

Australians at War Film Archive

James Matheson (Sandy) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 9th December 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1411>

Tape 1

00:38 **All right Sandy, let's get started. We're rolling now.**

Yeah.

Can you tell us a bit about your early years, where you were born and where you were grew up?

Well, I was born here. Well, I was born in Trentham and grew up in Trentham and went to school here. I went

01:00 to the state school up here and then I did a couple of years at Daylesford Tech School. That would have been in about the early '30s. I left school there when I was, just before I was fifteen and went working. I was working for a builder for a start and

01:30 things were pretty slack in the building game so I did several other jobs. I always seemed to get a job to do of some sort, some of them not very wholesome but I got through. Dad was working. He was an engine driver and he was on the road roller from the Kyneton Shire.

02:00 He was working practically all the time. Mum was at home all the time. There were seven of us. I was the second youngest. I had a brother younger than me and five sisters older. I was spoilt a bit, you know. Well, spoilt all right, or hammered down every time I bloody got up.

02:30 But anyhow, I got through that all right.

What, your father was an engine driver?

Yeah, steam engine driver.

So he was running between Kyneton and Trentham, was he?

He was employed by the Kyneton Shire. He might be anywhere in the shire on the road roller. It depends on what they were doing. Anyhow, he was

03:00 most time on there engine driving.

What were they transporting most of the time?

He was rolling roads, making new roads, putting down the gravels and that and then rolling them down before bitumen. There were no bitumen roads here where I was a kid. They used to, I was riding a bike from here to Kyneton when I was

03:30 fifteen, sixteen. I was riding a bike into Kyneton, and in between working for a builder I was working for a plasterer in Kyneton who had a plaster joint and I used to ride the bike in there and it was as rough as, well, it was too rough to ride on. There were better tracks off the track.

04:00 On the side of the road was better than on the road. However, we got there. It wasn't real comfortable. You'd be working all day and ride home at night. It was about an hour's ride, a good hour's ride. You had to be pretty fit to do it in an hour, both ways. Not bad going in, it's nearly all downhill. But coming home

04:30 it's nearly all uphill. You can't have it both ways. That's the sum total of that pit. Other than that I worked in underground in Wattle Gully when I was seventeen. I got a job up there when things were slack. I got a job in the Wattle Gully mine, worked underground there

05:00 for nearly twelve months. That was before the war, I was only seventeen.

What were they mining?

Gold, mining for gold, yeah. Yeah, they had, it was a gold mine at Wattle Gully. Wattle Gully gold mine was pretty well known. It was one of the richest mines going. At that stage it was probably the richest mine in Victoria anyhow, could have been in Australia.

05:30 It was a very good mine, good gold there, and I was one of a crew. I don't know how many they had employed at that stage. It would have been up near a hundred, perhaps more. They had shift work, three shifts going around the clock. You'd swap shifts every week. You'd do a day shift

06:00 one week and afternoon shift the next, and a bloody night shift then. Go back to day then. It was going around the clock.

How safe were the mines then? How safe were those mines?

How close to here?

No, how safe? Were there any hazards in mining then?

Hazards? No, not bad. No, it was a pretty good mine.

06:30 It was pretty well controlled, well managed. They didn't take many chances. There were a couple of blokes killed there early on, but once that happened they never had any more. There was a stone or something came out of the roof and hit them. It's always on in a mine. You've got to watch those things. You don't take

07:00 any chances with it. I was there for about twelve months. From there I came back and went back as a builder. He got a bit busy and said, "Come back, keep you going." So that's what happened.

What were you building mostly?

Mostly housing. Yeah, houses mostly.

07:30 Sheds out on the farms sometimes and things like that. Generally it was residence. He built this place. It was after I left, when I was in the war I think. It was built in about the '50s, late '50s, early '50s might have been. I don't know, something like that. It would have been

08:00 early '50s I think.

So obviously this area was rich in gold, ever do any fossicking yourself when you were a kid?

Yeah, I've done fossicking. Yeah, I was fossicking, used to fossick with old Dad up along creeks here when I was ten or eleven. We used to walk out through the bush. He taught me all about the fossicking part of it.

08:30 He grew up fossicking. His people were fossicking. They had a claim up here out about three mile out when he was a kid. He grew up on it more or less. We've been in this district for a fair while. He was an old chap. My father was born up the road a bit,

09:00 about two mile up at Newbury. His father, I don't know, he wasn't born here but he was born somewhere between South Africa and here I believe on a boat. They came out here in, I'm not too sure which year they came out,

09:30 but it would have been in probably before the 1840s because his father, my grandfather, he had a butcher shop in Melbourne before the gold rush came on, and he finished up packing up and coming up and looking

10:00 for gold, and he had probably the best gold mine in the state down there in Melbourne in the butcher shop. But he couldn't see it I suppose at that stage. Anyhow, he had a butcher shop in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne, behind, somewhere behind the post office, the old tin shed as they called it. He had, owned

10:30 a bit of property in there. However, that was the long gone days.

How successful were your grandad and your dad with the gold?

Well, they got enough to live on. That's about all you could say. They weren't real successful. It kept them alive and kept them going, but gold wasn't worth much at that

11:00 stage. It was £3 something an ounce. Different to what it is today, but they were living of course. I suppose they could buy a pound of butter for a shilling or something like that. A loaf of bread would only be bloody pence, you know, perhaps threepence. I don't know what it was, but it would have been in

11:30 comparison with the wage. The gold usually does that.

I'm understand you perfectly.

Are you?

Yes.

That's good. I haven't got a very strong voice now. I used to be able to roar a bit, but I can't do much of that

12:00 now. Well, I make myself understood I suppose, but that's about the size of it.

We're hearing you loud and clear so that's good. We're rolling again. So tell us a bit more about your family, you had five sisters?

Five sisters, yeah. They're all dead now. I'm the last of the Mohicans. I was lucky to have lived.

12:30 I was supposed to be dead in 1945. I got hit with a bullet and I came back and I'm still going, battling on a bit, but I'm still here. My sisters are all gone now and my brother died last year. He was younger than me, about five or six years younger. He was only seventy odd, seventy-five

13:00 or six or something when he died. He was a bit younger than me.

So you would have both been pretty spoilt then?

Well, we had to do our share or work. I used to have to, when I was a kid going to school I used to have to go over and ride, we had a block of land over about half a mile up in the

13:30 bush and we used to run cows, milking cows for the house. We used to have a couple of cows, sometimes two, sometimes only one, sometimes a couple of cows and a poddy calf. We had to feed them. I was brought up with cows. Mum used to, if I was going to school and I was a bit late she'd milk, but if I had time I'd milk.

14:00 That's how it was. At that time Mum was a pretty good caterer. She'd scald the milk and have cream and everything on apple pie. She was a pretty good manager, Mum. A great old scout, I've got a lot of time for Mum. She had it

14:30 hard, but who didn't, that's the point. There was no easy ways at that stage. She used to, kids were living up the park in the bush and she'd give them a billy of milk to go home with. They had pretty near nothing and she'd make sure they did.

15:00 A scone in one hand and a billy of milk in the other. That's the way she was. Other than that we battled through all right. What else have we got? I don't know. The girls and that, they got jobs, part time jobs and that around the joint.

15:30 One of them used to work in a green grocer's shop. There was a green grocer's shop down the street here. Another was working for Skallers, they were,

16:00 Skallers had the forge, shoed horses and things like that, but she used to work in the house for them. Another one, she did dressmaking in

16:30 Daylesford at the Tech School in Daylesford. She did dressmaking and she was extremely good at it and finished up with her own business down in Laverton. She used to make dresses, wedding dresses and Christ knows what.

OK, so you were talking about your sisters and how one of them was a dressmaker?

Yes. She was a pretty good dressmaker

17:00 and she finished up, she married a bloke and lived at Laverton. She used to make dresses down there. Christ, she made dresses for all the bloody officers in the air force and that sort of thing. She was pretty good at it, very good as a matter of fact. She was a top dressmaker. She died only a couple of years ago. Her daughter is a doctor.

17:30 She's not a, she's got a doctorate of I don't know what. I've got a book in there that she wrote for her thesis. It's a bit beyond my capabilities to understand it all. She's pretty cluey with

18:00 what she does. She's been all over the world, America and Japan and Christ knows where, lecturing on the subjects that she handles.

Did you family have a car back then in the '30s?

A car? Dad had a car, an old Chev, Chev 4. Yeah, the roads were that rough you couldn't

18:30 ride in it. They're different roads now. The old Chev 4 was a good car, it got you from A to B and back, generally got you back.

Did you learn to drive when you were a kid?

Yeah, I learned to drive when I was sixteen, fifteen or sixteen. I had a motorbike when I was sixteen, an old Norton,

19:00 a long stroke Norton motorbike. I used to rattle that along. Yeah, I had several motorbikes. I had my share of fun with them and bloody spills and things too. Other than that we were

19:30 walking.

What about your school years, were they a good time?

Yeah. I used to go up here from Trentham to Daylesford in the bus. From Trentham school, yeah, I used to have to walk up there when I was a whipper snapper.

20:00 We lived up the road. It was a good mile to the school, the walk. I started up there when I was five I think. I handled that, and then Dad got me a bloody half size pushbike then and I used to ride up there.

20:30 It was all right, [(UNCLEAR)].

What was school itself like?

I didn't mind it, but most subjects I could handle, you know. Then I went to Daylesford Tech School. Bloody algebra, I couldn't handle that. That was the only thing I couldn't handle.

21:00 I couldn't see any sense in it. I suppose there is sense in it, but it's trying to instil that into kids to learn it, it's a pretty hard job I think. I could tell you the answer to a problem, but I couldn't tell you how I got it. Like I couldn't algebraically. I couldn't put it down. I could get your answer.

21:30 I couldn't see the sense in doing it algebraically when you could do it in your head. Anyhow, that's the only thing I failed on, algebra. That's the way of them things. That's the way it goes, doesn't it?

22:00 **Sandy, do you remember any of the characters from that era? Were there specific characters in town that stick in your memory?**

Any what?

Characters, people who stick in your memory, teachers or kids?

Yeah, well I can't off hand. I know bloody kids I used to play cricket and football and that with. Some of the Hunts and that.

22:30 They had a big family up there and they were always playing cricket or football. That was after school or anything, a weekend or that when you weren't doing something else, didn't have to do something else, you'd be out kicking the guts out of a football

23:00 or trying to bat a bloody ball over the fence. Other than that we filled in time. I could shoot rabbits when I was bloody about ten or eleven. My old man was a pretty good rifle shot and I used to have a pea rifle and shoot rabbits for Mum.

23:30 I could shoot a rabbit and gut it and clean it up for her when I was about ten or eleven. Sometimes you had to you know. That might have been the bloody weekend joint, a couple of rabbits, and they were all right too. I loved them. I still like them. I'd still sooner a rabbit than a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK .

24:00 They're tastier than WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , but they're hard to come by now. They're harder to get than WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s now. At that stage they were easy to come by and WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s weren't. You had to kill a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK that might be laying eggs if you wanted a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK . The rabbits were plentiful.

24:30 When I was working at Wattle Gully weekends and any time off another bloke and I used to go out shooting rabbits. We'd go out early in the morning and be finished by lunchtime. We'd make more on the rabbits that we would working.

Who would you sell the rabbits to?

There were people, at this

25:00 day, there was Joe, he was in Kyneton, he had a chiller in Kyneton and there was another bloke at Elphinstone, had a chiller up there. We used to go out around Mt Alexander shooting rabbits early in the morning and dropping them off to him. You'd get, I forget what we got, about a shilling, a shilling each or something like that.

25:30 There was good money in them then. It didn't cost much to run out on the back of a motorbike or on the motorbike, a pint of bloody petrol. Petrol was only about, might have been one and nine pence a gallon or something like that. Not a litre, gallons. You'd get it for one and eight pence, one and nine pence.

26:00 A gallon of petrol in a motor bike you'd go for a week. Working in the mines wasn't bad money. It was, well, when I say it wasn't bad money, for those times. It was somewhere near nearly £5 a week,

26:30 about a pound a shift.

How would the £5 be spent? Where would the £5 go, how would you spend that in a week?

Well, you'd have to pay board. I paid board, thirty bob or a couple of quid. I forget now, but something like that. You'd have to get

27:00 your washing done, hair cut, boots. Pretty hard caper on boots underground, walking, bloody reef stuff, where they break the reef and that it would cut your boots out in quick time. You had to supply your own boots at that stage.

27:30 I think the only thing they supplied was the bloody hard hat. That's about all they supplied. Well, you'd have a few ales and that on the weekends sometimes. The rabbits would keep all the ale up that I wanted.

28:00 I'd have money to spare on the rabbits. That didn't happen every day, but it happened every regular weekend. It was, we lived all right and we bloody spent what we had. We'd go to the pictures or dances

28:30 and things like that.

Where did you go for the dances and pictures and stuff?

Well, used to bloody go all around, I was camped at, boarding at Chewton and we used to go to Fryerstown, Castlemaine, all over the joint to dances.

29:00 Yeah, out to, even out to Guildford, all around the district. Wherever there was a dance we'd happen to get there somehow. Some of them had, some of my mates had cars. One bloke had a baby Austin, he used to pile about ten into that and we'd all go out to a dance in that.

29:30 All over, a great old time. Those days are long since gone.

They are indeed, that's why we want to hear about them Sandy. Can you tell us about the dances themselves, what the dances were like?

The dances were quite good. Well, usually a fair crowd got to them, old timers, old time dancing, any

30:00 modern dance. Modern dancing then is old time now, like fox trots and bloody Palmer waltz and things like that. They were pretty old time at that stage. Those sort of things. You learnt to do new dances and what have you, it didn't take long. The girls would drag you around.

30:30 They were pretty good scouts, well, most of them were pretty fair scouts. We lived fairly well but we had to, travelling was a bit of a problem at times. Sometimes they'd have a bus going out to a dance like that. All pile onto a bus and they'd drop you out there

31:00 and wait until the dance was over and take you back. That would cost only probably, I don't know what the fares, would only be a couple of bob, two and sixpence a bloody bus fare or something out to a dance ten mile out or fifteen mile out, or something like that. They'd have about

31:30 twenty on it, twenty or thirty. Twenty-five I suppose the bus would carry, something like that. But we had pretty good times.

Were there girlfriends at that stage?

You'd pick up something [(UNCLEAR)]. Some of them you'd

32:00 drop quick but other than, I met my wife at a dance. She was only about, when I met her she was only about fourteen or fifteen and I never sort of, I never tacked on to her until I came back from the army, out of the army about five years later. She was twenty. I married her, she was twenty-one when I married her.

32:30 We lived together then for just on fifty years. I enjoyed every day of it. Not every day, but I mean over a lifetime it's good to have a good mate, and she was a good mate. A good mate to me anyhow.

33:00 She never, she always had a smoke but didn't ever drink. I soon taught her. Only a glass of beer, you know, nothing bloody stronger than that. She would never drink a bloody glass of wine if you gave it to her. I wasn't over keen on the plonk either. I didn't mind a couple of beers,

33:30 still don't. Still have them if I want them.

Don't let us stop you Sandy.

No, I won't. When I got hit in the mouth with a bloody bullet the bloody doctor was up in Bougainville in the 2/1st AGH [Australian General Hospital], the doctor came around to the ward

34:00 and he said, "You've got to drink a lot of fluid," and he named bloody milk and everything, everything bar what I wanted him to. He said, "Do you drink beer?" I couldn't talk, all I could do is nod my head. When he said beer my head went that way. He turned around to the charge sister and said, "Two bottles of beer every day that man is here. Two bottles

34:30 of beer on his ration." By gee I enjoyed it. It made me big and strong. I couldn't drink it, I couldn't drink

two glasses a day, like early at that stage. After a couple of weeks I was there, after that they expected me to die overnight. That's why he put me on the

35:00 beer, he didn't think I'd live long enough to drink any. I beat the books and I was there for seven weeks or something, about seven weeks. It might have been a trifle better than seven weeks, and when I finished the sister, the ward sister had it in her bloody cubicle in the fridge and I could go out any time and get a bottle of beer out and open it up.

35:30 Sometimes the girls, the sisters would be getting around, it was pretty hot weather, "It's about time we had a drink." I'd open up a couple of bottles of beer and we'd all have a drink. They enjoyed it too, we had a lot of fun. You've got to make fun where you can. No use being miserable all your life.

So if your

36:00 **mouth was all smashed up how did you get the bottle in there? How did you drink it?**

I didn't get a bottle, I was drinking it out of a straw. They had a peep hole in the side of my mouth I could just get a straw. My mouth was all bloody wired up and everything. I couldn't open my mouth, couldn't chew. I could chew the glass of beer. It would go down all right, down a pipe.

36:30 I went into there prior to being hit down in the front, I was playing football for the battalion. We had a pretty good football team. You had 800 or 700, 600 or 700 blokes to pick a football team out of and they're nearly all Victorian, or over half of them would have been Victorians, they'd all played football a bit,

37:00 and we had a football team there, between league players and league seconds and association players. I was only just a country footballer here but I held a game with them. The captain and coach of the team was a bloke named

37:30 Jack Pimm. He was an understudy at Collingwood to Ron Todd, one of the best goal kickers Collingwood ever had I suppose. He was a pretty good footballer, and this John Pimm wasn't a bad footballer either. He was understudy to Toddy. He said, "I want to see you at Collingwood after this," you know.

38:00 I was playing football there, I would have been in the vicinity of somewhere between ten and a half and eleven stone, and that was on Bougainville before we went down the front. I was surfing every day, I was fit as a mallee bull, and I came off,

38:30 I just forget how long it was. I got hit on the 24th of April and they said sometime, it was nearly back in June when they brought me down to Heidelberg. I went from somewhere near eleven stone, I weighed in at Heidelberg near two months later, I was

39:00 under five stone, four stone ten or eleven or something when they put me on the scales at Heidelberg there. So I lost a bit of weight. I wasn't getting any tucker in me. They'd feed me through intravenous. Jeez, you starve to death on that. If it hadn't been for the beer I reckon I would have starved to death, but it was the beer kept me

39:30 going, with the bit that was going in my foot, an intravenous bloody injection. I had tucker going in one foot and penicillin in the other, staggering around. The physiotherapist lass there,

40:00 she brought a set of steps up. She said, this is only about the second day that she put me doing physio work, and I said, "Yeah, I can climb up but I won't climb down them." It's harder going down steps than going up. Anyhow, I said, "You stand," it was only two steps high, bloody about this high, I said, "You stand there because I might

40:30 crash." She was a bloody, I think she was an old maid I think, born an old maid. Anyhow, I can't get my foot down on the second step and come down off the step. I climbed up all right. I said, "You stand here." As she did I stepped down and give her a big bloody cuddle. Jesus, she though she was being raped. I think now she was disappointed

41:00 she wasn't. She enjoyed it all, we had a laugh after. She said, "That's the finish of that exercise." Never worried me any more about going down the steps. I fixed that in one lesson. But those are the sort of things you overcome.

Tape 2

00:34 She would have been in the 2/1st AGH, part of their crew. That was like a base hospital up in Torokina. Torokina was the part where all our base people were.

01:00 Down the front was, we were down the south end and there was another mob up on the north end of Bougainville. There were a lot of troops on it, we had a few troops there. When I say a lot of troops, there were more bloody Japs than was Australians.

Sandy, shall we come back to it,

01:30 **shall we get to it later?**

Yeah, yeah.

You could now, maybe now on this tape, just to get a sense of the build up to war and what you thought or your enlisting? Where were you, were you working in the mines when war was declared?

No. I'd finished with the mining and I was working back with the builder. When war was declared, yeah, I was building a house down in West

02:00 Newport when war was declared. That was in '39 and I never went in the army then until '40, '41 when I went into the army. I waited for my bloody call-up. I tried to get in when I was sixteen, seventeen, sixteen and Mum wouldn't bloody release,

02:30 wouldn't let me go of course. She wouldn't have a bar of it. Anyhow, I tried to join up again and they wouldn't take me because they had too many troops to handle or some bloody thing. I said, "Well, forget about me." I said, "I'll wait until you bloody want me," and he called me up. That's what happened. They called me up and

03:00 I think I was twenty when they called me up, just twenty.

Was that disappointing for you, I mean you tried twice?

Yeah, I felt like, I wanted to join the air force when I was sixteen or seventeen, and they

03:30 wouldn't take you. They didn't want you because they had enough troops, enough people to handle, more than they could handle then I think. The army was a bit the same too, they were overcrowded with recruits that they couldn't bloody properly handle or train or cater for, like clothing-wise and things like that, rifles and equipment.

