

Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Ersser (Ted) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 9th March 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1376>

Tape 1

- 00:39 I was born in London, 1932. Stayed in London all the time. Went to school there. Got into usual problems with what kids get into trouble with. Second World War we were bombed out three times.
- 01:00 One time I was found under the front door. The house got hit and the door came back and I was halfway down the stairs and the first thing I heard was this fireman say, "There's a kid under this door. We've got to get him out." My father worked for Schweppes and we went to their air raid shelter and lo and behold, that was hit. And they got us out of there. More like walking through a furnace.
- 01:30 I left school, started work. I joined Surrey Cricket Club as a Colt with Jim Laker and Tony Lock, the Surrey players. Then the army said, "We need you, Ted." So in I went. That was in September '50. I was in the Brigade of Guards, which is at the Tower [of London]. Went
- 02:00 to Germany. Did nine months in Germany and again, got into the boxing team and also did a lot of running. We did a ten-mile cross country every Friday afternoon. Sick, lame and lazy. Nobody was excused. Anybody that came in after the CO [commanding officer] had to run again. Me and my friend who was our best man, we finished second or third, third or second
- 02:30 out of 1500 every time. There was a black fellow that was a sergeant and we just couldn't, could not catch him for love nor money. They asked for volunteers to go to Korea and my Dad said, before I went in the army, "Never volunteer." Of course, we did. Thirty-eight they wanted. You had to be a machine gunner, radio operator, or a mortar man.
- 03:00 So we volunteered. We came back to England and joined the Norfolk Regiment. Did about four weeks fiddling around in England and off to Korea. We had 12 months in Korea and out of that 38 fellows that went, seven of us came back. From then on, I came out the army. I was going to stay in, but a friend of mine got killed and that put an end to that.
- 03:30 The idea was that we were going home, join the Grenadier Guards and do all the ceremonial stuff all round London and overseas, but once he got killed, forget it. Came home, got married and started work, part-time with my Dad at Schweppes. I lasted ten years. After that I got myself a job as a warehouse manager.
- 04:00 Decided later on to come to Australia. The idea was put in my head when I was in Japan in the Commonwealth Hospital. Different countries had different wards and I was put in the Australian ward, because the English ward was full. I couldn't sleep and the sister came round, Sister Nicholson and she'd say, "I'll teach you how to speak like an Australian." And she'd sit on the bed at two o'clock in the morning and say, "G'day."
- 04:30 Kept on about it and we eventually said we'd go to Australia. So we applied to Australia House and we were the first people to fly out on a naval flight. We were the only migrants on the plane and the plane was only half empty. We went to Bahamas, Acapulco, Mexico City, Tahiti, Fiji, Sydney. And every time the
- 05:00 plane stopped, the kids got presents. They put flowers round your neck and I thought this was fantastic. We arrived in Sydney. We left England and it was a snowstorm. We arrived in Sydney and it was like walking into an oven. It must have been over 100. Big black Limo [Limousine] picked us up and said, "We're going to take you to where you're going to stay." Prior to that they'd told me they'd have a house
- 05:30 for me and I had a job. It was a company I was working for, which in England it's Triang, in Australia it was Cyclops. We drove and drove and I thought, "It's a long way to the airport," and we finished up in Cabramatta. Well, I nearly died when I saw these old Nissen hut things. Hundreds of people roaming around. "What's this?" Anyway, we stayed there a week.
- 06:00 If I could have got on the plane again and gone home, I would. Went up to Burwood, got myself a flat in Burwood and when I went for the job, they told me I couldn't go for a month because they were on holiday. It was January. They said, "We don't know anything about you." I said, "I've got five letters here

telling me how much I'm going to get, where I'm going to live." They said, "The manager

- 06:30 is still on holiday. Won't be back for a month." I said, "What am I supposed to do?" They said, "You can stay here and just wander round and get to know the place. He'll tell you what you're going to do when he gets back." I said, "I know what I'm going to do. I'm the warehouse manager." They said, "We haven't got one of those." I said, "Well, there you are." When he came back he said, "I've got some bad news for you Ted. The job that I was going to give you, belonged to a fellow that's gone to England."
- 07:00 I said, "Well, he doesn't like it and he's coming back. We're going to give him his job back." I said, "What does that mean? I haven't got a job?" He said, "No, I'm afraid not." I said, "I've come all this way and you tell me I haven't got a job." He said, "If you pick up the Sydney Morning Herald, thousands of jobs. You'll get one just like that." He said, "But in the meantime, we'll pay you." Anyway, I got the Sydney Morning Herald. Saw an ad in there for a production manager,
- 07:30 so I went down and saw, White Wings it was, at Chippendale, near Redfern, and spoke to these two fellows, both brothers, Ron and Graeme Francis, and they said, "Talk about give us a bad name. That's terrible. Look, I've got a job here that you might be able to do. Can you pick up things quickly?" I said, "Like what?" He said, "We're cake manufacturers."
- 08:00 Do you know anything about cakes?" I said, "No, I know how to eat them." He said, "Well, the production manager is an Englishman. If you follow him around and pick it up, you've got yourself a job." So that's what happened. I stayed there for about three, four years, I suppose, till I fell foul of the union. Came up here for a holiday, which the company paid for.
- 08:30 They were going to go on strike if I stayed in the job. They said when you come back it will all blow over. When I went back they said, "You've been blacklisted all through Sydney." I said, "That's lovely." He said, "I know a friend of mine who's got a frozen food company. He's looking for a production manager. I'll send you down there." I went down to Artarmon and it was called Excellent Frozen Foods and it was run
- 09:00 by a Hungarian Jew. Got the job. Went marvellously for about another four years and then Edgells decided to buy him out. So they said, "Would you like to come up to Bathurst and see our factory up there and we can make you production manager up there." Anyway, took us up, looked after
- 09:30 the kids. We had lunch, wandered all round. Showed us the house and then took us up to Mount Panorama and the fellow said, "Look, this is where we are." And Jean said, "I don't like this. It's too far from anywhere." So we came back and he said, "What about it? When can you start Ted?" I said, "We're not." He said, "Dear, that's a shame." Then I got into the plastics industry.
- 10:00 He wasn't a friend then but he is now, he said, "Know anything about plastics?" I said, "No." He said, "I can give you a job as a rep." I said, "A rep in England for Schweppes, they drive around in Rovers and wear bowler hats and that's it. They're the kingpin." He says, "It's a bit different out here. You have to go and pick up orders."
- 10:30 He said, "I don't know what you're being paid now, but I'll double it, give you a company car, phone, help educate the kids and if it don't work out in a month, say goodbye and part good friends." I said, "Righto." So I went there, stayed in the office for a week, got all the paraphernalia, what they were making, how they were selling, where they were selling it, what it was made of, how long it would last, and
- 11:00 he said, "Off you go." I said, "Where to?" He said, "Look in the phone book." I went to Qantas. As I say, I'd met this purchasing officer and that was the first order I got. And I never looked back. Everywhere I went it just came naturally. But I didn't have a clue what selling was like. Stayed there
- 11:30 and then I got poached by a company in Melbourne. Miller's Ropes and Twines, it was called. Fellow in charge was in Melbourne and he came up and said, "Fancy a job?" I said, "Like what?" He said, "Sales manager, Queensland?" I said, "That sounds good. Doing what?" He said, "Doing exactly what you're doing now. We're a plastics company." I said, "It says rope and cordage." He said, "No, we're a plastics company as well."
- 12:00 So I said, "Yeah, it sounds great." Never looked back again till the company went down the tube for \$25 million. Said to Jean, "What are we going to do now? Tell you what, we'll go down the Gold Coast and I'll let Bob Hawke look after me for a while." That lasted a week and I thought I can't stand this. I saw an ad in the paper for security men, but you had to be ex-servicemen.
- 12:30 I went to the interview and the fellow said, "Yeah, do you mind carrying a gun?" I said, "No." He said, "Where were you in service?" and I told him. "Right." So I finished up with four years in Surfers, till my knees fell apart and they retired me at 58. Been retired ever since. Now I'm 71.
- 13:00 **Tell me about your family.**
- There's my Dad and he had four brothers and two sisters. All over 18, 19 stone and I was nicknamed 'Little Ted' because I was the smallest. Still am actually. We lived in Lambeth,
- 13:30 Lambeth Walk. My Dad and his brothers were great sportsmen, soccer, cricket, dart players. They beat

the world champion dart player. Pike his name was. They all were in the services, army, all in the army. My Dad's eldest brother had three children. His other younger brother had three

- 14:00 boys. His other brother had four boys. When I was a kid, our annual holiday was going to pick hops in Kent and the day war broke out, we were all piled into the back of a truck and went down hop picking, so we didn't know anything about the war till we come back. The kids used to pick hops, me and my cousins in the morning. In the afternoon we used to go pinching apples out of
- 14:30 farmer's orchards and getting into all sorts of strife. Good life, great life. They gave us like a tin shack thing to live in and straw mattresses and the cooking was done outside. It was real fantastic. Parents used to come down weekends and have a big family feed. My Dad, all his brothers
- 15:00 and his sisters, and Jean and I, all worked for Schweppes, at one stage or another. Schweppes was a family company so you had to be very careful who you spoke to because it might be somebody else's brother or somebody else's sister. When my Dad retired they gave him a house and he could have that as long as he lived and then my Mum could have it till she passed away.
- 15:30 They looked after the staff brilliantly. I stayed there ten years, but the rest of the family, I've got a cousin who is a Trappist monk. That's my Dad's eldest brother's youngest son. His eldest son is in the leather business making leather handbags. We've got one whose name's appeared on The Bill,
- 16:00 production and we've got a doctor in Harley Street, one of the cousins. We've got another one who's a professor of medical instruments for children. Then I've got one brother. He's 11 years younger than me, he's second in command of fingerprints in England and his wife's a copper.
- 16:30 That disgraced the family, becoming a copper. My Dad used to say, "If you come across a good copper, cut his throat before he goes bad." I think he'd turn over in his grave if he knew my brother was in charge of fingerprints. Again, he's 21 stone. He's got three children and they live in England in Cambridge.

What was the family like as you were growing up?

- 17:00 My Dad was - all very close together. There would be a party just about every Saturday night in somebody's house and birthdays and I was very unpopular with the rest of the cousins because my grandmother, they called me Little Ted, when we go round, we go round Sunday morning and see Grandma and she'd say, "Come on, Teddy, sit on my knee." And they'd sort of look and say "Mmmm."
- 17:30 When it was my birthday she'd wait outside the school gate with a present for me. Nobody else, just me. She used to say, "Poor Teddy. Look at him. Could do with a good feed." And she didn't like my mother. "That's his mother for her." And she'd tell everybody that my mother should have been burnt at birth because she was a crook Mum. But as I say, the family did everything together. When we went hop picking,
- 18:00 there might be 25 of us down on the weekend and parents come down and other aunts and uncles. We all had Christmas together and when the war was on we lived in a block of flats. We lived at 22 on the first balcony and it went 22 and then all round the other side to 19. 19, 20, 21, we were 22.
- 18:30 If there was an air raid, pick up everything and go to Dad's eldest brother's house. He was on the ground floor so we thought it was safer. A funny thing one night, the air raid warning went. Grabbed the baby, my brother who was only young, and ran round the balcony, down the stairs, got into my Dad's brother's house and Mum said, "Where's the baby?" I'd picked him up, he'd fallen out the sheet. He was still outside the front door
- 19:00 on the balcony. I don't think he's been right since. It was a very close family. That's how it went till the war ended. Didn't do a lot of schooling because schools were bombed or you couldn't go to school. I was walking to school one day, and I looked up and I saw this parachute
- 19:30 coming down. Thought it looks a bit big for a man on a parachute. Next thing, there was a mighty explosion. I went about 100 yards back down the road laying there covered in dust. I thought, what happened there? Looked up and the school had gone. It was a landmine. They used to drop them on parachutes. I've been very lucky in my life, missing out of all sorts of dangerous things. Falling out of a tree,
- 20:00 falling in the bloody lake. The air raids. Knocked over, some young lady pushed me in front of a bus. Luckily it stopped. Got kicked by a horse. My mother was taking me round to me aunt's, her side of the family, and two dogs came through my legs fighting. I went up in the air, come down and I was underneath the milkman's horse and the bloody thing stamped on me.
- 20:30 And then where we lived, we had an outside toilet. Attached to the house, but you had to go out in the yard, and I used to follow my mother. She went to the toilet and I've run out there and there's an iron gate up against the wall. Bang, pulled it down on top of me. Couldn't open the toilet door, couldn't get the iron gate off me. Don't know how long we were there. That's the sort of thing. I'm always in trouble, into some sort of strife.

What was the area

21:00 **of London like that you - ?**

Lambeth Walk? Rough. Cut your throat for sixpence. Lambeth Walk is, I'd say about half a mile long. Shops all the way through. In the gutter is a stall that belongs to the shop, so this shop might be a grocery shop and he'd have a stall in the gutter selling biscuits.

21:30 They used to be in tins with glass lids on and us kids would go along and say, "You got any broken biscuits?" "No." Open the lid and go Bang! "You have now," and run. Or go to the fruit store and say, "How much are the apples?" "Penny each." "I'll have that one," and take the bottom one out of the pyramid and it would go 'ppfff'. You had to be a good runner, because they come after you and they really give you a hiding.

22:00 But that was the sort of thing. Lot of gambling went on outside the pubs, especially on Sunday afternoons. The pubs used to shut at two and you might get 30 or 40 fellows gambling outside. Throwing money up the walls, who gets the closest, that sort of thing. Or dice. And they used to give the kids sixpence to stand further up the road and let them know if the copper's coming. That was a good money making thing.

22:30 Also had bookmakers that stand in the side street and he'd pay you to see when the copper's coming because it's all illegal. The old ladies used to run over and say, "I want sixpence each way on so and so." And he'd write it in his book and off they'd go and if it won she'd come back the next day, "Thank you." It was a good life. At school you'd go to one of the parks had a football ground and you'd play

23:00 soccer, go swimming. The only thing was the winter of course. You couldn't do a lot in the winter. Again in the summer, Schweppes, they'd have what they called a 'beano', it's like an outing. All the coaches used to pile up outside and all the workers would hop on and then just as the bus is pulling away they all throw out coins. The kids are scrambling for the coins and Mum and Dad's gone off for the day

23:30 to Southend or somewhere like that. That was the annual outing for the company. And they always put on a big Christmas party for everybody, staff, the kids. Everybody knew everybody else. My grandmother had a stall and she used to make wreaths for funerals and Jean's grandmother had the stall next door. She sells second hand clothes, so if you got into trouble,

24:00 your parents knew within a flash because everybody, "You know Teddy Ersser is - " Walk in the door and you go whack! "What's that for?" "You nicked something out of somebody's - " I enjoyed it.

Did you ever come into contact with the upper crust?

Yes, I've met the Queen twice and I've written to her three times and she's answered me.

24:30 Whilst I worked at Schweppes, one of the jobs we got was at the race course, Ascot. There would be 13 of us. My Dad was in charge and we'd go to Ascot race course for ten days. Five days of racing and five days of setting it up, because there's 84 bars on Ascot race course. And we used to supply the soft drink and the brewers would do the same thing, they'd supply the beer.

25:00 At the end of each race day, my Dad would go round and he'd find out what soft drinks they wanted for the next day and then we had to fill it up before 10 o'clock next morning and also clear away all the empties. During the day, we were dolled up. We were racing men and you'd meet all sorts of people. I got sprung by the Duke of Norfolk. The system is that you put the stuff in and then first day of racing you go around

25:30 and you get the bar maid or the barman to sign for it, sale and return. In the Royal enclosure they put a big marquee for extra space for the bar. I'd put the stuff in the day before and I went round and he was an Italian. I said to him, "Schweppes," and he said, "Yes." And I said, "Have you signed for your drinks?" "No." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I brought them myself." I said, "Do me a favour. I put

26:00 those in yesterday. There's three tonic, three dry and three soda." "I brought them myself." Argument started. And he's calling me this and I'm calling him something else and throwing a few punches and we finished up on the grass. And I said, "You Italian, you so and so." Tap on the shoulder. Turned round, it's the Duke of Norfolk. He said, "I say, young man. We don't use that sort of language in front of

26:30 her Majesty." I turned and she's there. "I'm very sorry Ma'am." Without thinking I turned and said, "Now look what you've done, you stupid bastard." So my Dad said, "Right, you are out of the Royal enclosure. You're in the silver ring tomorrow. That's the cheap ring."

27:00 I knocked - I'm running up the moving staircase and he's standing at the top. Bang, down he went. "I'm terribly sorry." "That's alright." But you see all sorts of people at Ascot. It was great. When we got there we used to rush to see who could use the Queen's toilet first in the Royal Box. When I was a kid,

27:30 my Dad worked for Schweppes and they'd do all the shows and he did the Royal Agricultural Show in Windsor, and Mum and myself, we went down on the Sunday, didn't start till Monday, to have a free look. And I'm walking around looking, seeing the sheep and the cows. Everybody says, "Quick, stand still." I was about nine, I suppose.

28:00 "What for?" "Quick, here comes the King and Queen." And I'm up against this sort of barrier and I'm

looking. I can't see anybody. They said, "There, the King and Queen." I saw this man and woman and these two girls. And I thought, well, I'd never seen them before. And they stopped and the Queen, Princess Elizabeth then, said, "Hello." I said, "Oh, hello." She said, "What's your name?" I said, "Ted." She said,

- 28:30 "Have you come to see the show, Ted?" I said, "No, I've come down to see my Dad." So she said, "Would you like a duck?" "Oh, yeah." And she gave me this live duck. Now we lived in a tenement then. I don't know what happened to the duck, whether somebody cooked it or just disappeared, but that was the first time I ever spoke to her. I've written to her since I've been out here. She
- 29:00 always answered. I've still got the letters. When I left school, I went to Surrey, the oval and played for the Colts. There was Jim Laker, Tony Lock, Stuart Surridge who was a captain for six years, and the
- 29:30 thing that struck me most was in those days, they played Yorkshire, and Len Hutton was the captain. Everybody had to call him 'sir'. He had his own dressing room and he came out on to the ground through his own gate, not with the rest of the players. I thought this is a bit peculiar. It's a bloody cricket team, isn't it? Got to call him 'sir'. That's the only thing I didn't like too much
- 30:00 about the upper crust. Had everybody, "Yes, sir, no sir." I also went to the East Hill cricket school which was run by a fellow called Alf Gover. He was a famous English fast bowler and it was run by him and Andy Sand the batsman and Stuart Strudwick was the wicket keeper
- 30:30 and they set up this cricket school and we got all sorts of people there. The West Indians and Pakistanis and they used us in the off season as bowlers to these people who were learning to play cricket and then when we weren't doing anything we'd play snooker for thruppence a cup of tea, who was going to buy the cup of tea. You'd get all sorts. We had film stars would come in there.
- 31:00 Different cricketers. I kept in contact till last year when he died. He was an ex army man, captain. I think he educated me because he used to say, "Now, say 'yes sir, no sir', polite. And don't do this. Wear a tie. Always look smart." Of course, when I went in the
- 31:30 army they didn't tell you, they made you smart and being in the Brigade of Guards, it was absolutely horrendous, discipline and cleaning your gear. You'd get an hour a night to polish some sort of equipment, whether it be your boots, your brass, anything. When
- 32:00 you went on parade, you'd get charged for the least little thing. Dirty fingernails. I got charged one day in Germany. I walked from the barrack room to the parade ground and they'd come by. There would be the RSM [regimental sergeant major], the captain of the guard, the adjutant and there would be a corporal and he had a little black book
- 32:30 and they'd come along and they'd tap you and you'd lift your boot up and put it down again. And he'd tap that with a riding crop, "Put him in the book." What's that all about? And the corporal comes and gets up level with you. "Number?" "896." "What was that for?" "You lost a stud on your boot." And that's a chargeable offence. And you had to polish inside between the studs of the sole and your boot
- 33:00 had to be you could use it as a mirror. I also got charged for ungentlemanly conduct, when I was boxing. I was boxing in Germany and we boxed the 8th Hussars. I hit this bloke and he went down. Got up again. Hit him again, he went down again. Got up again. Third time he went to get up I ran up and bang! I got 14 days
- 33:30 for ungentlemanly conduct and disqualified.

Tell us about hearing about the start of World War II as a child?

We were being piled into the back of this truck and somebody said, "Hear the bells ringing?" "It's Sunday." "It's the start of the war." "What war? What are you talking about?" "There's a war on." "Don't worry about it."

