. He won't get her." Pete got her alright.
- 29:30 Had a dance. Brought her back. Sixteen and a half ackers for the drink. It was only just water. I knew I was gonna get touched. Second one was seventeen and a half. The third one was eighteen and a half and the boys were that drunk they said, "Piss her off. If you can't drink beer you're not gonna have us any more." She got away. Oh. So we come outta there
- 30:00 and we're on the footpath and these two British provos come along. Real Red Caps [British military police] and I couldn't figure out what one bloke was playin' at. He got on his hands and knees and he crawled around. I woke afterwards the other bloke was sayin', "Oh you good fellas. You no doubt about you" and when his mate was in position he pushed them over. Oh
- 30:30 god and they all staggered off down the road and there's an old garry. I don't know if you know what a garry is. It's a horse driven carriage and they pulled the driver out and threw him out and pinched the garry and off and I went the other way then. So I get back to the hotel and I thought, "Now this is no good. I better be careful." So I, the pockets had
- 31:00 a button on 'em. So I put me wallet in there and yes gonna go to sleep and I hear, "I know what you want. I know what you want." It's a woman's voice see, and I look up and all the boys are asleep. So I got to the door and open the door and here's two drunk's chasin' this sheila [woman]. She's in South African uniform. She had
- 31:30 on, a woman, and she kept sayin', "I know what you want. I know what you". They chase her 'round the block about three times and then they woke up. One bloke went that way and one bloke went that way and they got her just near me and they dragged her into the room and she's sayin', "I know what you want. I know what you want."

What happened?

What happened? You haven't been payin' attention.

Well I mean they didn't rape her did they?

- 32:00 **Was she...**

They didn't have to rape her. She knew what they wanted and she was givin' it to them.

But, in the room with all the other blokes?

No, no. The room next door to me. See there was a series of rooms right around and they weren't all occupied. "I know what you want. I know what you want."

But she was what in uniform, South African Army?

Yeah South African. Yeah.

She would have been

- 32:30 **in trouble if she'd got busted [caught].**

I don't know about bein' busted. Anyway I was gone in the morning before anything happened. 'Cause they used to ride in the trains, they'd sit on the bloody roof and ride along the roof you know. Oh god. Yeah "I know what you want." She was happy.

Pete, tell us about the day that you enlisted.

- 33:00 **Where did you go?**

Where did I go?

Yes. To enlist. 'Cause

Well here.

Yeah.

In Cairns.

Where was it though?

You know where the regional board is there now?

No.

Well they had a the militia [Citizen's Military Force] had a place there where try and think of the name of the street. Right in town anyway.

33:30 The militia had a place there and anybody that wanted to enlist could go there and enlist there and I went in and got a form. I had to get another one, I'd lost the first one. So and then I took it home to Mum and Mum signed it, much against her will, and Dad and I took it back and then when they said, "Right" you know, "We'll call you as soon as we're ready." So they put me before a medical and

34:00 that's right in town there. Oh goodness me. There's a big café on the corner and then the shops along there and just, it was this old depot with the militia. And that's where we went. We started there.

Were you always interested in the army? Not the navy or the air force?

Yes.

34:30 When I was fourteen, Mum wanted to put me in the navy and the old man said, "No." So that's as far as me um navy career went. Oh yeah, but oh in, I don't know if it's there. There's a receipt somewhere showing in the Cairns Post [newspaper] where

35:00 Peter Poulos was an air gunner in England. I don't know how the hell I ever got over there. It's here. I got it here. Yeah.

But did you meet friends straight away when you got in there from rookie training? Did you meet friends that stayed with you the whole time?

Oh not all the time, no there was, you see we went away thirty of us left here and then I when the

35:30 those blokes all went away in the 8 Divie and when I come out I had to start again and when I went to New South Wales there were a lot a Queenslanders with me, but I didn't worry about you know just we all knew each other and that's about all but.

Was there a difference

36:00 **between the states? Did you as a Queenslander versus a Victorian? Was there any kind of rivalry there?**

There was a little bit of rivalry, but mostly, see when we went to New South Wales, New South Wales and Queensland like to play rugby league. Victoria wanted to play what we call 'basket ball'. They'll tell ya about that when

36:30 you get up to Darwin.

So now you had to make mates again in the 6 Divie.

Yeah.

Do you con do you still keep in contact with any of those men?

There's none a them alive. I read the paper every day to see if my own funeral notice is in there.

Well you must be still alive because I'm here.

37:00 Afterwards I'll show ya in the papers, the first time I've seen it. I couldn't figure out QFX and I thought "QF" then day light dawned. It was a female, Queensland female, see. Our number is QX, but there's the F in it is and the name in it is a woman's name, so that's what put me onto it, but oh jeez.

Well what about

37:30 **the initial discipline as a rookie? The rookie training? Did you find it hard?**

No. We run around in our suits for two weeks down there learnin' to throw grenades, learnin' to do bayonet work and everything else and I was a fully trained infantryman and that's when I got jack a this walkin' business. I said, "I'm goin' back into transport." So I went into transport.

38:00 **And was there anything in the training that you were particularly good at, say marching or weaponry or anything like that?**

Well see I was the PT instructor. Later on, not early in the piece, but oh well I don't know. There's I'll find that photo for you after and show ya where they put us all into

38:30 this school and we all got a pass and that's when I took over that with all the drunks and everything. Yeah. Oh didn't they get a shock when I marched 'em three hours and said, "If you don't want me say so. I'll get a transfer and you'll have a" "Oh no Pete. No Pete. No."

What about the militia blokes? Were there many fellas from the militia?

Not where we were. Not where

- 39:00 we were. There was a couple down here at Mookarra. See I never joined the militia, but that they there was the 51st Militia was Cairns and when they put 'em into the army business the 31st , 51st and they went up to New Guinea, but the
- 39:30 militia was the boys that saved Australia. I could I must say that 'cause we were away overseas. They took the Jap on up here in the islands. If the Japs had a got here, by Jesus because when we when we were up in New Guinea we found a lot of papers where
- 40:00 they were gonna split Queensland in half, this is later, and they were gonna kill all Murris [Aboriginals]. Kill the lot. They didn't want and they were gonna use, decastrate [castrate] us fellas and breed from you women. They were gonna breed a whole new race. Does that surprise you?
- 40:30 **We'd better stop there and change tapes Pete.**

Tape 3

- 00:31 **Alrighty Pete. Now I'm just wondering if you can actually walk us through the Queen Elizabeth. I've known a few fellas who were on the Queen Mary, but not that many on the Queen Elizabeth. So what was she like?**
- Oh beautiful mate. Beautiful. I my job on the Queen Elizabeth, see they gave me two stripes before I got on it and I used to take this mob every mornin'
- 01:00 for a half an hour PT. They had, oh I don't know, about four swimmin' pools I think there was, and the we had, as I said, we had Palestinian police. Well you don't see 'em now. Nurses and doctors and everything. Six thousand we was and when they dropped us, you know what they did? They went all the way back
- 01:30 to America and bought out fifteen thousand. Yeah and dropped 'em in Adelaide. Yeah. True. How we know about that, when we come home we were havin' a beer or I don't drink much, but this bloke come in with a pair a glasses. Yank with a pair of coloured glasses and he said, "Now wait a minute Aussie. I just want to ask ya a question"
- 02:00 as if someone had swung on him see and he said, "I walked up to one bloke and I said, 'How's it goin'?' Or something or, 'We're here now, you'll be right'" or something and the bloke went straight for the [guy's] chin or the glasses. Blackened both eyes and he [the American] said "They told us to be, you know
- 02:30 friendly and everything else" he said, "And I asked one question and I got me eyes punched out" and I said, "Well" I said, "Never mind mate. What you shoulda said was, 'We're happy to come and give you a hand'" but then we found out that the boat had gone back to America and brought back fifteen thousand. Fifteen thousand. That's a complete division and we went away with
- 03:00 six thousand. Oh no wonder
- So they got you lot out and then they brought over all the Americans.**
- Yeah well the Americans to Australia see. Oh yeah.
- But Pete can just for a moment? Pretend you've got a, like a, maybe a video camera or something in your hand. Can you just sort of walk me through what the Queen Elizabeth at that time actually kinda looked like?**
- Well it was beautiful. Ah there was swimmin' pools, the lounges. My cabin was good. I had me and another fella shared it and
- 03:30 the other boys were down below and they had they had a special 'dub'. Dub. Do you know what a dub is?
- No. Tell me.**
- Toilet built down below see and one person got in there and died and as he fell forward against the door and everybody's tryna get in you know. They'd go and
- 04:00 try the door and this bloke was dead holding the door shut see. Alright. So finally after a month's conversation they climbed over the top and found this poor bugger dead, see. The he'd been holding the door shut and they couldn't get in, but the food was very good. Very good. Oh yes you wanted to know about the Queen Elizabeth.
- 04:30 Righto. One thing I'd forgotten to mention. They said to me, "Take fifteen blokes and go down and peel spuds [potatoes]." "Good." So I get me fifteen blokes and down I go and I asked for the head cook and I met the head cook and I said, "I've got fifteen blokes here to help peel spuds for you. Make it a bit easier on you blokes" and he burst out laughin'.

05:00 "Ha, ha, ha, ha" he said, "Come here." He said, "Come over here." So I went over and he said to one of his offsiders, "Pick up that bag a spuds." Half a bag or whatever it was. "Tip it in there." Tipped it in there and they all run out, peeled, the other end. He said, "Go hide yourself for the rest of the day." Oh dear. Yeah.

Musta been an old World War I [World War One] fella.

Yeah well

05:30 we were three weeks it took us three weeks, but a course we weren't travelling all that time see. We stopped at we to pick up the escort and we had to wait for the Mary and then we when we got up there we had a wait up there and then went across to Aden and oh yes and well there wasn't it was on the way home that they dumped us in Abyssinia.

06:00 **Yeah?**

For one week.

Actually we'll get to Abyssinia in a minute, but how did you pass your time on the on the Lizzie you know on the way over and

Oh we didn't seem to have much trouble there. We had our PT, morning exercises, and there was swimmin' pools and Christ only knows what you know to whatever you wanted and the meals were good. I was dishin' out two eggs to twenty

06:30 blokes, once a week. Yeah. Oh no there's...

What did you make 'em do for their half hour of PT every morning?

Oh I dunno now. I said, "You gotta learn to walk. You gotta learn to walk." So I was swing into a bit a jazz and oh we just filling in time more or less. That's all. Just filling in time, but

07:00 she was a beautiful boat and I don't know what happened to that load of apples the other one got. We never got any. Yeah, but we went up the Red Sea there to Suez and we weren't able to get anywhere where there was a wharf big enough to tie into see. Sydney wasn't big enough at that time, back in the '40s.

07:30 Bloody, we had to go to that, oh Jesus what, have a look in that book after and see if I can think of the name of that. It's beautiful. Right at the top end of Ceylon. Right at the top. Beautiful big deep water harbour and the two big boats in it, they looked like small bloody boats. True. Oh god it was beautiful. Comin' back was a different bloody matter though.

08:00 **Was there much gambling on board?**

Oh well we they never paid us see. We had no money. Yeah there wasn't much gambling going on then, but oh they seemed to fill in the time alright you know. They'd probably play cards or do something like that, but oh jeez five-bob-a-day tourists. Five-bob-a-day tourists.

08:30 Me. It's in the book. Yeah.

And what about the Middle East when you first got there? What were you expecting?

Well we got into Suez and got put on the train and then taken straight to Jenin, that's in Palestine. I didn't know what to expect. I arrived there a corporal in there somewhere in the book you'll see

09:00 a photo of me and they said all us fellas, "We can't send you up to your unit in charge of the men that have been in action" or something. So we had to start off again and do our exercise and even then, when I had the damn thing back again before I was to go up there I still they'd still take the still the same

09:30 thing applied. Oh yeah. Oh god we and I'll never forget the we were what tree miles or five miles from Gaza. So I go in one day. Gaza is not the Gaza it is now and here's the butcher and he's got two goats tied up. He grabs one. He cuts its throat. He skins it. Hangs it up and the bloody flies went 'boom'.

10:00 The flies and by the time he got to put it in the, ah in the you know those cages where we have here? You know meat safe. Meat safe, yeah, but he sold most of it. Then we went down to the beach one day and someone had caught a big shark and they were yellin' and screamin' and here's a bloke cuttin' pieces off. Cuttin' bits

10:30 and he finished up all he had was the little bit on the tail and the bloke's singin' out 'blah, blah, blah, blah', yeah righto. Only the tail end of the shark. Oho. God. Yeah.

How did you get on with the locals?

Oh well you see, we never had much to do with the locals. Only that time in Cairo where that bloke, I don't know he got in the two up game, but

11:00 we had locals doin' the cookin' and everything else, but we never associated much. Except them

bastards that wanted a every time you went on leave they wanted to sell ya a piece of the cross. Oh yeah we anyway we decided we'd get leave to go, um

- 11:30 what's the capital of Jenin, ah oh god. What's the name of the place in we were in Palestine and we and the capital of Palestine anyway. Ah so we were we were gonna go there. So we all get aboard this bus and we
- 12:00 got a native bus driver and he's tearin' along the road and the boys are sayin', "Ay ay George, take it easy, take it easy." He said, "I'm not drivin'. Allah's drivin'." Oh god. I didn't think we were gonna make it alive. Another time I went into, Tel Aviv, I went in and I was on me own as a matter of fact and I'm pokin'
- 12:30 around and I go to this brothel and up the stairs and look around and not a soul in sight. Not a soul in sight. Just when I turned to walk out I heard footsteps comin' up the stairs. 'Thump, thump, thump'. So I dived behind a curtain and in raced this provo and he went through all the doors lookin' lookin'. While he had his back to me I offed down the steps and he musta heard me and it
- 13:00 was on. Down them steps I went, three at a time, and hit the footpath and I'm off up the street and the next minute there's a taxi comes along with the door open. "Taxi Mister. Taxi Mister." There's no doubt about 'em, they didn't miss a trick. Oh.

Was there much thieving going on?

Um,

- 13:30 well one place there they had all the rifles on a pole in the tent and they disappeared and they were on a chain. Now how the hell did they get them off? They slackened the tent just enough so they could lift the pole up, slide the chain out and take the lot. Oho cunnin'. Oh yeah. Yeah.
- 14:00 That's the only decent one I can recall though. 'Cause you see you never stopped damn still. We got there Jenin were doin' manoeuvres and doin' this and then Christmas come. Oh Christ. Sixty men on guard all with live ammunition. Five rounds.
- 14:30 What happens when it blows Christmas? 'Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang' and who should be one of the unfortunate bloody men on guard? Me. The second, the corporal. Had two corporals, one sergeant, one officer. Sixty men on guard and then when they started firin' their rifles of course word come down and I hadn't gone on shift. I
- 15:00 was due on at twelve and it was about five minutes to twelve and down comes this skull. "Quick" he said, "Orders from the chief. We've gotta take the ammo [ammunition] off them." I thought, "Oh this is gonna be lovely." So we line up. What we had about thirty there. We lined 'em up and I said, "Come on you blokes." I said, "Orders are to give up your ammo." I said, "Merry Christmas" and I'm goin' along with a hat and they're dumpin' the what's left,
- 15:30 one or two or something, and this bloody drunken sergeant of the guard comes along and he's abusin' 'em. Oh he's really abusin' 'em and I just happened to turn me head gently. I didn't know which one it was, but one of them went 'bang' oh, and down he went, out like a light. 'Course I kept goin'. Next day we're all up the thirty of us are up before the beak
- 16:00 and the major said, "Corporal Poulos. Who hit the sergeant?" I said, "I don't know sir." I said, "I was too busy collecting the ammunition." They had five goes at me to see and I didn't honestly didn't know. I went to walk out the door the last time and he said, "Corporal Poulos." I said, "Yeah?" He said, "Who hit the sergeant?" I said, "I don't know." Oh dear. They had picture shows there.
- 16:30 It's a big camp it was and the concert parties used to come there and all I was interested in was gettin' up to the 6 Divie. I wasn't worryin' about that bloody joint. Yeah.

So what were you what were some of your daily duties while you were waiting to get back up to your unit?

Well I as I said before, they put me in charge of thirty men. I had all the drunks and

- 17:00 no-hopers and AWLs and everything else in this thirty men. They kept me busy.

Yeah.