04:00 There were troops when I went in, troops there, they'd just done their initial training and they'd done it with a clump of wooden bloody paling or some bloody thing carved like a rifle. They never had rifles even at that stage. They had that many troops going overseas into the desert that

04:30 all their stores were empty evidently. Anyhow, that's what happened, but it didn't worry me. I couldn't care less. I was bloody happy enough where I was, what I was doing. When they called me up I went in and done it. I'd done the initial training then and that was up at, up on,

05:00 it's up on the Yea Road, Trawool. Up Trawool camp is where I first went in. The battalion, they were up there. They'd been down at Mount Martha. They'd just moved up to there from Mount Martha, three month camp things, you know. Anyway, I made full time

05:30 duty up there. When I did my initial training, the bull-ring training as they call it, the instructor nominated me for NCO school which I never ever done because I think I might've upset it when

06:00 I told a shitty-nosed, snotty-nosed looking bloody corporal that I didn't like him in no uncertain terms, and he was a Scotch College bloody lad and didn't know shit from clay. Not even if he tasted it he wouldn't know. I

06:30 told him I didn't like him much. He wanted me to do a duty one morning and I was already on a duty. He'd put me on a duty, between him and the warrant officer, sergeant major, I was on duty over at BHP in-line picket which is a duty you're on for twenty-four hours but you have four on

07:00 and two off. Anyhow, he bloody, I'd come off at six o'clock in the morning and I'd walked over to my tent and changed clothes, have a bit of a wash-up and what have you. Anyhow, it was just on roll call and he was out

07:30 doing the roll call. I joined in the roll call. I didn't have to join in the roll call but I did, and he put me on this, he said, "You've got the Rose Bowl to empty?" I said, "I'm not emptying those friggin' Rose Bowl." I said, "The only way I'll empty it, I'll empty you into the bastard." You know, we sort of had a set-to.

08:00 It wasn't very nice, but anyhow I wasn't frightened of him. I couldn't care less whether he was a corporal or a bloody colonel. It didn't make much difference, but anyhow I told him in no uncertain terms I wasn't doing it. Anyhow, he said, "I'll get the warrant officer, I'll get the sergeant major." I said, "You can get who you friggin' well like. I don't care. You can go and get the King.

08:30 I'm still not emptying the bastard." Jesus, a great old set-to. The old sergeant major, he went up and had a word with the sergeant major. The sergeant major yelled out to me what had happened. All right, I wandered up there. He said, "You refused a duty." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Why?" I said, "Why

09:00 is my bloody worry. I'm not doing it, that's all." If they had any brains they'd have known they had me on duty from the night before, but they didn't have no bloody brains. Anyhow, I said, "Yeah." He said,

"You won't empty it, won't do the duty?" "No," I said, "Not for you or him either." I said, "I wouldn't do it for the fucking King."

- 09:30 Jesus, so they finished up, the old Toby I called him, I said, "I had a bloody dog called Toby and it was no friggin' good too." Anyhow,
- 10:00 he said, "I'll see Captain McMahon will be in shortly. You can have a word with him. He'll have a word with you," or something. "I said, "That's all right. I couldn't care less who you bring in." Old Captain McMahon was a nice old bloke, you know. You could get on with him, talk to him. These other lard-headed bastards you couldn't get much sense out of them.
- 10:30 The old captain came down, "Now what's the matter lad? What is all the bloody kafuffle about?" So I told him, I said, "I refused to do a bloody, to empty a pit tin." The Rose Bowl they call it. He said, "Why would that be?"
- 11:00 I said, "I haven't been in the army long, but I've been in it long enough to know that you can't give a bloke two duties at once." I said, "One duty, one dog, one bone, you know." "Oh," he said, "You were on duty?" I said, "Yeah, I was over on bloody in-line picket over at BHP all night. I'm still on it." You were on it for twenty-four hours. I went
- 11:30 on it at night at six o'clock the night before or something, or bloody four o'clock in the morning it would have been, and so I said, "I won't come off until six o'clock tonight." "Oh," he said, "This alters the case. You've got nothing to answer for." He said, "You can't be on two duties at once." That fixed that. By him being a bit amiable
- 12:00 I'd talk to him, but these other bastards, they were bouncing at you. I said, "You can get stuffed. You can find out yourself." I was a pig-headed bastard, and still am. That was how that happened. That fixed going to bloody NCO school. They had to go
- 12:30 through the sergeant major and the old sergeant major had it in for me forever after that. He knew I went overseas, he was too old I think. Shit, he give me some shit. Hung shit on me every time he had a chance, and he had plenty of chances too, don't worry. The stupid looking corporal,
- 13:00 he was up there, he was in the bloody office when I was talking to the sergeant major. I said, "Pluto," I used to call him Pluto, he had a hag dog look on his face like a bloody Pluto, you know, the dog. I said, "Pluto," and he bloody jumped up. He said, "I'm Corporal Fairbane."
- 13:30 I said, "Yeah, you are too, Corporal Pluto Fairbane." Jesus Christ, he bounced back again. That fixed the bloody NCO school.

How do you think you would've gone at NCO school?

I would've gone all right. I finished up doing everything, I finished up as a sergeant

- 14:00 and went into action. I was the worst private they had of course, one of them. There were several others not far behind. I was only in action, got rid of one bloody, one lieutenant, I couldn't get on with him much. Anyhow,
- 14:30 he got killed early on. He had no bloody brains either, and he got killed and I was a bloody corporal the next day. The bloody following, not the following day, the day after that again I was a bloody sergeant. They recommended for me for a VC [Victoria Cross]. One thing and
- 15:00 another, I done all right. I handled it all right after. They wanted me to take a commission in the field. I knocked it back. I couldn't handle it. Well, I could handle it but I said, "After abusing half these bloody officers I couldn't go and sit down and eat with the bastards." Jesus Christ. I said, "That would make me spew."
- 15:30 One thing and another, I said, "I better refuse that." The old colonel wasn't too happy about me refusing. He liked me. He reckoned my bloody way of operating was pretty good. Old Georgie Warfe, by Christ, he was a funny old man, a great old bloke, great soldier and a good bloke to work with. He was straight out.
- 16:00 If he thought you were doing the wrong thing he'd say, "You stupid bastard," or something like that. He wouldn't mince manners. He was a great old fellow, he suited me. There was him and Teddy Griffiths. Teddy Griffiths was another good soldier. He was a tough bloke. He was the bloke who recommended me for a bloody VC. Shit, wasn't he crooked when I got the MM.
- 16:30 I got the MM later, and he said, "I wouldn't even shake your hand." He said, "If you had the big one in front of it I would have been first cab off the rank." But he said, "They've given you that miserable bastard of a thing." He reckons it was shocking. But that's what he thought of me, and old Georgie Warfe was the same.
- 17:00 Well, the bloody recommendation would have to come through Georgie Warfe to be asked to take a commission in the field. It would have to come through Georgie Warfe, possible could have come from up higher. I don't know where it came from, but I know Warfe would have had to authorise it. He sent

another lieutenant down there to ask me.

17:30 I said, "No, I couldn't handle it. I don't think I'll go along with that." That's how it was. But I had a lot of fun one way or another.

You were telling us about the initial training, bull-ring training?

Yeah.

So that was up at?

Trawool.

Trawool?

Yeah, that was at Trawool.

What else struck you about that first army experience?

18:00 I don't know. I didn't mind it. There was a lot of, like it's knuckle down treatment but I didn't find it very hard. It got a bit monotonous doing the same thing day after day after day until you could do it right. But then after a while you'd do it automatic, and this was the idea

18:30 of it. It's the same thing when you're training troops. I've trained troops later myself and you've got to reiterate and go back through it and upside down and inside out until they know it complete. They get out there in the field and there's no old man then. You've got to do it yourself. If you've got them only half trained

19:00 they're only half any good, and if you've got them properly trained they can, when a bloody Bren gun breaks down they know exactly. They could do it in the middle of the night. I could pull a gun down in the middle of the night and go through every bloody spring and what have you in it, and all by feel, and that's the way you've got to have your troops.

19:30 If they're not up to that standard and something goes wrong, you've let your troops down by not having them up to that standard. You've got to be a pretty hard task master with them, but it's all for their own benefit when it's all boiled down. I got on all right with the blokes. Some of these bloody no-hoper blokes I couldn't

20:00 hack them. Bloody know-all know bloody nothing, you know, that's about the size of them. Because they went to Scotch College or some other bloody college they reckon they're Christ Almighty, but they're not even almighty much less being Christ, no worries. They used to have to get told.

20:30 I got on all right after they got used to me, my way of thinking. If they didn't like me as I was, they didn't like me and it was their bad luck. Oh well, such is life, old Ned said.

So is there anything else you remember from the

21:00 **training days, your initial training?**

I got through it. I got through it easier than a lot of other blokes, don't worry. It didn't worry me at all. I picked it up as easy as one thing, but some of them had trouble. We had a few come in, couldn't teach them to march. They were used to marching behind a plough,

21:30 still ploughing behind a horse.

I'll fix that, hold on.

Still ploughing behind a horse and they travel. You had no bloody hope of teaching them to march. Anyhow, they'd find a job for them digging shit houses or something else.

22:00 They were good blokes but some of them just couldn't pick it up. They didn't grow up with guns or anything like that. They were sort of frightened of them.

So do you think the country, the bushies had it better?

Yeah. I think they had an advantage. I think overall they did. We were used to bloody shooting rabbits and Christ knows what. Most country kids

22:30 were the same. City kids never had that sort of experience. They were used to dodging trams and bloody buses and that sort of thing, but there wasn't many of them about in the jungle. Whereas there were a lot of bloody Japs there, trying to dodge their bullets. But that's the way it was.

23:00 It was interesting. I think country boys did it a fair bit easier than city boys. Some of the city boys were good, don't worry. I've had good city boys with me. I had a bloke with me once, he was the roughest bastard you'd ever find, Kensington Kicker.

23:30 He had a bloody Kensington bike [(UNCLEAR)]. He was a rough bastard, but he was a good soldier. Him

and I used to do two man patrols in behind Jap lines and we'd go all day. We'd be in there and perhaps contact Japs two or three times in the one day. Have done it, have contacted three times, contact patrols.

24:00 On a job like that if you had too many troops you were at a disadvantage because you've got too many to make a mistake. If there's only a couple of you and you're used to working together you're a lot more dangerous than if you've got six or eight or ten bloody troops. One of them will bloody,

24:30 might light a smoke or something like that. I used to bar smoking on patrols. Behind Jap lines and things like that never smoked. "If you want your smoke you're not coming. Leave your smokes here if you want smokes. Forget about it."

25:00 It worked too because I could smell bloody Japs a long time before I could see them in the jungle. They had a scent about them. I think everybody does really. I'd smell me too, I might've bloody had BO [body odour], but that's nothing, everybody had that. We were in the back of Salamaua there and bloody,

25:30 I never had hot water for bloody, never had a hot shower, shave or anything like that for about ten or eleven months. Had plenty of cold washes walking through rivers up to your bloody chest or something, but no hot showers, no towels, no toilet paper. You'd wipe your arse on

26:00 a cigarette paper if you had to. I mean those sort of things, that's why I reckon if they put women in the army under the same conditions they would have a torrid time. In fact I don't think they would stand it. I reckon they would probably suffer stress all right.

26:30 We'd bloody get a leaf off a tree or something and wipe your bum, if you were lucky. Next time you walked through a river it would get washed. Rivers were fairly close together. You were crossing them time after time, sometimes four or five times a day you'd be up above your bloody navel. That's the sort of thing it was.

27:00 There was no bloody easy way.

Sandy, I'll take you back to training. After your bull-ring training what was next? Where did you go next?

We went to, we went to old Seymour camp. We went to campsite 17A I think it was, 17A, yeah.

27:30 The whole battalion moved into this campsite that had been occupied prior to us, you know. The troops that were in there went overseas, had been shipped out. Anyhow, we took over that camp. I had a fairly good time in there. I wriggled my way into the bloody

28:00 cook's officer in the sergeants' mess. That was a bloody joke, a cake-walk. I got in the cookhouse. I reckoned that was the best place to get tucker. I got good tucker in there. They caught up with me eventually but it took a while. Put me back out in the bloody field

28:30 again. It was all bloody repetition training, go out on bivouac this week and there might be another one next week. The only difference would be it might be in a different paddock, a different bloody place. It might go for two or three days camping out in the scrub.

29:00 It might be instead of going north you go south or something. That's about the only difference. It was all repetition training. It done you good, but we were training to go the desert warfare at that stage. That was in 1942, '41.

29:30 '41 particularly. Japs came in in '41, didn't they?

Yeah, end of '41, '42.

December the 8th I think, something like that, '41. Anyhow, they changed then.

30:00 We went to jungle warfare training then. But up until then we'd done a lot of training for the desert work, desert operations. But we never got to the desert. It was unlikely we would because we were only bloody choco soldiers, you know. We went to the jungle.

So had you been

30:30 **allocated to a battalion by this stage?**

Yeah, yeah.

When did that happen?

From the day I went in. The battalion I went into had a training cadre with it, a bullring training cadre there, and it was part of that battalion then. I was in 58/59

31:00 Battalion from the day I went in the army, whichever day that was. I'm buggered if I know, it was a fair while back, until the day I was finished, the day I was wounded and came out. Well, after that, I was still bloody part of the 58/59th Battalion. I was in it

31:30 a fair while.

You said you were militia you probably weren't going to go to the Middle East?

No, no.

They weren't allowed to send you?

I could have easily catered for that. I only had to join the bloody AIF [Australian Imperial Force] and I'd have been glad to go, but if I joined the AIF and the battalion didn't go, Christ knows where I'd have gone.

32:00 You wouldn't know where you'd go. I thought bugger it, I'd stick with the battalion I know. I had a lot of mates there. I'd soon pick up mates somewhere else too, or you might get a drunken one that's not too good, might lead you astray.

I'm sure you lead a few astray.

No, I mean those sort of things have been known to happen.

32:30 Anyhow, that's a code of a different colour. But I got through it all right.

Sandy, you said before there was a bit of a thing early on in the piece about the choccos and the AIF, they were hanging shit on the choccos?

Oh, they were, yeah, yeah.

Did you experience that? Did you experience any of that?

Oh yeah, only a little bit of it.

33:00 When we came back from the islands, we did two campaigns in New Guinea. We did the Salamaua show and then they brought us back to Moresby and they flew us up into Dumpu,

33:30 up along the Markham. It might be the Markham River, I'm not too sure, one of the bastards now. The Markham or Ramu perhaps. They flew us up into there and we were in the Finisterre Ranges. We took over from the crowd that had been in there,

34:00 served their time up there and they got the ranges, well up to a point they got the Japs out of the ranges part, most of them. From there on we did long range patrolling out of the ranges down to the coast which was bloody, it would have been seventy mile, and that's fairly long range patrolling to carry your gear and all that

34:30 for seventy mile. You can't do it in five minutes. You've got several days each way and it's a bit of a, I was down there for, well we did that bloody job. It was all right. You can get used to anything. You've got to get used to it in the army anyhow.

35:00 Well, one thing and another, I went down there with a patrol. I don't know how many. It would have been about fifteen, fourteen or fifteen I suppose.

35:30 The lieutenant in charge of us, he'd never seen a bloody Jap, never been in action. He'd just come straight up from Duntroon. He was a good bloke. You could tell him things and he'd listen. That's more than half the bastards would do. You could tell them something and they knew everything before you started. This bloke, he'd listen, you know.

36:00 I got on pretty good with him, John Norrie, a bloke, John Norrie. He's died since. He was a pretty fair sort of a bloke. Where were we?

The original question was about choccos, AIF?

Yeah, well

36:30 we came back from out of there, we came back. We went through to Madang and then they shipped us back home. We got off the boat, they brought us around on the Kanimbla it was to Townsville. Got off the boat at Townsville and

37:00 I think we spent a couple of days at Townsville before they could organise troop trains and things like that, everything had to be right. And then at bloody Townsville they put us, we had to spend a couple of days there I think. Anyhow, they found a camp out from Townsville. They had it earmarked there for us.

37:30 We went out there and bugger me, this old bloody Wode Tobe that I couldn't get on with, he appeared out there. I was the worst bloody private in the unit as I said before, but it was this bastard made me the worst private. It was through him that I was the worst private

38:00 because I didn't like him and he didn't like me so that was fairly mutual. He appeared out there the night we bloody landed at Townsville and they trucked us out to camp and they had two bottles of beer

- 38:30 for each man. Gee, I hadn't had a beer since we left Australia. No beer in the islands at that stage. So I had these couple of bottles of beer and this old bastard turned up. I was doing handsprings and bloody summersaults on the clothes line or something.
- 39:00 That's Kay, isn't it?
- That's all right, we're still rolling. So Tobe, yeah?**
- Yeah, and anyhow this old bastard, I had three stripes on my arm and bloody decorations on my chest
- 39:30 and this old bugger, I heard him talking to a mate beside me and he said, "Who's this bloke? I don't know him." I said, "You old bastard, you don't want to know me. You knew me a bloody while back." [(UNCLEAR)] again. He said, "You've got your stripes and your decorations." I said, "Yeah." I said, "It was
- 40:00 no friggin' business you ever taught me ever give it to me, I can tell you that." Oh Jesus, oh Christ, we had another set-to. That fixed that. Anyhow, now what else? Yeah, from there we went on a troop train down to Brisbane and we had to wait there the day.
- 40:30 A few of us there together there, half a dozen. I knew Brisbane fairly well because I'd been in it before and done a bit of shopping. We went down to, I said, "We'll go down to the Valley." Fortitude Valley was its proper name. The Valley we always called it.
- 41:00 "Go down to the Valley and have a drink, down the pub down in the Valley." The Prince of Wales or some bloody thing it was. I don't know what it was, Prince of something. Anyhow, we get down there, a corner bar, you go in, you go in from the corner and double doors. We went in the corner bar and the bloody,
- 41:30 I don't think there was any other bar. There might have been a back bar but I don't know, I was never in the back part of it. Anyhow, we get in there and there was about four or five of us, five or six of us it might have been, five, and we get in this front bar and we're having a few beers, a couple of beers.

Tape 3

00:31 **Where did you do the jungle training?**

Up along the coast there around Tweed Heads and Casino, all those places up through there. We were in there for about a year I suppose all together, Caboolture,

01:00 Nambour. We did a lot of patrols and that out along the coast because they thought the Japs might have been coming there and we were sort of spotters in case. Spotters had to often go out to do a bloody patrol out through the

01:30 jungle to spot Japs, but there were no Japs ever came down there. Well, I won't say there were none ever came down there, because they could have come down there. There were a few Japs picked up there that had been dumped off subs and things like that. We never ever picked up one but

02:00 some of the crews did pick up odd Japs that had been dumped there for intelligence purposes, information, and probably a wireless back to their base wherever that may be. It could have been anywhere. It might have been on a sub out to sea or something. There were a few Japs picked up there, but we never picked one up.

02:30 Never struck one. Struck them later up when we went to the islands.

Was this the Queensland coastline you're talking about/

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, Queensland coast, yeah. We did quite a bit of jungle training up through there, bloody wait-awhile and lantana vines and Christ knows what.

03:00 They're nearly as bad as, parts of it is nearly as bad as New Guinea to get through, but the country is not as steep as New Guinea. It was different topography than New Guinea. Mountains were bloody, you think they're high to look at them and then you get up there and there's another bugger above you higher.

03:30 You're climbing for days on end at times. Pretty slow going, but you get through it, you're young and fit. Like a mountain goat, you'd nearly run up it, nearly. You'd run down it, you might fall on your nose. Yeah, I've been through a bit of that.

Do you want to finish your story

Yeah,

04:00 **in the Valley?**

about in the valley. We went down into the Valley. We came off a troop train that wasn't going until the night, the next day eventually we got on. But anyhow, we went down to the Valley and this corner pub, I knew where it was, I'd been there before, and I'd take the blokes. There were four or five of us, and anyhow we went in there, into

04:30 this corner end, had a couple of beers, and there was a bloody [(UNCLEAR)] in the back. I couldn't see him for where we were. They were in the back there and there was one of them came out to the bar and said something to my mate there. He was standing at the bar and I was standing back a bit.

05:00 He said to my mate, "I see one of your mate's has got the MM, your sergeant has got the MM." "Yeah," he said, "Yeah." He said, "How did he get that, running away like the rest of your bloody crew?" Jesus, didn't that go down. So he got hit in the guts quick and arse over head. We didn't know how many was in

05:30 the back and they bloody all tried to rush through. They only had a narrow little alley to come up alongside the bar. They couldn't get out, they were all jammed up there. But anyhow we backed into the corner and took over the double doors. The buggers, people tried to get in and we had the doors covered, wouldn't let them in. Every time there was a bloody head come up we'd poke a bloody fist into its face.

