Australians at War Film Archive

Richard Garrett (Dick) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:39 **Dick, if you would just start by giving us a summary of your life from the time you were born until the present day?**

You're ready, are you?

We're ready.

I was born in 1925 at Ringwood on a cherry orchid.

Okay, if you look at me that would be great, thanks.

01:00 I was born in 1924 and my parents were on a cherry orchid in Ringwood. And then when the Depression struck my parents went on shares with my grandfather to a farm up at Kyneton. And then eventually my father branched out himself and we stayed in the Kyneton district

01:30 up until '39 up until the grasshoppers and the drought drove us out, we went to Gippsland, Noojee. We thought it was paradise, green grass and a running river, and a month later the '39 bushfires burned us out. And the next thing we knew the war was on and my father went to the 2nd AIF [Australian Imperial Force],

02:00 the 9th Div [Division] Cav [Cavalry] in the desert, in Syria and the desert, and then back up to Queensland. In the meantime I helped my mother on what was left of the farm and then eventually worked in the timber industry in Noojee until after my father got back from the war, and he took a soldier settlement place at Trafalgar

02:30 and I went and assisted him on that, getting him started. That was the period when the Korean War broke out and eventually I joined K Force, went to Japan and trained up there and final training to go to Korea. And got there in July 1952 and was there three weeks and was medivacced back to Japan. And we went back to the battalion

03:00 and I left Korea, time was up, shortly after the ceasefire. In August 1953 I went back to Japan and stayed there for twelve months training the people who arrived up there for reinforcements to the battalions, and then I went back to National Service in Puckapunyal. From there, when that folded up, I went to staff college

03:30 for a period of time, then was attached to public relations as a photographer after being trade tested there. And I stayed with public relations as a photographer until 1978, and then came out to civvy street [civilian life] again, to a new life and went into security work

04:00 until retirement. And then later on I ended up taking on the secretary's role of the Korean South-East Asian Forces Association until late 2003.

That's fantastic. It's a great summary. So what we'll do now is go back to your childhood and if you can just tell me where you were born?

04:30 I was born in Ringwood and they had a cherry orchid there.

What was it like growing up on a cherry orchid?

It was only in the late… Well they turned around when they were picking the cherries that they tied me up to a tree so I wouldn't roam around, otherwise keep an eye on me. And I

05:00 can remember apart from having a dog and running around there for a while. I started, went up to the Kyneton area, Redesdale Junction where my grandfather had his farm and that's where I started school. And things were a bit tough in those days.

That was during the Depression?

During the Depression years

05:30 but we survived.

What was tough? Can you remember some of the things that made is really tough for you life as a child?

Oh, having to help out on various tasks, and a lot of the time we only ran around in bare feet and the clothes were pretty well hand-me-downs. I can remember that's where I started school.

06:00 Then when we moved from my grandfather's farm to set out on our own we moved to a place at Carlsruhe. And walking to school had it's problems in the winter times with the ice, icy roads.

No shoes?

I ended up getting chilblains. And the school was a big school

06:30 and we used to gather up pine needles and pinecones around the school area for the fire to keep it going. And when you had chilblains you used to have to sit up against the fire. But you didn't know any different so you just accepted it. And you used to help out when your father was killing the pigs and the calves

07:00 to send to Melbourne market.

What would you have to do?

We helped out getting things ready on the bench and helping to scrape the bristles off the pig. It was one of those things. Help get the cows in. General help out around the farm wherever you could. Feed the pigs and

07:30 the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and…

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

I had one brother. He was younger than me, about four years younger. Then we moved around and we moved up to another property at Spring Hill, which is the other side of Kyneton, and when we moved up there and the springs were all flowing out of the ground and plenty of water and everything else. And then

08:00 one November morning we went outside and there was a big black stream of grasshoppers heading south, like a road in the sky, and they just kept on coming and coming. The birds ended up, they wouldn't eat any more grasshoppers and they just cleaned up all the grass and pretty well everything and made it a bit tough . And after they came in the drought hit us.

08:30 **Gosh. What year was that when you had the big grasshopper plague?**

That was 1936, 1936 and they stayed on for another twelve months because they put all their eggs in the ground.

The what in the ground?

They laid all their eggs in the ground so there was another crop coming on the following year. And then my father planted potatoes in

09:00 '37 and they didn't come up – no rain. And they ended up in eventually in '38 when we used to have to cart water from my neighbour's well and all our own wells had dried up and the springs didn't flow, the water didn't come out from the springs, so the tanks had dried up so we used to have to cart water up before we went to school from the neighbour's well,

09:30 from about half a mile away. So then Father went down to Noojee and got hold of a property to rent there and so we packed everything up and went down there. Arrived down there and there was a crystal clear river running in front of the house, water coming from the mountain down a stream to a flume at the back door. Everything was green, nice green grass, paradise. So we made use of the

10:00 water in the river, swam in it till dark. Never seen it like that before.

Never seen the river like that before?

No, never had a river like that before. We had the Campaspe up around Kyneton but that was only a very small stream at that stage and that was far away so we never ever went to there. And January 1939, Black Friday

10:30 came, burnt out. Luckily the house wasn't burnt. We had a cousin staying with us so we had to got to… We were told that the fire was well away from Noojee at the time but everything was grey and black, with the smoke hanging around the mountains. A cousin and I went down to Noojee to

11:00 get the bread and the mail and on the way down it looked like a black volcano over the back of one mountain. In the greyness it stood out. And we get to Noojee and the train is going out with, the goods

train is heading out with most of the townspeople in the railway trucks heading out. And we were told to get

11:30 back home as fast as you can, so we headed back home a couple of miles. By the time we were getting back, just before we got to a guesthouse there were bits of flame starting up on the valley floor in front of us and the people in the guesthouse grabbed us and put us in a tin garage, my cousin and I, and we

12:00 stayed in there with them. And they had a barrel of water and blankets and the wind kept changing and they would open the door from one way or the other and the weatherboard guesthouse burned like a cardboard box. My mother and brother had, my father had gone back up to Spring Hill to settle things up there, at the time, and the mother and the brother apparently had got under the bridge over the river

12:30 and stayed under there, and the Queensland heeler dog ended up on Mum's shoulder so apparently they had a scary time. The house didn't get burned down but the pine tree beside the house and the sheds all got burned and part of the house was on partly on fire. And so

13:00 then the police came, made their way up as the fire made its way across. During the fire the flames were going from one side of the mountains across to the other and the ferocity of the fire was unbelievable. And the police came up and they organised transport for us to go back down to Noojee where the township was burned out except

13:30 for the pub and the railway station. And then they got a bus to evacuate us and we went to Warragul for accommodation for a few days until it was safe to come back to Noojee. And we, they had assistance there with food and clothing and everything for us. And

14:00 there was fish, dead fish. We'd never seen the size of mountain trout. Floating around and killed in the water and that. And then when it was time to start school they set up a marquee on the dirt floor.

A marquee for? What did you use the marquee for?

We used the marquee for school. That was our classroom.

14:30 It was a classroom for the best part of eight months. And when the wind was blowing there was nothing but dust and ash floating around. And we got used to it, if it was a little bit cold with the frosts.

Did you enjoy school?

I enjoyed school, yes.

What subjects did you enjoy? What were you good at?

Oh I don't know, general subjects. Some subjects I wasn't too bright on but

15:00 I made the best of it. Eventually I got my Merit certificate at Noojee. There was no way of going on to high school. There was no means of getting there and my parents couldn't afford to board me at Warragul, so that was the end of my education at that stage of the game.

So I'll just take you back a little bit further. I just want to find out a little bit about your mother. What kind of woman was she?

15:30 Oh she was strict but she looked after us and made do. She was born up in the Goulburn Valley area, around Yea, the back of Yea in the mountains. Her father had a sawmill and a farm and her brothers had served in the First World War.

16:00 She was one of sixteen children and they had a hard life, but life was pretty hard for her all the way through really, one way or another. She was the youngest of the family and when one of the brothers was killed and his wife had died she virtually reared

16:30 three of the cousins on the farm and what have you.

So they grew up with you, those cousins?

No, they had grown up before I got up. They used to come and visit us quite a bit. And then when the Second World War started and my father went off to join the AIF

17:00 and he started off and he was sent to 7th Division, and they considered they had enough troops there so they formed 8th Division and he trained as 8th Division in 8th Div Cav, and they came back from final leave and were told they had been transferred to 9th Div Cav, and they sailed to the Middle East as 9th Div Cav to

17:30 join up with the other formations that were in Palestine, for 9th Div.

All right, well we'll talk about that in a little more detail. I just wanted to ask first what kind of man your father was while you were growing up? How do you remember him?

Well he was a hard worker. He came out to Australia in 1924.

18:00 **From?**

He had been in the Royal Flying Corps for a period of time in the First World War but he never saw action or anything. And eventually he came out and he hunted around out here.

He came from Britain?

Yes, he came from Norwich and he worked, turned his hand to

18:30 fibrous plaster, making fibrous plaster sheets and fixing fibrous plaster. He had carpentry jobs. He worked on the State Theatre in Melbourne putting the plaster in there and various contracting, and then he… That's how he… He gave that away and with a friend of his

19:00 he got him to go on the orchards with shares with him. And the Depression put the end of that so my grandfather turned around and asked him to go in shares with him, but that didn't bring in any money. It gave us food but we virtually has our own meat and eggs. And

19:30 one year he made one [shilling] and six [pence]. That was his share of the profits. So anyway eventually he went out in his own farm and rented a property and made do wherever he could by buying pigs and breeding them and killing the young and

20:00 milking cows. It was a bit of a battle.

What was he like as a father?

He was good. He was good, yeah. He used to keep us in order as well because we ran a bit wild in the bush.

Did you? What did you used to do?

Go roaming around the bush and everything else. And

20:30 go and visit the neighbours, and the neighbour's chap used to pick me up sometimes on the back of an old 1928 motorbike. He wouldn't drive around on the dirt track part of the road. Part of the road was cobblestones and he used to shake the devil out of me on the back of this old boneshaker motorbike for fun. And he would turn around on the weekend and turn around and take me

21:00 out onto the sheep property, which was next door to us. Take you out the back and roam around a bit out the backblocks and ended up getting me to drink sheep milk. And it was one of those things – take on anything. And coming home from school we used to drop in to an old lady's, halfway home, call and see her and

21:30 and we would get a bit of bread and jam before we headed home.

This was your neighbour?

Yes.

You mentioned that your father was in World War I?

Yes, he was trained in the Royal Flying Corps.

He didn't actually see action?

No, he didn't go across to France for action.

Why was that, do you know?

No. He was only about sixteen, fifteen or sixteen at the time and

22:00 he trained there as a kid. And I think he got a bit sick at one stage too, so I think that sort of put the end to that. And the winters were pretty severe. And he always told me of a Zeppelin raid in Norwich were a donkey had been blown up onto the spire

22:30 of the Norwich Cathedral, one of the Zeppelin raids there.

Did you go to church? Were you a religious family? Did you go to church?

Yes, we used to go church when we were young. We used to have to go to Sunday school.

Was it Catholic or Protestant?

Protestant, yes. And we'd

23:00 stay on for a church service and then we would move around to other places. The chap we used to have on the farm next door to us, he was a Salvation Army chap. And when we went up to Spring Hill there was a church but there was nobody up there to run anything, so he used to come up and run Sunday school for us. That was quite…

23:30 He used to have to travel quite a long way for that. And while we were there we used to have

community singing, local community singing sort of thing. And there used to be a local cricket team there. And we never had any radios and one of the neighbours had a radio and sometimes on Saturday night we used to go down to them. All the kids and the parents would go down and

24:00 listen to the wrestling, all the fights with Bob Dyer or Jack Davies giving commentary. And we used to have organised local dances in the school. The schoolteacher used to play a piano accordion and that was the music, and sometimes she'd go on an old piano in the school and thump out a bit of music for the dances. They used to boil up a copper for coffee and

24:30 people used to bring scones and cakes so it was everybody had a sort of a good time and get together, but you made the most of it.

So do you have many happy memories of your childhood or do you remember it as a bit of a battle?

A battle. We had to make our own thing, running around, climbing trees, chasing one another, getting in to fights.

25:00 **So would you describe yourself as a bit of a rascal when you were younger?**

Oh I dare say we were. One time the teacher didn't turn up so we decided we'd go up to where one of the neighbours had peas in there, growing a feed of peas, and so we got in there and had a feast of peas. When we came back we found we were locked out of the school

25:30 so we had to break in to get our schoolbags. And that original school at Spring Hill was burnt out so we ended up… Spring Hill used to be a halfway place between Melbourne and Daylesford, for the gold mines. And I believe at one time there were about eight pubs there and there was an old butcher's shop there and that's where we had our school in there for a while.

26:00 We had a kerosene heater on a concrete floor until the new school was built.

So it was quite a successful farming community in that area?

People survived on it. It wasn't bad. It was a lot of work cutting down blackberries and what have you. Blackberries used to overrun the country. It was part of an old volcanic area so there was reasonably good soil. The trouble

26:30 was the rainfall was a bit of a problem at times, and I've lost the plot.

I had a question to ask. Can you tell me how your father came to be involved, did he enlist or was he called up in World War II? What happened?

I think he, I don't think there was any calling up in those days.

27:00 I don't know exactly how it was but I think he just joined it.

He wanted to join?

Well apparently so, yes as far as I knew. I don't think there was any such thing as call-ups in those days. He could have been but…

Do you know why he decided to join the army when he had a family? Did he talk to you about it?

Pardon?

27:30 **Did your father talk to you about why he decided to join up to…?**

No, no, he never said. Well his brothers and his family had been involved with wars right back from Napoleon's days right through. He had a brother in the Indian Army and a brother in the Royal Navy, a couple more in the army so they were virtually a

28:00 warring family, if you like to put it that way, or it was their duty to serve.

So do you remember your father telling you that he was going away, or saying that he was leaving?

To go to war? Yes, well after the '39 bushfires things were a bit hard and Mum carried on on the farm and he went and worked up in the bush on the timber mills where

28:30 the bush was burned out, and that was to help make up some money to survive and that, to make the best of it. And then when the Second World War broke out he carried on there and then in '40 he joined the army. He felt it was his duty to join and that.

How did your mother react to that?

Oh, she accepted it because

29:00 some of her brothers were in the First World War, turned around and also joined up. So everybody

reckoned it was their duty to serve, wherever possible. And people from the farms, a young chap from the next farm, when he turned around and he got a call-up and

29:30 they asked if he wanted an exemption and he said, “No, I’ll serve on,” even if it was in the CMF [Citizens’ Military Force] at that stage. Later on his battalion turned around and volunteered to serve in New Guinea, the 39th Battalion, on the Kokoda Track.

So how did your life change

30:00 **when your father went away to war?**

Well I had to turn around and help on the farm, or what was left of it. We couldn’t fully utilise it so we had cows, milking cows, and I went working down in Noojee in the timber industry, unloading

30:30 logs and timber on the railway siding, which, that kept us going. It was a very busy time because the timber industry was in full swing then and we kept busy there six days a week unloading the timber trucks and loading the railway.

31:00 We would get truckloads of timber for the railway line and send them to Melbourne.

So you had to leave school when your father went to war?

No, I had already left. I left school at the end of ’39 just after the outbreak of war. Well that was when I got the Merit certificate and there was no further education locally unless I was

31:30 boarded in Warragul. Well our parents couldn’t afford to board me in Warragul, which was twenty-eight miles away, so I could go to a high school. So I just sort of got the end of my education and went on.

So it wasn’t until 1940 that your father left?

Yes. He joined up in ’40.

32:00 **And so you worked in the timber industry to try and survive while he was away? What else did you do?**

Oh we used to make the best of life. There was a place where we first had picture shows there. The first picture shows were in the produce part of a local grocer’s shop in a tin shed after the ’39 bushfires.

32:30 You were either seated on chaff bags and yahooing away at the movies or getting some seats from the local pub, which was next door. And then after I left school I went and worked in the grocer’s shop for a while until I got a bit older and went working with a chap who was contracting,

33:00 working a crane on the railway siding.

Did life change much when the war started? Did things change dramatically, the way you live changed? Were things tougher or what changed about your life?

It was, well no, I don’t know whether it changed much because there wasn’t much of great change really. Things got a little bit tougher one way or another but

33:30 it was probably a little bit better than when we were tied up in the drought area and that.

You were rationed. Did you have ration cards?

Oh we had ration cards and we were rationed, but we survived on the rations. Tea was one of the worst because I was a bit of a tea soak and I ended up working for a chap

34:00 who, this chap took over from my original boss and he had a gallon billy and he said, “Listen lad, the first thing in the morning when you arrive at work is you go and put the billy on.” I said, “How much?” He said, “Fill it up.” “How much tea do you want me to put in?” He said, “Put a handful in.” So that’s all right and we had the tea, and come morning tea break, he said,

34:30 “Put it back on the fire and heat it up.” And at lunchtime he said, “Right-oh, go and fix up the billy,” and I tipped it out and I got my ears chewed. He said, “Listen mate,” he said, “that billy of tea lasts until it is all drunk.” “All right then.” So that was okay, so it lasted all day and probably part of the next morning.

35:00 It got a bit tarry.

Did your mother struggle to feed the family once your father had left? Did her life change very much?

She had extra work to do and I used to kill a calf or a pig. When I was young I learned how to dress them and so we provided ourselves with a bit of meat and what have you.

35:30 We would share it with a neighbour.

Did she have to go out and work during the wartime, your mother?

No. No. She was tied up enough there.

On the farm?

Yeah, and getting back to this chap that I worked for and the billy, he… Come Friday he had to make a new billy of tea so come Monday morning

36:00 I said to him, I said, "I'll go and throw this tea out." And he said, "No you won't. You drink that." It was like drinking tar. When I eventually got around to getting call-up papers myself I found that between him…

36:30 He put a block on me. I wanted to join up and he wouldn't release me being in the timber industry and being a partially protected industry.

How old were you then?

Seventeen, I was seventeen when I got the call-up notice. The call-up people came around and I said, "I'm volunteering to join the army."

37:00 **Can you tell us. No sorry. Go on.**

So that was all right and the next thing I know they turned around and said, "No, you're not."

We'll get onto that. I just wanted to talk a little bit about your father first because he was already at war, wasn't he?

Yes. He arrived at Palestine, and two weeks later they went into Syria and then they went into the Western Desert at Alamein. And after that they came back

37:30 to Queensland, up at Atherton and they trained up there. They changed, and they were from carriers and they started training them as commandos, changed the title from 9th Div Cav Commando. He was there for a while and then eventually he got boarded out because he was getting on an age and he got pretty sick. He came back a bit

38:00 sick and…

What was wrong with him?

Well they turned around and told him he had a stomach problem and they were treating him for a stomach problem for quite a number of years, and he was backwards and forwards to Heidelberg [Repatriation Hospital], in and out. And it would take anything up to six months before he could get admitted to Heidelberg because there were that many

38:30 people in and out of hospital.

Once the war had finished?

Yeah, after the war had finished and the doctor came and seen him and she came from Neerim South, which was fourteen miles away, and had a look at him and she checked him over and he told her what was wrong with him and she said, "No it's not. You've got a crook heart."

39:00 So it took a long time before they accepted that and eventually he was TPI-ed [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pensioner]. He ended up he couldn't work any longer.

Did you get many letters from him while he was away?

Oh yes, we used to get letters from him pretty regularly, and parcels. He used to send back bits and pieces. He sent back tea from Egypt and packets of tea and whatever he would buy locally.

39:30 It was good tea. It was Lipton's tea. And he would send back presents and things.

Can you remember some of the presents he sent back?

One was a wooden camel. There was an artillery shell that someone had depicted out the Syrian

40:00 landscape and a few other items on it, and a few of those local Arab knives, little short knives.

What did his letters say? What did he write you in the letters?

Oh he would just write; he couldn't say much. Sometimes there would be heaps cut out and they were just general things to mother and that.

40:30 **Did you look forward to the letters? Did you count the days?**

Oh yeah. Everybody was looking forward to the letters and the mail.

Did it make you feel like you wanted to be at war? That you would like to be like your father?

Well I always had that sort of ambition and I mean after the war had finished and they started up BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] to go to Japan I turned around and said I was going to do that. And my father

41:00 wasn't in the best of health and he wanted to start the farm up again. We had to build a house on a farm he bought, that had this guesthouse that was burned down at Noojee. He bought that property and we built a house on it, my father, and then I said, "Right-oh, I'm going to join BCOF now. You've got the place

41:30 started." He said, "I don't think you'd better." He said, "That's not the sort of life for you." He said, "They get a pretty boring sort of life." So he sort of talked me out of it. But then when the Korean War broke out. In the meantime I had bought a tractor and farming equipment and I had been doing a bit of contracting around

42:00 the district with…

Tape 2

00:31 **Dick, I was just wondering, even though you were a young lad when the war was approaching, did you have any sense at the time that it was a possibility before the announcement was made?**

What, of the outbreak of war?

