

Australians at War Film Archive

William Booth (Bill, Wonga) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 19th January 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1420>

Tape 1

00:30 **Thank you very much Bill for agreeing to do this interview with us today. I'm going to start the interview by just getting you to give a summary of your life till today, so from where you were born and grew up through to now?**

We were a family of seven boys, in our family.

01:00 Dad was an engine driver. He used to drive up to Lithgow and all over the mountains. He would be home for a few days and then he would disappear and we wouldn't see him for three or four days, because he would be away in barracks and that, in Lithgow, and all up through the country. I was born at Bankstown, just out of Bankstown. Condell Park was the name of the place where we were

01:30 We were at Lancelot Street and Williams Street, Condell Park. There was a dairy just down below our place, because Condell Park was all bush, you know. Where the airfield is now, where the big aerodrome is now, we used to go out shooting every weekend. There was hares and rabbits. We had two beagle hounds. We'd take the beagle hounds with us and away we'd go.

02:00 And that's how we used to poke along there. As we grew older, we went to Bankstown school, Bankstown North Public, I went there, until I had to come down to sixth class, then, to Bankstown Central School. I went to school there. Then we had to leave when we were fourteen. Once you were fourteen years of age, you had to leave school. So we left school.

02:30 I got a job after a lot of running around. I went into Marrickville into the woollen mills. They were all woollen mills in Marrickville in them days. I went into the woollen mills, and up and down the street in Marrickville trying to get work, but there was no work about. And so I came back, and I got a job on a bakers cart. I was on the bakers cart. I used to get the horse of a morning and

03:00 go up to Rarman's Bakery, which was just in Condell Park, and I would harness the horse up and put him in the cart. The bakery was just up the road a little bit. In the (UNCLEAR) where we were. I would get to the bakery, back the horse and cart in, and put the bag on the horse so that he could have a meal while we were loading the bakery. I'd load the cart up with a chap that was with me there, named Ollie Wilson.

03:30 He was a man that was there and we used to go out. We'd load a hundred and eighty loaves in the first morning shift and we'd go out and deliver those and then we'd come back again and reload. And then we'd go way out towards Liverpool then. We used to go out that way. We used to go all round Bankstown delivering the bread and all that sort of thing.

04:00 We would come back home, and then we would go out again, and then we'd come back again in the afternoon. It would probably be about five o'clock before we got back. And I'd unharness the horse, take him down, give him a wash down and give him a brush up. Put him in his stable for the night, and fill the bin up with feed for him. And wash the cart down. The cart had to be washed. Everything had to be perfectly clean.

04:30 And we'd put the cart in the shed. And I used to have to go about, I suppose it would be about a quarter of a mile or half a mile to home. I didn't live far from there. I'd work Monday to Friday and I got seven and sixpence a week. That was the wages them days, because I was only, nearly, fifteen then. So that was what I used to do and I done that up till...

05:00 The war was coming on, but we didn't think it was going to be. The old diggers [soldiers from the First World War] were talking about it and they used to say to us, "There's going to be a blue [war]. It's going to be on." My brother was cutting sleepers out at a place called Holsworthy, where it was a common place in the First World War because they had a lot of Prisoners of War out there. Eventually, as the boys grew older, they started to leave school and

05:30 my the eldest brother, well, he left school and he went to Belmore Tech [Technical School]. He used to go to the technical college there. He grew up as an engineer more or less. He studied up and he was

lucky, he got through. While the war was on, and Wally, he couldn't go to the war, but he was in the Naval Reserves, I suppose they call themselves.

- 06:00 He was building the submarine net across Sydney Harbour, and he couldn't go to the war. Manpower sort of kept him back, and he couldn't get away. But my second eldest brother, he was cutting timber out in the bush, and he came home. He was cutting sleepers, railway sleepers, and that sort of thing. And I had left school and I
- 06:30 joined the Militia them days. We had the Militia there, at Marrickville. It was the [Australian] Army Service Corps, AASC. We had horses, we had horses at Marrickville. We used to go out to camp at Liverpool, and at Liverpool we had our horses there. They would bring them out and have them there. When the Militia, or the army boys would go into camp, this was before the war,
- 07:00 we used to take the food out in what are called limbers. We would load a couple of horses, make big stews and everything. The cooks would make all this sort of thing, put it all into limbers, and we'd go out to where the Infantry was fighting, or their manoeuvres and that. And we'd take out the food. We were the ration carts for them. That's how we kept them going there. And then eventually, as my brothers grew older and they left school,
- 07:30 and they couldn't get work either, most of them. Anyway, when the war started, I sued to go down to Marrickville every Tuesday night for training. We used to have training there at the Marrickville depot. And when the war started, we were sitting at home one night, and Dad was home, and Heck got up, my brother Hector, he stood up and he said, "Well, there's nothing here, I'm going to the war."
- 08:00 We were all sitting at the table, and I jumped up and I said, "If you're going, I'm going." Dad looked at me and he burst out laughing. He said, "You'll never get in. You're tall enough, but you'll never get in, you're too young." I said, "I not going to tell them how old I am." He said, "They'll wake up to that." Anyway, the war started on and they started recruiting men for the 6th Division, the first division to go. They wanted twenty thousand men.
- 08:30 And you had to be...six foot, or around about six foot, five foot ten. Well, Heck, goes down one day and I goes down. And he went in one end and I went in the other end. He comes out and, right, he was in. And I go in and I come out, I give him the OK. Right, I was in. I goes in first, because I knew a few officers around,
- 09:00 because being with the army, and I went in and there was this fellow sitting at a desk there, he was a First World War man. He had all the fruit salad in the world on him, all the medals and stuff. We used to call it fruit salad. He had plenty of fruit salad on him. I don't know whether he was a general or what he was. I walked in, I said, "Good day, mate." And he said, "Good day. Are you going to join up?" I said, "Oh, well, if I can."
- 09:30 Anyway, he looked me up and down and he said, "How old are you son?" I said, "Twenty." He looked at me as if to say, "Jeez, you're not twenty". I hadn't even had a shave then. He said, "Get on the scales." I got on the scales and he said, "You're not quite ten stone." I said, "Jeez, we'll soon alter that." And he gave me a big blue enamel mug, he said, "Fill her with water over at the tap." So I filled it with water,
- 10:00 and he said, "Drink, and drink, and drink. Keep filling her, until you see the plimsoll line [line on a ship used to measure the ship's load] in your eyes." I said, "Righto, mate." So that's what I did. I stood there and I downed her. I came around from the curtain there, and gave him a bit of a nudge. "Oh, goodo," he said, "Hop on the scales again." So I got on the scales again and he said, "You're right. You'll be close enough for me, mate." I said, "Right, good on you." And I turned around to go out the door and he said,
- 10:30 "Hey. Come back here, mate." And I thought, "Oh, this is it. Cooked me goose [I've been caught]." He said, "Here. Take this mug with you." He said, "Take it with you, mate. It might be good luck." I said, "Alright." So he gave it to me, and I took it home with me. And when we got called up...or when we joined up to Ingleburn camp, I packed
- 11:00 the mug and took it with me. I took it right through the war, it's over there in the cabinet now. I carried it right through. When we came home from the Middle East, I strapped her in my haversack [backpack], and away we went up to New Guinea, and I kept her right through there. And when I got wounded, I walked back, and I had the mug hanging off my dixie [cooking pot] in a little haversack, and I've still got it, it's in the cupboard, I kept it there just because he gave it to me. And when I came back, I went down to
- 11:30 to the Showground, to Marrickville, to see if he was still there, but that was two and a half years after. Probably he'd gone by then, he may have been shifted somewhere else, I didn't know. But I never seen him again. But anyway, thank goodness. It might have saved my life. And I've had a few drinks out of it anyway. We went in to join up, and I was pretty good then on the Vickers machine gun, because we trained in the Vickers machine gun,
- 12:00 our platoon in Marrickville, in the AASC. And we had the old Lewis gun in those days, too. The Vickers machine and the Lewis. Anyway, we gets called up and up we go, and my brother goes out to Ingleburn and I go out, and the officer says, "Oh, you'll want to go in a machine gunners." I said, "Well, if I can." He said, "We got some officers training to take over the machine gun."

- 12:30 He said, "Would you mind hanging off for a while?" I said, "Oh, well, I want to get away with the first mob." Anyhow, my brother went in, and they said to me, "Well, we'll call you. You hang five [wait], will you?" I said, "Righto." So I hung five for a while, and I eventually they went. I used to go out to Ingleburn to see him and that. They gave me a number, a four-figured number I had. And anyway, the time came and I hadn't been called up,
- 13:00 and I was getting a bit worried. So I went and seen them and they said, "You're in the next intake." But they had their own people, I think, that they wanted officers to over the machine gun sections, and I think that's why they stood me back. Even though I knew just as much about the machine guns as the officers coming in would have. Even though I was only nearly seventeen.
- 13:30 But anyway, Heck went. He went with the first 6th Division went, and they went to the Middle East. And then I got called back up then to come back in, so I went in. And we went then into Ingleburn, and then we left on the 5th of May, 1940, was when we got away. They other boys had gone. And they called us in. Mum used to come out to see us at Liverpool, and we were training there.
- 14:00 So we were called in and away we went one morning, early. They got us down to Sydney and the ships were in the Harbour, and no one was supposed to know that we were going. But anyway, we went alright. We marched down through Sydney a week or two before we left. And I remember we were marching down George Street and a lady, standing back in the crowd, she said,
- 14:30 "Here come the Bread and Dripping boys." And I turned round to her and I said, "You wait here until we come back lady, and you'll see what the Bread and Dripping boys can do." Because them days, if you had a bit of bread and dripping, it was a luxury, sandwiches and that. We used to laugh at it, and scrape the dripping off the top and get the gravy underneath, and have the sandwiches. That done us fellows. So anyway, we went away.
- 15:00 The other brothers, they were still at home. And the other brother, my age, he was just below me, he was working in a factory in Sydney, and he couldn't get away. So Heck and I, we both went, that was it. He'd gone and I said, "Well, I'll meet you over there." So we kicked off. We went down through the Harbour. As we were going through Sydney Harbour, I remember....There was an old digger there from the First World War,
- 15:30 and he put it over the amplifier on the ship. He said, "Come down the back of the ship. I want everyone to come down the back of the ship," as we were going out, towards the heads. And, of course, the Sisters, the nurses were there with us, too, they were on the main deck of the ship. We were on the Queen Mary, the first trip that she did. And anyhow, we got down the back of the ship, and this chap over the microphone said, "Have a look, boys. Have a look down this Harbour. Now this is what you are fighting for."
- 16:00 "Don't get mistaken." He said, "A lot of us are going to war now, and a lot of us are not going to come back. I just want to show you what you're fighting for. Have a good look at it, because we mightn't see it again, a lot of us." We thought, "Oh well, fair enough". So we had a look at the Harbour, as we went out the heads, and away we went. Down to Victoria. We picked up some New Zealand troops down near Melbourne, they came with us, they were on another ship from New Zealand.
- 16:30 We went around the Great Australia Bight, round to Western Australia, and we pulled up there, but we didn't go into the harbour because the Queen Mary was a big ship, and it was loaded. I think there was seven ships in the convoy of us. And away we went again then and we got....A bit below Colombo, I suppose. We were heading right across there, and all of a sudden they changed direction.
- 17:00 And we didn't know. We knew the ships had swing around, and they were not going the way we were heading. And I said to one of the chaps on the ship, I said, "What's going on? We're not going to Egypt?" He said, "No, the Italians are coming into the war. And they've got all you fellows on these seven ships here, and we're frightened that something might happen. So we are going to shoot youse around South Africa." So they took us down to Cape Town,
- 17:30 we pulled into Cape Town, and we got a bit of fuel and things there. And we shot off from there, and we thought, 'They'll come back up to Egypt.' But no, they never did. They said, "No. You're going to England." We said, "Well, what about our mates? They're up in Egypt." And they said, "Well, they're going to come up to England. And we're going to land youse at France." We thought. "Oh, gee, this will be great." So we go up to Sierra Leone on the Gold Coast, it was on
- 18:00 the French Gold Coast, in Africa. We pulled in there, into the bit of a harbour there, and the planes flew over. They were way up high. We could hear them going over, and we heard a few bombs rattling, and they dropped them from way up high, but they never got anywhere near our convoys, or our harbour. Dropped them near our harbour. We were only there for a couple of days. And then they took us then up to England. And while we were heading up to England,
- 18:30 the Dunkirk was on, and the British troops and all the boys were pushed back up to there. And we said, "Well, what are we going to do now?" And they said, "Well, it's no good landing you there, because we'd only have to get you blokes out, too." So we went to England and up to Scotland and we unloaded there. Down we came, all night on the train, from Scotland. I remember coming down. We went down to Bulford Fields on Salisbury Plains.
- 19:00 That's where our father's before us used to train there, before they went out for the First World War. So

we went into there. But we weren't a full battalion, you see, of infantry, because half of our division was in Egypt, and we were the other half, and we were sort of on the loose at that particular time. So we got down to Bulford Fields and we were there.

- 19:30 The officers and that all got together and they said, "Well, we've got to make Infantry battalions out of these fellows." Some were Army Service Corps., some were Medical Corps. We were everything. So they had a bit of a job to wield us in together. At Bulford Fields, on Salisbury Plains, we formed the 33rd Battalion, which was a wonderful battalion. Colonel Bearsworth was our CO [Commanding Officer].
- 20:00 And I can only talk about that battalion, because that is the battalion that I was sent to. So that was my battalion. We were on Bulford Fields. We dug in there, we had trenches there, and we used to do all our battle drill and all work in there. But at night time, the Germans used to come over in mobs, in planes. There might be a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred.
- 20:30 And then they'd come over. What they used to do is, come on over and they'd drop a big flare, parachute flare, and that flare would float around and it would light the country up for a mile around, half a mile around. It would light it all up real bright. And next minute you'd hear the bombers coming. And then they'd let the bombs go. And the people in England, they copped it very bad.
- 21:00 Bu we were in the trenches there. They scouted us out to different places. I went to a little place there for a week, me and about five of us there. We had the machine guns there, and the bombers, when we'd hear them coming over, we'd get into a position on the roof of a house or something, with the machine guns, and we'd try and hit the flare, if we could. It was very hard, because they were up so high, but it would lighten up. Then the planes would come over, and of course, we'd hear the bombs coming down.
- 21:30 She was on then. They dropped a lot of incendiary bombs, and they used to run down the roof, into the guttering and the house would get alight. And we were there, with all the people, too, and we'd cover them over with the garbage bin lids. That was the best way to kill the...what's her name. And we used to do that. And a lot of the children, we used to get the children and take them down into the air raid shelters at night.
- 22:00 And they'd camp in the air raid shelters, in the railway line, where the trains used to come in underground. We'd put them in there, with their mother and father and parents. They'd all go down there, and they'd sleep the night down there. In the morning, if there was no air raids about, they'd come back home. A lot of the children, they went from school, on trains, and they took them out in the country. They didn't stay in the town, because there was too much bombing and that.
- 22:30 Birmingham was really flattened there one night. I think there was about five or six hundred planes come over and bombed it. We went out then, and we'd help the people that were in the road. The buildings were smashed and everything, and we used to help them. Plus our training, we had our military training to do at the same time. When the boys all came back from Dunkirk, when they landed on the east coast there,
- 23:00 they sent us up to a place called Felixstowe. It was on the East Anglia coast. And we could see, on the east coast of England, we could look across to France, and we could see the coast of France, on a clear day you could see the coast there. The Germans had a big gun there and it was on a railway truck, sort of thing. I don't know what calibre it was. Anyway, we dug in along the coast. And we were front line troops there for
- 23:30 six or eight weeks, because the British people and the boys that had come back from Dunkirk had to be reassessed. They had to have more weapons issued to them and that. Because most of them threw their rifles away, or broke the pins on them, so they couldn't use them again, and threw they away, and they'd come back. So we were there for six weeks, and they'd fire this big gun, and all you'd see was a big cloud of black smoke. We'd sit there in the trench and after a few seconds, you'd hear a whizzing over the top
- 24:00 and she was bombing parts behind us. But they told us that they were going to land there, and we fully expected that they would. So we were, more or less, front line defence, the Australian troops that were there. But it never eventuated, anyway, they never came in. Then we went back to our training, which we always did. We were at Salisbury Plains for...a fair while down there,
- 24:30 ...I just forget how long, but it was a long time. We used to go on route marches of a day, fifteen out and fifteen back. Sometimes the band, our band, we had a wonderful band. The band used to come and meet us, and it was marvellous how it picked you up when we come back in. We had gas masks on, but you couldn't...We used to carry them with us all the time.
- 25:00 When we would get out a certain distance, out the road, the officers would come along and say, "Gas masks on," and we'd put the gas masks on, and we'd walk with them. And of course, once you start to fog up your glasses with the gas mask on, and you start to perspire and you'd pull the mask up and let the perspiration run out from underneath. But the cunning ones, of course, that smoked, I didn't smoke, but some of the boys would smoke, they'd get a box of matches and put them in the side.
- 25:30 The officer would come along and pull the matchbox out. Nearly choked you, because you were getting a bit of good, fresh air. You're not supposed to do that, of course, but knowing Australians, we'd have a go at anything. We got away with it, a little bit. But we had good training. It was really good. It was