- 34:00 All in the back of the truck and off to Kent and it wasn't until, must have been two or three months later when they started bombing London that you realised that, you could get hurt in this sort of thing. They were digging trenches in the parks and they were building air raid shelters and most of the factories had a basement with a big metal container down there that was an air raid shelter. Schweppes, they had
- 34:30 a massive big air raid shelter with bunks and all that sort of thing down there and you'd go down just as the sun was going down and you'd come up at dawn. Schweppes got hit and the bomb went through five floors and didn't explode. Where it stopped was on top of the bloody air raid shelter. But it was only for the staff. The first air raid shelter we were supposed to have gone down
- 35:00 was a place called Marmite, which was like a Vegemite. It was a brand new building. We went there because my Dad didn't know about the Schweppes one and apparently I started crying outside. I didn't want to go in. So he said, "Alright, we'll go home." It got hit that night and a 150-odd people got killed. I wasn't all that keen on being tucked away in a hole.
- 35:30 Then of course, daylight come and the kids'd all be chasing around and trying to find bits of shrapnel and, or somebody's house has got bombed and you'd go round and see if you could help. The best thing was you'd go along and say, "Oh, the school's got hit. Tough luck. No school today." We finished up

having to go to school on Saturday mornings because we were missing so much school.

- 36:00 People sort of gathered around and they'd help everybody else out. Nobody seemed to worry that we could lose the war. One Sunday morning a German plane got shot down and, this was in top of Lambeth Walk we were, and they saw this pilot coming down in the parachute and there must have been 20,000 people running down the road. He was drifting towards the oval cricket ground which is the other end of Lambeth Walk,
- 36:30 and they had bits of wood, they had saws, they had hatchets, knives, all sorts. What they were going to do to this poor German I don't know. It was worse than a football ground coming out. Luckily he came across by the oval and they used to have trolley buses running and he got caught up on the trolley bus wires, but he was dead anyway. They'd have chopped him up for sure. Londoners
- 37:00 are a strange mob. They'd give you their last shilling, right? But if you crossed them, forget it, you're gone for life. You seem to know that a fellow's a Londoner or a lady's a Londoner. I don't know if they've got a special look or what. And no one ever taught us that, said, "You've got to do this, that," it just seems to come naturally.
- 37:30 A Londoner would always look after a Londoner, no matter. If there's a fight going on and he's your worst enemy, if he's a Londoner, you help him. It's a peculiar set up. I don't know where it comes from. Same as in the army. When you're in the battalion, that's it. That's a family. Everybody looks after everybody else. You cannot do a thing wrong outside the barracks.
- 38:00 Always somebody else's fault.

As a kid you collected shrapnel. What would you do with it?

Just take it to school next day and say, "Look what I've got." And the kid would say, "Look at the bit I got. I got the fin of a bomb." "Bugger." Or you stand outside the underground station or Waterloo station. When the soldiers come out, "Got any badges? Spare badges? Or chewing gum?" Specially the Yanks. "Got any gum, chum?"

- 38:30 You'd get French, "Let's have your hat, sailor," because it had a red thing on the top. Never got it. Aussies would be there and you'd say, "That's a funny hat." The kids always found something to do. Always. Don't matter whether it was climbing over a bomb site or taking the poor old bloke's biscuits.
- 39:00 Always got something to do. You're never sitting around saying I'm bored.

What about game playing during the war?

You'd still play cricket in the street with a bat and old tin for a wicket, till the air raid warning went and then you were away quick. But most of the time you were like scavengers, you were looking for stuff.

- 39:30 Specially if a grocer's shop got hit, you'd be "Oh, look at this. Got tea - " Till a copper come along and he'd always whack you round the ear. "Leave it along, ya - " Not like it is now. Slap on the wrist and don't do it again.

Tape 2

- 00:43 **What memories do you have of the way the war started to affect your life, apart from air raids and things like that?**

Basically food was the problem. We were only allowed

- 01:00 a tiny piece of butter and so much sugar, so much tea and clothing. You had to have coupons. You might go and buy a new suit if you had that sort of money, but you'd need also 20 coupons and if you didn't have the coupons, don't matter how much money you had, you still couldn't get the suit. You got so many per year. Coal was rationed as well.
- 01:30 The kids, they'd get an old pushchair and they'd go and get 28 pounds of coal or they'd line up outside the coke factory at Vauxhall Bridge and get coke, which was better. It lasted longer, but you might have to line up for ages. I used to go down Lambeth Walk and line up for bread. I might wait two hours to get two loaves of bread and they were four pence ha'penny each.
- 02:00 I never saw sweets or lollies. I never saw much fruit either. The odd apples, but bananas, any sort of tropical fruit, no way in the world. You could line up - Jean, where she lived, was evacuated in Devon, they lined up for two hours to buy a cake. One cake they were allowed. Of course, there was quite a few of them, they just put them together and they finished up with a dozen cakes.
- 02:30 They took them home for tea. Still only had one cake each, but it looked better on the table I suppose. That was the hardest thing, was the - every time you got bombed out you had to find somewhere else to live of course. The government or the councils used to find you somewhere and they'd give you so much money to get new furniture, and again, you still wanted the bloody coupons for furniture. You might

want a new bed and say, "Oh, well, it's only

03:00 five pounds," but it's probably ten coupons and you didn't have the coupons because you wanted all sorts of things. When the front door blew back on me, we had a cabinet like that one over there. It was a kitchen cabinet and it blew over, like that. My Mum had a dozen eggs in a bowl and when they lifted the cabinet up, the bowl was still sitting there and there

03:30 wasn't one cracked egg. Everything else, jam was broken and stuff was spread all over the place, cups and saucers, but the eggs were perfect. Amazing.

How did that London spirit show itself or develop during bombing raids?

Everybody, don't matter where you were, if there

04:00 was an air raid warning somebody would say, "Come on, in here." They'd grab you or if you were down an air raid shelter they'd like, "There's room here for you." None of this, that's my space. Or, "Want a cup of tea?" "I didn't bring any." "That's okay." And they'd only just met you, but that was how they all acted that way, Londoners. Great. We had the villains, of course,

04:30 but even they turned goodies during the war. They'd help somebody out when they weren't robbing. Even the police, they'd say, "Come along, son. Don't stand there." Prior to that it was, "Get a bloody move on." Whack.

As a young person was there anything you had to carry with you?

Had to carry a gas mask. Had to take it to

05:00 school and my brother, being a baby, we had like a capsule and they put him inside it and a strap came up between his legs and fitted round his waist and then this bit covered him and he had a big glass window and Mum had to sit there just pumping in air, like that. All babies or toddlers used to have those.

When would you put him in there?

If there was a gas warning. An air raid warning would go, and if there was gas

05:30 they'd sound another. I never ever used mine because we never had gas in London. When they bombed London and it burnt, that was the worst because you thought, "Oh it's getting closer, it's getting closer." It was just like standing in a bloomin' furnace. They ran out of water. They ran out of bloomin' fire engines. They just let it burn. They couldn't do anything about it.

06:00 Again, people were running around saying, "Come on over here, love." Getting old people. Everybody looked after everybody else. You never found somebody say, "Oh, bugger, let him get on with it. It's nothing to do with us." Everybody made sure that it was their business to help somebody else.

How much were you exposed to things

06:30 **like injuries or bodies?**

You'd come out of the air raid shelter of a morning, and there'd be like a great big crater where a bomb had dropped and it was not unusual to see somebody laying there dead. They'd have a blanket or something over them, but they hadn't been taken away yet. There was a suburb just up the road from Lambeth called Brixton, and there was a famous picture where a bomb dropped and there was a bus

07:00 in the crater. Straight in the moon crater. They tried to carry on as normal, as much as possible. A shop might get hit, say the grocery shop might have got hit during the night, and he'd have a stall out the front in the morning and half the staff would be trying to clear up the shop hoping they could move back in if it wasn't too bad,

07:30 and the other staff would be running the stall. Mind you, most of the stuff they sold was tinned stuff or vegetables or stuff like that. Like the baker, if he got hit, tough luck. He'd probably go and find somewhere else where he could get some bread and bring it back to you. Again, you had to wait. You had to queue up for everywhere. Don't matter what you wanted, you had to queue up. The fish shop.

08:00 Has fish one day. "Great." Everybody would be down there waiting for him to start serving and there was no pushing and shoving. Everybody's just "Oh, yeah. How much can I have?" And he'd say, "You can have two fish." So you'd take two fish. And you might get somebody would say, "Look, I don't want mine. You can have mine." They all shared.

Was there any talk of you as children being sent away?

Oh, yeah. I was evacuated and Jean was evacuated.

08:30 I went to Blackpool. Only lasted about five weeks. I got a clip round the ear for walking on the wall of the cemetery. I thought, stuff that. Londoners don't do that.

Who were you staying with?

We stayed in a boarding house. They got paid to look after us, but it wasn't my cup of tea. I was home.

What was the boarding house like?

Just like an ordinary boarding house, for holiday makers.

09:00 Blackpool never got any air raids, it was too far up north. I came back after about six weeks I think and they said, "We're going to evacuate you now to Wales, and I went to a place called Clanawley [?] and I went with my Mum and another lady and her daughter and they put us in this big house, massive

09:30 big house and it was just one man owned it. And he said, "I'll put up evacuees." And they used to pay him so much for letting us stay there. But he gave us the run of the house. He was a lovely old man. That's when the girl pushed me over in front of the bloody bus. But we stayed there for about two months I suppose and they said the air raids are getting

10:00 less and less now, so we went back home. We went back home and the bloody Battle of Britain started. We thought, we're not going to bother now. We'll stay where we are, so we stayed there.

When they evacuated you, how would they move you around the country?

Train or bus. Usually straight out of London it was on a train and wherever you got to, it would be a coach to sort you out.

When you weren't travelling with your mother, how would they keep track of you?

10:30 You had a label round your neck and your suitcase. And you had to hang on to both. Most of the time you'd be sitting on the suitcase because there wasn't any room on the, any seats on the bus or train. There was always a mob of grumpy old women used to say, "I'll take him." Oh, God. I don't know how she's going to look after me. Oh, dear. Real mother-in-law types.

11:00 "Come here, you little scruff." Always called us scruffs. Them scruffy kids from London. That's probably because we kept going sniff.

What do you remember your opinion of the Germans being as a kid during the war?

Well, I never took much notice of Germans until the actual war was almost over.

11:30 I didn't realise at the time, but most of them were cousins of the Queen. The Kaiser was a cousin and somebody else. I said, "It's all the same mob and they're fighting one another. They're worse than Londoners." It didn't bother. We just thought, "Get rid of the Germans." They've got a saying,

12:00 before I left, we used to say, "We've beat you three times. Two world wars and in your World Cup. Do you want to make it four?"

But as a kid in playing games, would you - ?

The other kids would be the Germans and you had to kill them. It used to be cowboys and Indians and then it turned into Germans. Poor kids who were Germans were usually the ones

12:30 who got picked on all the time. Just lay down behind a load of rubble with a wooden gun and you'd fire it. "Got you. You're dead, you Germans."

What changes did you notice in London with so many men being away fighting?

Used to get more clips around the ear-hole from the ladies. Mothers. I kicked a lady with a wooden leg once, and she chased me and gave me

13:00 a right good hiding.

Why did you kick her?

It was one of those things where my mother stopped to talk to this lady and this other woman with the wooden leg came along and said, "Hello, Lil." That's my Mum's name. She said, "Hello." I looked down and thought, that's a funny leg. So, whack. That was the sort of thing I did. I wanted to know what was going on.

13:30 **Do you have memories of women starting to take over jobs traditionally done by men?**

Yes. There was the bus conductors and used to be a lot of - of course, all the shops, the owners were mostly men at Lambeth Walk, and it became that the woman was in charge of the shop. We used to have a pie shop down Lambeth Walk, Bob Burrows, it was called and it was all family.

14:00 They were white, but they had Negro hair. Whether they were half-castes of what, I don't know, but they were very good family and used to be four sisters and the father and one of the brothers. Well, they both went and of course, it was the sisters then. Boy, they were strict. Don't go in there and give them any lip, they'd bloody welt you with something. You'd go in and have pie and mash.

14:30 That was nine pence. You had nine pence left over to go to the pictures on Saturday or go down to the

flea pit on Saturday afternoon, see the serial or movie. Twice I was in the cinema and the air raid warning went and all had to get out and find an air raid shelter. Kids sort of stand there and watch the planes. "Oh, look at that.

- 15:00 It's a dogfight up there." "Oh, yeah, look." And then somebody'd come along, "Get off the street you silly little buggers. Get a grip of yourself."

Were you able to judge, after a while, if you were in danger of an air raid by sound?

Never seemed to bother us whether we were in danger or not. I had to go to Westminster Hospital which meant walking across Westminster Bridge from Lambeth and I got half way across

- 15:30 and I looked up and saw this flying bomb. I thought, oh, look at that. Next thing, crash round me ear hole and this bloke said, "Get off the bridge you silly little bugger, you'll get killed." I thought, what? From that up there, you've got to be joking and then it stopped and sshhhh. Boom! But that was his way of letting me know I was in danger. We'd always watch the planes, even at night. You'd go out there

- 16:00 and it was - the air raid warden would come and give you a going over. Said, "Get in out of the bloomin' air raid."

What sort of things did you see at night?

You'd see the search lights and if it was a big bombing raid, you'd see the planes and they'd get caught in the searchlight and you'd be saying, "Go on, get him." Kids shouting away. But of course, you didn't realise that whilst those guns were firing, the shrapnel were falling back down and it could kill you. But that didn't seem to bother us.

- 16:30 Nobody bothered that, "I'm going to get killed or something's going to hit me." The thing was, if it was a big raid, next you was thinking, tomorrow I'll be able to get some big bits of shrapnel.

Do you remember hearing news of any major battles in World War II?

We knew about Dunkirk, but only what we saw in the paper.

- 17:00 Didn't have television in those days. Then the Battle of Britain, you could stand there during the day and watch the fighters shooting down German planes and then when they bombed London and it burnt. Just everywhere was red with the flames and whole streets disappeared. The next day, it was still burning

- 17:30 but you could look around and say, "That's funny. There was a bloody row of houses there. And now there's a big gap and they've got another gap behind that, another gap behind that." And you sort of said, "Well, where's all these houses disappeared to?" But nobody said, "How many people have been killed?" Unless it was a neighbour or somebody would say, "Mrs So-and-so died last night." Not, "Got killed." Mr So-and-so got killed or died. It was never that they got blown up or anything like that.

- 18:00 **What are your memories of the end of World War II?**

That was fantastic, the end of the war. We had a big party and a great big bonfire. It went on all night. Kids had races round the bloomin' area and got lollies. I don't know where they come from, got lollies for winning. It was fantastic. Everybody thought, this is it.

- 18:30 But the rationing still went on for another six years.

How do you remember people celebrating?

There was always plenty of beer and Londoners drink a lot of beer. The pubs used to open at 11 o'clock in the morning till two in the afternoon and they'd open at five in the evening till half past ten at night. In the West End they'd stay open till 11.

- 19:00 So if you were a really good drinker, you'd leave the pub at half past ten, shoot across the bridge to a pub in Westminster and drink for another half an hour. But it was mostly just beer. Wasn't a lot of spirits got drunk. There was quite a range of beers. There was Watneys was the main brewer. Young was another big brewer. Later on you started getting the Carlsberg

- 19:30 Lagers and that sort of thing, but basically it was what they called brown ale, a light ale and that was it. Guinness was always in London. They used to give it to pregnant women, Guinness. They reckoned it was beautiful for the babies. Jean's Mum, she was always having a Guinness. Supposed to be good for you. Even today people say that Guinness is good for you. I don't like it. I haven't had a drink now for

- 20:00 eight years, I suppose. Medication acts with the beer, or spirit. But when I was working I used to drink mostly gin and tonic. So the fellow tells me now, just drink tonic and imagine the gin in it.

What do you remember when the troops started coming home? What sort of celebrations were there then?

There was lots of arguments

- 20:30 because their wives had gone off with somebody else. That was the main topic, I think, after the war. "Where's Mrs So-and-so?" "She's left. Her husband's home." And "Where did this kid come from? I've

been in a desert for four years and he's only two." Lot of that went on. But the thing that seemed to upset people was of course,

21:00 they lost their job. The man's come back home and he wants his job back. There just wasn't a job for him. The Londoner, he still looked after his mates. Me Dad wasn't in the army.

21:30 He took his four fingers off when he was a young man, so he was what they called air raid warden during the war. He was set up on a roof and they used to drop what they called incendiaries. Only little tiny things but they burnt. Used to flick them over the top so they wouldn't set the roof alight. His brother was in the army, he was in the desert. He came home. His other brother was in Italy, he came home.

22:00 The other brother, I'm not sure what he was in, because I don't even remember him. They said his name was Frank, but I don't remember him. I know he had these three sons, but I don't ever remember seeing him. When they all came back, the gambling started a lot. A lot more gambling on Sunday afternoons outside the pub, but I was too old to be a bloody runner then. And of course, then we started on with

22:30 the 50s so I went in the army.

What sort of impression had you gained of the army, living through World War II?

When they said, it was National Service, they said, "Right, you're old enough to do National Service. Have a medical." So I went and had my medical. Passed my medical and they said, "Right. There's an interview now.

23:00 What do you want to go in? Army, navy or air force?" I said, "The army." "Why?" "I want to be a Guardsman outside Buckingham Palace." "Too short." I thought, "No I'm not!" I'm five-eleven. That's the right height. I'd already found out. He said, "You're too short." I said, "No, I'm not." He said, "Yes, you are." "No I'm not."

23:30 He said, "Look I'm doing the interview. You're too short. I'll put you in a junior guard's regiment." "What's the difference?" He said, "It's the Royal Fusiliers which is stationed at the Tower of London, but they are in the Guards." I thought, well, that sounds alright. I said, "Right, I'll do that." So I went in and whatever I had to do, I expected to do. Nothing surprised me

24:00 apart from the amount of bloomin' polishing. That was a bit more than I thought. You're cleaning the floor with a bloody toothbrush about two o'clock in the morning, because there was an inspection the next day.

Tell me about the Royal Fusiliers.

Royal Fusiliers are the Lord Mayor's own regiment, a City of London regiment. They wear a flaming bomb in the badge, with a big white hackle behind it.

24:30 Like a big white feather. They wear the same uniform as the Guards, only they wear a busby instead of a bearskin. A bearskin is what a Guardsman wears. A busby looked like you've got a crew cut across the top. But everything else is the same.

25:00 Red jacket, trousers and that sort of thing.

Do you wear that on day to day?

It's only for ceremonial duties. I wore it on the King's birthday parade in Germany. I was escort to the Colour. Before that you used khaki or denims or that sort of thing.

Did you stay based at Tower of London?

25:30 Yeah. Museum's still there. When I went over to England two years ago, I went to a Royal Fusiliers dinner at the Tower. Beautiful. Used to be the officers' mess and I'd never been in there. They got big gold sculptures of the Tower, Tower Bridge. They must be worth a fortune.

26:00 Different regiments are stationed there now. When I was in it was the Fusiliers.

What's the Tower of London like to be stationed at?

Very strict. I did guard duty outside. You have a sentry box about as big as that door and about

26:30 ten, fifteen yards, there's another one. And the idea is you stand in that sentry box. If you want to move, you come out, you turn, you march up to the next sentry box. You can about turn and come back as many times as you like, but when you stop you've got to stop in either box. You must not move and you mustn't talk. I was standing there, Two hours on and four off it is, and a woman came along

27:00 with a camera, said, "Smile. Smile." "Get away." "What did you say?" "Get away." "Smile." So I thought, the only way to move her is to come out, take a pace forward, turn. And I stepped on her bloody foot and she had sandals. There was always a copper there as well. Copper came over. "Oh, the guardsman just

27:30 kicked me." And I'm not allowed to speak. I just carried on marching up to the next sentry box. Next minute, the guard command came out, changed the guard, took me back into the guard room. "What happened?" I said, "I took a pace forward, turned left and I trod on her toe." "She said you kicked her." I said, "I didn't bloody kick her. I trod on her foot. She was pestering me. She wanted to take my picture and she wouldn't take no for an answer." He said, "So you spoke then?"

28:00 I said, "Under my breath." He said, "How did she hear you?" I said, "She obviously didn't because when I moved she never moved herself." On a charge. I got seven days for that.

Whereabouts were you living?