Yes. Was it something that the family was speaking about, the possibility that there could be a war?

Yes, yes, there was always that thought. The way things

01:00 were going in the couple of years prior to the war starting, that there was trouble building up. And it became quite obvious towards the, particularly in the twelve months what was going on in Europe and being part of the Commonwealth well

01:30 you sort of… It was natural that everybody was going to get involved and that's the way we virtually accepted what the outcome was going to be.

Did your father feel strongly towards the mother country, the Empire? Was he that way inclined?

Yes. I think so, yes. Even though he had settled down into Australia and accepted Australia, but he still

02:00 had family ties back in England.

Had some of that respect for the Empire rubbed off on you, do you think?

I think so. I think that continued on quite well up until into the '50s, that sort of outlook of being part of the Commonwealth nations setup.

02:30 **How would you get information about what was developing in Europe? Would that come to the family through newspapers, through wireless? How would you get that?**

Through newspapers. And eventually we were able to branch out and afford to buy a wireless of sorts. It wasn't any big deal wireless but

03:00 it was car battery operated. It used to have a few problems with that.

Do you recall when the actual declaration was made by Menzies? Do you recall that day?

No, not on that day but later on we found out about it.

How did you feel when you found out about it?

Oh I don't really remember. You just

03:30 accepted and that's what's going to be ahead.

Did you have an eagerness to be involved from the early days of the war, do you think, as a young boy?

Yes, I think so. Being involved in the timber industry we used to have to supply part of the supply of timber for building up army camps and

04:00 stuff, sending loads of timber down to Wilsons Promontory when they started up he commando unit down there. And when the war went into the islands we used to supply a lot of specially cut timber in very extremely long lengths for the air force, for their

04:30 air force bases and that in various parts of Australia and what have you. I remember we, one of the sawmills had just about been cut out and the army came along and purchased the sawmill in bulk. That

was everything, all the machinery for it and everything else with it, and we had it load it into to the railway trucks to be shipped to Melbourne

05:00 and held until they got the word when it had to be moved out of Noojee to Melbourne to be loaded on a specific ship. It was some months later that we got word that the ship had been sunk in the Coral Sea, so that was the end of that lot.

So when you would hear stories of

05:30 **encounters, war encounters, battles, were you longing to be a part of that?**

Well yes. They started up a VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps] unit in Neerim South. I went up there for a while to sort of be part of it but because of commitments in the timber industry and that we couldn't carry on because of the travel

06:00 and the times when they were having their parades and everything. But I got really shook up when a lad next door was with 39th Battalion and they ended up in Kokoda, and I was told that I also had a cousin with the medical team that was at Kokoda as well.

06:30 He knew there was a sniper up in the coconut palm and he was down in the kunai grass and he laid there for a day without moving. And eventually he made the fatal mistake of making a slight movement. And he copped it in the spine and he

07:00 had forty-odd operations and they couldn't fix his spine. And eventually they turned around and said, "Well the only way we're going to ease it for you is to take your legs off." He said, "Right," which he accepted. And he was a fine big lad and he used to do a milk round in Noojee so it hit pretty hard.

Did you see much of him when you got back home?

07:30 I used to visit him down in Melbourne in Caulfield Repat [Repatriation] Hospital.

What impact did having contact with him and seeing what happened to him, what impact did that have on your mind?

Well just one of those things because we used to see people coming back that were badly affected by malaria and what have you. But

08:00 you have to accept that as a part of life, which we'd really accepted earlier in the younger days, to accept whatever came along in life, the hardships and that, especially being on the land.

Did it change the way you felt towards the enemy when you saw an outcome of what they could do?

08:30 We sort of had, how would I put it? An aggression against their savagery but later on we were to learn that they were probably no better off than what our people were. They were in the same boat as what we were.

09:00 They were given a job to do. They were brainwashed into, a lot of them were brainwashed into the sort of all out go, whereas I feel that out people are a little bit more easygoing in one way, not to that extent of being completely brainwashed.

But at the time

09:30 **what do you think your attitude was towards the Japanese, for instance, at that time when the Japanese had entered the war and they were a big threat for Australia?**

I thought well, you know, "We're going to have to put our back to the wall," and that's eventually what happened. We had to do something to survive one way or the other irrespective of whether you were in the services or

10:00 in a protected industry. You had to work extremely hard to try and overcome that, irrespective of where you were or what you were doing, because I was still helping Mum out on the farm, wherever I could, trying to grow a bit of stuff, so it worked out a virtually seven-day week sort of thing, daylight to dark.

Pretty flat out

10:30 **through that whole period?**

Yeah.

I Just wanted to clarify. You said earlier that you were involved in the VDC. Could you just explain what those letters stand for?

It was the Volunteer Defence Corps. It was made up of people who were too old to serve and people who were locked into their farms and couldn't get away, people that were

11:00 unfit for actual field military service but were able to… They had old 1896 rifles which were single shot, lever action, some of them had. There were very few of them in that particular district at that time but a

couple of my mates and I used to pedal our bikes up the mountains to go to

11:30 Neerim to go and see what was on and do a bit of field training with them and fire a few shots when they had range practice. But that eventually went when things got a bit tougher and more involved with what we were involved with.

So did you have any time to think about chasing girls or anything like that during the war as a young bloke?

Girls were

12:00 virtually non-existent around the area. It was a strange thing that in all the schools I went to there was only a handful of girls. I don't know the reason why or what happened. I think there was one school I went to where there were four girls in it. Another school there was probably half a dozen.

12:30 When I went to Noojee there were more girls there but they were a lot older. Some of them were younger but there wasn't the amount of girls in the ratio to boys in those days. We used to go, when later on they were running buses to Warragul on Saturday night for pictures we used to go on there. There would probably be a busload of us with maybe half a dozen girls amongst the busload

13:00 going into Warragul on Saturday night for the picture. I didn't see very many involved girls until I ended up getting my thumb busted in 1945 at work and was put in Warragul Hospital and the nurses I gave them a bit of a merry time. I used to run around and help them

13:30 because I only had my hand done. That's when it wasn't sewn to my body trying to put a graft on. And a couple of Saturday nights I used to take one of them to a local dance down there – shoved pillows in the bed and go down the back stairs and shoot through to a dance.

Good times?

You make the best of it. They were all trainee girls. They used

14:00 to work long hours, extremely long hours, because they used to have to go out and do ambulance work as well after their nursing shifts. They had to be on call for that.

Can you tell us a bit more about your accident with your thumb?

We were loading logs, and when we were loading logs we used to have an inch rope,

14:30 steel wire rope on two big loops. You'd put one on one end of the log and one on the other end. You'd put them down about two-thirds of the way down below the final circumference of the log so it wouldn't ride up. On that particular day I wanted a certain log to fit the railway truck. I was virtually a dog chaser,

15:00 and I turned around and one particular log I couldn't quite get it on. We had just made new slings prior to this and I tried to get it out. I couldn't get down below the halfway mark and I tried again, and eventually it looked as though it was going to hold so I put my hand over the corner of

15:30 the rope from the end. And I was directing the crane driver up slowly to take it up and it looked like it was going to grab. Instead of grabbing the log it jumped off and grabbed my hand and rolled my hand across a two foot six log, so it sort of squashed the thumb up a bit and tore the flesh off it. So that was a drawn-out

16:00 episode, a couple of grafts trying to patch it up.

Dick, you were explaining the process of being in the hospital and them working away trying to give you the best result possible there with the thumb? It took a fair bit of work?

Pardon?

It took a fair bit of work for them to get it right?

Yes, in those days it was a lengthy operation. For penicillin they used to mix

16:30 up a powder for penicillin to do it up. First of all they… The next day I turned around after they had plastered it up, I woke up and I turned around and told them I could count six fingers on my hand, couldn't believe it. So anyway they had a look at it a week or so later and they found that all down inside the thumb had all turned black, right down to the

17:00 joint from the middle joint of the thumb. So they turned round and they cut some of that dead flesh away and they tried to graft and they had me plastered up. An army doctor on leave did the job because I had a Polish refugee

17:30 doctor who was standing in because the local doctor had passed way some time prior. So they found out that that didn't work so they turned around, and the only thing to do was to keep dressing it and to keep trimming back the dead flesh on the thumb. They would nibble away at that and wash it, and I used to give the nurses a bit of a hand.

18:00 And when they got right back to the bone the, they only had the sinew and the bone left there and I had a look at it while they were dressing it one day and I said, “Those bones all have all got vertical splits in it.” And I squeezed it and gunk came out of it. And so then they decided that they would get another surgeon in to turn around and

18:30 cut the bad part of the bone out of it, and got rid of the dead sinew and eventually did a slab graft off my stomach and sewed my hand to my stomach and grafted that way, and eventually got it taken.

So how long all up did that process take for you?

About eight or nine months. It was

19:00 a lengthy operation in those days and they way they were doing it over a period of time, and the way things worked out to find out what was going on.

Did you have to stay in hospital that whole time?

No, the first time after about four or five days I went home. And I turned around and ended up getting a reaction to the tetanus injection and

19:30 I ended up going back into hospital for that because I had swollen up. My body had completely swollen up on that. So back to hospital again and they got that down and then they turned around and investigated further into what all the problems was because I had a wire sticking out the front of my thumb to hold my thumb out, and that was stitched to the wire frame in front of my thumb and plastered.

20:00 **So it kept you out of work for a fair while?**

Yeah, out of work. But when they did one lot of work on it I’d maybe get to go home for a week or so and then back to hospital again. And that was it.

So what has the outcome been with the thumb? How does it work for you? Is it all right?

It’s all right. I turned around, at one stage I turned around and said, “The best thing to do is to cut if off.”

20:30 They said, “No, we’re not going to cut it off because it will give you a bit of a backstop.”

So you’ve continued. You’re a right-handed writer, are you?

No, I’m a left-handed writer.

Were you a lefty before that?

I was a lefty before that even though the teachers tried to bash it out of me but it didn’t work.

Well it turned out to be a very good thing, didn’t it?

In one way, yes. I’ve got problems now though with it.

21:00 Anyway that’s another story.

Did you get into Melbourne much during the war?

No, oh a couple of times I got down to spend a weekend with my aunt and to see some cousins who had got back, and apart from that maybe I went to Melbourne

21:30 two times. That was all.

Were there many Americans in Melbourne at that stage?

Yeah, there were but I don’t know what the numbers compared with Sydney and Brisbane. I should imagine there would be a lot more there but there was an American army camp down at Balcombe. And there used to be a lot of stuff shipped into Melbourne.

22:00 **What did you make of the Americans that you saw? What sort of a profile did they have around town?**

Well only by the newspaper reports that they were pretty outrageous at times. Of course it was down in Melbourne that that chap killed that girl down at Port Melbourne or Albert Park and eventually they done away with him. So

22:30 the message we got was that they weren’t very welcome at that stage, even though the job that they were doing, we realised what they were doing.

And did Melbourne feel like it was just business as usual, or could you tell that there were changes?

Oh, you could tell that it was on a wartime footing because on the outskirts of Melbourne there were gun emplacements,

23:00 anti-aircraft gun emplacements, trenches, There was trenches around the Shrine [of Remembrance]. In Melbourne, buildings were all sandbagged up and Victoria Barracks was all sandbagged up on St Kilda Road there. There was… It gave you the impression that it was certainly on a wartime footing. And there were searchlights. You could see

23:30 searchlight emplacements and whatever.

Did you have to do air-raid drill at home during that time?

No, no, no, we were well back off the bush. We were at Noojee and I don't know how far; we were well back in the mountains.

So you were following the progress of the war fairly closely yourself? Did you take

24:00 **a real interest in it?**

Yes on the radio I used to listen to, when we eventually got a radio we would follow the news on there and the newspapers, and we used to get the newspapers.

Was your main recreation the occasional picture show, or were you able to go to dances or anything like that?

We had occasional dances. I ended up getting involved with

24:30 people who were running the Red Cross and I volunteered to give them a hand out, and we used to organise dances and organise people to make coffee in the copper and buy in cakes, get all the cakes from Warragul for supper. People used to bring in their sandwiches and that for a dance every so often.

25:00 **Would you get any soldiers on leave along to things like that?**

Some chaps used to come back on leave, a few of them. When they were in camp in either Victoria or some came back from the war and had sort of been boarded out.

Would you have a chat to any of them and find out how they had been going?

Yes, we used to talk to them.

25:30 At one stage there we had some of the truck drivers got jobs after they came out. Some of them were navy chaps and told us about the setup in Indonesia, the Dutch East Indies, when they were coming out, and how they went to refuel and had their tanks filled up with sea water and all this sort of thing,

26:00 what was happening. And some of the chaps came back from the war and they ended up as truck drivers. They had been discharged from the army.

Had you started to have a think about your future and what you wanted to do with your life, as far as whether you wanted to stay on the land or whether you wanted to pursue another career at that point while the war was still on?

Well I had always said I wished to stay

26:30 on the land because that's what I was brought up to know, and working in the timber industry was only a secondary. Even during the Depression years Dad used to go and work on a sawmill. He used to have to walk about five or six miles in the bush to get to the mill to… That was when he

27:00 had an opportunity to work. And he worked on there for a while but sometimes the wages wouldn't turn up and you'd be working for nothing. After the 1939 bushfires he went and got a job up in the mountains where the sawmill had been pushed in. The roads were only dirt roads in and

27:30 they were just mud quires and they used to have to walk about twelve or fourteen miles in of a Sunday night with the food they used to take in. And then the other food supplies would come in behind a tractor and sledge, which ended up being covered in mud. And it would be, "What did you have in your parcel of groceries ordered?" and all that sort of thing.

28:00 Oh, it was pretty rough. And they would be snowed in for months on end.

Did you ever have a feeling that you were going to be invaded by the Japanese at any stage of the war? Did you feel like they were getting too close for comfort?

Well yes, this was always at the back of my mind, "How long can they hold them off?" But after the Battle of the Coral Sea it sort of eased that, and

28:30 when they pushed it back off the Kokoda Track it sort of eased that off and the raids on Darwin ceased, and it sort of was a bit of a relief. But it was very dark days in 1942, right through until virtually well late in the year because it looked as though anything could happen,

29:00 but once they were held and sort of it was able to turn the tide and it sort of eased that off.

But quite disturbing at that stage of the war?

Oh yeah it was. The outlook wasn't good, really.

And how did you feel when you heard the news about the atomic bombs being dropped in Japan?

Well it was a,

29:30 there seemed to be a disastrous sort of way to do it, but we realised it was probably the only way to bring it to a close because well what we gathered from the news we got is if they ended up trying to invade the mainland it was

30:00 going to be a long drawn-out battle the way they were going, even though they were getting short of supplies and that. But the way they fought, they fought to an end, come what may. That was the way they were sort of brought up.

And how did you feel when you heard that the war was over?

30:30 Well I was in hospital at the time and I had my hand sewn to my stomach, and it was a great relief really when we heard about it. About the mid morning the news came through that it had finished. And that night the hospital was about a mile from the Warragul township and you could see the town

31:00 going mad, lights going on.

Were the nurses celebrating in any way?

Well those that weren't on duty, I think they all went down town.

It was a bit frustrating for you that you had to lie there with your hand stuck to your stomach?

Yes, but actually that day it was the day to have my hand removed from my stomach, so…

How long did you have to have it connected before the graft took?

31:30 It was on there for about three weeks, three or four weeks.

It must have been a trying process?

It was. Trying to manage everything with one hand strapped, sewn to yourself. But I ended up I could walk around, that was one thing. Eventually I could walk around, get out of bed and raise hell.

So when dad finally got back, did you ask him about his experiences

32:00 **and did he share much with you?**

Oh he told us odd bits and pieces about in Syria and about in the desert, but not a great deal, not a great deal, because he didn't talk. He talked about it on some sides of things.

So when did you first start to have this thought that you wanted to

32:30 **be a part of the army?**

Well that was during the war, during the war, but even before we were there. But trying to get release, I couldn't. I had this problem. I couldn't really leave Mum stuck there by herself with what farm there was to run, and so I was sort of hamstrung in a way.

So even though the war had finished,

33:00 **you were still keen?**

Oh, I was still keen. I reckoned it was part of life to serve one way or another.

Why did you think you felt that?

I don't know. It was just sort of that everybody else in the family, both sides of the family had served and it was sort of expected of people, I think. That was the

33:30 feeling anyway.

So once you heard about the need for an occupation force you thought you'd give it a go?

I thought I'd give it a go, but we were just setting up the farm that Dad had bought and we had just built the house and there was still work to do on that.

And then you got the machinery?

And then I got the machinery, yeah, and then

34:00 I got… I couldn't race off to join K Force originally at the start of the Korean War, and once I got that and Dad was pretty well settled in the farm and I thought, "Well the brother can turn around and help out." So I turned around and decided to walk away from everything and join K Force for two years.

Did you

34:30 **discuss that with your dad before you made that decision?**

No, I turned around and went down to see if I could get accepted and then came back and told them what I did.

And what was the response?

They weren't very pleased but they said, "That's entirely up to you."

Do you think there was a part of your father that was proud that his son was maintaining that tradition?

35:00 I dare say there was. I dare say there was.

So you were how old when you signed for K Force?

Twenty-five.

Pardon me. So what were your expectations as far as what K Force would be about? Did you know much about the situation in Korea at that stage?

I knew from the newspaper reports and seeing newsreels, what newsreels there were,

35:30 showing off our people in Korea. There wasn't very much on that side of it. It was all on the American side. So I had a fair inkling of what we were up against.

Did you have much idea about the politics of Korea and why the war had started?

I had a cousin on the occupation forces and he was

36:00 invalided back and I went and spent a weekend with him and he told me quite a bit. He was up there from '46, to '49. He told me quite a bit of background of what was going on up there in a way because he was involved recently with the military government and then he was involved with the military police. And I had a fair inkling of what

36:30 was happening. And as far as the internal politics of the place, I didn't know very much about apart from what I you read in newspapers, the Americans and Sigmund Rhee and what have you.

How did you feel about the threat of communism at that stage? Was that something you were aware of?

Yes, we were aware of that and it was sort of well known of what was the push was all about

37:00 and how Stalin had his worldwide ambitions, really. So, you know, you had a reasonable inkling of the dangers of how they were wanting it spread around the globe one way or another.

Did it seem to you

37:30 **like a conflict that Australia should be involved with at that stage?**

Yes, being part of the United Nations. Seeing it was said to be a United Nations setup so I thought the United Nations would be a really good way to go at that time.

And what was it about the whole proposition of being

38:00 **in K Force and going over to Korea that was appealing to you personally?**

Sorry, I missed that.

What was it about joining K Force and being in the army and going to Korea, what about that was appealing to you? What was motivating you at that time?

Well just to serve, I think, just to serve the country. You sort of still had that

38:30 feeling of obligation to serve.

Did the opportunity to travel as well, was that a factor for you?

Well yes, well that was something in there. Possibly it wasn't a major thing really at that stage but when I got to Japan and that it opened up a whole new world to me.

39:00 **So can you talk us through the process of signing up for K Force and the training that then took place?**

Well yes. We went and had a medical and we then turned around and we were told they would send us a letter when they wanted us to report to Royal Park. We went to Royal Park and they gave us a

39:30 part of an issue. At that time National Service had just started, hadn't long started, so we only got part of our issue. We were then sent to Puckapunyal and we became part of 2 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, who was based at Puckapunyal, and we did our training in support company.

40:00 It was a hundred and twenty of us went up and we were all in this one group of a hundred and twenty to be trained by a couple of NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and a sergeant and that was it. It was still the old wartime tin sheds, or tin huts I should say, and there was twenty-

40:30 six of us to a hut. And the mess halls weren't the best and the kitchens were still outdoors and there were no fancy kitchens at that stage.

What was the bedding arrangement?

Oh you had beds. You had blankets and a wardrobe.

41:00 So that was…

So when you arrived there and looked around, how were you feeling about your decision to join the army?

I thought, "What the hell did I let myself in for here?" So that, quite honestly was… And you opened your big mouth and you had to accept it.

Do you think some of the other blokes were feeling the same way?

Oh there were other people feeling the same way, but there were a few others

41:30 I think that sort of said, "Well this is not for me," and through our training period some of them went over the hill. And as a matter of fact some of them went over the hill with their beds, blankets and everything they owned. A taxi would pull up and cart everything away. That was the last we saw of them.

Do you think you got close to

42:00 **trying that yourself?**

No.

You settled in?