what we had to do. We had to it. We went up to Amesbury Abbey,

- 26:00 that was another great place in England, our battalion went up there for a while, not for long. And we came to another little town I know, where we were there, called....I'm just not quite sure of the name. But anyway, we were at this little town there, and we used to go up the hill and out to a place...
- 26:30 It was a great big house. Like a big building, it was, and it was an old type. And in the middle of it there was a great big haystack. We thought, 'Now I wonder what the devil this is?' So we potted around and in the middle of it, of course, was an anti-aircraft gun. And the British soldiers that were there....They were on this place, too. Night time, when the German planes would come over, the haystack in the middle would open up,
- 27:00 and they'd bring the field gun up. It used to be in there of a day and come up at night, and then they'd have a go at the planes from there. That's what we used to do. It wasn't far from a place called Devizes, I know that. It was a nice little spot there. Anyway, we were there for...it must have been a month, or a bit more than a month I think.
- 27:30 The rabbits were running mad. There were rabbits everywhere. There was a little hotel down the street, and I said to this fellow there, "What's wrong with all these rabbits?" They were a bit hungry there, because things were tough in England. And they said, "Oh we can't touch them. They belong to Lord..." somebody, I don't know. I said, "Where's he?" He said, "He's in India." I said, "Knock these rabbits over." He said, "Oh no. We're not allowed to do that." So I spread the word amongst the boys.
- 28:00 We had three or four rifles there, .22s, they were .303 Lee Enfield Rifles, but they were .22 set for target practice. We used to zero our rifles and do that training with them. So one evening, we had a yarn with one of our officers, and we said, "What about we get a few of these bunnies?" He said, "Yeah, get stuck into them." So every evening, two or three of us would grab a rifle and we'd go down in amongst all the chalk feed, the grounds there, it was all chalky,
- 28:30 and we'd knock a few rabbits off, skin them, and we'd take them down the hotel, the little place down on the corner. And we went in there one night, and I said to the bloke, I said, "Do you want a couple of bunnies, mate?" "Oh, no," he said, "We can't touch them." I said, "Oh, wake up." Knowing Australians, what we were like. We can't see rabbits running around and people starving. Things were tough. Meat was very expensive.
- 29:00 Anyhow, I said to a lady there one night, "Do you want a rabbit?" She said, "Oh, gee, don't let them see you give me a rabbit." I said, "They won't see you." So we took a bag down and brought half a dozen rabbits in. I went down one night and I took some down and they'd meet us outside. We'd go and in and give them a nod, they'd walk out, we'd give them a rabbit each, already skinned and dressed and wrapped up and they'd take them home. And then another night, if a couple of boys had time, they could slip down, and they'd go down,
- 29:30 then they'd come back up. They got to know us there. We were there, I suppose, for about a month or a bit more. We got to know the people quite well there, and they got to know us, too. We shifted then back to where we went to Bulford Fields. We were shifted around different areas. And we went back there with out training. We went from there to....They were shifting us to Colchester Barracks. They said, "We're going up to Colchester Barracks."
- 30:00 It was pretty cold there. So up we got to Colchester Barracks. I've got photos of us training there, at Colchester, in the snow. Halfway over our boots the snow was. We nearly froze to death there. Cherry Tree Barracks was the name of the barracks that we were in. The British Army, of course, trained there for years, and they sent us up to there and we trained there. And we used to go out and
- 30:30 do route marches in the snow, and that sort of thing. And the young fellows, little English boys would sing out to us. They couldn't make out Australians, with our slouch hats on and that sort of thing. But we were there for quite a while. We did a lot of training there. And church parade of a morning's a funny thing. It don't take long to wake up, so we had church parade. And our padre, really nice fellows they were,
- 31:00 and every time they'd start hymns, come around singing hymns, "For those in peril on the sea...." And we said, "Hello. There's a move on." And it was far wrong, either. They'd be singing, "For those in peril on the sea," we knew damn well there was a move on there. I don't know....Lord Haw Haw was the German lord [Lord Haw Haw [William Joyce - radio propagandist for Germany], used to say, "Oh, we know you Australians are going. We're going to meet you out there. We've got submarines off the coast. We're going to sink you boys.
- 31:30 You won't get home." And they used to put it over the amplifier, the radio. But we used to laugh at that, that was nothing. But anyway, it wasn't long. We were there till the Christmas time, in 1941, Christmas, and then they packed us up and they said, "Well, you're off. You're going back to Egypt, to be with the other boys."
- 32:00 We were hoping that they'd bring them over. But there was no sense in sending us to France, because the boys had all got pushed off there. We'd have got wiped out trying to take it, to get a foothold again. So they got us out on the ships, I forget how many ships there was, but there was a lot of ships, a lot of men. We went on the SS [Steam Ship] Nehelus [?]. It was a Dutch ship, but it was a bit of a tub, we reckoned. And all we got for the first few meals there was kippers.

- 32:30 Oh, the Pommies [English] always liked kippers. We got sick of eating kippers. We looked like a fish, we reckoned, by the time we got off. Anyway, we headed down the coast, down to Cape Town, South Africa, around the Cape and we went up to Durban. We pulled into Durban Harbour there for a bit. We had a day or two there at Durban, we reboarded the ship, they refuelled and away we went
- 33:00 up the Suez Canal into Palestine. We unloaded at Palestine, and we went down to Kilo 89 [camp 89km from Jerusalem], that was our training depot in Egypt. Most of the boys, our other boys, my brother was there. He was at a place called Bersheeba. We were at Kilo 89, and the 33rd, 31st and 32nd, there was three battalions there,
- 33:30 And the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/3rd were our other battalions, they were there. Not that I had anything against my battalion, my battalion was good, they were good blokes there. But my brother, he was older than me, and the elder brother could claim you in them days. He wanted me. He said, "You come up with me Skin." He used to call me 'Skin.' "Come up with me, Skin, and you'll be right." I said, "I've got a good mob here." I said, "We're good blokes, we've all fought together, we've been in England together,
- 34:00 We've trained together, and they're all good blokes." I said, "I'll stay with these bloke for a while." So it wasn't long and the 6th Division fellows went up into the desert then, up to Mersa Matruh and right through there, to fight against the Italians. And after they had gone up a bit, (UNCLEAR) Tobruk, they said, "You blokes are going up."
- 34:30 We said, "This is good." So away we gets on the open cattle trucks, they were. And the train only went as far as Mersa Matruh, along the coast. They took us up to there. We went up to there, and we unloaded and then went up into the dugouts in the desert. There had been troops there before. Our troops, the 6th Division boys had gone on through, and we occupied there.
- 35:00 My brother was up further and I thought, 'I'll catch up with him.' That's a map of it all, up there. Anyway, the fighting was dying off, the Italian prisoners were coming back and we got to take a few of them back. And they said, "We're going to go into Greece." And we said, "Oh, we'll go to Greece." Anyway... the 3rd Battalion came back, the 2/1st, 2/2nd, 2/3rd came back,
- 35:30 and they went back to Alexandria, into Egypt, and we stayed in the desert. I thought, "Oh, jeez, I'll never catch up with Heck. I'm still chasing him." Anyhow, he got on to me and he said, "Look, we're going over to Greece. I'll contact you somehow. One way or another we'll get together." I said, "Righto." Anyway, away they went. They went over to Greece and we stayed in the desert.
- 36:00 We were there for quite a while. We done night patrols. We used to go out on night patrols all around the place, come back in. We used to go up and cut the wire at different places. They had barbed wire, and the wire was bigger in some places and smaller in other places. We used to cut a piece of wire and bring it back. So that whenever we did attack them, we knew where to put the Bangalore Torpedoes [anti-personnel mine clearing charges]. We pushed the torpedos
- 36:30 though the wire, the engineers would, and it would pick the wire up and just throw it back in a big heap, about fifteen yards, I suppose, or more. And we'd go through the wire. We could run through then. We'd never get hooked up in the wire. And that's how we broke through. But while we were there, we heard... We were following the Greek battle, of course, it was not far from where we were,
- 37:00 but they were getting pushed back and we were getting a bit worried, because the Germans outnumbered our boys out there and we were getting a bit worried about them. Anyway, we heard then that they were evacuating, and we couldn't help them, we were still in the desert. Fifty degrees heat over there it was, all day and half the night. You'd get a bit cold through the night, but it would really be hot of a day. Very hot. We used to go out on patrols. You couldn't sit down in the sand because it was too hot.
- 37:30 And we only had shorts on, short putties. Anyway, that's the way we went. The boys came back... My brother, I was trying to contact him all the time by different once that were coming back, and I'd say, "Have you seen Heck Booth?" "He was still going when I last seen him." Of course, that didn't mean anything. You could be going and five minutes after you'd be lying flat as a tack. They got back. The 3rd Battalion was in Alexandria.
- 38:00 So I said, "Righto. Well, I went to get back to the old mob." So we thought we'd get down to them there. Then they decided then that the Vichy French [French who sympathised with their German occupiers] and the French Foreign Legion were going to come in from the top end, through Syria. If they come in through Syria and the Germans come in through the top end, we're the sandwich in the middle.
- 38:30 So the powers that be, our Generals said, "We'll go up and we'll take Syria." So we thought, "Oh well, here we go again." So down we came. The 3rd, 6th Division was positioned to the coast road. They went on the coast road. Our battalions came together again and we went up in the middle of this place there. We all, eventually, got all worked out.
- 39:00 The staff lines had got to be put out. There was a lot of things go to it to going up. We went up towards Syria. And it was the 8th of June, 1942, it would be. Yeah, the 8th of June. So we went up, and we were on the boarder there for a couple of days.

- 39:30 We were camping under the olive trees. There were big olive trees up there, acres and acres of olives, and we went under the trees. There was no smoking. And we laid there for a few days waiting. The CO told us, he said, "We're waiting for the full moon." There was a full moon come up on the 8th of June, a bit before midnight, and they let it get up pretty high, and the moon came up and it sort of lit us a path to go into Syria.
- 40:00 They never knew we were there. We were lining up and we could see the Vichy French on the boarder of Syria going up and down on horses, 'spays' they called these fellows. They were good horsemen. They were going up and down guarding the border.

Tape 2

- 00:40 **So Bill, we'll just pick it up. You were talking about the Vichy French.**

- Yes. There were two lots of French. There were the Vichy French, they were the mob that went with the Germans, and the Free French, they were on our side [opposed to their German occupiers].
- 01:00 It was a funny setup, because a lot of the French that went with the Germans came over to Syria, and they were fighting in Syria. And they were prepared to take on us fellows, and the Free French, they came there, and they were on our side. So when we went up, we were on their perimeter, on their border, and they didn't even know we were there.
- 01:30 Now, when the moon came up in the morning, the 8th of June, they said, "Righto, we'll go in." So away we went. And we went a long way in. We had to take a fort. There was a big fort on the ridge named Fort Khiam, and that was the name of it. But before we went there, we had to cross the Litani River. And on the Litani River there was a big shed
- 02:00 and these 'Spays', what we called them, they were the Vichy French, they were there and they had horses there and were guarding that area. We went in, and we hadn't fired a shot. We had gone in, and gone in, and we couldn't make it out. But what had happened, the troops there, the Vichy French troops, they took all the weapons off the people and they had no weapons to have a go at us, you see.
- 02:30 Not the civilians. So anyway we got up onto this bridge, it ran across this river, we had an officer with us, we had a good officer with us, and he could speak French fluently. Connors, his name was. And he said, "We're going to take this bridge. But first of all, in the middle of this bridge, was a machine gun nest." And the French were on the nest.
- 03:00 Now what he said to the boys, there was eight of our section that went across. I was with the Reserve section, and the other boys, seven or eight of them went with him. And they got up near the bridge. And he said, "I'll talk French, and you fellows laugh. All you've got to do is laugh. We're going to go over this bridge." Anyhow, the fellow said they nearly died. They didn't know what was going to happen. They were going to walk across this bridge with a machine gun nest there, and fellows in it,
- 03:30 and on the other side of the bridge was the big shed, and the horses and the officers and blokes were all in there, that were against us. So they got up on the bridge and he starts yabbering French, and the boys start laughing, and they all had hand grenades in their hands and Tommy guns. We had the Thompson submachine gun then, with the big round drum magazine like Al Capone [famous gangster] used to have. We had them. Fifty round mags [magazines] on.
- 04:00 He said, "When we get along to this pillbox [defensive firing structure], in the middle of the bridge, I'll yabber out and run. Throw the grenades, that'll blow the fellows up that are in there, and we'll get to the other side." So that's what they did, apparently. They ran across the bridge, they threw the grenades in, singing out in French, well he was, they were laughing, and of course, they thought they were their own mob coming back, see. And of course, once the grenades went off, they knew what was on then. So they opened up on the shed
- 04:30 on the other side. And some horses got away, you could hear them galloping away up through the bush. But a lot of the fellows were killed there. Not our fellows, but the French fellows. We got down into the shed, and in the middle of the shed...There would have been a good few fellows there, there might have been twenty. They had their beds on each side of the great big shed,
- 05:00 and in the middle they had been cooking eggs, apparently, there were eggs cooking in billycans boiling up in the middle. A lot of them didn't get out. They were still there. Then the horses galloped away, and some of the fellows got away, too, they got away. But anyhow, there was quite a few of them that were killed there that morning, early, just on daylight. All the rest of the troops came through, came up, and there was this big Fort Khiam, it was a terrific big place.
- 05:30 And the walls of it...It was like a crusader fort. Great big walls, feet thick, slits down the middle, and they had machine guns down the middle of each slit. And we were going up hills like that, and they were sort of looking down on us, you know. Anyway, the next day, the CO, he was named Captain Cotton then, but he ended up a lieutenant colonel.

- 06:00 He was a wonderful leader. He was a West Australian officer. Away we're going up, and they were firing mortar shells onto us. We only had three inch mortars, our battalions. All the Australian battalions had were three-inch mortars. They had four inch, and they outranged ours by a long way, you know. They could bomb us with mortars and we still had to come up.
- 06:30 Anyway, we got up fairly close to the fort, and they said, "We'll attack the walls." So we had a go at the walls, and they were shooting at with the Hotchkiss guns through the slits in the wall. A few of our fellows were killed there. I lost a very good mate there, a good friend there. A young chap, too, by the name of Keith Campbell. He came from Wagga [Wagga Wagga]. He was killed there, plus a few others. We got around the fort,
- 07:00 and got into the fort, and we pulled the breach out of the big gun they had in the fort. We pulled the breach out of that and threw it away. They couldn't fire it any more. We got around into the fort, it was a great big fort. Captain Connors was there, and he burst into one room, and there was Vichy French there, they opened up with machine guns and wiped them out.
- 07:30 But there was a couple of ladies there, they tell me. We didn't see them in our section, where we raided, but they were there. But they took them prisoner and taken back. They were working in the fort itself, you know. But they opened up on us and we had to get out again. They pushed us out, over the wall we got to and jumped down and shot out. We went out the gates and passed and come back there. We were there
- 08:00 three or four days, on Fort Khiam. It changed hands, I think, about half a dozen times. It was taken, and they pushed us out, and we'd go in. I went along with the Bren gun one evening, we were on a patrol and went out, and the next morning we went on further, to a place Jazzin. It's down in the valley.
- 08:30 A fairly big sort of a town it was. And that is where one of the officers was guarding the artillery. He had his leg lost there. He was our governor general here, not long ago. He was there and that's where he got hit. Anyway, I was going along and there was a mob [group] had given us a bit of curry [fired upon them] there, with a machine gun and
- 09:00 Captain Cotton said, "Move up, Bill. Run up forward and get among the rocks." So I raced up among the rocks and got up there, and a shell burst just over from me, and I copped a little bit just down this leg there. There were a few bits of shrapnel through my leg. And I came out, and they said, "You'll have to go back and get it dressed," that sort of thing.
- 09:30 So just on daylight, and later on in the day, as we went on they said, "You'll have to get it dressed." And I said, "Righto." So they took me out of the line, and there was a wagon going around picking up the chaps that were wounded. There was a few of them wounded there, shrapnel wounds and that, and I went back to...I finished up going back into Palestine, which wasn't a long way back from Syria.
- 10:00 They took me down there to a church in Nazareth. There was a church there, and there was four or five of us that were wounded there, and we went back into this church and we were laying on the floor. When we got in there, there were some Indian soldiers there, they were up in the battle too, they were wounded, they were laying on the floor. And there was a sister with her desk in the middle of the church, and I give a bit of a hoi [yell] out, "Where are we?" And she says, "Oh, don't worry fellows. You're all right.
- 10:30 You've been hit but youse are not too bad." She said, "This is a church in Nazareth." We said, "Ahhh." We could see all the images around the walls. We could see it was a church of some kind. Anyhow, they kept us there two days, I think I was there, and they dressed our wounds. And I went back to hospital, our Australian hospital. They dressed me legs up a fair bit,
- 11:00 and tied them up, and I went back to the line. The boys had come out. It only lasted five weeks, I think, the action in there, but I was back before it ended. I survived right through the rest of that little part of it. My brother in the meantime, in the 3rd Battalion, was on the coast road, and I was trying to find out how they were going. I knew they were in a bit of battle over there. I knew, we could hear the guns going and we knew they were into it.
- 11:30 But eventually, the 3rd Battalion came out, and he got out, too, so we both survived that bit of action there. And we finished up near Beirut, right up in the main part of Syria. We were on the coast road there. They put us on the coast road. The...what's her names...capitulated, they threw the towel in.
- 12:00 Then they moved us up there to a place called El Kantara. It was way out into the Drekish Mountains in Syria. Very cold it was, and we were out there. So we used to patrol around. And the fellows that gave in, the Vichy French, they surrendered. General Dentz, he was their, he was the general of them, he decided that he wouldn't go with the British or the Australians. He wanted to go back to France,
- 12:30 with the French, and go with the Germans, the Vichy French. They said, "All right, that's what you want." So he got his men who wanted to go with him, and eventually they got taken down to the harbour, at what's her name, and they went aboard ship and they went back. And they probably fought in the main war then, when it went after Dunkirk again, when the British and the Americans went in.
- 13:00 Well, they were probably in that part of the war there. But we never seen them again there, they were gone. It was a bit complicated of the war, they tell me, up there, because we had Free French who

wanted to come and join us, and then they were fighting the Vichy French, the German side, and like the Foreign Legion fellows, they were on the other side. And the boys were telling me, I had just gone back then.