Plenty of living space there. It's like a big room and you got beds, like ten beds that side, then beds that side. Wooden floor and

28:30 that's what you have to clean with a bloody toothbrush. And you had one locker. Some of your kit's on top of the locker and then when you open the locker it has to be everything has to be in the right place. The blankets have to be folded round the sheets, the pillows. Then when the bed is made, sheet has to be turned and measured with a string, so every sheet is turned back the same distance. And when you roll up your sleeves

29:00 it has to be the width of a cigarette packet.

Is the guard duty hard where you have to stand?

It depends. When we were in England, a Guardsman was out there and I said, "He's going to fall over in a minute." They said, "Why?" I said, "Look at him swaying." If you feel like you're going to fall you must raise your heels off the ground and that stops you

29:30 wobbling about or you just take a pace forward and march up to the next sentry box and back again. Just keep walking backwards and forwards. That's why if you collapse while you're on guard, you're charged. 'Idle on parade'.

How do you entertain yourself?

You don't. You just stand there. Look around so you can watch what's going on. Look at people passing. All you've got to remember, is when an officer comes, what

30:00 rank he is to give him a slope arms or a present arms.

Is it hard to stay perceptive for so long?

Not really. The time seemed to go fairly quickly. If you start getting fidgety or there's a fly buzzing around, just up there, turn around, march back again. But you must stamp your feet.

What are you looking for?

You're there for ceremonial -

30:30 If somebody come and shot someone you're not to move. You mustn't move to go and help somebody. Your duty is to stand there and look good. There's other people around. The copper's there to nick [arrest] anybody. Nothing to do with you. When the Queen got shot at, all the Guardsmen either side of the route never moved. They're not allowed to.

31:00 People run out of the crowd and the police come around, but the Guardsmen can't move. It's his job to stand there and look beautiful. Look impressive. I enjoyed it. I liked it. If I had my time over again I think I'd do it again.

How did you feel about being called up in the first place?

I quite enjoyed it. I was looking forward to it.

31:30 Didn't think of ever going to Korea of course. Had an idea I could go to Germany, but never dreamt of going to Korea.

In the initial training, what was the discipline like for you?

Very strong. I went in in September and I did six weeks basic training. That's marching, making sure you know how to

32:00 swing this arm against this arm. You know how to put your equipment on. Then I went straight over to Germany and joined the battalion and we went to a place called Iserlohn near Dortmund and it was an ex SS [Schutzstaffel] barracks and they were beautiful. Three to a room, polished floors, double glazing. Lovely. Big tiled bathroom and showers and two storey building and

32:30 you start doing your training then. The six weeks is just basic, but then when you start the actual training, that's when the discipline comes in. You've got to up at the right time, lights out at the right time. Got to be dressed properly. Even though you think you are they'd always find fault with you. I came out one Sunday morning from D Company which was around

- 33:00 a corner from the parade ground and the parade ground would be about 100 yards by 100 yards square. You mustn't walk across it. The only time you can, you can walk round it but you can't walk across it. I was walking from D Company to the NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] or canteen they call it here, on a Sunday morning. Denim trousers, denim jacket, a beret.
- 33:30 And I heard this voice, "Stand still." I thought, what's that? I looked and the RSM's the other side of the parade ground. "Stand still." I thought, bloody hell. Anyway, he marched along the top, come down. He said, "Where you going soldier?" I said, "NAAFI, sir." "Like that?" "Yes, sir." He said, "You're bloody naked." "Beg your pardon?"
- 34:00 "You're naked." "Sir?" They had two little clips at the top there, one of them was undone. Now he couldn't see that from over there, no way in the world. But he knew he'd find something. So he came over and he said, "Go back to your barracks. Dress properly and return me and don't walk round the corner and stay there. Go to the barrack room and come back. I know exactly how long it takes to get from there to here. So I
- 34:30 had to go all the way back to the barrack room, put this bloody little clip on, come all the way back again. And he said, "Righto laddie. Off you go."

What did you think about this kind of behaviour?

Everybody has a go at the RSM, that's his job. Even he has a go at the officers. He has to take the officers on drill parade and he can call them all the names under the sun providing he puts 'sir' at the end of it.

- 35:00 "You stupid so-and-so, sir." And that's okay. But when he came to, in Korea, he was a different man altogether. He was like an angel.
- 35:30 **Talk about that initial six weeks training.**
- That six weeks was marching, drill, getting fit. How to use weapons. Basically it was a lot of drilling. A lot of screaming and shouting out, "Left, right, left, right, up and down," because they were all mixed. They weren't all Royal Fusiliers.
- 36:00 They were different regiments. That lasted six weeks. At the end of six weeks you had a passing out parade, then you get a week's leave then you go to your regiment, might be in England, might be anywhere. Hong Kong or wherever the regiment was. My regiment was in Germany. That's when you actually start your training, when you get to your regiment.
- 36:30 I arrived, about ten of us from the initial intake and when we arrived there we were met by the adjutant and he says, "Welcome to the regiment. This is your family. That gentleman over there, the CO,
- 37:00 is your father. That gentleman over there is the RSM. He's God. If God says something, you do it. Don't think about it, do it. The rest of these men, 1500 of them, are your brothers. Whatever happens in this camp, stays in this camp. If you get into trouble outside this camp,
- 37:30 this camp and your brothers will look after you. Don't bring disgrace to this regiment, family. Welcome." Then you start your training. You're given somewhere to stay, like whatever company you're in. I was put in D company to start with, first week, and then I was in support company which is machine guns, mortars, radio operators.
- 38:00 Then you got A company, B company, C company, D company, HQ [headquarters] company which is the band and the clerical staff and the military police. All the provos, which is the regimental police [provosts]. Everything goes from there. You do exercises at different places in Germany. I got into the boxing team so most Saturday nights we went to another regiment somewhere else in
- 38:30 Germany and fought. Ten fights, ten different weights. And we got through to the British Army of the Rhine finals and the CO said, "If you win the finals, you've got 14 days leave and I'll be very pleased." We won one fight out of ten. That was the heavy one. And on Monday morning he said, "Well, I don't go back on my promise.
- 39:00 I promised you 14 days and you're going to get it, in the nick." And the charge, idle on parade. So we said, "What about the heavy weight. He won." He's in the team, he's the same as you. So we got 14 days in the nick for not winning the fights. Royal Army Ordnance Corps won it. He was most upset.
- 39:30 I learnt to ride a motorbike there. Basically I was on machine guns so I did a lot of that work. You go around on the range shooting. A lot of ceremonial stuff. At least once a week there would be a big parade where it's all ceremonial and of course, when the King's birthday, that was a big parade.
- 40:00 There was the Royal Fusiliers, the 8th Hussars, the King's Rifle Corps, they had green uniforms and we stood in this big German square and at one end of the square was a row of tanks and we did the parade and the tanks
- 40:30 fired a 21-gun salute and fired all the bloody windows out of the buildings. They were only false, but the explosion was so loud that it blew all the windows. Everybody got showered in glass.

Tape 3

- 00:37 Prior to the parade we did a rehearsal and I was number six of the front rank, which was quite an honour. We'd been at it for about an hour and he had us standing at ease and everybody sort of and he said, "John!" I'd dropped my bloody rifle. Crash.
- 01:00 So you mustn't move. Stood there and he walked up. He was about this close and he said, "You've dropped your rifle, laddie." As though I didn't know. I said, "Yes, sir." This is the RSM. He said, "You'd better pick it up." So I bent down and picked it up and he said, "Right, let's carry on." I thought, what's the matter with him? He's gone mad, soft. Anyway, next day, we're lined up
- 01:30 in the side street. I'm still number six of the front rank and they're pushing and shoving and getting all this sorted out and I looked and there's a full corporal this side and there's a full corporal this side. I thought, they weren't there yesterday. Then I heard, clonk, clonk, up the RSM came. "Ah, you're the laddie who dropped his rifle yesterday, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, sir." And he took a pace forward and he was, his nose was almost touching mine and he said, "You're not going to drop it today are you?"
- 02:00 I said, "No, sir." He said, "I know." I could see his tonsils. He nearly blew me away. He said, "I know you won't. Your feet won't bloody touch the ground. You'll be carted away." I was shaking like a bloody leaf by then. Anyway, he had these two corporals ready to take me away. We got on the parade. He came up afterwards, he said, "Well done, laddie." Always called you laddie.
- 02:30 That was the King's birthday parade. Then I did trooping the colour, which was same sort of thing. Only no shouting and hollering. All the words of command were given by the drum. It's a peculiar parade. You've got to stand and got to take nine paces forward. Come to a halt. Slope arms, and say whatever they have to say and the colour's lowered
- 03:00 and it's all done with this drummer standing there going and you got to remember what those bloody are. Very difficult. We had the band and the drums and when we had the band and the drums on the parade, we're getting ready and the RSM would say, "Joe Loss, are you ready?" It was the drum major. The drummers played a bugle as well as played the drums. It was great.
- 03:30 So smart and everything goes well. But a lot of it's brainwashing. You get 1500 blokes walking round a parade ground and all he says, "That man there." You think, did he mean me or him? He'd say, "Get your head up. That man there get his head up." Of course, everybody because he doesn't know who he's talking to. That's how they get around getting the discipline into you.
- 04:00 They tell you that it's so that if you're in any sort of action, and somebody says, "Move," you move. You don't think, "I'll think about it." They say that the British Army, the discipline is so good that when you're told to do something when you're in trouble, you do it double quick time. You don't mess about. I'd say 50 percent of the time was done with that sort of training.
- 04:30 And the other 50 percent is weapons and all that you're going to do if you were in a war. The only thing was, I was a machine gunner and they used Bren gun carriers, but we didn't have those in Korea. You had to carry the bloody gun everywhere.

What did you think of Germany at the time?

We had no problem at all with the Germans.

- 05:00 Jean used to send me tins of Nescafé and we used to sell them because they couldn't get coffee. We had drivers, German drivers, civilians used to drive the trucks. A couple of the lads got sent back to the Tower because they've got on the schnapps with these German drivers and literally went blind. So they sent them back and they got dishonourably discharged out of the army. First of all for
- 05:30 making the regiment dishonoured, and for breaking the law that you weren't supposed to fraternise with Germans. We'd get the old Nescafe sent over and sell it to them.

Did you fraternise yourself with any Germans?

Only in the pubs and bars. Didn't have a lot to do with them. If we were on a

- 06:00 firing range, they'd wait till it was finished then they'd fly around the back and pick up all the bits of lead. Every Friday we had to run a ten-mile cross country and everybody, sick, lame and lazy had to run. The sick had to be marshals and everybody that ran, if you finished after the CO, because he'd run it all,
- 06:30 you had to run again, straight away. Often jumps over a woman pushing a bloomin' pushchair as you'd come out of the bush and she's wheeling a poor baby and 1500 blokes charge through. Sandy my friend, and our best man, he was always finished second or third or third or second. Brilliant. I used to enjoy that. People used to say, "Bloody run again."
- 07:00 But I liked it, probably because being the boxing team you ran anyway. You was running into town

wearing army boots so that when you got in the ring, your feet were that much lighter because you got your boxing boots on.

What were you like as a boxer?

I was a welter weight, ten stone. I was very good. I only lost one fight. That was the one I got charged for.

07:30 I got knocked out once. On the way to Korea they put on a boxing tournament. They come up and said, "You're fighting so-and-so." I said, "Oh, yeah." "He's no bloody good. Don't give him a hiding." I said, "Righto." You'd think he hit me with a bloody stool. Second round. I don't know where it come from. That was it. It was all over. Woke up about four hours later and that was the third time I'd been knocked out.

08:00 When I was in England I got knocked out on a Saturday night. Woke up on a Tuesday. That was at the Albert Hall. I don't know what he hit me with either.

What were the boxing tournaments like in the army?

First, there is no ref in the ring. He sits on the outside. You can't cheer if you're the crowd, until the break comes. You're fighting another regiment so you're spread out.

08:30 Once the bell goes to start the round, it's silence, so the referee's outside. He can say, "Break. Move," and you can hear him. But truth is, you can't hear a thing, whether they're shouting or they're not. There was only ten fights, ten different weights from lightweight up to heavy weight and it was another regiment, so you got

09:00 more support when you're boxing in your own barracks than you did when you were outside, because only a certain amount can go to the fight in somebody else's barracks. I loved it. This fellow he really got to me. I said, "Why the hell don't you stay down?" and I saw him get up again. I ran across and whack. He was on his knees. Out like a light.

09:30 Before you could say "Jack Robinson," the referee was in and an officer was in. "You're a disgrace to the regiment. Take him away." I got marched off, still with the gloves on.

What kind of punishments would you receive?

The shortest amount is seven days and you can get 14 days, or if it's really serious, you get 28 days.

Of what doing?

Could be inside in the lock up.

10:00 Or you can do extra duties. Seven days is usually extra duties, so you finished your day's work and then you start going over to the kitchen, help clean up the kitchen or clean the toilets. All shocking jobs and every hour, if you're locked up inside, you got to scrub your equipment, re-Blanco it and present it again. It's perfect, but you've got to

10:30 clean it all off again. Just something to do. Apart from that, you go to what they called field punishment which is inside, like a compound. They had one in Korea and it was like a big concentration camp and blokes were in there, and you can't walk, you run everywhere. Even the guards run. Run up and down a hill,

11:00 gear full of sand or rocks. Dig a hole here and then dig another one there and fill that up into that one and then dig another one to fill that. In Germany discipline was so strict that you had to dust the coal. Take the dust off the coal and on a special visit from somebody from England, you whitewash the coal so it didn't look black.

11:30 In Germany did you see any signs of Germans being a bit desperate?

No, they all looked well fed. This was a place Iserlohn, which is near Dortmund. The town was quite nice, it didn't look any bomb wreck or anything. This was 1950, September.

12:00 Trams were running and shops looked alright. They looked fairly well off. We used to say they look better off than they do in London. They did. They looked well fed, but apparently they couldn't get coffee of course. They were quite pleased for us to sell them coffee or Senior Service cigarettes, they liked. Because

12:30 the British army and the NAAFI, most of the cigarettes were Senior Service, round tin. You could buy them and sell them for 50 percent more. Because the NAAFI would sell all sorts of things. Anything from chocolate to cleaning gear. Whatever you wanted. Get a feed in there. But the food was quite good in the army. I was surprised. People would say, "I don't like - Go in the NAAFI and have a feed."

13:00 The boxing team got special food anyway. We went to meals separately. They looked after the boxing team.

When you did have contact with the Germans were you able to talk about the war?

No. I can never remember mentioning the war to any of the Germans. Surprising now you think of it. Didn't have a lot of contact with them.

13:30 Because it was mostly doing exercise or drills in the camp. It was a big camp. We had our own swimming pool, soccer fields, running track. Everything was in there, so unless you wanted to go out to the pub. Well, you didn't have to go out to the pub because the NAAFI sold beer. But if you wanted to go down town for some reason, that's the only time you wanted to go out. Not a lot of people went out.

14:00 Probably one of the reasons was, there was a mirror just outside the guard room and you look in the mirror and say, "Yeah, I'm right," and then you go and the guard commander goes, "You're a bloody disgrace. Go and clean yourself up." So you can't get out. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just his attitude.

Did you come into contact with the other occupying forces in Germany?

Only when we went to their camp, like the Hussars, we went to their camp,

14:30 the King's regiment, we went to their camp. But that was all having a go at one another, "Ya bloody old mob you got." Nobody said, "What do you think of Germany?" or anything like that. It was all "Why do you wear those funny feathers in your hat for?" Because the Hussars wore epaulettes, silver braid thing on here. It's a cavalry regiment, really.

15:00 Now they have tanks. You'd say, "Look at them. Bloody horse lovers."

What about other nationalities like the Americans?

No. The only time we saw Americans was when we did guard duty on Hess at Spandau Prison. Each country did a term of duty, a month. Whatever regiment was there,

15:30 you took over, you'd hello, goodbye sort of thing. That was it. The only other time we come in contact with Americans, they had a big parade and the Royal Fusiliers was in it as the only regiment and we marched against the Yanks, the French, the Russians and we won. We were the smartest, yet the Yanks had chromed helmets,

16:00 white staves, white boot laces. But we just looked better, smarter and we won it. We were highly delighted, so was the CO. He thought all his Christmases had come at once when the Royal Fusiliers were the best turned out regiment.

Was there any talk of building tensions between the Soviet Union and - ?

No. We were stationed in Berlin just before I'd got to Germany and same thing.

16:30 Very rarely went out the camp. The only change was you had a different badge. We had two cross keys and in Germany it was a red circle with a black circle round it. That denotes you served in Berlin. But again, nobody had any problems with Germans or anybody else come to that.

There was no talk of difficulty with the Russians?

No.

17:00 They don't give you enough time. They find that so you got something to do all the time and you might say, "I'll go out tonight." You were so bugged from what you'd been doing all day, "Oh, I won't bother." Specially when the guard commander looks you up and down and says you weren't dressed properly. If you spent ages getting ready.

Did you hit the town at all?

Once. One winter's night we went down to the local bar

17:30 and had a few beers and on the way back, I slipped down a little gutter, covered in snow. Time I got back to the guard room, "How'd you get wet like that?" They find something to have a go at you about. Nothing

18:00 is an accident. Always happens because you did something wrong.

What was guarding Hess like?

It was the same as guarding the Tower of London. You just stood outside and if somebody wanted to attack Hess, you couldn't do anything about it. You just had to stand there. People inside were supposed to look after him, but I only saw him once. He was walking in the courtyard and he looked like a frail old man.

18:30 The Russians did it for a month. The Americans did it for a month. The British did it for a month and that's how they rotated.

What did you think of this image of this man?

I thought it was a lot of fuss over nothing. Looks like a grandad walking around.

19:00 Just ambling along up and down, getting a bit of exercise. Didn't impress anybody as far as I know.

What were your mates in the service like?

Good mates.

19:30 I had a fellow that used to sit in the corner with me, Louis. There was Eric Sandford, he was in the mortars. He was our best man when we got married. He went to Korea with me, so did Louis. The bloke who gave me a good hiding, he was the heavy weight. When I first went there, they said all us blokes in the gym. See what you're like at boxing.

20:00 "Have you boxed before?" I said, "No." The old man said don't say you've boxed. Three times I had to put the gloves on and he said, "Have you boxed before?" and I said, "No." Fourth time he said you can spar with this bloke. He was a big fellow.

20:30 It was McNally. He never knocked me out, he just gave me a hiding. He knocked me from pillar to post. At the end sergeant says, "Now, do you still say you haven't boxed before?" I said, "Yeah, I boxed for Alford House Boxing Club in Lambeth." He said they knew I'd boxed before. "Report here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning." I thought, another good hiding. Next morning, they said I

21:00 was in the boxing team. But McNally finished up getting 18 months for belting a German and putting a jeep through a shop window. We had all sorts of blokes. One bloke could play the piano, real honky tonky. He'd stand in the NAAFI for hours

21:30 and the place would be rocking away. The fellow that shared a room with me and Sandy was a bloke called Corporal Pilbeam. He finished up a major and he died and his son was in the army and his son got murdered, still in the army.

22:00 We had a good bunch of blokes.

How did you come to be sent to Korea?

The old man had said don't volunteer for anything. He'd never been in the army, so I don't know what he was talking about. I said, "Yeah, righto."

22:30 I didn't volunteer for the boxing because I said I wasn't a boxer and copped a good hiding and thought I ain't going to do that again. They said one day, we want 38 volunteers. You got to be mortar men, machine gunners or radio operators. Special job. And we thought, "This will be good. Probably go back home." Stepped forward. "Right.

23:00 Present yourselves in the gym tomorrow morning 800 hours. We get over there and they said, "Machine gunners over there. Mortar men over there, signallers over there. "You have just been chosen," not volunteered, "to go to England to join the Royal Norfolk Regiment who are going to Korea." Everybody said, "Where the hell's Korea?"

23:30 "Far East." We heard nothing about a Korean War, not a thing. All the training we were doing was house to house fighting in towns. They had a place called Sennelager, which was an actual city made to look like a town and you'd go out there and go from house to house, upstairs, downstairs. Nothing about Korea at all.

24:00 So they shipped us off back to England and we went to Crobar near Tunbridge Wells. We arrived there on a Friday morning. "They said, "Any of you boxers?" And somebody said, "Yeah, Ted is." And I said, "Only a little bit." "Righto, you, over here. We're fighting the local fire station tonight and you're in it."

24:30 "Thanks very much. That's very nice of you." I met a bloke called Smithy. He was a middle weight. He said, "What are you doing?" "They told me I'm boxing the firemen tonight." He was another regiment. He said, "They told me I'm boxing." Anyway, we boxed, we won. Saturday morning, they said we're not doing anything till Monday. So Smithy said, "Let's have it away.