Tape 3

00:32 **Dick, you were talking about Puckapunyal and the conditions there. Can you describe a little bit more about what it was like to be in Puckapunyal and what you experienced?**

Well apart from being dusty and living in the tin huts there in the summer time it wasn't the most pleasant sort of place, but you had to accept

01:00 that. And it was fairly solid training. We were only there for about three months and when we were moved up into what they called Scrub Hill, in marquees. And the kitchen setup in the marquee was right alongside a track, and this track was used

01:30 daily by the Centurion tanks going out for field training, so you'd line up and you'd probably get half the sand and dust in your meal as well, so it was a pretty rough sort of thing. One night one of the chaps got hold of a barrel of beer which, apparently, had been put out

02:00 in the sergeants' mess down in Pucka [Puckapunyal] itself and apparently it was off. So they rolled this barrel of beer up by some means or other and set it up on a stump, and they got hold of an old enamel dish from somewhere and they got around that, so there was a few characters involved with that amongst our group.

Some good men?

Some good men; some very good men. There were characters.

02:30 And we were only there for a matter of a month or six weeks and then we moved up to Ingleburn.

What kind of military training were you doing at Puckapunyal?

It was all basic. It was basic training: drill, weapon handling, fieldcraft. Just the basic infantry training. And when we moved to Ingleburn

03:00 it became more intensified and moved into another section of what the training was about.

What was that for you?

Oh it kept us busy.

At Puckapunyal did you take to the life? Did you think you'd made the right decision to join the army?

Well I made that decision so I had to stick with it.

03:30 I went along with it, yeah.

Were you having second thoughts?

No, I didn't have second thoughts. Well I couldn't because I had made the first thought.

And you said there were some good characters there. Can you talk about some of the other mates that you made while you were at Puckapunyal?

There was some very good mates from different parts.

04:00 They came in from all parts of Australia there. Some of the people had previous army service in the Second World War and joined up, at the same time there were chaps there who had jumped ship and joined the army. There were the air force chaps who absconded and joined the army to get to Korea, and that was their aim because the other services

04:30 were very limited to the people they could send, and they reckoned they had better scope in the army. At that time they were building up the married quarters in Pucka. They had several people who would turn up for reveille, breakfast parade, and then the first parade

05:00 and then they'd sort of disappear. What they were doing we found was that some of these characters were going over and helping these people construct these Swedish prefab [prefabricated] houses for the married quarters. They would come back for the midday meal and then disappear again and come back for payday. There were probably about three or four of these characters.

Did anyone catch them?

No,

05:30 I don't think so, I don't think so. I never heard of anyone being caught.

What about the men training you? What was their background?

They were people, corporals who had come back from Korea. The army officers, we didn't see so much of them. The CSM [Company Sergeant Major] was a Second World War chap.

06:00 One of the majors was a Second World War chap. The other officers, they were only sort of trainee officers. They didn't have any service so they were involved with other things as well. But we never got our full complete issue of equipment. We never got a slouch hat issued to us because all the slouch hats were being worn by the National Servicemen, and we were wearing berets.

06:30 **How did you feel about that?**

I ended up getting sunburnt eyes out of it, and that's the only way I got a slouch hat. And every few weeks, payday, you'd be lined you up to get your needles, injections, with the various things they injected you with. So come the next time around you were marched down to

07:00 the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] for another lot and eventually you found out that nobody had signed our AV83, which was a record for service and issues and what have you. Nobody had got round to signing that you'd received these, so we became a walking pincushion. That is one of the anomalies of being so many people being

07:30 handled by so few, actually.

Was there many mistakes like that being made, administrative mistakes like that?

No, I don't think so. That was only one of the things we found out was going on. See they had to be signed by the RMO [Regimental Medical Officer], the doctor, and he was pretty busy.

You mentioned that you didn't get a slouch hat because the Nashos [National Service soldiers] were

08:00 **so many and there wasn't enough. Was there much resentment amongst the people like you who were going to Korea as soldiers against the Nashos?**

No, not really, not really. They were alongside us. They had their unit alongside us. But they were well looked after because politics. We were only volunteers so when you stick your neck out

08:30 you accept what was given to you.

That was the attitude?

That was the attitude, yes.

All right, you mentioned that you went to Ingleburn next, and did you start to specialise at that point?

No, we went on to further infantry training all the way through so it was more weapon handling, more live firing and route marches.

09:00 And then we were in Ingleburn camp for about a month and we went on final leave from there. No, yeah, we went on final leave from there. And then we went out to the Holsworthy area and we were in tents out there and did a bit more field training out in the forests and what have you, digging holes in the middle of winter

09:30 and living in that, and frost. And you'd wake up in the morning and you could hardly move. They would turn around and get you to run and you could hardly move. Eventually you'd be able to run and go for a morning run then before doing more things, more route marches, more tactics.

Did they give you much explanation about what you were going to expect in Korea as far as conditions were concerned?

Yes, yes, the people out there

10:00 from Ingleburn, the warrant officers we had and the sergeants had all come back from Korea so they gave you a bit of an inkling as to what you can expect.

What part of the training did you like the best?

Oh I don't know. Weapon handling, weapon handling was the best, live firing.

Did you find the fact that you had been brought up on the farm

10:30 **and in the bush, did that make is easier for you to take to army training at all?**

I think so, I think so. I think that had a lot to do with it. Although there was certainly a lot of city people in it and they accepted it as well. We had to do river crossings in fold-up boats out in the Georges River. We were shown how to do it in the afternoon,

11:00 how to assemble them, race them down and put them in. They were fold-up boats, wood and canvas. How to get into them and how to row them across the other side and do the same thing again. They said, "Right-oh, we are going to do this tonight." This was in the middle of winter. In the middle of winter around Sydney in those days there used to be a lot of frost

11:30 because you never had the smog and what have you to keep the frosts away from Sydney. And we raced down this frosty evening in the dark and we had to go down a steep bank getting them in, and we heard an ungodly scream from one mob. They were a bit too ambitious and a bit too keen and didn't do the job properly. They ended

12:00 up in the water. So we got across all right and back again. So these chaps that ended up in the river, we had to get a big fire going and get all their clothes and try and dry them and keep them warm. At that time we were living under groundsheets, what we called pup tents. You'd join two ground sheets together and sleep under those.

12:30 **So after Holsworthy, did you head off to Japan?**

Yeah, we went. The last meal we had out there at, it was actually called Glenfield, the area we were in, and fish was on the menu. This was on Friday night, Friday afternoon. When we got our fish it was boiled up in the copper, scales and all.

What did that…

I'll never forget our last meal in Australia.

13:00 **Was that done on purpose?**

No, I don't think so. The cooks weren't all the best cooks we had.

So how did you get to Japan?

We flew up, Qantas flew us up. We overnighted in Manila. We get to Manila and we were put up in Manila Hotel and when

13:30 get there to check in there is a big Yank [American] there. And he says, "Listen guys, we are short of blood at the Red Cross." So okay, we'll volunteer to go and give our blood. We were in battle dress and the hottest time of winter in Sydney, and we get up there and it is the hottest time of the year in Manila. So we gave our blood

14:00 and after we gave our blood he gave us a bottle of Pepsi. So I drank mine and I went to put the bottle down but I followed it down. But anyway when we got back to the hotel we got a bath full of beer and a few cartons of cigarettes, so

14:30 everybody was happy. The meal in the hotel was chicken on the nest. I've never heard of such a dish in my life. It was spaghetti with little baby potatoes and a chicken.

And this was all laid on by the Americans?

No, this was laid on by the hotel, not by the Americans. It was probably part of the army's deal in accommodation.

15:00 Anyway during the course of the night a few army sisters went up with us, and the sister you saw in the photo, she fell over in the bath and cut her head open. When we got to Iwakuni the matron was there to meet her little flock of chickens and she didn't take kindly to

15:30 this sister arriving with her head bandaged up.

So you had army nurses travel with you?

We had army nurses travel up. They were posted to the British Commonwealth Hospital in Kure. They were up there on a re-posting. There were one or two civilians on it but the rest of us were army personnel, reinforcements.

So you went up to Kure, that was where you ended up?

Oh we ended up in

16:00 actually Hiro. We landed at Iwakuni and were taken up by an army work boat to Kure through the Inland Sea, and then were taken out to our camp our at Hiro.

What was that like? Can you describe that camp?

Well the buildings were good. We were put in tents alongside a paper mill. The meals were exceptionally good.

16:30 They were first class. The training was stiff but when you woke up the next morning beside this paper mill it felt as though the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s had camped in your mouth, from the smell of a paper mill. But the amenities and the showers, there was as much hot water as you wanted, the meal were really first class meals. The training was

17:00 extremely extensive.

What were the meals like? Do you remember any of the meals you used to eat?

Meals?

What would they give you? What kind of food?

Well there was everything you could wish for. It was well done. They had Japanese cooks under Australian Army catering submissions. The staff in the camp was Japanese staff, from hygiene right though, apart from the

17:30 clerical side. Stores issues was helped out by Japanese, and there was Japanese maintenance on the camp.

What were your first impressions of Japan?

Our first impressions I got, our first parade… Well not our actual first parade. When we got there we were given lectures and shown films

18:00 and then taken for a march out into the mountains late in the evenings. And then a meal would be brought out to us, a good meal was brought out to us, and then we were marched out by road. And I thought, "Oh well, we'll be marching back by road." Oh no, up over that yama [mountain] late at night, in the dark, coming back, so this is the sort of thing they gave us.

18:30 A few days later they gave us our first evening leave in the town, the local town. We were camped right on this part of the Hiro township, so we all got up there and looked around and we were taken up with the surround of the place and everything else and the way of life and what we saw around us. And the next morning…

What did you see? Can you tell us

19:00 **about the way of life?**

The way people were dressed, their mode of getting around in getas.

In what?

In getas, they were wooden thongs raised up on little wooden blocks. They were carved out of wood. Carrying children on their back, and their dress, the shops,

19:30 the various shops. There was a lot of gift shops there.

What would the gift shops sell?

Everything, trinkets, anything. Anything from an aluminium suitcase, right through to whatever, whatever. And beer halls and all this sort of thing. There were plenty of beer halls and what have you.

20:00 **Was it just Australians there in the western contingent?**

There was, in the area there was Australians, Canadians and Brits [British] and Kiwis so there was an intermingling of these servicemen within the Hiro area.

Did you get on with the Brits, and was there any of the other nationalities that you didn't get on with?

Oh yes, yes. The provos [Provosts – Military Police] used to go around and there used to be

20:30 the four different provos in a jeep just doing patrol work around, just keeping law and order, and trying to tell people to keep away from the places that you weren't allowed to, were off limits, sort of thing.

What was off limits?

Oh some of the Japanese halls and other places, and some of the food places.

21:00 But you learned to try a Japanese meal.

You had a Japanese meal?

Oh yeah, we tried those. We'd try anything.

Do you remember what your Japanese meal was?

On rice, served up on a little bar in front and you used to be able to get bits of meals sometimes in some of the beer halls. But the

21:30 morning after our first leave we were lined up on the parade ground and we met our company commander. And this redheaded company commander walks out and he starts to rant and rave and carry on and give everybody a serve. And I said to my mate, "What the bloody hell have we got here?"

22:00 I learned later on, I met up with him again in various thing and travels with PR [Public Relations] and got on very well with him.

What was he ranting and raving about to the new guys?

About conduct and about drinking beer and turning up drunk, and not getting too drunk. He had come back from Korea.

22:30 **What was his name?**

Jock McCormack . He had a broad accent as well.

Scottish?

Years later when I had met up with him… Oh I met up with him and he ended up in the Parachute Training School up in Williamtown and I had a bit to do with him there when he used to come to various para-drops with the CMF and I was in

23:00 public relations. When I was up in New Guinea he was the G2 [Second in Command, General Branch] there, and later on I had a lot to do with him, went out to the training depot with the PIR [Pacific Islands Regiment] people, and then he took over a battalion up in Wewak, PIR battalion. And then he invited me down to dinner one night and I was down there and his wife and family were down there and I turned around and

23:30 told him when I first met him and what we said.

Did you meet Japanese people while you were living there?

We met them in the shops or in the beer halls, you met them.

And what were your impressions of the Japanese people you met?

Well they were very sincere.

24:00 They were hard working, the ones I'd seen. There were no slackers anywhere. But I didn't get to really know a great deal about them until I went on leave in Tokyo.

Was that before you went to Korea? When you came back?

No, no, that was when we came back.

We'll talk about that later on.

Yeah, later on.

So what else happened while you were there? What did the training actually involve?

24:30 Well it was mainly toughening up training, forced route marches, more weapon training, more refined training for a few weeks and then we went up to the battle school up in the mountains at a place called Haramura, and that was intensive training there, live fire field

25:00 training under battle conditions with artillery tank fire support, and you moved in onto positions. And handling some of the weapons we had never trained with before, like bazookas. So it was very intensive training and more route marches, and then moving out into the

25:30 mountains on field training, bivouacking. And out there and that was in the middle of the wet season in Japan. And before we moved up to Haramura we did night firing exercises out from Hiro at a place called Karajuri, and they had a setup

26:00 where they did night firing and they used to use range fuel in ration tins with sand put in it as flares so you could see the targets and that. We used to bring them back and refuel them. A couple of us had been waiting for a detail to go on

26:30 and I'd rolled a cigarette and a chap came over and brought a few of the tins back. And they were supposed to be cool before they put the range fuel in, but apparently they got them mixed up because the next thing I know I'm rolling the cigarette and it went up in flames, and I ended up getting burned in the hands and the back of the neck and around the ears.

27:00 So I ended up for a couple of days in Kalajiri Hospital with these burns. In the meantime, people had marched up to Haramura. It was part of the training, this route march with all their gear. So when I came back from hospital a few days later my gear had been put in kit storage and the next

27:30 thing I know they said, "Right-oh, there's a truck there. Get on it." And I said, "I have no gear." They said, "Right-oh, we'll give you the webbing and the rifle," and the gear I stood up in. And I did the whole of that three weeks battle school in the gear I stood up with. I was on the nose [smelly].

28:00 And drying out and the barracks we had up there, part of the barracks we had there were part of the old Japanese army barracks. They had long huts raised up either sides, which used to be their sleeping quarters.

This is at Haramura?

Yes. At Haramura. And in the end there was a big tub for bathing , for your

28:30 hot water. So our chaps used to jump in the tub as it was, see. Apparently that wasn't on. But that's the first place I ever came across feeling an earth tremor was up there. We were in bed one night and wondering what was going on. We were on camp stretchers and we got this bit of a tremor. That's my first experience of

29:00 what happens with earth tremors.

What actually happened? What did it feel like?

Oh I just wondered what was going on for a moment. Luckily I didn't get tossed out of bed. Some of the chaps ended out of bed.

Did it last very long?

No, not very long, so that was another experience of Japan.

Given your impressions of the Japanese before you left Australia, were you shocked to actually come face to face with them and realise

29:30 **that maybe you have a different opinion about them? Or did you have a different opinion of them when you met actually met them?**

Well when I met them my original thoughts of what I was led to believe was completely different to what I expected.

Can you explain that?

Well they were very friendly towards us. Of course they were friendly

30:00 towards us because they were reaping a levy from our pay, so I suppose that was accepted. Later on I was to learn a lot more about it but I'll tell you more about that later.

Okay, so where did you go to after that? Was there any more training anywhere else?

Well I turned around and when I finished the battle school training they

30:30 turned around and wanted people to do specialist training. So I tried to get into, I thought, “Well maybe I’ll turn around and do machine gun training.” And there was signal training and pioneer training or mortar training. And it ended up they put me in assault pioneer training. So it meant learning explosives,

31:00 road maintenance, how to build culverts, how to lay mines, how to lift mines, how to make explosives for blowing up bunkers.

What are culverts?

Culverts, they’re under roads, where the creeks can flow under roads. How to do drainage, make road drainage and all that sort of thing.

31:30 That was extensive training. How to make these culverts out of 44-gallon drums by blowing the ends out of 44-gallon drums to join them together to dig them into roads and cover them over to allow drainage.

Why did you choose pioneer training?

Well I didn’t choose it. When I turned around and said I would like to do some specialist training

32:00 they said, “You can do that.”

So no-one got a choice?

Well, those who were lucky enough to get what they wanted. And it was in that training that I trained with Canadians and British people.

What was that like? Did you get on with those people?

Yes, I got on quite well with them. And we had what they called a mad colonel at Haramura. His dress was

32:30 shorts, sandshoes, a thumping great stick and a dog. And he had, his name went around well before we got there, just being the mad colonel. But he was a fantastic tactician, army tactician. So he

33:00 would get around, he’d walk around watching the training and what have you, and while we were down working on the culverts there was a company of Black Watch had been out in the field for a week and it was pouring rain. And he turned around and he was down watching these people come in and he gets down there and he said,

33:30 “Wing you bastards, sing.” And he made them sit up or come up instead of dragging their feet and that and he turned them around and had them marching along, marching back as soldiers.

What did they sing?

Oh he had them singing some song. I’ve forget what it was but some Scottish song. Anyway he

34:00 also, down where we used to do our work there was the transport compound, and apparently he didn’t like transport for some reason or another. But anyway he goes down and there was a jeep there that had been out in the field for a week and it was all muddy and it had come back. And he goes in there and he says, this is only second hand,

34:30 he said, “Clean that windscreen up on the jeep.” And then he said, “On second thoughts, replace the bloody thing.” So he smashed it with his great stick, smashed it. But he used to come in to the mess to check what our meals were like, whether you liked your meals or not because the Brits would say,

35:00 “All right, all right,” but our chaps would say, “No bloody good,” sort of thing. So he would come up and thump the table with his stick. But he never hit any of our jokers. Apparently by all accounts he used to wallop the Brits.

He’d wallop his own men, would he? And you said this dog was always with him?

This dog was always with him. And the other tale I heard

35:30 was that he didn’t cotton on to staff too well. He reckoned they got it too easy, so one morning first up he gets them all out and he makes them double out and around the back of this great hill, and they thought he’d only double them there and back again but he kept doubling them around

36:00 to a road that came around to the front of the camp. And, “Oh thank God we’re back.” And what he did was he about turned them and took them all the way back again. He was a hard taskmaster.

You said that his reputation, that you’d already heard about him way before you met him, what did the bloke tell you about him before you met him?

Oh just called him the mad colonel,

36:30 and how he used to get around.

Can you remember what his name was?

Colonel Lonsdale, yeah.

So he was responsible for training a lot of men in the, doing the pioneer training?

He was the overall camp commander and in charge of the training and everything else. He belonged to one of the British regiments. I think it was one of the midland regiments.

37:00 **So how long did you do the pioneer training for?**

I did it, it was for four weeks, but halfway through the last week I was called on draft so I had to finish that. They gave me a pass from the training because it was only just a wrap-up but

37:30 I had to go back down to Hiro to prepare to go to Japan, to Korea I should say.

So what did that involve, preparing to go Korea?

Just all the final check-ups to make sure we were all completely kitted out, our needles were up to date, and everything else was ready to go on draft, and that all our paper work was in order, wills made out, to make sure that we had made a will out

38:00 and all that administrative work, it was.

Had you had much contact with your parents at that stage, while you were over there?

Yeah, we used to write regularly. The mail used to come through pretty regularly.

Was there many other people drafted at the same time as you from your pioneer battalion?

Yes, I forget how many there were. There was a fair sort of a draft because there had been quite a few casualties that

38:30 time and there was, at that time we had the two battalions in Korea. So I was drafted to the 3 and a lot of my mates were drafted to the 1 Battalion and we were split up from there.

And do you know what had happened in Korea that there had been so many casualties?

Oh we were getting news back, that had filtered back that there had been attacks on people and getting wounded and what have you.

39:00 **Did you know much about the political state of the war in Korea just before you went?**

Not really, not really, no. The main aim of course was training and that's it. You had a bit of background but there wasn't much notice of the real politics in the thing.

Sorry, were you going to say something?

39:30 **Apart from that the Russians had really supported North Korea and sort of egged them on and supplied them with a lot of equipment and what have you**

So at that point were you feeling like you'd made the right choice in going into a military career? Were you ready to go into Korea and were you looking forward to it?

Well yes, we knew we had to go so that was it.

40:00 There was no turning back. You couldn't go… It was like crossing a bridge that was pretty rickety. You either had to get across to the other side; you couldn't turn back.

So you still had the feeling that you wanted to serve your country? Was that still very strong?

Yeah, yeah, you had to serve your mates, your mateships comes into that.

So it had gone from serving your country to serving your mates?

That's right. It's mateship, Yeah, you had to

40:30 turn around and stick by mates whatever come by.

Had you developed some good friendships at that stage?

Yeah I had.

Can you talk about some of the mates that you were closer to?

Oh yeah, a chap from South Australia who had served in the interim army prior to that. Another chap who had been a navy chap and we were pretty good friends. He came from Bairnsdale and the other chap came from Adelaide. And

41:00 there was a few others that you were very close to.

Did they get drafted at the same time as you?

Yeah, we all went together. So it was on the boat and across to Pusan.

All right. We're just about to run out of tape so we'll cut it there.

Tape 4

00:31 **Dick, I just want to take you back to when you were getting on the Qantas aeroplane to head over to Japan. That must have been quite an exciting time for you boys, getting onto a big aeroplane and heading out of Australia for the first time. What was the feeling on the plane?**

That was my first plane trip. I had a window seat so I was able to see a bit of what was going on from a distance.