- 13:30 They said, "We were sitting on a ridge and there were Frenchmen coming down fighting the Frenchmen on this side. But they all had tin hats on and they all looked the same. You didn't know whether, when you shot a bloke, whether he was a Vichy French or one of the Foreign Legion, one of our blokes." Because the French had the same helmets. That's why we had a little bit of a mix up there at one stage of the game. But that was down in the valley, but I wasn't part of that skirmish. But we went up into the Drekish Mountains there and up near Aleppo,
- 14:00 up near the Turkish boarder. We talked to some Turkish soldiers there, they weren't in the war, of course, but we were on the border, and we talked with them. They were quite decent chaps there. We were there for quite a while, and we'd come down, and we used to go on patrols early in the morning and we'd go along the coast in vehicles, and then come back, and do our training and that sort of thing.
- 14:30 My brother then contacted me. The 3rd Battalion, luckily, wasn't far from where we were. And we'd occupied Beirut, and we'd had all that taken in, and I got near him there, and we met for the first time. And he said, "Well, you're still going. You right?" I said, "Yeah, I'm right." He got me transferred then. He'd seen his CO and said, "I'd like to get my brother, the young bloke, with me."
- 15:00 I was a bit dubious about going, I didn't want to leave my mates, but I thought, 'Oh well, do the right thing.' So I went to the 3rd Battalion then, 2/3rd. The officer in charge said, "What company are you with?" I said, "Well, I'm in A Company at the moment, 9 Platoon." He said, "You can have A Company, 9 Platoon, 2/3rd Battalion if you wish." I said, "Right. That'll do me."
- 15:30 So I went down and met the fellows and my brother was there, and the officer, and the officer's name was Eric Carter. He was the officer, a dashed nice fellow. He's still alive and still in Sydney. I had a yarn with Eric. Anyhow, I started training with them, then, and I went onto the Bren guns then, machine guns, and I knew all about them and they knew, too, so we were all seasoned blokes. And we got in there. Well, we were there for a while.
- 16:00 And they said, "Well, we're going to go home. They're going to shoot us home. They think." So we thought, 'Oh well.' So we trained, we used to go way out, fifteen mile out, really hot, no gas masks on, we wouldn't leave them on, no water bottles. They'd turn all the water off in all the camp and you'd go out. You'd form up and away you'd march. Away you'd go.
- 16:30 We'd go about fifteen mile out, sit down, have a bit of a snack, no water, and we'd come all the way back, no water. We were training then for when we had to go back to the desert. Well, we were trained up, ready, because the Germans were going to come back to the desert. They knew they were going to come back. They were coming into Tobruk, and our boys were in Tobruk and holding them at the present time. But our lot, we didn't get back up into the desert again.
- 17:00 They said, "No. You're going home. We want you to home." So after a while, we done a lot of training and things, and we got aboard ships again, and we were shipped back to Australia....we thought. Well, we got back to Colombo and the Japanese looked like they were coming in on the Andaman Islands. They were going to take the Andaman Islands, which are just off Colombo,
- 17:30 and they were going to attack up through India....get to the top of India and take them there. The American General Windgate was up there, he was in charge of Ghurkhas [Regiment of Nepalese fighting under British Army] regiments and British regiments, they were fighting up there. We came into Colombo Harbour and we thought, "Oh, well, this'll be right. We'll go on home." It was Easter time and the Japanese planes
- 18:00 come over, and we were out unloading the ships in the harbour, taking our stuff up. And the next minute, bombs and machine guns start roaring, they were Japanese planes, we thought they were ours. They had red, white and blue circles under the wings. And we were way out on the end of a pier, me and a corporal, Corporal Bensley, three or four of us. We were unloading mortar bombs, actually. Next minute, "wom, wom, wom", all over the place with these bombs.
- 18:30 We grabbed our gear and we ran. We ran straight off the wharf, straight out, back into land. It was Easter, Good Friday on Easter it was. We will never forget it. But the British Air Force got up and they shot a few of them down, and they cracked in around Colombo Harbour there, and around Colombo. We managed to get ashore and we never got hurt. The engine drivers and all them fellows,
- 19:00 they left their engines and they run, they just shot through, that was the Colombo engine drivers and that, because it frightened them, I suppose, I don't blame them. They'd never been to war before, but they got a bit of a bashing there. Eventually, they moved us out from...We made a camp there. Eventually, they sent us out to a place called Ratnapura, and we put in a camp there. They made us camp there, we dug in.
- 19:30 We were in thatched huts there. We used to go on patrols there. The main thing on the patrols, we'd go through rice fields, and the main thing in the rice fields was they had tracks where we'd walk across. The only trouble was when you got across there, it was loaded with snakes, those snakes that they used to have there, they were all laying along in the sun.

- 20:00 And as we'd come along, they'd just glide off. Some would sit up. They had just dried off and they'd sit up like this and have a go at you. The fellows used to come out and they used to play the flute and these snakes would come up out of the...The Cobras...They used to come up. Anyway, we got back to Ratnapura and we were there a little while, we weren't there long. It was all big tea plantations there.
- 20:30 And then the Japanese were coming down and they thought they were going to land at Adaman Islands, so they got us onto the beach, and between Gaul and Trincomalee, in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], the Indian troops were there and we were there. We laid ten thousand mines from Gaul to Trincomalee. That was along the beach, they put in all these mines. It was ten thousand, they said. I don't know, but we put a lot in, and the engineers were putting them in all the time.
- 21:00 And we got onto the coast, we had machine gun nests put up, and we stayed...back off the beach. They thought that the Japanese were going to land and we had to be ready for them. So we were ready for them all right. Early one night, there was four or five battleships, big ships, in the harbour there, they took off, away they went. We thought, "Oh, she's on. They must be coming in."
- 21:30 Anyway, the navy boys went out and we were on the shore and we could see the flashes of the guns. They were into it. They ran into a Japanese convoy that was coming in. It was five ships, they said, in the convoy coming in to land on Colombo. They opened up and it was a heck of a battle out there. We could hear it. And it wasn't long after, when the [His Majesty's Ship] Warspite came in and it had one gun
- 22:00 on the back deck of the ship, and it was just over the side of the ship, cocked up like that, and the rest just cleared the ships. They sank the Japanese ships, anyway, so we survived out of it. We never got hurt there. Then, they were saying that they wanted us to come home. The Government wanted us to go home, and Wingate wanted us up there with him. But anyway, eventually, the government decided, "The 6th Division fellows, you've been there too long, nearly two and a half years you've been away."
- 22:30 They said, "You're coming home." I forget the name of the ship that we came from there to home on. Anyway, we travelled across to Melbourne, we landed in Melbourne, and it was pretty cold, it was in wintertime, and we got into the camp at Seymour.
- 23:00 They said, "You've been away long enough. We're going to give you some leave." So they gave us fourteen days leave. I had to, of course, come from Melbourne to Sydney, and then from Sydney out to Bankstown, where I lived. And most of the boys lived...they were country fellows up this way and all over the place. So we got the trains and we came up. I got to Sydney and got the electric train out to Bankstown, and we were full battle order. We had everything, guns and all, rifles and all, with us.
- 23:30 Shove, one side, water bottles, ready for action we were, tin hats and the rest. I gets off the train at Bankstown and walks up the platform and this bloke's there in a taxi, and I knew him when I was about this high. I got into the taxi and I said, "Whip us up home, will you?" And he looked at me, he didn't know me. And he said, "Who are you?" I said, "Oh Bill Booth. I'm going home."
- 24:00 "Oh God," he said, "I would never have known you." I said, "I know. I've been away for two and a half years," I said. "You wouldn't know me." I said, "Are they still at home?" He said, "Yeah, still at home." So in the meantime, we got a telegram at Christmas time, over in England, to say that my father had died. In the August, we went away...We were away and Dad died in August. We got a telegram in England, or a cablegram,
- 24:30 that was December. That's how long...It was hard to contact us because we were all over the place. So we had to go home and see Mum. And I got the taxi up home and got out of the taxi in the front of the house and walked down the side of the house, gun and battle order. I knocked on the side door and I could hear Mum coming down the hall, scuffing along in her slippers.
- 25:00 She looked at me, she looked down and she said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Bill, Mum." She looked at me and she couldn't make me out. "God," she said, "You've changed, boy." I said, "So would have you, Mum, if you'd of been through what I've been through. You'd change a bit, too." Anyway. "Come on in, son." She says. So I went in. "I've got your bed all ready. Look, there's your bedroom." Just like it was when we left, you know.
- 25:30 And I said, "Oh well, I'll dump this gear, Mum." So I dumped all my gear and sat down. And of course the word was running around. A lot of boys were at the war. "Have you seen this fellow?" And, "Have you seen that?" I said, "We were fighting, we didn't see too many blokes." But a lot of the boys from around there had gone to Malaya. And anyway, word gets around and...
- 26:00 No phones in them days, you couldn't ring up anybody and so she got on to one lady and she spread the word around that Bill was home and of course they all wanted to come and see me, then, and have a yarn. I was home three days. We were sitting down under the cedar tree in the back yard, having a yarn, a cup of tea, and Mrs Saddler come over, another lady, there was about half a dozen there. We were having a cup of tea, and I looked down the street. They were only gravel roads in them days, and here's telegram boy, peddling along,
- 26:30 coming up towards our place. I said to Mum, "Oh uh, here's the telegram boy." "Oh," she said, "I'm not opening the mail. Whatever he's got, I'm not opening it, Bill. I opened it last time when you got hit and I'm not opening it again." I said, "Well give her to me, mate, I'll have a look at her." So I opened it up.

"Report back to camp immediately. Wallgrove Camp." I had only been home three days.

- 27:00 I said to Mum, "Well, I've got to go." She said, "You're not going." I said, "How long have you been the colonel, Mum?" I said, "I'm still in the army." She said, "That's not fair. You're not going." I said, "I've got to go. I'm still on call, on duty." "Oh," she said. I said, "I'll stay today and go tomorrow." Well, went to bed that night and she come in in the morning
- 27:30 and I'm asleep on the floor. And she said, "What's wrong with your bed?" I said, "I've been sleeping on the ground for two and a half years. I can't sleep in a bed. I'm comfortable on the floor." And I slept on the floor that night. Anyway I gets my gear together and packs up my stuff together again and boxes it up. I said, "Well I'll see you when I don't know." And she said, "Are you really going?" I said, "I've got to go, Mum." She didn't want me to go. I said, "I've got to go."
- 28:00 In the meantime, my other brothers had gone to the war, and they were up in New Guinea. She was on her own. But what I did, before we went to the war....We got five shillings a day, in them days, and when we got over to the Middle East, we got one-shilling rise, that'd give us six bob [shillings] a day, and that was good money them times. So I'd allocated Mum two bob, and I had three bob a day myself.
- 28:30 My other brother, he allocated her the same. She was getting two shillings from me and two shillings from him a day. And that helped her a lot, because she alone at home. She said, "I've saved some money for you. I've put it in a tin here. Go and buy some blocks of ground." I said, "No, Mum, I don't want blocks of ground." She said, "There's some lovely blocks, look at it." I said, "Yeah, but we're going up to New Guinea.
- 29:00 We might get our head blown off in the morning." I said, "What's it to you? You don't want it." I said, "You've got your allotment, you keep it, and we'll duck up there." And away I went over to Wallgrove camp. My other brother, Heck....Just before we left Palestine to come back home, we were together for once, and he got yellow Jaundice and went to hospital. And as we drove down in the lorries to go down to the ships in Port Said
- 29:30 in the Suez Canal to come away, he couldn't get out of the hospital, so we got separated again. Anyway, I went back to camp, over to Wallgrove. Some of the chaps had got married. They went away, and they'd only been home three or four days and they got married. They came back. They gave us three days to be back, because the Japanese were coming down the Owen Stanley's [Ranges]. They were well down,
- 30:00 nearly knocked over Moresby. So we said, "Oh well, back we go." And most of the fellows came back, and what hadn't come back, well, we had to go. The boys were fighting up there, the young fellows, and they were up the hill. So back we go....They put us on the train, express, we came past Kyogle here, right up to Brisbane and there was
- 30:30 a troop ship there, there was five or six ships. And we were took on the John H Steel was the name of the ship that we were on. It was an American Liberty ship. They were making them and sending them out here, you know. So away we gets, onboard this ship and we goes up to Port Moresby. We gets there, about three days, we get to Port Moresby,
- 31:00 unloaded there and we marched out along the pier. They put us in lorries and took us down the road. It was really hot. And we were all in battle gear....It was desert gear, we weren't in camouflage gear or nothing. So we goes down near the airport there, and dropped our packs down, our rifles, all our gear. They said, "Strip off fellows.
- 31:30 Chuck your gear in the copper [pot]." There was big coppers boiling, and they had green dye in. We chucked our shirts in there and boiled them up. It was only four or five minutes they'd be in there, pull them out, chuck them on the grass. We were sitting there with just our jock shorts on, lay back in the sun. They dried in a few minutes. We put on our shirts and our trousers and our gear and boots and we were camouflaged again, had green dye all over them.
- 32:00 I remember the CO come along to me and said, "That Bren gun is not camouflaged is it?" I said, "No. Got a bit of green paint?" He said, "We'll soon get some." So got green paint and we put marks all around the guns to camouflaged them, and I put a bit of camouflage down the rifle. So Bully Hays was one of the corporals there, and he said, "I think we'd better sharpen the knives a bit, too, aye?" I said, "Yeah, we better." There was a bloke there turning a wheel, he had a big grindstone there.
- 32:30 So we got our bayonet's on the grindstone and we sharpened them down about six or eight inches, put them back in and they were right. We were there...around about two days. And they said, "Righto, boys. They're coming too close for comfort. We've got to go up and get stuck into them." So we goes in the lorries as far as we could, to a place called Owen's Corner.
- 33:00 And we get to Owens Corner, and they unloaded us there, and we had about an eighty-pound pack on our back. And there was the Golden Stairs, way up the mountain like this. We started off. Well, it nearly killed us, but we went up and we got up there. At Iorabaiwa Ridge, we could hear the fighting up ahead of us, we knew it was on.
- 33:30 The young fellows were coming back wounded, they were only seventeen, sixteen, the young boys, they'd called them up from here and took them straight up. Some of them didn't have a real lot of training at all. They were just there. But they fought well. They held them. They steadied them till we

managed, anyway. We got up as far as we could, and then the artillery fellows pulled a twenty-five pounder up through the bush, I don't know how they did it.