06:00 It was these blokes that were coming at us, you know. Anyhow, there was a tram used to go around the corner very slowly. It was a pretty sharp corner at the Valley around this pub. We stuck it there for ten minutes or quarter of an hour just poking bloody heads back. Every time they stuck a head up in front of you, you'd have a bloody poke

06:30 at it. Anyhow, it was all right. When we came to get out I said, "All right, we'll get this next tram that comes around the corner there." It used to stop just before the corner and then turn slowly around the corner. I said, "As soon as that tram starts to turn around to get a bit of speed up, we'll jump on it." That's what happened. We

07:00 opened the doors and there were buggers coming in and we were going out. It was a bloody big mix up, but we got out. Walked a few bodies into, well, knocked them down I suppose, gave them a bit of bump. We had to get out. Didn't have to.

Was there any disciplinary action?

No, nobody knew. Nobody

07:30 knew anything. Never tell the provos [Provosts- Military Police] anything. You don't call them, don't call for them. Anyhow, we came down on leave. We came down on leave in Melbourne, and anyhow we'd done a pub crawl up Elizabeth Street one day. It would have

08:00 been the same bloody mob I suppose. We were always bloody hanging around together and always on the booze. We came up Elizabeth Street, we got up as far as Vic Market. By this time we were pretty bloody cross-eyed and they decided to have a walk through the market. Well, they

08:30 were over there walking through the market and hats, were swapping hats for bloody dresses, and dresses for shirts and some other bloody thing. Didn't take it, didn't want anything, just bloody annoying the poor bastards that were trying to earn a quid. Anyhow, I was just walking through the bloody joint and on a stand there was a bloody big box. Couldn't see over it.

09:00 Couldn't see into it. I put my hand into it and I thought it might be a sausage so I gave it a pull, gave it a yank and walked away and I had bloody string of saveloys from here to the bloody corner, about as wide as this room. I walked up the market with this string of saveloys following me. By the time I got through the market I had every dog in North Melbourne following me. I went out

09:30 and sat on the kerb outside the doors of the market and bloody feeding the dogs. All the dogs got a bit of food. Anyhow, the old bloke that had the stall must've ran the bloody provos. The provos pull up and said, "You'd be the bloke that bloody pinched the bloody savs." I said, "I've got no friggin' savs." I never had a sav left. The

10:00 dog had them all. I had no evidence. Well, anyhow they chucked me in the dog cart and the bloody blokes who were with me they nearly shook the bloody dog cart apart trying to get in. They said, "We're going to." The provos are yelling out, "We don't want you. Only want the sergeant."

10:30 They took me up to Old Melbourne Gaol. I didn't know the doors were as high, they looked like as high as the clouds, hear them go bang behind you. It looked all right. They were firing questions at me and I'm answering them. Well maybe, I don't know, I was a bit sober, sobered up a bit by the time it happened,

11:00 and anyhow bloody boss big provo there, I don't know if he was called sergeant or some bloody thing, he said, "We'll have to lock you up for the night." I said, "Will you? I don't think so." "Yes," he said, "And

- you'll be scrubbing these flagstones in the morning." I said, "Like friggin' hell I will." I said, "I don't
- 11:30 scrub flagstones." He said, "How come you won't be scrubbing?" I said, "Before you lock me up I'm permitted one phone call." "Yeah." I said, "Well you can do the ringing." I said, "I want a personal call through to George Warfe at Scott's Hotel." George told us before we left Madang,
- 12:00 we were all on parade, he said, "If you get in trouble with the provos you'll always find me at Scott's Hotel," and old George, he was a colonel, jeez he was a bloody good old bloke. He said, "You'll get in trouble with the provos no doubt." I reckon he was looking straight at me you know. I don't know whether he was, but anyhow I told
- 12:30 the provos. I said, "I want a phone call to Scott's Hotel for George Warfe." "How would you know George Warfe?" I said, "I don't know him, but he knows me." Anyhow, he ummed and ah'd and ducked around for a while and he said, "If you know George Warfe like that we can't do much with you." He said, "Piss off out of this bloody road and get out of this bloody town."
- 13:00 I got out. Old Georgie got me out. He would have come up there and bloody pulled half the bloody gaol apart. He was a bloody wild old man. He wasn't old. He would have been a bloke I suppose in his thirties then. He could fight like a thrashing machine.
- So he was with the 58th/59th? George? George was with the 58th/59th?**
- George Warfe, yeah, he was our colonel.
- 13:30 He was in charge, a great old fellow. He was DSO bloke, MC, DSO, he had decorations but he was a good soldier and a very good leader. He had a captain come to us
- 14:00 up in Madang. We were at Madang, and this captain came out of the bloody desert, somewhere beyond bloody Alice Springs or somewhere in there. He'd been out there for a couple of years lost, whatever, the army had forgotten about him. He came up to us and he was a bloody no-hoper. I said, "No wonder
- 14:30 you were lost in the bloody desert out there for two years." I said, "No bastard wanted to find you." Christ, he said, "I'll parade you to the colonel." He took us out on a bloody exercise
- 15:00 up in Sia Plantation, coconut plantation, and he organised this bloody thing, bloody exercise and I had about eight or ten blokes I was in charge of. He dumped on the track and had taken us out in a bloody jeep trailer or some bloody thing. I said, "What's the purpose of the exercise?" We knew nothing.
- 15:30 He said, "You take your men out there, just out there." No designations or positions or anything, "Just up there, and keep watch." Keep watch, what for? Anyhow, he pissed off in the bloody jeep and we said, "We'll go up here and hide." We did too, we were bloody hiding.
- 16:00 It would have been about half past nine I suppose in the morning, and the time had bloody kicked on, dinner time, no lunch, no bloody noise, no word from him. Never knew what was going on or anything at all. I could hear them up along over the ridge a bit talking. You could
- 16:30 hear them bloody carrying on there. I don't know what we've got to do. We've got to do nothing. It was getting awful bloody dry. This was about three o'clock and the bloody water in the water bag had nearly boiled. We could have made tea out of it. I said, "Friggin' water is too hot to drink." I had a boy there with a two inch mortar.
- 17:00 That bloody two inch mortar was a smoke bomb. I said, "We'll have a cool drink." I said, "This is an exercise in survival in the jungle." I lined up this two inch mortar on top of a bloody coconut tree and I was bloody in it, and coconuts flew. There could have been bloody 200 bastards fell down. As soon as I fired it this bloody captain turned up
- 17:30 within five minutes in the jeep. "Who fired that weapon?" I said, "What weapon?" "A mortar or whatever it was." I said, "I did." He said, "I'll put you on a charge sheet." I said, "You can put me where you like." He said, "I'll bloody parade you to the colonel." I said, "That would be a bloody good idea." He didn't know the colonel was like that with me.
- 18:00 We were like father and son. Colonel used to always call me Young Matho and I used to call him Uncle George. This bloody new captain didn't know anything about this sort of thing and how I'd trained with George. Anyhow, he paraded me to George, the colonel, bloody two days later.
- 18:30 He had a bloody foolscap page written out on what I'd done and insubordination and he had the bloody rigmarole set out, and old George had, when he paraded me to him in a Yankee tent, and he had the desk at the back of it, and George said,
- 19:00 "I've got to read this," whatever it was, "to you by, it was written by Captain Hocking." I said, "Yeah, yeah." He read the bloody thing, it was about twenty minutes reading, all the bloody crimes and fucking things I was supposed to have
- 19:30 done, all that sort of thing, and he said, "What have you got to say Sarg?" I said, "Well, there's a bit of truth in amongst it, but there's a friggin' lot of lies, a lot of bloody half truths and lies." Jesus, he nearly

- busted his guts laughing. He said, "What about this firing a bloody weapon without
- 20:00 any orders?" I said, "Sir, as you know, I've been in places if I'd have waited for orders from bastards like this captain, I would have been dead and so would a lot of other poor buggers." "Oh yeah." So that went down. Anyhow,
- 20:30 he said, "Case dismissed anyhow," and he said to this Hocking, he said, "Captain Hocking, you brought that man here to be demoted." "Yes Sir." "Well, if there's going to be any demotions from this exercise," he said, "You want to look out." I chucked it back at him.
- 21:00 The old colonel, old Georgie Warfe, was a stickler for man-management. He was always drumming into you man-management was the way to get work out of your troops, handle troops. Man-management is the bloody thing. I said to him, I said, "As far as man-management goes," I said, "Which you are always sticking into us, this bastard's got none.
- 21:30 You couldn't complain about his man-management," I said, "He's got none." Jesus Christ. He said, "Oh well." Pissed me off. I never got any demotion but I was an acting sergeant at that stage. Within the week I was bloody confirmed rank of sergeant and
- 22:00 an MM came through, and I had a bloody MM on my chest. The old captain, oh shit, he didn't like it at all. He had me transferred to A Company eventually.
- What did you get the MM for?**
- Just bloody, it was pretty easy. There's a thing on,
- 22:30 now what are we up to? What do you want?
- What do I want to know?**
- What else do you want?
- Well, you went off to New Guinea, right? So you did twelve months in Queensland, was that on the Brisbane Line, that was?**
- Yeah, at that time this old WO was still with us and he wanted to ship me out. I
- 23:00 wasn't getting on well with him and he sent me down, I went down to Brisbane to a GDD Details Depot, General Details Depot, but whatever happened there were no papers came through with me. I don't know what happened, they got lost.
- 23:30 Anyhow, I was down there and I couldn't get any pay and I was down there for bloody months, and I was getting desperate for money. I couldn't get on the [(UNCLEAR)]. There was another little bloke in this GDD, he was in the same boat. He never had any
- 24:00 paper work sent through to wherever he had to go, wherever they wanted you to go. Anyhow, I said to this bloke, "We'll go to the pictures anyhow, bugger it." I had enough money to get into the pictures. Anyhow we got into the pictures and we were standing in Albert Street. There was a pictures
- 24:30 queue and on the other side of the street there was another queue. We didn't know which queue was which. Anyhow, they were both from here to the bloody main street long, and we picked one of them, and one of them was the pictures and one of them was the brothel. We got in the wrong bastard and we
- 25:00 were standing there for bloody hours I suppose. Never moved bloody two yards. I said, "Jeez, this must be the wrong bloody queue. I'll walk up to the front of it and see what's going on." Well there were bloody heaps of bastards right up the front. I said, "By Jesus, this is a bloody nice how do you do. We're in the bloody brothel queue." I said, "We'll be here all night." I didn't want to go to a brothel anyhow.
- 25:30 We pulled out and went to the pictures anyhow. We got into the pictures. I said, "There's a bit of bloody food for thought in that bloody brothel queue, you know. If we could get in here at bloody two o'clock in the afternoon, stand at the door, let them all go by, we've got the first two positions
- 26:00 between us." We've got the first two positions into the brothel, whereas the Yanks come rushing in here at bloody half past three. From half past three to bloody four o'clock the bloody queue developed from this long to the bloody main street. We were standing at the bloody door about two o'clock, you might stand there until three o'clock before you get any business. Anyhow,
- 26:30 what happened, the Yanks came in all right and it was in a bloody half an hour, "How much for your position, buddy?" "Five quid." We made more bloody money at the brothel than we ever did in the army. We made five quid for bloody standing there for an hour. This was
- 27:00 a bloody good bit of exercise, you know, food for thought all right. We used it every day we could. Only five quid. Bloody hell, we made good money. We were only on six bob a day or something, six and sixpence a day, but I was sending half my money home anyhow.

- 27:30 I made an allotment home to Mum and about half whatever I got. I was pretty skimpy bloody pickings I tell you. Five quid a day made a difference. Shit, we had a great old time with the five quid. We'd go and get on the wallop and go
- 28:00 to the pictures when we liked. We had money to burn, a great old time. But it caught up with us eventually. What happened was, how they caught up with us, we went into Brisbane and we had nothing to do and we more or less had a permanent bloody
- 28:30 leave pass. We used to reckon we had it. I don't know if we did, but we had it. We could have got one everyday if we wanted. Sometimes you'd go in and you wouldn't be bothered getting it. We went in that day and we sat on a stool, on a seat just outside of Roma Street railway station
- 29:00 in the park there, and there was another bugger came and sat there beside us and he never sat down there ten minutes and the bloody provos were right behind him. They were watching him and he was a pretty well known character and everything. He'd been in and out of gaol all the time. I'd never had a fine, I had one fine I think in my pay book for a quid for being late home from
- 29:30 leave. This other bloke never had, not a red mark in his pay book. Anyhow, this bugger sat down and the provos picked this bloke up and they said, "Where's your leave pass?" I said, "I haven't got one." "You better come too." And this other bloke he never had one, so we all went, all in the dog
- 30:00 cart. We went up and took us into their bloody headquarters and the bloody captain or bloody major or something there, it was the next morning and had to front the beat, you know, and anyhow, he had shovelled the three of us in together and this captain
- 30:30 or major or whatever he was, I think he might've been a major, he read this bloke's record, this bloke we didn't know, read his record. He said, "Fourteen days Churchill for you." Churchill was the bloody coop. I stood there and he said, "No use you standing here." He said, "You're going too." Never even did anything about it. Jesus.
- 31:00 Well that's bloody poetical justice. That's what happened, so we did fourteen days Churchill. So when I came out of Churchill they sent us back to this GDD, General Details Depot. They sent you back to your original unit so I landed back there with old Wode
- 31:30 Tobe and he wasn't very happy. I couldn't care less. That's the way that happened.
- So you didn't get demoted for that? They didn't demote you for that? It didn't affect your rank?**
- I was only a private then. I did it before we went overseas. Yeah, I was only a private, and the worst bastard they had
- 32:00 they reckon, according to old Tobe.
- So when did you finally get to go to New Guinea?**
1943. It was about early '43 I think, fairly early. It's in the book there when we went, but I can't remember the date. I can't remember which date.
- 32:30 Anyhow, they took us over on the old Taroona which was a flat-bottomed boat used to do the Tassie run. It was a good boat, good little boat, that's the one we went over on into Moresby. They were still bombing Moresby. The Japs, they were bombing Moresby then, bloody night raids and God knows what, a hundred
- 33:00 bomber raids there one night. They reckon it was a hundred bombers, I don't know, I never saw a hundred, but they reckon it was a hundred bombers. They might have been a few bombers off. I never, I didn't see them all, but anyhow what happened then? I don't know.
- You stayed in Moresby, you were based in Moresby for a bit, were you?**
- Yeah, based at Moresby for
- 33:30 a while, quite a while, well, a few weeks. Dug miles of bloody slit trenches up around the hills. They thought the Japs might send a landing party in and we had to dig these bloody slit trenches all around, a defence trench all around the bloody hills behind Moresby. Anyhow, the Japs never came that way. They tried to get overland.
- 34:00 The Kokoda Trail was a bit hard for them. That's when they thought they might bloody send a landing party, but they didn't. By the time we finished there, they, what happened? We were there for a week or two and they flew us over to,
- 34:30 flew us into Wau, which was along the Black Cat Trail thing. Wau is on the top end, the finish of the Black Cat Trail. The Black Cat Trail came up from Salamaua to Wau, but there was another crew, the 2/7th or something, were down on the Black Cat Trail. They were still fighting for the bloody
- 35:00 airstrip at Madang. Not at Madang, at Wau. When we jumped off the plane they were still bloody

- blueing there alongside it. We didn't know who was going to own it overnight. But anyhow, they won out, we won out, Australians won out. Then we went down to Bulolo,
- 35:30 down the Bulolo River to a place, Bulwa, B U L W A, Bulwa, and that's an old township. There was nothing left of it, it had been bloody blown out, but it was a township in the gold digging days when the dredges and that were going. The dredges were still out on the river when we were there.
- 36:00 They weren't working. The Japs, there was a mob went through, and Australian mob, Major Fleming or something went through and blew everything up, blew the dredges and blew, well part of the dredges so that they were inoperable, and all the town's water supply, the bloody
- 36:30 electricity powerhouse and all that was all blown out because they thought the Japs were coming in there. Anyhow, it was us that went in there. Then from there there'd been another track found, or another supposed track that could be used for access into the back of Salamaua. It was called
- 37:00 the Double Mountain Trail. Talk about a trail, it was a trail all right, you couldn't have got a bloody donkey up it. We had to get up it. We weren't long in the ears like donkeys, but we got up through it. It took two or three days to tramp these bloody hills, Double Mountain. It went up ten thousand feet from the Bulolo Valley.
- 37:30 Bulolo wouldn't have been more than perhaps a couple of thousand feet above sea level. We had eight thousand feet of bloody mountains to climb up and fairly steep country. The first mile of it was all steps dug into the bloody hill, zigzagged around the bloody hill, you know.
- 38:00 That took a bloody couple of hours to climb. I think somebody reckoned it was bloody eight hundred steps or some bloody thing like that. It was pretty rugged. I had a bloody good little mate with me going through there. His name was Ronnie
- 38:30 Williams. He's been dead for many years now. He was a bloody [(UNCLEAR)] bloke. He was pretty fit and so was I. He used to do a bit of pugging before the war. He was a boxer down in West Melbourne Stadium. He used to have fights. He was fighting six rounders
- 39:00 there at the finish. He was fighting for bloody thirty bob he said, in the Depression times. He was married. He had a wife and a couple of kids and he did this to keep the kids and that in toys and what have you. [(UNCLEAR)] little bloke and pretty fit. I trained like that all the time.
- 39:30 Anyhow, there was a bloody boxing tournament at Casino. We were camped up there. When we were up at Casino there was a brigade boxing tournament or something and he entered for that, and I said, "What are you doing?" This is within a couple of weeks of the bloody tournament, I said, "What are you doing about this bloody boxing tournament, Ronnie? You haven't had a glove on."
- 40:00 He said, "I'll take a hiding." I said, "Yeah, that sounds all right but it's bloody all the better if you can give one, give a bit back." He said, "Yeah, I'll give them a bit, don't worry." Anyhow, he never won the tournament but he met the eventual winner of it in his first match and he
- 40:30 got the best fight of the night, and it was only a bit of training I did. I used to run him around, run him from the camp which out about two or three mile out of Casino, run him into Casino. They had a gym in there set up and put some bloody sparring gloves on him. He had me as fit as he was. I think he was. I don't know how he did it. Well, I was
- 41:00 fit too, you know. It was good training for me as well. That's the way it happened. But he was a good little bloke.

We'll stop there.

Tape 4

- 00:34 **So you're at Double Mountain?**
- Yeah.
- You've got 8,000 feet to climb and Ronnie is with you, is he?**
- Yeah, Ronnie. A whole lot of us, whole crew, whole battalion went through there. Ronnie and I did it as easy as anything because it was all worked out for days.
- 01:00 He had a days walk under the conditions with a pack, all you had to do, but Ron and I used to race through and drop our gear, have a cup of coffee at the bloody Salvo's shop, their bloody tent. They had a tent
- 01:30 wherever the camp was made. We'd go back then for about, walk back up the bloody range until we picked up the last bloke and walk through with them. We'd finish up bloody two hours, three hours after

getting in there early, we'd walk back for perhaps two hours and then walk back

- 02:00 through to our base with the stragglers, a couple of stragglers or something. But just as well we did it because some of them would have stayed out all night and been bloody distraught. They would have bloody gone off their head because it's eerie country, up in Moss Forest and that sort of thing and it would drive you nuts if you were a bit that way inclined, but we could do it easily enough.
- 02:30 That's what we used to do every day, each day. It was three days on the track and that's what we used to do. We'd drop our gear, have a cup of coffee and a biscuit or whatever the Salvos had, offered, and go back then up the bloody range without our own gear. We'd drop our own gear, and go back and pick up any stragglers
- 03:00 that couldn't make it. Some of them wouldn't have made it. Big blokes particularly. Big blokes were at a disadvantage because they had big feet and bloody roots this far apart and they were bloody staggering and getting hung up in the roots. It made it difficult, whereas us lighter blokes, smaller blokes could sort of dance over the top of the buggers,
- 03:30 but the big blokes were plodding and they couldn't bloody lift their feet.

Was there any risk of attack? Was there any risk of attack when you were crossing that mountain?

There were no Japs along that track until we got down near Salamaua. That's where we attacked them then. Yeah, we got down there one bloody evening, one night, it was bloody, and

- 04:00 one place we had, there were night bloody exercises. We had to move by night because they reckon they had spotted from the ranges further down. They didn't know we were coming in there, how many or when. Anyhow, it didn't make any difference. We bloody got there just the same and got stuck into them. It was rugged country.
- 04:30 It was the Battle of the Ridges they called it and the Siege of Salamaua. It wasn't a pretty bloody spot at all as far as we were concerned.