Until I really jumped 'em see. You had to take 'em of a morning answer the roll call and then you'd take 'em out for a walk somewhere and march 'em up and down and bring 'em back and you'd sit down try to give 'em a talk on something. Oh yes that's right. I was handed a Thomson machine gun. You know what,

- 17:30 a Tommy gun. Not our own. Five rounds of ammunition and I had to teach these fellas how to use a Tommy gun and oho. Oh talk about a turn. I said, "Look I'll fire at least four. I dunno who's gonna fire the other four." Fancy a bloody Thomson machine gun. Oh. That day was one of the little things I had to do. Teach these blokes and I'd never

18:00 seen a Tommy gun before. Oh yeah. We, but they had a good camp there. Like you could go to the pictures when you weren't workin' or there was leave. You could go into Gaza or you could get a bus and go to Tel Aviv or somewhere like that you know.

Did you have any

18:30 **favourite spots?**

Oh which was the first one? Oh no I mean...

Apart from the brothels? Was there a favourite brothel?

No. I tell ya. I became a heathen because when I left there Mum used to take me to the Sunday school and I used to go to church and everything else and then I went into the church in Bethlehem, Beersheba, the whole lot of

19:00 'em and there was that much wealth in there and when you walk outside here's poor buggers starvin'. That's it. Finished. No more. I came home a heathen.

But despite the fact that you were a heathen, you still felt that there were a few times where somebody was looking after ya?

Well somebody musta! Look I told ya, I don't know how in the name a God I missed Malaya. I missed gettin'

19:30 blown up in the Sinai. 'Bang, bang, bang, bang' and yet I seemed to be you know, on the outside and a course then when I met up with Dottie after seven years I had to come I had to be christianised again and it was only because I you know I really musta felt something for her. So she said, "Oh well you

20:00 you'll go in Athens and learn." So I used to go and go to confession and I'd be tellin'. Finally in the end I blew me stack. I nearly shook the box down. I said, "You're not gonna bloody well tell me what I can't do" and I come back and I said to Dottie, "I don't think we'll get married." Oh she started to cry. That was it. I went back again after

20:30 that. We were married, you know where the big church is here? You oh, you wouldn't know yet would ya? We married there in 1944. Yeah I did me 'nana. I bet that poor devil dodger [priest]. You gotta learn these terms. That's a priest, a devil dodger, and I'm shakin' the box sayin', "You're not gonna bloody well tell me what I'm gonna do."

21:00 **Peter I'll just I'll bring you back to the Middle East for a bit. Ah once you kinda got word that you were going back up to the 6 Div?**

Yeah.

And they shifted you up there. Now was that when you were you went into Tel el Kebir with the where the big ordnance depot was? Can you give us a bit of a picture on I mean you've mentioned that it was big, but can you give us a bit of a picture on what that the scale of the thing. What was in there and...

Oh god there was, I don't know

21:30 how many troops and they had all the gear all the things you needed. It was a supply depot and then on top a that was any of the bloody old tanks and that they took from the Hun. It was a junk yard part of it, but you they had everything there. Oh they I remember we were playin' bingo.

22:00 The whole bloody I guarantee there'd be over a hundred men or more playin' bingo. Yeah. We'd sit down and play bingo.

This is actually in the depot itself?

In the depot itself. Like when we weren't on duty a course and oh yes it and it wasn't that far from Cairo, but it was oh everything, everything was there. You know. When we took that load

22:30 of ammo up there and got blown up. That was just I don't know how the convoy got away. I think that I think we saved the convoy.

Mighta been a perfect decoy.

Yeah. We went into the bloody sand out there and they just kept goin'. Yeah. Oh jeez.

So how did how like just on a like on a day to day level, how did I guess the ordnance depot actually work? I mean we what were your

23:00 **duties in relation to it?**

Well when they when they sent me there that was the idea. I was to take this convoy up to Syria. Me and a few others see. So we used to go down. We didn't even have to load the trucks. They were loaded for us and oh yes that's something I can tell ya. So we were warned, "Don't take any dope [marijuana]

- 23:30 Don't take any dopes" you know and they'd come at ya in the evening and say, "You goin' up?" "Yeah." "Oh you wanna earn a quid [pounds] or a few bob or something?" "No. No. Uh uh." Well for all that how many trucks was there? There musta been oh bloody nearly twenty. There was three a them
- 24:00 we they pulled us up before we got into Beirut and they were searchin' the trucks and everything else. You know what they done? You know the chassis on a car on a truck? It's sorta got a place in there. There was three a them had taken the money and let them, they put the dope on 'emselves. They
- 24:30 did it at night and they found all this dope on the and a course the boys said "Well we don't know" and "We only got the trucks to drive here" and see but yeah. Three lots a dope.

And so what happened? Did they have to account for it?

Oh no. No. Well you see we were bringin' the convoy through. We picked the trucks up in the mornin' to start driving. We dunno what happened before that because they

- 25:00 we didn't even load 'em. They were loaded there.

Oh so your boys on the convoy were actually innocent?

Oh yeah. Oh innocent, innocent but...

Of that.

If like one bloke offered me six hundred pounds for a truck load of petrol and I said, "No." I said, "My mates that might need that bloody petrol." I wouldn't, another bloke, he sold it. He,

- 25:30 and they put it in that bank. What's the main bank in England? Oh god I can't think of the name of it. Anyway he put his money in there. I don't know what happened after that, but yeah. Oh yeah they and we the only rort [scam] I ever got onto was, see underneath the truck was a place I used to have a box of
- 26:00 tea and box of sugar and I used to get a pound a pound for tea and a pound was worth twenty five and eight pence. I used to flog a couple of pound of tea from underneath my seat and away I'd go. I was havin' a ball. Oh I'm not an angel you know.

What was what were some of the worst stories you heard about the black market

- 26:30 **in terms of things that were getting flogged or traded?**

Well you see like very little of it we had very little to do with the actual black market. It just happened that the time with the dope was when we were in the big main depot. Well there was natives comin' in and out like bloody yo-yos. You wouldn't know and when we all went to bed well it was open sesame I suppose and

- 27:00 we didn't we didn't know. We, only time as I said, if I wanted a quid or so I'd sell a couple a pound of tea, but I used to get a box it was a box of tea and it used to just fit nicely under the seat, but what tricked me was when we came home, went to Darwin, here was all the bloody desert trucks. Bloody
- 27:30 CAS, Canadian All Steels. I thought we'd left them behind the desert, but jeez I solid. Ooh. Little bit of wood on the handle. That's all. Cumbersome, but oh boy when you wound 'em up they went. Oh jeez they went. Yeah.

So there wasn't I mean given the ordinance depot was really huge with all that sorta stuff there wasn't twenty four hour security?

Well if they had security we never knew about it.

- 28:00 See we were in tents, right? Well then they had the big place where they could play bingo and all this sorta stuff and you're just goin' and comin'. No no real security except that time in Jenin, Christmas Eve, when they put us all on guard and then they fired all the shots off.
- 28:30 No the only time was when they lost those rifles. Jeez they were cunnin'. They loosened the tent so it wouldn't fall and then they went in, they were sleepin', six blokes sleepin' in it, and they lifted the pole up like that and slid the chain down and put the pole back and then went out and tightened up the rope. Jesus they were good. Oh really good.
- 29:00 Yeah.

And what about your trips up into Syria to for supplies?

Well we were to take up supp [supplementary] rations and stuff and to bring back 'loot' or we called it loot. It was whatever was left from the war between France and bloody and Australia you know. Ah there was a lot of horse horseless carriages and junk. I don't

- 29:30 know why they wanted to bring it back, but anyway we took it back down there for them, but oh what a turn up. The 6 Divie boys had raided the French officers' brothel and that was it. Puttin' us all out of bounds. We couldn't go to town. Oh that 6 Divie, no wonder they called them the 'Fightin' 6th'. Used to

be the 'Fightin' 6th', the 'Silent 7th', the 'Forgotten 8th' and the

30:00 'Glorious 9th'. There y'are you got 'em all. Yeah oh jeez, but you know we did more guard duty I think when we were the first ones over there at Jenin than we ever did anywhere else, because we never stopped. Yeah we when they told us we couldn't go in on account of the boys that raided the French

30:30 officers' brothel and we had a couple a days leave and next thing we're back on the road again comin' back. We had to come right back through Palestine and across the Sinai and into Tel el Kebir and ah I don't know why they kept sendin' me there all the bloody time but they did but ah I don't know. I think I had too many close shaves.

31:00 I don't want any more.

Pete were there some brothels that were better than others or that had a better reputation?

Oh well most brothels had the blue light outfit. If you had sex and you went down to 'blue light' outfit and you washed up and cleaned up. Most of the trouble seemed to come, like it does here,

31:30 from street walkers you know. Outsiders. Ah if there was a brothel that caused any trouble, straight away they jumped 'em, straight away see. Must tell ya this too. We went in one night to this brothel and here's all the girls sitting on the floor, no pants on, and they're playin' dice.

32:00 Jesus. So in rolled this bloke. I'll guarantee ya he come from back a Bourke and he sat down the chair like this and one of the girls said, "We'll have some fun tonight." So she goes and sits on his lap and starts to play and of course, bein' a human bein' it come up and he never said a word.

32:30 He just got off the chair, picked her up in his arms like that, walked to the first, oh walked to the first door, give it a kick, threw her and she landed on the bed and he was on top of her. Oh god. You shouldn't be listenin' to these things. No it's a, I'll never forget that night. By jeez it was funny there. Oh yeah.

33:00 The most a them and yet in Palestine they had a 119th Special AGH [Army General Hospital]. That was for the pox and sypho [syphilis] and gonorrhoea. Anything at all. Jesus they were and oh I'd better not say it.

Why not?

Well there wasn't only bloody privates there, there was everything. Even a devil dodger. Oh

33:30 god. Officers, privates.

Well, they're all men at the end of the day.

Yeah. Had to go in to get treatments. Oh yeah.

So was that the VD unit. Were they very busy on a regular basis?

Well you see, once ya got it you had to stay there in the camp. I believe

34:00 in the mornings, when'd they say? In the mornings they'd give you an injection and through the day they were giving 'em medicine or something and after two weeks or three weeks or something they had to prove they didn't have it. So when they went to pee, if they peed any pus, back again and start all over again

34:30 really and yeah I believe it was what I saw one bloke, where was Grovely that's right, and we used to, see I used to go to the fence and talk to me mates. They were inside. I was on the outside and this civilian came and I said, "What's goin' on here?" They said, "Oh he's got

35:00 syphilis." They brought him down put him through the, I don't know, some of the things that happened, but every joint had a, there shouldn't a been the amount of that was needed because you were given a, I'll tell ya a little story about the 'skin' [condom] in a minute, 'skin' or a Frenchie and there was a blue light outfit you know you where you

35:30 could clean up afterwards and if everybody had a played the game there wouldn't a been any, but half of them'd say, "Oh I'm not wearin' one of those 'great coats' [condoms]." Great coats and yeah that's right. That was funny and oh

So what would they do what was the procedure when you walked into the blue light after you'd been to the brothel?

Oh well you'd go in the blue light and

36:00 you gotta go and wash yourself see and you'd tell 'em where you been if possible because they keep a record and then if you happen to get the pox or something they know where it comes from see. Oh yeah they had that had that covered, but how 'bout these bloody Yanks? We'd come home and here's the Yanks roamin' around Brisbane. As soon as they got a load they went into this joint

36:30 and they give 'em a bloody big injection and let 'em out again. Oh Christ. The boys said, "This is no good

to us. We're in the wrong army." Oh yeah.

So did you make a habit of going to the blue lights before and after?

Oh well if I was gonna use a brothel I would. I'd, I tell ya that one with the pants, droppin' her pants

37:00 and her arse... I never even bothered because I never had sex see. See only time you had you used the blue light was when you had sex, but them other five blokes, by the livin' Jesus, I'll 'til the day I die I'll never forget that. "You stand over there. You stand over there. Were you with this mob?" "Yeah." "Show me."

37:30 See they squeeze it like that and if you've got it the pus comes out see and according to the story we got, that the internal of the penis it builds up little sores and until they're cured, it discharges all the time. There y'a. Now you know. "That'll be two and threepence thanks."

No worries.

38:00 **Give it to you after lunch. Were there any girls, particular girls, that were I guess well sought after in any of the brothels that you know?**

Well the trouble was you were moving most of the time. Now you take it we were in Palestine, right. Ah on our way to Syria we went through Tel Aviv an' Haifa, those places, but it's

38:30 only bloody rogues like me that can't resist temptation and you never you know, but they were always givin' us a bit of a talk about it. Always givin' a talk about it but and they used to say, "I'm not wearin' one a those great coats." Great coats they used to call 'em.

Okay we're gonna have to pause there Pete.

Righto.

So we can switch tapes again.

Tape 4

00:31 Right now. One more incident happened here, in Queensland. Um what happened? We had this, oh twice this happened. Once in Darwin and once here. This bloke was a young fella and we used to call him 'Bubba'. So they said to me, "Take Bubba

01:00 to the jailhouse." Box Creek it was called up there in Darwin. It was the other side of what's a name, "And show him the route" and so forth, and there's a bomber squadron there, "You've got to drop some stuff there." So away we go and we're just about ready to leave and this bloke come tearin' out with a sugar bag. You know what a sugar bag is? Oh you never seen a sugar

01:30 bag?

Yeah I know, a hessian sugar bag?

Yeah.

Yeah.

And he says to Bubba, "Will you drop this at the hospital on the way home?" "Yeah" Bubba says, "Yes." It was tied on the top and so we get back to the hospital and Bubba hands the bag in and the bloke says, "What's in here?" Bubba says, "I don't know." He said, "Oh well." He undid it and tipped it up and it was what was left of a bloke.

02:00 Oh my godfather and Bubba went, "Aaah", out like a light [fainted]. So I sat him up and got him back and I'll never forget that. That was from the air mob down there. Yeah. So now Bubba, he must be like me. We went on leave from Darwin and I had Mum in Brisbane then. So I could

02:30 come back to Brisbane. So Bubba I don't know, he come from south a bit and he got back to Brisbane a bit earlier and this Yankee nurse kidnapped him. True. She kidnapped him and of course he didn't know it at the time and he thought "I suppose I you know." So she takes him up to the flat. She locks him in every day before she goes to work

03:00 and he's gotta be ready had a bath and ready when she comes when she comes home from work. Anyway she had him there for a bloody month, hey, and she had his uniform all nicely cleaned up and everything else and she said she musta thought, "Oh he's tame now. He won't run away" so. So

03:30 Bubba gets out 'cause she left the door open. Away he went. He's walkin' down the street and he runs into a couple of provos and he says, "Arrest me. Arrest me. I'm AWL. I'm AWL." Here he is immaculate. Clothes pressed. No, he's shaved and everything and the provo said, "Oh piss off" he said, "You can't be AWL. Not in the condition you're in right now."

04:00 So he said, "Oh well that was no good" so he had to go back. She'd come home she demanded sex every bloody day and Bubba was only a young bloke you know, but he wasn't bad evidently and then the next day he said, "I'm gonna get outta this." So he goes right down to the Exhibition Grounds where the army place was and he said, "I'm so-and-so. Here's

04:30 me pay book. I made a "Yes." 'Bang'. Right. I dunno how she made out, but Bubba arrived back in camp only five weeks or six weeks away and we said, "Bubba what happened?" He said, "I was kidnapped." Ha, ha, ha. Oh Jesus, yeah. Poor old Bubba... or young Bubba he was.

Do you think that was the first time Bubba had sex?

05:00 I don't think so. I think he might have had a taste, but he had more than a taste for that month. She was absolutely demanding. She'd locked him in and he couldn't get out. She made sure the phone was off. Everything. He couldn't move. He just had to be bathed and ready when she came home.

I wonder if she got in trouble?

Hey?

I wonder if she got in trouble.

Oh no. She was doin'

05:30 alright. She was workin' all day and comin' home shaggin' all night and ha, ha, ha.

What a story. Now you were saying before Pete that you missed out going to Greece.

Mm.

Because you were ill again. What were you ill with?

Ah what do you call it? Like a fever. You know what I mean? Oh

06:00 like a, dengue, oh that's right. I had dengue fever and they had me in hospital. I was bad, but I dunno. I've been I'd liked to have gone and now I've got me passport all ready and everything here and I only got to win the Lotto [lottery] now to go, but I'm supposed to inherit a lot of money over there, but oh, oh well I,

06:30 if I don't get there, well I don't get there.

How much is it to fly to Greece?

Oh it's not a case of flyin' to Greece. See Dad's sister owns a block a units in Athens with a lotta money and she's had this she never married, but she's had this vulture and he's the stumblin' block in the road, but I've sent papers in, birth certificates, everything else and I think he bought

07:00 his way 'cause they said, "Oh we never received your papers. We never received your papers." So I don't know.