- 34:00 And they were spotting on the Japs. And the Japs were lining up there for breakfast one morning, and they didn't know the artillery boys were there, and they opened up on them, and they slopped it into them, as quick as they could put the shells in they hit them. And we went up then, and the Japs were scattered everywhere, and they turned, and they didn't come back any more this way, because we kept on them, oh...we went right through up to Lake Myola,
- 34:30 we went to Lake Myola, that was a dried lake. But they used to drop supplies down to us through the bush at Lake Myola. We stopped there for a day or so, and then we went on again. The other boys were fighting up ahead of us, and we were holding and they were pushing up. We went up and at Templeton's Crossing we took over from the other battalions, the militia battalion boys there.
- 35:00 It was getting on September, October....It was round about the end of October it was then, I was on a patrol one morning... You'd go up for half an hour or twenty minutes. It was nerve wracking, because the Japs were there. They lay along the limbs of the trees, and you'd never know when you'd get a bullet in you. What they used to do,
- 35:30 we'd go forward, we always had a getaway man, what they called a getaway man at the back. So that if we got ambushed or anything, it was his duty to get back and tell them. But the Japs got a bit cunning, and as we'd go forward, they'd let us all go forward and the getaway man forward, too, and then they'd shoot them in the back of the head. They were up in the trees and they'd snipe them. So we had to wake up to them, then.
- 36:00 Some fellows were married, and we didn't like to send the married men forward, because if you went forward, you were a sitting duck. You would probably have got killed anyway. Still, someone had to do it. So we'd go up, two of us, or probably sometimes there'd be one each side of the track. Sometimes there'd only be one. And you'd go along quietly and, all of a sudden, a big butterfly would fly across the track. Talk about give you the ducks and drakes.
- 36:30 Big butterflies flew out. New Guinea was all full of them butterflies, big ones. So we went along and went along....At Weeby Creek, there was a big battle. We got stuck into them there for a while there. We lost some very good men there. I lost some good mates there. I went in one night, it was pouring rain....Every night it poured rain up there, and we'd go to lay down...You couldn't dig trenches
- 37:00 or fox holes much. because all the roots of trees...I don't know if you've seen those trees in the bush? They come down like that, and then they come out like that. Boys used to get in behind them, and the Japs used to put a bullet straight through. You could put a bayoneted through it. It was just a piece of the tree that come down, like a big fig tree. If you got behind one of them the bullet would go straight through you.
- 37:30 So we woke up to that. And the Japanese used to send a mob down at night times and they would make a noise and throw grenades and sing out all night. You know, "Are you there, George?" And you wouldn't answer. If you answered them, you were gone, because they'd know where you were and they'd snipe you. We woke up to that. And one day up there, they dropped the bully beef [tinned meat]. Bombers used to come over,
- 38:00 they couldn't see us, but they could see the trees where we were. And they'd swoop over low and drop out bags of stuff, they'd throw it out in sandbags to us. You might get egg powder, some days you'd get bags of tea....And all the fellows that smoked found it hard, because they couldn't get tobacco. They wanted cigarettes, and they'd smoke tea. They'd fill their pipes with tea,
- 38:30 and they'd light it up and puff the tea. Of course, I didn't smoke, so I didn't worry. But the poor fellows, I felt sorry for them. And we went there one day, and we said, "We'll fix these fellows." So they dropped some stuff down, and we packed a heap of it up on the track. It was only a track this wide, only a little track. We heaped it up there and we came back a few yards. We were only fighting from here to the back yard out there, only ten yards or twenty yards.
- 39:00 And we lay doggo and waited. Anyway the Japs were hungry and they came down. We let one little bloke come through, we seen them come through. And then our section leader, he said, "Let him go, keep him. Let him go." Anyhow, he got there and he opened the tin of bully beef and he was tearing into it, and the other fellows came along and they were all there. There was about fifteen of them there, having a great feed, and the old sergeant said, "Give it all."
- 39:30 We opened up, and we copped the lot of them. We stopped that mob. But then we went on further to other battles, as we went through. I got hit one night, in the pouring rain. Leaches were the biggest trouble up there, they were as big as your finger and they'd get into you and we'd pull them off. And we had more blood down our shirts than what we had anywhere else, because you couldn't muck around.
- 40:00 We'd just pull them off. And next minute you'd look at a tree beside you and there'd be a big fellow coming this way and he might get on your face or he might get down your back, or in your boots they used to get. Anyway, we were on a patrol there one morning, I went out with a chap. I'd done a shift in the morning and we came back, and they said, "We want a couple more to go out this evening to have a look around." I said I'd go.

- 40:30 And a chap by the name of Mick Sweeney, he was there and he said, "We'll go on this side, Bill." So I said, "Righto." So we got in there, and we're pushing along quietly, it was pouring rain and we were wet through and creeping along through the bush. And the next minute, I got around a tree, and put my rifle through and I smelt a rat. There was someone watching me, I knew. Dick was over there and I looked up the tree...The Japs used to lay along a limb of a tree. They'd lay there and they would pick you off.
- 41:00 I felt there was someone watching me, and the next thing...whang! It went through my hand there, and came out there, the bullet. I had my hand like that forward with my rifle, and she just went straight through there and out there. That mucked my hand up, of course.

Tape 3

00:30 **So you were telling us about being shot through the hand?**

- Well, that was at Obi Creek. It was a fair battle up there. It was in October, towards the end of October. We didn't know what the days were, what date it was or what it was.
- 01:00 As long as you see the sunrise and the sunset, you considered yourself lucky. When I got hit, I couldn't get out, and I was just about...I suppose I was about ten or fifteen feet off the track. Pouring rain. And I went to get up again to try and get forward. I couldn't see where this bullet had come from. There were bullets flying everywhere.
- 01:30 We just struck a heap of them. They were waiting for us, of course, and we were moving. They had the shot on us all the time. I had to get up onto the track. I went to get up, and as I went to get up, another bullet hit the tree beside me. So I thought, "Well, he's he's picking me off." And my mate, Dick Sweeney was just near me, and Dick said,
- 02:00 "Don't get up, Bill. Stay where you are. Don't get up. You'll cop one." I dropped back down again, and I waited for a little while, and it was starting to get dark and it was raining fairly heavy. As it got darker, I slipped backwards and then I curled up on the track and lay on the track. And it was all mud and that, that was where the boys had all gone through. I lay there, and I could hear the firing all around us. There was bullets flying everywhere,
- 02:30 you didn't know where they were coming from. Anyway, a doctor came along, or someone came along the track. I think it was one of the mess orderlies, or one of them, and he said, "Are you alright, mate?" I said, "Oh, I got one in the wing." He said, "Give us a look at it. Anyhow, I had my hand up like this, and I could feel the blood running down off my elbow. I had my rifle, I wasn't going to leave my rifle. I dragged my rifle with me and I got up on the track,
- 03:00 and anyhow he had a look at it and he said, "Oh Jesus, she's in a mess." I said, "Yeah, feels like it." Anyway, I just crawled along a little but further. I couldn't get up, it was too slippery in the mud, and I said, "I'll lay here." And he said, "Righto." It got dark then, and they couldn't do much, and we had to stay there until it got daylight, next morning. And a doctor came along, just on daylight, it was.
- 03:30 They were going in picking up the fellows...There was eleven killed that night, in that action, there was eleven boys killed there, and a lot of them hurt, pretty badly wounded. Anyway, I don't know who the doctor was, he said, "Jesus, son. I'll give you a morphia tablet." So he give me an injection in my arm, and he got a pen out and put a mark on my forehead. That was so that anyone would know that I'd had an injection of morphia.
- 04:00 Anyway, they were bringing out the boys that were killed, and they didn't know how far down the Japs had come. They used to come down of a night and make a lot of noise and then go back. And the ones that you were fighting all day, would come back in the morning, and they'd be waiting for you. They'd had a good night's sleep. They made sure you never had one. We'd be awake all night trying to keep them from coming onto us. So the fellows were coming in. A little mate of mine,
- 04:30 he had a bullet through both arms. He was hit in both arms. Another bloke had one through the leg. Another chap had one through here. His face was all badly smashed. And they said, "Now what are we going to do?" They couldn't land the planes on the airfield up there, because the Japanese had bombed all the runway at Kokoda,
- 05:00 at that particular time, and the doctor said, "Well, those that can walk, I would suggest that you start to walk. And those that can't walk," he said, "The Fuzzy Wuzzies [Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels - New Guineans who aided Australian troops on the Kokoda Track] will carry you." They had to be carried, which some blokes had to be. Anyhow, it had gone on towards midday that day, and the fighting was going on of course, further on, and the boys had to move on. And I said, "Well, we can go." The doctor said,
- 05:30 "Right, who can walk?" I said, "I can walk." My other little mate was near me there, he said, "I can walk. But I've got wounds both arms." I said, "You'll be walking with us. We'll look after you." Another chap was there, he was badly wounded in the arms and shoulders. He said, "I'm in about the same boat as you are." I said, "Don't worry about it. We'll look after youse."

- 06:00 Anyway, the doctor came along and he said, "It'll take you ten days to walk back to where you came from." I said, "Yeah." I said, "It's either walk back for ten days or stay here and die." I said, "What do you reckon?" He said, "Do you think you can make it?" I said, "Well, we'll have a go." I've still got the piece of paper inside with the names of the four or five fellows that we walked back. So we teamed up together. And they were out of different battalions. I'd never seen these men before and they had never seen us.
- 06:30 But I got with them and we got a rope, and we put a rope around each bloke's belt right through, and we hung onto the rope, and we got a stick each to help us balance, because it was slippery in the mud going back. He said, "Well, walk as far as you can and then stop the night and go on." We walked back a fair way and then we came to a river,
- 07:00 and we stopped there. We'd fought all the way through that, so we knew the places a bit. We camped there. There was no Japs there. They were back further. In the morning, we got cracking again. We had nothing to eat that day. We got up, we crossed the river. We had the rope around each other and we just walked across. I said, "Well, our pace will be as fast as the slowest man. That's the pace." Whatever we did, that's how we walked. No matter how you felt. You might have felt like running, but you had to be with them,
- 07:30 we stuck together. We got back to a little Salvation Army hut, on the side of the track. They had come up as we were fighting our battles and they had formed a little place there. They had some mince meat cooking, a stew cooking there. And oh, he was our friend for life. We had a dixie full of stew and a slice of bread, and we lay down and had a bit of a sleep.
- 08:00 The reinforcements were going up into action, and we were coming back. I don't know what they must have thought. Here we are walking back, covered in blood, we had these leeches all over us, and we pulled them off, and we were just in a mess. We walked back and took our time. We camped the night. The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels came with us, as we called them, and there were two of them with us. When we lay down at night times he'd cover us with banana leaves.
- 08:30 And we'd lay there. The next morning we'd get up and we'd have a meal of what we could, rations. Sometimes up there, we were eight men, we had a tin of bully beef between us. We cut a little square each and that was dinner and tea. We'd have that. Anyway, we moved on and on, and we got back to Lake Myola. And at Lake Myola, there was a medical unit there and a doctor there operating.
- 09:00 He had a limb of a big tree cut in half, that was the operating table. And just over from him, there was two coppers boiling. There was an orderly there, he was sterilising the instruments. And as we came back...We had a ground sheet propped over a couple of trees, and we crawled in under there and we laid there. Then the orderly would come over, the doctor would have a look at your wounds. "Oh, I can do you at four o'clock.
- 09:30 I can do you at such and such." And they'd take you over and put you on the table, and they'd give you an anaesthetic, and you'd wake up and you'd be back on the ground again, where you were. That was there that Frank Cane, that was the chap that got wounded with me through the jaw....They brought him back and Frank was in the tent next to me. We were together, actually, on the ground. And the orderly said to me, "He's pretty badly wounded, mate."
- 10:00 He said, "But if he starts gurgling and getting crook, for God's sake sing out to me, will you?" I said, "Righto." I was laying there, and they brought Frank back, and he was going alright. He seemed to be, I thought he was alright. He started to gurgle a bit, so I sang out to the orderly to come over, and he was only just a little bit over boiling up the instruments. He came over and he shook his head and he said, "He's gone." And I said, "Oh, God." And we lost Frank there, they took his out.
- 10:30 They were carrying him, the next morning, up to the hill. They were burying the chaps on the hill as they died, up along the ridge. Anyway, I said, "Oh, well, that's Frank. We couldn't do much for him." Anyway, we were there for three days, nearly three days. The doctor dressed our wounds a bit, and he got us out on parade. I suppose there might have been a hundred odd men there, by then.
- 11:00 They were wounded coming back. He said, "Well, boys, I can't do much more for you. There's only one thing, you've got to walk on." "All right" I said to my little bloke with me, who had both his arms done up, we used to help him with toiletries and all that, through the night and day. I said, "What do you feel like, mate? Will we go on?" "Yeah, we've gone this far, Bill. We'll go on." I said, "Righto, we'll go on."
- 11:30 There was quite a few fellows there, there must have been about ten or fifteen of them, but they were a bit fitter than we could, they could go a bit further. So they went on a bit quicker, and we just poked along, you know. It was four days, I think it was, we got back to Ford's Crossing, which was where we started from. And we'd been walking then,
- 12:00 I would say about eight days, around about that, we'd been going through the jungle. We came across one...lads, the Fuzzy Wuzzies had carried them from where we were. They left a day ahead of us, of course, but they were a lot slower, too, carrying the wounded men. We went down the track, and it was a day when we caught back up to them. And the two chaps on the stretcher, they were down, they were shot dead and the two orderlies
- 12:30 that were with them, they were shot dead, too. The Japanese had surrounded them on the way back and

shot them. That was it. We didn't know the men. They were from in the battle where we were, and they left the day after the battle and we left the next day. We came across them, because we were walking quicker, and that's what happened. They were laying there, they shot the lot of them. All we had had a hand grenade in our belt.

- 13:00 I said, "Well, if I'm going to get killed, I'm going to die fighting. So I might as well have a hand grenade or something." So I had my hand grenade in my belt and I carried it all the way back. I didn't use it, of course, but I was going to have a go if I struck a Jap, he was going to get a hand grenade, whether it hit him or not, I don't care, but I wasn't going to let him hit me, for nothing. And that's what we did. And I got back to Port Moresby, to the hospital there. They met us in vehicles. They'd come up the road as far as they could,
- 13:30 and they'd pick the wounded up and take us back. So we got back to the hospital there, and there was a night sister there, a sister there and nurses there, and she said, "You're old fellows. Gee, look at the old fellows coming in." We were covered in mud and blood. She said, "We'll give youse a bit of a shower." We said, "Oh, that'd be great." So we got in and had a bit of a shower, a bit of a wash and, they laid us in the bed, and I said to the sister,
- 14:00 "We're still all muddy and dirty. We'll lay on the floor." She said, "No, you're not. We'll give you a wash, and we'll wash these sheets, don't worry about that." So we laid on the bed...oh, lovely soft bed. Anyway, the next morning she came in, the same sister came in in the morning. She walked along and she was looking at us there, and she said, "God, you're only young blokes. I thought you were old fellows, but you're only young fellows." I said, "Of course we are. What do you think we are?" Anyway, we were right.
- 14:30 We had yarn with her. And we were there about two days. And I had lost a fair bit of blood. They said, "Don't walk too quickly." They said, "If you walk too quickly, you'll bleed a lot." So, we went along and kept our arms up like this all the way, as we could. And then there was my mate, had both his arms crook like this. He was done. He couldn't do much.
- 15:00 The other fellow was the same way. And then the sister came in, about two days we were there, and she said, "You blokes are going home." I said, "No. We're not going home." She said, "Yes. You've got to. You can't stay here." She said, "You've got to go." I said, "We're not going home." I said, "We're not that bad that we've got to go home." We didn't want to leave the battlefield. We said, "No way. Anyway, she said, "No, we've got a plane. They're flying you down to Charters Towers in Queensland."
- 15:30 So, oh well, we couldn't do much about it. They took our rifles off us. We had all our other gear. We got on this plane, a Lockheed Hudson [bomber] it was. And I remember laying down on the bottom of the plane. We lay down on the floor. There was four of us. Four of us there and away we went. Anyway, the American pilot that was flying the plane,
- 16:00 he said, "When we get over the Barrier Reef," he said. "I'll swing her on her side and give you a look at the reef." Well, you know what he got. "To hell with the reef. We don't want the reef. Get us down on the airfield. If you get us down that's all we want." He weren't interested in having a look at the Barrier Reef. He landed us down onto the airfield and the Red Cross ladies come out, and they said, "Oh come on, come on."
- 16:30 They were lovely people. We got out of the plane and they seen us there. And I thought, "Oh God, we're covered in blood." Even though we had been cleaned up, we were still covered in blood. Our wounds kept bleeding all the time. And we got out of the plane and our arms weren't smelling too good, you know. And the lady with me said, "Come on. I'm taking you over to the café. We're going to get you a good meal." I said, "Oh no, I'm not going to no cafe."
- 17:00 I said, "We couldn't go over there." I said, "Look, take us to a little room over here somewhere and grab us a couple of pies." I said, "We'll be right." The boys said, "Yeah, that'll do us." She said, "No, I'll get you a meal." So they went and got us a meal each. Well we couldn't do much with only one hand, you know. So they cut our meat up for us and gave us the salad. They gave us the world, they did. Anyway, it was quite nice. We were there, they took us to a hospital.
- 17:30 It was at Charters Towers. It was Mount Carmel College. It was a girls' school, a college, and they took us and that was made a hospital. They lay us on the floor in this great big college, like a room, and we were laying on the floor there. The doctors came around and seen us, had a yarn with us. The doctor said, "Where do you hurt, mate?" And he had a bit of a scratch up and he had it all there.
- 18:00 He said, "Oh, yeah." He said, "Righto, we'll have to do something with you." I said, "Well, I've already had a bit of an op [operation] on it." He said, "That was a quick one. You've got to have another one now." Anyway, I was there for a few days, I think, and they operated, and then they put us in an ambulance. They were all women, ladies, driving the ambulances, then.
- 18:30 They said, "We've got to drive you back to..." Some other place, I forget where it was. Away we went. We were laying flat on our back in the ambulance. And we all got back, and eventually we ended up at Redbank. It was a hospital up there, and they operated again there, and then we were laying there. I was there for about four or five days. And we were all in the beds there. And my mates were there with me that were with me all the way down.
- 19:00 The sisters used to come in and move our fingers on things to try and keep our fingers going. She said,