01:00 It was, oh I don't know. I just accepted it and it was a good trip.

Were the blokes in good spirits?

We had to make a stop during the night down at Cloncurry. We had an emergency landing at Cloncurry for a while. I don't know what was wrong but anyway we arrived in Darwin in the morning.

01:30 **Did that make you apprehensive about flying, knowing that you had to make an emergency landing?**

No, no, no, no, we just accepted it. Planes had been around a long time before I got in one. And we got into Manila probably later afternoon for an overnight stay and then off next morning.

And when you were

02:00 **arrived in Japan, what sort of damage was still evident to you when you got there?**

I saw a bit when we arrived in Kure dockyard area. There were still parts of our dockyard that had been twisted metal. When we got out on the buses and out to Hiro

02:30 where our camp was it was quite evident because there were submarine pens just across the canal there. There was water on two sides of the camp area and that was still showing the results of the bombing and that.

03:00 And on the, along the roads there were these tunnels that had been dug into the sides of the mountains. They were still visible, whatever they were used for, probably storing ammunition or whatever. Then when we got up into the mountains on route marches

03:30 in one particular area you could see where they had had guns on top of the mountains overlooking the Inland Sea. But the guns were no longer there, of course.

And when you were able to move around the townships a little bit and do a little bit of shopping and socialising, was there a contingent of the blokes who were keen to sort of

04:00 **find bars and try and chase the local girls? Was that an activity that was favoured by some of the lads?**

Well it probably was. Everybody was, I wouldn't say everybody, but quite a number of people used to go to the bars for drinks, try this bar out and then go to another one. And they had, the bars had hostesses in there, like girls

04:30 who would serve the beer to them and everything else.

Were you allowed to mix with those hostesses?

Yeah, you could sit with them or they'd sit with you or whatever and talk and that sort of thing.

Were you forbidden from taking the relationship with the hostess any further from an official army point of view?

Well that was discouraged. Whether people took it up or not I don't know,

05:00 at that stage of life anyway.

Did you try those sorts of bars where the girls would sit with you?

I used to have an occasional beer but not that much at that stage of life. I was more interested in walking around and looking at shops and trying to see what camera gear was there and the other things that interested me.

So you already had a bit of an interest in camera gear at that stage?

05:30 Yeah, I used to have, originally years ago I was given an old Box Brownie and I used to take a few photos round the bush and what have you. The results were much to be desired in some cases, but I didn't go into it much because I never gave it much thought. I would take photos of the

06:00 family or the cousins or whatever, visitors and people I used to much around with.

So did you end up buying gear when you were in Japan?

Yes I did.

Can you recall what you got?

I bought a 120 camera which I ended up losing later on, but I never got much chance to use it.

06:30 **Were you allowed to throw a camera into your pack in those days?**

Oh yes, yes, well everyone used to do it so I assume if you weren't allowed they used to shut their eyes to it, I don't know. But it was, people used to buy radios and what have you.

Did you buy any other goodies while you were there?

No, not there. Not at that stage. No.

07:00 I had enough to carry around already I reckoned.

Did you take a few shots around Japan while you were training there?

Yes. I took one or two but I didn't much of a chance to do much with it.

And would you get the film developed there or just sent it home?

I would get it developed locally. The local Japanese photographic shops were very good. They were extremely good at processing

07:30 films and what have you.

All right, well we'll now get back to the time when you were getting on the boat to head over to Pusan. Can you tell me a bit about the vessel and what that journey was like?

I had never been on a boat so it was a first for me. And it was an old, it was

08:00 a South East, I think it was called South East Asia Shipping Company that was used apparently on charter. It was fitted out well enough. It had foam mattress bunks in it so it was quite comfortable as far as that was concerned. It was only going to be a less than twenty-four hour boat trip to Pusan.

08:30 We had two meals on it and the meals were a little bit different to what we were used to in the army but they were meals.

Who cooked the meals?

I'm not sure. We just went down to the mess hall. The ship were run by the English army transport unit.

So in what way were those meals different?

09:00 They were virtually a basic meal. There was nothing flash about them, but they were a meal.

And how would you describe the mood amongst you and your fellow soldiers heading over?

Oh they were probably all a bit quiet. There were card games going and what have you but there was nothing to see apart from going, it held the interest of people

09:30 up on the deck going through the Inland Sea because it was a fair distance we had to travel down through the Inland Sea before we got out into the Sea of Japan.

How many blokes were you on board with thereabouts?

I can't rightly recall. There was probably about

10:00 a hundred and fifty of us on that ship. There was Brits as well going across as well and the odd, probably a few Canadians thrown into the bargain, so it was quiet. The seas were kind to us. The Inland Sea was like going down a millpond.

So you had no problems with seasickness?

No, no.

10:30 Just once you got out to sea to feel the roll of the boat in the sea it was all right. We accepted that. And when we got to, in the morning, when we arrived early in the morning at Pusan that was when it really opened our eyes. Not only with the amount of activity on the port

11:00 with the Americans and the equipment and everything else there but everywhere was lined, all the streets were lined up with people living in cardboard shelters, and right up the mountains with all the refugees there right up the back to Pusan. It wasn't all that big a place really and all the mountain behind it was right to the top was

11:30 refugees' shanties. You couldn't call them shanties, really. They were just virtually cardboard packing cases and what have you.

So there was people just strewn everywhere by the sound of things?

Yeah, yeah.

And what were the Americans up to at the port there?

Oh they were transporting stuff around. Unloading ships and

12:00 carting it off to the railway sidings.

And was there any sort of official welcome party waiting for you there?

No, no, no, it was just the people from Seaforth camp, the transit camp at Pusan and they were there to meet us in buses, or trucks. I think it was trucks if I remember rightly.

What was the weather like that day?

It was summer time. It was fine.

12:30 The wet season hadn't opened up at that stage.

Any other impressions of Pusan?

There was no trees around. It was treeless. There were bare rocky mountains.

So did that all make for a grim atmosphere around the place?

Yes. You got a grim outlook really from the setup. And we moved out to a,

13:00 what they called a Seaforth camp. It was just bare tents and marquees really. They put us there overnight to make arrangements to put us on the train the next morning, an 8 Army troop train it was, and that's when we,

13:30 on that troop train was our first Yankee meal.

What was that like?

It wasn't bad, it wasn't bad. It was dished up on a tray, a normal tray with all the indents around for all the different meals. It was the first time I had ever seen something like that instead of eating out of dixies.

So it was well received, this new style of...?

Yes, yes, people seemed to enjoy it. Yeah, the food was pretty reasonable, yeah.

14:00 **Was it a crowded train trip or were you fairly comfortable?**

Oh we were comfortable. The carriages were comfortable on that train. There was nothing out of the ordinary on that train. What amazed me was how the rail system worked there. The rail system just kept going straight, on the flat virtually. It didn't go around mountains or anything like that,

14:30 it just went through them, the railway system built by the Japanese.

Big tunnels through mountains?

Big tunnels through mountains, yeah. The rivers were bone dry, nothing but rock in the side of them. We saw the typical old Korean villages. Around Pusan wasn't too badly knocked around. It wasn't until we got halfway out

15:00 to Seoul that you noticed the damage that had been done to towns because the fighting was reasonably kept well away from within reason of Pusan, so it wasn't until you got up towards Taegu that you started to see the war damage.

And did you start to sort of realise, or did the reality of the war you were going into sort of start to

15:30 **sink in?**

Yeah, then we'd start seeing the build-up of supplies at various stages, back-up supplies for the front line along the way in these various towns. And it really wasn't until we got to Seoul that we saw the extent of the damage.

Can you talk to us about that extent?

Well you travelled alongside the bridges that

16:00 were blown, the road bridges that were blown, and they were still down. When you got into the city of Seoul it was just a wreck, really. The railway station, I think there was only one or two platforms that were operating and the rest of the place was just a shambles, bombed out. Outside the station when we went to get on the buses

16:30 there were bomb craters still there, and there was only essential work that was done.

Were there many people out on the streets?

Not many, not many. There was not many people around really.

It was a bit like a ghost town?

Well pretty well. There were servicemen around. There were American servicemen moving around because they had bases in Seoul.

17:00 There was a few Koreans moving around with ox carts and what have you. A few shanty places sort of half done up, patched up.

And could you notice a change in the mood amongst the blokes sort of moving into the city and getting into the new situation?

Oh no, I think they were wide-eyed and

17:30 they were probably in their own thoughts and what have you. Maybe talking about what to see and what's happened there and we moved in to a, what they called FMA [Forward Movements Area], which was a holding place for people for moving on overnight, and we moved in to this old high school area.

18:00 There was not much there. It was wired in. There was barbed wire around the school and we were given a meal and a bed upstairs in this old high school, wooden high school setup. There was nothing flash about it. Just the beds and

18:30 the facilities there and a bucket to use during the night, and there were showers downstairs the next morning and we were back on the train then to go up to Tokch'on.

How long did that trip take?

It was only a very few hours. It was a slow trip actually because on the way there there were locos [locomotives].

19:00 The loco would have been blown over the side of the railway embankment. And one of the things you could see apart from as you're going through Seoul itself was that the factories and other areas were all bombed out. Got to Tokch'on and it was a forward base area so there wasn't much there really apart from army activity,

19:30 camps and stores area.

Camps of various nations?

Mainly it was a forward railhead for the British Commonwealth Division. There was a bit of ack-ack [anti-aircraft] activity there, not much. You didn't see much of that really.

20:00 We were then picked up by the Canadians in trucks , GMCs [General Motors Corporation], and taken up to our area. It was then the rain started. The wet season started, the minute you got to Tokch'on. So the Canadians thought they knew how to take us to join the battalion

20:30 but they couldn't find it. So we ended up coming back south of the Injin River to our brigade headquarters where they gave us a meal, and then the rains really set in. And they then explained to the Canadians where we were supposed to go because they got lost on the

21:00 different roads around the area. And it was then, when we were heading back again, just before it got dark there was a tank lined up on the high-rise pintail bridge because the floods had come down and the Injin River had risen so quickly and there was so much debris coming down so they had a tank stationed alongside the bridge to blow up anything that looked like being,

21:30 could be mines, because it came down through the front lines. The Injin River's headwaters was in North Korea, in the North Korean lines, so they were playing safe. It was only later on that one of the other bridges further down got washed away that night.

22:00 It was a high rise, the river banks were nearly, the banks of the river were nearly thirty feet. Looking up you couldn't realise when we were going up there why the banks of the river were so deep in a lot of places, and it was only when you saw the amount of water that was coming down that you'd realise how quickly they'd rise.

So that was literally

22:30 **the very first day of the wet season, was it?**

Yeah, it was We eventually got up to the battalion and we were sorted out where different reinforcements were sent to the different companies. It was sorted out and some of your mates went that way and some went that way.

Was that a bit frustrating when you had to part ways?

23:00 Oh no, you probably realise that you wouldn't be able to stay mates together. But I had a namesake with me, no relation. But a few of the other chaps that we trained with, they weren't close mates, but we ended up in B Company.

So you got to B Company with a few familiar faces?

Yeah, some of them were people I knew.

23:30 **Round about how many blokes were you with joining up with B Company?**

There was about five or six of us because apparently B Company was a bit under strength. And the reason, later on we were to learn the reason why the company was being built up to full strength,

24:00 because of a task unknown to us at the time that was ahead of us. So…

How were you received by B company?

All right. There was a shortage of bunkers around. There were people, there were spaces in some of the bunkers for people

24:30 but you probably had to double up for people that were out on patrols. I was put in on somebody else's bunk for that night, or part of that night, but then led around to our trenches where our weapon pits were and then told. We didn't meet

25:00 too many of the people. I met a platoon sergeant and a couple of others because it was dark and they all had their jobs to do. So we settled in there and during the night I turned around and was called out to go and do a picket duty in one of the weapon pits, but what was in front of me I never had a clue. And…

How many of you would do the picket together?

25:30 Only one in this particular area, and there would be others around on different points depending on where it was.

So it was pitch black?

What?

Pitch black dark?

Pitch black dark and rainy. And you were told the wire, there was barbed wire down in front of you and that's all. Then you could start hearing

26:00 noises. "What's these noises?" I had a Bren gun. That was, I could hear these noises here, there and everywhere else.

What sort of noises were they?

Rustling noises around apparently in tins somewhere around the wire or on the other side of the wire.

26:30 I don't know. I just sat pat and wondered what was there. Anyway I was later to learn that those noises were rats running around where the French Canadians had thrown all their tin cans over in the place. And we were to learn that the rats also used to accompany you in the bunkers.

27:00 **So you had to get used to the rats?**

We had to get used to them. You used to give them a burst every now and then with Owen gun when they came in. So that's one thing I learned – how to live with the rats.

Did the French Canadians have a reputation for being pretty messy and pretty bad with…?

They didn't have a very good name, put it that way.

In general?

27:30 In health wise, in general they weren't the same as how we were taught by our mothers. Anyway so when the people came back off patrol I had to move out from that with my gear, and I met my platoon commander, who was a Pole,

28:00 George Zelonski, "Call me George. You're in 6th Platoon," and that's how he used to talk.

And did he make you welcome?

Oh yes, he welcomed us, old George. Then I had to go up to the Company CP [Command Post]

28:30 and report up there. So I get up there and we got a Chinese CSM, Win Kee, a well known Second World War man, 3rd Battalion, 2/3rd Battalion I should say. And I said to him, I said, "I don't think I'm in.

29:00 I think I might have been sent to the wrong company." He said, "Why is that?" I said, "Because I did training as an assault pioneer." "You're an infantryman and that is where you are staying." So that settled that lot. I didn't take that any further.

How did that sit with you?

29:30 Oh well, so it be. It was good background training for me anyway later on. And so that was that. I had to turn around and move my gear from out of this other chap's bunker, and the only space available was ammunition bay. I had to sleep on top of all the ammunition

30:00 and rockets and what have you until such time as the mate and I, the namesake and I, built a bunker, a bigger bunker.

Was that a little bit nerve racking?

No, not really, not really. It was a bit of a strange thought to have to sleep on ammunition, something new. Anyway our kitchen was down the bottom of the hill in a tent and

30:30 it was where they cooked the meals, and the meals were reasonable.

And when did you get a chance to sort of start meeting the other blokes?

It was during the day we started meeting the others and our group and what have you, and then see what was in front of us. We were reasonable… In this particular area we were reasonably away across the valley from the Chinese lines.

31:00 So we sort of took in what was in front of us and then the people turned around and showed us where the gaps were in the fences to go out on patrols, some of the minefields that were around the area and what have you, and then they gave us a rundown on what sort of patrols they were doing at that stage, whether they were standing patrols, whether they listening posts,

31:30 or layer patrols or fighting patrols.

How far away from the Chinese lines were you at that point?

At that point I would say we were probably the best part of half a mile, maybe a bit further, at that particular part where our company was holding a position in the valley, overlooking the valley.

32:00 You used to get, we were fortunate that there was very little shelling in our actual position, but further alongside us on more the battalion area there was a fair bit of shelling going on there during the day of the tanks and the positions and what have you, but we were reasonably lucky where we were.

Did the blokes in your company

32:30 **have any reluctance to sort of get to know the new blokes? Was that a difficult process at all?**

No, no, no, the reason with the battalion, with 3 Battalion, it was it was reinforced all the time. So you had people with experience getting the new people to take under their wing

33:00 and set them straight if they weren't up to it, and give them hints of what activities and what was expected of them. And as the new people went in and so the older people went out and they in turn, in line, turn around and down the line, kept accepting the reinforcements, which were readily accepted

33:30 because you had to keep your numbers up because otherwise it was too much work on those that were left, through one way or another, through casualties or through people ending their twelve months service and going out. Some of those twelve-month service stayed on for another term and some of them stayed on for another term after that. So it was

34:00 a continuity of people with experience who could tell the reinforcements what was expected of them and what the problems were at that particular stage.

What were you told? What were you told to expect?

Well you expected to be going out on standing patrols, listening posts,

34:30 with people with experience. You'd go out on fighting patrols with people with experience and how they worked together, which we had already been taught back in Japan. We got good grounding there so we really knew what our task was, and it was just a matter of people settling in

35:00 to what was in front of them in reality and just accepting it.

Did anyone in particular take you under your wing, or was it a number of blokes?

Oh, there is always people. You work beside people with more experience so you had to toe the line, otherwise you would have made life hell if you didn't.

35:30 You know, you had to shape up and that was it.

So what was the process of adjusting to the situation like for you?

Yeah, I accepted it. You gradually realised what it was really all about. And then

36:00 a couple of weeks later we had to go. We were told that we were earmarked to do a raid so we had to turn around, and they picked a spot behind their lines where you turned around on the ground and worked out what particular role was on this raid you were going to do. It was

36:30 a piece of ground that was very similar to where the position we were going to. We could see the position we were going and they said, "That's where we were going and this is how you are going to do it. Go back behind our lines during the quiet of the day and do it." Because at that stage of the game it was a static war, apart from the shelling hotting

37:00 up. It was very quiet in the mornings, but from eleven o'clock on the Chinese would start shelling our positions and our people would counter barrage them and what have you, and the air force would be hitting target around. And then at night-time things really hotted up with patrols going out, and there'd be occasional patrol clashes.

37:30 And then there would be DF [Direction Finding] tasking, which was targets were picked out where the artillery would turn around and concentrate on various strong points in the Chinese lines. And they also used to bring up a Bofors gun on the back of a truck and it would fire direct lines into certain areas.

38:00 And there's be thump, thump, thump, thump, eight rounds going out off this Bofors gun into the trench systems and bunker systems. And the Americans used to, the artillery was in support further back, heavy artillery, 155s. So that was also part of the Commonwealth

38:30 Div support as well as our own divisional artillery support.

So this raid that you were preparing for, was it your first real operation?

That was the bloody…

So by then we had set up your bedding quarters?

We had build our bunker and everything and set ourselves up.

Can you explain how you went about what you ended up

39:00 **building there and how you set up?**

Well we dug this big hole the size of, it was virtually a standard sized bunker for two people. And so we dug that and then we had to scrounge timbers to roof it and then put steel pickets on top of that and then fill the sandbags and put sandbags

39:30 covering over it and everything else. And then we had to make our own beds, which we used with pickets and signal wire. We made our beds by trying to knit up signal wire for our beds with the pickets holding it up.

Was that successful? Did the beds turn out all right?

Yeah, they turned out all right, a bit better than sleeping on the ground.

Was that an idea that someone

40:00 **else had put you on to?**

Oh yes, some people, at an earlier stage, wherever they could they would have got the machinegun belts, fabric belts, they were quite long and they would make a better style bed, but we couldn't get hold of those because there was no machinegun post where we could get hold of those. So it was right, the rain was

40:30 easing off then so it was not too bad.

Up until then the rain had been a problem digging the trenches?

Oh yeah, it used to flood the trenches. It used to be mud, continuous wet and whatever.

In the middle of the wet season, on a typical day, is there a pattern to the downfall or is it just continual?

It varies. Sometimes it would ease off during the day and come

41:00 down at night-time and what have you and so it made things a bit miserable.

Pretty torrential sort of rain?

Yeah, yeah, going out at night-time and laying up in the wet grass where it was raining wasn't the done thing, I don't think, but it had to be.

And in those early days were you in a position after

41:30 **having a meal in the mess at the night to sort of mingle around with the other blokes and get a feel for what they had been up to during the day?**

Oh yeah, yeah, you had a chance. When you said mess, there was a kitchen in a tent and there was maybe a log laying around the side of the track where the kitchen area was and that's where you ate your meal, down there.

42:00 **Did you have a chance to…?**

Yeah. You'd be talking to other

Tape 5

00:39 **Sorry. Dick, if you could describe the significance of the Canvas Line?**

The?

The Canvas Line?

The Kansas Line?

Yeah.

The Kansas Line was a fallback line on the south side of the Injin

01:00 River.

Right.

It was very mountainous. We had an allocated position forward of that, just short of the river and we used to, when we were in reserve we used to go back and work on that to keep the fortifications somewhere up to scratch in case we ever had to fall back to it. There was another line called the Wyoming Line, which

01:30 was just a very low range of hills on the north side of the Injin River, but the Kansas line was very rugged country behind there.

So where were you positioned?

We were on the Jamieson Line.

The Jamieson Line, can you explain that?

That was the forward line right across Korea,

02:00 the United Nations positions. They were just names of various areas where if the push back to, get orders, say, "Right-oh, back to either the Wyoming or the Jamieson Line." And the Jamieson Line was the last line prior to Seoul. Once if we were knocked off the Jamieson

02:30 Line there wasn't much hope. We'd be pushed out of Seoul.

Can you just walk us through what it was like being on one of your patrols, from the very beginning to the very end? Just try and describe what it was like for us to be there.