Now also you mentioned before that you were in charge of a bunch of drunks and derelicts...

Yes.

To train them as a PT [Physical Trainer]. Well why were they conscripted men?

No, they were volunteers. They but it just happened.

07:30 See they picked out all the drunks, all the bloody bludgers and everything and put them in one group and then I finished up having to handle them see but after that time they I tipped them all out of bed and everything they sort of improved and a course then it wasn't long before I was sent to Egypt see. I never stopped. I'm buggered if I know, but

08:00 all I wanted to do was get up to the unit. When was it? I never got there 'til even coming home, where was we? What happened? Oh yes I got into the unit. At last. At last I'm in the unit. So we were doin' our see the 8 the supplies.

08:30 We used to get the rations and break 'em up and that's why I showed you those couple a cards see. There's one there 8/2nd something see well we wasn't too bad in Palestine, but when we were up in after the bombing raids in Darwin we had to make do what we could and you know it was a, oh god I've lost the track again. What

09:00 was I doin'? Where was I?

That's alright. I was asking you about the men being conscripted but...

Oh yeah. No they weren't conscripted. They I dunno what happened to 'em. I straighted 'em up as much as I could and then I went to Egypt and god only knows what happened.

Sorry, I'm trying to hold back a sneeze there.

Have a sneeze.

Um now the supplies that you ended up taking to Syria, they were mainly food and ammunition. Is that right?

Supplies.

09:30 **So anything that they the men needed?**

Well see you gotta remember we I've been in supply and ever since I joined the bloomin' army more or less, except that six months I did infantry. I'm a trained infantryman, but you see they usually set up a depot. Well we had to take the stuff up to the depot

10:00 and we they'd distribute it, but if we had to come right through, right through from across the Sinai, across the canal, over through Palestine and up to Syria, but and we were really never got organised on that until we went to Darwin. Oh my godfather. We had the I think I don't know if I

10:30 told you about the general was sayin', "You got three months to do it." Did I tell ya that one?

No.

Well we I don't know, look true, we gotta go right back to bloody Jenin and then I got into me unit as a, what do they what they call it, a 'Kilo 69' and then we came in one day

11:00 and they said, "Pack your kit bag and sit on your bag and sit in your tent and don't go away." That night the brought in other trucks, we left our trucks there, took us to the station, put us on the train and we finished up in bloody Suez. So we got there four o'clock in the afternoon. We hadn't had anything to eat and they said, "Oh we'll give you an early tea." We're havin' tea and that

11:30 mate a Hitler's [Lord Haw Haw, William Joyce, radio propagandist for Germany in the Second World War], what's his name, he said, "Men of the 6th. I believe you're going home. Six miles out and three miles down." In other words they're gonna sink us see. So anyway we left there and went down the Suez Canal to Port Sudan, that's the capital of Abyssinia. We wondered what the hell had happened. The boat stopped and we get off the boat.

12:00 There was no camp, there's nothing and one roll of barb wire, they'd run that around and said, "Now that's your camp area." One roll of barb [wire], so we stayed there a week. I'd better not tell ya what happened during that week.

I have an idea that you may have escaped the barbed wire and gone into town?

Yes. Well I a couple of me mates wanted to go to the brothel.

12:30 So I said, "Alright I'll go and I'll watch the driver." We got a taxi. So we get down to the brothel. Now the brothel consisted of grass huts. No windas [windows], one door and I'm sittin' there and this taxi driver's gettin' very anxious. He wants to go and I said, "No, no, no. We can't go yet. We can't go yet" and then a bloody whistle went and you,

13:00 you'd be surprised. Not only my two mates, but there was others. They just come straight through the walls of the bloody thing without, well there was no windas, no door, only one door, and they just come straight through the walls. Anyway we got 'em in the truck and we just got back, we stepped over the barb wire and the whistle the bugle went. So we got outta jail and then of course they loaded us back on the boat in a

13:30 few days' time and we got down to Aden and across to Colombo.

Before you before we talk about going to Colombo, was Port Sudan just all grass huts?

Ah no. No. No, no it wasn't. See it was Abyssinia. You had the town. There's a photo somewhere in there if we can find it of us having our photo taken in the town.

14:00 It's only a small one, but it's there and well you know the brothel was sorta on the edge of town, but you'd been surprised at the way them blokes come through them bloody walls. There wasn't only our blokes. There was every blokes comin' out of walls left, right and centre. Oh no I'll never forget that. I lucky I'd a been there because the driver would have left our left the other two behind.

14:30 **And they would have been sent to jail for sure.**

Oh no they couldn't wouldn't go to jail, but they'd a got fined about ten pound or something for bein' AWL.

What about some of the adventures you'd get up to, for instance when you took the supply truck in Syria?

Yeah.

How many days would it take you to get there and what could you do on the way to relax or take it easy?

There was no, not a case of relaxing. We went from Tel el Kebir

15:00 across the Sinai into Palestine. We got as far as a place called Haifa. There's a camp there so we spent the night in the camp. The next day we took off again and we went up the oh it was beautiful country that up there and up near just like goin' up the range and when we hit the

15:30 outskirts of what's his name? The cops had us bailed up see because the 6 Divie had raided the officers French officers' brothels and the town was out of bounds and we were we were stuck. We couldn't go in and we couldn't go out. We couldn't go to the unit. So they dumped us in the South African mob.

Did the officers have better girls or something

16:00 **in their brothels? Or was it just off limits to...**

Well I wouldn't know there because I never saw the French officers' brothels, but of course the war they our blokes had chased them out then. Oh god. It's hard to say but gee I laughed. Anyhow but that's all we did. We only stopped the one night in Haifa and then we drove right through to Beirut.

And did you do any fishing there?

16:30 **In Haifa?**

No. I carried a fishin' line in my bag from the day I went in the army until the day I come out, and every time we I was somewhere and I undid it and the blind fell out they'd be, "We're in the desert. Where they gonna catch a bloody fish here?"

The Red Sea?

Oh the Red Sea. No we didn't fish I never fished that because...

You can't fish that, can you?

I don't know. Well see we

17:00 just got into Port Sudan there and they unloaded us and run a string of barb wire around and said, "Now don't, don't run around because we mightn't stop long." I'll see if I can find that photo for ya in a minute of the town, town part.

What about the Brits [British]? Did you come across many Brits in your travels over there in the Middle East?

The Brits? "Got a smoke

17:30 Aussie? I'll take two in case I don't see ya again." True. So you'd they're on a shilling a day. I was on two bob a day because I'd left my mother three bob a day outta me five until I got me promotion and I got up to nine bob. Well I, by the time Mum got hers I got

18:00 about six bob, but that was their favourite sayin', "Got a smoke Aussie? I'll take two in case I don't see ya again."

What about the Aussies? Did they used to bludge them off the Poms [British]?

Oh no. They only got a shillin' a day. They never had no money to buy smokes or anything. Yeah we didn't have a lot to do with the Poms

18:30 you know except that time I told you about the Red Caps and we never had much to do with them at all.

So they didn't take it out on the Aussie blokes for getting paid more than them did they?

Oh no. No, no. There wasn't see you gotta remember each division has three infantry battalions. Now ours were the 4th, the 8th and the 11th.

19:00 There were fifteen hundred to each one. So we weren't we each mob was fighting their own battle. You know what I mean? If there was any strays got in, well that was alright, but we didn't worry about it.

Now Chris was talking to you before about Gaza and you know, a few brothels there and what have you, but what about

19:30 **the social life? Would you go out beside you know besides the brothels, would you go out for a drink with your mates in Gaza or see the cinema?**

We could go to the cinema. I went to the cinema one night that's all and that's all written in English underneath. They're speakin' the other language, but it's written in English, but I only went once. No it was no good goin' there.

Do you remember what you saw?

20:00 No. I can't remember the picture, but I know we still had three miles to go home.

Now when you were in Egypt did you come across any of the sort of historical aspects of the Australians that were involved in World War I?

Not in Egypt. In Palestine there's a big war cemetery and I prowled around

20:30 through there. There's nurses, pilots, air force, army, it's a big thing. It's in Palestine, but in Egypt I, well I never had time really because I no sooner hit the joint than they were sendin' me up the desert or up to bloody Beirut or somewhere else.

Now I'm not quite sure if I have the pronunciation here, but Trinamalee, is that it?

21:00 Trincomalee.

Trincomalee?

That's the place in, oho Trincomalee... Colombo.

Colombo. So now tell us about Colombo. What was that like?

Well on our way home see I don't know this was we were just one unit. I couldn't understand what we were doin' on our bloomin' own. Trincomalee, yes I'll never forget it.

21:30 It's a most beautiful harbour. I reckon it makes ours look, I'm a traitor, but I think Trincomalee outdoes us.

Can you explain it for us?

Well wait a minute 'til I tell ya. On our way home, what was I gonna tell ya? Ah we were just one mob on a bloody old troop boat that could do six knots and I'm still at a puzzle of what the hell we were doin' and when we got

22:00 to Colombo we could see all these Pommie [British] troop ship ah Pommie navy ships comin' in. Tied up and everythin else and they used to go past our boat, but the oh now I've gone off again. Where was I?

That's alright. You were

22:30 **talking about that you were only one unit.**

Oh one unit...

In Trincomalee.

That's right. We pulled in. The boat pulled in one into Colombo. This is on the way home. We weren't comin' home. I think we were goin' to Timor because while we were there they gave us ammunition, everything, medical supplies. Took our kit bags and we were ready to go

23:00 and we couldn't find out where we were goin'. Later on ah we got in a storm for about three or four days and when we come outta the storm, we were off the West Australian coast. Just as well the bloody Japs had their fleet out after, there I go again see, and they said Timor had fallen and I think that's what made me think, "I'll bet that's where we were goin'",

23:30 see. We were only three hundred of us and we had all our ammunition and guns and bloody bayonets and medicine and everything see. The next thing a bloomin' old Wirraway [training aircraft] flew over us and I said to me mate, "We changed course." He said, "You silly b****" he said, "We change course every fifteen minutes." I said, "See that? How much petrol do you reckon that bloke's got?"

24:00 We must be off the West Australian coast" and that's where we were. So then ah, there was nothing else for us to do. We just kept goin' down towards Fremantle, but we could anchor this time. We could go up the wharf and we could have a couple of days leave in Perth. Oh.

I'd like to ask you about that, but just before I do, I'm a Sydney girl and grew up around the harbour and I

24:30 **think it's just the most beautiful harbour in the world. So when you said Trincomalee you think has got something on Sydney I'd like to know what it looked like.**

There's a great, it's got hills around it, most of it, and it's beautiful big area. The two boats in there look like two little, small boats and I'll never forget it. I haven't got a photo of it because we weren't allowed a camera then,

25:00 but Trincomalee, yeah. It's really beautiful. Really beautiful, but of course what, why I say that, the other place, see in Sydney you've got bloody ferries runnin' back and forth and boats and everything else see, but there was just so quiet and peaceful and the two boats. Just the two ships.

25:30 Oh it was lovely.

I wonder if it's still like that?

Oh I should imagine so, although you gotta remember love, that's that's sixty years ago. Oh goodness

me, you are expecting miracles!

So tell us about Fremantle then. You hadn't been to Western Australia before. What were your first impressions there?

Well we got the Arunta pulled into the harbour and they said, "Oh you can have a bit of leave. Go up to

- 26:00 Perth." So we had a shave, I remember, and in the rush to have a shave I've ripped meself. I don't know how, but I did. Anyway I had to stick some cigarette papers over it to, but no, it was it was good Fremantle. They were getting fresh supplies on board and we went up to Perth and had a look around and
- 26:30 there's a post office was up on a upstairs and these bloody Kiwis [New Zealanders], I dunno where they come from, they picked this little Mini Moke up and carried it up to the top of the stairs and left it there. Oh god almighty. We said, "Let's get out of here quick before we get blamed for this." Anyway we, and
- 27:00 when we got loaded up we had a couple of days there. It was a nice change you know to be on 'cause we'd been on the water, well it took us six weeks to come home. We'd been on the water a month or more then and we had to go from there around to Albury to get coal. Around we go to Albury and get coal. Then we finish up in Port Adelaide. They didn't lose any time.
- 27:30 They threw us off the boat, put us on a train and took it up took us up to the mountain. Bridgewater. You know where Bridgewater is? It's up in the hills outside Adelaide and we were there for awhile. They told us, "Oh we'll billet you out here, billet you out there" and we used to say to the lady, "Can we do anything?" "No, no there's a train goin' in a half an hour. Get on it and go and enjoy your leave."

28:00 So we had we had it made.

So who was the lady though? A family that offered to take in some army blokes?

Oh the whole lot. We were all billeted all 'round that area.

But were you with any mates or were you just on your own?

No. I had another bloke. There was two of us in this one but so we I never forget that bloody Adelaide though. We used to get the train in

- 28:30 and a train back. One night we were playin' up or something and we missed the train. So there's about six of us and we decided to get a taxi. Now the taxis didn't have fuel. They had gas. We pushed it up every hill and down the other side. It was twenty miles out of town.

I hope he didn't charge you your fare.

- 29:00 Ha, we gave him the fare, but I don't know if you've seen 'em. They they're sort of a like a gas cylinder they put on and we got home anyway, but oh Jesus talk about a trip. Every time we went on top of a hill we had to we go to push it up the next one, but Bridgewater's a nice place. It's really a nice place.

Can you tell us about

- 29:30 **arriving back in Australia? You'd been away in the Middle East. Did it feel did you feel like, "Ah my adventure is over. I'm coming home" and you were a bit let down or were you excited?**

No, no I wasn't let down. After we got billeted out and had a look in Adelaide, chased a bit of fluff [chased girls] I mean anyway I did. I did too. I got engaged.

- 30:00 Oh Jesus. Anyway when later on when I was in Darwin she sent me my Christmas box and he had his name on it. Oh dear. That was that. So no, when we went on leave Melbourne was the biggest downfall or whatever you like to call it. The train pulled up at...

- 30:30 in Melbourne and the people rushed us and you couldn't get too close, they grab ya. All wanted to know about the poor old 8th Divie and we were the 6 Divie see. They were all cryin' and yellin' about the 8 Divie, 8 Divie. See they thought we might even be able to tell them where they were or how they were or what they were doing. We didn't

- 31:00 have a clue. We were in the Middle East. The 8 Divie was in Malaya. So anyway we finally got back on the train, but you couldn't get near that bloody wire gate. They'd have ya quick. You know wantin' to know and it was a shame because there musta been a lot of 8 Divie boys from there. Well I was

- 31:30 not from there. I joined the last lot I was in, the 6 Divie, they were all Victorians. 6 Div ammo company. Oh my godfather.

So Australians didn't really find out about what happened to the 8th Divie until much later did they?

No. Well my cousins

- 32:00 they joined up after me and they got sent to Malaya. Oh they come back a mess. Oh god they were a

mess. They'd been hit over the head that many times with things and you know, they were in a really in a real mess, but they were with the 8 Divie. Well like my stay with the 8 Divie was short, but

32:30 you know, I would have been gone. I was gone, except for a bloody carbuncle and I mightn't a been sitting here talkin' to you today. It's hard to say, but those poor 'cows' [women] in Melbourne. Oh gee I felt sorry for them. We couldn't tell 'em a thing.

Were they mainly women or...

Were mostly women and they wanted to know where was the 8 Divie? What was the 8 Divie

33:00 doing? Ra-ra. Do you know so-and-so and...

Did you know any of the men that they talked about?

No. No. We were over in the Middle East and all Malaya had gone there and as I said, I was only attached to the 8 Divie ammo company for that short period and I would a been gone with them if I hadn't a got sick as I was sayin' that. So

33:30 no, it was a bit touching that. So

But, sorry.

Go on.

I was just going to ask you about this woman you got engaged to in Adelaide. What how you wouldn't have had much time to get engaged?

Six weeks.

Long enough I suppose and where did you meet her?

Oh I dunno know about where I met her, but I bought her engagement ring and we went through to Darwin. Christmas

34:00 comes. That was about April, or May or somewhere around there we went to and I get a parcel. My address is on the front of it and when they open it out the letter outside is to, "Dear John." The boys downed me. I said, "Come on. Send it back." They said, "Like hell." They all jumped on me and shared it all out and said, "Here. Here's the letter. You can have that."

34:30 So I wrote down and her mother wrote back to me and said, "I don't think you knew her long enough." She said the spell was too short, but I wrote back and said, "Alright. Well send me back the ring." One of those girls up there on that ah Jean, she's got that ring.

35:00 I gave it to her when I finally come, but oh jeez I don't know. Yeah six weeks. Big love affair and you know where I I'd been in every bloomin' camp. We were in the cricket grounds there in Adelaide. It was in the showgrounds in Melbourne. Ah I think I just about saw every camp there was.