25:00 You live in London. We can get a Green Line bus outside the camp. Be home in about three quarters of an hour. Nothing's going to happen here." So off we went. Got off the bus at Victoria, went home. Said, "Meet you back here Sunday night." Met him Sunday night and the bus didn't go all the way back to the camp. About a five mile walk, so we'd gone about two or three hundred yards and there's a pub.

25:30 "There's a motorbike over there. Let's borrow it." So we wheeled it down the road and then started it. By the time we got near the camp we put it in a ditch and strolled in the main gate and the guard said, "We're you going?" "Back to the barrack room." "Where you been?" "Only just come over from Germany and we went out the back door and we wandered round the streets." He said, "You must have been gone a long time."

26:00 I said, "Why?" He said "The battalion moved out Sunday morning. The place is empty." In the nick. Spent the night in the nick. Next morning, up before the CO and the RSM. He said, "You've been charged absent with leave. Got anything to say? I said, "Yes, sir. I've just done nine months in Germany and

- 26:30 arrived here on Friday. I was told to box on Friday night, which I did and on Saturday morning they said nothing was happening till Monday morning. I had a sudden instinct to go home." "Well done, laddie." And he sat there looking at me, must have been five minutes. He said, "I've just had a sudden instinct. Put him inside for seven days. March him out."
- 27:00 Out I went. Smithy went in, same thing. "How we going to do seven days here. There's nobody here." They said, "No, you're not. The battalion's gone away to a field exercise. We're going to truck you down there." So we turned up at this camp. All these tents. We just did everything everybody else did. Come the weekend, they all got leave. Me and Smithy got the job cleaning out the toilets
- 27:30 for the weekend, so we never got home. Then at the end of the second week, everybody come back to camp and we got 14 days leave before we went to Korea. I was friends with Smithy from then on. We both got boxing on the boat as well, only he spent most of his trip in the nick. He
- 28:00 stuck it on two corporals, so they put him inside. At Portishead the boat stopped and they had these bum boats come up and you let a basket down and you buy stuff and pull the basket up. He bought some chewing gum and he's pulling it up and the deck below, these hands come out and grabbed it. "Come on Ted.
- 28:30 Let's go." Ran down onto the next deck and there's these two corporals. "Hey, that's my chewing gum." "Don't talk to me like that. I'm a corporal." Bang. He was out. In the nick. So they had this boxing tournament, and they said "Smith, middleweight. He can fight Captain so-and-so, champion of India."
- 29:00 And I've got guard duty, on the nick. And I went and said, "Smithy, you're fighting tonight." I said, "There's a boxing tournament". I said "I'm fighting a bloke from Battersea." I said "You're fighting this officer. He's champion of India, and he's there to give you a good hiding." "Is he?" Well, god, he cut this officer to pieces. Not knock him out, he just hit him, and hit him, and hit him, and
- 29:30 of course the officer wouldn't fall down. So when the fight was over, he got put back inside again, for the rest of the trip. So he spent six weeks in the nick on the boat. Apart from the journey from Southampton to Portshead, he was out. But from Portshead to Korea, Pusan, he was in the nick, apart from coming out to do the boxing. But great fella, he won a medal as well, as soon as we got there.
- 30:00 **How did you feel about leaving for Korea during those two weeks of leave?**
- The only time I felt a bit upset was when the boat pulled away and you gradually saw England fading away. I thought I wonder if I'm going to see this place again. Because by this time, people had started telling us about Korea. Sandy said, "What do you think Ted? Bit weird, isn't it. Wonder if [UNCLEAR] come see this again when we come back."
- 30:30 "Of course, Smithy. Come back? What difference does it make?" Everybody was that way inclined, I think. Feeling very sorry for themselves and wasn't sure what was going to happen. But once the boat got started it didn't bother me, because I was seasick all the way there. Every time the boat took off from a port I was seasick. I was
- 31:00 always laying down somewhere or throwing up. I copped a guard duty where you have two blokes at the front of the boat looking outwards and two blokes at the back looking outwards and the idea is, someone falls over you give the warning. I stood there with me head over the side throwing up. The whole boat could have fallen over, it wouldn't have made any difference to me. Couldn't take any notice. They had film shows and I just lay down.
- 31:30 I never felt so crook in all my life.
- What did your family think of you going off?**
- Me beloved Mum said to Jean, "I'll get rid of all his stuff, he won't be coming back." I was most upset. She sold everything I had. When I came out the army, I had nothing. Not a thing. When I first went in the army, you had to send home ten shillings a week
- 32:00 to somebody in the family to put in the bank for you so that you had some money when you left the army. Stupid Ted, gave it to my Mum. She spent the lot. So I never forgave her for that. Everybody else, my cousin, he thought I was going on holiday. "Great. All these different places."
- 32:30 Didn't seem to us we were going to go to war. We were sunbathing and we started using the machine guns on the deck and it dug into the deck and the captain nearly went berserk. The tripod of the gun was digging up his deck. But again, they found us something to do, even if it was marching round the boat.
- 33:00 You had something to do. The only time I wasn't feeling sick was if I was marching. If I stood still, crook.

What did Jean think of you going?

I've never asked her. The only thing she said, they never heard nothing on the television, nothing on the newspapers. Not a thing about Korea.

- 33:30 When we came back, before we got off the boat, these two fellows got on in smart suits, dark glasses and said, "Before you get off the boat, we got some words of advice to you. Anybody who wants to know where you've been, you've been on a six weeks' cruise from Japan." And there was about 2000 people on the boat.
- 34:00 "You don't talk about Korea, otherwise you will be charged." And that was it. They let us off the boat. We went straight back to Norwich. The Britannia Barracks. Stayed the night and they flung us out the next morning and said, "On your way. We don't need you anymore." That was it.
- What expectations did you have as**
- 34:30 **you went on the boat, what you were going to do there and about the war?**
- We thought we were going to go there and do like they did in Germany. Wander round the streets and make sure everything is happy and peaceful. Never dreamt you were going to start shooting at people. When we were testing the guns, we thought, this is doing this on the range. To make matters worse, when we arrived in
- 35:00 Pusan, they took all the steel helmets off us and dumped them. Thought, "This can't be too bad." They'd dropped all our gear in the water. It was in a net and the net broke. They put us in a camp and the first day we were there, stayed the night. The next day, they marched us all back to the docks. We had to unload a boat. We became wharfies.
- 35:30 We spent three days unloading boats. They said. "The dockers [dockside workers] are on strike." I thought, this is a nice country. You come here to help them out and unload boats. Then right out of the blue, on the truck, away. Up the front. Took two days on a train to get to where we're supposed to go. Every time the train stopped, somebody had to get off each carriage
- 36:00 and guard the train. Off the train, on another truck, up to the front. The only thing that struck me, before the boat even docked, was the smell. God, it stunk something terrible.
- 36:30 People saying, "What's that?" That's the land. It was shocking. It was like spicy food, animals, sweet, soury sort of smell. I noticed it also when we stopped at Portishead.
- 37:00 Thought is must be those wogs. All those camels, but when you got to Korea, what a stink. As soon as we landed, we didn't notice it so much. Noticed it more when the boat was two or three mile away. The only thing
- 37:30 you noticed in Korea, 100 yards away, somebody dead. Whether it be an animal or a person. Got this sweet, sickly smell. Didn't seem to take much notice of the country other than the
- 38:00 digging I had to do. I reckon the mountains in Korea are a lot shorter now than when I first went there. Everywhere you went you had to dig. The weather, that was the worst thing. That was a killer. It was so hot in the summer and it was so cold in the winter, because we were further north
- 38:30 than most people and it was coming straight off Siberia. At one stage it was 40 below and the frost penetrated 14 inches into the ground. You had to try and dig in it. Some blokes had the bright idea of blowing the hole up. Grenade and you got a big hole.
- 39:00 Then you had people like big Jim Castles. He was in charge of the Commonwealth division. Wore a kilt, crooked walking stick. Major general. He came up one day when we were digging and we had this rock as big as a Mini. He said, "I say chaps, we've got a few rocks." You silly bugger. Take a week to move this.
- 39:30 He said, "What's over this wire?" "Don't!" Too late. Put his walking stick on a mine. All he had was the handle. The fellow I was with, Scotty, he walked in the mine field. "Stand still Scotty." They were mines with three prongs and a wire ran from here to another one
- 40:00 and another one, and you tread on that, and it sets the lot off. I got down on my belly and slid forward, and said, "I'll put my hand on the wire and you lift your foot." We waited for the bang. I had to then take my hand off the wire, so he said, "I'll grab your legs and pull you back." He pulled me back. Me arm
- 40:30 got longer and longer, till I let go and nothing happened. Big Jim Castles came up and flicked it with his walking stick and Phoom.

Tape 4

- 00:39 **When you first got to Korea and were unloading ships, where were you based?**

Pusan. That was the docks and we were sleeping in a wired compound in tents. Each morning for two days, they'd stick us in these trucks, out to the docks,

01:00 unload the boats. Used to get a lot of kids round by the wire and we'd give them chocolate and stuff. That's the only contact we had with the local people. The dockers were on strike so never saw anybody there. Used to drop a lot of cartons of wines and spirits, then [UNCLEAR]

01:30 through the cardboard cartons. Everybody had a drink.

When you were there for those two days, did you know anything more about the war?

No. Nobody gave us any information whatsoever. The only information

02:00 we got was from the medical officer from the boat going over. He said, "There could be some firing in Korea when you get there. If your mate gets hit, put your thumb over it. If it's bigger than that, put your hand over it. If it's bigger than that, put your fist in it. If it's bigger than that he's probably dead. That was it.

02:30 The only problem was the first time he saw blood he fainted and they took him back to England. He was useless. First person got shot, he was off back.

In Pusan was there evidence of the different members that made up the UN [United Nations] force?

No, we didn't see anybody else. Only the English.

03:00 We didn't see other countries till we got up the line. We saw Australians, Princess Patricia's Canadian regiment. We took over some Greeks. They were filthy buggers. We saw the Yanks, they were using artillery.

03:30 Great big guns called Persuaders. They were way back and when the Chinese overrun, they left them behind and the Chinese used them to fire at us. They were dressed in chromed helmets and white cravats. Think they're on royal parade instead of the army. They'd just stand around, boom, boom. That was it. Never saw them actually fighting.

04:00 Up the front, most of the blokes I did see, were black and the truck drivers were white. So they'd dump around 19-20 blokes and they'd go back. Saw one medical officer, an American, during the summer. He said, "You look as though you could do with some salt tablets." We said, "Have you got any?" He said, "What flavour?" "What do you mean, what flavour?" He said, "They're candy covered."

04:30 So he gave us strawberry flavoured salt tablets. They had everything. Didn't want for anything. They had two helmets, inner and outer. All the time they were wearing the inner they were insured, life insurance. During the winter they got hot donuts and hot coffee, brought in by helicopters. In the summer they got ice-cream and strawberries flown in. If they were building a bunker, get nine by three timbers flown in

05:00 and sandbags. We had to chop down whatever trees were left and rocks. They had air beds to lay on.

How did they move you from Pusan up to the line?

We got to the station and they put us on a train. Again, didn't say where we were going or how long we were going to be on the train. It was slow. They said, "Starting from this seat here,

05:30 when the train stops, you two, you're off that side, you're off that side, guarding it, and you two at that end, you guard there. That's one carriage. Same all the way through. So every time the train stopped, you had to get off and stand there. We got up to way past Seoul, near the Han River. They said this

06:00 was Italian H

The line is further up. So we stayed there overnight, and the next night, November time, was our first battle. We were on a hill called Bunker Hill, and the hill in front of us was 355 and the King's Own Scottish Borderers were occupying this hill and during that day,

06:30 **the NAAFI wagon, canteen wagon, came up and it had beer on it. And the King's Own Scottish Borderers bought the lot. We never got any. They proceeded to get themselves well and truly drunk. During the day, the Chinese were forming up in the valley and they were loving it. Didn't have to have any money, just**

07:00 **write it on your pay book and they'd deduct it off. That night the Chinese attacked. They come up the hill, into the trenches and fellow called Speakman won himself a VC [Victoria Cross]. He was hitting them over the head with beer bottles. Drunk as a lord and they lost the hill. Lost a lot of casualties. A sergeant**

07:30 **went back up because they left all their equipment and knocked out the machine guns. On the way back he got shot in the back. That wasn't recognised, that Speakman got the VC for hitting them over the head with beer bottles. So that left us on this Bunker Hill, which was overlooking, 355 was overlooking us and it was Guy Fawkes Day, November 5.**

08:00 **Every time you moved a mortar fell. They're going to attack us now. Anyway, that night they**

attacked us and the idea is that machine guns stay to let everybody get off and the infantrymen stay at the bottom to give covering fire to the machine guns to get off. So we're sitting there firing away, 600 rounds a minute hoping that they wouldn't come

- 08:30 because they were already there. Our sergeant said, "Go, come on." So we grabbed the guns. Had a tripod which weighs 45 pounds, the gun which weighs 50 pounds and ammunition, which there's three to a gun. And the poor bloke carrying the ammunition, only small boxes like this, has to carry as many as he can. They're heavy and only got a little metal handle. You might pick up two
- 09:00 with that hand and two with that hand. So you put the tripod over your shoulders with two legs and stick one on there and one on there. So that's extra. The bloke carries the gun on his shoulder and carries... Trouble is if the gun's hot, it burns your shoulder, because it's water cooled. Off we went. When we got down the bottom, nobody. The place is empty. Sergeant Warner said, "Buggered if I know."
- 09:30 Better get out of here. These Chinamen will be down on top of us in a moment." We started moving. Three days we're wandering around. We couldn't find anybody. We were completely lost. We slept in little caves. It rained. On the third day we saw some blokes. We came down the hill and the rifle company had gone.
- 10:00 They told us there was nobody else up there. The machine gunners had gone the other way. We got back to the camp, like base camp, and the RSM went berserk. "My boys, we thought you were gone."
- 10:30 He's run away, come back and the bloke behind him was the cook sergeant and he was limping. "Come on, you bastard. I want food for my boys. These are my boys." Running round, waiting on us like we were King and Queens. He was hugging us. "Bloody riflemen." We stayed there for awhile then they put us on another hill
- 11:00 which overlooked Bunker Hill. We'd been walking round in circles. We'd gone virtually nowhere. You can't do it in the daylight because you'd be seen by the Chinamen, so we were doing it at night and we must have kept going round the same place. Where we stayed in this cave this night, we were so wet we stripped off, wrapped ourselves in a poncho and went to sleep.
- 11:30 No guard, nothing. Said if we get captured we get captured. When they put us on this other hill, where the machine gun post was, Bunker Hill, they'd sent a section of blokes,
- 12:00 because the Chinese had taken it but they'd left it again. This group went on this patrol and they come onto the machine gun bunker. What you do with a machine gun, you lay it onto a target, you set it. So we laid on to our bunker because we knew that was our bunker and just after dark, the radio blares out, "They're coming."
- 12:30 Sergeant Warner comes along, "There's a bloody patrol out there and they're in our bunker." The officer said, "Fire." We said, "There's blokes in there." "Fire." So we fired. The bloke, he'd just been made up to a corporal, he said, "Sir, they're coming. They look like mad dogs. They're dressed in green. They're ugly looking things." "Get your head down
- 13:00 and stay there. Fire." Ripping this bunker to pieces. The Chinese must have had second thoughts and they went. "Just let me know how many there are, where they are, then you can come back." When they come back they said,
- 13:30 "Glad we're not Chinamen." Those bullets were ripping through the timber like nobody's business. There's 600 rounds a minute and you've got two guns firing. Each battalion has six guns and you've got two firing at that particular target. I was a machine gunner. You got two handles and two buttons. You press like that. Another fellow sits here with a bandolier,
- 14:00 comes out with a case and goes in and through and all the shells fall this way and the third man, it's water cooled, like a jerry can at the front of the gun and there's a pipe coming out and it goes into the water. The longer you fire, the less water because it goes to steam. He has to make sure you got plenty of water there and plenty of ammunition.
- Where do you get water from?**
- 14:30 We were on a shoot once and somebody said, "No water." The officer said, "Piss in it." And he did, and does it stink. It works, but it stinks. The only time that happened. It's got like a cover over the barrel
- 15:00 So when you pick it up it's not too hot, but it gets that hot, you put it on your shoulder it burns through. Beautiful guns. The first battle was November 5. The second one was when we were back at Bunker Hill, then we moved again
- 15:30 and we went to a place called Samichon Valley. It was like a horse shoe terrain and over that side was Hook, that was the last battle ever in Korea, and the Royal Fusiliers, come to Korea from England and

that was the last battle and they

16:00 were in it and they lost 67 blokes and a friend of mine that comes down to see us, he was in the Black Watch, he was taken prisoner there. He did 18 months more than he should have done, because they shot him in both arms and both legs because he kept trying to escape. He goes to Greenslopes now because he's got shrapnel in his ankle and it comes to the surface, he has to have it taken out. If they

16:30 took it out all at once he'd lose his foot.

What were your first impressions of the Chinese as fighters?

The first thing I saw was two dead ones. We were going to go up Bunker Hill and it was bloody steep. Scotty, he was our range finder,

17:00 he was leading us and he said, "Bugger this. Going to stop." We had a sergeant major called Winkie Fitt. He came along, said, "Get off your arse." And Scotty said, "I'll wrap this bloody tripod round you, you talk to me like - " We said, "Scotty, he's a bloody sergeant major." He said, "I don't care if he's JC [Jesus Christ] himself."

17:30 And he just walked away. We wanted some water. Somebody said, "There's a stream here." So we got our water can, started filling up and drinking and a Yank came along and said, "Are you drinking that?" "What do you think we're doing? Having a bath?" and he said, "Come with me." Took us round the corner, there's these two dead Chinamen in there. Scotty said, "Don't taste like Chinese food, does it?"

18:00 He was a comedian, Scotty. Died just recently. He come from Essex. Different regiment. Wasn't the Fusiliers, but as I say, the Norfolks were made up of quite a few different regiments. But Scotty, he was a tremendous fellow. Ginger Taylor was another one, he was a funny fellow. He come from Watford. Our sergeant, he was a butcher. He come from Watford.

18:30 Sergeant Denny, he was the sergeant in charge of both guns. He's now ex-major. He lives in Suffolk. We went and stayed with him when we went back to England. The RSM lived just up the road here. He emigrated from England to Alexander Headlands. He died a couple of years ago.

19:00 I was standing there one day and the phone rang. I said, "G'day." And this bloke said, "I hope you're standing to attention." Who the bloody hell's that? I said, "I always stand to attention." He said, "Glad to hear it laddie. This is your RSM, Gilchrist." Well. I said, "Are you phoning from England?" He said, "No, I'm up the road from you. Alexander Hills. And he'd been here for a long time.

19:30 I used to tell Jean about him. He used to say, "I am Regimental Sergeant Major Gilchrist. Never mistake me, fucking Jesus Christ." Ex-RSL guardsman [UNCLEAR RSM?], he was. Brilliant [UNCLEAR] man. Everything he did, like if he was writing a letter, he'd write three. Everything was in three. We go and see his wife every now and again, see how she is. He left me ties and regimental buttons

20:00 and things when he died. Died of a heart attack. Fiddling around in his garden. Jean said, "You told me he was a terrible man." She said, "He's such a softy." When Scotty came over, we went and drove to his place. He thought it was wonderful. He was a real - 27 years he'd done in the army. But a real bloody soldier. Everything was military. Great

20:30 fellow.

When you first arrived up the line, were you taking over from - ?

Yeah, we took over from the Greeks. They said we'd have to dig these trenches a bit deeper. Our officers said about six foot.

21:00 And there's all the bodies. The Greeks had just left them there and slung some dirt on them. It was worse than a tip.

What did you do with the bodies?

They'd dumped them, over the top, over the side. Couldn't do anything to them.

How did those hand overs happen? How did the Greeks move out and you move in?

21:30 It's all done by officers of course. They say, "We're moving out. This is where we're going to be." Usually get a young second lieutenant walking around saying, "Keep off the skyline." We had two officers. We nicknamed them the Commonwealth Kids. They had riding boots, britches, jackets, bought two American .45s, pearl handled revolvers, scarf

22:00 from the 7th Cavalry round their necks and guardsmen hats. It wasn't all serious, we had a lot of laughs. The officer we had, Mr Wormhole, he should never have got out of bed. He was absolutely useless. A company that we were attached to,

22:30 because a machine gun section is attached to a company, they lost quite a few fellows. "Machine gunners don't go on patrol." "They do tonight." Off we goes. We're walking along through long grass.