You'd get a patrol warning during the day to say what sort of patrol it was going to be, who was going to be on it. They'd

03:00 nominated who would be going, whether it would be a reccie [reconnaissance] patrol, a standing patrol or a fighting patrol. And then they'd turn around in the evening, after the evening meal they'd turn around and give you the full details of what was going on, where you would go, the way out, the way in, and what would happen if you were hit,

03:30 so everybody knew exactly what was going on and how to get out of the situation and if you got casualties or whatever, and you worked on that.

So who would give you that briefing?

Maybe at times the platoon commander or the platoon sergeant

04:00 or your patrol commander. It would come down through generally the platoon commander.

So what would happen? You've been given your briefing, what would happen next?

Well then you'd turn around and get yourself ready to go out, check your weapons. Maybe you'd test fire your weapon to make sure everything was all right.

What weapons would you be carrying with you?

04:30 You'd either be carrying a rifle with grenades, and an Owen machine gun, submachine gun with hand grenades, or else you'd be a Bren gunner and you'd have an assistant with the Bren gun with extra ammunition for you, and you'd know exactly how much ammunition to take with you on the situation and

05:00 everything else and that would be about the size of it. And the time going out and the expected time, it depends on the setup, your expected time out and your expected time back in the line, and the route in and out. And first of all you'd be given a password. The password would be changed every night so if you were a straggler

05:30 coming back in the pitch dark you'd be able to give a password.

What kind of passwords would they give you?

Well they would be in two parts, could be anything, like chicken, bone or something or other. It could be anything. Two different words joined together. If you were challenged you could give the first one

06:00 and then the challenger would turn around and say, "Advance the second word."

And who was the challenger?

Whoever was on the picket duty or passing though an outpost or that sort of thing.

So can you tell us, describe your very first patrol? What you did, where you went, how it all unfolded,

06:30 **that very first patrol you went on?**

The very first patrol I went on? I went on, the first one was a standing patrol down on the forward slopes of our position. It was raining, the grass was up shoulder high, we went around and I was carrying a Bren gun. The platoon commander, who was our platoon corporal, he turned around

07:00 and put us in a position, put everybody in a position where he wanted them, spread around. We laid up there for x number of hours and coming back in we went in a circular route around and we didn't follow everybody's tracks. Unfortunately, going along,

07:30 I stepped into space. In the Korean farmland and that they used to revet some of the steep pieces of land almost down like that with ground stones. And I sort of stepped of into space, coming out of the grass, straight in; you couldn't see. The people in front of me had gone there and some of them had gone that way around so they didn't track around.

08:00 So it ended up I clattered down and I was panic stricken really because when the Bren gun crashes down it makes so much noise. I thought it would give our position away. You never know where somebody else is, where the other people are. I let the cat out of the bag [gave the secret away].

Did you let the cat out of the bag? Did any Chinese hear?

No, no, no, we were right that time.

08:30 There was nobody interfering with us when we came back in.

Did you get reprimanded for that or did nobody even know?

Well they understood what happened. It was quite easy to step off into something that wasn't there.

So the next night when you went out on patrol, did you do things any differently?

No, not really. We did go into different areas, see. The next patrol I did was a

09:00 fighting patrol and we went down and re-entered and skirted around in front of their positions in the paddy fields. We stuck to the paddy buns unless they were dry.

Did you fire any shots? Did you see action in that patrol?

No, it was NTR Roger – nothing to report.

Is that what you called it?

Yeah.

09:30 Nantair Roger.

So when did you first see action? When was the first time you got to see some?

Thirteenth of August 1952. that raid on Seven Five, known as Operation Buffalo.

Right, okay, that's very important. Can you tell us everything about Operation Buffalo, from the beginning to the end, what happened?

Well we were

10:00 trained in the rear area on roughly the type of feature we were going to go on. The idea was that they were always looking for prisoners.

The Chinese were always looking for prisoners or you were always looking?

We were always trying to get prisoners. The Americans had this thing that every, they gave orders down the line. They were in charge of the Commonwealth Division, right, and the Commonwealth

10:30 Division passed on orders that attacks are to be made to try and get prisoners to try and get information. That was the theme of it. And prior to that, 1 Battalion had done a raid, they did a daylight raid, and they got knocked around pretty badly. So we went up on this feature. It was directly in front of our

11:00 position and it was like a finger position over both sides and down the end. We went up on the end. We had divisional support. We moved into position at just before midnight, formed up down below their position, and everything was quiet then they opened up with the divisional support –

11:30 artillery and tank fire, mortars, the works. So it was pretty heavy sort of stuff lying around. And at a given time we were to move up and at a given time the fire was to lift. There was fire going on, there was heavy artillery fire going further over to sort of block off anything that was

12:00 over the other side of the features to try and stop a counterattack.

And what were you doing? What was your role there?

I had an Owen gun and I was beside the section commander and we were the lead section, and the section was spread over down either side of the feature. And we moved along, we moved over trenches and some of the trenches

12:30 were pretty deep, and we sort of gave a few bursts of fire just to clear if anybody was floating around in the trenches.

So there were Chinese in those trenches?

Yeah, there were Chinese. And then we kept going and we went to ground when we got, waiting for the fire to lift, and we went so far and stopped momentarily for a while.

Did you crouch down or would you…?

Well

13:00 we crouched down in a defensive setup. One of the funniest things that happened there was one of the other chaps who had a Bren gun, when they gave the order to advance he picked up the carrying handle of the Bren gun but he only had the barrel. Somehow or another, whether it was a bush that unknocked the locking handle on the Bren

13:30 when he went to pick it up, but he wasn't very happy about that. He was only about two or three people down from me.

Was he injured?

No, he came out of it all right. So he was going along the ridge and there was a few tank shells. Apparently there was a tank that hadn't quite lifted his fire properly

14:00 and one shell hit across the top of the phosphorous. You can see them going just in front of our feet. It blew up a bit of dirt – that's how close it was going on. And we kept on going over the hill. And then we kept going forward and the next thing the orders were

14:30 that if anybody was hit they had go out. We couldn't afford to have to try and get people out if that happened. If they could make it out themselves, then get out. I felt something sting on my head and in the small of my back and I was going to keep going, and the section commander said, "You've got your orders," and he put a bandage,

15:00 a field dressing around my head and he said, "Out, down there and you know where to go," because we were told the way out and everything else, you see. And that was the end of my vicious adventure.

So it must have been, as you were advancing forward the Chinese were firing directly at you?

15:30 Well yes, there was a machinegun firing at us in a bunker position directly in front of us. A few people got hit. Then they started to counter bombard us with probably mortars, and that's probably where I got the metal in the head. I was carrying, besides the ordinary 36 grenades we had to

16:00 carry two phosphorous grenades. And I got hit between, we carried them in our belt at the back, and where I was hit was between those two phosphorous grenades. If it had hit one of those I'd be still running, I think.

Why were you carrying the phosphorous grenades as well? Was that standard?

Well it was standard at that time. I believe later on they outlawed us taking them because the idea was to

16:30 use them in bunkers, so that was one of the things there. But my section commander, he kept going and some of the others kept going, and then our other sections coming in through behind. We had two support sections, one on each wing.

How many men did you have in those sections?

About ten men.

17:00 And plus we had platoon headquarters with the radios and everything behind us bringing up our rear. A couple of chaps had armoured vests at that time. People hadn't been issued with armoured vests because they only had a few. We had a chap who had been hit by a fifty cal [calibre]

17:30 and it went through the zipper, unfortunately. And some of them got knocked around a bit, with the armoured vests turned around and saved a lot of casualties. But we had once chap taken POW [Prisoner of War].

On Operation Buffalo?

Yeah, we had one chap

18:00 missing in action, apparently the chap was taken POW. Apparently he had been knocked out. He was over to one side and apparently the Chinese had grabbed him. But we don't know what happened to the other chap, probably the same thing, and we had quite a few casualties.

Did you see anyone being hurt?

18:30 As I was going out I saw other people doing it. We had a sergeant with us with a flamethrower but he went to use it and he panicked; he tossed it. And apparently from what I'm told a Chinaman grabbed it but he didn't know there was two triggers to a flame thrower, one for the fuel and the other one for the igniter,

19:00 so they were happy. But on the way out there was people who had been hit with phos [phosphorous]. He was down in a creek wallowing in the water trying to stop the phosphorous.

The phosphorous, that was from the grenades or…?

I don't know whether it was from grenades or whether the Chinese had them. I don't know where the phosphorous came from, or whether it was a misfire or not I don't know.

That must

19:30 **cause terrible burns, does it?**

Very terrible burns, yeah, and it is a sticky substance that sort of stays on the skin. Water is the only thing that…

It must have been horrific. This is your first action and you're running into fire. What was going through your mind when that was happening?

Oh, I don't know. You were there and all you had to do was concentrate on what was in front of you and what you had to do.

20:00 **Were you terrified or…?**

I wouldn't say I was terrified. I wasn't panicking or anything like that. It was a new ball game, certainly, but that was a bloody… And I made my way back to the company lines. They had an aid post in the valley floor and they checked you over and

20:30 said, "Right-oh you, go back in. If you can go back in, well and good. If not, we'll pick you up somewhere along the line." And I got back in and they had a sort of advanced dressing station in the company lines set up in a tent. That's where that photo was taken. They gave me a cup of tea and a dixie.

Were you in a lot of pain?

Oh no, not really. No.

21:00 No. Even when I had the hand dusted I wasn't in pain either. That sort of nullifies it.

So what were your injuries? Did they explain when you had got back to the post what had happened to you?

Shrapnel and gunshot wounds. As we were going forward it was definitely shrapnel. So they put us in stretcher jeeps and took us back to

21:30 Indian Field Ambulance where the Indians shoved a needle in my backside and it sent me nearly through the roof. I must have been that tight up, you know. So then when they got a few more come in, as they got an ambulance load they sent us off to the American MASH [Mobile Armed Services Hospital] which was further back around the line.

So the Indians were in charge of the ambulance?

A field ambulance setup. Yeah, the Indians

22:00 operated a field ambulance for the Commonwealth Div. They didn't have actual field soldiers. They had an ambulance setup, a field ambulance setup.

This happened through your time in Korea? It was always Indians?

It was always Indians, yes. And then we get down to the American MASH in the early hours of the morning,

22:30 around about four o'clock probably, and they wouldn't have anything to do with us. "No, don't want you."

Did they give you a reason?

No, no reason, no nothing. We hung around there and, "No, get going." So they sent us around to where the Norwegians had a MASH further around between there and Tokch'on, and as soon as we arrived… We were covered in dirt and everything else; that didn't worry them. They just turned around and

23:00 took off the hair where it was necessary, took x-rays, and stitched it up and bandaged it up and put us to bed. No wash, no nothing.

How many of you were there?

Oh, it varied. They went in different areas. Some people ended up on an Italian hospital ship. It depended on the degree of their wounds, I think, as to where.

23:30 They couldn't send everybody back to the one place. They had to sort of send them out like that depending on how bad their wounds were and how they could be done like that. And because I had a head wound I had to get our of Korea and so the Norwegians, all they did was patched us up and settled us down for I think it was two days,

24:00 good meals, and then they put us on an American hospital train and that was an eye opener.

Why is that?

In the carriage where we were, it was set up with a stretcher setup. There was an American there and that part was just the bone hanging down and it was just

24:30 something around it to stop the bleeding of it. So they turned around and took us to Yong Dong Po, which was just on the south side of the Han River in part of Seoul, and they had an evacuation hospital in what must have been a big high school on top of a hill.

Tell us more about the train. What else did you observe there apart from this man? Did everyone have horrific injuries on that train?

25:00 Oh the train had started off up behind the American lines and it was pretty crowded by the time we got on it.

So the Americans suffering a lot of casualties?

Yeah, they suffered a lot of casualties, one way and another and probably tactics, I don't know. But anyway there was various types of head, legs, you name it, anywhere.

25:30 **It must have made you feel… How did that make you feel seeing all those injuries?**

Very appreciative of what I ended up. When we get down to Yong Dong Po the Americans have got these buses with stretchers in them. Negroes are driving them. My mate, the namesake, he got his knee busted so

26:00 on the way up to the hospital they go hell for leather, races. I am almost sure it was bus races. And they dropped his stretcher so you can imagine the agony he was in. But that's okay. We were herded into a room, probably a little bigger than this, and there was a reception desk. There was a hand basin, a heap of

26:30 chairs, and the Americans sisters I assumed came around and took the bandages off and went away, and a Red Cross woman came around with a dilly bag of toiletries. Now I hadn't had a shave, I still had a lot of dirt on me and I hadn't had a shave for the best part of a week.

27:00 So I saw a hand basin over there with a mirror on it and I thought I'd go and start shaving. The next thing, whomp. "What do you think you are doing?" I looked at her and I said, "What's wrong, sister?" And she blew up. She nearly went berserk. I never realised they were nurses, not sisters like in Australia. She must have reckoned I was

27:30 getting fresh with her or something. Apparently I heard afterwards that some people coming through either tried to, had a neurosis and turned around and tried to do themselves in. This is what they were up against. So we stayed the night there. They gave us a feed then and breakfast the next morning, changed our clothes,

28:00 probably threw it in the incinerator, gave us some American gear and we were taken back to our own Britcom Hospital annexe which they had in the Seoul centre itself where they turned around and sorted people out and looked after their own people.

So you were put with the Australians then?

28:30 Yeah, with the Australians. I did a few days there until I had room on an evacuation plane, a Dakota, and we were flown out to Iwakuni and put on a hospital train to go to Kure Hospital.

What happened? It is a long journey, isn't it, while you are sick?

Well they turned around, opened all the wounds up again, cleaned them up, stitched them up,

29:00 sorted people out and sent us one way or the other, back to Australia or back to RTU [Return to Unit], back to your unit, return to your unit if you were fit. Prior to that you had to go to a convalescent depot.

And that was in Japan?

That was in Hiro, Kure I should say, and that's where they made you fit again.

29:30 **How did they make you fit? What did they do?**

Oh you used to have to do runs, do exercises, go for runs up the yamas, get you back to where you were trained before. I was only, I came out then I was only about nine and a half stone when I came out from hospital instead of being eleven-odd stone. So they turned around and

30:00 built me up a bit, went back and then…

So you got an RTU after you got better?

Yes. I went back to the camp at Hiro and they assembled another draft to go back to Korea and rejoin the battalion. It was out in reserve when I got back.

How were you,

30:30 **when you were convalescing were you hoping that you might be returned to Australia or were you wanting to get back?**

Oh no, no. You had a commitment to do so you had to go back, whether you liked it or lumped it. It was one of those things and you accepted it; you expected it

Did you feel that you were well enough to go back into action?

Oh yeah, yeah, I only had a slight wound. I still had two arms and legs and my eyes were all right at that time.

Was there many Australians with you?

31:00 **Were there many Australians injured in Operation Buffalo?**

Yeah, there was quite a few. No, I forget. Out of our platoon of thirty-nine, forty people there were only twenty-three left the next morning to clean up the weapons, and there is a photo of them floating around.

So the rest had been injured or killed?

Yeah.

And that's just one battle?

31:30 My section commander, he got an MM [Military Medal] out of, Maxie Wilson, who has now passed on, but he got an MM.

What did they say it was for?

For when he attacked that outpost, that machine gun post. And Eddy Wright, who was another one of our friends, he got an MID [Mentioned in Despatches] because he went around helping people out and picking up weapons

32:00 that may have been dropped.

So what was the tactical purpose of Operation Buffalo?

Purely to try and carry out the orders of the American 8th Army, for prisoners. It was after that operation that the divisional commander said, "Enough's enough," because it was like running up against a brick wall because they were that well dug in

32:30 you couldn't achieve anything. They had really heavy dug in defences and they had the manpower there, and they had underground bunker systems so it was well fortified, and the cost of the casualties was far too great for what they achieved.

33:00 If they did get a prisoner it would probably only be some front-line chap who was recruited out of a paddy field somewhere and would only know his training and what he had to do. He wouldn't know what was going on anywhere. So, you know, they decided that they were going to call a stop to it. We certainly did fighting patrols and

33:30 everything else, but the main principle of that afterwards was to keep them off your front door. The more you moved around the valley and these fighting patrols and that and clashes, it meant that they weren't creeping up to your positions to have a go at you. They certainly had people creeping up here and there but they never really put on an

34:00 assault on us as such at that stage of the game apart, from later on at the Battle of Hook right before the ceasefire.

So did they actually achieve their aim? Did they get any Chinese POWs in Operation Buffalo?

No.

Not one?

We always reckon that if we couldn't get a prisoner we'd bundle up the CSM.

34:30 **You said they refused to do operations like this any more?**

Well the divisional commander did, yes.

So that was an Australian divisional commander?

He was English.

Right. So he told the Americans that this was not on?

Yeah, not on, yeah.

Did the Americans continue to do this kind of operations on their own?

Yeah, well they used to battle on, battle on, go up on a hill, take the feature and then get driven off it. They would go backwards and forwards and achieve nothing.

So after that you were fighting after Operation Buffalo, fighting

35:00 **separately to the Americans?**

Yes, they were further up in a different sector. You could see where they were and you could hear and see the gunfire and everything else, but they were further along the line.

What about the British? Where were they in relation to you?

We used to change places with the British. You would be in the lines for a while and you would come out and possibly a Canadian or a British unit would take over the position,

35:30 and when you went back into the line you relieved someone else. So you weren't going all the time back into the same positions, although sometimes you went back in, after a period of time you went back into that same position again but not straight away. So you weren't allocated a permanent position in that front line.

36:00 You could be moved to any sector within the Commonwealth Division setup

But the Americans were never part of that interchangeable process with the Commonwealth Division? They kept separate?

Oh they relieved us when we went into corps reserve. The division went into corps reserve with the exception of the New Zealand artillery. They remained on call, not in the actual front line but further back. They were

36:30 on call for the Americans for artillery fire. But we went down to corps reserve for a short period of time at the end of the winter.

So what was your impression of the Chinese as fighters, as soldiers? Were they good soldiers?

Yes. They apparently would disable their weapons if they had to disband them.

37:00 They were good at moving around although they certainly moved around in fighting patrols, they moved around not in platoons or they moved around in probably big company strength, but you never knew where you were going to expect them. They would send someone up on a sort of a reccie to a position or close to it.

37:30 **Did they use bugles or anything like that to…?**

Yeah, yeah, they used bugles. Yeah, they used loudspeakers.

And you kind of look with sort of disdain at that. What do you think of that method?

Well I don't know where they used to get their information, intelligence was very good. We'd take over from another unit and they'd say, "Welcome Australians."

38:00 Then at Christmas time they played Christmas carols.. When one of our patrols got severely knocked around and that same patrol knocked theirs around during the winter, the next morning their bugle sounded the Last Post.

38:30 **So they knew what was Christmas like? What was your first Christmas in Korea like? What was that day like?**

Christmas Day was quiet, but it was frozen. We moved up to relieve 1 Battalion. I went up on the advanced party to relieve 1 Battalion on a feature called 355 and it was absolutely frozen.

39:00 My role was section leader then and I had… They showed me all the minefield gaps, all the ways in and out, and of course our particular front. We were right forward only about four hundred yards underneath a Chinese position and they showed us the different patrols, where they put them, where they put their outpost, where they went

39:30 over a few days before Christmas. At Christmas time we got a message saying we had to go back to the reserve area for Christmas dinner. So we had a vehicle there and it took us back for our dinner. The next night they bought us back in and took over the position. I had ten people in the position. I was,

40:00 I went into a position in the company area in one place, when I went back in again apparently someone had changed their mind and put us in the right forward section. So I get there and there's a bunker for the platoon commander and the sig [signals] operator and his runner. There's a hole in the wall of the trench

40:30 and we kept shoving the chaps into this hole and ran out of space, couldn't get any more in it. It was like a cave with a little round hole getting into it. There was, the engineers would start to build a proper bunker with timber and everything else, not in my section area, so

41:00 myself, my section 2IC [Second in Command] I should say, we slept in our open weapon pit when we changed our positions. Another chap was left over and I put him in on an ammunition bay. So accommodation was a little bit tight there.

Did you have enough warm clothes?

We had, well you never had enough.

41:30 But we weren't too bad off. When we went out on outposts we would put sandbags around our boots. If we were standing around on outposts for a couple of hours we'd put sandbags around. You wore two pairs of socks, you had the British wet and cold uniforms, string singlet, flannel shirt, windproofs or heavy pullover,

42:00 underpants with a split up the front and back.

Tape 6

00:31 **Dick, just going back to when you were injured, how long, all up, did it take for your recovery and rehabilitation?**

I was out for about five weeks I think, roughly, by the time I got back to the battalion.

01:00 **So when you were told you were going back, were you feeling like you'd had enough recovery time and were you feeling pretty fit and healthy again?**

Oh yes, yes. No, I was right.

And you were feeling eager to get back in the saddle as it was?

Yes, you accepted that you were fit to go back and resume your period of twelve months there.

Do you know if notice was sent to your parents about your injury when it happened?

01:30 Yes, they got a telegram to say that I had been wounded.