35:30 Wandering boy.

And what about the pieces of fluff that you were chasing in Adelaide. Wasn't the girl that you got engaged. I'm assuming it was the brothels in Adelaide.

Oh no, no, no. I met this girl and it was a big love affair. We met at a dance and that's funny. I must tell ya about that too. We were we went to the dance

36:00 see and a lot a Yanks there. Now when the jazz music was on you couldn't get a girl to dance. The Yanks had had the lot, but as soon as an old time come that's when we'd jump in and oh you've never seen such a turn in all your life, but I don't know. This girl, Gwen her name was I think. Gwen, yeah, but her mother wrote up and apologised and said, "I don't think you knew

36:30 her long enough." So anyway I said, "Well send me back the ring", which her mother did, but them vultures pushed me down, took all the parcel and ate it.

What was it? Fruit cake?

Oh everything. Parcel, big parcel like that. There was tinned stuff and cake and you name it. Lollies, but what happened was, she got caught herself. She got with this other bloke, his name was John.

37:00 I get John's parcel and John gets my parcel. Aha ha, but my name was on the badge see. Oh Jesus.

So how long were you there in Adelaide and oh, until you got sent to Darwin?

Oh well from Adelaide we went to on leave.

Oh.

That's I think I told our mate there about what happened didn't I?

37:30 You leave Adelaide, you go to Melbourne, you go to Sydney, you go to Brisbane, you go to Rockhampton

and you got out to Emerald and then you change trains and I was my Mum was out in Blackall and I had to I said to her, "What do you want to do Mum?" She said, "I wanna go back to Brisbane." I said, "Alright." So I got me old pass out that was in about four pieces and I took it around to the

38:00 to the bloke at the station. I put it down. He said, "That's no good. It's expired. The date's out." I went around the corner, changed the date, come back. "Oh yeah that's alright." Ah so in three weeks I was adrift and I got Mum settled down and I went back to where did I go back?

38:30 That's right, I went back to Adelaide, and all the boys are gone. See I I'm always 'tail end Charlie' [bringing up the rear] and there's a young officer there and he looks at the pass. He said, "You're a bit late mate aren't ya?" I said, "No." I said, "Do you know where Blackall is?" "No." "Righto. Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane"

39:00 "Rockhampton", I'm not telling no lies, "and down to Emerald and down to Blackall." "Oh. On time."

So you went all the way back to Adelaide?

Yeah.

To be sent all the way back to Brisbane and up to Darwin?

No. I went all the way back to Adelaide on holidays.

Yes.

And then we went straight to Darwin.

Yes.

See and oh dear me.

What about your sisters

39:30 **Pete? Did they stay with your mum or did they join up any service?**

No they didn't join the service. 'Course they're young. Like you know, what I mean to say is I was nineteen and Jean and there was two; seventeen, Jean'd be seventeen; Betty'd be fifteen. You know Betty was working at a printing place that I know of. I don't know what Jean was doin' and see and

40:00 everything seemed to be going along alright, but bloody kids. Oh yeah so that was one boo-boo [mistake] I made. Something carried me away in six weeks. You bloody women.

You're just a born romantic I think.

Oh. I can't help it.

Alright, we'll stop there for lunch.

Tape 5

00:30 **Okay. Alrighty Pete, we'll make a start. I wonder if you could tell us when you got the news that you were heading up to Darwin and**

Oh. Well. We see we arrived back in Port Adelaide and they sent us up to Bridgewater and then they gave us leave and told us we were going to Darwin. We came back. Me, I'm runnin' late as usual, three weeks. When I get there they're gone. So I finished

01:00 up spending a week in the ah where the cricket you know the showgrounds that were there and then we had to get on a train, four foot eight gauge, and we had to go up to, oh hell I wish I could remember half these places, and change trains onto three foot six and up to Alice [Alice Springs]. We got to Alice and they dumped us in the creek there, it was dry,

01:30 and then boy oh boy. Three solid days in an open wagon. Goes fifty minutes and stops ten. Train, wasn't train, it was trucks. So we get up there and I had a...I was like the rest of them I wanted a bath and got the under the shower. Some dirty b*** pinched me pay book. What for I'll never know. So when I got up to the camp I had to

02:00 report I'd lost me pay book and they put me on a charge. So righto. They got me up before the beak and he said, "Where's your pay book?" I said, "I dunno. Someone pinched it." "Righto. Fined ten bob" and then he says, "Here's your pay book." Oh god oh bloody mighty. Could a given me the pay book. Instead a that he fined me ten bob. Oh, ho, ho.

02:30 So that was down near Adelaide River and then we shifted up to the sixty mile peg to start our camp. That's when the general comes and he says, "Right. You blokes a got three months to put the supply system right. We're bringin' in troops all the time, bringin' in a lot a stuff" he said. The 4th and the 8th Battalion, two battalions, 6 Divie got there later on and so righto.

03:00 We went like mad and we of course we had no shelter and that's why those cardboards I just to give you an idea, anything we could write on it. 2/1st battalion, 2/2nd or whatever it was, that's when we're breakin' up the supplies. Righto. Put that there, put that there. Anyway we'd had our three months and oh we had it

03:30 goin' nicely.

So you didn't have any buildings or anything. So what did you actually have, what did you have to build or arrange across that three months?

Oh I'll tell ya in a minute.

Oh okay.

So we three months went past and he came back. "Ah" he said, "You blokes have done a wonderful job." He said, "Now stay here and look after it." We never got leave to fourteen bloody

04:00 months went past before we got home. Anyway what happened was, we knew the wet season was comin' and we went up to Darwin and we grabbed any loose sheets of iron we could, 'cause they were all full a bloody holes, and we built a place so that we could put the tucker underneath. If it rained,

04:30 well we had then was those little signs out in the open, see, and then we had to I don't know where they got the tar from, but they boiled it and I'm up on the roof with brown paper and tar, hot boiling tar, puttin' it over the holes and down I went. See those two fingers? It just took the whole thing right off

05:00 and about a week's time a lump under me arm. Hospital. So I was tryna pitch a line to the I mean the sheila was tryna pitch a line to me, ah the nurse. Anyway she said, "Ah you'll..." I said, "I'll be goin' home tomorrow." She said, "No you won't." I don't know how the hell she knew.

Excuse...

But I couldn't open me eyes.

Excuse me Pete for a sec, we've just got

05:30 **Okay.**

I couldn't open me eyes. See the red mud, the red mud, the red dust, and they were they had to bathe 'em open for a week. Bathe me eyes open for a week, see, and every day the Sister'd come in and she'd rev it up me. "Aha another day, another day." So when I got outta hospital me mate said, "Come on, we'll go down to Adelaide River."

06:00 It's about ten miles away. He said, "There'll be a big swy game on." Two up. So righto down we go and he wins six hundred quid and I duck over to see this bloody woman and she says, "Oh yeah" I got to the door and the bloke said, I said, "I want to see Sister So-and-so". "Yeah" and as soon as she heard she came. We went for a walk and she said, "Aren't you gonna kiss me?" I said,

06:30 "No. I'm not gonna touch you." "Why?" I said, "I don't wanna get discharged, dishonourably discharged, outta the army." Yeah. I said, "You're an officer. I'm a private." "Oh." So I said, "You stay that side of the log and I'll sit this side a the log." I never ever went back after that. Anyway me mate and I we went back, he had six hundred quid, and he said to our pay sergeant he

07:00 said, "Here. Look after this for me." Pay sergeant said, "How the hell am I gonna look after that much money?" He said, "Look there's the tent. All I got is a little box", like one a them there. He said, "I can't be responsible for six hundred dollars." "Okay." Couple a nights go past. He said, "Come on, back we go" and he blew the lot. He blew the lot. Oh. Anyway

07:30 they decided to put me on the petrol point see and that's when the big ah, ammo fire, the dump went up. Oh I dunno. I think someone must a lit it as far as I could see and it took every truck. There was musta been about thirty trucks I think and they took mine. They threw all

08:00 the stuff out of it, just threw it out, and said, "Get in. Come on. Down we go." So down we go. Well you can imagine what it was like with all steel, Canadian All Steel trucks. You only had to get ten feet away from a flame and you could feel it. Anyway we got as much stuff as we could and then it was getting late in the afternoon. There was still explosions goin' off and

08:30 our major and a and the sergeant and me went for a walk. Oh another bloke yeah. We were walkin' along and 'boom'. Looked around. I'm the only bloke standin'. They're all on the ground, see. They weren't hit. I dunno probably I got a bigger fright, I forgot to fall over, and they said, "Oh." So that's when

09:00 they were talkin' about me getting the medal for bravery see.

And what was the explosion from? Was it part of the ammo dump?

Oh that was the ammo dump. That was goin' off. You know the navy shells there were that big, like that,

and that round we couldn't lift 'em and then with the heat of the fire they were getting hotter and hotter and hotter. Oh yeah. So anyway that was the ammo dump and after that, every night we went on duty on guard over our own

09:30 camps, plenty a live ammo. Plenty a live ammo didn't and didn't hesitate to use it if you had to.

And how big was the ammo dump and what was in it before it went up?

Well there was ah, naval explosives, there was mortars, there was hand grenades, there was bullets. You name it. It was a dump, an ammunition dump for the top. I think someone

10:00 musta lit it to be to be truthful, but so that was that. That was the ammo dump and I told ya about Bubba with his passin' out on me and then when we went we decided to we'd build a place for the wet season because we had tea, sugar, everything you know. Anyway

10:30 one other thing happened. Oh yes. We done the delivery and came back to camp and got pulled into the officer in the tent. He said, "Righto" he said, "You gotta go back out again." I said, "What for?" He said, "A truck, a truckload, a plane load of new prime New Zealand lamb has landed." Our fridges our freezers at Adelaide River were full. Full

11:00 of meat, see. He said, "We've gotta get rid of it." Righto. So away we go and we're givin' different units what we can and we get to this Yank camp. The Yankee sergeant there in the kitchen. I said to him, "Here. I've got something really good for you mate. Really cheap." He said, "What is it?" I said "Prime New Zealand lamb." Well I thought he was gonna

11:30 grab me and choke me. He said, "We don't eat that bloody stuff. We only use that to grow wool on." I said, "Alright." That night we had lamb, after dark we had lamb. So that that happened and

How do what do you what did you think of the Americans?

Oh well we never had much to do with 'em. They what's his name? I don't know whether I wrote it in the book there. There was Australian

12:00 bloke shot the only bomber down at night time. Um he was in charge there and that other fella that disappeared, somehow or other, it's every time he was drivin' a truck you'd think he was tryna fly a plane. He was trying to get it off the ground and we never had much to do with the Yanks at all. The only other time ah was out at, oh what's the name of that bloody

12:30 joint? There was Coomalie Creek and that's where the Beaufighters [Bristol Beaufighter aircraft] were. We were deliverin' there one morning. They'd been out on doin' their job and bloody Japs followed 'em home and as this poor bugger went to land they shot him down right in the aerodrome. So that was there. Then we were out at the oh what's the name

13:00 of it? The big drome anyway where the big planes used to come in and this Fortress [Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber] come. Slowly, slowly, slowly. It looked as though you know what an apple looks like when you bite a chunk out of it? Well that's what the tail looked like. As though someone had bit a piece out of it and he went over us slowly, slowly, slowly down. He run along the strip and stopped. We raced down. There wasn't

13:30 one alive in the whole plane. They were all dead and the pilot lived long enough to put the bloody thing down on the strip. He lived just that length of time. This big Fortress, but it's funny, I always think of an apple bite the chunk out of it. That's how much was missin' outta the tail of it. The whole lot. The whole crew was dead.

From what? Gunshot wounds?

Oh yeah.

Okay.

Oh well we didn't see you gotta remember mate, we can't butt

14:00 in on all sorts a things. They were all dead. The plane landed. It had been on a mission. Naturally they were bullets or whatever it was. The fighters, the Jap fighters, the Zeroes, musta got into 'em and the gunners were all dead and so was the pilot, how the hell he lasted long enough to put that plane down safely I'll never know. He's sittin' like this when we got there and he'd only been dead about

14:30 five minutes and...

Extraordinary.

Oh yeah that was then there was three ah Dutch planes ah sort of semi- bombers and every mornin' they'd go out over our strip, over our camp. Then suddenly one mornin' there was only two went out. Then suddenly the next mornin' only one went out.

15:00 No more. So they lost the whole lot eventually. We don't know what happened to 'em, but they were flyin' over there for quite some time before they started to go missin', but you see then there was the um, our own air force there and the Yanks. They weren't doin' much because they were mostly

interested in the bombing down at Box Creek.

15:30 That was their camp down there, but I laughed at that bloody Yank. "Take it away. We don't eat that stuff. We only use it to grow wool on." Oh Jesus. So we had a that night after dark after tea was finished and everything else we had nice grilled lamb chops on a on the open fire place and anyway we got this I got burnt

16:00 and spent a couple a weeks, you wouldn't credit it, the tar just lifted the whole sheaves of skin and all and then it got infected.

So what was the lump under your arm? That was...

That was from poison from this. From the burns. See I got burnt. Well I was carryin' on and a germ got in evidently and I had this lump under me arm. I dunno know whether I still can show you the mark,

16:30 the scar. Oh you can't see anyway. No they operated on it and I had two weeks in hospital and then when I was due to come out I couldn't open me eyes. The red dust, red dirt on the road. Oh it was bad. We had no glasses. We had nothing. Anyway we finished our job on the weather. Sixty mile peg in Darwin if you ever

17:00 goin' there. There's a sign up. Three company ASC [Army Service Corps] or 2/3rd or Australian Army transport corps and my mad mate, there's a photo of him up there somewhere, 'Bomber', and we were drivin' the big CAS, Canadian All Steels, and the Yanks were drivin' those ten wheel Chevys [Chevrolet] and that you know and they kept runnin' us off the road.

17:30 So Bomber said, "That's it." In front of our camp he sat there in it and he saw this bloody Yank comin' and he started the motor and 'boom'. He backed off and drove in. They had to come and get and get the Yank with a the break down truck. Oh those Canadian all steels they were heavy and

18:00 oh. Yeah and then I went over...

Okay.

Then I used to go over from the camp across there, there was a bit of a gully, and I used to get a duck.

You used to get a what?

A duck. So this day I had five rounds a ammo and I go across there. I miss the first time. The second one I get me duck and I'm comin' back and I got here I got attacked by a big

18:30 brown snake and I fire the three shots at him and I miss him, and I'm only from here to you off him. So I switched the ah the old .30 round and I got stuck into him with the butt and she was like that. So I took the snake and the rifle back to the camp. Didn't show 'em the duck a course. "Here y'a." Put the rifle down. Swung the snake up onto this thing. I said, "Give us another bloody rifle.

19:00 Look this one's no good." They did too. Oh gee what a bad, snakes were bad. Really bad.

How did you handle the wet season up there?

Oh well it wasn't it never really worried us when see we went up about March I think and then when we were there right through Christmas. We didn't seem to have much of a wet

19:30 but I must tell ya about the Christmas. So by Christmas by the time Christmas comes, all the 6 Divie is there just about and they were all bloody joint's crawlin' with troops and everything. So we decided we were gonna give 'em a Christmas dinner. So we split into two gangs. One gang'd go out and shoot and one gang'd go out and pluck and the next day you'd change over and we fed

20:00 the whole bloody mob on geese and ducks for Christmas. They didn't get a lot but they got it they got some. Yeah and

They must have been they must have been happy with that.

Oh yes. Well you see it was Christmas time and we had a big freezer down in Adelaide River, which they used to put the meat and that, but I don't know I was I often look at these

20:30 fingers. By jeez the that boiling tar took just as though it took the whole pieces out.

How long did that take to heal?

Well I was two weeks in hospital with the thing here and it was still healing then. Oh yes. Boiling hot tar. 'Boom.'

Now Pete, where were you on your travels when the Japanese actually entered the war? When you first found out?

Well when the Japs

21:00 um, well I joined on the 1st of August 1940.

Yeah.

Right. I went to Mookarra and then I joined the 8 div ammo company. Well that's probably where I was, although ah oh the Japs were in the war, but they were still sending gonna send our mob to Malaya in August or September, but you read that piece there what I told ya about

21:30 the bloody oh I found it there awhile ago.

Yeah.

You know what that was gonna happen mate. You'd a had a squeaky voice.

Now were you concerned at all go to go over to the Middle East given that the Japanese were sort of in the war and you know that war was coming closer to Australia? Were you worried about going over to the Middle East and thinking that maybe you should stay here?