"You want to keep the hand going, otherwise you'll lose it." The doctor came in and he said, "You and you, we'll operate in the morning. And this chap will probably lose his hand," looking at me. And the other chap, he might have lost one of his. He had a bullet through here,

- 19:30 he was bad. Anyhow, a sister came in to us, and she was a physiotherapist and she used to give us things to move our fingers. She used to say to me, "Move your fingers." I had no hope. And she'd say, "Try." And she'd get my fingers and she'd move them up and down, like that, for me. Anyway, I said to her, "They're going to take my hand off in the morning, and I don't want to lose it." And she said, "Who said that?" I said, "The doctor here." She said, "Did you know...each state looks after your own wounded now."
- 20:00 She said, "If you just tell him you want to go down to New South Wales, and you want to be operated on down there." I said, "I wouldn't like to say that. Might think a man's a bit of a crank." She said, "No. Tell him. I'll tell him." So anyway, he came in that afternoon and he said, "Oh, sister was telling me, you boys, you want to go Back to New South Wales, do you, mate?"
- 20:30 And I said, "Yes doctor, if you wouldn't mind." He said, "No. Fair enough." He said, "Each state looks after their own wounded now." I said, "Well, I've never heard of this." We'd never heard of nothing like that. And he said to my mate, "Do you want to go down?" My mate said, "Oh yes. I come from down there. I'd like to go down, too." He said, "All right." He said, "Look, we've got a hospital train being made up. It won't be made up for another three or four days." He said, "You can stay here till then."
- 21:00 And he said, "We'll put you on the hospital train. There's seventeen carriages on it." He said, "It's the biggest hospital train to go down from Queensland to New South Wales. There is that many wounded," he said, "We've got to put you somewhere. "Oh gee," we said. "That will be alright." He said, "You might lose your hand, mate, but I don't think you will." He said, "But it won't be any good to you again a lot." And I said, "Oh well, I've got to take a chance, doctor. What do you reckon?" He said, "Oh, yes, by all means. That's all right."
- 21:30 Anyway, four days went by, five days, and then they came in one morning and they said, "You're off tonight." "Oh, beauty," we said. So they took us over to the hospital train and they had beds made each side of the train. The badly wounded blokes like myself was on the lower floor, I could get up and move about. But if I was up high, I couldn't do anything.
- 22:00 Climb down or nothing. So anyway, we were all on this train, and away we go. I think it was about two days, three days, we were on the train. We came through Kyogle here....I didn't know Kyogle from Bullamanka [imaginary place in the far outback]. We gets down to Concord Hospital at Rose Hill, where all the ambulances were lined up. We could see ambulances for miles. I said, "God, have a look at the ambulances."
- 22:30 Concord Hospital wasn't far away, you see. Eventually they got around. They were unloading all day. Eventually they got up to our carriage and we got out, and they put us on stretchers, and we said, "We can sit up." They said, "Oh, no, no. You've got to lay down." They made us look sick as dogs. Anyway, away we went. We got to the hospital and they said, "Well, where are we going to put them?"
- 23:00 The wards was full, everywhere was full. And the sisters were there, and I said to her, "Plonk us on the floor here." She said, "We couldn't do that." I said, "You've got no option, have you?" My mate said, "It'll do us." So they got some mattresses out and they put them all around the balconies at the hospital there, and we laid there for two days, because they couldn't put us away anywhere. All the beds were full of blokes wounded. It was a bad time for us all. So we were there that night.
- 23:30 And it was the next night before they put us inside then. And they put us all in Ward Six. Ward Number Six. That was the Arms Ward, where they were all in with the crook arms, they put you in that category. And we were there, and I'm lying there one night and talking away to the blokes, and I felt something on my arm. I thought, "What's this on my arm?" And the bloke said, "You're flyblown."
- 24:00 You've got maggots coming out your shoulder." I said, "Oh, you're joking." And the sister come up from the ward and she said, "No that's right. They put them in your arm, up at Charters Towers, to eat all the bad flesh out of your arm." They put them in and they eat all the bad flesh, and then they'd crawl up. That's what they did those days. Anyway, sister said, "They're going to open you."
- 24:30 I had a plaster on from there, and around, with my hand on a frame and everything. She said, "We're going to take it off tomorrow and have a look at it." So anyway, they took me to theatre, and I came back, and I just had a short bandage on my arm, then. It was light plaster under there. Anyhow, they put me there and took me down. And they used to have Lux soap, in them days, they only used Lux soap. And they had a bath thing about that big,
- 25:00 you put your arms in. She said, "I'm taking off your dressings now, and I want you to put your arm in this bowl, and I'm going to bathe it with Lux soap." Anyway, they took it off and here's the bones into the back of my hand sticking up like this, and she got my arm and they turned it over, and she said, "Look at this." And they'd go like that, and you could see my fingers going like this, all the tendons to my fingers. And she said, "See that one there?"
- 25:30 And this one there?" "Yeah." They said, "You've got to go out to Holsworthy now." Ingleburn. And I thought, "Oh, that's where I left to go to the war." I went out. I was there for three months, nearly drove

me mad, walking around. And they would bathe my arm every morning and they would move my fingers and put a wire frame on here, and it came up here, and

- 26:00 they had elastic bands on it. And I used to move my fingers up and down, and the elastic bands pulled it up and down. Exercise. And then, they gave me a soft rubber ball, not quite as big as a tennis ball. I'd hold it in my hand and I'd squeeze it like that, all the time, and that used to get my fingers going up and down like that. It came good a little bit.
- 26:30 But I was out there, and I think I had eight or nine operations that hand. Eventually they wired it in here. These two fingers here, they wired it in there. They're still wired there, as far as I know, just to hold it. But I can use these two fingers. And I was backwards and forwards to Ingleburn, back and back. And that's where I met Mary. Mary was a nurse in the ward there.
- 27:00 She used to come in and help dress our wounds and all that sort of thing. They were very kind to us, but I wanted to get back to the Front, because our fellows had just came home.... After I got wounded in the October, it was my 21st birthday on my way back. I don't know where I was, somewhere on the track. And I said to one of our officer, this fellow coming up, I said to this officer chap
- 27:30 I said, "What's the date today, mate?" He said, "29th of October." I said, "Christ. It's my birthday. I'm twenty-one today." That was good. I said, "You've made my day. We can't have a beer, haven't got any." And that was my 21st birthday. Anyway, I was back and forwards, and the battalion went on in action until they took Kokoda. That was only a month after.
- 28:00 And they came home, because they had lost a lot of men. We lost too many men. We went up there... We had a full battalion, I'm not quite sure, but had a full battalion of men, and we had twenty-three officers or something, I forget now. We finished back up with ninety three men we had left, and a couple of officers.
- 28:30 That's all we had left of our lot. Mainly they were badly wounded, the fellows, because it was close fighting there. And they came back and got a bit of leave and went up to the other side of Cairns, up there, to a place up there. And I'd love to have gone up there. I wanted to go back up. But the doctor said no. "You're tied up here, Bill."
- 29:00 I was twelve months or more, in and out of Concord Hospital, operations. I think I had about twelve or fourteen operations altogether, on my hand. It finished up that they took a nerve out of my leg there, down there, and laid it in there and put it up there and down there, and that give me life to my fingers. Sir Robert Wade and Doctor Ken Star
- 29:30 were the two doctors that done the operations on my hand. Them days, of course, they didn't have the things we've today. I suppose if I'd have had it today, I might have had different. But I was very pleased with what they did for me, and that helped me. Eventually, in 1944, I was still in the army, and they said, "Well, Bill, you can't go in anymore.
- 30:00 You've got to be discharged." So I was eventually discharged, and I went down to the barracks in Sydney, Victoria Barracks. You had to be discharged down there, me and a few other fellows. And I said to this chap, "Well, what can we do? We've got to get work, get jobs." And he said, "What would you like to do?" I said, "I wouldn't mind doing a bit
- 30:30 of wool classing. I'm interested in wool classing." He said, "Sorry, mate, they're all full." He said, "The fellows that got out before you, they've taken that job." I said, "What else have you got?" He said, "They want a couple of blokes for the police force over in central Australia." I said, "That would be alright, but it's no good to me, I've only got one hand." Anyhow, he had a look around and he said, "No, you'd be no good there."
- 31:00 I said, "No. No good." He said, "Well, we'll just have to discharge you and see what you can find." So I was discharged. And I got a job down at Duford Motor Parts in Sydney, Carrington Road, Marrickville, I think it was. I worked there for a while. And eventually Mary and I got married later on.
- 31:30 We got engaged and then married. We got married at San Souci. Mary's auntie lived over there, and we got to know them and that, and we got married and we lived then up at Bankstown for a while. And then I got a job down at Duford Motor Parts, and then I was there for a while, and blow me down, I went down to work one morning and
- 32:00 the place was all locked up. Locks on the gates. And the blokes are all standing outside, and I said, "What's going on?" "Oh," he said, "There's a strike on, mate." "Oh, no, don't tell me." I said, "Jeez, we've been away at the war a few years and we come back and now there's a strike on." I said, "How long's the strike going to go?" He said, "We don't know." He said, "Well, if we're out for six weeks we don't get any money,
- 32:30 but if we're out over six weeks we get a bit of money from the government." I said, "That's good." Mary and I were living in a little flat on our own. I had no money of course, battling of course. I had just come from the war, I had no money saved. Anyhow, we struggled along and struggled along. I went back a couple of times, "No, she's still on strike, mate. We're not going back." Anyhow, just before the six weeks was up, they decided to go back to work.

- 33:00 So we got no money then, the money was gone. We had to be off six weeks or the government didn't give you any money. So we had to go without and battle the best way we could. So we did that. And I worked down there for quite a while. And her father lived up here at Kyogle. And he said, "Why don't you come up this way?" There wasn't much work in Sydney at the time.
- 33:30 I had never been in the country before. I was a city bloke, more or less. I had knocked around the bush, a bit. Eventually I said to Mary, "What do you think?" She said, "Well, we've got nothing here." And she said, "There's no work on." She had to retire later on, of course. Once they got married, the girls had to retire. So she had to retire and we were both there and we had nothing, so we decided to come up to Kyogle. So we came up on the train.
- 34:00 And I seen her father and that, and we went into a little house just up the road here. We haven't moved far. And we were at the house here, and the sawmill down the road....They had a big sawmill in those days, but most of the sawmills are gone now, because they won't allow them to cut the timber, they won't allow them to do this. The Powers That Be [i.e. the government], they never lived in the bush themselves, but all our sawmills were stopped.
- 34:30 And the men were all out of work, and I was out of work. "Well," they said, "They're looking for blokes on the railway." I went to the boss down here, George...And I said to George, I said, "Look, George, I want to have a go and see if I can get on the railway. It doesn't look like there's much going to be here." George Rogers was the man in charge of the mill.
- 35:00 He said, "There's going to be nothing here, Bill." I said, "What do you reckon? Do you mind if I went and had a go at the railway?" Some of the fellows here said, "Oh, don't tell him you're going on the railway. He'll sack you." I said, "I can't be much worse off." I said, "I'll tell the man what I'm going to do." I had been there about three years. He said, "There's not going to be much work here, Bill. I can tell you now." He said, "The Greenies are getting in and they're going to stop all the timber cutting.
- 35:30 Eventually," he said, "There'll be no timber here." And he worked out right, too. And I said, "Well, I'll go to Sydney and see if I can get on." So away I goes to Sydney. And they put me through the glasses test, glasses on and glasses off, the colour lights, and I done all this right. Anyway, I come home and I got word to say that I got a job on the railway. And I thought, "Beauty". Because the sawmills was good work and good money and that,
- 36:00 but still, there was more money on the railway. So I got on the railway and they said, "We'll put you here, Bill, and you can do holiday relief." So I started at Kyogle. There was four men in the gang, a ganger. And as each one went on holidays, I would take his place, and eventually, when he'd finished, another gang, halfway up towards the mountains, up here, and I'd go to their gang and
- 36:30 I'd work their gang. Up this way, of course, when you got up in the bush, I had to cross the river a few times to come home. So I said I'd have to get myself a motorbike. So I got myself a motorbike. An Aerial Red Hunter. And I used to ride my motorbike up, and I'd camp up there in the bush on the side of the line. I had a mate up there, we had a tent up there. We'd be from here to the wall off this railway line,
- 37:00 We'd have out tent and our motorbike there and we'd camp the night there and stay there. Weekend, we'd come home. I'd come home. And I'd go out of a weekend. We had a big fuel stove then, it was a combustion stove, and I had to go out and cut wood, with my crook hand and all. I couldn't use a chainsaw, because I was frightened of holding a chainsaw. I was frightened it would slip and cut my leg off. So I seen a couple of chaps out here
- 37:30 and I said, "Can I come out and cut a bit of wood around your paddocks, if you don't mind. It would save me and help my wife a bit." They said, "By all means, Bill. Come out." Old trees had fallen down and they were rotten. So I would go out and jack a railway jack under the end of them, and I had a saw and I'd saw it up and put it in a bit of a trailer thing I had there, and I'd come home, and put it in a shed down the back, and chop it up as best I could into pieces, so Mary could
- 38:00 put it in the stove, you know, the combustion stove. And that went on for fourteen years that I was on the railway. The furthest I went up was just over the border, into Queensland, New South Wales Railway, but into Queensland. I used to go up to there. But every weekend, I'd come home, I'd have to have to start cutting wood, you know. Our first little girl was born here and we were in a little unit up there.
- 38:30 A lady who owned the houses, she owned five houses from here right down. She said, "The first house that I get empty is yours. You're coming into it, because you look after everything nice." And I said, "Oh well, give it a go." Anyway, blow me down, the people that were living in this place, he was on the railway, and he said, "I'm going Bill. I've got to shift." I said, "Oh, are you?" He said, "Yes." So he said, "I'm going, Mrs Morris. I've got to shift."
- 39:00 I told Mary we might have a chance of getting a house. "Oh gee," she said, "That would be great." Anyway, they had a sale here and the way these people moved out, so we came down, it was pouring rain, drizzling rain, heavy, we were up in the little unit up there, and the baby was only little, so we had a cot...She said, "Now when they move out..." In them days when someone moved out of a place, some people would hop in,
- 39:30 and they'd take over the house, and you couldn't get them out. And I said, "Well, this is not going to happen. We're not going to have that." So they had the sale here, and the people went, the people were

pretty good here. It used to happen in some areas, but it didn't happen in our little town. I said to Mary, "Put the baby in the cot," and her and I carried her down in the cot. We had no other way to get her here. We carried her down the road here, the road out there was a gravel road them days,

40:00 and we carried the baby in the cot down and we put her in here. Then we went back up and got other things that we had up there. We didn't have a lot of furniture, but we had enough to keep us tidy. Anyway we got it down. And I said, "Well, I'll switch the light on." I switched the light on...nothing, I went in the room out there, nothing. When they had a sale, and people were going from one room to the other, and some galah [fool] would take the globes out.

40:30 So we had no light. I went up to the little shop, just up on the corner, and said, "I want a couple of candles." So I bought a packet of candles, and put it on a saucer and stuck them on and we had candles on the floor here, and Mary and I slept on the floor here with the baby. That's how we kicked off here.