So when you got in there were you reinforcements? Were you coming in as a reinforcement?

No. We were the only unit in there at that stage. The only other unit with us, or other unit that had been in there that were in there

- 05:00 was a section of the 2/3rd Commandos, 2/3rd Independent Company. They'd been in there and they'd done the survey I think of this track that we came, this Double Mountain Track. I think they broke that through, they got through that. Shit, it was rough going. They were in there, but they'd been in there for a week or two I think.
- 05:30 I don't know just how long. We sort of strengthened them up and we'd only attack onto the ridge. They were only in there as a reconnaissance party to recognise to find out the strengths and find out where they were. A lot of their reconnaissance wasn't very reliable.
- 06:00 In fact some of it was very unreliable. That's why old Georgie Warfe used to get me to bloody go out and do specials for him, do special patrols on a matter. He'd want to know where the Japs were down there or where, you know. Usually it was something pretty sticky, but anyhow, I done them no trouble.
- 06:30 I had good boys with me too. I'd only take a couple with me on those sort of jobs because the more you've got the more you're risking, I found. That's the way I looked at it. Maybe I was cross-eyed.

So these reconnaissance patrols that you do, this is at Salamaua?

Yeah, yeah, yeah,

- 07:00 a lot of them there.

Did you come across any Japanese?

Shit yeah, yeah.

On those patrols?

Heaps of them. Yeah, we often came across Japanese. We'd often bloody strike them two or three different places in the one day. No worries about that. You'd shoot two or three and they'd get upset, go looking for you. You wouldn't be then though. You'd disappear into the jungle

- 07:30 and wait for them again, wait until they spoke out, hit it. That's the sort of work it was. It was more guerrilla warfare. It was fought under pretty difficult conditions. We had aircraft dropping supplies to us when they could get through, but they were getting missed
- 08:00 too. We worked on half rations. They used to send the rations up, field operational rations, they were supposed to be set up to survive a man a day in action.

You were talking about the patrols and what

08:30 **the situation was like.**

Yeah.

What sort of weapons were you using?

We had, most of our crew then on patrol you'd have Owen guns which was only a 38 but it was pretty close contact work. An Owen gun is pretty deadly from here to ten,

09:00 bloody five or six yards out, ten yards. That was about the sort of country we were operating in. Ten yards, yeah, that would be fairly close. We operated anywhere from here to the door. I've been beside a track and had the Japs walk past the track on the track, I've had the Owen gun sticking through

09:30 a bush and I could have reached out and tripped the bloody Jap over, grabbed them by the foot, but you can't do that because you've got other blokes in your operation as well, and once you do that you've upset the whole apple cart. You had to think of your own people doing the operation

10:00 with you. Yeah, I used to carry a Bren gun if I could because if you hit them with a Bren gun they stayed hit, but if you hit them with an Owen gun they're likely to get up and run away, or bloody run at you or drive a bullet at you. But if you hit them a couple of times with a Bren gun they don't recover too quick. It knocks them arse over head.

10:30 **So how well were you able to work out the position, the Japanese positions in those situations?**

That's what we had to do, find them. That's half the problem, is finding their position and finding out how many, approximate bloody strength of them, and then planning an attack for them.

11:00 There's quite a bit of work to be done before an operations starts. Then you get into action and you've got to get back out again. Half the time it's nearly as hard getting out as it is getting in. We handled it pretty well, got a lot of Japs. Best bloody morning I had was, well, it wasn't

11:30 say the best morning. I suppose looking back it wasn't the best day. I was bloody made a corporal, private to a corporal to a sergeant in three days. In that three days I killed something like fifty-two Japs in several different positions.

12:00 You've got to have them sussed out pretty well to be able to do that, and then knock the buggers out while you've got them sort of confused. I knocked out three machine guns, a mortar position and their headquarters where they were issuing bloody orders from,

12:30 their control post, knocked that out too. Took the bloody bloke, bloody Nip officer with a bloody sword swinging around and trying to get his troops up. I took him out. It was bloody hard yakka. Well, when I say hard yakka,

13:00 it wasn't that bloody hard I suppose. It was risky stuff. You wouldn't know when

Can you tell me about those three days in a bit more detail? Can you give me a bit more detail about those three days? They sound pretty extraordinary.

Those three days? Yeah, I could do that because it happened, the first day was down in what we called Coconut Ridge which was a ridge down off

13:30 Vickers. It was, we went through, over Vickers Ridge and went down onto this Coconut Ridge with a party, a company of us. We were the forward section of it and we struck two bloody

14:00 Japs on this position. As soon as they saw us they panicked and took off. But what they'd done when they took off, we found out soon, they had a stack of ammunition head high. The ammunition wasn't stacked there for nothing, don't worry, they were planning

14:30 to attack us. Anyhow, we took the bloody ammunition off them, didn't we? That sort of must have stymied them a bit, it sort of slowed them down because they were, they did put an attack on us, but this first day they came out, we took over this first bloody little,

15:00 Coconut Ridge was a series of ups and downs like a saw tooth bloody thing, and each bloody position behind, the next one was higher. There was a low one and one a bit higher, and another one a bit higher behind that again. It was an awkward place to put a bloody concerted attack on.

15:30 We took this first bit of it and we stayed the night on it. During the night the Japs put, they put in an attack with a few troops, they kept pin-pricking us, you know, and it was

16:00 rather uninteresting. Well it was interesting because you don't know where the bastards are. Anyhow, I had a Bren gun at that stage and I happened to spot one coming up over this, they had to come up a fairly steep little bloody thing to come up to where we were, and this was out in front of me,

16:30 and I spotted one. The moon was just coming up and I spotted the bastard, he moonlighted himself, and

I knocked him over. Well from then on, that bloody moonlight was handy, you could see any movement coming up over this ridge. But they broke through another track of course, bloody got in the jungle.

17:00 **So were they coming up, you said over the ridge, were they coming up from a higher point or were they coming up the side?**

They were coming up at us. Yeah, we were, they were on this Coconut Ridge which was a series of bloody waterway things. They were coming off there. They had this ammunition stacked on the part of the ridge that we took early.

17:30 We shifted the bloody ammunition to back up the bloody top of the hill where we had a force up there controlling the Vickers Ridge end, the Vickers position.

So what fellows were you with? When you found the ammunition dump what fellows were you with then? Who were you with?

Who was I with? I was with B Company,

18:00 58 Battalion B Company. We went in there as B Company.

How many of you were there?

How many were there? About well, I think by this time with sickness and bloody wounds and things like that, a few killed, I think we were down to about under forty, and Christ knows how many Japs were there, but anyhow, I killed a few of them,

18:30 thinned them out a bit. We went back, we were withdrawn from this bloody position down the front on the bloody,

19:00 **Vickers?**

Hmm?

Vickers or Coconut Ridge?

Coconut Ridge. We were withdrawn from it early next morning. I had a battle there with the bastards to get out. There were troops there with me and I had the Bren gun and I had it, "Well, you piss off back up and I'll hold them here. If they come at

19:30 me I've got the answer to them." This is what happened. I had a Bren gun laying flat on my guts beside the track and there was a little bit of waterway washed out where the bloody water dribbled down through it made it a little bit low and I was laying down in that. Just as well I was because when I opened up these,

20:00 I could hear them rustling in front of me. I had them all pinpointed, one there, two there, one there. I had them more or less pinpointed, there were about six of them. But unbeknown to me there was a machine gun up above me on the right flank and it was in a bit higher country than I was. Anyhow, I opened

20:30 up on these one I'd pinpointed in front of me, knocked them out, give them a bit of, a bloke named Alfie Stone, he went past me. I said, "Anybody behind you Alf?" "Anybody behind me?" he says, "Bloody Japs, heaps of them." I said, "Won't matter if I tickle a few ribs then, will it?" So that's what I done, I stopped there tickling a few ribs and they died laughing.

21:00 I think they did. The looked all right to me dying. But Alfie was a very good soldier, Alfie. He was a great bloke. He's still alive, I think he is. He's a bloke who'd be interesting to get a story from. He's Alfie Stone and he comes from Lancaster up near Kyabram, between Kyabram and

21:30 I suppose Shepparton, somewhere in there, Undera, or somewhere up that way.

So that day where was Alfie, what was Alfie doing? You were down in the ditch with the Bren gun, what was Alfie doing?

Alfie was coming out. He was, I think he was a corporal then at that stage, but I said, "Is anyone behind you Alfie?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "They're all friggin' Japs."

22:00 I said, "It won't matter if I knock a few down then, tickle a few ribs? It won't hurt our blokes?" "No," he said, "They're all out." So that's what I done, anything that moved in front of me I knocked out.

So why were you withdrawing from Coconut Ridge then?

Why? Because word came through that was an attack going on, I don't know how they got it, but they got it,

22:30 there was an attack to be put on to Vickers Ridge and they didn't want us down in there cut off by a heap of Japs not in the bloody firing line. Couldn't have even got up to there, and this is what happened. Possibly this was what their ammunition was for too, but we'd already got rid of that. We got that up to the blokes

- 23:00 that were up top. They were doing it then without much ammunition, probably a scarcity of ammunition and a few of their bloody blokes being knocked off overnight, which I knocked off down in the Coconut. Then when I went back up the hill I was made a corporal there and then. I came
- 23:30 back up from knocking out off this bloody, the machine gun, it was out on my flank, and it was putting the bloody bullets just across the top of my bloody magazine. If I'd had the Bren gun sitting up on the bipod, which is normal, I'd have been taken out first burst, and I'd have just cut the grass, mowed the jungle, just over the top of
- 24:00 my bloody head, wouldn't have been two inches, three inches. Well, the magazine was about eyesight, the top of it. It was bloody just mowing the bloody scrub down. That's how close it can get, but as long as it didn't hit me it was all right. When they didn't hit me I
- 24:30 had to wriggle my arse around and get, without getting my head up, a bloody machine gun firing at you on strips, strip fed, they can fire nearly, keep firing for bloody, well, until the gun gets too hot to fire with because they feed it on strips. It takes two men to do it.
- 25:00 I turned around, I could fire the Bren gun with a magazine at a time on my own. I had it folded down but it burnt all my bloody arms here, particularly my right arm. Burnt all the bloody, I was laying there with the bloody smoke coming off my arms, with hot shells. But you don't feel them.

25:30 Not at the time.

How many shells in a magazine?

Twenty-eight. Twenty-eight in a Bren magazine. You used to load them to twenty-eight. They would hold twenty-nine but you never loaded the last one. You'd bloody leave a little bit off the spring. It's for safekeeping. Your spring is,

- 26:00 the tension will go out of it if you keep loading it right to the top. That's what the book of words said. I never ever loaded them that far. Very seldom you'd have to fire more than half a mag at a time, you know. When this bloody machine gun opened up I gave him a full bloody burst, but I had to change the magazine before
- 26:30 I fired on him because I'd already fired half a mag down at the bastard in front of me, and no use setting into a machine gun with a bloody few bullets. I thought I'll bloody change my mag first. I had to lay the gun over and feed another mag on to it. Take the mag off and feed another mag onto it laying on its side without poking my head up because this bloody gun was firing just, I don't
- 27:00 know, he mustn't have been able to depress his bloody gun any further than what he had it or something. I don't know. The Japs were there, their LMG, I forget what they called it, Doogie or Loogie or something, and they had a bipod on them but they weren't like the Bren bipod which was
- 27:30 telescopic. You could raise it or lower it, or you could fold it right in under you and let it lay flat on the ground. That's where I had it. If I'd have had it up, even half up, it would've taken me out, no worries. But as it was laying flat, it was just too low for him.
- 28:00 I fired back up. I thought if I fired back up along the bloody line of bullets he'd been putting at me, I'd give him a bloody time. I reckon I'd make him dance I reckon. I made him dance but he didn't dance far. I hit something, I don't know what it was. It might've been a bloody grenade or a box of grenades and a cloud of smoke went up and bloody machine gun went up.
- 28:30 Bloody something else, two bodies went up. I don't know what I hit but it was something. It could've been something, it was probably a box of grenades or something they had there. I don't know. It might've been sympathetic fire firing along in their bloody ammunition box, or something like that. You get that. But anyhow, that fixed them. They never fired another, that gun never fired another
- 29:00 round I'll bet you.

So you saw him when you shot him, you saw him?

I saw the blast when the thing blew up. A couple of bodies blew up with it and they weren't too good. I think they were fairly finished. I got out then and went back up. I yelled out to Alfie. "Alfie," I said, "Get up." I told Alfie, I said, "Get up behind

- 29:30 the big tree." I said, "I might want a bit of cover fire to get out of here shortly." I didn't know how it was going to finish. Anyhow, I yelled out to Alf, I said, "Are you there Alf?" "Yeah," he was there. He'd have been there until bloody tea time if I'd have wanted him. He'd have stayed all day. Anyhow, I said, "I don't think these bastards are going to do much
- 30:00 from where they are now." I said, "I think I've got them pretty well quietened." I waited a few minutes, maybe five minutes to see if there was any movement or anything. There was nothing. Calm as a bloody graveyard. I said to Alf, "I'm coming up. I'll be on the right hand side of the track. Don't mistake me for a so and so Jap because I won't be a Jap,"

- 30:30 and I said, "I'll be coming up on the right hand side of the track in the jungle. I won't be in on the track. I'll be just off the track." "That's all right." I went up to Alf and I said, "There are no bloody Japs left I don't think Alf." "Looks like," he said, "you never got a shot fired at you. That's all right." So we went back up to where our company was up
- 31:00 on the ridge up on the range, up on the ridge a bit, going uphill, and went back up there. Teddy Griff was the company commander. He said, "What the bloody hell have you been doing down there?" I said, "I've been tickling a few Jap ribs and they died laughing." He said, "You mad bastard." So he said, "Get up there, you're a corporal."
- 31:30 So the next day, that night I bloody, that night we went back up through them and took up a position at the back of the party, the mob that was up on the ridge, we took a position up in reserve. We were a reserve company. We were only bloody thirty odd strong.
- 32:00 We took up a position there and next morning Teddy Griff found a bloke wheeling a bloody, we had weapon pits and that dug and we were in the weapon pits, and Teddy
- 32:30 Griff sent a bloke up to say the Japs had taken up a position between us and the top of the ridge on the other side of the ridge from where we'd come up. He said, "I want it reconnoitred. I want to know how many is there and where." Teddy Griff was I suppose
- 33:00 might have been 150 yards down along the ridge, so I went down and saw him. I took a Bren with me though. He said, "Yeah, I do want somebody to bloody have a look at that and find out just the strength of them and how they're situated." So I said, "I'll go
- 33:30 up on the bloody ridge," and I got up on the flank of them and you could look down over them. I said, "I'll do that. I'll get up there with a Bren." I said, "If I see a few of them I might tickle some more ribs." That's what happened. I tickled their ribs all right, and I took out another, don't know how many. I took out a fair few.
- 34:00 But by the end of that next evening I'd taken out over forty down there. That was beside the ones I'd taken out down the, Cliffie Schwartz, he was a sergeant, he was in charge of the bloody supposedly this platoon that I'm in and I was about the only bloody one in it I think. Me
- 34:30 and Cliff and might've been another bloke. Anyhow, they were all over gathered down the bottom of this bloody ridge. They were going to attack up the ridge. When I bloody opened up on them and took this, from where I was up above them, I took off, any Jap moving I took them out. There was bloody
- 35:00 a heap of them dead. I came back down to Teddy Griff and told him how I saw it. I said, "There's a bloody lot of Japs in there." I said, "Not any just holidaying. They're in there for a purpose." So I said there was a fair few of them and weren't, I bloody sort of
- 35:30 told him, and he said, "Well, we're going to plan an attack to come up this ridge tomorrow morning." I said, "That will be all right." I said, "I'll get up the back of them and see if I can wriggle my bloody way in and hit them from the arse end of them." That's what I did. When they started the attack the next morning
- 36:00 I went up the back of them. I had to climb up a bank higher than the roof here, bloody straight up, with a Bren gun strapped on my back and the Japs, if they'd have turned around they'd have shot me like a bloody bird in a, like a fish in a bowl. They didn't. When the attack
- 36:30 started they were all looking down the bloody, what was left of them, because I'd already taken out probably twenty of the bastards and I'd taken out a machine gun position, another machine gun position there, and bloody mortars but the command post was still
- 37:00 there. I got up, and when I got up in the back of the bastards I was within here to the toilet door there, the bathroom door away from them. I bloody give them buggery. Any that was above ground was dead.
- Is this at the command post?**
- Yeah, the command post was in too. It was in it, and a lot of other troops that were laying about,
- 37:30 hangers on. They were all pretty well crippled. I took out bloody, I had a bloke, a bloke came up to me and knew, later that day there was a bloke, a couple of blokes, they were reinforcement blokes, young blokes came up and I said, "You'll bloody do me."
- 38:00 A good sturdy looking bloke, I said, "You'll make a bloody good undertaker." I said, "You've got plenty of work, plenty of places here you can practise." So I put him to work being the undertaker, and he reckoned he buried bloody forty-four of the bastards on this position up there. I don't know. There was nobody else up there. Nobody else shot them because I was the only bastard up there.
- 38:30 Cliffie Schwartz was the sergeant, he came up after and he said, "I might've shot two of them," but there were forty-six there altogether. I said, "That was your two." It was interesting. It broke their
- 39:00 bloody, it opened the caper right up as far as the Japs were concerned. It broke the bloody back of their

attack force. They never had the guts for another operation. On the whole position, the rest of the company put the attack up the ridge to where I was,

39:30 I was up on top of them, they got quite a few more Japs. Overall, it was tallied up there were sixty-eight Japanese killed there and we never had one casualty. Never had one man hurt. It was a pretty good bloody operation and sort of took the guts out of the Japanese too.

40:00 Those sort of things happen.

So is that when you got the rank of sergeant?

Yeah, yeah. Teddy Griff turned around and he said, "Get up there. You're a sergeant, you mad bastard." All the Japs [(UNCLEAR)]. Yeah, those Japs were laying there a bloody week still laying about. Teddy Griff came up to see us,

40:30 Cliffie Schwartz and I, and he said, "What the bloody Christ has been going on here?" Cliffie turned around and said, "Ask the mad bastard there." I was a mad bastard again. I was always a mad bastard, but anyhow it got the results.

Tape 5

00:35 **Fire away Sandy.**

Well, we did a few odds and ends jobs like, I don't know just what now. I'd have to think about them. We were in Salamaua there for another couple of months after that.

01:00 **Is that where you got recommended for the VC?**

Yeah.

Can you tell us? We haven't heard about that on camera, can you tell us about that?

Yeah. That's when I went down the coconuts. That was down in the coconuts before I took out a machine gun and quite a few Japs besides them. We came up onto,

01:30 the Japs came up through the night and got in between us and the people on top of the hill, top of the range there, and I took out another bloody forty odd up there the next morning, next day.

You told us that story just before lunch Sandy, so who

02:00 **recommended you for the VC?**

Teddy Griff. Teddy Griff, a captain of a company. He was the company commander. He was very savage on it when I never got it. He was very charred about it. He said it was bloody shocking. He never said anything at the time, but when I got the MM later

02:30 he said, "You should've had the big bastard in front of it." That's all. He said, "I wouldn't even shake your hand on the Military Medal." But that was Teddy Griff. He wanted me to go to Korea with him later. I struck him at a reunion in Melbourne and he wanted me to go to Korea with him. 1950 I think it was, '49 or '50.

03:00 He said, "I'll take you, you can come into the unit," into the unit that he was going in, 2RR, RAR, whatever it was, Royal Australian Regiment. He was 2IC of that regiment at that stage. He finished up in charge of it and he wanted me to go to Korea with him. He said, "Best

03:30 bloody patrol sergeant I've ever seen." He wanted me to go with him. At that stage I was married and had a couple of kids. I said, "I'm not going." He said, "If you come with you can come in on your old rank, guarantee you a commission within a month."

04:00 He said, "I'll guarantee you'll have your commission in a month." I said, "I've already knocked that back once." I said, "That doesn't interest me at all, neither does Korea." So I never went. Never thought any more about it. I was busy here trying to make a business go, you know, I got pretty well involved in trying to make a business career,

04:30 and I did too. You can't do everything. I couldn't afford to go, to piss off over to Korea.

So when you received the MM, was that instead of the VC or was that for something else?

No, no. You never get anything instead. You've got to get another fresh again. If that one's knocked back that's finished. No more

05:00 arguments about decorations on that particular job. Once it's gone through, recommended for a VC, they won't recommend you, they won't take a recommendation then for the same job even if it's whatever. That's the way decorated are allocated.