We all in the Middle East, we were gonna walk home. There was nearly a bloody

22:00 revolution over there. That bloody what's his name? Churchill [Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom]. He wouldn't let us come home. He said, "Oh we've gotta have someone here for the Alamein [El Alamein] show." So they took the 9th Divie over there and that's how we got out of it, but if he had have a there was nearly a big strife. They said, "Alright. We'll walk home. We'll go through India",

22:30 but then Churchill changed his mind again see. They had the 9th there at Alamein to we had, oh I mean I could admire him for the fact that he was worried about England but he wasn't givin' a damn about us because when they said to him, "What about us? The Japs?" "Oh" he said, "We'll take it back after the war." See. Oh yes that was funny. They were gonna walk home.

23:00 The two divies were gonna come. No no no muckin' around. It woulda been funny seein' what was it, fifteen hundred, three thousand troops marchin' or well walkin' from Palestine into through India to India. Oho. Would a been funny but that's that was why a lot of us didn't like Churchill because, "Oh we'll take it back after

23:30 the war." Yeah. What was he gonna take back? You seen what was gonna be. You'd half bred Jap population. If he could take it back. Yeah.

And what about Blamey? What did you guys think of Blamey [Sir Thomas Blamey, Australian general]?

Well I knew Blamey's driver and one minute he'd be a sergeant, the next minute he'd be a private, and every time I saw him, I saw him in the Middle East a few times.

24:00 I said, "What happened?" "Ooh" he said, what's his name, Tom [Thomas], "Tom and I had a bit of a yike [disagreement]" he said, "And he's tore me stripes off." He said, "Don't worry. I'll get 'em back next week." Sure enough. Oho. Oh yeah, but our man that went to Malaya, he's the poor bugga that copped it. He's the one general that got outta Malaya.

Black Jack?

Oh god. What's his bloody name? Anyway he got out

24:30 and oh they give him hell. They give him hell at home, but anyway I'm lucky to be even talkin' to ya 'cause...

Tell us about what you experienced of the bombing in Darwin?

Oh well you see in the first few raids we weren't there and then they'd come over, they'd fly over our camp.

25:00 The Spit the fighter pilots'd fly over. You could almost reach up and touch 'em, see, and then it in the evening the bombers'd come, but they weren't interested in bombin' one of our little unit. They were mostly, up around Darwin what was up there? Oh that's where the other air force was. You know closer to Darwin. There was

25:30 you know Kitty Hawks [fighter aircraft] and everything and then the pride and joy. One day there I'm I could hear these planes. "Spitfires [Supermarine Spitfire fighter plane]! Oh you beauty!" and they went over me. Well they got that excited, these damn Spitfire pilots, they're chasin' the Japs and they go out to sea thinking not worryin' about the petrol and they bloody crash into the sea.

26:00 They had to we had to have the, what do you call 'em? The boats to tear out and get the pilots. Yeah. They get they get too carried away chasin' these bloody Zeroes, but oh Jesus they were good, though. They were good. Yeah. I'm tryna think I'd have to get that book and see the name a that ah he was a very good pilot and they stripped his plane down,

26:30 but he was the only plane only one to ever shoot down a night bomber in Darwin. It's in history and anyway

What kind of damage did you see because of the bombing that were happening in Darwin?

Oh Darwin. All the houses that had fibro on 'em were all shattered. There was all just the frames. The bombs used to smash you know go off

27:00 and ah Chinatown there I think got wiped out and I think there was a Yank boat in the harbour. Destroyer, cruiser, something. She went down all hands, but we weren't there then. See we never left to go to Darwin ah we never it was February, March

27:30 before we started to move up there. Well a lot of things happened between the you know in between times but oh the cheeky buggers. They'd come over like that. So our blokes have stuck a Bren gun [machine gun] there and that was alright. We waited for the next lot to come and the next camp, this poor bugger was sittin' there with his .303 [Lee Enfield rifle] and he, 'bang'. He must a got too close to the pilot.

28:00 They come back and shot the whole camp up. So we put the Bren gun away nice and quietly. Took it down and put it down. Oh well, if we fire at 'em they'll come back and blast us. Oh yeah. I'll never forget, that poor bugger, he I don't know whether he hit the pilot. I don't think he hit the pilot, but he must a give 'im a horrible fright from the whole three or the four a them, whatever it was, to come back and blast, blast

28:30 away. Yeah.

And what about what was left, if anything, of the local population in Darwin? Did you get to...

No, no local population mate. Look when we got there, it was after the first few raids. From Darwin to Adelaide River was just one string a cars and trucks. As that one run outta petrol they got in the next one and that one and that one and then just left 'em.

29:00 Then they got on the train and went further south. The train from Adelaide River took 'em down to Larrimah or somewhere. So but it was funny to see all these cars run outta petrol and yeah and that other mob, by jeez I was cranky about that. They just got in and they ripped open every pilla [pillow] case and every mattress.

Which mob was this?

Oh the scroungers, the bludgers,

29:30 the urgers. I dunno what you'd call 'em. They were there.

Locals or army fellows?

Oh I think they were army fellas, but we never were able to track that right down, but all we could see was mattresses ripped open and pillas ripped open. Yeah.

Lookin' for money?

Yeah.

And what about I guess more general looting? Were

30:00 **was anybody sort a nickin' stuff outta the abandoned stores or**

No, no. We never saw any a that. 'Course we're sixty miles away see and these things could happen and we wouldn't even know about it, but I went back to Darwin, took Mum up for a trip. There's a photo of us there where we used to get our water at Adelaide River and

30:30 I took Mum up, but I forget then, oh that'd be a bit longer and that's a long time ago now, but no, see most a the population cleared and even the army or what what army whatever was there, it cleared too. There's wasn't many left, but the 'sproodies' decided to wait. See they had no worry about there was no organisation or anything.

31:00 They just, right. As everybody went, they went in. Anyway we got the iron which we could use or it was full a shot full a holes. You shoulda you wouldn't credit how brown paper and tar could seal the bloomin' galvanised iron, oho. Near sealed me fingers too.

31:30 Yeah. So we had that built. I don't suppose it'd be there now. It probably was all bush timber, see it. It probably God, forty two, forty three, ooh sixty, seventy years ago. It'd be gone now, but I believe they have put signs along the road where different camps were and we were at the sixty mile peg. Oh yes.

32:00 No, you see we were too far out and we were actually too late if you follow me. The first three raids, whoo they were just off and there there's oh some anti-tank mob, tack attack mob, there. They were frin' at 'em, but they couldn't

32:30 get much from I'd like to know I've got the name of that boat written down there somewhere. The Yankee boat went down. There's about a thousand on it you know. Oh yeah.

Now without any I guess local population or local girls around the place, what did you do to

pass your time?

We were there twelve months and I saw one woman and it was as black as those shoes a mine.

- 33:00 She went past in the back of a truck and one the blokes said, "Look out there's a woman" and everybody rushed to have a look and it was an old gin [Aboriginal] sittin' up there. No women. Oh you alright, you now you prompted me. We came outta Darwin and Bomber and I, Bomber's Mum was in Brisbane, so was mine. So when we were on leave
- 33:30 whichever was the closest, his place or mine, that's where we slept, see. So I said to Bomber, "We'll go to the dance tonight?" "Oh yeah, yeah, we'll go to the dance", but I said, "Christ man", I said, "I haven't seen a woman. I don't know what a woman's like." I said, "Twelve months" I said, "I'll get a stand in as soon as I pick 'er up" and he laughed. He said, "Alright. C'mon. Down the brothels." So we go down
- 34:00 and this sheila takes me on. Ah three quid I think it was or something like that and I'm pumpin' away there for about fifteen minutes. She throws me off and she says, "Where a you been?" I said, "Darwin." She said, "It's full a mud. Here's your money." Give me back me three quid. Oh you wouldn't credit it. Oh it's hiding. Yeah
- 34:30 and okay. We next time we went down there, there's a Yank runnin' around and he says, "I can't get a girl to take me. I can't get a woman to take me." We said, "Why, what's the matter?" He said, "They all say I'm too big." Oh well. So we were pokin' around there and suddenly one a them must a had a weak moment. She said, "Alright. Come on. I'll take ya." So we're sittin' in the gutter, see,
- 35:00 alongside you can hear alongside the house, see. So he gets in there and he climbs aboard and she says, "I thought you said, aaaaah, you sure have."

That sounds a bit like a bit of a tall tale.

It's not a tall tale. It was a bloody Yank and every time the boys'd

- 35:30 see one another up the town, "You suuuuuure have." Yeah.

So did that cure you and your mate of bein' anxious in terms of chasin' some local girls around Brisbane?

Brisbane? Oh well ah you know we we'd go to the dances. There was plenty a dances there. There wasn't a case of just one dance. You could half a dozen

- 36:00 different places you could go dancin' but what happened to Bomber? Oh godfather. Oh that's right. He latched onto this sheila. We went and got our photos taken and he latched onto this sheila and a course we usually worked as a pair when we were on leave. One girl, no. Two girls, yes. So
- 36:30 Bomber said to me, "Listen" he said, "Give us a break tonight." He said, "I got a date." I said, "Alright." So we were bouncin'. It was out near where my mother's house was. Where she was staying. So Bomber's out with this sheila. She was married to a bloody Yank. I don't know why or how, but and he drives up, Bomber's in doin' business and he drives up
- 37:00 in his jeep and Bomber heard the door go and he jumped up. He moved behind the door and this bloody Yank raced in and he's he said, "Ah" he said, "I thought I had ya doin' it, playin' up at last" and Bomber gradually eased out the door and got behind a pot plant and this bloke slammed the door and Bomber got out and come over to me. He
- 37:30 said, "Gee whiz mate" he said, "You got no idea how close he was."

Was there a bit a competition between the Aussie boys and the Americans for the girls?

Ah only in certain areas. Now as I told ya before, I think, in Adelaide when the music was jazz we couldn't get a sheila.

- 38:00 Put the old time on and the Yanks were hopeless. They couldn't do it. So we used to get our share, but we used to I've seen 'em standin' in the gutter offerin' a sheila money and the woman's sayin', "Go away, go away." Yeah, but oh well. That's war.

Okay Pete we'll actually stop there.

Tape 6

- 00:31 **Pete we'll just talk about that time after being in Darwin and you came down to Brisbane and you and Bomber were going out and having fun and what have you.**

Mm.

Now that's when you met up again with Dot, your bride to be wasn't it? No? Tell us how you

how you ran into Dot and got married.

Well the unit was when we first come outta Darwin they sent us to Wondecla.

- 01:00 That's up on the Tableland [Atherton Tablelands]. Then we moved into Wongabel, see. Then we moved into, if you ever go up there you'll see the big place where all electricity is that's reminds me, I'll tell ya a little story about that creek too. Anyway we were doin' the rations and I dunno
- 01:30 I it was I hadn't seen Dot in seven years then and one a the boys said, "Oh come on, we'll go to Mareeba for the dance." I said, "How the hell are we gonna get there?" "Oh" he said, "My skull" he said, "He got a sheila there. He goes every night." "Oh" I said, "That gets us there. Now how do we get home?" He said, "No worries mate." He said, "There's a train leaves at four o'clock in the morning. It takes us to Tolga.
- 02:00 It's only a mile, a mile and a half to the camp. You gotta walk there." "Right." Away we went. So ah he had a girlfriend and in workin' in the hospital that I didn't know. Anyway he went to see his girlfriend and I was pokin' around there. I thought, "Oh well I'll go to the dance." So I walk into the dance and Dottie's sitting there.
- 02:30 On her own. 'Cause I'm a cunnin' bloody shit. I look around at a couple a dancers to see, see what the girls are you know how good the girls are. I'm tellin' ya my secrets, see. So no one seemed to be goin' near Dottie and so the music struck up and I went over. I said, "May I have the pleasure of this dance please?" She got up. Two steps. She said, "You're
- 03:00 Peter." Four months and we're married. So from then on it was she used to come up to Atherton. There was a place there I could book her in of a for a few nights and she'd go back to Cairns and we had no children then. Matter of fact it wasn't until I went to New Guinea that back to New Guinea
- 03:30 that the first child was born.

When you were in New Guinea?

Yeah.

So hang on. I just slow get you to slow down for a second there Pete. So you actually saw each other at the dance and four months later you were married?

That's right.

Before they sent you to New Guinea, before you went to Wewak? Now why was it all so fast? Did you feel that you wanted to get married before you went there or...

Oh I don't know. It's just you take it seven years

- 04:00 when someone claims ya after seven years and there's other photos there I might show ya afterwards. I thought, "Oh well. Bloody man's twenty six, twenty seven now. It's about time he settled down" see, but I didn't go to Wewak then I don't think it was. Yes I did. That's right. It was '44. 21st of March '44 we got married
- 04:30 and we never went to, the Coral Sea Battle was on. There's three divisions were up on the Tableland. We weren't goin' anywhere because if the Japs had a won the Coral Sea Battle we'd a been fightin' like mad to keep them from goin' up the Tableland, see, but anyway Dottie and I got on together and oh what was it? Mary was nine months old I think when I saw her.
- 05:00 That's the one that was murdered and I came when I come home I got discharged on the on the 17th of December 1945. I caught the train straight away that night and I was back in Cairns on the 20th. I joined the RSL [Returned and Services League] on the 20th and there it is, there's the thing there, and
- 05:30 anyway Mary was um, Dot was stayin' with her parents see. So I think I got a hundred and a hundred and fifty quid. That's what they paid me after they kicked me out. So I thought "Oh yeah." I looked out the road there and I bought two blocks a ground for fifty quid each and then I went to the bank and
- 06:00 got a loan and they wouldn't let me build a house 'cause I wasn't a carpenter then, then, and this carpenter built the house and nine hundred and twelve pound five shillings. Three bedroom house. Big. Proper you know none a this rubbish. All the timber was big and good and oh dear me
- 06:30 and when that time that of course the we were living there and this fellow came down from New Guinea, a mate a mine. He must have, oh I can't tell ya what his name is now, and he said, "What are ya doin'?" I said, "I'm workin' on the council as a carpenter." Did I tell you how I got that job? I'd better stop and go back a shade.

Let's go back just a little bit before you went to Wewak and you got married.

Yeah.

So

07:00 **how did you have the money to buy an engagement ring for Dot?**

No, but hey, get off there, but you'll bloody well know all my secrets shortly.

07:30 Come on come on. I must be in the wrong one am I? There.

But you had a wedding ring.

You know what I said to her? See that?

08:00 You have that or none at all. Now that wedding ring is was bought in 1944.

It's still in good shape though isn't it?

Yeah, but it's thinned down a terrible lot. I always carry it in me wallet here.

So how did Dot organise the wedding with only four months that'd you been going out?

Oh.

Just at the last minute?

No,

08:30 wait a minute. When we got married in '44 that was in...in March and we didn't go to New Guinea until next year. We couldn't go anywhere because the Japs had us blocked off, but to get the wedding organised, when I proposed and she accepted it and we had a big wedding cake made and then I

09:00 wriggled me way into getting some leave to go to Brisbane because her Mum and Dad were there and my mother was there. Then things went awry. Poor Dottie's down in Brisbane with the wedding cake and I'm up in Cairns and I can't get leave. Oh so Dottie had to come back. On the way back,

09:30 there's a girl sitting in the train with her and she says to Dottie, "Where do you come from?" and Dottie says, "I come from Cairns." "Oh Cairns. Do you know Peter Poulos?" and Dottie said, "Yes and I'm gonna be marry him."

Well I was reading in your book Pete just then about the other girl talking quite a lot about you, that she knew you very, very well.

'Course she did. All women know me well.

10:00 **Do you know who she was?**

Haven't got any idea. Anyway that was part of it. So Dottie came back and then they give me leave. So Dottie went down again and it got I finished up gettin' leave in the end and I had three months in Brisbane. That was my honeymoon and then I came back. That's when they shot

10:30 me up to New Guinea, see, but it must a been shock for Dottie when she said to Dottie, "Do you know Peter Poulos?" and Dot pounced up. She's usually very timid. "Yes and I'm goin' up to marry him and here's the weddin' cake." Oho god love me. So anyway we came back and

11:00 by the time I got back the boys had gone to New Guinea see. So I was tail end Charlie again with a few others, AWL-ites and so forth, and they put us on a boat here in Cairns called The City of Mexico. A rotten bloody banana boat. It stunk bananas, bananas, bananas. There's a photo of me in the layin' in the floor in the

11:30 thing somewhere here. Anyway we finally got up there and there's no wharf, again. So we have to go down the ropes, over the ropes, full pack on, down the ropes into the barges and taken ashore. So that's how I got back to New Guinea. Well from then they had a different set up to Darwin. See in Darwin

12:00 we were in the unit but there, we were still in a unit, but they'd say, "Righto. You're transferred there for one month. Take your truck and the end of the month you bring it back for overhaul." So I used to go I was detached to the infantry and one day there I didn't have any work so the boys said, "Do you want to go for a walk up the front?"