Tape 4

00:30 **Thanks Bill. You grew up in Bankstown. What are your first memories of growing up?**

Well, our first memories of growing up was when we left school. When we were growing up we were only young...

01:00 The dairy was just down the road. A Mr Reed had a dairy. They had a lot of cows there and that sort of thing. We used to go down there and get a billy of cream. I think it was a shilling in them days. He'd fill a big billy full up of cream, and we'd bring it up home. Mum used to make the butter in them days. She'd put it in a churn and make the butter.

01:30 And then I used to go out with the rabbit traps. I'd go out over Black Charlie's Hill. They called it Black Charlie's Hill, and they still call it Black Charlie's Hill, because this chap, he was an Aboriginal man, and he lived up on this ridge in the hill, he had a little bit of a shack up there, and we used to go up and talk with him. He was a returned soldier, too, by the way.

02:00 He had his medals and that, but he was just in a little place on his own. And we'd go up the back gully and go to his...cabin, have a yarn with Charlie. He said, "Are you going to put some traps in, are you?" I said, "Yeah. Down the back there." We put the traps in, we had a hurricane lamp with us and we'd covered the traps all up. We might put in ten traps, twenty traps, but it was around about ten we used to put in. And we'd sit there, and we'd hear the rabbits get caught, and go straight down the track we'd go,

02:30 get them out, skin them, put them in a bag ready to take them home. We used to pull all the traps up about nine o'clock. Mum would say, "Now, don't you be late, you boys." She'd worry that snakes might get us or something. And we'd take all the rabbits down, give Charlie a rabbit or two. He used to like a rabbit, we'd give him a rabbit and then we'd go down home.

03:00 Oh, we used to do things like that. Black-berrying. We used to go black-berrying out on the flat. We'd take a sheet of iron and load a sheet of iron on the blackberry bushes, and walk out on a sheet of iron into the middle of the bushes so we could get the blackberries. Otherwise, you couldn't get into the middle ones, and the middle ones would all be the best, and we'd be unable to get into them. Of course, if you had a pair of slippers on, or a pair of sand shoes, in them days, you were well to do. We used to manage to

03:30 get a pair of sand shoes or something, and we'd go in. And we used to sell them. We used to get nine pence for a billy can. We'd go round and people would buy them off us. We'd get the big cans and we'd take it round, we'd get them. Dad was out at a place called Kentucky. It was out near where Milperra Bridge is now, only up the river a bit. We used to go out to Milperra Bridge,

04:00 half a dozen of us, young fellows, and we'd dive off the bridge when the tide was coming in, and we'd swim up a few miles up. We would get out in the channel and we'd swim up...We could swim alright, And we'd go up to Kentucky and get some watermelons from the melon growers up there, and sit down and have a feed of water melon. And then in the evening we'd go back home. They used to always say to us, "No, no sharks here.

04:30 Don't worry about them." Anyhow, one day we were out at Kentucky, and a young lady walked out, having a swim, screamed out. A shark had her. Took both her arms off. A young girl called Beryl Moran. The sharks had got her, took her arms. Anyhow, she got ashore, and they took her to hospital and she survived. She would be a very elderly lady today, but she had did survive the accident.

05:00 We never went no more there. We said, "The sharks can have it". So we signed a pledge with them, if they don't come up in our dressing shed, we won't go down there. So we don't go near the sharks today. I keep away from them. We used to go down to Bankstown. I was in the bike club down there, we had a cycle racing track down there. Canterbury, Bankstown....Canterbury had a big board track. It was a big wooden track down there.

- 05:30 Saucer track. We used to go up high on the saucer and cut down on them, and race. We used to go down there every Friday night, or so. Lakemba Bike Club used to come down. And my eldest brother used to come down. He was a good bike rider, and we used to race on the track there. Oh, we had a few falls and a few scratches and a few splinters in us. It was good. I used to go down
- 06:00 to the army, of course. I went out down to the army when I was sixteen, of course. But while I was younger, I used to go up to the butchers of a weekend. The butchers shop was just up from our place. George Stanton had the butchers shop there, and I'd get the basket on the handlebars of the bike, and I'd deliver the meat for him. He used to give me a few bob. I think it was five shilling or something I used to get off him.
- 06:30 That was a good enough fare to the pictures. I'd go to the pictures. And it was only sixpence for a hair cut them days. Get a haircut. Keep ourselves...Dad used to always say, "Keep yourselves polished up. Don't look like an Arab." We'd always be as tidy as we could. We'd go to the flicks and come home. There were seven boys in the family, and we had to help Mum. Mum had a lot of things to do.
- 07:00 So we used to wash up, wipe up, different ones would have different turns. Dad would say, "Righto, Bill, you and Gordon. You're washing up this week." And we'd wash up every night. If we didn't wash and wipe up, we never went to the pictures on the Saturday to see Tim Micks, or some of them blokes. They used to be in the cowboy pictures. If we didn't do the work that Dad allocated us to do, then Mum would tell him and that was it.
- 07:30 We had a garden, Dad had a garden. It was a fair backyard, but it wasn't that big, and we all had a garden each. Each bloke had his own garden and he was responsible for what was in that garden. Dad would say, "Righto, now put your cabbages in there." I'd put cabbages in there. And we'd have beetroot in another and something else in another. Whatever the season was, we'd have vegetables in there. So that's how we knew to keep our stock going.
- 08:00 The RSL [Returned and Services League] fellows used to come around the streets of Bankstown, sometimes there, and they'd have a loud speaker and they'd say, "All families of returned soldiers come down tonight," and they'd give you a cabbage, or whatever vegetable they had spare. The market gardeners used to bring them in, give them to them, and they'd take a sugar bag down
- 08:30 and they'd give you a vegetable. It was either cabbages or pumpkins or whatever. And that was the way they used to live. The government then....It was like the Depression years, the Depression was just starting to go out, and we'd left school right in the middle of it, sort of thing, and they'd get so many coupons. You used to get coupons, and they'd say so many coupons you could put it in
- 09:00 to the shop and you'd you'd get a shirt. So many coupons and you'd get a pair of trousers, but it took you a while to get it. I didn't smoke, my mate used to smoke. And I'd say, "I'll give you my cigarette ones." And he'd say, "Well, I'll give you two or three of my shirt ones." If you want to get a shirt, you could save it up. It might take you two or three months, but I'd get a shirt. Well, that's how we sort of worked in together with one another.
- 09:30 When the war broke out, those boys went to the war. But unfortunately, there was four or five of us used to go around together, and there was only two of us came back. They were taken in Singapore, and up through there. And two of them were...they were on a ship, and the Japanese had them battened down in the hatches and the Americans sunk the ship. They were taking them up as Prisoners of War to work in Japan, and they were lost.
- 10:00 So we lost a few of them there. But Bankstown itself was a good little place there. We used to play football. We had a game of soccer there. We used to play soccer. When we were young fellows, we used to have bonfires, we had a good bonfire night there. There was not much there, of course, on the block opposite to where we were.
- 10:30 The bonfire night, cracker night and that, we'd cut the trees down and we'd put a heap rubber tyres in the middle and put all the leaves and trees on top, cut the bush down. We used to go over there, because sometimes the kids would come along when the trees were starting to die, ready for bonfire night, they'd come along and put a match in her and get her alight before. So we used to get cunning, so we had a good dog, named Spot,
- 11:00 he was a decent sort of a beagle hound, and we'd have him over with us and we'd camp in the middle of the bonfire. Mum used to be in a litter of fits, because she reckoned if someone set it alight, we'd all get burned. We'd wake up to that, old Spot would see to that. If anyone come near the bonfire, he'd be at them. We used to camp over there, just for the night. We were only across the road. But we used to go to the pictures. There was a family that lived up from us.
- 11:30 There was about eight or ten in that family. We used to all go to the pictures. We had to walk through the bush to go to the pictures. And Dad used to say, "Now the pictures come out at eleven o'clock. I want you home here at quarter to twelve." That gave us time to walk back through the bush. And they'd say, "Now, look after these girls." The girls from around would go with us, and Mum would let them go with us.
- 12:00 So we would all go together to the pictures, and we would all come home, and we were right. That was our night to the pictures. But if you didn't come home by a certain time, they'd be looking for you. They'd come making sure you got home. But we had no trouble. We didn't cause any trouble or anything

like that. A couple of places down from us had a few fruit trees, and they had a cement gully part that ran right down through their place.

- 12:30 And we used to know the chap that lived there, and we'd say, "Can we slip down tonight and get a few peaches or something?" And he'd say, "Yep, go down the drain though, along the drain." The water was only about that wide when there was no water flowing, and we'd go down and get the plums or peaches. And we used to play soldiers in them days, as young fellows, and we had trenches dug. It was more like Tobruk than our backyard,
- 13:00 down the back part of it. We had trenches dug and we had parts in the trench where we would dig in the side of the bank, and we had boxes in there, and we'd put down some fruit and that sort of thing. And we'd get together and have a yarn, and go out and get rabbits and bring them home, cook the rabbits. We'd say to Mum, "We're cooking down the shed tonight, down the back tonight. We're not coming for tea." "Righto." So we had a couple of the great big camp ovens and
- 13:30 we put them down there, and cook, put a bit of dripping in and cook our cooked rations and all that sort of thing. Baked potatoes and all that. One of our favourites was the white ant nest. We'd dig a hole in them, and set her alight and get her going and put our baked potatoes in, and they'd bake up lovely and brown, and we used to roll them out when they'd be cooked. We used to do all that sort of thing, yeah. The Scouts? We used
- 14:00 to go over to Bass Hill, from Bankstown. It was Bass Hill over the river. And the Boy Scouts were there, and we were with the Boy Scouts, and we used to do all our scout work and all that sort of thing. Lots of things. We never had a dull moment as far as doing things. We were always on the go. My mate up there, he had a soft drink place,
- 14:30 I remember. We used to go there, and he'd go round in his truck of a Saturday delivering soft drinks. We'd go around with him and help him unload and all that sort of thing. There wasn't a lot that you could do, other than...in the bush part of it. We knew all the bush side of it. It was apart from going
- 15:00 out of a Saturday afternoon, when Dad was home, with the beagle hounds, and all that. There was a lot of shooting there, them days. Not many of the men used to go shooting. A couple of them had shotguns there, and they used to go out and we'd go out with them. And on the bike racing, we used to go down to the bike races. We used to go there. But Bankstown was fairly quiet. As my brother's, they used to be out...
- 15:30 My second eldest brother used to be out cutting wood and the timber out there. He would come home on the weekend. He would be home weekends. He would stack the timber, we'd help him. We had a sulky there, an old sulky. We took the seat part off it, a chap down on the farm near us there, he said, "Do you want this sulky?" We said, "Well, we haven't got a horse to put in it."
- 16:00 He said, "You can be the horse." I said, "Righto." So we took the seat part off it and we'd go down through the bush, pull the sulky with us, and we used to put a load of wood on it, and bring it back home. We'd chop it all up and bring it all up for Mum for the copper, under the copper when she used to boil the copper up to do the washing. We used to cut all our own wood up.

So what is a sulky?

- 16:30 It's a horse and sulky [light buggy]. You'd put a horse in the sulky. You can see them at the show, going around at the show. The chap sitting up on the seat, and the lady driving around together with the horse. That's what they used to call a horse and sulky. They had seats and the two wheels, and they had a lamp each side, for a night time, when you were out of a night-time with the horse, you'd put the lights on. You'd have carbine lights, or you'd have ordinary lights.
- 17:00 **So you pulled this sort of thing along without the horse?**
- Yeah, we used to, yeah. We had no horse. We said, "We're the horse." "There's enough of you blokes." There were seven of us. Some of them were only little blokes, so we'd let them stay home. But we'd take the cart down the road, Dad would take the seat off. We had no horses, them days, of course. We had no room for horses.
- 17:30 We said we'd have the sulky. Righto. So we'd put the box of wood on it. Sometimes we'd have a cross cut saw, and we'd get on the end of the saw, one on each end, and we'd saw the blocks up about that big, and take them home and then we'd split them with the axes, clean them up. So that's how we used to do that, to get the wood in. But you had to do that, or otherwise...The coal. They used to come around with coal, in those days, too.
- 18:00 The coalman would come around and he'd have bags of coal. But if you put coal in your in your fire, it went through your house, it was like an engine. You'd have all stinking coal dust through your house. We couldn't have that on. No. Because they had coppers in the back yard in those times, big round brass coppers, you know. They had those. And on the stove inside, we had a big urn, about four or five gallons.
- 18:30 It had a great brass tap on it, coming out off it, we'd screw them off and clean all inside, put it back on, and on the stove, and when we wanted hot water, the urn would be boiling all the time. We'd have him boiling. And I remember when we were home, Mum was expecting a baby there then, and I was, I think

I was about four or five, and she said,

- 19:00 "You'd better go and see Miss Eldridge, Bill." And Miss Eldritch was a lady who used to come around with them, a midwife. The doctors were in Bankstown, it was a fair drive into drove into there and we had no car or anything. So we went up to Miss Eldridge, she lived up over the paddock, about two miles away.
- 19:30 So away I'd go over the paddock to Miss Eldridge, and I'd go to the house and I'd sing out to her, I'd say, "Well, Mum said you'd better come over, Miss Eldridge." She'd say, "Oh, are you expecting a little sister, are you?" We always reckoned we'd have to get a sister, but we never had any luck. Miss Eldridge said, "Have you got the copper boiling? You got the urn boiling?" "Yes Miss Eldridge." "Put some more wood on, have it boiling. Tell her I'll be over in about an hour." "Righto."
- 20:00 And we used to say, "What the bloody hell do they want the copper boiling for?" We didn't know whether they were going to boil the kids and make lobsters out of them. "Hell," we'd say to ourselves. We'd come home, we'd say to Mum, "Miss Eldridge said she'll be over in an hour." "Have you got the copper boiling?" Mum would say. "Yes." "And you keep the wood on the fire." "Yes, Mum. Righto." And then eventually Miss Eldridge would come down and we'd be sitting out the back, us boys. "You boys wait out the back there." "Yes, Ma'am, we'll be out here."
- 20:30 And then we'd hear her squealing and squawking, and we'd say, "Ha ha! We've got one! Who have we got this time?" "You've got another little brother." "Oh God," we'd say. "Not another one." Anyway, we'd say, "What are you going to call him, Mum?" "Oh, we don't know yet." And then he'd come along, and we'd have him for a couple of years, and another bloke would come along. "What are you going to call him?" "Oh, we don't know yet."
- 21:00 I said, "We'll run out of names soon, if you keep going." Anyway, we used to laugh. And then we'd be listening to the cricket. Don Bradman [famous Australian cricketer] would be playing. Him and Bert Oldfield and all the old cricketers. We only had crystal sets in them days, you know. You didn't have wireless and things like we've got here. "Now quiet," Dad would say. "Quiet, you boys."
- 21:30 Don Bradman's coming out to play." And this would be night time, we were supposed to have been in bed, but we'd sneak out of bed and be out. We'd get the crystal set and you'd put the headpiece on. And Joe Blow [somebody] would be beside me. "Who's scoring?" We all wanted to know the score. And the old man got fed up with it one night. He said, "I'll fix you raggers," he said. "I'll cut her in half." So we had four, what we could listen to.
- 22:00 So he got to work on her and cut her in half, and there was four of us could sit then, and we could listen to the cricket. We'd sit there listening to the cricket, and jam our ears with cotton wool, when we'd sit there. And Don Bradman would be batting, and Bert Oldfield would be flogging them, and that'd be good. We'd be listening to the cricket. Gee, that was great. And then a kid came along one day and he was walking up the footpath, and he had a
- 22:30 little wireless set in his hand. And I said, "Hey, what's that?" Archie Plethora his name was. I said, "What's that, Archie?" He said, "It's a wireless." "Ah, wireless? You've got no wires on it. Where's the wires?" "You don't have wires on this one," he said. "Oh jeez," I said, "Give us a look at it." And we run our hands over the top and underneath, no wires. I said, "How does it go?" He said, "We put a battery in it." That's the first time we had ever seen a wireless.
- 23:00 Oh God. All the kids in the village were around, magic it was. How can this bloke talk when he's not hooked up to anything. We couldn't make it out. But it was...Talk about laugh. The old man on the crystal set [older style radio set], and then someone would come in and whack the table and the little cat's whisker would come out. It would have a little thing on it, like a Primus pricker, and he'd set it on the crystal.
- 23:30 "That's right. She'll be right. Don't make a noise." Then some galah would hit the table. You can imagine it. As we grew up, of course, we had homework to do and we'd have the hurricane lamps. We'd have about four lamps. We had a table from here to there long. And we were down the table trying to do our homework. We had the lamps, we had the thing in the middle of them like that.
- 24:00 And they'd light it and let it fizz up and then she'd light and it was a good light then. We could all see. But if someone knocked the crystal set, oh Jesus, that was a cardinal sin. You got jailed. Especially if the cricket was on. We used to sit there, and we'd often laugh about it, how it used to go. And we had a wireless.... It wasn't a wireless, a music it was.
- 24:30 A little round thing with a diameter about that and about that long, and you'd wind it up and you'd play it on and you could hear the music and that. But she was a funny organization, when you used to get to it, you know.