- 23:00 Suddenly come to a stop and there's Mr Wormhole. "Gentlemen I've got two compasses. One says north that way, and one says north that way." Sergeant says, "I know where we are, sir, and you keep the compasses well apart." He had a shotgun. "They tell me pheasants are very nice here in Korea."
- 23:30 "We're on patrol, not after pheasants." When I went back to Korea, he's on a tombstone 'Missing'. They said he got captured and died as a prisoner.
- 24:00 **After taking over from the Greeks, what was your first interaction with the Chinese?**
- When they took 355. They said, "Look for a fellow in a white hat or somebody blowing a bugle.
- 24:30 Look for the chief." They gave the words of command on the trumpet or the whistle or the bloke in the white hat. If you shot him, they'd turn round and run back again. The second lot would have nothing. They'd just run and throw themselves against the wire. The second lot would have weapons and the other lot would pick up the weapons of the ones that, and that's how they carry on. If you could get this bloke with the white hat or the bugle, they run back.
- 25:00 **What sort of noises would they make?**
- Shouting, screaming. I often wondered how they heard the trumpet or the bugle or the whistle's not very loud. They were either drugged or brainwashed. And they all dress the same, padded trousers, padded jacket, padded shoes, bandolier of rice.
- 25:30 **What affect did this noise have on you?**
- I was only concerned how many I could shoot at a time. You get six guns firing, 600 rounds a minute; it's a lot of bullets flying around. But they still got through.
- Did the Chinese know that your regiment was--?**
- 26:00 They knew before we got there. When we left, they congratulated us on going and what a good job we'd done. They sent letters or blast it over a loud speaker. When the Fusiliers arrived, "Welcome to the Royal Fusiliers." How they know, I don't know. Christmas time they sent us cards. These two little kids, 10
- 26:30 and seven, they walked through the mine field, through the wire, up to us without us hearing them, brought two bags. There was silk stockings, cigarettes, perfume, lighters. And the cards, "Come over to us. Don't fight in this unjust war with these Americans. Your families are sitting down for a Christmas dinner, there's an empty space where you should be."
- 27:00 The CO said burn the lot. Send the kids back to Seoul. I suppose they were clever. We had five strands of wire with tin cans or stones that the wind would rattle. Mines, and they come up in the night and cut a hole, you could get a bus through, and you wouldn't hear a thing.
- 27:30 Yet you go up and clip the wire, 'ding'.
- How did the Christmas cards and the loud speakers affect you?**
- The CO said burn them. You never had a chance to see what Joe Blow felt about it. You don't know what happened.
- 28:00 The same as when somebody got killed. They don't run up and say, "Joe Blow got killed last night."
- When did they use the loud speakers and what did they sound like? What would they say?**
- They're like the old fashioned ones. Big speaker. You couldn't see them.
- 28:30 When they brought the Christmas cards, they were hooked on the wire. Woke up in daylight, there's all these white things on the wire. "Smithy, go have a look what's on the wire." Creep down and take it off. "It's a Christmas card."
- 29:00 Gently take the others off, just in case it was attached to something. That's how we found out, the cards. But the kids, they walked through the wire, through the minefield, right up to the bloody bunker. "Where'd you come from?" Talk about Father Christmas. Got this bag, and I thought, well, if I open it, and it blows up, she's going to get killed as well, so I opened it up and had a look.
- 29:30 **Over the loud speakers what would they say?**
- They would speak perfect English. When we were going, "I hear the Royal Norfolk regiment are going back to England. Nice to have enjoyed your company."
- Would they sing songs?**
- 30:00 No, I never heard any songs. The only noise I heard on a patrol. A fighting patrol was 25 or more and you'd go looking for trouble. The Samichon Valley was classed as, they were in the middle of the peace talks and there wasn't going to be any more violence. It was just patrolling

30:30 and little fire fights. Again, I got picked to go on this fighting patrol and off we went. We all suddenly stopped. About 300-400 Chinamen walking through the long grass. You could touch them. We let them get out of sound and we went on to what were supposed to be doing. On the way back the same thing happened again. They were going back and we were going back.

31:00 I was shaking in my boots. Somebody says you're not scared, it's just lies. I've stood in a bunker, hear these Chinamen coming, I could feel my heart beating on the side of the bunker.

How do you control that sort of fear?

You just think, here goes nothing and 'pphhh'. Just firing.

31:30 We did some things that you shouldn't have done. We fired on 355 by chipping the ends of the bullets off which is against the Geneva Convention. It's called a dumb-dumb bullet. You take the point off it and it hits something, it explodes out. Instead of making a little hole in you, it will blow your arm off.

32:00 Another thing we did, every fifth one was a tracer. We could see where it was going. That's against the law. Not supposed to fire tracers at people because it's fire. Yet you can use a flame thrower. We'd get a container of grenades.

32:30 There'd be 12 grenades in a box, and they're set in three pieces of wood. We'd take the pin out, slide it back into the box so the pin didn't clip it and fly off, and leave it on the top of the bunker like that. When you see the Chinamen coming you say, "[UNCLEAR]" and you get 12 grenades going out all at once. Makes a big bang.

33:00 **What was it like the first time you knew your machine gun had got someone?**

The first time didn't matter. We went back to [Hill] 355. We took six guns early afternoon and we had to sit there all night, waiting for the hill behind

33:30 for the digging army, because the Chinese had a digging army. Used to come up to dig the trench. In the early afternoon we sat there. Got the range of where these trenches were going to be dug. We would wait till next morning, sunrise, and as they come up we'd get them.

34:00 Next morning we could hear this noise and they sung a song called Adi Dong. They'd all march together and sing Adi Dong. The officer said, "Wait." They all come up. Some had picks, shovels. They had shovels with bits of rope on so one bloke holds the shovel and

34:30 two bits of string, two other people pull it, so there's three to a shovel. They all seemed to start work and he says, "Fire." So the six guns started and we were short. Hitting the target. Fifty yards short. Said to Scotty, "You got the range wrong."

35:00 Scotty says, "They could have moved." So we up the range. By this time they were waving these shovels and picks because they'd seen what happened. We'd missed them. So when we started firing there was arms and legs going everywhere. Then we heard mortars. The mortars you hear 'boonk.' That's where it's dropped and it

35:30 fell just in front and the sergeant said, "Off, let's go." So we grabbed everything and he says, "Leave the guns, let's go." So we left the guns. You take the lock. Every machine gun's got a lock in it. Looked like a door lock, fits inside. Take the lock out and it can't be fired. All I grabbed, we had no water. I grabbed a five gallon jerry can on an A frame.

36:00 Stuck it on my back and off. I don't know what happened, but I slipped. I went over the side of the mountain, upside down, down the mountain went between two rocks so I'm hanging upside down. Gerry can hits me on the head. Went down about another 100 feet. "Scotty?" Head come up,

36:30 "What's the matter?" I'm stuck. Mortars are coming down all the time. So he comes down, puts a rope around me and they pulled me back up. I can't walk when I get to the top so they carry me. Saw the MO [medical officer]. I said, "I can't walk. My knees."

37:00 "Strap him up, orderly." They carried me back to the gun pit. Couple of days later, they said, "That digging army. You did a good job. There was about 2000 of them, you killed at least 1500. They were women and kids." Jesus.

37:30 Wasn't good. You don't mind killing the blokes. And they'd waved to us. They were probably South Koreans for all we knew. Forced to dig. People say, "Did they wave to let you know they weren't Chinamen?"

38:00 You don't know. Never will. I thought that was wrong. I suppose you can't blame the officer because he didn't know either. That upsets us.

How did you deal with that at the time?

Everybody was very quiet. There was no jokes about killing Chinamen.

38:30 Tried to let it pass away. Then the other time, when I actually killed somebody with my hands. We went

on a patrol and we got ambushed. We didn't know at the time, but after we found out were Mongolian Palace Guards.

- 39:00 No hair, shaved right off. Just a jacket, trousers and sandals. No weapons. We're just strolling along and they come out the bush. They bit a bloke's nose off, ear, three fingers, another lump out of another fellow. To this day, I don't know why we didn't shoot them.
- 39:30 You want a fight? We'll fight. It became a brawl. I finished up on top of this bloke and I strangled him. He was bigger than me and I see the psych and he says, "Well, when you get to that stage, you get three times the amount of strength because everything goes to your muscles, all your blood, energy." And he's gone.
- 40:00 "Come on Ted, we're going." As I got up, there's another one there and I got the rifle and hit him and it broke in half and he went down. The fellow with the ear bitten off, he died, loss of blood. We couldn't stop the bleeding.
- 40:30 Away we went. Hall, they took him away in a straitjacket. He went berserk. Just couldn't handle it.

Tape 5

- 00:39 **You were telling us about your mate that ended up in a straitjacket.**

They took him away and never ever saw him again. He was a funny sort of fellow. He was wireless operator. He had tight curly hair and when I grabbed the water can...

- 01:00 The reason I grabbed it is because we were always short of water and whatever little drop we had, he'd wash his bloody hair. That was all he thought about. "I have to wash me hair." Scotty built a spacious toilet, lid and door,
- 01:30 out of corrugated iron. Hall was in there. We started throwing stones and all making noises as though we were being attacked. That's probably what sent him round the bend. He'd go berserk. "Let me out. They're coming to get me." "No, he's not going to open the door, we got him."
- 02:00 We used to take the mickey out of him something terrible. We had no water because it was so hot and they couldn't get water up to us and we finished up all lousy, twice. Somebody was itching and he took his shirt off. "How long has an army shirt had white cotton?" It was all the lice. Everybody was covered then.
- 02:30 Sergeant reported to the RSM and he whipped us away two at a time in a truck, back to a bath house run by the Americans. They took all our clothes, burnt them and shaved all our hair off and sent us back. Three weeks later we were lousy again. No water, living in holes in the ground. Of course, in the winter it was opposite. You were so cold. The
- 03:00 English uniform, it was absolutely woeful. The boots we had lasted about three days. They just fell apart and gave us American boots. The uniform they gradually got rid of those and gave us American uniforms. In the winter we had these big parkas, beautiful. The buttons you could take them off and if you boiled them they made soup. Brilliant idea. As you got lost somewhere
- 03:30 and had nothing, take the buttons off your parka and boil them.

What flavour?

I never found out. We lived on American rations most of the time and they lived on a tin of soup with a wick and you lit that and when the wick burned down it heated the soup. I loved it on American rations. Tinned fruit,

- 04:00 chocolate and toothpaste and cigarettes. We used to get 50 in a tin, English ones, and then 20 a day in the C7s. I never smoked so I used to swap mine for tinned fruit cocktail, chocolate.

What were the British rations like?

Dark chocolate, hard biscuits. Terrible.

- 04:30 World's worst. Think they came over with Captain Cook. Every now and then in the course of 12 months we might have got half a dozen hot meals. A truck would come up and, "You three go down and get a meal." Then three more would go down.
- 05:00 A mortar went off and went straight through me parka. Missed me arm. They whipped the parka off and stamped on it.
- 05:30 **Did you get your meal?**

No. The truck went when the mortars started falling.

Did you talk about food?

We took over from the Yanks on one hill and when we go there there was carbines, air beds, and one bunker, was full of

06:00 C7 rations, up to the ceiling.

06:30 Sergeant Warner said we could keep the food provided we shared it with everyone else. We had Americans carbine rifles, air beds. We got these star pickets and the bandoliers from the machine gun and plaited it all up

07:00 and made two tier bunks. Put the air bed on top, it was lovely.

What is C7?

That was the name of the rations. Last 24 hours. Big as a shoe box. You had cigarettes, coffee, tea, biscuits, tins of jam, small tins, tin of hamburgers, tin of chicken.

07:30 Tin of beans, fruit cocktail, peaches, cream milk, chewing gum and 20 cigarettes, Camel. Everybody was swapping.

08:00 Bloody sight better than some of the cooked meals they eventually turned up with. Supposed to be hot, it was half cold by the time it got there. We had little stoves you could cook up on.

Did you ever have trouble cooking at all considering the cold?

No, because you could cook inside if it got too cold. To keep warm, we'd get an ammunition box.

08:30 Cut a piece through the lid. Put some shell cases one inside the other and that made a chimney. Put sand in, get a can of petrol with a rubber tube, let it drip into there and this would get white got. Beautiful.

What were your living quarters like?

09:00 You'd have an entrance here, so when you're digging it, you dig a hole down about two foot then two foot there or three foot either side. You leave soil so it went, those two bits would be your beds, this would be the walk in area. You come in

09:30 down a couple of steps then you're in. You could lay down either here or here and in that corner you could have your little stove or the other thing there with the petrol dripping in. Cover over the front door, snug as a bug. In the winter they used to give the two guns,

10:00 a dozen blokes, a gallon of white rum and share that amongst you because it was so cold. I only ever had it once. I was sitting by the fire. Somebody said, "You're on stag, Ted." I had to get up

10:30 and go out into the cold. They found me next morning down by the wire, covered in snow. I'd been drinking this white rum. I haven't had rum since.

How sick were you?

I didn't know whether up was down, or down was up.

How many people shared a living area?

Two of us in a bunker. I used to share mine with my mate Louis, who used to be my corner man when I was fighting. He got killed. We were sitting on the hill behind Bunker Hill, and

11:30 he said, "Your turn for dinner." He was two years older than me. "Give us the can, I'll go and get it myself."

12:00 So he grabs the can opener, went outside the bunker, gone. Mortar came. I ran out and he's flaming cut in half. And he said, "It was your turn Teddy. Here's the can opener." And he died.

12:30 (BREAK)

13:00 Of course, I felt guilty because it was my bloody turn and it should have been me. People say, "Don't matter whose turn it was. It happens, it happens." You can't blame somebody else for something that happened like that. I still got the can opener. I still carry it with me all the time.

13:30 He never boxed but he was in my corner all the time. He had this ability to say, "Keep out of his way first round. Just dance around him." At the end of the first round he'd say, "Right, I want you do to this, this, this and this." And I did it and I won. He just knew what I'm supposed to do.

14:00 He didn't have to go to Korea. He said to me, "I hear you're going to Korea. You can't go. You're in the boxing team." "I'm going to go." He said, "Well, I'm going." "You're not a machine gunner or mortar man. You're in HQ Company." So he went and saw

14:30 somebody and did a bloody course and he came. He said, "Somebody's got to look after you." That happened before the Mongolians and that's what put me over the edge. I went mad.

What did you do immediately after this

15:00 **to help you deal with it?**

I shot everything, everything that moved. I thought, "Bugger you. Don't give a stuff who it is." I don't care now. Killed my mate and now I'm going to kill as many of them as I can. So I just went berserk, every time there was a battle on. They'd say, "Rapid fire," and rapid fire you're supposed to go a couple of

15:30 seconds faster and I'd keep going till my ammunition ran out. Fire, fire all the time.

Did anyone have a talk with you about what had happened?

No. The only blokes ever said anything to me, we went back to England. I met one of the blokes who was a stretcher bearer. And he says, "I was there that day."

16:00 Don't you remember me? We heard somebody say a mortar's dropped at the machine gun section. We ran up with a stretcher and saw these two blokes covered in blood. And we thought, two of them's copped it."

16:30 He said, "You were holding this fellow, saying 'Get him away.' We picked him up and put him on the stretcher and we said, 'What about you?' and you said you were alright. 'A mortar just hit us.'" He said, "They were falling like raindrops that day." I only remember one. We met him when we went back to England.

17:00 Michael Griffin, got a shop in England. All I remember was arguing about the can opener. When we went back to the grave.

17:30 The idea was that when we left Korea we were coming back to England, we were both going to - he was a regular soldier. I was a national serviceman. I was going to sign on and we were going to join the Grenadier Guards and tour the country, the palaces and the parades. We thought that would be great.

18:00 **Why did you hold on to the can opener?**

Just to remind me of him. Got the date on it as well.

Did they give you any time off after this?

No, don't get time off for anything. If somebody gets killed, tough luck. All they did when Hall got taken away in a straitjacket, they sent us another radio operator.

18:30 You don't get, "Go and have a rest." You could be on patrol all night and a battle starts during the day, they don't say, "You rest." You've got to be there. So you could be up for two nights. Depends how much patrolling you do. They had this bright idea, as it wasn't an advance and retreating war, at that stage,

19:00 on the Samichon Valley, this officer came along and said, "Have you got a sock? One." "Yeah." "Fill it up with sand. Tie the end, now tonight, take that with you and we're going to collect a prisoner. Over there. Chinaman.

19:30 The first person to bring back a Chinaman will get a bottle of Scotch and five days in Tokyo." Off we goes, creeping around. See one standing there. Thwump. Killed him. Too much sand in the sock. Come back. Said, "Well,

20:00 take some sand out and make it not so big." This lasted for a fortnight. And they finished up bringing one Chinaman back and while he was in the bunker waiting to be questioned, the officer went out and when he came back, he was dead. The two blokes said, "He dropped dead." So nobody got the Scotch and nobody got the five days in Tokyo.

20:30 **Why did they want you to do this?**

Information. They were going to question them on what they were doing over their side of the line and they never got the chance.

21:00 **How do you kill someone with sand in a sock?**

Like a lump of lead. If you get a sock it's as big as your hand.

Did it seem dangerous to go that close?

Was it ever? You could easily get captured

21:30 yourself. You could even get shot. They said, "Go down that village." There's a village, a few houses. "Go and see if there's any guerrillas down there." So it's fairly deep snow. Plodding along.

- 22:00 About six yards away there was this 44 gallon drum and flames coming out of it and these blokes round it. What used to happen, Koreans used to come back and they used to store their rice in a cave behind the house. We thought they'd come back to collect some rice. We didn't take any notice. We walked past them. Next thing, 'boom!' they were Chinamen.
- 22:30 So they're sticking these bayonets in our back, march that way. We'd taken about four steps and a shell come over, 100 yards in front of us.
- 23:00 They prodded us again and that was closer. Another one, closer still. The next one we all hit the floor and Scotty said, "Next one that comes over, run." The next one come over, we didn't have to run, it blew us and we were off. The Chinese ran that way and we ran this way. When we got back we met this artillery observer, a
- 23:30 New Zealander. "I saw what was happening. I didn't know what to do, so I thought I'll put a round of two down and I'll frighten them." I said, "It frightened us alright. You blew us back here. Thank you very much." So we never looked at anybody again. We just walk straight over, "You. What are you? If you're a Chinaman, you're dead."
- 24:00 If you're Korean, bugger off."

How often did you come into contact with the local villagers?

Not a lot. Most it was if there was a little few houses round where you were, they'd come back looking for food mostly. You get a lot of wild boars around. We woke up one morning there was a wild boar dangling in our wire and we went down

- 24:30 and got it and officers' mess confiscated it. We ended up with a little bit of leg.

At that moment of capture, how did you feel?

Terrified. "What will they do to us?"

What did you think was going to happen?

Didn't bear thinking about.

- 25:00 Thought they were going to take us up the road and shoot us or something. The old bayonet jabbing in your back every now and again made you walk quick.

Describe what was going on in your body.

I was shaking like a leaf. Cold sweat.

- 25:30 Trying to talk to Scotty. He was the same age as me but he seemed more grown up. He come from Essex, in England. HE was a carpenter, and his father was a carpenter. He'd seen more of life than most of us. He was a poacher. He was a bloody good shot.
- 26:00 He could ride horses. Nice all-round fella. We sort of took notice of him more. Cause we had people like Horwell who were bloody hopeless. A big mixture. And people like Mr. Wormhole, a bloody 2nd Lieutenant, should never have been in the Army. Came straight from Sandhurst to Korea so he'd seen nothing other than Sandhurst.
- 26:30 We even played Russian roulette in a bunker on Bunker Hill. We couldn't move. Every time we moved we got mortared from 355. And Scotty said "Here, I've got a .38 pistol here." "Oh yeah, where'd you get it" "I found it." He probably nicked it. He said "Let's play Russian roulette." And I said "Oh, yeah!" Ginger Taylor, he was a butcher.
- 27:00 He said, "I don't know, what's Russian roulette?" He said "Just put it to your head and pull the trigger." He said "With bullets?" "One." So we talked him into it. "Righto." So Scotty said "Who wants to go first?" He said "I'll go first." So ... you can't spin it, you have to roll the chamber on your hand, a .38. He rolled the chamber, and click. "Here you are Ted."
- 27:30 Click. "Here you are Ginger." "Oh, I don't know." "You're not a coward are you?" He went ... through the roof of the bunker. He flew out of the bunker. He said "You're mad, you two. You're absolute mad. You're lunatics." When Sergeant Warner heard about it, he come in he said "You bloody idiots. I've a good mind to charge you for that.
- 28:00 Not for trying to blow your brains out, but for wasting ammunition." You had to have some sort of laugh otherwise you would have gone completely mad.