And were you able to let the family know that you were recovering well fairly quickly?

Oh when I had a chance to write, yes.

So when you returned to Korea was your group still at the same position or had they moved?

Oh no. They had moved out into reserve area, came back out of the lines,

02:00 back to a feature just back from the line for a rest.

So you rejoined them and they were still in that process of resting?

Yes.

So what happened for the group next, once they finished that rest?

Well they went back to another forward position.

Where was that?

That was still in the Samichon Valley area and it was just another bit further along the line.

02:30 **Was that near Little Gibraltar or was that later on?**

No. That was more down towards The Hook area. The Hook area was the furthest west of the Commonwealth Division area and Little Gibraltar, or 355 was the eastern end of the divisional area. So we had a set bit of estate to look after if you'd like to call it that.

And was

03:00 **that the area that you worked in for the rest of your tour?**

Yes, yes, well in between we worked in, we went back onto 355 later on. But 355 was my busiest time really, being a section leader and nominating, saying, "Right-oh, you, you and you are going out," which is not easy

03:30 to turn around and virtually pass a death sentence on people.

Is that what it turned out to be often?

Well that is what happens and you get people wounded often, and one time I was out on outpost one night in charge of an outpost and two engineer officers came down and they said,

04:00 "You've got to come with us." And I said, "We are only four hundred yards from the Chinese position." I said, "You'll have to get someone else. I'm in charge of this outpost." He said, "You are coming with us." You couldn't argue the point, and there because in the winter time voices and noises carried for yonks. So I went with them and they turned around and told me that

04:30 we were going to map this minefield that has got part of the fence missing. They turned around and handed me a radio and they put me, they said, "Right-oh, you're in the minefield now. We're going to go down and we're going to map out where this minefield actually is," because the position had been overrun by the Chinese.

05:00 The Canadians were holding it in November '52 and a lot of stuff had never been sort of remapped out and fortifications rebuilt and anything like that, and it took a long time to redo it. So I'm with the radio in the middle of nowhere. I keep getting calls at about two o'clock in the morning,

05:30 "When are you coming in? When are you coming in?" "I can't tell you. They are away checking the minefield out." "You've got to tell them to turn around and come in whether they have finished the job or not. They've got standing patrols out spread around out around the vicinity," and I said, "No I can't."

06:00 So anyway eventually they said, "You've got to go and find them." So I twinkletoesed [tiptoed] backwards out and I could hear where they were working so I did a circuit around and I went down and found where they were working, and they said, "We are just finishing off now," and said, "Incidentally, this is a minefield

06:30 gap along here," and it was down from our outpost and I had never been in that area. A couple of days later the outpost about nine o'clock sends word up that there's an Owen gun being fired down the forward flank. So I went to the platoon commander

07:00 and reported to him what I'd received, and, "What are you going to do about it?" And I said, "The best thing to do is to grab a stretcher party and I'll go down and have a bit of a look. It is pretty quiet in the mornings and it's pretty quiet there." So what did I grab? Four, about, six people, four or five people that were still up running around the section area.

07:30 We set sail and I went out through one gap that I knew and I went down through the scrub. It was scrub on this side of the feature. So we spread out and we searched through there and just as we were going there the battalion commander, he turned around and decided to give us smoke protection. And it went all around us,

08:00 and when we moved out of it we were lit up like St Kilda Road. It was against the smoke, see. And we had a bit of bare paddy fields to cross to go further down the valley. I thought, "We'll go down another two or three hundred yards and that will be about as far as we'll go because of the sound of the things." And it wouldn't have been

08:30 … Probably not down there and it is getting too deep into their lines. So next thing I knew snow starts popping up in front of me, round my feet. And then I heard a machine gun fire. I stopped and looked and I told the joker to pull the stretcher over and show the stretcher. So we kept going a bit further and went about

09:00 another fifty-odd yards again and the same thing happened again, just in front of our feet as neat as you like. So I said, "Right-oh, we'll go down to the creek line and we'll swing back around that way and we'll come back in the way these engineers showed me." So as I swung down and around towards the creek line between the Chinese position and ourselves, the next thing I look up

09:30 and I hear this commotion up on the hill. There's about two hundred Chinese swarming up out of the trenches. And we showed them the stretcher and I said, "Right-oh, ignore them while we just walk back." So they come streaming down. So I said to the chaps, "We're going in. I'll show you the way in through this minefield." Two people decided they didn't belong to my section. They were

10:00 a couple I grabbed. They wouldn't follow me. They went back to the way they came out. So when I got back to the outpost there is a Chinese chap up on the feature, the knoll where we used to do our listening post, about a hundred-odd yards away, see, and they were all at the outpost standing there. We didn't have a Bren gun.

10:30 So I sent one chap off to get a Bren gun and the chap was still there so I had a shot at him. He disappeared and the next thing they gave us hell. On our platoon position they dropped eleven hundred rounds in the course of a few hours. I had one chap got hit with a piece

11:00 that sliced him a bit on the backside, another chap, another corporal, he started to, when we moved back a bit and left the outpost there this other corporal came down to see what was going on. He was going, "Oh look at them, look at them." And he was firing his Bren gun at bits of old stump,

11:30 so he was ta-ta. That's all right. We really got knocked around, like the position got knocked around. All our sig wire was chomped down and there was one hell of a mess with all this concentrated mortar fire.

Did you lose many?

No. I made sure that our people were in the bunker and the platoon commander got me to go

12:00 around to check the other platoons because at that moment we had no platoon sergeant, see, so he made me check out this. So later as it eased off a bit in the afternoon the outpost came back to me and sent a chap back to say that one of our chaps was laying on this feature where the Chinese joker was. So I grabbed a stretcher

12:30 and two chaps and went down to the outpost and said, "Right -oh, take the stretcher across and put him on it. Bring him back." So one on each end of the stretcher and they get down to the entrance and the Chinese start mortaring again. They drop the stretcher and one went forward and one came back. So what does muggins have to do? Go and get the stretcher,

13:00 and go up to this chap that was wounded. And in came the stretcher and how were we going to get him back? So there was a bit of an entrance around to another track, which let up a very steep icy slope, a track out to go out on that patrols used to go out on at times, because it was very icy. It was in a shadow area and really slippery.

13:30 So I turned around and took the chap down around this re-entrant and back around the other side to go up this track, and as I am bringing the stretcher up the platoon commander on the position above our position could see what was happening, me trying to get the stretcher up, and so he came down himself with a couple of people to help.

14:00 This chap had been shot through the chest. When I got there to him… I always carried an American field dressing pouch which I found somewhere. It had an field dressing patch in it and some morphine in it, capsules of morphine with a needle, a little needle capsule thing. So I hit him with the morphine

14:30 and because the bullet had gone right through him, it had gone through his back and come out through

his chest when I had a look. There was no bleeding. It was that cold and frozen, you see, been laying in the snow And we got him back in so I didn't see him again.

Did you ever hear how he fared?

Yeah, he fared all right. He came good eventually. He was a Tasmanian lad.

15:00 **Would that be the most intense experience for you while you were in Korea, do you think, that particular operation?**

Well there was a bit of a curly one we got out in the outpost one night. It was actually on the listening post and I was actually taking a reccie out towards 217, the Chinese position, and they cut off

15:30 our area for some reason or another and they… As soon as anything happened, the Chinese always used to hit the tracks back in and the outposts of the position. They knew exactly where everything was, where people went out and came back in because you could only go out certain ways because of the minefields and the terrain. So

16:00 I come back in and the chap said, "Oh we've heard, came back to the outpost." And then the next thing I know, I stayed at the outpost for a while with the offsider and there was noise down on the right flank in this re-entrant, just below us about fifty, thirty, fifty metres down the

16:30 hill from us. It was absolutely pitch dark but you could hear everything. They'd come along and they'd go back and then you heard a bit of grumble and carry on. Then we heard somebody drop the Bren gun so we knew. The Bren guns when they fall made a particular sound. So I said, "Right." So I challenged them. I said, "Stay where you are."

17:00 Because I always made sure when I went out that I knew what patrols were going out either side of us. I knew what was out in the area. I made sure I knew that and just didn't accept what I was told and then it disappeared. I always made certain of that. So I went down and these people had come up the wrong spur, come up and then into the wrong re-entrant. And they

17:30 got caught up in a low barbed wire entanglement and couldn't find their way out, so I had to bring them back in.

Were they Australian?

Anyway another night I went out, there was three of us on a reccie. We went through another platoon's position to go down the spur. It was fairly heavily timbered. It was in the

18:00 spring time. We were still wearing our cold weather gear and when you were walking your trousers used to rub and make a noise. The chap who I was with was a little bit toey and he said, "Stop, there's something." We listened. Nothing. This happened two or three times. So I said,

18:30 "It is only your windproof trousers rubbing together, the noise you're hearing." So we went down and we got down to a bit of a creek where the track went across the creek. So I put them down and I went down and had a look-see up on the other side of the bank, and there was something laying directly in the middle of the track, a shape.

19:00 So I immediately dropped down as quick as a flash. Nothing happened. I popped up again and it was still there. It was a damn stone. It looked like somebody laying in the middle of the track ready to have a go in the half gloom.

19:30 These things make the hair stand up on the back of your head sometimes.

So when you returned for the second time, was it long before you started leading the patrols?

Not long.

And that kept you pretty busy for the rest of the time?

It kept me pretty busy being father, mother and making sure that

20:00 they were looked after properly.

It is a lot of extra responsibility?

Yeah, but it was great. Platoon commander's only got the responsibility for the platoon sergeant down, but a platoon corporal, a section corporal has got ten people to look after – their aches and pains and what have you. And people due to go out on leave reduced your numbers.

20:30 You've got to double up on the amount of work that's got to be done. Then you lose people through finishing their time and going out wounded and what have you.

Did it take a toll after a while when blokes you were taking out were getting injured and getting killed? Did that start to wear you down a bit?

Yeah, well at one stage I lost my bunker mate, who was my section 2IC.

21:00 He went out. The patrol was to go out and I turned around and the platoon commander turned around and said, “Right-oh, you, you and you go,” and I said, “What about me?” He said, “You’re not going. You’ve done enough work. You’ve got to stay in tonight.” And it was three of them didn’t come back. So that chap that when I went out with the stretcher party, he

21:30 ended up as a POW earlier in the winter there, so that was one wounded, and one chap was grabbed and went as a POW.

Did many of your blokes end up taken POW?

He was the only one of my lot. There was a chap, oh when I got wounded there was another chap wounded,

22:00 Poppa, he got taken by the Chinese that night of the action and he was knocked out and they picked him up later on.

When you were leading patrols did you ever end up taking prisoners yourself?

No, no, no, we just turned around and did continuous fighting patrols, standing patrols or outposts, out listening posts or whatever.

22:30 **What is the principle behind a standing patrol? Why is it called a standing patrol?**

Well you go out to an allocation, an area which is given to you, and that reference is taken and, “All right, you go out to so and so.” You set yourself up in a standing patrol or a standing ambush patrol. Right. you go down into an ambush position,

23:00 spread out and everybody’s got their arch of responsibility. And you put them all down and you just sit there and wait for anything that would come along. In winter time when you went down you would lay down in the snow and you got pretty stiff and cold. It was all right in the summer time. You only had to content with the mosquitoes. But in the winter time

23:30 after a period of time you froze up in those sort of situations.

And with the fighting patrol you are going into a definite target?

No. You are given a certain area and you are given an area and you go so far in there and then you’ll go so far one way or the other and do a sweep around the valley floor and then come back a certain way.

24:00 You are given a specific task, where to go, and roughly how long you are going to be out.

And a listening post?

A listening post you go out and you can either go out all night or you can go our for x number of hours, and in the winter time you go out for three or four hours and too you just sit there with a radio, maybe in a minefield gap,

24:30 and wait for it. If anybody’s poking about, and then you report back in. I had an instance where there was something down the bottom of this feature where the minefield gap ran down to. I knew there was nobody out in front of us. It was that I could hear the noise in the snow.

25:00 And the radio people came in doing radio checks and if you were talking you’d give your position away. So you had to learn to try and distinguish the noise. And if it is going to continue on, you turned your radio off, which was a no-no really, but in that situation what do you do? So that’s all right, you’re listening and listening, and there was a slight breeze came up, and on the minefield fence

25:30 alongside us it looked like somebody coming up over the oak scrub. Because the oak scrub doesn’t lose its leaves during the winter time. It hangs there all the winter. And looking and looking and nothing happens. It comes again and after a short period of time,

26:00 well after probably a long period of time I suddenly woke up. It was the breeze blowing a triangle on the minefield wire and it all looked like somebody coming up over the thing there. So anyway they sent out a patrol when they didn’t make contact with company. They sent out somebody to grab back me and take me back in front of the company commander.

26:30 I said, “It’s all right for you. You are in a bunker here.” I said, “Every time you come up on the radio, people from miles around can hear you.”

So it could be pretty nerve racking?

“Right-oh,” he said, “you are going back out to that listening post for the rest of the night by yourself.” So that was my punishment. When the moon eventually came up I abused every Chinaman there was in Korea.

27:00 **So pretty nerve racking on a day-to-day basis?**

It can be like that. You've got to try and keep on top of it.

It was a struggle for you to keep on top of it sometimes?

No, no, it just made you think, have to think now, try and sort out what the noise is or what this is. But the wet season going out in patrols when it was raining and that, everything is dark, wet.

27:30 Not a very happy situation to be going out in. But this all goes with the deal.

How would you keep your spirits up?

Oh you had to keep your sense of humour, keep your sense of humour. A bit of chiacking amongst one another and try and keep it the best way you can.

What were some of the things you had to do to prepare for a patrol,

28:00 **such as painting up your face and making other sort of modifications to what you were wearing? What did you have to do to get ready for a patrol?**

Well you had to put anti-mite stuff on your clothing and you put mosquito repellent on and then try and break down your skin tones somehow or another. But I often think later on

28:30 that they probably could have smelled us when we were smoking cigarettes anyway. So you know, when you think back on all these things and when you stop smoking and you smell other people smoking cigarettes you understand these things.

Did you smell the Chinese?

Yes. With their diet and that you used to

29:00 smell where they had been and what have you. You could see in the winter time where the bunkers were facing our lines and where their tunnels were. You knew where they were because of probably body heat and breathing and that, and would come out of the tunnels, and you could see the ice on the vertical parts of the trench system was, you could see that part of it,

29:30 plus the icicles hanging down off your eyebrows.

Can you tell me about the Chinese and their human wave tactics?

I never really experienced that, only by what I've been told and what I've since read. I never experienced a human wave setup.

30:00 That sort of setup ended just before the ceasefire alongside us. We were in a position alongside there and we got a bit of the overshoots of their shelling and firing in that position where 1 Battalion was, 2 Battalion was, but we weren't actually up, they were up on top of the hill. We were on a feature in the middle of the valley

30:30 by ourselves, behind what they called a million dollar fence.

Do you think we've covered most of your major activities in the valley leading up to the last engagement at The Hook? Have we pretty much covered that territory or is there something more we should talk about?

Oh pretty well. No, I think that's the general run of the mill. That was in a stalemate there

31:00 and so it was just continual patrolling, listening, keeping people off your front door, so to speak.

Did we cover all the different types of patrol? We covered standing, fighting, listening post?

Reccie patrols.

Reccie patrols? How did they work?

Well you ended going out, about three people going out with a radio and going

31:30 out to an area looking and listening and laying doggo [still] for a certain period of time. Or else going around and moving across the front of a certain position just to find out what was happening across the front of that in the valley.

And are there any other types of patrols that we haven't explained yet?

Oh no. That's pretty well it. They were the ones I was involved with.

32:00 **And you were doing most of that patrolling at night-time?**

It was all done at night-time. You become a night owl.

So what would happen at the end of one of those patrols and returning back to rest? What was the process?

There was one other patrol you used to have to do. You used to have to do a minefield check. You used to go out and check the wire was intact around the minefields in the front of your position,

32:30 so that if anything happened and it was knocked down by mortar fire it could be repaired. You didn't want your people walking into them, which happened in some cases, where people walked through onto minefields because the wire was missing.

Were you around for that happening?

No. It happened to one of the 2 Battalions. It happened to them. And it hadn't been long

33:00 and they hadn't long been in that position. You get to know what's actually in front of you. But if you've got a reserve company going out to do a specific job it's pretty hard on them because they don't know what they are going into, really. But when you are sitting there you can see it in daylight.

33:30 You can work out what's exactly in front of you and where you can go and where you can't go. That makes a big difference. So we used to have to periodically change over to reserve areas, but when we came out of reserve we'd always go back to that while we were in the line. You'd have three forward companies and you'd have one reserve company.

34:00 So when one went out to the line you'd go back to reserve and the one that was in reserve would go back to their original position, so it sort of worked back around.

So what was the procedure for you after you had finished a patrol and you were coming back to wind down?

When we came back in you'd go and give a patrol report to the platoon commander, unload,

34:30 make sure everybody was set, probably have to go straight on to stand to. Stand to was from dawn until about seven o'clock for about an hour and a half, so then you'd go and clean up and by that time your breakfast would be brought up. It would be brought up in hot boxes by

35:00 the Korean Service Corps. They were old men that couldn't do front-line service, and they turned around and put them in the front line anyway to be carriers of our supplies and everything.

Did you find them to be good men?

Yeah, they were decent old chaps. It was as much their fight as ours.

So you had a bit of breakfast?

We had a bit of breakfast and then go and

35:30 have a sleep.

How long would you have to sleep?

Well it varied, whether you had to get out again to do a stretch of daytime picket duty or not or whether you had to turn around and go and bring up wire, stores, or ammunition, stuff like that, bring back up the mountain from the jeep.

So what do you think you were averaging sleep-wise?

36:00 Oh I don't know, about three or four hours sometimes. I didn't sleep. When I moved into that forward position I never slept for three days, not with patrols and everything else. Eventually I couldn't shut my eyes. I had to go to the aid post and get some drops for my eyes because I was that tied up with looking after people and organising stuff and everything else.

36:30 Patrols, you'd go out and do an outpost and then you'd have to go and do a patrol, or you'd do a patrol and come back and maybe have a hot drink, make a hot drink and then back out for an outpost, something like that That kept us pretty busy.

Pretty gruelling, pretty intense?

But I had to look after the diggers to a certain extent. You couldn't expect them to do what I had done.

And that was a

37:00 **role that you enjoyed?**

Well I accepted it but I had to make the best of it.

And do you think your blokes responded well to your leadership?

Yeah, yeah, I think sometimes they hated my guts but when you turned around and had to stand on them over something and pulled them into gear,

37:30 if things got a bit sloppy or something, but that was for their good.

So what was your involvement in the engagement at The Hook?

Only we were just filling up, this position was in the middle of the Samichon Valley between the Samichon River, it was a knoll and this side of The Hook area. We were just sitting on there and our job was patrolling.

38:00 **Was there much action for you there?**

No, just continual patrolling. I had one unfortunate incident where I had to go out beyond the million dollar fence which was huge barbed wire entanglements across the valley floor. How long it would have lasted if they really wanted to do it because they could have chopped it to pieces in about five minutes with mortar fire. But we had to go out up this old

38:30 roadway to some paddy buns and after I got out through the gap in the wire one of the chaps flipped. What do I do? I couldn't very well ask somebody to take him back.

When you say he flipped?

He sort of... His mind went.

39:00 And he turned around, so I put the patrol down in an ambush position and decided to take him back myself. I didn't think it was fair. I put one chap in charge of the setup I had and I took him back so he could go back and get treatment and that. But his nerves were shot. He was a very quiet chap and I think his bunker

39:30 mate might have kept his nerves on edge.

Did you strike many blokes having problems psychologically?

No. He was the only one I had. Used to have trouble getting people out of bed to stand to of a morning.

And how did you deal with that problem?

Just keep abusing them. No, they were pretty good.

40:00 You can well imagine that after doing hours out in the dark you'd want to rest up if you had the opportunity. So anyway they all used to turn up eventually and… But in the wet season you ended up with mud and the bunkers would be dripping water and it would be wetter in the bunkers

40:30 than it was outside.

Did any of the blokes have problems with frostbite?

No, I had, when I came back off leave… I went on five days' leave in early December, came out of the line. And when I came back we were sent down to the Kansas Line area to do work on it

41:00 and I ended up virtually getting my thumb frozen, where I had had my thumb injured. And I had to go back and get that thawed out. But otherwise it never affected me. But I know people who had got frostbite, bad frostbite. That was from their early years in Korea. So…

So how did you

41:30 **respond to the news that the war was over? Well actually, let's hold that question because this tape has just finished so it's probably a good way to start the next tape.**

Okay.