05:30 You only get one snap at a bloody cherry and that's it.

Sandy when we get to the event that led to the MM, make sure you do tell us, yeah? Was that Madang where that happened? Was that Madang?

Madang? No, it was at,

06:00 well it was on the long patrols out of the Finisterre Ranges. We were up in the Finisterre Ranges and we did long range patrols out of the Finisterre Ranges down to the coast, down to Kaliko and Bogadjim, around that way. That's where I was recommended for

06:30 MM. That's where I got the MM. But that was much, that was later than Madang. It must've been. I forget now what it was. No, that's right. We took Madang out of the Finisterre Ranges.

07:00 We were working in the Finisterre Ranges and then done these long range patrols and we sussed out the coastline from there around to where the big river comes in between. I forget the name of it. Between Madang and where we were

07:30 there was a big river there.

Was that the Ramu?

It could've been the Ramu. I think it might be. Anyhow, I could hear the crocs barking all night. Bloody big crocs in there. We never went to close to the river, we kept our distance of it. If they want to eat anything they can eat the Japs. I didn't want them biting my tail.

08:00 Anyhow, but that's where I got recommended. I went down into a village. It's in that bloody thing anyhow. The recommendation is in that thing.

Yeah. Can you tell us the events, the action that led to the recommendation in as much detail as possible?

Well, the Japs came up to us. We were up on a position at,

08:30 we were operating from sort of a sub base at, what the hell is the name of the place. I know it. We were operating out of there and the Japs came up. We went down the coast and the Japs got onto us somehow. They followed us back out,

09:00 or supposedly they did. They came back up where we were the next day. But where we were, up on this high, fairly high country, we could see. We had a bloke on the track all daylight hours, on the track with a bloody set of glasses just keeping check and seeing if there was any Japs coming up.

09:30 Anyhow, he spotted some, spotted these Japs coming up and I said, "Well, that's all right," so I grabbed a couple of blokes and we went down along the track a bit and put in an ambush for them and got them, got about half a dozen I think, something like that. That fixed them up. But then we were only at that stage,

10:00 we weren't a bloody, we weren't there to bloody occupy ground. We were there to suss out Japs, where they are and what their movements were, and what we'd done by going down the coast we found out about what they were doing, where they were building ports and where they were taking them away and what have you.

10:30 So what we were there for was mostly done at this stage and then when they sent these Japs up to take us, we took them out instead. That's the way of it. That was a bit of skirmish, you know, it only lasted bloody two or three minutes. The patrolling, we patrolled for days,

11:00 several days down there.

Sorry Sandy, just the hay fever. Apologies. But the decoration came for that particular skirmish?

Yeah.

So there must have been something slightly out of the ordinary involved with it?

Nothing really. It's how it's been seen, you know. It was all right.

11:30 I never involved any more troops than I had to, there was only three of us. There was only me and two others. I think I took most of them out in the first bloody burst of the Owen gun. The other blokes, I think it was reported by the natives

12:00 I think the following day, that there were six Japs killed. I don't know. I only reported four. I could see there were four down, so that's what I reported. But the natives reckoned there were six killed. I think I reported four killed and others wounded, but I didn't know many or what wounds. But anyhow, the natives seemed to think six killed.

12:30 It's whether you take their word or mine. I don't care. It didn't worry me. That's all it was, but it wasn't

even dangerous. Not the sort of things I'd been doing.

Do you actually remember the very first time you fired a gun in anger in Salamaua or New Guinea?

13:00 Yeah.

What was that all about?

That was on the bloody [Government] Bench Cut Track incident down there between the Bench Cut Track and Komiatum Track. No, the first time I shot any bastard was on Komiatum Track. But we had an ambush

13:30 set for them and we opened up on them and who killed what you wouldn't know, but I fired a bloody [(UNCLEAR)] blast. I think I would've hit him. That sort of thing happens. You don't know who. He could have been hit before I hit him. I don't know. He might have been hit after too. He might've jumped up. I don't know. I mightn't have had to kill him. Might've had a lethal blow bullet through him. I think I did.

14:00 I had a feeling I did. I was a fairly good shot with a rifle, with any gun, no worries. Yeah, that's all that was.

What did it take to be able to do what you did?

What did it take? Only a bit of nerve. You've got to have the nerve. Keep your nerve,

14:30 don't panic. Panic and you're finished, you're gone. That goes with anything, nearly anything. Anything in life if you panic it will bloody go down. If you keep your bloody head and attack it as things crop up, you've got to attack them as you see them and then hopefully they come out all right, which they will if

15:00 you, as long as you persevere and don't panic. You've got to keep cool and the harder they get the cooler you've got to be because it will test your bloody limits if you get in a position where, I've been in a position several times where I think the next minute could be my last, the next second could be your last, but you

15:30 keep cool, calm and collected and you'll bloody win through. Sometimes it takes a minute, only minutes and sometimes it takes days, hours, days to do, to work your way through. But you've got to just persevere and that's all it is more or less, perseverance.

16:00 Sometimes it's under pretty hard conditions. It's hard to realise that you've done it. After you've done it you wonder how you've done it. You don't know. You've got to look back and say, "Shit, how the hell did I do that?" You even amaze yourself the things you can do under duress. That's what I found anyhow. You don't know what you can do until you're put to the test.

16:30 That's what I feel about it. You get under pressure, the same as playing football or anything, you don't know who you can beat until you try. You've got to have a go at them, cricketers, anything, whatever. They've got the big name but you don't let names worry you. Just work

17:00 on them, persevere with them. That's the same in life really right through. That's the way it happened to me.

Does it help to actually be able to hate the enemy?

Oh, I didn't like them at all. I never had any time for the bastards. Some of the things

17:30 they could do. They'd shoot you in cold blood, no worries. They wouldn't care or give a bugger if you had a chance or no chance. They'd bloody down you. Well, we got that way too. Two can play that caper. So if they came up like that, that's the way they went. It's was a matter of

18:00 an eye for an eye, isn't it? That's the way it was anyhow. I don't like Japs. You can't trust them. I would never trust a bloody Jap now because I know the sort of bloody ways they work, palavering to your face and stab you in the back.

18:30 But anyhow they never got the chance to do much of that to me, I tell you. If they were palavering to my face I'd bloody down them anyway irrespective. I could have taken them prisoner I suppose one day. We had no tucker to feed a prisoner and they had less than we had. So what's the use of taking a prisoner? He's only going to starve to death, and not only that,

19:00 it would've cost us a man to look after him, to keep him. Not only just to keep him in rations, to keep him there. You'd have to tie the bastard up to a tree or something and then you wouldn't know that he'd get off the bloody rope and slit your throat while you were asleep if you were sleeping. They wouldn't have worried about that, that would be an easy walk for them, a bloody

19:30 cake walk, oh no.

So you had someone attempt to surrender, is that right?

Well I had a bugger, I asked him to surrender. I said, "If you're fair dinkum come out." He was a bloke

with a, he was in a fox hole and on the front of the fox hole on the parapet there was

20:00 a satchel with a red cross on it. A red cross usually means that they're a medical person, doesn't it? But I said, "Well, if you're fair dinkum come out and I'll see that you get through, get back." But he never moved. Well I didn't know whether he was alive or dead, so all I could see

20:30 of him by looking in the pit from where I was, was his foot, and he never moved, never said nothing, never made, you'd think he was dead. I said, "I don't know whether you're alive or dead, you bastard, but I'm going to find out." So I had a Bren in my hand, so I fired one shot through his foot. He was alive, but as he bloody got the shock of the bloody bullet going through his foot,

21:00 if he'd been a medical person they're not supposed to carry bloody arms. Anyhow, the first bloody thing that shot past my nose was a bloody rifle. I said, "That's the sort of bastard you are?" Yeah, it was a trap set for me, or set for somebody. They're not getting me. When this bloody rifle shot up past me I said, "You

21:30 can have the bloody rest of the mag now. You can have another couple." Stuff him. If he'd have been fair dinkum I could've had him taken prisoner, put it that way, but I never. It plays on you a bit later, it's a concern to yourself, but you've got to live with yourself. [(UNCLEAR)] You do those sort of things

22:00 and it makes it more difficult to live with yourself. But I didn't feel guilty at the time. It was the normal bloody procedure for the bastards. If they are not what they represent to be, they are represented to be a medical bloke that would look after wounded. Yet he was prepared to kill the bloke, he was prepared to kill

22:30 me. He had a rifle laying beside him when I shot him through the foot. He had to jump up, when he got the bloody bullet through the foot he bloody lifted up and the rifle shot up in front of him. If that's the sort of bastard you are, you want to die, so he died. Didn't take much burying, only a couple of sods to fill him in. He had his

23:00 hole dug ready, handy. Oh well, those sort of things happen.

What would be done with, if there were a lot of bodies, you shot a lot of guys, what would be done with the corpses?

Well, maggots eat most of them. The bloody maggots are two and three inches deep over an area of,

23:30 twice as big as this bloody room, three times as big, four times as big as this room, where the bloody Japs were. The maggots were eating the blood on the ground. Shit, there were maggots everywhere after the second or third day. We were supposed to stay there for three days. Christ, I said, "I'm not staying here three friggin' days in these bastards."

24:00 You couldn't hardly get a bloody bite of bully beef up to your mouth without bloody maggots at you. Anyhow, we got through it, but it's shitty conditions to live in, sleeping in, sleeping on top of the bastards. Couldn't shovel the bastards off.

24:30 Anyhow, we got through them. It wasn't very nice. That was one of the worst places for maggots I ever saw. There were a lot of Japs killed there. As I say, bloody forty of the bastards killed up on this one bloody bit of a ridge. Anyhow, we got through them.

25:00 After they'd been dead a couple of days there, Christ, the maggots multiplied by about a million. Didn't have any worries to get multiplying, just kill a Jap. You'd plant them in a bloody hole. I had a bloke up there planting them for me. Dan Ralph, he was a funny bastard. He's

25:30 the bloke I made undertaker. He'd open up a bloody fox hole that the Japs had dug and take a bit each end and make it about five feet long which is the normal bloody thing for them, five foot six, and

26:00 a couple three foot deep, a couple of feet deep, however he could comfortably handle it. Pull the bloody, pulling two or three into there and roll them into it and bloody cover the bastards over, get them out of sight. Anyhow, he was doing this and sometimes you'd strike, you'd have your bloody old [(UNCLEAR)] you might strike

26:30 a bastard five foot nine or something. The odd one was five foot bloody nine. We had this bastard this day, he said, "Gee, I'll have to go and get the shovel and dig a bit more out." I said, "Don't worry. Don't worry about the shovel. Leave him here." We bloody left him on top of the bastards. I got my steel L and poked his head down the corner. It went crunch.

27:00 As it did the bloody maggots shot out of his mouth and nose. Oh shit, you poor bastard. He'd only just come up there and he was only near spewing. I said, "Don't worry about those little things, you get used to them." He did. He wasn't a bad soldier after. Nearly upset his guts first up, I tell you.

How long did it take you to

27:30 **get used to those sights?**

Ten minutes I suppose. Didn't take long. The first bloke I saw killed was one of my best mates and he

was a hell of a nice bloke. He was Billy Ryan, was his name. Billy Ryan from down bloody Essendon, North Essendon or somewhere there. He was a nice bloke, a hell of a good mate,

- 28:00 A tall blond bloke, but this was his downfall. Being blond, his face and hair and that, his features and that, he was blond as a bloody, nearly as blond as that dog only a different colour blond, and a blond bloke in the jungle stuck out like
- 28:30 dog's nuts, like a neon sign. That was most of his downfall, blond, but we had a lieutenant come up to us, different ones come through, come straight from Duntroon. The first bloody thing they want you to do is shave. I said, "I'm not shaving. That's the first mistake you'll make in here, is shaving."
- 29:00 I said, "Who do you look, the bloody harder you are to see?" "You've got to shave, the book says that." I said, "Well you can stick your book and do bloody shaving [(UNCLEAR)] where it might hurt." I said, "I'm not shaving." We had no bloody shaving gear anyhow. I never carried it, didn't need it. I had bloody hair down hanging down like a bloody no-hoper. I suppose I was too. No bloody,
- 29:30 beard down to here, rough as guts. Japs kill you, they don't care a bugger whether you're shaving or not. They kill you easier if you are shaving, I tell you, they'd be able to see you a lot easier. So I never bloody shaved all the time I was in there. I wouldn't shave. "I'll send you back, you'll get [(UNCLEAR)]." "[(UNCLEAR)] you can do what you like, I'm still not shaving."
- 30:00 There was a bloody lot of others wouldn't shave either after they could see the futility of shaving. Bloody officers coming up from Duntroon, they'd want to shave. "You can please your friggin' self. If you get bloody killed it won't worry me. If you're that bloody stupid you want bloody killing." Might as well be dead, or something. Anyhow, that's the way it was.
- 30:30 Some of the bastards, well, they more or less committed suicide by shaving. Put a bloody bullet straight your big white face. Yeah, I wouldn't shave.

Are you going to tell us about Billy Ryan, your mate, Billy?

I knew Billy well. Yeah,

- 31:00 he got hit with a bloody machine gun burst and he would be as close as you are to me, and I never got a scratch. [(UNCLEAR)] dead as a mackerel laying on the bloody track. Great bloke, Billy, the sort of bloke you don't forget. He was the first bloke I'd ever seen killed. It was on the bloody
- 31:30 Bench Cut Track which is a track that was dug into the side of a hill. It went from the junction of a track going up into the coconuts and the track went from Komiatum Track which was down on the, down near the river, and it
- 32:00 came along and went back up to a place. I don't know just where now, forget. Namling I think, something like that. I think it was Namling it went to. But anyhow, that's where it was. I was nearly killed there. We got ambushed on that bloody track.
- 32:30 About eight days later the Japs came up and ambushed us. Where we'd been down on the Komiatum Track ambushing them, they came up and ambushed us on this bloody Bench Cut Track, the track we were using to go back to base and that. They bloody made a nice old job of us. They killed, Billy Ryan was one of them and several others.
- 33:00 We had a corporal with us and he said to me, "Matho," he said, "Do you think you can get us out of here?" I said, "I was just thinking about getting myself out, and I think I can get out myself." He said, this corporal had a bit of
- 33:30 a wound up along, he took a bit of meat off his thigh, he said, "See if you can get us out." I said, "I won't get you out yet anyhow. It will have to be dark, after dark when the sun goes down." I said, "It wants to be dark at least, and then some," and I said, "Then it's in the lap of the gods whether you
- 34:00 get out whole or bloody dead." We had two wounded blokes, and there was only four, one, two, three other blokes and myself standing it. This bloody great hill in front and there was one going that way, same hill going down this way, cut by the Bench Cut Track. I said, "I'm not going downhill,
- 34:30 that's the easy way. If you go down there the Japs are," Komiatum Track was only 200 yards across, right into their, mixed up right amongst their territory. I said, "I'm going up the bloody hill." At least you're putting distance between you and them. So that's the way we went out. We got out. There was another crew,
- 35:00 another section of a bloody platoon, they were out bloody over a week before they got back to base. I brought these two wounded through. One of them died. He was hit pretty badly, hit up in the groin and bled to death.
- 35:30 I had no [(UNCLEAR)] for bleeding to death. I couldn't bloody, I wasn't a doctor anyhow, but I couldn't stop bleeding up in the groin part here. There's some pretty vital sort of bloody veins go through there. Anyhow, I had nothing to stop him bleeding. I did the best I could with him. I bandaged, no splints or anything, you know. The only way I could see

- 36:00 to splint him to move him was to tie both his legs together. There were a couple of rifles laying there and I put rifle straps around his legs, tied him together as best I could. He pleaded with us to leave him. I said, "No, you're not staying here. You're coming with us. If you die, well, that's bad luck." But anyhow he died all right.
- 36:30 I'm glad that he died with us instead of with the Japs, put it that way. The Japs would've tortured him. Not that they'd get much information off him because he was about gone then. But Ronnie Williams and I pulled him up this bloody hill. If we both let go at once he'd have slid straight back down, that's how steep it was. It was a bloody rugged but of country.
- 37:00 But anyhow, we got out of it, but it took us, I think it took us three days to get through and it took this other crowd bloody seven or eight or something. They had a [(UNCLEAR)] problem. They never had a wounded bloke but they had blokes that had fallen down and sprained their bloody ankles and things like that, but they were down in the bloody, they went downhill.
- 37:30 We went uphill. We weren't out, three days we were back home, back in base. Opened a tin of bully beef and it was rotten. That was the first bloody meal for three or four days. However, that's the bloody luck of the draw. Didn't even
- 38:00 know what was around the corner, that's the point. Yeah, however, bad times.
- What was the longest you were out in continuous action?**
- Well we were in action there, in the back of Salamaua, every day.
- 38:30 One of our group bloody contacted Japs for over seventy days, continuous contact. Not often that sort of contact happens. Seventy, I think it was seventy-six days or something like that. Yeah, they kept you busy. You had to keep thinking all the time.
- 39:00 You wouldn't know when you were going to walk into one. You've got to stay alert as well as get tired. You get tired anyhow, but you've got to stay alert and wait for surprises to happen. They can.
- 39:30 **How much sleep would you get?**
- Very little. You'd snatch a few bloody winks when you could. Some days you might be lucky and get a bloody, you might sleep all afternoon but you wouldn't know whether you were going to sleep that night or not. They had a habit of wanting to get up
- 40:00 on you when you were sleeping. You'd sleep in the afternoon if you could and stay awake at night, and you might be needed at night. By the time nights gets there you might be surrounded by the bastards. You wouldn't know. But that's the way it happens.
- 40:30 You bloody sleep when you can sleep. No time for crying. You don't cry over spilt milk. Once it's spilt, it's spilt. Never worry about the dead ones, dead blokes. I always tried to look after wounded blokes, yeah. I battled my eyeballs out to get a wounded bloke through, but if he's dead, don't matter, you won't hurt him any more.
- 41:00 He's gone, he's finished. As far as hurt goes it don't matter, but if he's got a breath in him then battle your eyeballs out to bloody get him. No use trying to bloody revive a dead one. It won't ever be done. That's the way I saw it anyhow. I might have been
- 41:30 a bit hard in that, but it makes you pretty hard too, to see death nearly every day, of some sort. It mightn't always be your blokes but it will be bloody somebody. If you went out hunting the Japs and never got one you'd feel like you'd gone rabbiting and never seen a rabbit. You know, bloody Christ,
- 42:00 that's a shocking bloody state of affairs.

Tape 6

00:38 **So Sandy, we're back on camera.**

Are you?

You can smoke, that's all right, drink.

I'll get rid of it. I don't have to smoke. I'm not supposed to, but what you're not supposed to do and what you do do are two different things, you know. They're always totally different.

Now,

01:00 **you were going to tell us about when you got the shrapnel wound?**

Yeah. That was up in Arnold's Crest. Japs were in a position, we were on this Arnold's Crest, it was a feature up on this range and it was one of the highest features and we took up a position on it and chased the Japs off it and occupied it.

- 01:30 The next day I think they sent another mob up and occupied the next part down along the ridge. It wasn't a very high ridge. It was nearly as high as the one we were on. Anyway, they were in a position where they could've raked us with bloody machine gun fire, and of course we were vice versa too. The trouble was
- 02:00 they attacked us in fairly large force and we hadn't been, we never had supplies coming up to us. Once they cut the track off we couldn't get bloody ammunition and that up through. They cut that out L of C, back to base, and anyhow, we had to,
- 02:30 this bloke and I, I went out forward scout and I had a look to see just where they were and this bloody Jap came out. I heard the click. The Japanese grenade had to be hit on something firm to arm it before they threw it.
- 03:00 To arm it means the striking pin has hit your initial, like a bullet cap, and that starts a fuse only about two inches long or an inch, whatever it is, four second fuse, and then
- 03:30 the next bloody thing you hear is the grenade going off and it goes in a pretty big hurry when it goes. Anyway, I heard this click. He must've hit it on a tree that he came out from behind or something, and I yelled out to the bloke behind me to get down and when he poked
- 04:00 his bloody nose around the corner of this tree I give him a burst of Owen gun, fired half a mag of Owen gun at him and then jumped over the bank I was beside, and as I went I bloody covered my arm up over my head. That's when I got all this shrapnel in my bloody arm. I went back to the doctor. We were going back to the doctor anyway because I had to take this other bloke back because he had one up here.
- 04:30 We went back, we had to evacuate the position and we had another out going the other way down a creek bed. We got back to the doctor and I said, "Oh shit, I might get a holiday." I hadn't been out of action, every day I'd been in action since I was in there. This was about,
- 05:00 it would've been nearly seventy days, seventy odd days I was in action before this happened. I said, "I'll get a holiday." He said, "No holiday for you," he said, "You don't need a holiday." He picked the two or three of them down along my arm and he said, "You've got a knife, you'll get them out." I bloody picked them out with a bloody pocket knife.