That's a bit of a ... kind of a deathly kind of joke.

Yeah, yeah.

Why on earth would you do that?

Just something different, see.

We went out on another patrol, real deep snow.

28:30 They said follow one another's footprints. If the first bloke trips on a mine, the rest of you are right. We had to go to this village. In front of the house in Korea they have a pit. About five foot deep and everything goes into it. Human, animal manure, anything. When it's been there for

29:00 so many years, it's used as fertiliser. I was number six. I moved sideways. Voomph. Straight in, right up to here. "Pull us out." "Pull yourself out. The stink." "Hold me rifle and pull me out with that." I couldn't get out.

29:30 They pulled me out and I'm standing there. Got back to the gun pit and Sergeant Warner said, "What's that smell?" I was like it for three days.

30:00 I saw Mrs Green, said, "You're very rare. Anybody that fell in those dies of the gas."

30:30 **What do you think of all these close calls?**

I've used all my luck up. I never win the lottery because I've used all me luck. In a way, apart from the odd thing, you had to make it a laugh. You couldn't take it too seriously otherwise you'd -

31:00 you go on patrol you can't say, "I'm likely to get killed tonight." You had to go out there and say, "When I come back tomorrow I'm going to have all the baked beans that anybody's got." So you don't worry about it. Just keep your eyes open and your ears open. Make sure you didn't make too much noise. Scotty and I went on a patrol where we had to cross a river. We took a rubber dinghy with us. When we got to the river they said,

31:30 "You two stay this side and hold the rope and when the boat goes across the other side, when we pull the rope, you can pull it back." We laid there for about two hours. It was freezing cold and when you move, we had snow suits on, they cracked because they were so cold. He said, "I want you at least 12 yards apart." In the end we were laying

32:00 together like this, waiting for this rope to be pulled. What are we going to do if they don't come back? Do we know the way back? All of a sudden the rope moved. We heard splash. The sergeant had got one foot in the boat, the other on the ground. Could have caught pneumonia, but we thought it was a laugh.

32:30 **Do you have a dark humour in these situations?**

Yeah. We had a Korea fellow who was a porter. They brought up a wagon for food and set up a 44 gallon drum with a fire underneath it to wash the Dixie cans in.

33:00 We're waiting for this food and one of the blokes says, "Petrol." Korea bloke looked and no flame. What he didn't realise the sun was shining on it and couldn't see the flame, so whoomph. He was standing there like a torch. They said, "Hey, barbeque tonight." Poor bugger burnt to death. They thought it was great.

33:30 **Did anyone get disturbed by the black humour?**

The only one I know is Hall. It wasn't humour. He was just afraid of the blokes biting fingers and noses. They told us they were Mongolian Palace guards, but

34:00 it turns out they are out of a mental institute and they walk around all day just chewing on cobs of corn. So they're harmless, but they didn't look harmless to me.

Describe them.

Six foot. Shaved head.

34:30 Padded jacket, padded trousers and sandals. That's all they had. They just come out like guerrillas out the bush.

Why didn't they have any weapons?

Whether they were lunatic or not I don't know. When somebody says they're ex palace guards you'd think they'd have a weapon of some sort.

35:00 They didn't punch. They just bit everybody. One bloke had three fingers taken off. He said, "I never felt a thing."

35:30 Most of the blokes were Londoners and they thought, you want a punch up mate, you've come to the right place.

Did this way of fighting seem bizarre?

We didn't think much about it till it was all over. A lot of officers said, "Why didn't you return fire?" How can we return fire? They didn't fire at us.

36:00 **How did it end?**

The bloke I strangled and the other I hit, they were just laying there and the others were just melted into the bush again. We just ran, carrying our wounded.

36:30 Big fellows. I was amazed. How did I hold one of them down there? After Louis, I found strength from everywhere. I fired the machine

37:00 gun from the hip which you can't possibly do, they say. It pushes you back but I held on.

How long after Louis was this event?

Within months, weeks. Everything after that was,

37:30 I just did it. I still talk to him now.

Tape 6

00:39 **What things would you do to relax?**

Most of the time you tried to sleep because you were either on patrol or up all night or something like that.

01:00 If you could sleep, great. We'd get Coca Cola bottles and a piece of string and we'd sit there for hours cutting the string off and you got a nice glass. Edges all smooth with a bit of rock and you got a drinking glass. I didn't know a piece of string cut glass, but if you do it long enough, it does. Do a lot of digging, of course. Some officer

01:30 always come along, "I think this could be a bit deeper." Like the fellow who used to say keep off the skyline. He came up and

02:00 wandered past, and this American plane came over and dropped eight bombs on us. We had air panels out everywhere, you could see them. As he went by on the stretcher, Scotty said, "I say, keep off the skyline old chap."

What are air panels?

Big silk strips, about 24 foot long and about six foot wide

02:30 and you put them out in either a cross or a T, whatever it might be for that day. One's yellow, one's red or it might be white and green and you put them out and let's New Zealand aircraft know whose there. This idiot came in and bloody near hit the air panels. Nine or ten blokes got killed. He radioed back and said he unfortunately overshot the target.

03:00 That was it. Nothing done about it.

Tell me about these bunker trench systems. How do you dig a trench?

You dig a bunker this side of the hill, the gun pit would be this side on the front of the hill, and you'd dig a trench from there through to get to your bunker. Then

03:30 the trenches would be interlocked with other trenches so that wherever you were moving around you were below ground level. Only if it was just head level. The pit for where you slept was dug, then a roof on it. Bits of timber whatever you could find and covered with soil. The gun pit, for a machine gun had to be dug

04:00 square hole but you'd leave a section in the middle and the tripod would sit on that so you could walk around it. This would be an opening only about this big so you could put the gun through it, just front of it and you could traverse the gun round to cover the angle. Then you'd have that gun pit would come out into a long trench,

04:30 down to the next gun which was further along, or back to where you were sleeping or over to where the radiator was. You could move around fairly quickly without being seen. But in the case of 355 they were looking straight down on us, so every time something moved, down came a mortar. The mortaring and the shelling would be some of the worst.

05:00 A mortar, you could hear it. You could hear it go boonk. That's when it hit the bottom of the barrel and the next one was boom. But the shell would just appear from nowhere. If you heard it, it was going to miss you. The ones you don't hear are the ones that get you. It was a case of doing a lot of digging and of course, when it rained, there was a lot of mud everywhere. You had to try and support the sides if you could because if you got a six foot trench

05:30 won't take long before it falls in. And to water proof the bunker you were sleeping in, we used whatever we could find. The Americans, it was all brought in. Do it yourself house building.

What were your sleeping conditions inside the bunker like?

- 06:00 It was, up until we nicked the air beds and Scotty made the bunks, that were only on one hill. Can't take them with you of course. It was sleeping on this soil that was dug out, with your ground sheet down first, and probably a blanket and something to make a pillow. Mustn't take your boots off of course. Undo them but you can't take them off.
- 06:30 We got lousy because we couldn't wash. We had no water. In the summer it was no water and in the winter it was so cold you tried to find as much stuff as you could find to put on to keep you warm. Then it got difficult moving around. When everything starts to happen, you get very warm. No matter what you got on, you start taking things off.
- 07:00 You might play cards or something, but there was always somebody on, they call it stag. Like a sentry. You'd have one person in the gun pit, one person in that gun pit. You might have a fellow down here where the radio shack is, looking out, all looking towards the Chinese.
- 07:30 The rest would be fiddling around behind you and just as the sun goes down they have stand to. Everybody comes to where his position is. There's three of us on the machine gun, fellow on a Bren gun and riflemen further up and everybody's ready and you stand there till it's got completely dark and if it's all quiet, some go away and some stay there for two hours. Some of them get four hours sleep.
- 08:00 Change over during the night. If something happens then you're back out. So you can't afford to take your boots off. It's just down, sleep or get something to eat, cook. Tin of baked beans. Whatever was in the rations for that day. That's if
- 08:30 you've got them. They didn't always come, so you didn't always eat it all at once, just in case the next one didn't turn up.

Was there a system where you'd spend certain time on the front line and then - ?

Yes. Nothing was set down in black and white. We were there one day and they said, "You, you, and you. In the back of that truck. R and R [rest and recuperation]."

- 09:00 They took us to Inchon, to this rest camp. Was just tents. We'd only been there ten minutes, there was an air raid. Bombs dropping left, right and centre, so we come back. Every so often, blokes got five days in Tokyo. You went to Tokyo.
- 09:30 You were given clean clothes, showers, shave. This is where you sleep. That's where you eat. If you're going to stay out all night, make sure you're off the streets by 10 o'clock. If not come back here to bed. Make sure you're here for the day to go back on. That was it. They left you on your own and you drew out whatever money you wanted from your pay book and then you hit the town.
- 10:00 Wasn't bad. Everybody wanted your money. If you go in a bar, it was a big bottles of beer. Had a rising sun on it and a girl comes along and pours it into the glass, sits on your knee and as soon as you take a sip she pours another. You never got an empty glass. So when you've drunk that bottle, there was another bottle there. They don't ask you, the just put it there. You get drunk as a lord in no time at all. You have to pay to dance with them.

10:30 What were these girls like?

Some of them were quite nice. One I picked, her name was Michiko. She turned round and smiled. All I could see was gold teeth. Forget that one. We booked into a hotel and said, "Five rooms." And we turned round and there was girls all lined up.

- 11:00 Fellow's bowing like this, "Which one you want in your room?" We said, "How much?" "No, all in price." So, "That one will do me." First thing was a bath. "Lovely. Hello, what's that?" She's in the bath doing your back and she had to stay in that room all the time you occupied, rented that room. If you wanted to take her out, all well and good,
- 11:30 but she had to stay there other than that and do everything for you. It was great. The only warning we got. If you come back here with a disease, you don't go back till it's better. They did that when we were leaving Korea to come home. Parade on the dock. Anybody had something wrong with them, he stayed behind, didn't get on the boat.

12:00 Did they provide you with any sorts of - ?

Oh, yeah. You could go to the medical [UNCLEAR] and get condoms and jabs. I'm lucky.

What other things would you get up to in Tokyo?

We'd go around shops. I sent Jean home a tea set, beautiful tea set, next to nothing. You could hold the cup up and see the light through it, so fine. He boxed it all up in a big box

- 12:30 and then threw it up in the air, crash and opened it up. Nothing broken. He said, "That's how they go to your country." When it arrived in England, the sugar bowl, one of the handles was broken off. Sent it

back and they replaced it. The freight would have been more than what you paid for the tea set.

- 13:00 You could buy all sorts of silks and kimonos. So cheap. You could eat well, drink well. But the five days, just gone. You were back in mud again.

Did you socialise with troops from other countries?

Yes. Even when we were in Korea, the Australians were on the right hand side of us and they were characters. You'd hear them at night.

- 13:30 Chinese must have been getting close and the Chinese used to say, "We're a party from such and such a country. We're lost. Who are you?" "Aussies." "Can we come through your wire?" "Yes, of course, you can." "Can you give us directions?" Sounded just like an Englishman and they'd say, "To the left, ten paces."
- 14:00 Straight through, to the right, ten paces," and they wait till they get right up close and then Whooop, "Got you."

What did you notice about the - ?

You knew that nobody was out there. The Canadians, Australians and the British knew that we were sending out a party, they were sending out a party, because it's on this horseshoe thing. You're going into the valley, so you

- 14:30 let everybody know what's going on. If somebody comes wandering back and says, "We're lost," you've only got to pick up the phone to the British or the Canadians, "You got anybody - ?" "Nobody out there." So you say, "Keep coming." The Chinese didn't like the Australian bayonets. They used to run a mile when they see them. Because we only had small,
- 15:00 like seven inch nail thing.

Did you notice anything about the way the Australians behaved, or a sense of humour?

They didn't take any discipline at all. Do as they liked. We got seven days inside, they get fined. I went to a battle school in Japan, Haramura, and it

- 15:30 was a Commonwealth battle school, and there was Canadians, Australians, English, New Zealanders and had a mess hall. This Aussie turned up, great big overcoat on. We said, "Are you cold?" He said, "No, I sold all my clothes to Papa-san in the brothel next day." He'd come in for a feed.
- 16:00 All he had on was the overcoat. If they done something wrong, two pound fine, three pound fine. The RSM that run it was a Scotchman. He was a terror. These two French Canadians in the nick, they were screaming and shouting. Nobody would open the door, they were afraid of them. "What's that noise?"
- 16:30 "Two prisoners, sir. Can't go in there, sir. Too dangerous." "Open the door." He walked in and they went whack. He came out next morning wearing a beret and a big black eye. But he sent about a dozen blokes in to sort them out.

What did the British troops think of the Australian slouch hat?

I got on very well.

- 17:00 When I arrived at Haramura, I was covered in mud and they put us in this dormitory. You went in a long building and there's a step up there and a step up there and that's where you slept. This Aussie said, "You just arrived?" "Yeah, where can I have a shower?" "Yeah, just across the road there at the bath house." These women are waiting there to wash you.
- 17:30 Sit down on a stool and give you a scrub. He said, "Coming down town?" I said, this is all I got, covered in mud. He said, "I got a spare uniform will fit you." Off we went to town. We were walking along. Jeep pulled up and the MP [military police] said, "You, soldier! Whose bloody army do you think you're in? How long the Australians been wearing pommy hats?"
- 18:00 Take the bloody thing off and enjoy yourself." That was a ten day course. The things we'd been doing, they were trying to teach us so it was a waste of time, really. But it gave you ten days off. The food was good and you could have a good night's sleep. There was none of this racing around drilling.

Did the British like the Australian slouch hats?

Yeah.

What would they do for a slouch hat?

An Australian would never give his slouch hat away. Not for all the tea in China. If they lost one they would wear a beret like we did. But they wouldn't swap them. We met a French Canadian.

- 19:00 Most of them are ex lumber jacks. He turned up and he must have had about 14 South Koreans with him and they were all covered in bandoliers and ammunition and weapons. "This is my private army," he said. He had a big beard. He was like Man Mountain.

- 19:30 Korea, second day we come up, they walked into a mine field. Smithy without hesitation went straight in, carried them out and he got the Military Medal for it. He nicked a lot. He nicked an American bandolier with little pockets. Used to wear that. He was out on patrol and
- 20:00 this Chinaman with a burp gun, like a machine gun. Goes bom, bom, bom on the pockets. "You bugger. You ruined my belt." Thump.
- 20:30 **What things did you notice about the effects of World War II on Japan?**
- The only affect I found, we were in a place called
- 21:00 Kure. The battle school was just outside. Kure was the town and it was 50 miles from Hiroshima and there was no Americans anywhere to be seen, not one. We made enquiries and they said, "Yes." Because Kure is a port and they dropped leaflets to say they were going to bomb the port and everybody went to Hiroshima.
- 21:30 Of course, they dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. There wouldn't have been half so many casualties if they hadn't dropped the leaflets. So there was not an American in sight anywhere. Lady Mountbatten come to see us. But the people, very friendly.
- 22:00 I was surprised how friendly they are. The old mama-san sitting there and she lifts her skirt up and she'd got this big bowl of charcoal burning and that will keep her warm as she's sitting outside her shop.
- What was Lady Mountbatten like?**
- Very nice. I was in the Australian ward, because the English ward was full up.
- 22:30 In the English ward, when the officer came round, you had to lay to attention and the sheets had to be folded back and be in line with one another with a piece of string. In the Australian ward there were blokes jumping around on the beds, couldn't care less.
- 23:00 She came round and said, "How are you. You're English aren't you?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." "What are you doing in the Australian ward? Are you enjoying yourself?" "Yes, thank you." I was on the veranda. Laying there looking up and saw these marks appear in the ceiling. I sat up and a
- 23:30 pane of glass fell out the window and cut the pillow in half. It was an earth tremor. If I hadn't been looking up there, the glass would have cut me head off.
- How did you end up in hospital?**
- Me knees. They kept playing up, so when I went to Hiroshima I reported that my knees were crook
- 24:00 and they started to fiddle around. I got now, two titanium knees.
- How was the Australian ward set up and run?**
- Brilliant. You could do as you like. They were not all Australians. We had two Canadians,
- 24:30 they had 38 holes in their back where this Chinaman threw a potato masher, like a grenade. Looks like a handle. Pull the thing out the bottom and throw it. And he threw it, and he sort of went like that, and they were in hospital with 38 holes in their back. They'd come over and say, "You coming out Ted?" "I can't, I'm on crutches." "Oh, come on." When they put the lights out at ten o'clock,
- 25:00 boy-san would come up "We've got rickshaw downstairs." So I thought, I'll have a go. Fell down the bloody stairs. They went. I managed to get back into the ward. And they turned up next morning, they looked like death warmed up. And the medical officer came round, he said "You chaps are not getting any better." "No sir, no sir." Been on the tiles all night.
- 25:30 Papa-san would come round with his two daughters and suitcases. Put them in the middle of the ward. He'd open them up and there would be night dresses and kimonos.
- 26:00 Food was good. I was laying there one day and heard this woman say, "Would you like a piece of candy?" Opened my eyes and thought I was in heaven. Beautiful blonde. She was some movie star. I don't know who she was.
- 26:30 Some American movie star visiting the troops. The Yanks, if it was too bad they were on a plane home. It was only the ones that could get quickly fixed up and go back again.
- 27:00 **Did you talk to the Australians about Australia?**
- Sister Nicholson. She said, "First lesson. How to speak like an Australian. G'day."
- 27:30 That was one of the reasons we came to Australia. I'd like it because she'd tell me all about it. I never saw her again.

28:00 I said, "What about the kangaroos?" "They run down the main street. And the crocodiles. Come up the bath sink."

Did you talk to the Australian troops on the ward about Australia?

No, you never had time. When we were lining up for a feed

28:30 at the battle school they'd tell you about Australia. We didn't realise how big it was. One of them said, "Here's a map. See that bit up there? Northern Australia. Your country will fit in there and below that is Cairns."

29:00 They got three times more pay than us. They were always flush with money and there wasn't a lot of discipline which was good.

Did you talk about how the fighting was going from their point of view?

You'd probably only say, "Where were you?" "I was at Samichon Valley."

29:30 If they were older soldiers they would have been in the Apple Orchard or Kapyong.

What was your opinion of them as soldiers?

Good soldiers. They didn't take a step backwards. It was always,

30:00 "Come on, let's get these bastards." That was their attitude. Not like the Yanks. When the Gloucester regiment got taken the Americans were either side of them and during the night they pulled back and never told them. Of course, the Chinese got them. Very fond of running, the Americans. They were so well looked after, it was amazing. This Bunker Hill that we took,

30:30 it was taken first of all by a Korean regiment, ROK [Republic of Korea] Army and the youngest CO, 26 year old CO, he took it with a bayonet charge. Brilliant. A lot of the Americans reckon the Koreans were a rubbish army. They were good fighters. They get scared like everybody, but the Yanks give this impression, nothing scares me.

31:00 But they certainly run when they want to. They were on a system, the more you were in the front line, the more points you get so the quicker you get home. If you was a bloke driving a truck, you could be there forever. Very few were up in the front line, which were mostly black. You'd get home earlier if you lived long enough.

When you were in hospital

31:30 **in Japan, what were they doing to your knees?**

They were doing tests. They said they couldn't see anything broken. It turned out that it formed an arthritis thing and the knees, when I came back, the knees just fell apart. Just out of the blue.

32:00 I tripped over the phone wires and split the inside of my mouth. Scotty said, "I'll take you down to the MO." I've got me hand over me mouth. Scotty said, "He's cut his mouth. Can you stitch him up?" "I'm just about to have my lunch."

32:30 He had this needle and thread and dipped it in his soup and then seven stitches through the bottom lip. I nearly went through the roof. "Try not to get hurt when I'm having my lunch next time." The orderly who did my knees up, he got killed. So did the cook. They came up again, "You and you,

33:00 in that jeep. Off you go." It was Danny Kaye, putting on a concert. About 20 mile back. It was great. Watched the concert. Got in the jeep to come home, three of us in the back and two of us in the front and hear crack and he fell forward and his brains are in my lap. A sniper got him. The bloke driving the jeep, he planted his foot.