Tape 7

00:46 **Dick, we'll just pick up the story where you left off and you were talking about the very last battle that Australia had in Korea, at The Hook. Can you tell us more about your role in that battle? What,**

01:00 **just walk us through it?**

Well in our position there we were just left to provide patrols down on the Samichon River behind the million dollar fence, which was a sort of defensive wire across the valley, Samichon Valley. It was about probably ten foot high. It had wire entanglements

01:30 about ten feet deep. Apparently the Americans had built it at some stage to try and stop the Chinese from coming through, but when you looked at it it didn't mean a thing after experiencing what mortar fire does to barbed wire entanglements because it just chops it pieces, into six-inch bits, so it can be there one minute and gone the next

02:00 if they really want to get rid of it. But we had to turn around and do a patrol outside that, along an old road heading into the Chinese position. And I was given a task of doing the ambush patrol if there was

any movements coming towards our company's position, which was on the edge part of The Hook

02:30 and across where we were in the valley. We had a platoon in the valley and were by ourselves. And we got there and I just got through the fence and once chap lost his nerve, he flipped so I thought, "What I can do?" Because I can't very well expect one of the men to turn around and take him back.

03:00 Well because he was a bit toey with some of his mates and a very quiet chap. So I went and put the patrol down and nominated a chap to take charge of it. So I took this chap back by myself and sort of tried to calm him down.

What was he doing? Was he resisting?

No. He didn't resist at all. His nerves just went completely on him.

What happens when that happens to a man?

03:30 Oh he just sort of gave a bit of a carry on for a while and I went and spoke to him and sort of eased him off a bit, and it is a bit scary when you have that go on you. So…

What did he say to you?

I don't know. I can't remember now. But I eventually sort of half calmed him down a bit and sort of led him back to our platoon position

04:00 so they could send him on to the RAP to see if they could get treatment. He was only out for three or four days and we got him back again and he calmed down.

What did they give him?

I don't know. They must have had some sort of treatment there probably, some sort of medicine to calm his nerves down I'd say. What they actually did I never enquired. So we just let him forget all about it

04:30 and I sort of mothered him a bit after that when we were back in the position with us. He was bunkered with a chap who did some stupid things at times. A young joker who I had only received. Anyway, he got a good talking to.

05:00 **Did he play tricks on this man?**

Oh he used to play tricks and do all sorts of things, just to sort of annoy him I think. He was just that type of chap. And that chap who flipped was very quiet, sort of deep within himself really. So…

Did it tend to be the men with the more quieter natures who you would notice would often flip like that?

Well I only ever saw another other chap do that but I didn't know what sort

05:30 of nature he was. I saw a chap earlier go off, firing his Owen gun. He reckoned there was people there he was firing at but it was only tree stumps and bits of rubbish laying around. Unless I was getting blind, I don't know, but there was nobody there.

So back to The Hook and that, you said you were put in charge of doing ambushes

06:00 **for your section. Did you encounter any?**

No. There was nothing. It was just, we were just put in there to block anything that may be coming around, down the river or something like that, and at that time when things got really bad we got word to say that if they broke through it was every man

06:30 for himself because our position was… There was a minefield behind us and there was no way out because the roads would have been cut off because we had to go right in behind it. The road led right around so the road was out and the only other way was to go across the river and try and join up with the Brit unit, but we didn't know where the minefields were. So it was every man for himself to…

07:00 It wasn't a very sort of happy thing. We couldn't believe that it was going to finish in a couple of days' time.

So was it every man for himself in the end?

No. It didn't get to that, thank goodness.

Can you describe the progress of the battle?

We couldn't see very much of it because it was up and over the top of a high feature along our left flank

07:30 and we were getting artillery overshoots within the area but it wasn't really on us. It was just stuff that was coming over but it was nothing really. So it was virtually a pretty good, easy position to be on. But the people stayed away and didn't annoy us.

Who was involved in the battle? Everyone was

08:00 **was involved?**

No, 2 Battalion was on the actual position and 3 Battalion had a company alongside them, and that company was involved on The Hook. And so that was, they were heavily involved, 2 Battalion.

And the Americans? Where were they?

Alongside them were the American marines,

08:30 and they were involved in part of it as well, but it was a particular part that they tried to push through. They tried quite often to push through that position because one they got over that position they were straight on to the Injin River and had the river at our back. And they couldn't,

09:00 and it was down through that way that the Battle of Gloucester Valley that they came through that time a couple of years earlier. So it was one of the traditional ways of trying to get to Seoul..

So how long did your battle at The Hook last for?

We were in

09:30 that position for about three weeks, probably, until the ceasefire came, and then we had to unload and move out.

How did the word of the ceasefire get to you?

We got the word at ten o'clock at night to say it was finished.

The battle or the war?

The war. The ceasefire was

10:00 ordered and nothing happened and the… We had… Each of our sections had two KATCOMs [Korean Army Troops attached to Commonwealth Division]. They were Korean soldiers attached to the Commonwealth Division, two to each section. And when… The next morning they sent out

10:30 the terms of the truce, which were to be read to the troops. See our platoon commander, Alec Weaver, he could speak a number of languages and so he read off the piece of paper the terms, what the truce was all about. And the same piece of paper he read it out in Korean to the Korean troops.

11:00 **Do you remember any of the words in the truce?**

No, no I don't.

How were you feeling when he read the terms of the truce out?

Oh it was a relief, I suppose. It was, we could never, towards say three months before the truce was called it looked as though the war was hotting up

11:30 and it really started to get… Things were happening as far as activity of the Chinese was concerned. So I think there was three or four in our platoon, and particularly in our section, and they turned around to the K Force people and they decided that we would re-engage and

12:00 join the regular army. Our K Force time was running down. So eventually there weren't too many of us left after that changeover, there wasn't very many left to sign over to the regular army.

Why was that?

Well with through being wounded and going out and what have you.

So how many out of the original

12:30 **batch of men from K Force would have signed over to the regular army?**

I don't know, but over the years, over that period of the war years there were a number of K Force personnel who changed over to the regular army over a period of time.

Why would they do that?

Just to stay on for another go. Instead of going home you'd turn around

13:00 and stay there and try and see it to an end if possible.

So you really wanted to see more action if possible?

Yeah.

Why?

Don't know. It was just one of those things.

Did you enjoy the fight? Or what was it about the life that you enjoyed?

Oh I turned around and accepted that life. And I got used to it.

13:30 So you know, when your time was up you were sort of leaving a job that wasn't finished sort of thing. That's how a lot of people looked at it.

Did you feel like the job in Korea wasn't finished?

Well when you really found out what you had in front of you I don't think we could have finished it. There was a big army sitting in front of us, I tell you.

The Chinese?

14:00 Yes. They had a lot of men there.

And when the ceasefire happened, did you actually come face to face with the Chinese army?

No.

What happened? Can…?

Well 2 Battalion people, they came in face to face with them because they were picking up… The Chinese came up to pick up their dead and what have you, and some of them, they weren't supposed to, turned around and

14:30 sort of mingled with them, a few of them. But apparently there was a lot of Chinese bodies in front of 2 Battalion's position, because it went on for days and there was no let up.

Picking up the bodies?

No. Like the actual hard fighting. There was no let up for days. They just kept pushing men into it and…

Until the Chinese

15:00 **surrendered?**

Until the truce was called. Yeah, so one side is turning around talking about peace and the other side is on one hand talking about peace and on the other hand talking about trying to get more ground.

How did that confusion happen?

Well I don't know. Well I suppose they were always out to try and push as much,

15:30 push the line further back into South Korea as they could, I suppose, get more ground. They reckoned if they had the truce they'd work on the troops' line as being the boundary, the border…

So when the ceasefire was called did you go back to your barracks? What happened to you then?

Well we moved out. We had to unload. There was the… The United Nations put in

16:00 people and they had been surveyed where there would be a demarcation zone and it was fenced off. We had to move back out of that fence with all our ammunition and weapons. It all had to go. So we moved back and we moved back down to the Injin River, and we were on the bank of the river so we could swim and

16:30 we had a nice spot where the sand and tents and sleep and we could have a few beers.

So it was summer time?

Summer time, yeah, in July, so we relaxed there until such times as they organised going back to one of our reserve areas and set up camp where our battalion used to be in reserve all the time. And they organised

17:00 marquees and that for us to stay in. Eventually they put up some Quonset huts and made more or less a permanent camp there in that particular area.

Was there a lot of partying going on to celebrate the ceasefire?

There was a bit. There wasn't too much grog around if people wanted to drink, sort of thing. The thing was we had to go back

17:30 after a few days and start pulling down all the bunkers, filling in all the bunkers and all the defences that had been sort of destroyed. Weapon pits had to be filled in and what have you. And any timbers that could be reused that were in some of the bunkers, well that was all recovered. And any stores,

18:00 wire and pickets and what have you, they were all recovered over a week or so. And you used to have to go back into the area on working party, and a couple of times I went up into The Hook area where the battle was on and you could see what went on when you were there pulling down defences.

What did you see?

You know,

18:30 the layout. How the place had been knocked around and how it had been churned up by artillery fire and everything.

There was a bloke that you lost, who had become a POW at Gibraltar while you were saving the other man who had the wound in his chest. Did people try and find out what had happened to him, where he had gone? What was the procedure there?

19:00 We knew he didn't turn up, so something must have happened. He must have been grabbed. Whether they sent out patrols in that particular area to see whether his body was there or not. Eventually there was word came through that he was POW. I never heard… When he came out, apparently he was brought out and

19:30 shipped straight back to Australia and I never heard where he is or heard from him since.

How long was he a POW?

Oh he would have been a POW for about eight months. The Canadians had a different idea. When I came out of Korea I was sent to Tokyo on guard duty in Tokyo at the

20:00 relief centre and I struck a chap came in one night when I was on guard duty, and he had had a few beers. And I got talking to him and he said, when the Canadian POWs came out they turned around and took them up to Tokyo and gave them a leave pass, a pocket full of money and don't come back till a certain time, see,

20:30 so they could unwind. And this particular chap, he'd been into the Ebisu Barracks when he arrived there, they gave him clobber, a pocket full of money and went out on his own. When he came back late at night and he had a few beers in, he left me and he

21:00 said, "I've got to get up early in the morning and my plane's leaving. I've got to get up an leave at five o'clock in the morning." So that's all right. The next thing I get a phone call from the adjutant of the relief centre, who was a Canadian, and he said, "There is a drunk running around our lines in the officers' mess. I want you to put him in the can."

21:30 So I went up there and there was this chap and he got lost. You arrive at a place late, you go out for ex number of weeks, come back in the dark and you don't know where you're going. So anyway I took him down and he was telling me how he was going so I took him down to the provos' place, the cells and that, and I told the provos, the corporal who was in charge at the time,

22:00 that this chap was a POW, that he was out, he wandered into the officers' lines and he's going home and has to leave at half past five in the morning. See. Catch the plane to go home. So the provo handed me a slip of paper. He said, "Sign this." I didn't read it,

22:30 I signed it. The next morning I dismounted the guard, toddled off to bed. The next thing the RSM comes down "Dick, the adjutant wants to see you. Where's that Canadian?" "Probably halfway across the Pacific by now." I went up to the adjutant and boy, did he carry on. He was going to do this and going to that. I said, "Please yourself."

23:00 I said, "At this stage of the game I've only got a couple of weeks left in this man's army." "March him out sergeant major…" When I went back to Hiro I signed over to the regular army so that was a little side thing that you get involved with.

So how long was it between the ceasefire and you cleaning up in Korea before you actually

23:30 **went back to Japan?**

Actually my time was up the day of the ceasefire, but I had some hospital time to make up so I was there for another three weeks.

In hospital?

No. I was with the battalion an extra three weeks.

Why do you call that hospital time?

Well they turned around and they took that as non-service for that twelve months.

24:00 If you were out for a certain period of time. It depends where you were hospitalised and what have you. I was sick and I was out for a couple of weeks.

You were wounded though, weren't you?

No. This is later on. This was in May. I got sick after I lost my mate in the section. I think I got tonsillitis and what have you. They wouldn't take your tonsils out in Korea. Pretty bad, so they sent me back down

to Seoul

24:30 to get treated for it and then I went back to the battalion, see. That period of time they made me make it up on the paperwork to the battalion. You owed the battalion that much time.

Which mate were you referring to that you lost?

That was my section 2IC, when I was told I wasn't to go on this fighting patrol.

25:00 One of the other chaps there, Ron Cashman, he took it out. He was out with the platoon commander.

Okay, so you got back to Japan, you do your extra three weeks?

I do my three weeks in Korea and then go back to Japan.

And then you signed up with the regular army?

Yeah, I turned around and was sitting

25:30 waiting to either go home or what they were going to do to me, whether they would sign me up in the regular army. In the meantime we had to supply a regular guard in Tokyo at Ebisu Camp for a month so we had to take over from the French Canadians. There were about three people left on the guard and the rest were in the boob.

The what?

26:00 In gaol.

What was that for?

Playing up. Probably playing up and not turning up for guard duty and what have you.

They went a bit crazy after?

Anyway that's beside the point. Anyway our duties up there were to mount a guard at the main gate. And anyway, while I was there one afternoon I was sent word that, some people used to

26:30 used to go out in civvy clothes and some in uniform. I wasn't to let anybody out of the camp in civilian clothes. So half an hour later two gentlemen came down in civvies, all done up nicely. So, "Sorry sir." I didn't know who they were. "But you are not allowed out in civilian clothes. That's the orders I've received." They said. "Oh,

27:00 we'll go back and see about this." They turned around and said, "I'm colonel so and so and he's so and so." I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but that cuts across the board. No civilian clothes outside the gate." Somebody's bright idea. So back they go. They came back a bit later. "Corporal, did you get the word that that's been cancelled?" I said, "Yes sir."

27:30 So they put the heavy word on the camp commander and that's the way it goes. But I ended up having to bury a couple of, a Canadian and an Australian who were killed in training down in Hiro, down in Haramura, while we were there, out at Yokohama Cemetery.

At that time?

While I was there, yes.

28:00 Had to provide, so that was extra duties. Another thing that I had never been involved in.

And then where to next? Then you signed up with the regular army?

I waited. Everybody I came out with had gone home when I came back from Tokyo, back down to Hiro. I was sitting around there for a few days and I said to the CSM, "What's happening to me?"

28:30 He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well do I go home or do I change over to regular army?" He said, "I'll make a few enquiries." So anyway a couple hours later I was signed into the regular army and posted to Hiro for twelve months.

So was that a really proud, happy moment for you?

Oh yeah. I was pleased I got it

29:00 because one of my mates had already done it as well and he was in the Q [Quartermaster's] store, and I had somebody there who I was close friends with and we joined up with at the same time and he went to 1 Battalion and I went to 3, and then when 2 Battalion came over they had surplus men so he came over to my section, to 3. Very good mates.

So you made some really, really good friends

29:30 **during that year in Korea?**

Yeah.

Can you talk about that mateship, that kind of special mateship, that bond that happens in battle?

Well you sort of get bonded together. Your interests are virtually the same and you know, you sort of grow close together. Probably even closer than brothers because you are going through some

30:00 torrid times really, and you rely on one another. You know, whatever happens you've got a back-up one way or another.

So when you went back to Japan and found that quite a few of your mates had gone home already, did that leave an empty feeling in you that all these people who you've spent so much time with?

Oh well, you wonder what goes on. There was others coming out anyway that I knew

30:30 who had finished their time.

So when you came out to Japan did you have a big night where you wound down and celebrated?

Not really, I didn't make a big deal of it. I used to be pretty quiet. I didn't get rearing drunk and that sort of thing, not really.

So what did you do during those twelve months? How did you entertain yourself in Japan?

In Japan? Oh whenever I got the opportunity

31:00 to store up a few stand-down days I turned around and used to travel around different places wherever I could, for the length of the period. I went and bought myself a Japanese tourist book in English which listed virtually every village in Japan and what could be seen where and what have you, and

31:30 I used to study that a bit and map out and decide where I could go in x number of days and then head off.

By yourself or would you go with mates normally?

I used to have company at times.

Would they be other soldiers?

No, no, a friend. Anyway we'd head off and go and look around

32:00 and she would act as an interpreter for me.

Your Japanese girlfriend?

Yeah.

How did the army look upon you having a Japanese girlfriend at that stage?

Well they accepted people marrying Japanese at that period of time so it was sort of accepted. Although some of the commanders used to frown on it a bit, but

32:30 so anyway that's all that was.

You met your wife during this period?

Yes.

Can you tell us how you met her?

Oh I met her travelling around. I met her in a shop, actually, when I was hunting around and poking around in a shop. I got to know her and decided to get a bit more friendly and eventually that was it.

And she spoke English or how did you communicate with you?

She spoke

33:00 a reasonable bit of English, yes.

And where was she from? What part of Japan was she from?

She was originally from Kobe and she had moved, with one of her friends, quite a number of years, down to the Kure area so it was through one of her friends actually, a mate of mine knew a friend of hers and so an introduction was done.

33:30 **Was she working at the time that you met her?**

Yes. She was working and she used to be doing dressmaking and what have you.

So there was quite a lot of interaction between the Japanese women and the regular soldiers in Japan at that time?

Yeah, yeah, there was. And you got to know the people and one way of learning how people lived and what have you.

34:00 **What did you learn about the Japanese at that time?**

Well the first thing was very obvious – they were very industrious. You only had to go and see, when they were training people in the area before they went to Korea we would go on route marches through Hiro and out through the villages and we'd see all these little industrious places virtually inside a house, making steel, whatever, all sorts of things.

34:30 Working out in the paddy fields and up in the mountains on their land, they would be out there from first thing in the morning until last thing at night. And you know it was really a thing, completely different outlook to life in Australia.

And what was your girlfriend, your wife to be, teaching you about the Japanese people at that time?

Oh she

35:00 explained a few things that were going on, but when we travelled around a bit together we saw other aspects of it.

Can you describe some of the things that you remember seeing or noticing that you were discovering that was totally new or really different to you?

Yeah, well I turned it around and gave it a lot of thought and asked if she'd marry me

35:30 because I was sort of, I really appreciated her and everything. And I went and asked for the marriage papers from camp and the next thing I know I'm being put on a draft back home.

Why was that?

Apparently they were trying to cut, someone didn't want me to get married up there. So it took me two years

36:00 to get the application through immigration before I could get her to come down, just in time for the Olympic Games.

How did her parents receive your proposal of marriage?

Oh I never met her parents. But I was going to go up that way and meet her parents but I had to go home. I was posted back home to National Service. And that finished that.

All right. But I'll just ask you

36:30 **what work were you doing as a regular soldier in Hiro? What were they making you do there?**

I was instructing, field instructing with the people coming up from Australia before they went across to Korea. And then I turned around and two of us took charge of what they call a holding platoon, where people were

37:00 coming from Korea to go to hospital or coming out of hospital. Some were going back to Australia. It was sort of an administrative job in the latter part of my stay there when things started to wind down a bit further during that twelve months I was there, which was just getting people ready for draft, making sure that they had had their needles. There were some comical things that happened there.

37:30 Getting people down for medical checks and that was funny.

Did you mix with the local Japanese, apart from your wife to be, did you mix with the locals and did they receive you well?

Very well. They were always respectful. I never had any problems that way. No. We always, you were always pleasant to them and so they were to us. You know, people passing and that.

38:00 People that just lived in the village just up from the camp and that. You used to go up there and mix with them a bit.

When you, you know, told the powers that be that you wanted to marry a Japanese woman and they basically drafted you back to Australia, did you protest?

I turned around and tried because I had a cousin who was just at that time

38:30 arrived from the UK [United Kingdom] who was an officer in the British Army, and he was coming out, so I missed him by a couple of days as well. So somebody must have wanted to do the dirty. I must have had an enemy somewhere because the papers I got were from a chap, he gave me them. There was no worries there with the sergeant who gave me the papers, but somewhere along the line someone must

have known I was getting these papers, and I never had them put in. If I had put them in straight away it would have

39:00 blocked that off. They couldn't have done anything with me until such time they sorted out whether the wife was acceptable, or the girlfriend was acceptable to come to Australia or not. Until they had done security checks on her and what have you.

And your girlfriend, was she very upset that you had to go and you might have to be apart for two years, or was there an agreement

39:30 **that she definitely would come out here?**

Well I turned around and told here that I would get her down one way or the other. We used to write regularly.

Did you get married over in Japan?

No. We got married here in Sydney in the registry office. She came down on a boat, the Esang. There were a heap of Japanese brides and some soldiers coming back from the wind-up of the

40:00 occupation, not the occupation, the wind-up of the our forces in Japan. Because the occupation ended in April 1952 before we arrived in Japan and where we were stationed in Japan it was known as BCFK, British [Commonwealth] Forces Korea.

40:30 We travelled under that style.

So was it really difficult to fill out immigration papers and did you have problems with the Australian authorities getting your wife or your wife to be out here?

No. There weren't any problems filling out papers and that but when I turned around and tried to push them they just wouldn't budge for two years. That was two years and that was it. End of story.

41:00 **But you were determined to wait that long?**

Well I had to, didn't I? I made a promise.

And did you write to her regularly over that time?

Yeah, we did.