12:30 This was the camp back. The front was in front of it. I said, "Alright. They said, "Well we need another one for a guard" see, and a bloke said to me, "Here y'a. Here's an American machine gun." Them little ones. He said, "Take that Pete." He said, "Instead of luggin' that big old .303." So away we went and we get ambushed. Again, see, again.

13:00 The devil smiled and I tried to fire this thing and it jammed. So I had to lay there while they fought around all around me. Anyway they beat the Nips [Japanese] off and we delivered the bit a tucker and we came back and I never ever went without my old faithful .303 again. Oh jeez. Just marvellous. Just it just

13:30 I said to the bloke, "It won't fire." "Oh" he said, "It's jammed." I said, "Yeah I know it's jammed" and I nearly got jammed with it. So that was how they worked there and that what I told you about the Yank

with the cigarettes. No I haven't. Alright. Well when we first went there, they had a log and two

14:00 forks like that and they that was what we sat on to watch the pictures. So this night we went to see the pictures, see, and there's a Yank sittin' alongside of us. There's two of us and a Yank and then there's someone sittin' on the other side and the bloke on the other side, "You got a smoke?" It's in the book there somewhere and

14:30 the Yank gives him his packet and his lighter and about ten minutes later he's screamin', "Where's me bloody cigarettes?" see, and someone struck a match and it's a bloody Jap in there. So they pinched him. Took him up for interviews. He'd seen every movie that they'd shown there in the whole time. 'Cause he could tell ya the name of the picture, the main actresses

15:00 and everything.

What was he doing, was he hiding out there?

No. He used to just come down from the hills when the pictures were on and watch the pictures and go back up hill again to his unit. Oh he had it made this boy and then he'd get a smoke. Sit in the dark somewhere and ask for a smoke and they'd give him a smoke. Oh he had it scummed.

So nobody knew that he was a Japanese?

No. Not until that night. Anyway then they took him down and interviewed him and

15:30 went put him through the paces but he'd been having a picnic. Ever since the Yanks landed he'd been to the pictures.

What happened to him do you know?

Oh well he's a prisoner of war. God only knows what we had no time to worry about him because we were doin' supplies. We'd race down bringin' the, we never had any beer for a few months.

16:00 Now the beer had to come on the boat on the barge and we were back onto the barge and they'd load it straight on the truck. It was one and threepence a bottle. We were allowed two bottles. So sometimes we'd say, "Oh well, we'll drink one" and the Yanks'd come along offerin' you a quid for a bottle. So you'd say, "Oh now

16:30 I get some smokes", but the bloody Yanks were one jump ahead of us. We'd go to the Yank camp lookin' for cigarettes and they wanted three dollars ah thirty bob a carton for cigarettes. So that was more than we had the quid for see. Oh yeah.

Did you meet many Americans that you became friendly with in Wewak?

Well

17:00 they weren't there that long. You see when we moved in they'd been fighting and there was all the barges and bashed up barges and everything else and it had a couple a spots there on the river bank there where they'd had a big fight. We never had time. That bloody MacArthur [Douglas MacArthur, United States' general], I'll choke him. He didn't want any Australians to go to the Philippines, so he dumps us there and takes all the Yanks there.

17:30 Yeah. So we never got to the Philippines and he said, "Oh it's only a moppin' up campaign." They only went seven miles and they won the first VC [Victoria Cross]. Moppin' up right enough. They got two VCs out of that campaign, but it's only a moppin' up campaign, and I there's those two blokes MacArthur and what's the bloody Pommie?

18:00 I always, always think of them. I say, "You pair a bastards."

I was just reading in your book about Cape Wom where you were...

Cape Wom. Wom.

Wom.

Mm.

That's where you were stationed and how far away from the port that Wewak was that?

About

18:30 oh, we had a road around us. It was about three mile from there to Wewak drome and we used to go we had to take turn about of the barge would come down with the meat and we had to go at a certain spot to meet the barge somewhere along there. It was still enemy country and we'd bring the meat back and then we'd break it up and deliver it. Anyway

19:00 there's a fella there, 'Snapper' or something, anyway he'd been in Greece and Crete and the desert and real dry sort of a fella and this morning he got a load of meat on about three ton and he went to take off and he got half way in the bush and 'bang' a bullet went through the windscreen or the door and he

bailed out and left the three ton of beef go tearin' off down the road until it hit a tree.

19:30 Three days we waited for him to turn up. We didn't know whether he was dead or alive or well it didn't take us well after the first twenty four hour it didn't take us long to find the truck with all the meat on it.

Was the meat off?

Oh it was gone. Gone, see. So we were all sittin' there. It's nearly tea time and in rolls what's his name and we said, "Where the bloody hell are you been?"

20:00 "Bloody hell" he said, "I didn't go through Greece and Crete and the desert to come over here and get shot by these bastards." Oh jeez. So they we didn't have the in Darwin we had the Canadian All Steels. In Wewak we had the ten wheelers, Chevys and that, and we were packin' up to go to

20:30 Bougainville when the war finished and that brother-in-law of mine, not the fella in the photo the other one, Betty's husband, he was in Bougainville at the time and the war finished. Otherwise we'd a been still goin' to Bougainville. Yeah. Oh yes, but Cape Wom was on a sort a you come up from the beach on a sort of a rise and

21:00 we were on Cape Wom. You could look out and you could walk down but you had to be careful and that's where we got the dugong to feed 'em on that time, but the Yanks bombed us. Oh I'd better not tell ya that though.

No tell me. What was it?

No, no, no.

No that's alright. You can tell us.

Yeah and someone'll shoot me.

No. It was so long ago now.

Well all the divi

21:30 moved up onto Cape Wom and the bloody Yanks thought we were Japs and bombed us. They killed seven people. We had to bury 'em down below Cape Wom, but they didn't realise it for awhile and then so that's alright. Another day on the island there the Japs had their island. They're on

22:00 the island, we're on the mainland, and this bloody Yank, he's havin' a go at 'em over there and they had a go back and he got one in the plane, so he bails out see. He doesn't know which way the wind's blowin' or anything else. If it went that way he'd be a prisoner a war of the Japs. Come this way he'd be our ours, see, and all the boys are watchin' him in the chute there. We're down on

22:30 the beach. See Cape Wom went down like that and that's where the barges used to come in and we were down there that day and we see it comin' into the scrub so we race chargin' through the scrub yellin' our heads off. He thought we were all Jips, Japs and here he is backed up against the tree, his revolver in his hand, goin' like this and,

23:00 "God" he said, "Here" and he give his gun away. He undone everything, except his pants, and give it all away to the boys. Oh god but he's lucky he landed on our side and not their side 'cause they would have killed him. Oh yeah. Bloody Japs.

Had you heard about any of the atrocities that had taken

23:30 **place in the islands at that time, or did you find out later?**

Ah when we got up to Wewak, I'm just tryna think if there's any before that. Oh well what you read that bit in the book there and what they were gonna do to you women and us blokes, but outside of we never found that until we took Wewak, but we you know we

24:00 there we rescued seventy four Indians. First of all they found one on his own, then they got seventy four, who told our blokes there was fifteen hundred of 'em brought out from Malaya and all they were doin' was usin' 'em, eatin' 'em and sexin' 'em. So righto. They put the infantry in and they got the seventy four out and

24:30 we went up to pick' 'em up. There was an Indian fella there, a major, and they were of course we've always got the smart arse askin' questions, askin' questions and he said, "Oh all this bull shit" he said, "About you blokes gettin' used for sex" he said, "rubbish" and the old Indian

25:00 just dropped his pants. Well he'd just been whipped, torn and busted. Right?

The Japanese had actually chopped his penis off or...

No the Japanese were ridin' the arse off 'im. Aha.

I'll have to stop for a second Pete.

This, you right mate?

Yeah.

This major, now to become a major

25:30 in the Indian Army...

Sorry Pete.

Indian Army, hello.

Okay, sorry Pete.

Yeah to become a major in the Indian Army, he'd have to have been there a long time and a brainy bloke. Anyway we roll in with our trucks and as I say, there's always that rotten idiot that'll you know

26:00 never believes anything and he just politely dropped his pants, turned around. Oh god almighty. See what was happening was, they had no food. We cut off all their supplies and when they used to go out on patrol they'd take an Indian or anything at all. They'd all play sex with it and then they'd eat it.

26:30 Yeah I'm sorry to make you think that way, but that's what was happening, but oh I'll never forget that idiot of a bloody clown. Anyway the old Indian major never batted an eye. See they before they kill 'em they were havin' sex with 'em and the poor buggers never knew what was gonna happen, but seventy four

27:00 out of fifteen hundred.

Survived? So it wasn't obviously just the men that they would rape and then kill? It was also the women?

Oh Christ, yeah. The poor bloody gins [natives] used to go for the bush as soon as they heard a noise. Oh yes. Yeah. Yeah. They see they were usin' 'em for sex and eating 'em

27:30 afterwards. Now they ate my mate and I'll never forgive the bastards who went on it for... Hello, who's... Someone's out there.

Pete we were talking about your mate and I know it's pretty horrible to talk about it now, but it's very important for the archive to try to understand what did happen. You were telling me that he was a great footy

28:00 **player.**

Great footballer. I was a footballer, he was a footballer, but he was better than me, but that how see we can't get too far ahead of we were in Wewak and we were coming down the coast oh, where were we? We were we

28:30 oh, I told you about how they changed the subject around see, to sending trucks to different battalions, and they'd be a month away, and we had one brigade up in the hills. Anyway we went the first seven miles was a, they won a VC. So righto. That was alright. We went

29:00 progressing along, right along the coast, and we run into trouble. We couldn't get any further and they were brought truckload after truckload a rocks and every time they put 'em in they just sunk down and sunk down and sunk down. He couldn't get a bottom. So that meant they had to bring in the barges and go 'round it and we finished up at a place called But.

29:30 B-U-T. That's where I lost me mate and he was in the infantry and he was went out on this patrol and he got shot the first day and took three days to get his body back and that's when they'd eaten heart, liver, kidneys, muscles, the whole damn lot. I was sitting there when they brought his body back and you mightn't credit it. I just burst into tears and I cried for bloody ten minutes.

30:00 No. Alright. That happened that side, and I, when we moved in there, there was an old road leading to the strip they had there, the Japs, and oh, I got a itchy nose. What's that a sign of? Some sheila thinkin' of me is she? Yeah. Anyway we were...

Hang on Pete. Hang on.

We were

30:30 moved in and the sea was there and we were there and the road was there and the Jap strip was over there, but they weren't using it see, and the first night I had to fill for guard duty with this letter fellow named 'Shorty' Walton. Shorty. Better not mention his second name. So we dig a hole

31:00 and we get in it and there's the road runnin' along there. First shift went alright. Second shift goes to go and down comes the skull, the officer, with another bloke. They got a Bren gun and a box a cartridges and, "What's up?" "Oh expect a counter attack tonight. Here, get the gun ready." So, righto. So we're in the hole there and

31:30 ooh it was about half past two, three o'clock. Mighta been later and Shorty's tappin' me on the shoulder. "Behind us, behind us, behind us" and I said, "You silly b****" I said, "Our camp's behind us. All the boys are sleepin' down there." "No. Behind us, behind us." I turned me head and a bloody big kangaroo or wallaby jumped in the hole with us and then

32:00 didn't we have some fun then tryna get rid of the damn animal and then the two of us, finally we got it out of the thing, and down the line further this fellow went to relieve himself and he comin' back he tripped over the rope on the tent and the other bloke was layin' there with a bloomin' machine gun. Of course he sees, went "phut" then it started the whole lot. Guns

32:30 started firin' everywhere.. All except ours. We're the only ones in the mornin' that didn't have to clean a gun and it was a false alarm, but unfortunately the one man was killed, see. So I think, oh no I haven't got any photos of But, but then we moved on again at we got to Wom

33:00 and that was on the hill and then there was the river like the sea, but I drove a truck there for about thirty hours cartin' ammunition up to the artillery. Down there, back on they'd load me up, up there, they'd fire it, back down there. It went on all night.

Now sorry Pete, but were they your exact orders?

33:30 **That was your job there in Wewak is to actually give supplies to the artillery?**

Oh any supplies love. We, see we were known as the supply company. Righto well, when the artillery started, they needed extra ammo. It came in on the barge. Now how is it gonna get from the barge up onto the hill? We had to take it, see, and

34:00 it was funny. We I finished a shift and I one stage there I got out to do a pee and I couldn't climb back in, I was that tired, and two of them picked me up, sat me behind the wheel. Once I had hold of the wheel I was right again. Oh dear me. Anyway that's when the artillery blasted Wewak and

34:30 that's where they finished up with another the infantry went in. We finished up with another VC. Oh but it was only a moppin' up exercise so one, you can remember this. The boys were in hospital. The hospital was on Cape Wom point there and this member of parliament, I don't know who it was, came up

35:00 and a course makin' a big fella out of himself he's gotta go and visit the hospital and he said to one bloke, "Oh how are ya?" "Oh not bad." He said, "You'd better give me a new mop" and this bloke said, "What do you want a new bloody mop for?" He said, "It's a moppin' up campaign. Here am I full a bullet holes." Oh dear

35:30 and then we had what they call a big road and that's where they go up there and bring down prisoners. They sent three trucks up and there was that many they we had to come down. So then they had to make little trenches about every mile or so. They had all had dysentery and they'd walk

36:00 'em down a mile and on the logs. They'd sit there and have their poo and then they'd start off again. Then they'd get down to us and we'd put 'em on the barge and take 'em the barge'd take 'em out to the island. Oh god. Talk about a turn.

What did you and Dot correspond with letters during this time?

Oh yes. Yes. Yeah, oh Dottie. Couldn't lose my Dottie. No. No I mean

36:30 I used to chase a lot of women in me days, but Dottie was the genuine one you know. The one that was for me. Fifty five years and six months and for a woman to put up with me for that bloody long, she had to be good.

So did she write you a letter and tell you that she was expecting a baby?

Yep. Yeah. Yeah. She wrote and told me.

37:00 Oh what was that? Yeah. That's right. She sent a photo of the baby and everything and we only had the one at that time. Wasn't until I got home then the boy came along and everything was goin' along comfortably until ah

37:30 oh this bloke, a mate a mine, come down from New Guinea see and he said, "What are ya doin' here?" I said, "Chipping [carpentry]." He said, "Get up to New Guinea. Get a quid." So I had that, I had about three hundred WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens] in the yard and I sold them and flew to Brisbane and I had to go before the taxation department to go for and everything. They give me the job. You know what they wanted to put me

38:00 on the plane the next day and send me to New Guinea and I said, "Hey, no go." I said, "My wife's expectin' twins." I said, "When they come I'll go." Used to ring up every day. "Them twins arrived yet? Them twins arrived yet?" "No." Then one day, "Yes the twins arrived." "Are you ready to go?" "Yeah, in a week." So I went away and nine months I waited

- 38:30 to get a place for her. So in the end I said, "Oh well this is it. No good to me." I went up and fronted the boss, the big boss, and I said, "Look I been here nine months. I got a wife and a couple a kids down there." I said, "They'll be grown up. I won't know 'em. What about some accommodation?" So he called the orderly in. He said, "Now how's the accommodation?" and the orderly said,
- 39:00 "No good." "Right" I said, "Give us a pencil and paper. I resign right now" and the boss said, "No, no, no, no" because I used to do all his work at the house see. I got the place in that they got it for me. Well then Mum came up on there was some new houses went up with the out at near the drome. So we
- 39:30 shifted out there, but oh it was on a bit of a hill and you know it wasn't too good. So we finished up shiftin' back into the other one again. She was there two years.

Did she like it?

Oh yes. She liked it until that bloody black bastard raped that kiddie next door. Oh that was the end of that story. I had to get her out of Moresby [Port Moresby] and get her and the kids back to Cairns and throw in me

- 40:00 best job I ever had in me life. Come back. Tried to be a farmer and found out I was a better carpenter than I was a farmer.

Alright. We'll switch tapes Pete.

Tape 7

- 00:31 **Okay Pete. What can you tell me about Red Robbie and I guess other COs [Commanding Officers] up in the islands?**

'Red Robbie'?

Yeah.