33:30 That's how it happened. One minute you're standing up and the next minute you're not.

How did you bury bodies?

Most of the time we didn't bury bodies. If there was a Chinese attacks and we'd copped quite a few of them, by the morning

34:00 they'd collected them themselves. If not, we just left them there. But our own were taken by stretcher bearers back. I never saw Louis. That was it, they took him away and I never saw him again. The Yanks they bring in a helicopter and away. We were put on a jeep or an ambulance

34:30 or two blokes carrying a stretcher for a couple of miles to get back to where you're supposed to be.

Was there a padre?

Yeah, Sky Pilot we called him. I only saw him once. He was from the Scottish Salvation Army. "How are you lads? Keep up the good work." Gone. We never saw a cameraman, yet I got pictures over here taken on 355.

- 35:00 Never saw a cameraman. One of the things we did see that was amazing. They used to put out a newspaper called the Stars and Stripes, something like that, and
- 35:30 we looked up and this cloud was the head of Christ. Perfect in every detail. We sat there for ages watching it. It was front page on this Stars and Stripes.
- 36:00 It was a big image of Christ's head with thorns round his head. Beautiful sight.
- Did it make you feel creepy?**
- It did. Perhaps he's looking down on us. There must be a Jesus.
- 36:30 **What did the Stars and Stripes article say about it?**
- Said it was a miracle. Never been known before to see that image. Just this one big cloud. It didn't move. Must have been there for half an hour then it started to disintegrate.
- 37:00 I wasn't religious by a long way.
- Did it give you any thoughts about religion?**
- 37:30 No. When I was in Germany I went on a religious course in the Black Forest. It was quite interesting. How the world begun. It was about three days. Good food and sleeping in. Anything that gets you off doing something, you grab.
- This padre that you saw**
- 38:00 **once, was there anyone else?**
- No, never saw anyone else. Only saw the medical officer that did my knees and other than that I saw one medical bloke, the Yank that gave us the salt tablets. Candy covered salt tablets. The English ones were great big things you couldn't even get them in your mouth.
- 38:30 **Any more interactions with the locals?**
- In Japan they were very friendly. We went into a silk shop and highly polished floors. Apparently you're supposed to take your boots off. Chap was going, "Thank you."
- 39:00 We thought afterwards, I bet he was cursing us. To make matters worse we knocked over a bottle of ink and it went all over the silk. Any other shopkeeper anywhere else, he'd have strangled you. The brothel was funny
- 39:30 at Teramura. Walls are made of thin paper and they slide. Somebody would go thwack, "I can see you." Then all of a sudden, crash, and blokes are running. The MPs are here. They're running through the walls to get out. We weren't supposed to be in there.

Tape 7

- 00:38 **We were talking about those brothels.**
- Only one. It's called the White House, just outside the gate of the battle school.
- How big was it?**
- About twice the size of this place. Only one level.
- 01:00 **What were the papa-san and mama-san like?**
- Very quiet, very friendly. When I left the hospital I walked into Kure and Mama-san said, "Boy, boy. You want nice girl? You want nice man? You want little girl? You want
- 01:30 little boy?" No thank you. I don't want anything. You just go in the house if you did.
- Were there brothels for - ?**
- Every house was a brothel if they wanted it to be. That's how they earned money. And the whole family would take part.
- Were there brothels for gay men?**
- I don't know. Wouldn't have a clue. That was before my time.
- 02:00 We used to call them poofers and the only two we saw was on the boat coming over. They were a couple of stewards and they went out to one of the places we docked at, they went out all say, dolled up with rouge and lipstick. Finished up copping a good hiding.

What were the girls like in the brothel?

If you got one without gold teeth, they weren't bad.

- 02:30 They weren't old. I suppose 18 or 19. Very nice. Nice skin because they all seem to have nice skins till they get to mama-sans and then they look like they've been smoked.

How did they flirt?

They don't flirt. They just come up and say, "You want sex? Come with me. How much?" That was it. Done, finished.

- 03:00 The only flirting you'd get is if you went to a beer hall and all she was worried about was the more you drank, the more money she'd get. You had to pay to dance with her. The more times you dance, the more money she'd get. But in that course of dancing and drinking, and you said, "What about - ?" off you'd go. You didn't have to beat about the bush.

- 03:30 **What was it like in the room?**

Very clean, very tidy. You're on a floor with a thing to rest your head on.

Would it just be sex or would there be talking?

When we had the hotel in Japan, we had a proper bath and everything and a proper bed. She said, "If you want to take me out you can, if not I got to stay here."

- 04:00 Other than that we just got on with it. I used to like the bath. That was good.

Did any of the men fall for the girls?

Some of them did. One of our vets married one. She died a couple of years ago now. I don't know how it worked out to get them back to England or Australia. He was Australian. He's our treasurer.

- 04:30 **What did the men generally think of the Japanese women?**

They think they're lovely. This fellow says they leave Australian women for dead. Of course, that don't go down too well with the rest of the blokes.

After a period of relaxation what was it like to go back?

Terrible.

- 05:00 You'd go back and think, back again to the mud or the snow or the heat. Backed to tinned food and no water. Jean sent me a parcel one Christmas. Bloody Chinaman got it. I never got it. There was cake and biscuits, but I never got it.

- 05:30 Somebody said the mail truck had been captured at a certain time. There was a battle going on. Everybody lost out on their mail. We'd get mail probably every three weeks perhaps. If we were lucky. The Stars and Stripes newspaper, in a year I suppose we saw four copies.

- 06:00 There wasn't, other than patrols, on guard or digging, there wasn't a lot to do. At the time, we didn't know that the armistice talks were going on. They didn't tell us that. Because we'd gone right up near the Chinese border and the first thing we heard, we're going back.

- 06:30 to Panmunjom. "The President of the United States says that if we go any closer the Chinese and the Russians will join the fight." "What are you talking about? We've been fighting the Chinese for 12 months." "That's the law, that's what's going to happen." So they moved us back. Our place was the Samichon Valley. That's where we stuck. When they

- 07:00 decided to bring the truce thing in, Royal Norfolks just left and another regiment took over. Royal Fusiliers took over and there was just one more battle. That was the battle of the Hook and that was it. They tried to grab the Hook before the armistice thing was signed. It didn't work out. Quite a few blokes lost on the Hook.

- 07:30 The Black Watch was in it. The Royal Fusiliers lost 65 I think it was. I don't know how many the Black Watch lost. Derek who got taken prisoner, he said it was bloody terrible. I'd gone by then.

Tell us about guard duty.

It was two hours on and four off if you were lucky. You could do your two hours on

- 08:00 and somebody says, "Stand to." Chinese were coming or something was happening. So you could be awake all night. Other nights you could go and have four hours sleep. Somebody would forget to wake you and you'll probably get six hours. Of course, if you're caught asleep, you get shot. You're not endangering yourself, you're endangering

- 08:30 everybody else. They'd shoot you on the spot. Asleep on duty, on active service.

Who would?

The officer. Whoever's in charge. The Leicester Regiment, when the Kings Own Scottish Borderers lost 355, we thought we're going to go forward now, see if we can take it. They said, "No. We're going to bring in the Leicestershire regiment

09:00 down this side of Bunker Hill, and they're going to attack it and they're going up there." So they did. Five times they went up and five times they got knocked back. Half a dozen of them said, "Forget it. We ain't going back up there." The officer said, "Are you refusing to go back up the hill?" "Yes." Bang, bang, bang, bang. Shot them. Six of them. Deserted in the face of the enemy. No trial, nothing. They were a goner. That was it.

09:30 **Did you see this?**

Yeah. From Bunker Hill, we could see them down there. Scotty saw them with a range finder and he said, "There's trouble down here. There's an officer waving a pistol about." Next thing we heard the shots go off and the blokes dropped.

What did you think of this?

I was run up there backwards.

Did you think of it as murder?

You couldn't

10:00 call it anything else could you? He was an officer. If he be 21 he'd be getting on a bit. Straight out of bloody Sandhurst. Telling blokes, some of them could have been regular soldiers. They could have been national servicemen, we don't know. But if they'd gone up there five times and they can't get up because they were being shot at or mortared, you'd say, "We'll give it a rest for a while. We'll try again later." He was looking for glory

10:30 for himself. "My men took the hill." They never did take the thing because they took Bunker Hill off us instead.

Did you ever hear of what the Americans called 'fragging', killing officers?

No. We had a bloke called Sparrow. Cockney fellow, come from the East End of London. We'd only just arrived in Korea, sitting on top of this hill not knowing what to do or where to go

11:00 and he said, "Look, it's the RSM." His name was Gilchrist. "I bet I could get him from here." We said, "You couldn't shoot him from here Sparrow. You're not big enough." He picked up the rifle and whoomp. He missed him. Up came the RSM. "Who fired that shot?" Sparrow said, "I did sir." "You fired to hit me?" "Yes sir."

11:30 "I've come half way around the world to fight some Chinamen and I get you, you short-arsed thing, trying to shoot me. And you missed me. I've got a good mind to send you home. You're useless to me out here if you can't hit me that close." And walked away. He could have got locked up for life. That was the RSM. He was a lovely bloke.

12:00 **Why would he want to kill him then?**

He was a lovely bloke in Korea but he wasn't too good when he wasn't. It was the same with all the RSMs and officers. They might have been very strict when they're outside, because they know that they can quite easily get shot by someone other than the Chinaman. We had a bloke called Sergeant Major Boxhall. He had these prisoners, our own blokes,

12:30 they were doing field punishment and he got them putting this barbed wire up. He come along, "Get a move on." And started waving his cane about, and a bloke hit him round the head with a pick handle. He finished up doing 18 months. Some, you'd throw a grenade down there, if you killed him

13:00 they wouldn't know it was you. Or they could say he stepped on a mine. That's why they were so happy to see you. But he looked after us wonderful. He'd get ammunition up to us when it was running short and we'd wonder where the next lot was coming from. He'd get food up to us. That was his job of course. When we got lost and he found us, he'd

13:30 talk about my long lost sons. He was all over us. Because we were the machine gun section he thought we were special

14:00 and they left us.

What is the British Army like as a class structure?

You start off as a private, lance corporal that's one stripe. Full corporal's two stripes and sergeant. The full corporal thinks he's God when you first go in and do your basic training;

14:30 you very rarely see sergeants. It's all full corporals and they're running around telling you do this, do

that. When you get to the regiment, lance corporal's just like a private, nothing. The corporal's a bit better. Then the sergeants take over and the sergeant majors take over. In the British Army of course, the main thing is discipline. Discipline,

15:00 smartness. Making sure that everything's done the right way. Your barrack room has to be just perfect. The officers in the Royal Fusiliers wear white gloves, and they come round and run their fingers along window sill or ledge. Put this room on a charge because he got a few spots on his gloves. But virtually brainwashing more than anything else, because the more

15:30 they have a go at you, the more it sinks in. Eventually you're looking for any least little thing. You get a leather army boot and you have to flatten out the eye holes for the laces and then polish them. They had brass under there. Chip the black paint off, flatten them and then polish them.

Did you have to continue these things?

Not when you're out in the – you were

16:00 lucky if you got a wash. Another thing we did was when you turned your boot up, you polished inside where the studs went. You polished the leather sole.

How did they continue these types of things in the field?

The things that you learnt in those 12 months was that if somebody said, "Run," you ran. You didn't say, "What for?" As soon as the word of

16:30 command was given you done it straight away and that was all the method of getting it into you. Same as the machine gun. You had to take the machine gun to pieces and put it together blindfold. If it broke down in night time, you can't say, "Give us a torch." You feel it and put it together. You'd do it over and over again, so you know it in your sleep.

What was the class structure like

17:00 **in the army? Did you notice working class, upper class?**

Oh yeah. You get second lieutenants were from Eton, Harrow, Winchester, those sort of schools. They thought they were God's gift to the army. Then you get the lieutenant, two pips. He thought he was like a private and then you get the captain thinks all the rest of the

17:30 army is no good, only him. Then you get the major with the crown, they seemed to be fatherly types. Then of course you get the adjutant and the CO and the CO, the ones I knew, were fatherly type blokes. Our RSM, 20 odd years in the army and you couldn't pull any tricks on him. They knew every trick in the book. People used to go for a medical and they'd be

18:00 foaming at the mouth. He'd say, "Next time you foam at the mouth, use Sunlight soap, don't use that other soap, it don't foam as much." He knew what they were up to. People had done it years before we'd come along. Privates, unless you was high school

18:30 and never left till you were 16 or 17, they used to take the mickey out of them and say, "You came in the army before you could go to Oxford, did you?" Most of the lads left school at 14 like I did. We all got on well together. We found that if there was a football match on and there was an officer playing, you made sure you kicked him even if he was on your side.

19:00 **Did the class structure in the British Army ever anger you?**

No, it never bothers. In Germany we had this ten mile cross country and if we could pass an officer or a sergeant, it was fantastic, because this fellow used to win every week without fail, was black and he was a colour sergeant, wears the red sash across.

19:30 But we'd beaten officers and we'd beaten other people and that was good enough.

What was your pay?

Thirty bob [shillings] a week. We never got extra for going overseas or active service. Other countries got active service pay and they got more pay and we got nothing. Out of that 30 bob we

20:00 had to send 10 bob home a week to somebody to put it in the bank for you, so you had to live on a pound a week. 1950s you had a pound, it was a lot of money, but still not as much. Australians were getting three times as much as we were. God knows what the Yanks were getting.

How did that make you feel?

Terrible. What with the English rations of dark chocolate and hard biscuits. Out here fighting for somebody and

20:30 we're getting treated like peasants.

How did they keep the differences between the different ranks in the British Army?

Again, discipline, because a second lieutenant would have a go at the sergeant and the sergeant would have a go at the corporal and the corporal would have a go at the lance corporal and the lance corporal would have a go at the rest of

21:00 the lads. Scotty was a corporal but he wouldn't wear his stripes because they picked him to do a job.

Was there much mixing between the - ?

Oh, yeah. You weren't allowed in the sergeants' mess of course. But corporals and the lance corporals come into the canteen or the mess the

21:30 ordinary soldiers had. We were called Fusiliers. That's one rank above a private because you're the Lord Mayor's own regiment. We had Corporal Pilbeam, he was in the room with me and Sandy. We just shared everything, the cleaning.

22:00 Sergeants used to have their own area where they slept, but lance corporals, you can be a lance corporal unpaid and if you get paid, might get nine pence a week more for wearing that stripe, but you got to take all the crap from everybody else.

Take us through your role as a machine gunner.

A machine gun is

22:30 on a tripod with a wheel that elevates it up or down, then you got a compass thing on the side and you can dial it for whatever angle you want to go to and then to make sure you've covered that angle, when you're firing you just give a tap,

23:00 three taps this way and three taps that way, and you covered an area of 200 yards. When you've got six guns, you've got six guns virtually firing like that. So wherever you're firing from, you're all firing together, you're going to cop them, unless you were doing harassing fire, which we did at night. You could

23:30 see the Chinese across the valley and give them harassing fire so they can't rest. Just keeping them awake, but in return they'd start shelling us, keep us awake.

What's it like for your mentality going through that constant - ?

24:00 Well, you start to, "Is that coming? Hear that? No." You're always listening and we adopted a Korean boy, Kim. His mother and father and family had been killed, we found him wandering. 17 he was. He come on stag with me. "I go on with Mr Ted." Always called me Mr Ted. He'd stand there, "They're coming."

24:30 "I can't hear anything." "They come now." Next minute the burp guns would go off, it would be the Chinamen. How he knew they were coming I'll never know, but he was magnificent. But he'd only go on stag with me. Wouldn't go on with anybody else.

Why do you think he got on well with you?

I don't know. I treated him like I would anybody else.

25:00 Some of the other blokes used to push him and shove him around. Because he was a Korean they didn't know he was north or south. That was their attitude. I used to feed him with some of my rations. Nobody complained about him staying with us.

25:30 He used to help. He used to carry ammunition and he'd do some washing if we had some water.

What was he like?

Tall, thin fellow. Never found exactly how old he was, but found out he was coming as a refugee and they got hit, strafed by the aircraft

26:00 and killed his mother, his father and his sister and his brother and a little baby. He just wandered off till he found us. Very pleasant fellow. He'd say, "Time to go on stag, Mr Ted?" Wake me up, off we'd go.

26:30 Sergeant would come along and say, "Kim with you?" "Yeah." "Righto."

They tolerated this?

Yeah. Kim was with me all the time I was on the Samichon Valley. That would have been about six months. When I left, he just disappeared. Never saw him. Probably hooked up with somebody else.

27:00 The French Canadians, this bloke had his own army.

Would he tell you much about himself?

No. Only that he'd lost his mother and father and sister and brother and the baby.

What were his mannerisms like?

He was, I'd say, well educated by the way he spoke and the way he acted. Very pleasant. We had a reunion down here on the Gold Coast about five years ago, at a meeting place for Koreans and I went to their meeting and this Australian fellow, Foster, he was

27:30 wanting some money. He presented the Koreans with a picture of Kapyong. He wanted money to bring this old lady from Korea who was looking after the cemetery at Kapyong. At the time nobody took any notice. We found out there's no cemetery at Kapyong. There's no old lady who gave up half her rice paddy.

28:00 It all went in his pocket. At the same meeting and this Korean fellow came over and said, "That man know you."

28:30 "You know me? Where?" "Korea."

29:00 Said "Your name Mr Ted." "Yeah." Nobody at that meeting knew I was called Mr Ted and ever since that we go to the Korea community dos [events], I'm still Mr Ted.

Did you ask him?

He went back.

29:30 They'd brought over half a dozen South Koreans and one of them turned out to be a North Korean, just to join in the celebration. This bloke had a black leather jacket on. We said "Where you from?" He said "North Korea." We said "Were you in the war?" He didn't say he was a kid, or grown up, or what. And he looked about the same age as us, so

30:00 it was a bit peculiar. "That's funny. A North Korean. What's he doing here?" And the other five were from South Korea. But they'd bring over kids, singing and dancing, and choirs, They'd bring over their own soft drinks, their own food. They put on a bloody good show, every year, 25th of June.

30:30 **How was the gun pit set up?**

If you dug a square hole, but instead of digging a section out there, you leave it six- eight inches down you leave a square and that's where the tripod sits, then you can walk up either side or the back because the gun is sitting on the tripod,

31:00 going through a little gap. You've built yourself a roof over the top. You've got enough room for number one behind the gun, number two feeding the ammunition in and number three sorting out the ammunition and the water.

31:30 A cone goes over the front of the gun and it stops the flash being seen.

How deep is the pit?

Deep enough for me to stand in, with me head just missing the top.

32:00 The bit that you're walking around, you're looking at six, seven foot. The bit you leave would be four foot six high. Like a square box you've dumped in the middle.

How do you protect the front?

You don't. It's open. You make a slit and you get trees and put one across the top,

32:30 one across the bottom, some along the side and soil over it. Hope nobody don't throw a grenade in there because you can't get out all that quick. If you want to get to get out quick you can only get out the back way.

33:00 You get as many tree trunks as you can, put rocks on top, ground sheet over that and then cover it with soil. Ground sheet keeps the water out and hope the tree trunks don't break.

What's it like if an enemy is doing a charge towards it?

You're just sitting there.

33:30 You can see that angle and the next gun can see that angle so you've covered a mile from there to there without swinging the gun about.

What's the feeling like as an enemy approaches?

The feeling is like you get very sweaty hands because you hold it like that then press the thumb piece.

34:00 Got the steam coming out the water, like working in a boiler room.

Is it a scary feeling as well?

You wonder are they going to keep running or are you hitting them or are they ducking the bullets. It gets a bit confusing. "They're still coming. Is the other guns firing?"

34:30 Then if it stops, a jam, "Get the bloody thing fixed."

Were there occasions where you were overrun?

No. The only time was when I fell down the side because we were getting mortared. We headed down the side of the mountain and I fell off.

35:00 Lucky I didn't have the gun with me, or I would have missed the rocks altogether and gone straight down about 100 feet. I was scared lots of times, but also enjoyed it. There was your mates, and you had a laugh.

35:30 When we knew we'd taken this hill or that hill, we'd stopped this charge, it was great, fantastic. "You can't beat us. We're Londoners." Although we were in the Norfolk regiment.

Did the British fight differently to the other forces there?

It was certainly different to the Americans.

36:00 They had all the modern equipment. They had all the help they wanted. Australians would be similar to us. Australians were more sort of couldn't care less. Greeks, absolute crap.