- 05:30 That was the sort of treatment you got. They couldn't stop and treat every bloody little thing.

You've got a piece in their still, haven't you?

Yeah, I kept that one. That's to remind me of Snowy Hanell. That's Snowy Hanell there. He got a piece the same size off the same grenade in his head and died. I'm a bit

- 06:00 sympathetic I suppose. Not really, I'm pretty solid in that sort of respect I think. I'm not a sook. I don't think I ever was and I don't I was meant to be, but however.

A bit sentimental?

Sentimental, that's the word I was trying to think of. Yeah,

- 06:30 that's right. That is the word. Anyhow, it didn't do him any good but I often think of Snowy. He's long since dead. That would have been about the end of August '43 I think. Yeah, something like that.

- 07:00 **So how long were you in the hospital there?**

When?

With the shrapnel?

I never went into hospital. The doctor said, "You're bloody all right. Don't need to go back, you're not badly hurt." I wasn't either, it was like a bee sting. He said, "No, you pick them out." They came up a bit. There was a bit of a festering and you just touch them with a knife and

- 07:30 poof, they pop up. I don't know how many I took out. I was taking them out for bloody weeks after. He took a couple out. He said, "I'll be here all bloody day. [(UNCLEAR)]." That's the sort of things that happened. He'd have more serious cases than me to look at, particularly my little with a part in his head,
- 08:00 but he couldn't save him. He died overnight. He didn't look badly hit, you know. You could only see a little mark on the side of his forehead on the side of his head there. You would think he'd bloody scratched him but it must've went through to the brain. He went, carked it that night, Snowy
- 08:30 Hanell, used to remember him. These are the little things, you remember people when they've gone from you. You had some good mates, lost some good mates, quite a few. You couldn't sort of get, say,

"Oh well, bad luck, he's gone.

09:00 He won't be back." To think a bastard like, I took more chances I suppose than ninety per cent of the poor bastards that were killed, and never got killed. I've had bullets go close to me. I've had a bullet come up, I've had the Bren on my hip and a bullet goes through between my arm and my body.

09:30 Take the cocking piece of my Bren, went out through the butt of it, went through the tail of my shirt going out. It had been pretty close. You can't stop and think about those things. That one missed anyhow. Looking back on it you wonder how the hell you bloody ever

10:00 survived. There are always some bloody things, the bastards, a mongrel dog lasts longer than a bloody thoroughbred I suppose.

So you just consider yourself plain lucky?

Yeah, sheer luck. Not bloody, you couldn't bloody organise it. You couldn't bloody

10:30 put it up if you really wanted to. You couldn't make it happen like it.

Sandy, you talked earlier about that fellow from Kensington, the rough guy, the rough fellow from Kensington that you patrolled with. What's his name?

Yeah, yeah. Dave Martin, Les Martin was his name, Darkie Martin. Jeez, he was

11:00 a rough bastard, but he was a good soldier. Him and I used to do two man patrols in behind Japs day after day, because we were short of men. By the time you, you start off with a company, probably, well we started off with a full strength company was 120 men, but we were never full strength. I suppose when we first went in there

11:30 we could've had ninety plus. After we were in there for a bloody couple of months you were down to bloody thirty. I've been in a bloody platoon that had three blokes in it. A platoon is supposed to have bloody ten blokes at any time. Two or three blokes in a platoon. You can't bloody,

12:00 I don't know, you've just got to battle on without them, fill in a gap. You leave a bit more weight on the ones that are left, put it that way, but this is war. That's what war is, always like that. It's the same to every bastard that ever fights in one. It's bloody futile. Yeah, I bloody hated it. I hate

12:30 wars, put it that way. It's a bastard way to live. I don't know how these bastards over there in the Middle East, they're warring all the time. I don't know how they put up with it.

Can you tell us how you and Les would work the patrol, how you'd communicate with each other and what signs you'd [(UNCLEAR)]?

Yeah, you'd only be signs.

13:00 You'd be sign language, maybe you'd have a whistle or something like that. You wouldn't travel real close together. We'd travel five or six yards apart, perhaps one each side of a jungle track.

13:30 We were cautious without being over cautious, but we knew what we were doing. We knew the signs to look for that bloody Japs were about and what to do with the bastards when we found them. Kill them, knock them off.

What were the signs, do you remember? What sort of signs?

I don't know now, I forget now, but we used to have signs of our own.

14:00 Never smoking, no smoking. You'd go for bloody hours or days without smoking. You were never smoking behind Jap lines, it was the first give away. The Yanks used to wander in. They were down along the coast. I never had much to do with them, but they tell me they used to wander around through the bloody jungle with bloody cigars going and Christ, making a joke of it.

14:30 But then a lot of them bastards were killed too, and that was why. They got themselves killed, committed suicide more or less. That's the way it was, but I wouldn't run those bloody risks. There were enough risks without sticking your head out for them. When you had to take risks, you had to take risks, yeah. But

15:00 you didn't have to bloody be stupid and walk into them, bloody don't do that. Bloody officer that was killed down on the coconuts there, he came to us only, he'd only been with us only a fortnight or something and

15:30 I was right down on the front. I said, "The Japs have just gone down that friggin' track." A bloody steep track, and I said, "The Japs have just gone down that path." "I can't see any." I said, "No, you can't see them. That's what I'm a bit concerned about too." He said, "There's none there." I said, "Don't be a bloody idiot"

16:00 He said, "There's no bloody Japs here. I can go down there." I said, "You can go where you friggin' like, you're in charge." I said, "I'm not going. I don't care a stuff who goes. I'm not. I wouldn't go down there

for anything." I said, "The village idiot wouldn't go down there." "I'll go down." He went down but he never came back. That just proves a point, but you can't see it now.

- 16:30 You wouldn't send a bloody brindle dog down there, and you wouldn't send my bloody little Jacko. She wouldn't go, she's too cagey for that.
- 17:00 That's the way of things, but that's the sort of things that were happening all the time. Stupidity killed a lot of people, just plain stupid, stupid bloody actions, stupid bloody way of going about doing a job. That's the sort of thing. We were probably lucky this bloody lieutenant got killed. If he hadn't have got killed he'd have probably got a dozen of us
- 17:30 killed somewhere along the track. If he'd have lived for another bloody month he'd have probably had a dozen bloody dead blokes on his belt. We were lucky he went early because he was that bloody stupid. Teddy Griff came up and he said, "Where's Lieutenant Huff?" I said, "Down there." "Oh," he said, "He's got bloody important papers on him."
- 18:00 I said, "He has." "Yes," he said, "He's got important papers on him." I said, "Well it looks like you've done the bastard." I said, "The important papers will be hard to read," I said, "He's full of bloody lead. I think you wouldn't read them for blood," and I said, "If you want him he'd down there. I'm not going down." It wasn't worth looking at.
- 18:30 That's the sort of thing it was. He said, "How did he come to go down there?" I said, "The stupid bastard knew everything and he wouldn't listen to me." Perhaps it's one of the acts of God or something like that. I don't know whether it was an act of God or the act of a bloody idiot.
- 19:00 That's about what I put it down to. That's how it finished, that's the way of it. But those sort of things, they happened from time to time to time, but they didn't have to happen. Some of the bastards can't see a hole through a ladder, for sure, until the ladder fell on them and then they'd know it was a ladder.
- 19:30 A no-hoper.

Is that when you were told that they wanted to commission you?

No, that was after that. That was a bit after that.

But you were a sergeant at that point?

Yeah, yeah.

What did that mean for you becoming sergeant?

Not much, but

- 20:00 it means that I could bloody stipulate where I was going to go a bit, and there were no bloody officers about that could tell you. They were bloody hiding in their bloody little nests somewhere. Most of it was left to NCOs, most of the bloody work away, unless the Japs were bloody actually attacking you they might get caught up with it, but if you had to go out and find Japs it wasn't the officers who went
- 20:30 out. They stayed home. We were ambushing down along the Komiatum for bloody eight or ten days and there wasn't an officer seen at the Komiatum Track, and yet we had bloody probably sixty or seventy troops that had been down there two or three times. I think I went down there three times and quite a lot of others down there twice.
- 21:00 An officer never, we never had an officer with us. They wouldn't come and see us, and the day the Japs ambushed us, they shop up the kye line, our tucker line, and there wasn't a bloody officer appeared. They sent twenty-three blokes up out of the company to go and see what was
- 21:30 going on with one sergeant and about three or four corporals, and not an officer. No, they couldn't leave their bloody camp, they might get dirty boots. Doesn't matter. So many officers were bloody no-hopers I tell you, but this is what I was going mad at. This is why
- 22:00 I couldn't take bloody pips because I'd tell them what bloody idiots they were. I thought they don't believe me, but some of them had to believe me because they found out how bloody big idiots there were. Old George Warfe knew, he was a bloke, and Teddy Griff knew. Didn't lose much sleep over it, some of them.
- 22:30 The first bloody lieutenant, the first lieutenant platoon commander I had, we were on the Bench Cut Track and living like dogs. In fact if you had your dog living like we were living the RSPCA would probably have you in the coop. You were living like a mangy dog
- 23:00 and no tucker, rations when you got them sometimes and conditions, well, you couldn't imagine it, but there you are, it happened. Bloody conditions like worse than dogs, like a pig sty. Like pigs bloody living in, in fact the pigs wouldn't live like it.
- 23:30 They were a bit sensible, a clean animal. There were no bloody, no blankets. Well, you didn't need blankets really, but you'd be two men to a tent, like a little two-man tent and it would be on the side of a

bloody hill like that and if you were lucky you mightn't roll

- 24:00 bloody downhill. No place to pitch the bastard. Any bloody level spot, the bloody officer would have that. Of course he'd have first choice. You'd get what was left, but there was little bloody done for you, I'll tell you. The first bloody officer that I had, I was going to tell you, was
- 24:30 a bloke, he'd been an officer, he'd been a lieutenant for bloody yonks. Don't know how long, could have been three years, I wouldn't know, but he'd been one for quite a long while. Anyhow, we were down on this Bench Cut Track and it was such a shit of a position it was getting to him, you know.
- 25:00 One morning he was up there, he was up bright and early cleaning his pistol, pulling the bloody, Ronnie Williams and I watched him for bloody two hours. We were overlooking where he was. He is cleaning the pistol, put it back in the holster, take a few steps up or down a track somewhere and pull
- 25:30 the bastard out again, clean the pistol again and pull the rounds out of it, half a dozen rounds or whatever it took. I think it was a Smith & Wesson, holds six. Cleaned all the bullets, no dirt on them. I said to Ronnie, "This bastard, cleaning everything, even the bloody bullet rounds." I said, "He's going to put the
- 26:00 bastard through himself somewhere," and I said, "He don't want to die of bloody poison. He's frightened bloody tetanus or something might set in if there's dirt on the bullet." Anyhow, sure enough about half an hour later you hear the pistol go off. It was only just up along the track a bit. I couldn't see from where I was.
- 26:30 There was a hell of a commotion. Lieutenant Dempsey, "Lieutenant Dempsey has just been wounded." I said, "Lieutenant Dempsey has just been wounded?" I said, "The bastard wounded himself." I said, "The bastard he was walking up and down here a while back." That's what happened, he put a bullet through his bloody hand and
- 27:00 back to Moresby with him. I said, "That's got rid of one bastard." No help, none at all, no, no. Anyhow, we get another bastard who's just as bloody stupid only he never had the intentions the same as Dempsey had, but he was just as bloody stupid. In fact he was the bloke
- 27:30 that got himself killed down on the bloody coconuts. He got killed that day and I was a corporal. That's what he thought of me, but he didn't like me because I told him what a bastard he was. But Teddy Griffiths, as soon as he died he turned around
- 28:00 to me and he said, "Oh well, you're the corporal." After I'd bloody knocked out the bloody machine gun.

You don't think if you had been, become a lieutenant or whatever, you might have been able to change things a bit, make an impact?

Yeah. Yeah, I could have but you could see it come. You can see things happening. Half the bastards if they read it in a book they wouldn't believe it. You couldn't get

- 28:30 it through their thick skull. I didn't have to read it in a book, you could see what was happening. You could leave the bloody country and see the bloody people in it. These bastards, if they hadn't learnt it at the bloody officers OTS, their bloody training camp, officers training school, Duntroon, if they hadn't read it in a book there it didn't exist. That's the sort of bloody
- 29:00 beliefs they had. It doesn't happen if it's not written in the book. It bloody happens all right and a bloody lot of things happen that are not written in the book. If you take any notice of a bloody book you'll be dead before you can get to the first page. I didn't believe in books, that sort of shit, because you've got to face life as it's happening, not as
- 29:30 it was, not as somebody else has seen it, as you're seeing it yourself. That's the one you've got to face, and if you don't look after it no other bastard is going to. That's the way I read it anyhow, whether it was right or wrong. I've had a few people tell me I was right and some say I was a bit bloody
- 30:00 harsh or a bit bloody bomb happy or some other friggin' thing. I wasn't bomb happy, I wasn't bloody, nothing wrong with my bloody nerves. I just bloody tried to keep myself bloody alive and others, and that's what it's all about. The more mates you've got with you the more chance you've got of winning,
- 30:30 but you've got to keep them alive if you want to win. They won't do it dead. But anyhow, that's the way I saw it.

Obviously you had the nerve, did you see, you mentioned the lieutenant who shot himself in the hand?

Yeah.

Did you see other examples of guys, fellows who just couldn't hack it, guys who went a bit troppo?

Yeah, they try to, they

- 31:00 do that, but this bastard went to Moresby and [(UNCLEAR)] me, he's back me with us, it could have been six months later with another bloody pip on his shoulder, a bloody captain. I told him too. I said, "That's the way to get a bloody third pip, bloody put a bullet through your hand." Oh shit, didn't he fire, didn't want
- 31:30 to know me. It was a self inflicted wound, he should have been back in coop. But anyhow, they say it don't happen, an officer wouldn't do that, oh no, they wouldn't do that. I saw the bastard polishing the bloody bullets so that they wouldn't bloody poison him. Yeah, frightened he might get tetanus out of the bastard. "You shouldn't have worried about the tetanus,
- 32:00 tetanus wouldn't live on a bastard like you." Christ, didn't he fire. Well, he didn't fire because he didn't bloody want to know me, just turned his back and walked away. "You bloody mongrel dog." He was too. We used to call him, his own mortar blokes, they knew him better than I did. He was in charge of the mortars at one stage. They used to call him Doggie, Doggie Dempsey. I said,
- 32:30 "He's a bloody dog." I was talking to the mortar blokes later. He said, "Of course he's a dog. We named him Doggie Dempsey bloody years ago." Didn't they? But anyway, I wouldn't name you bloody Doggie Dempsey, you're Doggie Jackie Russell. You're Doggie Jackie, isn't it, aren't you? You're a bloody good little mate you are.

Note for the archive, there is a dog below frame.

- 33:00 **So other than the men in your platoon, your company, you just mentioned the mortar men. Did you get to know a lot?**

We got to know them all, yeah. You get to know mortars and sigs and all that. People are allied with you. Sigs and that were in and out of the bloody company all the time. Mortars, you'd get an attachment of mortars, it depends on what you were doing, what sort of a job you had in

- 33:30 front of you, a mortar detachment to you. It might only be one mortar but they'd fire half a dozen bloody rounds onto a bloody hill. They might hit something, they wouldn't hit a bloody crow, it wouldn't go that far, but you wouldn't know. They wouldn't ever hit any Japs I don't think.

- 34:00 Three mortars only had a range of about 2,000 metres, 2,000 yards I think, something like that. They were a good lot of blokes, don't worry. I didn't mind the mortar men. They had a job to do, but what other things,

- 34:30 how they done it was another bloody thing. They were suffering the same bastard jobs as we were with bloody incompetent bloody officers.

Obviously the officers are a bit of a problem, what about the jungle itself, living in the jungle, the weather, the river crossings, all that sort of stuff?

It gets depressing. It does get depressing but you've got to overcome that.

- 35:00 Some silly bloody thing at the right time, you know, just to bloody crack a joke or something. "You'll get bloody wet feet walking through that bloody mud," or something like that. "Shit, that mud will go crook." Something like that, you know, something that is out of the bloody world. You know, those sort of things, you've got to bloody sort of just win and wear them, get along with them as best you can. Everybody is suffering

- 35:30 the same thing. There's a bit of depression, but depression hits some people harder than others, put it that way. I don't know if I ever suffered from the bastard. I couldn't put up with it, couldn't bloody sort of get at it. I don't know, I wouldn't bloody, it never worried me anyhow.

Did you see

- 36:00 **men who were good soldiers lose their nerve at all?**

Hmm?

Did you see blokes who were good soldiers finally succumb to where they'd lose their nerve and had had enough?

Well, it gets you all like that a bit at times. You sort of get depressed a bit at odd times and then all of a sudden, Christ, away we go again, and you've got something

- 36:30 to do. It's when you haven't got something to do you get more depressed than when you have got something to do. Even if it is a bastard of a job you've got something to think about and be concerned about. It keeps you alive then. If you're not concerned about it you don't bloody think about it and puzzle it out as it comes, as it

- 37:00 opens up, you've got to work it out as it happens. If you don't, there'll be one waiting for you. Bloody bullet around the bloody corner. But I know, you've got to treat everything with a certain amount of caution, but not over cautious otherwise you'll bloody kill you anyhow. Go bloody

- 37:30 getting like that, you bloody get caught up with it.

Sandy, we've heard some stories about cannibalism in New Guinea?

Yeah.

Was that the case?

I'll tell you about New Guinea. In Bougainville it happened. I had a mate of mine killed on a position in Bougainville and the next morning we went in

38:00 there. I wasn't with him the day he went in. He was B Company, I was back in A Company. We went in, A Company was allocated the task of going in the next morning. We went into it next morning and the bloke who was alongside me, another bloke, he was a section leader or something, and he went in on

38:30 my right flank, and he struck a bloke that was killed there, a bloke by the name of Jim Mills. He was a good mate of mine, and he told me, he said, "Jim Mills never had a bit of meat left on his bloody bones down along his arse, arse and ribs and legs." He said, "He was stripped bare, stripped to the bone."

39:00 That was overnight. They ate him. I couldn't say for sure they did because I didn't see it, but that was the normal bloody procedure. Why would they strip the meat off him? They eat the meat, I'll bet you that. The meat wouldn't be there, but that's the sort of thing that was happening. It's hard to prove a thing like that. You know it's happened but what proof have you got that it did happen?

39:30 What's the outcome of it if it did? Who's going to bloody say, "These Japs, they've eaten my mate, ate Jimmy Mills." Yeah, they did eat him, I bet you they'd eat him, but I didn't see them eat him. I couldn't prove that they ate him. I didn't see them strip him but my mate saw him after he was stripped. They'd have stripped him bloody

40:00 early in the evening or just on dusk or something. No bastard would have seen them. They stripped him and cooked the poor bastard, Jimmy, but that's the sort of thing that was happening all the time and you shouldn't bloody, you couldn't say for sure that it happened, but they're ninety-nine per cent bloody certain, don't worry. They never bloody, they don't do those sort of things, well,

40:30 there's been the same in New Guinea. I suppose it was but we never struck it in New Guinea, but just on Bougainville struck this bastard. They'd bloody, they'd rip the bloody meat off you and cook you, no worries. [(UNCLEAR)] the buggers, "I'd have to be awful bloody hungry before I'd eat one of them bastards," I said.

41:00 You don't know if you get desperate. They probably hadn't had tucker for bloody months either, these Japs. They never had much bloody, not much resources there to get tucker and bloody ammunition and things like that. They had a lot of stocks of ammunition, but their tucker and that wouldn't have bloody lasted all that long. That's what was happening.

41:30 It's hard to say what, you know it's happened, but proving it. You prove it. It wouldn't stand up.

You told us about firing a mortar into the coconut tree. It was a great story, were there other cases of you having to live off the land? You were out there for seventy days?

Well, it was a bloody exercise, living off the land. It was an exercise for

42:00 these troops.

Tape 7

00:34 **Well, as long as you're telling the truth.**

Yeah, yeah, it's all true. It happened, it's as it happened.

All right, so we've covered Salamaua. We've covered Salamaua.

Salamaua, yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, and bloody

And you went up to Frisco, Frisco

01:00 **and Rough Ridge?**

To what?

Frisco was another place you went to?