Red Robbie was a general over in West Australia in the new, ah not artillery. The new tank company. The see they formed another tank squadron over in the west and Robbie was the boss.

- 01:00 Well we had a very good general in the islands. Little fella. He'd come up to you, you know any time and say hello and no, you know, no messin' about and he died. I think or did he get killed in a plane crash here in Cairns? I'm not sure but and a course we get landed with Red Robbie. When the war finished I said to Bomber

- 01:30 I said, "What'll we do?" "Oh" he said, "Let's go to Japan." So I said, "Right. We'll put our names down." Then we found out Red Robbie was goin' and we backed off very fast. We didn't wait. We scratched our name off the board. Oh, yeah.

Now why was that? How did he treat you fellas when he arrived in the islands?

Well what made us blokes get a bit sour on him, one poor bugger was walkin' along the road there one day. We were

- 02:00 doin' somethin' anyway and he never saluted him and Robbie made him stand there and salute a hundred times. So that's number one. Right. Now every time he came to the pictures everybody stood up. The war finished, so nobody stood up. So Robbie stopped the pictures.

- 02:30 Number two. Then the boys were gettin' real fed up with Red Robbie.

Gee you want to stop a picture show at your own peril don't you?

Hey?

You wanna stop the pictures at your own peril don't ya?

Oh he just said, "Stop" and the pictures stopped. We all got up and went home. Oh yeah. So I probably would a went to Japan

- 03:00 and Bomber said, "Oh come on mate. You're married now. You got a kid" he said, "And this bloody idiot'll have us dancin' around" and I said, "Alright. That's it." So we bailed out. 17th of December 1945. I was back in Cairns on the 20th.

Now why, I've been wanting to ask you this question all day, why was your mate's

- 03:30 **nickname 'Bomber' and why was yours 'Barbed Wire'?**

Well Barb Wire eventuated because just it cost you sixpence to go into the showgrounds in them days to watch the football. I was playin' football for Ivanhoes and we're playing for the premiership and

04:00 we go out and I'm you know playin' around there and a loose ball come my way and I grabbed it and run. Well I was pretty nippy [fast] for about twenty yards. I'm a sprinter and on the grandstand there's a bloke, he musta put two bob on us, the last two bob on our team and he's screamin', "Good on ya corn beef and barb wire. Good on ya corn beef" and when 'corn beef and barb wire'

04:30 fell over the try line I looked that way, looked that way, there was no support and I had to throw meself at the line because I could hear the others comin'. We won the premiership. He had two bob on us probably. That's how and the boys said, "Oh well you're stuck with it now boy." When we come off the other team said, "Oh you're 'barb wire' from now on."

Strange way to get a nickname.

Yeah, but Bomber, oh um

05:00 I think it was mostly because he'd fight at the drop of a hat, but not everybody called him Bomber. Only me.

So you're one of the few blokes to actually get his nickname before you went into the service.

Yeah. Oh Bomber and I were playin' he was funny thing we're playin' opposite teams. Ha, ha, ha. Anyway, but he was a good mate,

05:30 but if ever I lost him I'd just go lookin' in the first brawl in any pub. I'd find him. Jeez he was a demon.

Now Pete if I can just take you back to Wewak for a bit, did you have to deal with many snipers or ambushes and things running the supplies?

No. No the only thing was that story I told you about the cigarettes. That's the only Nip we saw

06:00 for ages until the push started, see. No I never it was only on that time I went on guard duty at to take the rations up and we got trapped and the bloody machine gun wouldn't fire and I had to lay there pretend I was dead and I swore I'd never go anywhere else without me trusty old .30 after that.

06:30 That was the only time. Oh another time, it didn't affect me, there was another bloke and me where he was drivin' one truck I was drivin' the other and this Jap pounced in front of him on the road and he just calmly got his rifle out and shot him. Oh god but you couldn't trust 'em see. You couldn't trust 'em.

So what was the was the Japanese fellow

07:00 **was he wanting to surrender? Was he taking you on?**

Oh no, he wasn't wantin' to surrender. He was just takin' us on, see. He thought because we were drivin' trucks we had no infantry experience or anything like that, but oh yeah, but that bloody gap where they look for days, they just carted rocks and rocks and rocks and they'd tip 'em in. They'd go straight outta sight.

07:30 I don't know what was there. Anyway after about a week they had to give it up and put us on the barges and go around it.

Now given what you'd all heard and seen I guess as some of the bad stuff the Japanese were doing, some of the atrocities and stuff, was that...

Oh yeah well you see them poor buggers in Malaya, they copped hell

08:00 and the only time we saw evidence was when we rescued those Indians and it was real evidence. There was no two ways about it. So

But was there a lot of hatred toward the Japanese because of that sort of stuff?

Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh and look after the war. These young ones. They'd stand ya

08:30 up and say, "You started the war. Not us." Oh god almighty. If ever you wanted to choke something you felt like doin' it there and then. Yeah we started the war. Mm and you read reading that piece there what was gonna happen if those bloody Japs had a got here. I'll tell ya. Yeah. They were gonna they were gonna wipe the Murris right out.

09:00 Didn't want 'em. Didn't want 'em at all.

With the artillery runs that you were doing how long, I mean how long was the sort of furthest journey you'd have to take from barge to...

Oh not far. Not far. See if you

09:30 follow me, the barge was down there and up here was Wom and more higher ground and that's where they were shootin' from. We we only doin' 'short runs, but Jesus they blasted away there. Oh god almighty. I thought they were never gonna stop. The artillery. Those were big, long guns too. They weren't short ones.

So because you were doing supply lines pretty close I mean you were you were kind

10:00 **of close to mainline action.**

Oh yeah. Yeah. Well it wasn't far. They told us see, "You just remember, don't be frightened to use your own gun sometimes." Oho. Oh dear. Yeah well from that we went on to Wom, Cape Wom, but you gotta sort a picture this. There was a sort of a

10:30 plateau there and it dropped away down there to the sea and the barges were good pulling in there and that's where we were that day this bloke got a had to bail out of his aeroplane. 'Cause I think I told you, didn't I?

Um you might have told Heather. Yes you did.

Yeah, but no it's,

11:00 see we wouldn't we wouldn't trust 'em an inch. Wouldn't trust 'em an inch.

But you were ferrying food out to POWs [Prisoners of War] at some stage weren't you?

Oh yeah. Well see what happened. When they started dumpin' 'em on the island. See we had a brigade up top there were chasin' 'em down outta the hills and when they'd come down we'd

11:30 take 'em over to this island and we used to have to go over there but you only go over with a truck and offsider and say, "Righto. Unload the bastard, unload it you bastards." They'd pounce on it and then we'd get back on the barge and come back again. Oh no. No. You just had to tread very gingerly and one bloke, I don't know how he got it

12:00 or where he got it, he got a you know that white polish, white stuff they use for polishing. He got a tin a that. A big tin and he mixed it up and made it like bloody and they they all got stuck into it over there and they lost half their teeth. It was a hard setting. Oh

12:30 god.

They actually thought it was a drink?

No. They thought it was something to chew on see and we thought, "Oh Jesus we're gonna be in trouble now" but nothin' was said about. It was you know the Nips didn't have brains enough to complain about it then they just threw the rest away. Oh. Yes and then where did we go from there? Well we used to go over

13:00 to Wewak. Now I don't know what the hell was over there but Wewak was on a hill and there was this set a steps goin' down, down, down, down and you walked right kept goin' the steps you finished up in water up to your knees and there was still steps. I don't know how much further the steps went. It was underneath the hill, see, so I oh that's right. That's what I was lookin' for those bloody coins too. There's a

13:30 New Guinea shilling or something on the on it. It's here somewhere but oh dear and that's where they got the second VC and there was 'One Shot Willy', that's right. One Shot Willy. The drome that the Japs had was, the track was over to the hill and then it turned off and went down to the

14:00 drome, and on the back a the drome was the mountain, and there was a bloke had a artillery gun up there and we used to call him One Shot Willy. He had it on a on a set of wheels. He'd wheel it out when the cloud was down, he'd fire one shot and then wheel it back and no one'd know where it was, see. So one day I'm on the delivery run and

14:30 I pull into where the camp was alongside the and the bloke said, "Get that f'n truck out of here. Here's that One Shot Willy's gone amok [out of control]." The kitchen was shot up and there was everything so I backed away and I waited for about half an hour and I drove back. I said, "How's it goin' now?" They said, "Oh he's finished." So there was one bloke he said, "I'll get that b." So he went up in

15:00 the hills lookin' for him. He found him in the end. In a cave. With this trolley with a gun on it, see. So he takes the you know the firing part off it. He kills the bloody Nip. He comes back and no one'd believe him. So finally after much persuasion, 'course he had the main part of the gun, they went up. Yes it was One

15:30 Shot Willy alright. Oh god. Didn't he didn't he cause some panic. He'd just come out, fire one shot and then he'd push the gun back in. Oh.

And what kind of rounds was he firing?

Oh they were the gun was small artillery one. Very small and ooh I suppose about a shell about so big, but didn't he flatten that other camp. By gee whiz didn't they run.

16:00 They all went and oh

So it sounds like one afternoon he went a bit crazy and kept firing.

Yeah. He just kept firin'. Well then another incident. I was there one day and this Yank plane came in. A what do you call 'em? Fighter plane anyway. It landed on the strip and he got out of it and he said to us blokes. "You can have it. I don't want it."

16:30 It's no good to me." So someone come along and they contacted headquarters and they put a guard on it. So the next day the Yanks came back and took certain part out a the cabin, out a the thing, said, "No you don't need you don't need the, you don't need the

17:00 guard. Take it off. Take it off." They said, "Well" they said, "Someone'll take some..." "It's alright. It's only junk now." Forty thousand dollars worth. Inside a two days you could hardly see a bit of it. Everybody was cuttin' pieces off to make rings and gadgets. Yeah. Never forget that.

What was your opinion of the Yanks as fighters up in the islands?

17:30 Oh well you see we never had much, it's like over in the desert there you had you infantry battalions, see and you supplied them. Although we trained in infantry before but never got a chance to see the poor buggers in action. Old what's his name whipped 'em all out and took 'em up to the Philippines

18:00 and but they were smart enough. They'd give you a quid for a bottle a beer and you had to pay thirty bob for a carton a cigarettes. Oh they were good. They'd drive down through the lines. "Quid a bottle, quid a bottle" and when it was beer issue night you know, oh. "Quid a bottle."

Now I've spoken to a few fellows who have

18:30 **talked about their time in the islands towards the end of the war being, they felt it was a bit unnecessary or there was talk about that it was a bit unnecessary 'cause MacArthur had buggered off with all the Americans and that the Australians are kind of being withheld or just sort of...**

Well as I told you, MacArthur took the Yanks off Aitape and said, "This is only a moppin' up campaign"

19:00 because he didn't want any Australians to go to the Philippines with him. He wanted make it look as it was, all the Yanks. The Yanks got kicked out and the Yanks come back, see. That's what I the way I put it and but he's oh but as far as seein' 'em in action we saw very little of the Yanks in action 'cause we'd

19:30 be comin' with the supplies or goin' here, goin' there and except a time like anything like One Shot Willy or something and started blazin' away at 'em, the artillery. Yeah I found on my dead meat tickets there's a a New Guinea shilling that I'd found and I've always had it on me, but I thought I put it in the bloody

20:00 box. It's got a come it musta fallen out somewhere. I'll find it.

You will. Now were you where you were stationed by this stage at Camp Wom, was that where you were for the rest of the war?

To where what?

Was this where you were for the rest of the war?

Yeah. Yeah. I I had a different job then. I used to clean all the trucks and be keepin' 'em in good nick

20:30 and we were told we were going to Bougainville. Well then the war finished and that was it see and a course myself and a few others made five years service. Who was gonna get the first discharge home? That was us. They took us down and put us on a boat and sent us straight back to Brisbane.

Do you remember

21:00 **getting the news that the war was over where you were**

Oh yeah. Yeah we had to in our camp they had a loud speaker system goin' right through the lines. They used to play music and everything else. 'Course we were on Cape Wom and Wewak was about three miles away and there was nothing behind us because we'd cleared all that. We knew the war was over. Yeah.

How did you celebrate?

How could we?

21:30 We had no beer. We had nothin' until the next beer issue come along. Did I tell ya about the beer? When we was in when we were in Darwin I and that petrol point I was showin' ya, the trucks used to come through there and get the petrol and go down the Adelaide River and unload the beer. Somehow or the other these

22:00 pair a smarties got an empty case and see they were bound with wire and they got the without they took the lid off without breakin' the wire and when they filled it up with rocks it wasn't hard to nail the top back and it just looked like a full case. So one day there I'm ah

22:30 checkin' up with the driver and the provo's sittin' in the front. I looked like that. Here they are. Takin'

one full one off the back and puttin' a dummy on. Away it went. Now that case went to Adelaide River and nothing was ever said. So they tried to pull it again in New Guinea. So righto. They got the

23:00 case. We waited for the beer and I was drivin' that night and they said to me, "How about pullin' up along the road?" I said, "Alright." So I get half way back from ah Wewak to the Cape Wom and I reached over and switched it off and the truck went like that and I said "Oh god almighty. What's the matter with this bloody truck?" Had a provo sittin' in the front. I get out and I lift the bonnet and I play around.

23:30 In the meantime they slid out of the bushes, took the full one, puts the dummy on. Now here's the difference. The first case they opened in the canteen was the dummy. Oh god. They descended on us truck drivers like nothin'. We had been workin' most of the night. They came in and said what had happened, the boys had dug a hole.

24:00 Put the whole case in. Put the dirt back and had the tent pole sittin' on it and they're standin' on it and they're sayin', "Oh nothing in there nothing there nothing there" you know and isn't it marvellous that in Darwin nothin' ever happened and there it was the first case opened. Oh god love me. About a week went past and suddenly there was an empty beer case out the back just ready to fall down in down

24:30 towards the water. Four dozen empty bottles. Oh god almighty. Talk about a turn but you wouldn't credit how one could nothing happened and yet this one was the first case opened. This one musta got shoved in the back and shoved in the back and

Oh well and also in the islands I'll bet ya beer's probably a little bit more important.

25:00 Oh dear. Yeah they used to they offered us about six hundred quid for a carton a beer. Not a carton, a truck load a beer. One bloke had a go at it. He drove off the barge and the provos were here and he's supposed to turn left. He turns right and away he goes. He nearly got away with it before the provos woke up and went after him. Yeah. Here's he's the provo said to him,

25:30 "Hey you're goin' the wrong way. Turn around and go back the other way." "Oh I'm sorry." So he turned around. He missed out on his money but oh god. Talk about a turn. But by jeez the Yanks lived better than we did. We used to go over to the island where the barges were and oh there was bloody ice cream and all sorts a things over there.

Was there much scrounging going on?

Hey?

Was there much scrounging going on?

Oh not no, well see

26:00 they were on the island. We were on the mainland. Once MacArthur took all the Yanks away, well what was the good? There was no wharf. Everything had to come in by barge until we started to move and then we had that run we went past Wewak actually. Went down to Bolken and that's a little bit further down but there was nothing there

26:30 so they turned 'round and stopped right there.

Did you prefer your time in the islands over the desert or was it the other way around?

Oho give me the give me the mud and the water. Oh bugger that desert.

You'd be one of the few.

Oh shit. Yeah.

27:00 **So what was it like sort of coming back to Australia again after knowing that the whole thing was all over?**

Oh no I wanted to get home and see Mum, Mum and the kids, Mum and the kid but oh I've always been pretty active you know. I never stop still very long and then I they said, "Oh you can go back to your old

27:30 job, truck drivin'. They've gotta give you back ya job." Leave Cairns Monday mornin' six o'clock. Return to Cairns Wednesday night at six o'clock. Leave Cairns Thursday mornin' six o'clock and come home at six and the kids were growin' up and I wasn't I wasn't here. Anyway I put up with that for about six months and Mum said, "Oh look the kids are missin' you know you go away

28:00 when they're asleep. You come home when they're asleep." I just walked in and said, "Pay me off" and I went around and I said to the Veterans Affairs [Department of Veterans' Affairs], "Righto I'm applyin' for a this trainee carpenter job." Six months I put in there. I got me credentials. It's there. Came out and I went they put me with a small contractor and all he was doin' was

28:30 shaggin' the sheila in the office and givin' 'em money.

She's alright.

Anyway he we went out to Yorkey's Knob out here and we built a house and we just about we had to have the frame work up and everything on and we had to set to make two sets a steps, fourteen treads

29:00 each, and it all had to be hardwood, see, and you had to saw it and chisel it, saw it and chisel it. Anyway this woman that we were buildin' the house for she came along in the afternoon and said, "What are you men been doin'? You been sittin' down all bloody day" and Joe, he was the old fella, he said, "That's right lady. We have. There's ya bloody steps. Pay us off.