It must have been a hard two years waiting?

Yeah. I had a photo of her in the barrack room I shared with another chap. He said, "You're always mooning over her." So it was one of those things.

And so when you came back to Australia

41:30 **you said that you joined the Nashos?**

No, no, no. I was posted to the National Service as an instructor. I was only there about a month and the orderly room corporal shot through, so the company commander said, "You've done a little bit of clerical work in Japan." He said, "I want you to take over the orderly room."

42:00 I said, "Never done it." He said, "Do it."

Tape 8

00:31 **Dick, it sounds like you adjusted pretty well into the lifestyle of Japan and that you were quite at home over there?**

Yes, yes. I enjoyed my stay there. Getting around and seeing broadened my outlook on Japan and on life, and

01:00 I was quite happy there.

So coming back to Australia, was it hard then adjusting back into the Australian way of life?

Oh going to a National Service battalion was, going there as an instructor was a different sort of army ball game than being a part of a battalion as such. Going for a National Service unit was different,

01:30 the whole atmosphere was different.

In what sort of ways?

Oh the people were posted there, and a lot of them. And I for one didn't have any real ambition to be an instructor. Not as a basic training instructor. Field instructing suited me far better –

02:00 we could get out in the field and work in the field. But being stuck on the square didn't really appeal to me. I was fortunate enough to be able to be pushed into being the orderly room march… And doing the administration, as an orderly room corporal doing the bookwork for the marching in and marching out

02:30 of the National Servicemen for the period of time. Then they turned around and brought in a young chap who was a service corps chap who the posting really belonged to as a clerk. I wasn't a clerk. I was just filling the job in. I went then to work out in the field in the pioneer platoon training in the use of explosives and

03:00 that sort of thing, that aspect of army training.

After how long?

I was probably two and a half years in the orderly room marching different intakes in and out.

And did you end up enjoying that?

Pardon?

Did you end up enjoying the orderly room?

Well it was far better than working in the bullring as far as I was concerned. I didn't enjoy working in the bullring, just standing there and

03:30 bellowing out at people and all sorts of thing.

So the pioneer training was a step forward for you?

Yes. That was practical work, so it was far better.

And where were you doing that?

At Pucka out on the range, doing the range show and teaching them how to make charges and what that was all about. Making defences

04:00 and all stuff that entailed pioneer soldiers to be involved in.

Had you managed to get your wife over to Australia by then?

Just. Yes, she arrived, I was able to get her into Australia virtually at the start of the Olympic Games in November '56.

I don't think we've actually mentioned her name? What is your wife's name?

Her nickname's Tosh.

Tosh? We should call her Tosh?

04:30 **So that meant that she started her life in Australia living at Pucka?**

At Pucka, yes. We stayed at friends' until such time as we could get a room and a kitchenette in Seymour to live, and then the 15 National Service Battalion was folding

05:00 up and the original National Service was winding down. And I, in the meantime while I was at Pucka, I did a public relations photographer's trade test. And shortly after that when the winding down was, after we were living in Seymour in the place there for a few months I

05:30 got attached to Headquarters Southern Command Public Relations.

And did you welcome that?

I welcomed that because I rather enjoyed that sort of work because we took it up, a couple of us took it up as a hobby because it was something to do while we were posted in National Service camp.

So the photography side of things had really taken your fancy?

Yes. We sort of delved into that and

06:00 processing and taking photos, and it became sort of a heavy sort of hobby. And when I got the invitation to go down for a trade test and look into it further and learn how they worked there, how semi-professional and professional people worked photography, it was good training.

06:30 The trade test lasted for, I think it was six weeks and then I went down on the unallotted list, the army's unallotted list, for about three or four months until such time as they said, "Enough's enough. You can't be on the unallotted list all that time. We'll send you down to staff college at Queenscliff as a batman." I walked in there and told them

07:00 straight that I'd never been a batman and I had no ambitions to being one. They said, "Well we've got another job in the sergeants' mess." So I said, "Right, I'll take the lesser of two evils," so I ended up

running the sergeants' mess.

How did you find that?

Well it was working long hours at times, mess hours. They'd kick on having fun until quite late.

07:30 But I knew a lot of the people there from service life before, so it worked out all right. I learnt to be a barman and worked in the actual mess part of it itself, doing the cleaning and what have you, and the accounting for the stock.

08:00 **So how long did you end up doing that for?**

I was doing that for close on two years. And eventually they got a chap there that was posted there to fill that so-called vacancy and he got me out, being in charge of the batmen and the women who used to work in the officers' mess at the staff college.

08:30 And that was only just an administrative thing, really. But prior to that I put in to go and join the battalion in Malaya and I went up to Royal Park and I had a bit of a blue [argument] with the doctor and he threw me out physically by the ear.

And what was that blue all about?

09:00 Oh about whether I could be suitable to be in the army because while I was at Pucka with continual bullring service on my thumb, rifle drill used to aggravate it, throwing the rifle up and that, and I was carrying the weight of that. That became a bit of a thing so that was on the paperwork

09:30 and he was using that as a lever to why I shouldn't go and join the battalion. And I said that was a far different sort of service life to what it is in the battalion, so that never came about. So anyway the army brought in a scheme where people who weren't happy with their postings, they called it job x, and they could change people around

10:00 so you could fit in better. It was called job x. So when that came out the colonel from Headquarters Southern Command, rang up and said, "Do you want to come up there as a driver photographer?" I said, "I'll be up there in a flash."

Where is Southern Command?

That is Melbourne headquarters. St Kilda Road, Melbourne. So that set me off in photography. And the chap that I was working under, twelve months later he quit.

10:30 So I became the sergeant and then eventually took over. It was a warrant officer's posting so I eventually ended up being a warrant officer photographer.

When did you become a warrant officer?

A temporary warrant officer, I became that in 1961, I think. I was only a short while in the rank of sergeant.

11:00 I had the qualifications for sergeant but that's the way it goes. The role as a photographer in Southern Command was that I used to attend army camps, CMF, regular army exercises,

11:30 and graduations, Portsea graduations, officers' school, the graduations down at Balcombe of the apprentices and any functions to cover those sort of functions and that and spread photos around to the local newspapers, TV [television] stations,

12:00 shoot some TV film when I went out to the country areas to the local TV stations, and also for the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] and the major TV stations in Melbourne of anything that was going on that they never covered themselves. So you know, you could turn and see the results of what you were doing when you got home in time to watch the TV news or something.

So it was a pretty good wicket?

12:30 Yeah, a good wicket.

Did you enjoy the work?

Yeah. I enjoyed the work. The only drawback was it entailed weekend work as well at times. And the family were young and they sort of grow up without, before you know what was going on.

And who did the family consist of?

Who did the family consist of?

Can you take us through the kids? The names of your children?

13:00 The names of the children? Jennifer was the eldest daughter, and Peter was the oldest boy. Linda was the other daughter and Colin was the youngest born. I lost a… My wife was involved in a car accident up in New Guinea and lost a child up there when we were posted up there. They've done all right. The three of them are

13:30 involved with the medical world and so it's, it has moved around. We moved to New Guinea. We had three years in New Guinea.

So when did New Guinea take place?

I moved there at the start of the confrontation with Indonesia, when they put strength and forces

14:00 into New Guinea because of the West Irian border. I used to go out with PIR patrols. That's the native army patrols there under an Australian Army officer. You'd go out and patrol the native towns and the jungle along the border area and I used to go out with them working there for about a month at a time, sent in still photography.

And so the whole family went up?

Yeah, took the

14:30 whole family.

Where were you stationed with the family?

At [Port] Moresby. And I used to go away at a time.

Was that dangerous work for you?

Oh I don't think so. We met some very strange and savage looking native tribes at times but we got on all right with them.

How did you find the natives in general?

Good, yeah,

15:00 particularly in the country. There are some rascals floating around in Moresby one way and another. All sorts of tribal groups used to mingle down there, come down on work permits, working there and they sort of get the bad habits once they got on the beer and that.

15:30 They weren't supposed to drink but then the United Nations turned around and put their foot in it and said, "You can't stop them from having drinks," drinking and what have you. So that made the situation a little bit worse as well.

So Moresby could be a little bit dangerous?

Well it got that way later on.

16:00 I was asked to do a job for the ABC. The natives were putting on a… The local ABC reps [representatives] in Moresby, they had a radio station up there. And they asked me to shoot some film one Saturday on a protest march they had in Moresby, and I guarantee there must have been over ten thousand people involved in it and I was in the middle of this march,

16:30 marching on the government house. Not that it worried me or anything but they were yahooing and carrying on, all different tribal groups on this protest march.

And did you pick up some pidgin while you were over there?

Not very much. A little bit. I never went in much for that. I enlisted a native chap to do PR and photography work

17:00 and he spoke pretty good English. He picked it up very well. But as far as going out and taking photos, he was a little bit backward on that, but in the darkroom work he was quite good. He came from one of the islands off New Guinea, off a mission island. So he was a reasonable sort of a chap.

17:30 **So did you know how long you were going to be stationed over in New Guinea?**

The posting was for two years, but then when the wife got smashed up with the car accident. When she was in Moresby, a car ran across the footpath when she was waiting for a bus in the shopfront, and I was held up there until that was all sorted out.

18:00 And then I was supposed to go to Vietnam but they sent me back to Melbourne to settle the family down so I could go to Vietnam, and then on Christmas leave they turned around and said, rang up and said, "You're not going to Vietnam now. You're going to Singapore to set up a five nation." Setup it was.

18:30 **So that was in which year?**

We had to get together, the Brits and the Kiwis [New Zealanders] to set up a darkroom and work together on that. And they turned around and ended up working for the Malays or the Singaporeans, the Brits or the New Zealanders. So…

What year did you start doing that work?

19:00 I went there in ’70 to early ’73, and from there I got a job with the Royal Navy back in Japan.

Was that the first time you’d been back to Japan?

That was the first time I had been back to Japan, yes.

How was that?

It was a big difference to the Japan I knew. I couldn’t believe the Inland Sea we went through. Instead of being crystal clear it was full of chemicals and God knows what.

19:30 There was a big chemical factory in the middle of the Inland Sea on a very low island. And you’d turn around and see rubbish dumped on vacant land. We never saw any rubbish before. The place was always clean and tidy and it was a bit of slightly different. I went and got a Land Rover that the navy had on board

20:00 HMAS Albion and I took some of our people, the navy people, out the back of Kobe into the country to get photos of them and we could just see stuff dumped over the sides of the roads, dumped over there which you never ever saw before.

Was your wife able to join you at all over there?

I didn’t find out until I went aboard the

20:30 carrier, the officer, one of the officers on the boat was the liaison officer or acting as the liaison officer on the visit to Japan. He said, “I wish we had known that. We could have flown your wife up there to do the arrangements for our arrival up there.” And the family, see. They all could have went back there. But she had already been back in the early ’60s. She went back home with two of the kiddies.

21:00 Went home for a few months and…

How did she find adjusting to Australia?

Oh it was a little bit hard on her settling in in a way, although she had some friends, other Japanese women at Pucka there who she could turn around and she could communicate with and

21:30 get to know the ins and outs of things. I had an uncle and an aunt in Seymour and we could go in there and we were accepted in there with them and everything.

And your family took well to her and accepted her?

Yes. Although Tosh was always a little bit dubious about the mother-in-law

22:00 but she got on all right with my father, so…

And was there any disapproval in military circles at home regarding you having a Japanese wife?

No, no, no. One time, I know people who did run into a slight problem one time but that was the only one occasion I ever heard of.

22:30 But I think it was over a posting, but that was the way it went. But anyway his wife ended up working in the camp as a typist so it worked out all right.

Did your wife have to tolerate any racism when she first got here?

I don’t think so. Not really. I think a few people sort of

23:00 were maybe a little bit dubious because there wasn’t many Asians around in the early day, in the late ’50s. But as far as the family was concerned and the relations, she was well received. And back where we came from, everybody,

23:30 even though they had served in the islands during the war, there was no sweat [problem] there.

So what happened when you returned back from that visit to Japan?

Well I turned around. I had other jobs. I worked in Thailand. I did a job in Thailand to cover an Australian sponsored vehicle rebuild where the Thai army was

24:00 stripping down all these reparation vehicles that they got from Japan, and they had sort of been dumped in the jungle and they all had to be refurbished so they could have… They couldn’t really afford transport at that stage and our army people in the mechanical engineering and electrical engineering turned around and set up this workshop, had them build it

24:30 and then showed them how to strip down these vehicles, how to rebuild them, keep an eye on them, and they just… The labour for that was brought out. People from the paddy fields were recruited and brought in and they were just shown what to do, each particular job. It worked well. And then I did a job with the survey unit when they were doing a survey mapping

25:00 in Sumatra for the Indonesian government. That was a bit of a different sort of a lookout on the country over there and the way they lived and what have you. And then I did a job for foreign affairs up in Nepal, when they turned around and sent equipment up to the army. They sent equipment up by army ship to Singapore

25:30 to be transferred to Nepal on aircraft and they were stored in the army stores in Singapore. I went with them to cover the arrival of this stuff going up to Nepal, to set up there and bring their airport at Kathmandu up to international standards. It was radio equipment, fire tenders,

26:00 and other associated radio equipment, so I spent a couple of days up there. That was another…

Some pretty exotic locations. So can you take us through to the end of your career?

I finished with two years in Singapore, working out of Singapore. I was posted back

26:30 to Sydney. Originally I was supposed to go back to Melbourne, back to my home area, but they reduced, downgraded the posting in Melbourne to a corporal photographer so I had to take over in Sydney. From there I did two tours to cover two exercises in New Zealand. I

27:00 turned around and did an exercise in the UK and one in America, plus going around to Western Australia and the Northern Territory with the SAS [Special Air Service], and general army exercises around New South Wales, both regular army and CMF exercises, covering that photographically. And then in ’56 I was posted

27:30 to Defence Public Relations just in time for the Queen’s visit to Canberra.

’76?

So I had to turn around and be involved in the coverage there. So I was put on top of Parliament House to take the overall photos of the parade there, the whole setup there, then follow around on the various aspects

28:00 of her tour around Canberra taking photographs. I also covered her visit to Singapore before. That was early ’73.

And after her visit, what happened next in ’76?

Well in ’76… I stayed on till ’78 and I still had a couple of years to run but

28:30 the kids were all into their education and that meant that they were getting up, my son was getting up starting his uni [university] course so I had better come home because he was getting a bit toey so I had to keep him in order. He was getting a bit much for the wife.

29:00 I had to keep an eye on him. Anyway they did all right. One is a doctor, and one worked in pathology and one is a nurse. And the youngest son, he was doing accountancy and he also was involved with the CMF until he had the problem with the cancer.

So was that the end of your military

29:30 **career, when you came back here?**

Yeah.

And that was in what year?

1978.

Was that when you started work in security?

I went and worked in a photographic, Ilford’s warehouse for a while, and then I went and worked in security. I worked at Bonds for a while, Bonds in Sydney, towels and singlets and all that sort of stuff,

30:00 in the warehouse there but that was not a very nice job. And I got offered a job with Sydney Night Patrol down working at the oil terminal down here in Botany, the BP’s [British Petroleum] one, Amoco I should say. And I was meant to be there twelve months and I ended up working the twelve months and they said, “You shouldn’t be working in this particular one

30:30 job for so long. You’ve got to go across to ICI [Imperial Chemical Industries] and work at ICI.” And then after the finish of the building the police were building there, they finished the project of the oil refinery project that they had going there for a few years and that finished and I was offered the odd job anywhere around Sydney. It was too much travelling then.

31:00 I thought, “No.” And a chap I had met who was on security up at New South Wales Uni, he sort of talked me into going up there and trying for a job, so I put in for a job up there and I was up there till retirement time. But that was a bit of a nightmare at times, too. Get the students jumping the queues, getting in their vehicles

31:30 and what have you, chasing around, and the powers that be would be on your back and the students would be on your back, “Why can’t I park here? Why can’t I do this?” And then we used to check out the buildings during the night so you were working a three-shift rotation. I ended up being on a permanent gate job.

And what year was it when you finally retired?

32:00 1990, when I turned sixty-five. I tried to get an extension but they weren’t having any at that stage of the game.

So could you tell us a bit about the association you have been involved in?

Yeah, a friend asked me to go along to a church service at an association and I met a few people who I had known during my service life

32:30 and I agreed to join it. This is just before I finished work. So when I retired I took more interest in it and attended more meetings because with shift work you couldn’t always get to a meeting because the meetings were held at night. And anyway the secretary,

33:00 he turned around and said he was retiring and was going to live up the north coast and that was it. So the president turned around and asked for volunteers. Nobody volunteered at the meeting so the next morning I rang up the president to say and had a bit to say. I said, “You don’t turn around and call for volunteers, you ask for nominations.” And he said, “Well I’m not doing both jobs.” And I ummed and aahed and I ummed and aahed

33:30 and I said, “I’ll carry on until the AGM [Annual General Meeting] just to help you out.” And that was the end of it. So I carried on being secretary virtually from that day on and that was at the end of 1991, apart from the short period of time when we lost the youngest son. I had to sort of come home and sort of pacify things at home. It was a bit traumatic over that period of time he was sick.

34:00 So I stayed in till December last year.

What is the name of the association and what are the objectives of the association?

The association’s name is the Korea and South-East Asia Forces Association, which involved people from, those who served in any of the services from 1945 onwards,

34:30 even to the present day. And the objectives of the association was to look after people and keep them informed of those people they might have known and that by means of a newsletter, by meetings. We used to get involved in the Anzac Day march. We had an Anzac Day march contingent. We also ran a

35:00 Battle of Kap’yong and post-1945 services, memorial service at the cenotaph at Martin Place; we used to run that. And then an annual church service and also organise an annual luncheon. It is whether also any other get-togethers that also involved the Asian with the Koreans. Because we got involved with it,

35:30 a Korean sub-branch of those Koreans who served during the Korean War and/or the Vietnam War because Koreans were involved with that as well. And those people here living in Australia could join that sub-branch and become sort of intermingled as part of the association. We were also involved with other associations and their functions

36:00 and memorial services. It kept me busy and off the street. And I used to produce a newsletter periodically to keep people informed of who had passed on, or somebody wanting to know if we had such and such in the association, if they could get in contact with them and looking for old friends and put in, ‘So and so’s looking for

36:30 one of his mates in years gone by’. And we used to get results from that. And that pretty well covers it. And also in the meantime I did a revisit tour to Korea and got around to P’anmunjom and got to some of the old battle sites where we could get within that weren’t involved in

37:00 areas within the demarcation zone. And then the Koreans asked me to help me take back a tour of those people who had been badly knocked around, and they sponsored them a trip. The re-visit ones had to pay their own fare but the accommodation and all that was all paid for by the Koreans.

How did you find being back in Korea?

37:30 It was one hell of a change to the Korea I knew, the way of life, the way things had been built up, the way commerce had taken over to what we knew. Lifestyle and everything else was completely changed.

Was it emotional at all for you getting back to the old battleground?

Oh yes, you could sort of relate back to different areas of being involved.

38:00 **What do you think are the most important things about your association?**

Well it was keeping in touch with, I think the camaraderie and keeping those who served together, keeping them in touch with one another. When we all came back from Korea people just disappeared to

do their own thing, and because we were

38:30 recruited Australia wide there was no hardcore area where the people who served in Korea came from. So people just disappeared and were doing their own thing and went about their own life. The association, sort of when they got on with their life and then started to get on in age they sort of come and looked to dig out old comrades.

39:00 **Do you think Korean vets [veterans] have received the recognition that they deserve?**

Oh yes. When we came home we just accepted it as the norm. We just went on with what we were doing. We got two medals and we were happy with that. Not that the medals brought you anything, but they gave you that recognition. But years later

39:30 in Vietnam you scrambled to be like the Yanks and medals for this and medals for that. So I gathered a few more medals along the way apart from the two I got for service in Korea. For long service and what have you and other things.

How do you think your involvement in the Korean War changed you as a person?

40:00 Well it gave me a far broader outlook on life and the army service in general where I got to afterwards, the postings I had afterwards. It broadened my outlook on the the world, because when you are on a farm you work within a tight-knit farm community but you don't

40:30 really, unless you go to Melbourne to a Royal Show or something there, get out a bit. But at that stage then people didn't travel much because there wasn't many cars around, so you were just within a tight-knit community, really. But it certainly broadened my outlook on the rest of Australia.

Do you have a final message or reflection you would like to share for future generations

41:00 **about your involvement in war, your military career, anything you would like to pass on?**

Well army life is what you make it yourself. If you turn around and accept it and take it as it is given to you, you've got no problems. But if you try and fight the system or you want to be different to the system, that's where people run into trouble.

41:30 And it's a great life. You learn comradeship, which you haven't got in civvy life. And coming from army life into civilian life is far harder to accept than accepting army life. That's the way I found it, anyway.

Fantastic. Thanks Dick. That's

42:00 **great.**

INTERVIEW ENDS