That was only a river, Frisco River? I crossed that several times. We walked through that. Yeah, Frisco River was where I was doing a job for old Georgie Warfe. It was a bend in the river

01:30 and there was an island out in the river where the river had changed course and the Japs had been going across to this island and then walking across to the other end, the other side of it. Anyhow, Georgie Warfe wanted to know on this big bend, side I was on,

02:00 we were on, the big bend there the river had cut off, you know, and he said to the 2/3rd blokes down there to have a look at it and he wasn't very happy with what they come up with. He said, "Those bloody 2/3rd blokes came up with," that big flat, right, like a, where we'd been, and it had cut,

02:30 and he said the 2/3rd commandos blokes reckoned it was occupied by Japanese, and he said to me, "Young Matho," that's how old George talked, "Young Matho," he got me on the phone.

03:00 He said, "There's a place down there," he gave me a map reference and he said, "I want you to have a look as far as occupancy of Japanese." He said, "I want to know for sure." So he was probably, wanted to know whether it was occupied or not so he could advance further ahead or

03:30 whatever he would do with it. Anyhow, I said, "Yeah, I'll have a look at that." He never told me anything about these 2/3rd commandos going in and having a look at it for him. He didn't say anything about them but I found out afterwards that's what happened. Anyhow, I said, "I know, I know about where you are and I'll find out."

04:00 He said, "Give it a good bloody going over. I want to know if it's occupied at all by Japanese." I think there were three of us, me and two other blokes, and I said, "Well, we've got to go right around this bloody block." It would've been, I don't know, it would've been bloody forty or fifty or sixty acres probably

04:30 of fairly flat country before the hills went up on either side on the end. So I told, "We've got to have a look at this." So away we go, we walked right around the outside of this furthest bloody perimeter. We walked right around the bastard, not a bloody Jap.

05:00 We could hear them up on the bloody ridge. You could hear them talking and bloody cutting bits of bloody wood and this, and whatever they were doing, probably building [(UNCLEAR)] or something, and there were none down on the flat. So I walked around and I went back on the river side. I came back up the river, yeah, on the

05:30 river side and there had been, there was a good track there on that side. There was no track around the back on the inside of it, like the perimeter I walked around. On this track I couldn't see any bloody fresh foot marks and anyhow I kept walking and the track went down to the river. That's where they were

06:00 crossing over on to this island. So I said to the blokes, "I'll just go down here on my own and see if there's any fresh foot marks. That's if there's any Japs been crossing there, they'd be fresh foot marks." I said, "They'd be in the mud up near the edge of the water." Well I walked down there, it was only bloody five yards up

06:30 off a bank and I walked down this bloody thing and fucking hell, I just got down near the water's edge, crunch, I couldn't see any fresh foot marks anyhow, and a bloody artillery shell landed in the water nearly beside me, nearly, well, from here to the bloody doorway it felt like. I suppose it would be a bit further,

07:00 but what happened, our own artillery opened up and I'd already told the bloody artillery officer that was with us, I said, "Leave your guns off that bloody map." I gave him a map reference and I said, I knew where I'd be and, "I don't want bloody artillery shells fired at me," and he couldn't have missed,

07:30 he must've been another one of those stupid bloody officers I suppose. I thought Jesus Christ, this is nice, so I bloody took to scrape up this bloody bank. Then we had to keep going around. I yelled out to the blokes, "Get going." By Jesus, they got going. Shit, they didn't go far before I bloody caught them either. I

08:00 had the scrapers going. Anyhow, I got back out of it. If that bloody shell had another four or five yards of travel on it, it would've blown me to pieces. That's another thing, you know, but those sort of things, by Christ, didn't a frighten that bloody FRO when I saw him. "I would've pulled your

08:30 bloody guts right out through your arse hole." Gee, "What have I done?" I said, "You stupid bloody bastard." Christ, I told him he wasn't nice. "I told you a map reference not to bloody have your artillery not flying near it." I told him where I was going and about what time I'd be there. "Don't know what happened."

09:00 "Jesus," I said, "You wouldn't know what friggin' day it is." Jesus, I give him a pay out, but anyhow I said, "I don't want to see you any more, buggar you, you're a useless bastard." Walked away and left him. I got in touch with Georgie Warfe and told him about it. I said, "We got bloody artillery fired at us." He said, "Those stupid bastards."

09:30 He knew them. I don't think they ever fired another bastard at me. That bloody artillery officer, I told him a few little home truths. Won't hurt him, he's too bloody dull to know. Some words to that effect. Christ, it wasn't too good bloody

10:00 sitting up, they fired about another six rounds after that into the same position. Christ, I would've looked good down there with them. It nearly drowned me, the bloody water came up. Jeez, I had mud and shit all over me. Anyhow, that's one of the things in life.

Is that all part of Rough Ridge

10:30 **as well?**

Yeah, that was just under Rough Ridge. Rough Ridge was a feature there that the Japs occupied and they had a pretty neat little set-up there. They were hard to shift, but anyhow, they did get the artillery on to them I think later and they shifted them. I wasn't there then. I was somewhere else, I don't know where.

You got malaria?

Yeah, I got malaria.

11:00 I had malaria when we came back out of Salamaua I got malaria then before we went up into the Finisterres. I was in 2/7th AGH in Moresby for my twenty-third birthday.

11:30 That would have been, that was in December. I got malaria, I was in there with malaria. That's the first time I had it. I probably had it, Christ knows where I got it. I might've, we were in, when they took us off Salamaua they took us down to, by barge they took us down the coast to, right down

12:00 the bottom end, a bloody malaria bloody sort of a place.

Milne Bay?

Milne Bay.

Milne Bay?

Milne Bay, that was it. Anyhow, that's where I reckon I would've got it. Then they took us from Milne Bay around to Moresby and that's where it came out on me. Anyhow, but that was only the first time. I had it several

12:30 times after.

When did you finally get back to Australia?

Back to Australia, in about May, June, about June or July '44. Yeah, that's about right.

13:00 June, I reckon it would've probably the middle of June thereabouts, and we came home on leave. We had leave for a couple of weeks and we done a battalion march in Melbourne. I don't know whether it was a welcome home or piss off again because they put us straight on the train and we

13:30 went up north again after the march, went straight up to, back up to where? Up to Cairns I think, up into the Marpee country up above Cairns. It was good country up there too. It wasn't a bad climate. It was good training country.

14:00 That was before, that was after we came home. We came home from the Finisterres, Madang. They took us off at Madang. They picked us up at Madang. I don't know what boat it was, the Kanimbla. I don't know, forget. It would be in the bloody book I've got. I've got a book on the history, the

14:30 battalion history written by one of the blokes that was there. He was a captain too. He wrote the book. He was a good bloke too, old Ruster, Russell Matthews. He was our adjutant at one stage and he was a pretty cluey bloke and he wrote the battalion history up. This is several years after the bloody show.

15:00 I suppose the date when it was printed would be on it, but it would've been probably, could've been '47, '48, '49, something like that. But he wrote it then and he did a fairly good job. He'd gone into all the dates and that. He had records and things like that of the battalion, records and things, and he got most of it from there I dare

15:30 say, and not only battalion records, he'd have access probably to brigade headquarters and things like that. He'd get brigade, verify bloody dates and that through them. Other than that there was nothing much happened.

So what was the training you were doing in Cairns?

In Cairns, yeah, more jungle training.

16:00 I did, what did I do? I did a couple of schools there. I did one school anyhow. Yeah, I did the school, photo interpretation, aerial photograph interpretation. I got that one down pat. I could read them. I bloody, we had to do exercises off the photograph, you know, the aerial photograph.

16:30 You had to get a mosaic on them and the stereo, the bugger, I used to stereo them with my eyes without

the bloody stereograph. I could do it no worries. I'd just glance at the bastard and do it with my eyes. Anyhow, we had these photographs. They dumped us off a truck

- 17:00 up, what's it called, Python Mountain or some bloody thing, Python Ridge up behind bloody Marpee somewhere, out to buggery, bloody ten mile out from where we had to get back to, and anyhow, they dropped us off at this place and then we were in pairs, you know. I said to the bloke I was with, I said, "These bastards,"
- 17:30 they all started off going down the hill. The camp was, I knew where the camp was, the direction of it. I said, "I don't know if it's going to be the quickest way back to this bloody camp or not, but I'm inclined to think if we go out to the left instead of going right," I said, "I think we might get back to camp first, quicker." "What makes you think that?" Well, on the side of the map there was either dust or smoke.
- 18:00 They look the same on an aerial photograph. I said, "I'll take a gamble on this being bloody dust. If it's dust there's a bloody road and if there's a road there's trucks on it and if trucks are on it we'll get a ride." So this was a deduction and this is what happened. We went over to this bloody, I didn't think it was smoke because it was all billowing up in one place and wasn't
- 18:30 stretching out, you know. I said, "That's not smoke. No," I said, "It's dust." Away we go, go left, and all these other buggers, there must have been bloody near thirty in the class, in the thing, they all went out to the right. That's the way the camp was. I knew that, but I was thinking this bloody thing,
- 19:00 if there's a road there it's got to lead somewhere. Anyhow, we had only just reached the road, wasn't down there five bloody minutes and along come the rations going into town. [(UNCLEAR)] I said, "We're camped at," whatever bloody number. I forget the bloody number of the campsite. I said, "I go bloody past that. That would be handy, just
- 19:30 drop us off there." We done it easy. Instead of walking like buggery for ten miles, we rode for about eight. Well, I don't know, it would have been perhaps more, but it wasn't far anyhow. Instead of taking three hours it bloody took us about, we were back, we had a cut lunch with us and we got back to camp and ate the bloody cut lunch, and they
- 20:00 never dropped us off until about ten to half past. We didn't take long to get back there. We only walked probably, might've walked a bloody mile and a half. What happened?

These guys, the men that you were training in reading aerial photography with, had they all been at the front, had they all

20:30 **fought or were they new?**

No, not all of them. Not all of them. They had come out of different, there were a heap of them. They'd run this school, Aerial Photography and Photograph Interpretation or something, whatever they called it, and they ran it for various people, various units. They had a lot of units represented in it, put it that way. Anyhow, I was in

21:00 there for fifty-eight. There were a couple of us I think up there. They split you up when they got up there. You might be in with a bloke from anywhere, you didn't know. It didn't matter much, you know. I did it fairly easy. The instructor took us out there, I think I beat the bastard back to camp.

21:30 They wouldn't give us a ride back, you had to walk. I was back there before the bloody truck got back.

So then you went off to Bougainville after that?

Yeah, I shipped over to Bougainville. That was, I was over in Bougainville, they took me off Bougainville, that's when I was bloody,

22:00 wanted to make me a bloody lieutenant again on the boat, before we got off the boat. I still refused. That was my birthday too. That would have been my twenty-fourth birthday, the day I got off the boat and landed on Bougainville.

22:30 Yeah, it would have been. My twenty-third birthday, which I had in Moresby, and my twenty-fourth I had on Bougainville really. I only just got off the boat the day I was twenty-four. That was a year gone by. Nothing happened much.

23:00 Between one thing and another there was I suppose. The bloody Finisterre Ranges, that was hard country, but it was a different war, you know. It was, there were bloody tracks off the bloody ridges up there, very steep country, a lot of Kunai grass. Kunai grass grows about this high. Elephant grass, like Elephant grass, but

23:30 it's not Elephant. On these tracks up the narrow ridges, the bloody ridges are only two foot wide or something on top. Jesus, they're narrow. They come to bloody near a point, which is only a bloody track, a track which has only just been worn down there with bloody weather mainly, and a few natives walking over it I suppose. If you'd have gone off

24:00 the side, there were any amount of places, if you'd have gone off the side of that track into the Kunai grass I reckon you would have gone to a thousand feet before you'd stop because the Kunai grass is

every slippery. Nothing there to stop you. There's not much, very little bloody scrub along it, only Kunai, more Kunai grass. I don't know, it bloody grew, the Kunai grass

24:30 like buggery. It was acres and bloody miles, square miles of it, hundreds of acres, thousands of acres. Very bloody treacherous country if you travel in it by night. You happen to slip off the track no bastard will find you. You wouldn't know if anybody had been down there by the morning. You knocked the grass down as you went, it would be up again by morning.

25:00 No bastard would know you were there, unless you yell out maybe you might get somebody to hear you. You could easily get caught there and die there. You'd die of starvation, thirst, dehydration, you'd get

25:30 in a day laying in the bloody sun in the Kunai grass. Like if, bloody like out there now, it's humid out there, humid as buggery. Moisture in the air and it's the temperature brings the humidity up. It's a bastard thing to travel in.

26:00 And it's full of bloody, well, it's full, a bloody lot of places in it, got bloody bugs in it, it's got those bastards that burrow in, ticks, those sort of things. Jesus, they drive you mad. However, they've all died out of me. I've had them in but they've died out of me. They won't live on

26:30 good people, or maybe the live on people that are bastards, I don't know. I've had them all. Yeah, well, other than that, what else are we up to? I don't know.

Well, you were shipped off to Bougainville after Cairns, after the jungle training?

Yeah, yeah, shipped off to Bougainville, yeah. I had a good time over

27:00 there when we went over there, when we were on the Torokina perimeter. The Yanks had been in there for twelve months and they had a perimeter and it might've been as big as Trentham, but that's only a very small portion of the island. But our blokes weren't satisfied with the perimeter. They had

27:30 to go and find out what was outside it, and they found out all right. There were bloody thousands of bloody Japs over on the other side of the island. They could put a bloody raid in on us any time they liked but they didn't because they were frightened if they did they'd get a bastard back. It was a sort of

28:00 stalemate thing. You don't shoot me, I won't shoot at you sort of. Anyway, bloody Blamey or some of them smart bastards, they decided they'd have to get them off the island. They could have starved the bastards out. A few plane loads of bloody shit would stop their guns from going would have put them out of business, but no,

28:30 they had to put troops in there. That was another thing, Blamey and MacArthur, Blamey was licking bloody MacArthur's arse and MacArthur was bloody probably licking somebody else's, and we were the bloody meat in the sandwich. Anyhow,

29:00 that's all gone and done by.

So you were put into A Company on Bougainville?

Yeah, yeah, I was put into A Company, yeah. I was playing football. We had a company team. I was playing football. B Company, had a stipulation when this bastard

29:30 sent me across there that I was to play football with B Company. Stupid prick. I wouldn't play football with any bastard if you bloody pull those sort of stunts, but anyhow. I was playing in the battalion team. We had a battalion, inter-battalion, there were a few troops on Bougainville and we had an inter-battalion team there and I could hold a game in that and that was all nearly all bloody, well, pretty

30:00 good footballers, country footballers and country league like Bendigo and that sort. A lot of them came from that. That sort of league, Bendigo, Shepparton, bloody further up from that too, bloody up to Wahgunyah, had blokes from Wahgunyah playing with us, and pretty solid league, and a

30:30 lot of them, nearly all of them, nearly every league team in Melbourne had a representative there. League seconds and Sunday games, all that sort, Saturday football, Saturday morning football. I was one of the few country, only country kid that never had a bloody reputation

31:00 as a bloody footballer, but I could hold my game with them anyhow. A bloke wanted me to play with Collingwood later, but I said, "We'll see what happens after this." Anyhow, I got crunched up and that stuffed Collingwood. I never went near Collingwood, but anyhow, I was surfing

31:30 had a bloke from Sydney with us, this Neville Kelly, he'd been surfing and he was a lifesaver, a Sydney lifesaver. Been a lifesaver for bloody years on Bondi or somewhere, and we had no surfboards but he said, "You don't need surfboards. I learnt to surf without a surfboard and there were no surfboards when I learnt to surf."

32:00 You only body surf, you know, you bloody dive in under one bloody wave and come up on the side of the next. You've got to pick the right wave. One of them will go right in, every third one will go right in. I got to like it, I was liking it. I was fitter than a mallee bull, surfing and footballing. No time to myself.

Was this all on Bougainville?

32:30 **Sandy, the surfing and the football, was that on Bougainville?**

Yeah, yeah, that was on Bougainville. Yeah, it was a good place for that.

So did you have to use your stereo photographic skills at all on Bougainville?

No. No, not really, no, no. I never had to use them, but

33:00 when you wanted a bloody aerial photograph they never had them and when they had them you didn't want the bloody ones they had. It was hard to get coordination. I suppose it could have happened, you know, in a different situation it could be a handy thing to have, to know how to read a bloody map. You've got an aerial photograph,

33:30 you can read the bloody thing immediately and you know it's fairly close to being right. Whereas with their mapping things, they might have taken the survey for the maps bloody forty years ago. You know, and the bloody tracks have changed and different bloody entries and different bloody exits. You wouldn't know, but with a map

34:00 with aerial photograph you'd know it was pretty fair because it would only have been done recent. Well, when I say recently, probably in the last five years or six or eight. Whereas the mapping could have been mapping pre-war in World War I bloody days, which some of them were too, and the maps were not very

34:30 accurate. Either that or the villages would shift, you know, the natives would have a village here for instance and they'd have another bastard up half a mile up the road would be another village. That would be one and two. Well you wouldn't know which bastard you were in after a while. They didn't

35:00 sort of, the natives knew them, but when you're going in there you're not too sure whether you're in bloody village number one or village number three or village number whatever. They had them all different numbers and you wouldn't bloody, you'd get tangled up.

Is this when you were out on patrol?

Yeah, yeah, you'd want to know then where you were going.

35:30 We used to want to know map reading then.

Had they rebuilt the battalion? For Bougainville had they rebuilt the battalion? Were there more men in the battalion than what there was when [(UNCLEAR)]?

They had. We'd been reinforced, yeah, when we came back to Australia we got reinforcements. The battalion came up to full strength again. We got a few bloody

36:00 shake-ups over in Bougainville too, you know. It's only, we were on Bougainville ten months. We had more casualties in that ten months than the Vietnamese boys had in ten years. That's the sort of place it was. You couldn't just walk in there and do as you liked.

36:30 It was a pretty hairy place [(UNCLEAR)]. Bloody prick of a place. Anyway, I wasn't in it that long to bloody know about it. Well, I know about it, but I never had to suffer it too long. I was only in probably in March and I was out in April. I was in a bit over a month,

37:00 something like that.

So you were there for the Buin Road? You were there at Buin Road, is that right?

Roads?

Buin Road?

About Buin Road?

Yeah.

Yeah, I got Buin Road. That was, Buin Road was one of the main roads that go north and south. It went north and south. It was a jeep track

37:30 down through. In fact, I got on, I was taken out down the Buin Road on a stretcher on top of a jeep, jeeps that used to carry a stretcher. Other than that you had to wait for bloody boongs to carry you out and they mightn't come until tomorrow or

38:00 the next day. But the stretcher jeeps, they'd be along. You wouldn't be long waiting, and they took me over to a place, Motupena Point where they had a, it wasn't a CCS, a

38:30 Casualty Clearing Station, it was a pretty advance place, advanced treatment, whatever it was. I forget now. But they had doctors there that could operate and things like that, that could do operations there but they wouldn't do mine. I had to go back to the base hospital up in Torokina.

- 39:00 Their number one hospital anyhow up there. It was a big hospital. That's where they took me. I was shipped, I was taken off around to this Motupena Point because that was where the launch, they had a launch travelling across Torokina Bay. Torokina
- 39:30 Bay was a bay, shit, would've been twice as big as Port Phillip Bay. It was a big bay, a big bloody indentation in the island. It would've been, you would've had to travel from Motupena Point to Torokina, could have been bloody seventy, eighty
- 40:00 or ninety miles straight across from one point to the other. I reckon it would've been something like eighty miles. It wasn't just a five minute, it was just a stone's throw around the corner or anything like that. It was fairly time consuming to get across to it. I was taken across there in the evening
- 40:30 of the day I was hit. I was hit about give or take half an hour, about say ten o'clock give or take half an hour, but by the time I got out to Motupena Point I had to go out in this thousand yards of [(UNCLEAR)] walked back for a start. That would've taken me probably half an hour under the conditions that I was in.
- 41:00 A doctor was waiting out there and he jabbed a needle into me and sent me on my way. Christ knows how long I had to wait for a stretcher, on a stretcher there for the jeep doing the stretcher take. How long I had to wait for him to come along I wouldn't know, but it was pretty, didn't
- 41:30 wait even, by the time I got on the boat, the launch to take me across from Motupena Point to Torokina, and I don't remember getting off at Torokina. I was probably out to it, probably had me filled up with supe, super. Anyhow, what's happening?