So your Dad, what was he like as a bloke?

Oh, good. Oh, he was all right. He used to be good on the engines. He would go away on the engines, you know.

- 25:00 Dad was a New Zealander, actually. Mum was an Australian lady. She came from Albury, down on the

Murray River there. And her father was a policeman. He was a policeman. They came up to Petersham in Sydney, and he was a policeman there at the big park, walk around Sydney. He used to walk around the big park. And he often used

- 25:30 to talk to us, old uncle Charlie used to talk to us. He said, "The biggest hiding I ever got down there." I said to him one day, "Did anyone ever give you a belt up?" "Yes," He said, "I got the biggest hiding I ever got, one time." "How did you get that?" "Oh," he said, "women took to me with their hatpins." They used to wear the hatpins through their hats, in them days. "Jeez," he said, "they gave me a flogging. They were sticking hat pins into him.
- 26:00 But he used to be all down the Hyde Park in Sydney, and walk all down around there. They had a house in Petersham, and we used to go down when we were kids, down to their place. And Mum's sisters were down at Hurlstone Park. One lived at Hurlstone Park, and one lived at Canterbury. We used to go down there. And Jim Kelly. they lived down there, and their name was Kelly.
- 26:30 But Dad went back to New Zealand. Only once he went back to see his family. He had a lot of friends there and that. But he was too tied up with his engine driving and all that to get away on his own. We had a good life there, we were all together, and we had a lot of fun. But other boys came along. They were younger. Bert, my youngest brother...
- 27:00 We'd all been to the war, and he said, "Well, you blokes have all been to the war, I'm going." So he joined up, went to Korea. But he survived, he came back. He lives down the coast somewhere now. I forget what they call it. Down towards the other side of Coffs Harbour. He's on the beach down that way. They live down there. The other brothers are
- 27:30 all over the place. Wally's at Hurstville, and Ray's at Bankstown, he stayed at Bankstown. Bankstown was a good place there. There were times when the Communist Party...We remember, we were kids, and the Communist Party used to be on there. And the "New Guards", as they used to call them. They were a different mob. And they used to have fights and riots with one another, you know. We used to keep out of that. We'd keep away from the town. We never went down there.
- 28:00 But Condal Park, it was good at Condal Park. It was a good little place. I went back there once, when I came back from the war, but I couldn't settle there much. I had a couple of days...I went down one Anzac Day and had a march with the boys and got together and had a yarn. A couple of times we went. But it was too far from here to go, the train goes from here now. It goes from here in the morning at half past ten and gets down into Sydney
- 28:30 at half past ten or so at night time, and you wouldn't want to be wondering around down there at that time of night. Unless you had a gun in your pocket or something. I wouldn't be in that. So we don't go down much now. We have a good RSL here in, the boys here, a good mob. We get together...

Your Dad and discipline? What was the discipline of the household?

Oh, pretty strict, the old fellow.

- 29:00 Oh yes, you had to be dressed decent, when you went out anywhere. You were dressed tidy. If you had a haircut, you had a haircut decent. You wouldn't have hair the way some of the young blokes have it today, not the way the fashion is today. They have the long hair and that sort of thing. You wouldn't have it in them days. You'd just go down and get a haircut. It was only sixpence. It wasn't much to get a haircut in them days. We'd go to school,
- 29:30 we'd buy a meat pie and a chester coke for thruppence. You wouldn't get a meat pie for thruppence now days. We used to go around and bottles....Blokes would have a bottle of drink, soft drink, and they'd throw it away, and there'd nearly be a fight to get it. You got them bottles, you got thruppence each on the bottle, or pennies on the bottle, we'd take it down to the shops and get the money for it. That'd be good. That would nearly be your fare to the pictures on the Saturday.
- 30:00 So that's the way we used to get a few bob that way. Dad was very good. Very fair with us. We got on well with him. Even though he was away, we all had our jobs to do. If he said, "Now, this is your garden," and such. It might be about half as big as this room across, and we'd have our garden, and he'd bring the plants home and say, "Now, pop them in while I'm away." And would put them in. We all had our garden.
- 30:30 It saved us buying vegetables and all of that. We grew our own, more or less. We had to grow them.

And your Dad, when you got in trouble, would he give you the strap or the belt?

Oh, he'd straighten you up. Mum used to give us a clout with the Singer sewing machine belt. She'd whip that off. And like the cat of nine tails that would be.

- 31:00 She used to say, "Come in here, you boys. You've been playing up," or something, and we'd get a clout around the legs with the machine belt. She'd put it back on again a couple of seconds afterwards. We always paid our dues when we got caught if we done anything wrong. We had a pretty good life. A lot of fun. We made our own fun, them days. We all had billy carts.
- 31:30 We'd get a box and put a set of wheels on the back, and a board out the front and a set of wheels on the

front, and we used to go up on top of the hill....while it was gravel. When they bitchemened it, we couldn't go out them days. But when it was gravel road, we used to go out on the hill above our place, we'd go right up the hill. Give us a shove off on the billy cart and we'd hang onto the wheels and put our feet up and away we'd go down the hill. We used to have races with each other, all the fellows around the village.

32:00 We used to have fun like that. We'd make our own billy carts. August was always a good month. August was a windy month, so we'd make kites then, we'd all have kites. We'd go up on the hill and fly the kites. And pinch the old man's fishing line, probably, and put her on a wheel and let her go way up. That kept a bit of fun. We just all made kites

32:30 I had a young fellow come to me the other day, he said, "Can you make a kite, Bill?" I said, "Yeah. No trouble at all." He said, "We want to fly a kite, and we don't know how to make a kite." They used to go down and buy them, they had plastic ones there. I said, "Oh, I'll make one with a couple of sticks of wood." So I got a couple of sticks of wood and tied it up and put paper all around it, and he was happy as Larry. I made his kite up for him. But it was no trouble to make a kite. They don't seem to want to do that,

33:00 the young fellows today. There are plenty of yards here, where the fellows have got a good yard, and young fellows could have a good garden. And if went around, if you grew a few carrots and a few cucumbers and things like that, you'd sell them like smoke if you went around here with them in a basket and asked someone to buy them. I said to the young bloke, "Why don't you grow a vegetable garden?" "Oh, I'm not going to be in that." But we used to always have vegetables.

33:30 Grow them. We had to do it.

Just coming back to the billy carts. What were some of the accidents or crashes that you had?

Well, sometimes you'd be going down a hill and you used to turn on the corner, and if you'd go down the hill and you'd have to turn the corner, and you'd swing her a bit quick, she'd go straight over. Of course, there was no crash helmets then, either. We had more bruises on us than a....

34:00 I had a good big billy cart. Some boys, the young blokes, they'd get a pair of pram wheels and put them on, and by jeez, they'd go. They'd put the pram wheels on and put the axel through and put a split pin through it. They'd be bigger wheels. We used to have the round steel wheels on bilycarts. The steel ones. They'd take a bit of winding up, but when they wound up, they'd go. But the pram wheels, oh jeez, you could go on them.

34:30 We had a hill there, Lancelot Street, it was a fairly long road, and when there was no horse and carts, when the horse and carts weren't there, looking, we'd have one bloke on the corner and he'd keep nit for us, and the boys would get up top and we'd race down there, and as we got to the corner, we'd swing around the corner, to take the corner, and there was often a crash on the corner. You'd never know. The old man would have to get the ambulance kit out. He was a First Aid man.

35:00 He used to go to the football, and he'd be on the line. He had a little box and he'd do all of those things. He'd get the kit out and patch us all up.

So why did bitumen change it?

Well, the carts would go well on the bitumen. On the gravel road, it was a bit rocky, it wasn't so nice and smooth. You could get a wind up. Even on the road out here, we used to play when we came up here,

35:30 we used to have billy cart to race down the road here. I started the bike club up here, when I came here, and we used to race from here to Lismore and back. Or from here to Ballina. We'd have road races to Ballina. We'd have five-mile races out along there. That was a short race. We had a good bike club here with good fellows in it, young fellows.

36:00 We had good bikes. We had a good bike shop down the town here. I used to get them down, and we used to start near the baths, coming into town, the swimming baths there. We used to race from here to Casino...Not quite into Casino, we'd turn around at the meat works and come back. We had good races. We used to go out to Wiangaree, which is out along the road out here at about ten miles.

36:30 And we'd have a twenty-mile race, ten out and ten back. It was a good club. And then I had the boys at the football. We used to go down to the football, at the oval down here. In the half interval, when the boys would go off for half interval for a break, we'd go on the track, on the bike track. It was an ash track them days. We used to get the ash from the sawmills out there, and put the ash round

37:00 and we had a big blade, what we used to call a crow blade for cutting the timber, and they were worn out, so we used to put a horse on the front of it, and he used to drag it around the track. It was nearly the width of this room across, and we'd drag it around and make a good track. And we'd have a five-mile scratch race during half-time. We used to bet on it. People would bet on us. And we used to go down, and by jeez, we used to have a good mob.

37:30 I was always pretty well back. They'd have me well back. I was a fairly good rider. Nothing special. But I used to race there and I used to race down at Casino. We'd have a race track there, and we'd race down there. The only trouble at Casino is that it was a dog track, too. And down there, they had a barbed wire fence around the oval. It was a four stand

38:00 barbed wire fence, and you'd get a bloke up near the fence and you put your knee out and he hit the fence. Oh, we jacked up a bit on that. We went down to race there, just the same.

So all that cycling was post war?

Yeah, post war stuff. When we came up to here, that was after the war, when we came here. But Bankstown, we used to do the same things at Bankstown. We had the track there. A good track at Bankstown.

38:30 We used to race around down there. The boys from Lakemba would come up. And then we had the Goulburn to Sydney race. That was a good road race. If you finished under five hours, you got a medal. A gold sort of medal about that big.

Tape 5

00:34 **Coming back to your growing up years, you talked earlier about how your Mum would get the cream and make butter. How would you refrigerate things and keep things cold?**

Blocks of ice. That's all we had.

01:00 They were about that big and that square. We'd used to go up with the billy cart, get a block of ice, put it in the billycart and bring it down home. We had a safe, and put the block of ice in the safe, and put bags around the safe to keep it moist. That's how we used to keep things cool. That was our ice chest then.

And the rabbits and stuff that you caught,

01:30 **did anyone accidentally tread on the rabbit traps?**

No. I made sure of that. We were pretty cluey. We knew where the trap was. We didn't have to mark them, we knew where the trap was.

How did you keep the rabbit meat for a period of time?

Oh, we'd bring it home and Mum would put it in on the blocks of ice.

02:00 It would keep cool there. When there was seven of us, Mum would make a rabbit pie. It looked like the deck of a ship when you'd see it. She had a great dish on this end of the table with rabbit stew or whatever in it, and the same on that end. One wasn't big enough for the mob, so she's make two, one for each end. And she would have a jar, a cup in the middle, to stop it sinking, and that would go right over the dish.

02:30 And that would make the two. If we cooked a rabbit, she would cut the back legs and we'd cook the back legs. We might have three or four rabbits, and we'd put them all on at once. That's how we used to cook them. The ice was all right. It kept it cold pretty well, especially if it was wrapped with the bag. The ice chest would hold it, and you'd wet the bag over the side, and it would hang over.

03:00 Like a cockies [bird] cage, you know. You'd hang it over the side and keep the bag wet. And the cold air would keep it pretty good. Yeah, she was alright.

Your Mum made rabbit pie. What other things did she make?

She used to make all sorts of cooking. But rabbits were the main thing. We used to shoot hares and bring the great big hares home.

03:30 I remember when I first went out with Dad, I was only knee high to a grasshopper and we went out with a shotgun and bailed a hare over. He said, "Righto, Bill. You carry the hare." He didn't have the sugar bag with him, so here I am carrying the hare like this, and his ears and head dragging along the ground. I was only knee high myself, and I carried this hare. We got him home. And then we got a sugar bag. We cut the sugar bag in half,

04:00 put some strings through it, or rope, and sling it over the shoulder, and then it was alright. We'd carry them home. We called them a Bundaberg Portmanteau, because it was Bundaberg sugar bag. Put her on and away we'd go. Mum used to make brawn out of that. She'd make lovely brawn. She'd get the hare and cut all the meat off

04:30 and do it all up, and she'd make block of beautiful brawn. She'd cut it out of the hare. What you buy in the shops today. It is like a meat that you make, you cut it, slice it. She used to make it nice and cold,

05:00 and we used to take brawn with us, when we went to school, when we were kids. Mum used to make that, and we used to have that with us.

Because your Mum would be cooking for nine people?

Yes. There would be nine of us. Dad might be away three days or so, then he'd be home two or three days,

05:30 and then he'd have to go away again, he was away on the engine again. We learned to cook a bit ourselves. We'd cook a feed. All the boys. We didn't have any sisters. We were hoping to God we'd have a sister, but we were never lucky enough. We'd say to Mum, "Go on Mum, get us a sister." And Mum would just grin. All the others were born at the house,

06:00 and I was born at Wattles Private Hospital at Canterbury Road, Bankstown. Why I was taken down there, I don't know. But I was no different to the other roosters [other children]. I was born at the Wattles. It's not there now, of course. It's gone, but it was Wattle's Private Hospital.

So your Mum was a strong woman?

Oh yes. We wouldn't let her get out and do any of the yard work. We would make Mum stay in for that.

06:30 We'd handle all the wood. We'd keep the wood up to her...When I went away to the war, I was doing a bit of bike riding in those days. I put my bike, I had a Speedwell bike, I hung it up in the shed. We had the thing rims on them, racing bikes. And I said, "Mum, I'll go to the war. Look after this bike.

07:00 Put a little bit of oil in the middle, where the axle went. Pull the cap up and put a few drops of oil in and spin her and she'd go out into the axle." I said, "Look after that bike, Mum, won't you?" "Yep." "And if I don't come back, give it to the first kid that comes down the street." I said, "No good having it hanging here. Get rid of it." "All right," she said. The first thing I said, when I came home from the war, the first time...She said, "Come down, Bill.

07:30 "Have a look at your bike. I've spun the wheel a few time." I roared laughing. She didn't get what I told her. She'd put the oil in the top and she'd spin the wheel. "Your bike's alright." I said, "Oh? Is it?" I said, "I don't think I'll be riding it yet a while. We've got another job to finish. And when we finish the other job, I might ride a bit.

08:00 She was good. We had a couple of ducks down the back, down the back of the yard in the back part. It was only about as long as our yard here, probably. We had ducks. We used to have duck eggs, and they were good too. We had a cedar tree in the back yard. We had a big cedar tree in the back yard, and we'd sit out under the cedar tree in summer time. At Christmas time, we'd all have dinner out under the cedar tree. We'd all get out there and

08:30 put the tables up out there. It was good. We'd have boxing, sparing fights out there. We'd put the gloves on, we'd get few gloves, put them on. Bit of a blue. Bit of a friendly battle with the boys. But we never ever fought or anything, among ourselves. We'd have a bit of a laugh at times, but we wouldn't do anything. Mum used to go down to her church of a Sunday.

09:00 She liked to go to church. We had a little church not far from our place, and she used to go down there. And Dad used to say, "If you boys want to go to church, you can go to church if you want to." He never forced us to go to church. But we had good mates there.

Did you go to church?

Not very often. We knew all the people there. We went now and again, but Mum was a Roman Catholic.

09:30 Mum used to go to the Roman Catholic Church. Dad was Church of England. And us boys were all bought up Church of England. But Mum used to go to her church, and we'd say, "Are you going up to church, Mum?" Before the war, I saved up a few quid off the bread cart, and my mate

10:00 down the street had an old T Model Ford [first mass production car]. An old man he was. He said, "You can have my Ford, Bill." I laughed at him, I said, "Oh, go on." He said, "No, you can have her. Go for a drive in her." So I said, "Jeez. This will do me." I got in the old T Model, you pushed the thing up and you got the gears on her, and away we'd go. I said, "This is all right." And so my mate and I said, "Well, we've got the old T Model Ford. She'll do us."

10:30 So Mum wanted to go to church one Sunday morning. We said, "Take you down to church, Mum?" And she was, "Oh, no." I said, "Ahh, we'll take you down." Dad wanted to go down to bowls. He was going down to bowls. He said, "Don't drive me right in where they are, in the old Ford, will you, Bill? Just drop me in the front. I'll walk in." I said, "Yes, Dad. You're right." And we were sitting up in the ford and old Dad's there.