36:30 I liked the South Korea army, the ROK Army. When 355 was being attacked, a piper stood up all night playing the bagpipes. No one took a shot at him and it frightened the life out of the Chinese. They called him a devil in a skirt. It was bloody eerie.

37:00 Frightened the life out of us, never mind the Chinamen. Until they lost the hill. The Kings Own Scottish Borders are more like Australians. They couldn't care less. They drank like fish and fight anybody especially when they've had a few beers. I came home with Speakman and we go to Singapore,

37:30 the Union Jack club and there'd been a soccer match before we got there and the military police got beaten. Everybody was enjoying themselves. The door opened and it was Speakman. "I'll fight anybody in the bar," and the place just erupted and he went.

38:00 He went back to England. Every time he went in the gate, the guard has to turn out if you're a VC [Victoria Cross] winner, so he went in the back gate, out the back one making sure the guard turned out. Absolute idiot. His CO was in Brisbane, Ernie Monroe. Asked him, "How's your boy?" "He's inside, attempted murder of his missus." And he married the colonel's daughter.

38:30 **Would anyone else wear kilts?**

No. The Irish might do, but not as much as the Scots.

39:00 **I mean apart from the piper?**

Oh, yeah. Not when they're fighting of course, but they'd wear the kilt if they're on leave or in the camp. But not in Korea. The King's Own Scottish Borderers wore trews. They don't wear kilts, only the piper.

39:30 We had a joke about the Australians and their bayonets. They reckoned they were fined a quid for every inch it was out the scabbard if it was in the barrack room.

Tape 8

00:37 **Take me through step by step of a night patrol.**

You started off by somebody saying, "You, you, you, you're on patrol tonight, so get your head down now. Get some sleep."

01:00 When it was time to go, if it was a fighting patrol, when you went looking for trouble, there'd be 25 or more. If it was just looking for anything, it would be less. You made sure that your boots were done up, you had everything sorted out, ammunition, weapon, whatever you needed and

01:30 you go down through the wire into the valley, because the only patrols I did was in the Samichon Valley and whoever was leading it, provided it wasn't Mr Wormhole, you probably follow a path that was followed most nights. You just went through the long grass

02:00 till you come to the river and either go across the river or stay this side and hoped you didn't meet anything on the way. And hoped that nobody followed you back because they'd get right back to the wire and then attack and of course, you're in trouble then because you're being shot from both sides, behind and in front of you. The only other time I was absolutely petrified when

02:30 about two or three hundred Chinese walked this way, and between me and them was the long grass. They were rabbiting away, not any chance of being quiet. We stood frozen to the spot and when we

come back, they were going back. Passed them again and it was pure luck we didn't bash into one another. If there had only been a few of them we could have had a ding dong, but too many.

03:00 "On you go, back home." You had to find out if they'd moved any of their positions or whether they'd put any more wire up. Then when we went out looking for the prisoner, you had to get real close and that was always a worry. "They're going to spot us any minute now." When you

03:30 hit the bloke, you hoped he didn't shout out.

What was the worry with mine fields?

They're not marked of course. You could step on a mine as easy as anything. These ones with the prongs sticking up, the wires went from here to another one there and so it was like having a net on the ground. Once you tripped that wire, they go everywhere. You had to be very careful.

04:00 You might get somebody go out and make the path, to make sure that when you're going out, you're on that path. If you stepped off it and you set the mines off, you're gone.

How did you know where the British mines were?

We used to mark ours. They were marked, mine field. Red

04:30 tag on it. We'd have a map of where our mines were laid, so when we left our position, we knew we had to go down between that wire, turn right there, then left until we got into the valley and then it was anybody's business where their mines were. There might not have been any but you'd just have to watch out. You don't walk along scraping your feet or kicking stuff.

05:00 That's why it took all night to go from there to back again. By the time you got back it was almost daylight, yet you left when the sun went down. It's a long time out there and it wasn't a great big valley. We could see the Chinese from where we were, you'd see them lighting their fires, where we lit our fires in the bunker or

05:30 behind the hill. They couldn't care less, they just lit them anywhere they liked. You're making your way across the valley and you see those fires. You had to take it very slowly.

How would you communicate with each other on patrol?

Radio.

Within the patrol?

Tap on the shoulder.

Were there different non verbal signs?

06:00 Officer might turn round and tap his head and you all go to him.

What weapons did you take with you on patrol?

Usually somebody would have a Bren gun. He usually followed the officer, because the

06:30 officer only had a pistol. In Mr Wormhole's case he only had a shotgun. Then the riflemen would have rifles and bayonets and some of the sergeants might have Sten guns, an automatic gun. That was it. You had your bayonet. You could knife somebody.

07:00 The English bayonet was like a proper knife. Though it fixed on the rifle it was like a knife. Riflemen, it was just a case of bang. We had a sergeant or other people could use a Sten gun. But the Chinese had a burp gun. Peculiar thing. Made a noise like a burp-burp-burp and you knew it was a Chinamen then.

07:30 **Who would decide when you went on a night patrol?**

That comes from the battalion H

Intelligence would go, "We should go and see what's going on over there." You had no say in it. You'd just find out, four o'clock in the afternoon that you're going on patrol and you're going to meet up with this patrol and that patrol and

08:00 **it then becomes a fighting patrol, so now you're looking for trouble.**

What's the terrain like to move through?

Terrible. It's like mountainous. Then you get a valley, but it's not even, sort of up and down. Then you get elephant grass, long stuff.

08:30 Get scrub, trees. We went to Townsville on a trip into rain forest. I was terrified. I kept looking to see if anything was going to jump out the bushes at me. I had to come back out.

09:00 It come back like a flash. You've got to be quick enough to fire. No good saying, "I saw him coming but I

didn't do anything about it." You got to know where the noise comes from and react.

09:30 For people to say they're not scared, it's rubbish. Your heart's beating nineteen to the dozen. "We going to meet anybody? Are we going to get shot at?" You're not happy until you get back and somebody says, "Right lads, get your head down. Have a cup of tea."

10:00 "The whole world could drop in now. I don't care. I'm back." I'm in my bunker.

When you first went to Korea, how long did they tell you you'd be there for?

Till my time was up, which was following September. Being a National Serviceman,

10:30 I had to come out the following September. I went in September '50 and I had to come out September '52. Only I was a bit late coming out, because things happen and they forget about time, I think. The only advantage you get is they take you out of the line seven days before your due

11:00 to go home on the boat. You've got to get from there to Pusan to collect the boat. It takes two days on the train and coming back we were on a truck. So that seven days turned out about two days you're out of danger. That was the excuse they gave you.

By the stage you were nearing the end of

11:30 **your time, what were your feelings about the war or what you were fighting for?**

I hope something don't happen before I leave here. People were getting killed still. That was the main thought. When you first went it didn't bother you, but, "How long you got to go Ted?" We not all left at the same time. Fellows went

12:00 in the army different times, but to go to Korea, you had to have 12 months left of your time to do. Derek arrived on his 19th birthday so it left him 12 months to do. He got taken prisoner and did an extra 18 months and never got paid. They said he wasn't taking any active part in the war.

12:30 They didn't pay him. Only the British do that sort of thing. I finished up going to the High Court of England for my knees because it happened there. They sent reports back that I wasn't even in the army. I asked for my medical report and they said, we can't give it to you, we'll give it to your local doctor.

13:00 They sent it to the local doctor and it wasn't even mine. Won the case, because I had 22 witnesses, some of them were dead, but that's how many people were there when I fell. They said, "You've won the case but you're not going to get anything." Then the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs]

13:30 here in Queensland gave me a white card, if anything happens to me knees now, I can get it done through DVA. But British government never gave me a penny.

As leaving approached, did you care what happened to the country?

No, long as I was out.

What were your feelings about Communism?

The first time

14:00 I got home, I took my Mum and Dad shopping in London near Edgeware and Dad was a fellow that never went in the shops. He'd always stand outside and wait. Fellow said, "Do you want to buy the Daily Worker, good Communist newspaper?" I went whack. I've been 12 months fighting those buggers and he comes up trying to sell me a paper.

14:30 That's the problem I've got now, anger. And that only started, it really came to life about eight years ago. I got up one morning very early and I said, "I'm going to kill myself."

15:00 I don't remember saying this, but Jean said I was dressed, ready. What I didn't know, I didn't have the car keys. She rang DVA and they sent a counsellor down and we sat here for hours. She took me to the Gold Coast hospital. None of this, I remember. The only thing I remember is these six people in white coats in the hospital and they said,

15:30 "We're doctors. You tried to commit suicide." I said, "Come off it. What have I got to commit suicide for?" They said, "You can't go anywhere."

16:00 "No way I would commit suicide. Ask my wife. Ask my sons." Barry the oldest bloke came down from Brisbane and they said, "Well," this is about seven o'clock at night, I've been in there since about seven o'clock in the morning, they said, "We'll let you home as long as you promise

16:30 you will not harm yourself." I said, "You've got to be bloody joking. Why would I want to harm myself?" They said, "You tried to the day - " I said, "I've only got your word for it. Nobody else has told me I did this." They said, "Your wife knows." I said, "She doesn't." "Your son knows." I said, "He doesn't. Do you Barry?" "Afraid so." So they brought me home and then sent me up to Greenslopes.

- 17:00 I stayed there for five days and they started me on drugs and had all these sessions of the psychiatrist. The first drug they put me on was Zoloft. It didn't seem to make much difference. Then they changed it to another one which was a bit better. And then about three years ago, Christmas, they put me on this new one,
- 17:30 and it changed my life completely. He said, "It works on some blokes and not on others." The local GP [General Practitioner] said, "You ought to change. You can't keep on the same one." I went and saw him last Friday, Doctor John Gibson, Greenslopes, and he said, "No, no," he said. "You're doing too well for me to change it," he said. "I could change it and you could go backwards." So I said, "Right, I'll keep on it."
- 18:00 The only thing is you can't use alcohol with it. You can't drink. I wasn't going to believe him but I saw another bloke on it and he fell everywhere. He was throwing up. God, what a mess he was in. He only had a mouthful, out of a stubby [375 ml bottle]. I said, "No, I'll keep off the grog." Because being a rep I was entertaining and drinking. Not
- 18:30 alcoholic, but having me share. But as soon as I saw this fellow, thought that's enough for me. You've proved it, mate. I go there every six weeks now, to Greenslopes, just to see Doctor John. Jean has to keep a diary of what's happened and how I've performed. I lose my temper very quickly.

What sort of things make you angry?

- 19:00 We had a case not long ago, where I pulled up outside the office, Jean got out to go and see if there was any mail and a fellow walked out, and he popped his head in the car window and said, "Why the effing hell don't you park inside the door and be done with it?" I said, "I beg your pardon?" And he'd walked round my side by then. He said, "You effing people, you want to park any where you like." I couldn't get out of the car quick enough.
- 19:30 I grabbed hold of him, I said, "See this? I'll stick it right up your nostrils. You talk to me like that. What difference does it make to you whether I park here, here, over there or even put the bloody thing in the air? Just mind your own business or I'll break you in half." Rob the manager and the manageress, she said, "We weren't coming out." And Jean wasn't coming out. She said, "You looked like you could have killed him." I said, "I bloody would have done if he'd fought back."
- 20:00 But he just backed off and went.

Why do things like that set you off now?

Guilty. The kids and women.

- 20:30 Sorry about that.

It's okay.

Tell me about your trip home from Korea?

- We left Pusan on a boat called [HMS] Devonshire which was a tub. We got to Hong Kong and the boiler blew up. They took us off that and put us on a boat called the [HMT] Empire Pride. I'm not exaggerating. You could
- 21:30 stand at the side of the boat and just about touch the water, that's how small it was and low it was in the water. We came home with another regiment, the Northumberland Fusiliers. They were a complete regiment. We were just odds and bods that were due to go home. It was a good trip home although I was seasick again.
- 22:00 Not as much. We stopped off at different ports. One port they weren't going to change the money when you got back on the boat, so I had 15 bob left and I bought 15 bob's worth of pineapples. Armfuls. By the time I finished eating them, mouth was split both sides.
- 22:30 It was a good trip home until we got to England. Must have been at least 2000 on the boat. We slept in hammocks. Going out we went on a boat called the [HMT Empire] Orwell, which was an ex German boat and it was like a luxury liner.
- 23:00 We had proper bunk beds, but on the way back we had to put hammocks up every night and sleep across the tables that we were having our breakfast on the next morning. When we got to England, these fellows got on and give us this information. Out of all those people, the train was waiting to leave the station, the Customs had my gear out all over the bloody floor.
- 23:30 The whole lot. Nobody else. They didn't find anything that I shouldn't have. They did help me put it together again. The train had to wait till I was ready. Got on the train. All the lads are shouting, "Late again, Erssie!" Got on the train. We went to Norwich, off the train on to a bus, up to Britannia Barracks.
- 24:00 This officer said to us, "You can sleep there. You can have a feed down there and breakfast there in the morning. I'll see you." Off he went. Next morning we had breakfast, reported to the office. They gave us a railway warrant to get home with and whatever pay we had left, and said, "Righto. We don't want to see you again." No counselling, nothing.

- 24:30 Spent a year in Korea and nobody don't want to know about it. Jean said, all the time I was over there, there was nothing on the radio, in the newspapers. Korea didn't exist because the government of England classed it as a police action. That's one of the reasons we didn't get extra pay. Everybody else
- 25:00 did. They're still arguing now, today. They're talking about giving the blokes extra money. Half the buggers are dead.

What did it feel like to arrive home?

Was glad to be home, but the attitude of people you spoke to. "Where you been?" "Korea." "Oh, there. Another holiday." That's their attitude because they knew nothing about Korea.

- 25:30 It was only the people who had somebody in the services who happened to be there, like the Gloucesters and the Middlesex regiment who took heavy casualties, knew that their sons or their brothers were in an action. Everybody else in England thought it was a bloody birthday party. It was lovely. I got in all sorts of arguments with people eventually. When I started with Schweppes, "Here comes
- 26:00 Ted, the Gook." Because they called Koreans Gooks. "You went playing soldiers with those Gooks, didn't you." No idea. When you start fighting back they want to argue that you're angry and you're vicious and all this crap. The British government doesn't say it was a shooting war and there was people killed, lots
- 26:30 of them. We lost 1100 dead, 2000 wounded and 800 prisoners. That's just the British Army. Over all, on both sides, there was six million casualties in three years.

Over time, did more become known about the Korea War?

No.

- 27:00 Even now, when I went back to England, I went back to a regimental reunion at the Tower, they all know about it. They lost 60 odd people. But other people, Jean's cousin went in the army, he never left London. "What did you do?" I said,
- 27:30 "I was in the Korea." "Where's Korea?" No idea.

Did shows like M*A*S*H [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] change people's... "

They, most of the British people I think, think that's just a show they put on the telly. MASH was a name they'd come up with for a battle somewhere, they don't exist. If you was out there, MASH was nothing like

- 28:00 what it was like. It might have been on the American side but nowhere else it was like that. If we got transported on a stretcher, it was on the front or the back of the jeep. But the Yanks had helicopters everywhere. You were lucky if the surgeon had a needle and thread.

What was it like seeing Jean again?

Fantastic.

- 28:30 Her Mum said, "He won't come back. He won't want to marry you when he comes back." Her Dad was alright but she was a shocker. She didn't like me from the day she met me to the day she died. Yet she was a magnificent cook.
- 29:00 Her brother was in the air force. He trained as a pilot in Canada and they brought him back to England and they had no aeroplanes left in the Battle of Britain. So he went to the Cocos Islands, was intercepting Japanese messages for the rest of the war and he finished up a QC [Queen's Counsel]. Died last year. We went over for his 75th birthday.
- 29:30 And he got up one morning, getting breakfast and his wife said, "I heard this bang. I come out and George was lying on the floor, dead as a dodo." He had diabetes, and his doctor said, "George, you've got to stop drinking Scotch. Doing you no good." So I said, "What happened?" He said, "I drank brandy. He didn't say brandy, did he?" But nice bloke. Very nice.
- 30:00 Jo his wife, she's nice. Got a daughter who was a ballet dancer. She's been in The Sound Of Music and one of her cousins was a ballet dancer. And Roy Castle, I don't know if you've heard of him. He was a British comedian, he was the best man and she was in all sorts of shows. Now her daughter is touring America as a dancer.
- 30:30 The whole family turned up for George's birthday. "Hello, Ted, how are you?" I get on ever so well with the rest of the family. Her mother, "Him again."

What stage was your relationship at with Jean when you got back?

We got married in '53. We'd been going out with one another since we were 15.

31:00 We'd known one another for a long time. I said, "Let's get engaged." She said, "No, you're going away. Blokes go away and they come back and they ain't got the same feelings. Let's wait." So we waited. Then I come home and we got engaged and got married. We got married

31:30 21st of March which is first day of spring in England. We got married at Lambeth Palace, the Archbishop of Canterbury's residence. It was good. All my family turned up. We had about 110 at the reception and I drank milk.

Why was that?

I wanted to know what was happening.

32:00 Scotty was there and Sandy was there and a couple of the other lads were there. I thought, get me as full as a booty and I won't know what's happening.

Tell me about your decision to come to Australia.

We were going to come ten years earlier and Jean's Mum, "You're not going to Australia."

32:30 So we left it. I was telling Jean about Sister Nicholson and how good it was in Australia. We agreed. Ten years later we did everything. Went to

33:00 Australia House, had the medicals, had the interviews, got the time we were leaving and then told them. The mother wouldn't come to the airport. My Mum and Dad come to the airport and my brother and quite a few people.

33:30 First time I went back, when my Dad was sick, I went to her brother's house.

34:00 When you got to Australia, when did you think about any involvement in any Korea associations or Anzac Day?

I

34:30 have been a member for about nine or ten years down here, at Twin Towns, that's when I started RSL [Returned and Services League] and I picked up the paper and saw a Korean giving medals to somebody. I didn't know there was any Koreans down here.

35:00 I rang the paper and they said, the Korea community have a meeting once a year on the anniversary of the start of the war. They don't do the end. Got a letter saying, you're invited to the 25th, to

35:30 the Korea community where they presented me with this medal. Great big thing. Somebody asked if I was a member of the Korea Vets and I said, no. "We have the meetings once a month, Southport," and I joined there.

36:00 Then I became vice president and gave that away last year. A lot of them want to know what England's like. They've been to Korea but never been anywhere else. A lot of them want to know what the British Army is like. "You wouldn't survive in the British Army because you get away with murder in the Australia Army.

36:30 Do as you like." One of the fellows is, breeds horses. He used to be in the light horse up in the mountains somewhere. He's got a farm up there. He's this year's president, because Tom, who I told you, he was last year's president. This fellow, Les Taylor, is the new president this year. We have meetings and barbeques.

37:00 If any of the vets want help with DVA or whatever it might be, it's all organised.

What does Anzac Day mean to you?

I marched in Brisbane last year, first time in Brisbane. I usually march down here. But I would never do it again in Brisbane. We went up the day before. Lord Mayor gave us a welcoming home do. I thought, "It's a bit bloody late." And he never turned up.

37:30 His assistant turned up and there must have been 1200-1300 people there from all over the world. They looked after us and the food was wonderful. I got taken for a sailor, an airman, somebody who was in the SAS [Special Air Service], that he knew me.

38:00 They said, "You marching tomorrow?" "Yeah." We marched but kids were running forward trying to stick a flag up your nose and women were coming out and hugging you round the neck. Forget that. I'll march down here in future.

When you look back at your wartime service, what would you say you learnt?

38:30 Discipline for a start. Don't rush in and do things that are not going to work out quite the way you hoped they were, steady as it goes. Try not to lose your temper, which is very hard for me. Try and help somebody.

39:00 When you're in the army the regiment is it. Nothing else. It's your family and everybody helps everybody else. Londoners especially. No one teaches you this. You grow up knowing it, but you give your last shilling to somebody but if he crosses you, forget him because he's gone for life. He can't come back and say, "I'm sorry." He's done it.

39:30 You just wipe him. And that's family as well, and that's happened a lot.

Are there any final words of summary?

I'm 71 now, and I can say I've had a colourful life. I've enjoyed most of it. Some things I didn't enjoy.

40:00 I've been very lucky. I should have been dead ten times over. Got a good family. Three good sons and a daughter. Seven grandchildren. I still think today's young people, especially these hoons, 12 months,

40:30 two years in the army, you'd have none of this vandalism and crap. It would straighten them right out. Don't be so timid with the little villains. Give them a slap on the wrist and lock them up and throw the key away. And I don't like Chinamen. I won't ever like Chinamen.

INTERVIEW ENDS