Tape 8

- 00:32 Yeah. No, they do it well. Slater's Knoll, yeah, I know where it was. I was through it but I was never in action on it. It was, that was where the Japs attacked the, I forget what unit it was now. It wasn't us, but it was one of ours.
- 01:00 Yeah, it was down below Old Smokey Joe. Smokey Joe was a bloody volcano going up in the centre of Bougainville. It was further down than Old Smokey Joe. I'm sure I've been through it but I just can't bloody, I was never in action
- 01:30 on it because the action that was there, the Australian troops bloody put on a bit of a show. They attacked the Japanese and the Japanese bounced back with a heap of these bastards and they got caught with a Vickers. They had a Vickers gun I think, whoever took them out.
- 02:00 They had a Vickers gun lined on these bloody Japs and they were bloody dropping like a bloody rabbit kill. You could kill them by the thousands if you want to, didn't matter. I remember where it was but I was never on it, never done it. I had nothing to do with it. You can't blame me for that.
- 02:30 **What can we blame you for?**
- Hey?
- What can we blame you for?**
- A few other little things I've done. I don't mind being blamed for what I've done but I don't like being blamed for what I haven't done. That's not good.
- So you went via, you went past Slater's Knoll on your way to Buin Road?**
- I think that was about what happened, yeah. Yes, I think that's about what happened.
- 03:00 Yeah, we went in there, somewhere there, and we had to go left. We were going south and then we had to go left, we would have been going east.
- What was the situation there on the Buin Road? There were a lot of Japanese there, weren't they, in the jungle on either side of the road?**
- Yeah, a lot of Japanese on
- 03:30 nearly all those roads. They had it pretty well covered, those bloody roads, don't worry. There was one over further that had more Japs on it I think than that, than the Buin. It's in that bloody book if you want to take that with you and have a read. It's bloody, I can't place the name of it now. Jesus, there were some Japs over there. I've only read of it in that book.
- 04:00 I wasn't on it because at that stage I'd been wounded and back in hospital. I'd been drinking beer. I was doing it cosy, you know, bloody smiling about it, but that was happening. I had a few mates killed down there. It was pretty torrid for a while. However, that was the way of things, the way of life.

So how long were you there before you got shot?

04:30 **How long were you there on the Buin Road before you got shot?**

How long?

Were you there in that battle on the Buin Road?

On the Buin Road, not long, not very long. I suppose I wouldn't have been there a bloody hour and a half. I sussed it out and then I thought, right,

05:00 and I made a mistake. That's the way it happens. The next thing you know you're bloody dead, if you're unlucky. But you don't know when it can happen. I suppose it wouldn't have been, I'd have been down there probably an hour and a half. Went down there early in the morning and it was about ten o'clock when I got clobbered.

05:30 Yeah, could've been about half past eight, wouldn't have been [(UNCLEAR)].

So how did it happen? Where were you, how did it happen, you getting shot?

Well, I sent this Corporal Pickering, I said to Picker, I had about, I had how many troops? I had to look after twenty odd,

06:00 to look after. I had a platoon, whatever it was, and the platoon commander he was sitting down there. I don't know where he was, sucking straws I suppose. I don't know what he was doing, but I had control of the platoon. Well, we were going to go around this bloody position and I thought, well,

06:30 I don't know how far around we've got to go to get around, and I said to Hank Pickering, old Hank, I said, "Do you bloody, just move over this bloody," it was in a wash country, you know, bloody water races. In the wet season it was bloody, you wouldn't have gone in there

07:00 because it was all bloody flood country. There were water races there that would drown a bloody horse, but it was dry at this stage and I said to Hank, I said, "Get over a few yards and just throw a grenade in out in the bloody open

07:30 and see if you can draw fire." But anyhow, what did he do? Being a corporal, I'd never had the man in action before, had not been in operation with him because I'd been transferred to a new company. If it had been my own boys and I told them what to do, I told this bloke what to do, but he didn't do it, did he? He bloody done it his way and that's what happened, he got killed. If he'd have done it my way

08:00 he wouldn't have been hit even and I wouldn't have been hit because I wouldn't have had to go in after him. That's what happened. So it only takes one mistake to make two mistakes.

So this was the first time in action with that platoon?

With that platoon, yeah. Yeah, first time I'd been in action with them. I'd been training with them for a week or two but that's not the same

08:30 thing as being in action. Different altogether, you know, when you're in action you've got to know what you're doing and do it properly and do it quickly, as quick as possible. Either that or else lay doggo and wait and be patient, one or the other. Can't rush in with your head down either. That's the sort of thing it is, what was happening. But this Hank

09:00 Pickering, being a corporal he should have known a way to get through jungle without being able to throw a grenade twenty yards without lifting his bloody body off the ground. I could do it no worries, and I thought, all my blokes could do it. I thought, well, he's a corporal, he should be able to do that. I said, "Don't lift your head, don't,

09:30 stay right down on the deck. Just toss the grenade in ten, fifteen, twenty yards in front of you. You'll probably draw fire but you shouldn't get hit." Well, he shouldn't have got hit, but what did he do? I saw him bloody come up on his knees to throw a bloody grenade over fifteen yards, twenty yards. Jesus, Hank, my fucking blood went cold.

10:00 I said, "Jesus Christ." No use yelling to him then because it was too late. He only did it once and got clobbered, put a bullet through his guts. That's why I wanted him to stay down on the deck. They wouldn't have hit him the guts, wouldn't have hit him at all. They wouldn't have hit me. But as soon as he got hit, the blokes that were there, they said, "We'll have to do something about Hank." I said,

10:30 "We'll do nothing about Hank. You just bloody get back up there where you're supposed to be and keep your bloody eyes peeled." I said, "I'll bloody do something about Hank." I went in and tried to get him out, which I, he was hit bad through his guts, here somewhere, and bloody leaking like a bloody sieve, but I had a field dressing and I had the field dressing around him

11:00 and this bastard is still bloody, the bastard with the rifle, the Jap, was still firing at me when I, I had a field dressing around him and had him pulled back probably a yard or a couple of yards before he hit me, so he would've fired, I don't know, every time he fired I bloody put another grenade in after him

- 11:30 but I ran out of grenades. I had about six on my belt and Hank had a couple left. He got them. But every time I threw a grenade I couldn't see him but I could see about where he was and I thought he's unlucky enough, it might happen, sneak one into their bloody fox hole, but it didn't. But anyhow he'd have probably thrown
- 12:00 it out if he had. He was twenty yards, if I'd had a Bren gun I'd have given him some bloody curry because I could've laid the Bren gun on him and just kept bloody firing bloody two and three rounds every second or two.

Where did he shoot you? Where did he shoot

- 12:30 **you? Where did you get your wound?**

Where? In the face. Yeah, I got it in the face. It went through my nose there and then took, I had a plate with a few teeth and it broke that all up and scattered all around. The wires that go around your teeth when you've got a part plate,

- 13:00 you know the wire part that goes around your teeth? There's a bit of that still somewhere down behind my windpipe. It wouldn't ever worry me. I don't think it has either. It doesn't stop me drinking or talking. I can eat all right. That's what it is, you know. However,
- 13:30 it hit me that hard, I was laying down looking, look straight along over alongside Hank looking at the bastard, looking to see if I could bloody pinpoint him and the bullet hit me and picked me straight up and laid me back the other way, off the ground. That's how hard it hit me,
- 14:00 a bit like getting hit with a train. A bullet travelling at, the bullet only bloody about three ounces I think, two or three, two and a half to three ounces, I forget now, but it's travelling at something like 2700 feet a second.
- 14:30 That's 900 yards a second when it hits you and it don't want to stop then. That makes you think a bit. It would be like bloody getting hit with a train. Anyhow, it's finished now.
- 15:00 Gone and done with.

So you had to get out of there?

I had to get out. I bloody turned around and went. I don't know if he fired at me again. He probably did. I had a bloody, I sort of got out while I could still memorise the bloody situation. I had to get out quick otherwise I wouldn't have bloody got out. If you wait too long

- 15:30 your bloody head's fuzzy and you've lost sense of direction, you've lost senses of everything, and I had to get out quick otherwise, before that happened. I was out, I had to bloody, I went around down this bloody dry creek bed thing. We were in this dry creek bed.
- 16:00 It would have been three or four feet deep and about five feet wide I suppose. I went in that and then I walked over, I went over to that joint, I walked down there and down along that was where the rest of the company was. I went down to there and I could sort of
- 16:30 hazily see them. I got out where they were, and that's where the sig wire was. I saw the sig wire and I grabbed it. [(UNCLEAR)] So I followed that out. Hank sort of, Hank should not have been killed. I
- 17:00 distinctly told him not to get up off the deck, and he has. First thing he did, got up on his knees. Bloody foolish, silly. He wore it. He only did it once but that's once too often. I don't like it. [(UNCLEAR)] It couldn't have helped. He didn't realise
- 17:30 the purpose. He was a bloke with enough knowledge, he should've realised it. But anyhow, it's more spilt milk. No use crying.

So this meant you were going back to Australia?

Hmm?

Getting wounded meant that you were going back to Australia?

Yeah, yeah. I came back to Australia after about six weeks up in

- 18:00 2/1st AGH. That's where I got, I had two bottles of beer a day up there. That was sweet. I had a big party the night we left. I left because I was [(UNCLEAR)] bloody several dozen beers down there in the fridge. I said, "What are we going to do with it? We're not going to put it outside and throw stones at it?"
- 18:30 I said, "We'll start a party, we'll fix that." Did too. I tell you, there were half dead ones and bloody three part dead ones, and they were sparking up like [(UNCLEAR)]. We had a ball. The sisters, the girls in the wards and the sisters and that, "Bring you mates around, that don't matter." Drink when it's gone, that's it.

19:00 Nobody got any when it's out. So that's what happened. Bloody hell. I had to get on the plane the next morning about bloody four o'clock or half past three, four o'clock. I had to be over the airport I think by four o'clock. Jeez, they flew me across to Lae. I didn't know where Lae was. I couldn't

19:30 care less. I was layered all right. I didn't know which direction. Bloody hell, it was all right. Sweet pay, they call it. Do you want one of these? Has he gone to sleep? Do you want?

No, later thanks Sandy. Not on the job.

20:00 **So the 58th/95th Battalion went through some difficult, some really bad battles, didn't it? The 58th/59th?**

Yeah.

Did you have many casualties?

Yeah. There were quite a lot. I could tell you how many, if you can count. I can't count them. I've got them there in the book. They're all listed in the book, the back of

20:30 the book. They're all listed, the date killed, date of the wound and what have you, regimental number. No rank, I don't think so, not rank. But they're all

21:00 listed in that book that, Matthews put up. What's his name, what do they call him? Russell, Russell Matthews, yeah. They're all in that, all the casualties, when they got them. Not where they got them, it's when they got them.

21:30 They're in different, the area is in it. They got casualties from Salamaua and casualties from bloody Finisterres and casualties in Bougainville. The area is listed but no, unless you know what happened you wouldn't know just where it was.

So do you still see those, do you still see

22:00 **those mates from the battalion?**

The ones that are left I can go and see them. They have an annual reunion every twelve months on the 24th of April, but I haven't been down to one for Christ knows how long, bloody five or six years, because I've got to be driven down there and not every time, you can't get somebody to drive you.

22:30 Kay will drive me, but sometimes it's not convenient for her to do it and I wouldn't pressurise it. I can ring bloody people up, I'm a bloody life member of it, of the battalion association. I can ring them up any time. I'd never do that either.

23:00 I just ring them if I want to know if somebody is still alive or dead, that's all. If I was going somewhere near where they used to live or something, want to know if they're still there. I could bloody call in and see them. I go up to Mt Beauty and that I call there and see a mate up there. He was in the sigs. He's a terrific little bloke. He's a Military

23:30 Medallist too. He was in the sigs. Curly Price is his name. That's not his name, Curly is, Frank Price is his name. He was a very very terrific little soldier, don't worry. He was a great bloke. Do anything for me, and if you've got to do anything up there, up Mt Beauty, call in

24:00 and see him. Make sure you do see him because he's interesting and would possibly be interested in doing something like this. He's that sort of bloke. Where he lives up there, he's in, I've got his phone number somewhere, Else Street, E L S E I think, Else Street, but anyhow everybody up there knows him.

24:30 He's a great bloke. He's the sort of bloke you'd get better stories off than me. He might've been through more than I did. I don't know. He did it pretty solid there for a long while. He was a good operator.

You did seventy days straight in action, didn't you? In New Guinea you did seventy days

25:00 **you said before, seventy days straight in action?**

Yeah, we done over seventy days, yeah, without missing a day. Yeah, I did over seventy days without missing a day.

How do you reckon that affected you?

Never affected me at all. I suppose at some stage along the line there was, the battalion people had

25:30 organised a lay day, one day a month, one day for every soldier every month, but the trouble was it only lasted three weeks and I all my blokes went in front of me. I

26:00 said, "You keep going." They only sent a couple at a time. They said, "No." I think every week or something a couple went down. Anyhow it was my turn the next week and it was bloody cancelled. I said, "I'll miss out again. That don't matter at all." But those sort of things you just take as army life. That's about all

- 26:30 that happened, that's what happened in the army. You might be here today and gone tomorrow. It didn't worry me. They came back a bit refreshed but you've still got to do the same bloody thing the following day. You only had twenty-four hours, it was a twenty-four bloody thing. You'd be three or four hours going down there and three or four hours
- 27:00 coming back and the rest of the time you'd be down at this rest camp. I don't know whether it did them any good or not. I suppose some of them it did I guess because some were getting pretty browned-off, you know, but I don't know if they came back any bloody better because they were still the same troops
- 27:30 that I knew and didn't seem to be much bloody more life in them. Well, life in them maybe, but bloody, they were no keener to do something. The edge had probably gone off them. It had gone off all of us by bloody eighty odd days in there. Bloody takes the edge off all right, no
- 28:00 worries. I don't think the bloody twenty-four hours rest camp was, it might have been a success. I don't know for sure because I was only down a little bit of it, only the ones that I was involved with. Overall it might have been a lot, but I don't know that. Over a battalion
- 28:30 it could have been all right, but I don't know. I never had it anyhow. I missed out, but anyhow that's nothing. It's not the first time I missed out on things that I could have done with. A few beers probably, never had a beer in New Guinea.

Why didn't you get a beer issue?

- 29:00 **Why didn't you get any beer?**

No beer allowed onto the island when we went over there in '43. No beer, only in the canteen, and that's where they were selling it there of course. But I never got back to the canteen. Couldn't be up the front and be back at the canteen too. The only beer I got on the island was Christmas

- 29:30 bloody '43, Christmas '43. Yeah. That was, yeah, and we had Christmas bloody, a sort of a Christmas dinner and it was all right too. Whoever it was organised it, they found a bloody WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK and Christ knows what.
- 30:00 A good meal, the best meal we'd had for a bloody year, and that was what? That was the only beer I had I think we got issued with. I don't know whether it was a bottle of beer, it might have been two bottles of beer each, and anyhow that was the only beer I scored, I had on
- 30:30 New Guinea. I never was at the canteen where they had it. I believe, I don't know, I never was in the canteen, never got down that far. It was back in, down right in Moresby. We were camped out to buggery. I never got into the bloody canteen I don't think, that I can recall. If
- 31:00 I did I never bloody got any beer. They had soft drink probably. I didn't fancy that much. You could drink water. That was the sum total of that.

So I think we've only got a few minutes left.

Yeah.

Yeah. Maybe you can fill us in on what happened once you came back to Australia? They flew you back

- 31:30 **to Australia?**

Yeah, yeah. I came back through Heidelberg. They flew me back, flew me back to Essendon in an old DC-3 down from Lae. They flew me across to Lae and then down to, I got off at where? Then I got onto another plane. Brisbane I fancy it was, Archerfield, and then they flew me through to Essendon.

- 32:00 Then landed down there at some ungodly hour of the night. I don't know what time it was. Pretty dark. It was a winter's night. I think it was about the middle of June or something like that, and this cold wet bloody weather, and I'd done it all right. I was stuck up in Heidelberg Hospital. It was quite warm up there out of the bloody weather.
- 32:30 I had, on Bougainville, that was off Bougainville when I came home wounded. That was when I had the two bottles of beer a day on Bougainville, but on New Guinea I never had nothing. I was up there,
- 33:00 I was in New Guinea for over eighteen months and never had a glass of beer, never looked like it. Never had nothing, nothing of any consequence. I think somebody made a home brew. Home brew bloody, I tried that, Jesus, it was worse than bloody water.
- 33:30 Some of the home brews, shit, they were terrible. They used to make them out of, they'd make like a grappa out of dried apricots or bloody dried apples or bloody dehydrated potatoes and Christ, you wouldn't know what was in it and you'd open the bloody bottle and spray the bloody tent. Christ, it was a potent brew, some of them were.
- 34:00 **Was this in camp? Was this in the camp?**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it was in camp. In the bloody, I had a brew given to me, a bottle of this bloody stuff given to me in 1943 at bloody, the only beer we had, I think we had a bottle

34:30 a man I think it was. I don't know, I'm not too sure. Anyhow, a bloke had this brew cooked up and he said, "Here Matho, try one of these," and he handed me a bloody bottle of jollop. I said, "Yeah, I'll try anything once bar hanging myself." That could be very permanent. Anyhow, I tried it. When I opened it, I was in the tent, in the,

35:00 it was a bloody brand new tent, it was jungle greens, you know, nap and everything was bloody beautiful in there. I opened this bloody bottle in it and sprayed the whole bloody thing. Jump me Christ, within an hour you could see the bloody sun shining through the bloody holes. It went straight through the bloody tent. It was only a tent.

So when you went back to Australia on leave after New Guinea,

35:30 Yeah.

do you remember the first pub you went to?

First pub I went to? Don't know.

Did you go straight to the pub when you got back?

No, no, I don't think I did. I wouldn't think so, no. No, I don't know. I can't recall just where I went.

36:00 Buggered if I can recall. I know we had a few sessions in Melbourne and I went home. Up went up Trentham, like within a couple of days, Trentham up here. I had a few beers in Trentham pub probably. Keep the wolf from the door,

36:30 keep things moving. I forget who was in it, but the bloody beer was all right. Better than I'd been having, nothing. That's the way it went. The bloody social part of it wasn't real bloody bright. You know, you never bloody, never had too many bloody days

37:00 on the booze, your pocket wouldn't let you. Well, it didn't do any harm. But I couldn't go back to bloody Brisbane and get my five quid a day, that was out. I couldn't get back in there. But it was good while it lasted, very good. £5 didn't seem much

37:30 money but in them times it was a lot of money because we were used to having no money. We were used to having bloody, I used to have bloody, you might have bloody thirty bob in your pocket or something if you were lucky. You wouldn't have that because I sent half of it home to Mum. As a sergeant I was only getting, at that stage I was only getting eleven and sixpence a day.

38:00 You know, that was a sergeant's pay. A corporal's was ten bob or something. I don't know what a lieuy was, they were about a quid. I knocked them back. That was the way of it. Money wasn't real bloody

38:30 flash, not down here. It was all right when I was getting five quid a day. I had bloody oodles, plenty of money for me and my mate too if he wanted it. Good things don't last long, you know. It lasted long enough to let me know what it was like.

So what did you do once you got back, once you

39:00 **left the army?**

When I got out of the army I went back to the builder I was working for and I was only working for him about a fortnight and he said, "Wages are going up to buggery. I can't afford to keep you." I said, "That's all right Jack. I can't afford to stay here." I went down and got a job in Laverton in the salt works. I only got full

39:30 pay, paid overtime and everything. They wanted me to bloody take over down there, wanted me to be bloody foreman. I was there bloody near twelve months and I said, "I'm leaving." They said, "Oh Christ, you can't leave. The foreman's leaving too next bloody week and we want somebody as foreman.

40:00 We thought you'd be it." I said, "I can't do it. I won't do it. I'm coming up to Trentham, up in this fine good country." Anyhow, I did it, put a sawmill in and battled on from there.

Did you have to have an extra surgery done on your face?

Did I what?

Have to have any extra surgery done on your face?

Surgery, I got sick of bloody surgery on my face and bloody

40:30 skin grafts and bloody all sorts, bloody bone grafts. The chin and my jaw were sitting on my chest. All the hinges were broken both sides. I had a plaster cap around my head. I must've had that for a bloody couple of months or something, and it was all wired up to the plaster cap.

41:00 Rods down through the plaster and I had screws or something on the bottom of it and they could screw it up to tension it up as they wanted. It was all right. It was the best they had at that stage I suppose. It was something different. The old bloke who did it, he had blokes coming from all over the bloody world looking at it.

41:30 It was something new, you know.

Where did they do this? Was it as the Repat?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I had one on, I had a plaster cast put on it on Bougainville but it was only a temporary one to hold my jaw together until I got down here to Heidelberg where they had all the gear and everything to do it properly.

INTERVIEW ENDS