29:30 We're goin'. We're finished." "Pack 'em" he said. So I went and packed 'em. So that finished up. Christmas come. He gives us a bouncy cheque. Joe goes and cashes his and at the RSL and he come tearin' to me. He said, "Don't put your cheque in. Don't put your cheque in. There's no money there." So I waited. One day I

30:00 happened to be in town and I put the cheque in. I said to the bloke, "Is this cheque any good?" He said, "Of course it's good." So I got paid. So I walked down to the council and I said, "Can I see the engineer?" "Yeah righto." So in I go. I said, Maurice was his name, that's right. I said, "Mr Maurice. I'm a married man with two kids. I've five years at the bloody war and I'm lookin' for a job."

30:30 He looked me up and down and he said "I'll give you three days" and I said, "And I'll bloody well take it too." Three years later he come along he said, "What are ya leavin' for?" Three years later. That's when me mate come about New Guinea. So I pulled outta there and went up to Moresby. So

Now what was the draw to go back to Port Moresby?

31:00 Moola, moola, moola [money].

Good moola?

Yeah. Christ.

What was the job?

Well I started off as a 'chippie' [carpenter]. I got lead man and I finished up area foreman for the whole of Papua New Guinea and don't you think I wanted to be there for the moola, moola, moola. Yes oh yes. So I finished up area foreman and I think they were gonna send me to Canberra

31:30 if I'd a stayed, but of course with that bloody black bastard rapin' that kid, that was the end of it. I had to get Mum out of there. I had to chuck the job in and everything else.

What was what was Dot's original reaction to going up to New Guinea to start with?

What? Mum?

Yeah.

Oh she was quite a well she'd be nine months without a husband. So she was happy, but there's the oh

32:00 in the album there there's somewhere you'll see 'em sittin'; in a jeep when I went to pick 'em up from the drome. Yeah but...

Was Pete was it hard for you to settle down at all after comin' outta the war? Getting back into civvie street [civilian life] after five years?

Well when I came out I went down with the best dose of malaria you ever seen. Three weeks I never saw

32:30 daylight and the hospital was full and the doctor was like that doctor. He'd come to the house, 'cause there was no room up at the hospital, and all I can remember about it was I could feel me pants gettin' taken off and me shirt. Her brother was undressin' me and puttin' dry clothes on me. Three weeks I was. Best dose of malaria.

33:00 Never had it in the islands. Had to wait 'til I come home and got it. Oh. Mm. Yes. Malaria.

And what was your mum and dad's reaction to seeing you again after the war?

Oh well Mum, ah well Dad, Christ only knows where he was. Mum, oh he came

33:30 I when I bought the farm later on, or tried to buy a farm, he come up. He said, "You're workin' twenty four hours twenty three hours a day. You'd better come down. I've I got a little business I've made, Poulos and Son." I went down and I lasted about two weeks and I said, "I gave up workin' twenty three hours a day, but I'm not workin' twenty four hours here. Shove it up your jumper" and I baled out. Not a penny. Not a penny.

34:00 A wife. A boat, a little flattie. A dog and two kids and here we are out here along Mulgrave Road four o'clock and Mum says, "Oh listen you'd better go over to Mum's place. It's getting late and the kids" so we went over there and we were with them for quite some time. Oh that bloody farm.

34:30 Grow pineapples. Oh I should never look at another pineapple in the face. Anyway that was another experience. Eighteen thousand quid. I worked day and night. I worked in the railway in the day time. I

carted furniture in the night time and did all sorts a jobs. I had to pay the interest off and everything. Oh Jesus

35:00 but then I built the house 'round there. Made one brick at a time.

You serious? You actually made one?

There's a photo of the house there somewhere. In one of the albums. Ah four bedroom house. Oh yeah and I did everything bar the plaster and I had to go back to the bank and I said to the bank,

35:30 "Come and have a look at this." He said, "Did you do all this?" I said, "Yeah." "Oh" he said, "Here's your three hundred. Get your plaster done." 'Cause he knew the value was there and we lived there for about thirty years and it's just as good today as what it was then.

You did...

It's got air conditioning in it and everything.

Well you did a good job then.

Oh yeah. Then we had that last the

36:00 son and he had got married and had three kids or something and I said to Mum, "What are we gonna do?" I said, "The only thing is sell him the house cheap, so the kids'll have a roof over their head." We sold him it cheap. It was about a hundred and fifty thousand for the house and we took sixty and then Mum and I went and we have a ball. Ha.

36:30 'Round Australia, Fiji, Solomons, everywhere. Spent the lot and Dottie was quite happy. We used to go down on the Murray [River] you know for a couple of weeks at one time. We had five trips on the Murray Princess, but I don't know if it's workin' now or not. Don't see it. So then what happened? I

37:00 had to go back to bein' a carpenter again. Ten years. For about four stages about two or three hundred miles up there down to Cardwell. I was traversing all the time. Mum said, "You give it away. The kids are" I said, "Alright. I'll transfer." So I went from a carpenter to a builder. Carpenter what do you call them? Wagon builder.

37:30 Another ten years. By this time I'm gettin' a bit long in the tooth. That's I think I told you that's where I tangled with these two, I was fifty seven years of age and I wasn't gonna have anybody insultin' my wife and I took on two eighteen year olds with knuckle dusters. So poor Dottie was cryin'. I

38:00 said, "What are ya cryin' about?" She said, "You fought for me." I said, "You're me bloody wife. Why wouldn't I fight for you?" Oh Christ. Yeah. Fifty five years and six months.

Okay Pete we'll just pause there 'cause we're gonna have to switch tapes again for one last time.

Hey?

Tape 8

00:31 **Pete you were showing me before a Christmas card that you were sending to Australia...**

Mm.

From the Middle East.

Mm.

And in that Christmas card there was a poem, and you've got at the beginning of your book there that you've written about your war experiences that this poem is dedicated to your mate Bomber. So I was wondering if you wouldn't mind reading it for us on tape.

Alright. You ready.

Yeah.

01:00 "A flask of wine a book of verse and thou. So ran El Amar's song, but give me the sight of a brindled cow beside a billabong. The wilderness was paradise and no, so said this Eastern fake who never seen a shady gum beside a Gippsland lake.

01:30 Here from the land of the mystic smells where the natives chant 'buckshees', I'll send you Christmas greetings and may Allah go with you. In memory of me old mate Bomber." Yeah.

Now what did Bomber die of? You said he lasted through the war, but died after the war.

I don't know. He joined the railway. He joined the railway and the last then I heard

02:00 he was acting station master or in the station master gang in Rocky. So I went down and I said, "Where's Bomber?" and they said, "Who are you?" I they said, "Are you a relation? I said, "Oh I might as well be." They said, "Bomber passed away." I never even knew e was dead. So poor old Bomber.

02:30 I didn't have to go findin' other fights to find him.

Something also that we didn't discuss in further detail was the bombing of Darwin. You said that you weren't there for the first three raids...

That's right.

But you copped the other sixty.

That's right.

Tell us what was the worst part about being there in Darwin with the bombing going on.

Well you see being in Darwin after the first lotta raids, it wasn't actually

03:00 Darwin that copped the bombs. They were chasin' the air force and anything between there and Adelaide River. It was no good, what's the good of bombing Darwin? There was no one there. Until they started to move some of the troops back in there and there was nothing there for them to bomb. They used to just come over and drop bombs

03:30 around all around us. That where I told you about the fortress, they were always chasin' that, but no, there was nothing much in Darwin to get. 'Cause you see the 'Ned Kellys' had gone through the place after it was bombed. What was there? There was no one there. The only ones that were in Darwin was the artillery

04:00 ah um what do you call 'em? Ack ack [anti aircraft] artillery. They were the only mob left and when the Spitties [Spitfires] got amongst 'em oh boy that was my day of my life. I heard 'em comin' and I said, "I know that sound." See I'd from the desert see. I heard it over there. Then they got that damned excited they chased a Jap out

04:30 to sea and run outta petrol. Oh god almighty. We lost a couple of Spitties but there was nothing much, after the first couple of raids there the there was nothing in Darwin. All the people had gone. There was only a few troops left.

Have you been back to Darwin since the war?

Yes. Yes. There's a photo there. Oh don't get up Pete you'll drag the thing.

05:00 **That's okay. We can have a look later but...**

In the album there's a photo of the church in Darwin and the watering place where we used to get our water for the army. That's at Adelaide River there. I took Mum up.

And what year was that?

Oh my godfather. It's a fair while back. I'd have to work that one out, but

05:30 Darwin was alive then. There was we were staying, in that album you'll see the place where we stayed at, where we had the meals and where we're gonna do all that yeah but of course that's the trouble. Forty years go past and things change. Look at this place. In the sixties oh it was a good place

06:00 to live in. Look at it now. Bloody buildin's gone up left, right and centre. You can't breathe. We got twenty three night clubs in Cairns now and I call 'em night clubs. They're in the paper. They'd show you the page with all the places.

Do you think you've been able to forgive and forget the Japanese for the damage that they did during the war?

06:30 Not while I think of me mate. Far as I'm concerned I've got to be polite. "G'day." That's all. Yes. Oh I tell you. Look you've got no idea how close you blokes went. You read that there where the they tell ya, "Kill all the Aborigines, castrate the men

07:00 and breed from the women. Breed a new batch."

Where did you get that from?

It's in the paper. Had it written there.

It was in the newspaper?

Yeah.

At in 1945 was it?

Yeah. Hang on. Get that album. I'll show ya. It's there in the album. No, it's in the book.

The book that you wrote?

Yeah.

This one here?

07:30 There y'are woman. Read and down there. See who that is there? Tell ya who wrote it.

So this was written in 1984. September '84 and

08:00 **it's written by a Sir Albert Abbott.**

Yeah.

Queensland President oh or, okay., "Adrian McGregor talks to the Queensland President of the RSL, Sir Albert Abbott." So he's saying if they had captured New Guinea they would certainly have invaded Australia taken a...

Oh yes.

Yeah. Oh okay so, but it doesn't say where he got his information

08:30 **from here.**

No well we found the information up in Wewak. That's where we found it, but a course there it is there. The naturally they passed it onto 'em. It wasn't to us fellas it was just something on paper.

Because it was written in Japanese?

See. So we sent it through and there's the there's the story there.

09:00 So I dunno. Maybe I'm, I can't sort of begin, but ... I got no I just say, "Hello how are ya." That's all.

Because Cairns has a lot of tourists doesn't it?

Oh yeah but what's gonna happen one of these days? Did you see that in the, that the dollar is now seventy seven or seventy eight yeah. Wait'll it

09:30 gets to eighty. The wine had the wine on last night. The wine companies are growing because the price has gone too high for their wine.

What about becoming adjusted to not being in the army life when you came back to Australia and moved in with Dot? Did you find that difficult?

Well I said to Mum, I dunno I had a hundred and thirty, hundred and forty

10:00 days' leave due. I said to Dot, "I've gotta move." She said, "Alright. Go and have do what you wanna do." So I jumped on the train and away I went to Brisbane. I come back to Cairns. Up and down up and down and got it out of me system but I just outside a that malaria

10:30 that pulled me down a peg. Three weeks I never saw daylight. Oh god.

Must have been terrible. Do you think Dot, you said you didn't drink...

Oh I'm only a very moderate drinker.

So what do you think Dot had to put up with from an ex-army bloke? Do you think she had to put up with anything from your war experiences?

No. No I look I never raised me hand to Dot once.

11:00 The only one was me daughter. She was givin' her mother a lot a cheek. That's that Mary and I pulled her into gear and she slapped me across the face, so I slapped her back. Said, "Now you get in that room. You're banned for a month. You're not goin' anywhere." That's the only time I ever raised me hand to me wife or kids or anybody else. Except them pair a louts.

11:30 **Now something terrible happened later in your life, Pete, with your daughter Mary. You were telling me before that she was murdered...**

Mm.

And she was about thirty seven did you say?

About thirty seven, yeah. She was murdered in Townsville. We didn't know actually what had happened, but there was rainin' cats and dogs up here. It was the middle of the wet season and,

12:00 oh that's only my clock. No. It's only the clock mate.

Oh, it's stopped.

I told ya. It's only the clock. Anyway

Hang on one second there Pete.

That clock goes off at quarter to five and twenty five to six. That's one I found in the rubbish bin, but where was I?

You were talking about

12:30 **Mary and what happened.**

Mary, yeah. It was rainin' cats and dogs and this 'bang, bang, bang' on the door of the house we'd built and I go and there's two big coppers. They seemed to be seven feet tall and they said, "We want you to come to Townsville to identify a body." As soon as they said Townsville me heart went down to me boots 'cause Mary was in Townsville. So I in the got on

13:00 the phone, rang the office the engineer and said, "I've gotta go to Townsville. Me daughter's been murdered" blah, blah, blah and in the morning I went over and he said to the office staff, "Put that bloke on the first available train out of here." Mum and I went to Townsville and identified Mary. Mum wouldn't come and we had four little grandsons to bring home and we had four. That makes eight.

13:30 I didn't think I could have a family that big. Oh.

What about her husband? He didn't take the children?

Not straight away. It finished up I had to put the gun at his head and say, "Now get the, you got two houses out at Trinity Beach. Get a housekeeper, put her in one and take these kids because Dottie cannot look after eight kids." So away they went,

14:00 but they never ever found out who did it or why or how or anything. She was just she was just found shot.

No clue. No idea. Just...

Not a clue.

A random killing?

No, just a random killing. So that's that was that was the end of Maro [Mary]. She was married over there at that church. Did you see her wedding photo and...

I did. It was

14:30 **beautiful.**

And

How did Dot cope with the grief?

Oh well she still had me and you know well, I tried to be a good husband and the kids see, so but she wouldn't go and identify her. No.

15:00 So anyway we made out alright. We made up to fifty five years and six months and then she musta said, "I've had enough of this bloke, I'm off."

Now what about associations? Obviously you joined the RSL, you told us that before, but what about any others?

Well there y'are. Next time you get up, go and have a look at the odd balls up there. Manchester Unity Independent of Odd Fellows.

15:30 Know of it? You heard of it? There's the thing in the middle up there.

And the fishing club obviously?

One fishing club? I was in every fishing club bar one. There was five and the only one I wasn't in was the Post and Telegraph because I wasn't workin'. They wouldn't let me join there but they'd take me out every time they went.

And what Anzac Day Pete? Do you participate in

16:00 **Anzac Day?**

I used to. I used to. There's a couple a photos there of me on Anzac Day at it all depends. I like to go, but then well it you know sickness and that. I didn't I no, I didn't go to this year. I went last year, that's right. Oh well I say that. Went last I went last year, but year before. Yeah I get dressed up and

16:30 put all me gongs on...

Have your children or your grandchildren taken an interest in your book that you wrote?

I don't think they worry about it. Yeah. I don't think they worry about it. We got what? Fourteen grandkids and seventeen great grandkids and more comin'.

17:00 **Well that's very good. Now what about if a young person came up to you today and said, "Alright I want to join the army. Any advice for me?"**

Well I'd ask him why.

Seems like a good thing to do.

Well the army today, except the ones that are overseas, they're gettin' big money compared to what we got. We got five bob, fifty cents, a day.

17:30 Now I got a one of my grandsons he's on the verge of becoming an officer. What is he gonna get a day?

I've no idea.

You know if I knew I'd tell ya, but I don't honestly know, but I know it's they're they get big money and they get even bigger money when they go overseas

18:00 but if anyone wanted to know I'd ask 'em why. What's the matter and tell 'em that I went in the army on fifty cents a day, but I was young and silly and please yourself mate what you want to do.

Okay I've got one last question for you. Do you think Australia will become a republic?

I think

18:30 so. I honestly do. I think it's gonna come. It might take awhile, but I think it'll come. Ah it depends it just depends on see with the way these refugees were comin' you wouldn't know see, but I think it'll be on eventually.

Are you do you support the republic?

I don't give a

19:00 damn which way they go to be truthful. Well if they're if they're gonna have a republic what can you do about it? If they don't have a republic what do you do about it? Nothin'. Yeah. Oh well never mind. Anyway I'm not gonna live long enough for the bloody republic. Old doc says, "You're gonna live to be a hundred." I said, "What are ya comin' at?"

19:30 I said, "I don't wanna be a hundred."

Well thanks Pete. You've been a real gem of information today and a real pleasure to be with. Thanks very much.

That's alright. Did you have a look at...

INTERVIEW ENDS