11:00 We get to the gate, straight in, round around to the front and we pulled up. He nearly had some vital cancer by the time he got out of it. Anyhow, popped in. And when he got home that night, he said, "You beggar, you!" I said, "What have I done now, Dad?" He said, "You should have dropped me at the gate. All the blokes were talking about me coming in the car." So we takes Mum up to church, and we pulled up right at the gate.

11:30 But the old T Model, she was a good one. I still had her going when I went to the war, but I left her with my mate. I said, "You can have her mate." "Oh, no. I don't want her." I said, "Yeah, go on. She's right." We used to chuck our rabbit traps in the back and away we'd go over the hill and set our rabbit traps. This was good, save walking, carrying the traps.

Was petrol expensive?

Petrol. Yes. I don't know what it was them days.

- 12:00 I don't think it was too bad. I'm not real sure. I wouldn't know. We never worried. We just used to go down, fill her up, and she'd be going, chug, chug chug. We used to have fun in her. I've still got a hundred and twenty traps down in the yard, in my shed. Dingo traps, too. The big dingo traps, too. We used to set traps, but it's prohibited today. You are not allowed to set traps today. But handy to have.
- 12:30 You never know. You might be glad you had those traps one of these days if things get tough. They killed nearly all the rabbits, but there's plenty back here now. There's a few coming back. But I've got a stun gun out there, and she stops them. I don't need the traps, I get the stun gun out.

So just coming back to the car. Driving it. Was a double clutch, or how would you drive it?

- 13:00 Now, you've got me. We just used to just put her into gear and pull the...what's her name down on her, and it had all marks on it. That used to give her the juice, and she'd rattle. It was all up on the handle parts.

So there was no feet?

The foot pedal there was a break pedal, on the old T Model. She was all right. We'd keep the spark plugs clean on her.

- 13:30 We'd brush them off and keep them nice and shiny so they wouldn't black up. Oh, we went everywhere. We were going out to the flat, one day, trapping, and we were going along, roaring along, and all of a sudden....clunk. And the what's her name belt was broken, and she was roaring like hell, and we were getting nowhere with her. The fan belt broke. So we got out.
- 14:00 We got something and we put it on her and we roped it together and she got us into home, into town, and that's where we got a belt and put it on her, a what's her name belt. It was a good old T Model Ford. When I came back from the war, my mate was gone, and my other two cobblers who used to go with me, they were gone. I said to the chap, up in his father's yard,
- 14:30 he said, "What do we do with the Ford, Billy?" I said, "You can have it. I don't want her." So I never bothered anymore. I don't know where it ended up. And then I came up here to live and I haven't been down there since. They probably sold it to someone else, or give it to someone. No, that was the only car...I learned to drive on a Citroen, a little Citroen car with a little back dickie seat on the back.
- 15:00 I used to drive around on that. I went and got my licence on that, before I went to the war. I got my licence on that. She was a good little car. Only a little single seater thing. And we used to go around on that, every now and again. But I left that to one of my brothers, I told him he could have that while I was away. But I don't know what happened to it. When I came back, I didn't worry.

So you bought the Citroen?

Yeah, the old Citroen.

- 15:30 They were cheap them days. They didn't cost much money.

How much is not much?

I've forgotten what it was, really. It was only a few quid [pounds]. We used to get a few bob. When the storm was on, after a big storm, there was all paddocks around Bankstown then, and we'd go out with a billy can, and it was no trouble to get a billy can full of mushrooms.

- 16:00 We would sell the mushrooms, you know, and we'd keep the money. We'd put it in a tin or something. Oh, the things you could do. When the blackberries were on, we'd sell blackberries. We used to go out and pick them. They were there for everybody to pick them, but there weren't that many people to pick them. The blackberries were just growing wild. But mushrooms were good. But you can't get
- 16:30 mushrooms much today, unless you grow them. You go out in the paddocks today where we used to grow them, and once they fertilize the paddock, you don't get the mushrooms. The mushrooms don't come out. The fertilizer seems to stop them. I don't know why. But we used to go out....to the golf links here and you could get a billy full of mushrooms, no trouble at all. But you won't today. Once they fertilize it to keep the grass nice,
- 17:00 you don't get the mushrooms. The mushrooms don't come there.

Back to the cars. And before the Citroen, you then bought the Model T Ford?

We had the old T before the Citroen. We had them not far apart, really. When we were trapping and that sort of thing.

Was that the family car, the Ford?

Yes. That was the old T Model. Mum and them didn't get in it much.

17:30 The boys handled it. No steel elements, them days....Bob's your uncle [no problems].

And the push bike? Today we've got gears and front handle breaks. What did it look like?

Oh, we had fixed wheels. We had no back pedal breaks or none of that business. We just put our feet in the stirrups and pulled the clips up.

18:00 Underneath our boots, we had the two leather straps that big, and they'd go over the pedals so you couldn't slip out. And you strapped yourself in and away you went. If you crashed, you rode her out.

And gears?

Oh, the gears did come in eventually, but I never road with gears. We always road with the fixed wheel and handbrakes on each handlebar, on each handlebar we had a brake. Front and back break.

18:30 We never had gears on the tracks here. We just rode straight out.

And the handlebars. Were the rams horns?

They came out like that, and then down that way. I got a photo that is in there somewhere, that I can show you somewhere, of what we used to race with. They were good handlebars. We used to get down on them. We had leather gloves fitted to there. Some used to have arm guards on their elbows,

19:00 but I didn't have any of that. I just had the what's her name. After I've done about twenty miles, she started to ache a bit here then, through hanging onto the handlebars. This was alright, but this hand, I've got no grip there, you see. And it used to hang onto me a little bit, if I got in the rough. Twenty miles was alright. But once I got over twenty miles, she ached a bit.

Were you racing pushbikes before the war?

19:30 Yeah, we used to race at Bankstown, at the Bankstown Oval. Lakemba Club. They had a good club. Lakemba Bike Club used to come up. Lidcombe Bike Club used to come to Bankstown and we lived at Bankstown so we used to go down and race there. We used to play football there in the football season and bike racing in the bike-racing season. We used to have it there.

So just in respect to the bike racing,

20:00 **were you interested or did you even hear about things like the Tour De France [famous bike race]?**

Oh yes. We had two good riders in Bankstown named Strong. We had two of them. I can't think of the two brothers. They were the Strong Brothers and they used to ride overseas, too, from Bankstown. But we didn't because we used to race at the track. That's all.

20:30 Trophies and different things we used to get. It was something to do for sport. It was our sport, more or less. I went to Bankstown North for a while, but when we got older we used to go to Bankstown School. Well, when we first went to kindergarten at Bankstown, at Condal Park, we had a big shed...That's what it was and we used to call it the Pig and Whistle.

21:00 And that's where we went to school. All the kids started there. When you were six years old. It was only two streets up there and we used to go there. And all the kids that went to Bankstown started there and then went to the big school. We went down to Bankstown and did fifth class, sixth class and then go into the high school. But when you turned fourteen you had to leave.

21:30 You couldn't say, "I'm going to go next year and I'm going to do this." They'd say, "No. you can't, you're fourteen." You have to leave and that was it, whether you liked it or not. Some of the kids today might have liked it. We were just as educated, I think, as some of the blokes who stayed at school today until they were eighteen, some of them. Some of them have questions they ask me, and I help the young blokes. I'm no wild man or nothing.

22:00 Oh, when I done my railway time here, I done fourteen years here, but while I was on the railway, I studied up. The doctors here....There were three doctors here and I finished up a radiographer at the hospital, for twenty years, until I retired.

22:30 I didn't go to the university to, more or less, be a top class radiographer but I studied up. There were two doctors in Lismore named Pook and Bell, and they were very good. They were the only radiographers here in them days. And when you are on the railway, if you study up each year, they have examinations on the railway for medical and First Aid,

23:00 St Johns Ambulance, and we used to meet down here on the railway station here, twice a month, and any of the fettlers or any of the men on the lines, if you went and done the course, they'd put you through exams, the doctors would put you through exams, and it was pretty tough. You had to know what you were doing. They said to me one day, "What about being in it, Bill? And I said, "Oh,

23:30 I don't know whether I'd do any good at it or not. Oh come on. Be in it." I said, "Alright." I said. See, if you passed, you got a first class ticket for your wife and your family. I said, "This is alright. We can sit up in first class and think I am King Billy." So I used to come in, if I am working on the line out of town

here, I'd come in of the night and do the exams and study up and that. And there was a good ambulance officer here named

- 24:00 Arthur Dodd. He was a marvellous man and he could have been a doctor I think and he was good. He used to put us through the test, and if you didn't know it, you never got it. I done this for...Well, I was twenty years on the railway, and then they advertised in the paper....We had a doctor here, he was a radiographer and he had one leg. I don't know whether he was a Dutchmen,
- 24:30 or what he was, but he wasn't an Australian doctor, and he was at Kyogle Hospital, and he was going to retire, so the hospital here advertised for someone to be radiographer and operating theatre assistant. So Mary said, "Why don't you put in for it?"
- 25:00 She said, "You can do it". It was a bit hard on me shovelling blue metal all day and putting in sleepers, and up on the big bridges. My hand used to play up a bit, and I thought. I made an application to the hospital. I went down to Port Macquarie on holiday, and I got off the train at Casino to come up to here and the bloke come up and he said, "You've got the job."
- 25:30 You've got the job." I looked at him, and said, "What do you mean you've got the job?" He said, "You've got the radiographer's job at Kiogal Hospital." I said, "Oh you are pulling my leg." He said, "No. You've got to go for an interview." Of course Kyogle, everybody knew what was going on in the town. I didn't know anything, because I was on holiday. Anyway I come home and there is a letter from here to go up to the hospital to be interviewed and so a test and that.
- 26:00 So I went up and the hospital said, "You'll be notified", and a fortnight later I got notified that I got the job. So I started up there. I had the Saint John's Ambulance certificates because I passed all my exams down here, over the years, on the railway. I started there in the x-ray department and I finished up in charge of the x-ray department,
- 26:30 and I used to go to the operating theatre, in the morning to help in the theatre, as what you would call the 'gofa' [as in 'go for']. "Go for this Bill or go for that", if someone wanted something. And the doctors were operating and if something dropped on the floor it was my job to pick it up and put it straight in the steriliser. It was sterilized and give back to them. But
- 27:00 I done all the x-rays there, and I studied the x-rays up, and a doctor from Lismore, they used to send things up here. And the doctor here was a very good friend of mine. He was in the war. He was a pilot and he was shot down over Germany during the war. Doctor Binny, and he helped me, and I took home the x-ray book every night. I took it home here and sat out here. It's not....just say the x-ray of an arm. It is not just
- 27:30 take an x-ray of this or that it is which way they want it for certain angles on it. So I studied all this up and I stayed there for twenty-two years before I retired and I've been retired now...I'm eighty-three now, and it is twenty-two years I stayed there before I retired. I've been retired now for twenty something years. Sixty I retired. I retired at sixty.

Let me come back, if I could to again,

- 28:00 **growing up days. The household had seven boys. Did you each have your own room?**

Oh well, we had a double bed that two of us used to sleep in. There was three different rooms in Bankstown, in the home we had. There was a veranda room, there was a double bed there, and a couple of other beds there.

- 28:30 Oh no. We all had...Two of us used to camp together sometimes, but mainly we had our own stretchers. What they call stretcher beds. Single beds, you know. We had plenty or room there. We were there in the beds.

And things like plumbing and a toilet? What was the situation there?

There was two toilets out in the back yard. They were not inside, but they were not far out down there.

- 29:00 We didn't have to go a mile down the yard or nothing. It was just handy there. We had the toilets there. Of course, them days, there was a funny episode there. The toilet used to be there. They were there and that and we used to go down, and there was a toilet. But Dad used to put kerosene or something in the toilet. That used to stop blowflies or whatever in the toilets in those days. Everyone had the same trouble,
- 29:30 and they put kerosene in the toilets. We were down in the yard one day, and I was digging in the garden down the back and Norm, come in. That's the other one of the boys. He says, "Where's the old fellow?" "Up inside somewhere." Dad was up inside. "I'm going the dyke," he said. "Keep it will you." I'm doing working down digging the garden. "I'm going to have a few," he said. "No bloody cigarettes," I said.
- 30:00 So he said, "I'm going to have a puff." Old Norm was a bit of a dragon, and he is in there and the old man come down the steps, and I said, "Shh, the old bloke's coming." He threw the cigarette, but into the toilet. Phwoompa! Here she goes. I said, "Hey." The old man comes down. "What's going on in the toilet?" What's happening here?"

- 30:30 Mr Willy. He used to call me Mr Willy. "What are you doing here, Mr Willy?" "Not me, Dad. I'm digging in the garden." He said, "I can see that. Look at the bloody smoke coming out of the toilet." "I don't know." In the mean time Norm has run out and he's round the back of the toilet. He is on the other side of the toilet. And it is going off. The seat was a board seat, you know. It was a board and had a big round hole in it and it was a toilet seat.
- 31:00 And Norm is around the other side and he said, "Quick. Get the water. Quick Bill. Get the bag." And I turned the tap on, put the wet bag in, run it in, threw it over the toilet and smothered the flames and stopped it. He said, "By Jesus, if I catch that Norman, I will skin him alive!" We used to die laughing. We could have wrote a book on it.
- 31:30 It happened a couple of times, during the time. Of course he caught Norman after and he said, "By God, if I catch you smoking cigarettes in there again," he said, "I'll have your hide." But you can just imagine it. The smoke was coming out the top. Just as well she was a brick one. The whole lot could have come down. Most of them were weatherboard toilets, but this was a brick toilet.
- 32:00 And the pan...They used to point them with tar inside the pan and the tar started to melt and she got alight. She made a fair flame. Oh, Jesus. Oh, some of the episodes you had in the days there at Bankstown. The sanitary man used to come. They used to ring the bell,
- 32:30 and people would know that if you were in the toilet, you had to get out. He was coming, see. And he had a big bell. It was a great big wagon with all the pans on top, clean ones, and the ones underneath were full, apparently. Anyhow, the old men would sing out, "Heyo! The Sanitary Man's coming! The humdinger's ringing up the street!" They used to call it a humdinger. That was the toilet cart coming, see.
- 33:00 And they'd ring this big bell. We used to laugh. Everyone would call it. "Here comes the humdinger. It's on Lancelot Street." They would give you time to come out of the toilet if you were in there, because they used to come to the toilet to take the pan away. They'd open the back of the toilet and pull the pan out, you see. Because if they opened the toilet and you were on the pan....He'd ring his bell, ding, ding, ding, and you'd hear him half a mile away. Like a school bell it was.
- 33:30 Many a time they come around a corner, and the doors flew, and there was a mess on the road. That often happened and that would be the laugh of the season. Especially when they got the bitumen road. When they had the gravel road, it would go round nice and steady, but when they had the bitumen road, a bit of oil and
- 34:00 she'd come down the street and around she'd go, and they'd fly out. "Make sure you shut the door." They'd have to shut the door and put a little catch on it to lock her in.

So how big were these pots or pans that were underneath the toilet?

Oh, the toilet pans you mean? Oh well, they took them away and put another one back in.

- 34:30 They would be that high and about that round. They were a big pan.

Two foot by two-foot type thing?

Yes. You had a wooden frame at the back of the toilet, and two catches there, and you'd just pull them up and hook them up there, and pull the pan out like that and put the new one in. Put the lid on the other one, and fling it on their shoulder and away they'd go.

- 35:00 If a dog attacked them and they fell over, too bad. You'd have a bitumen sandwich.

That would be the worst job in the world, wouldn't it?

Yes. I never took that job on. Oh no. Oh no. That was a ninety-dollar piece, that was. And apparently, the sanitary depot at Bankstown,

- 35:30 was where the aerodrome is now. That was the big sanitary depot. Because there was no houses around. It was all bush out there, and that's where they used to have their sanitary place. They would pour the tins down the trenches.

Payment. Did you pay when they came?

Your council rates paid that.

- 36:00 We paid for it with the rates. That was the sanitary rates. You'd pay our rates and that's how you paid for your sanitary. Some of them wouldn't have sanitary on. Those that were way out, and they wouldn't have sanitary on at all. They used to do their own sanitary. She was a day and a half, that was. But then when they'd have the...They used to have a ball or a dance,
- 36:30 where we used to go to school. It was only two streets up. We used to have a bit of fun out there. We used to create a bit of fun. The fellows would come in in a horse and sulky, and they would put the horse there, and the sulky, and have them all lined up. And me and a couple of my mates there would go out there, while they were in dancing. We'd get the horse out and turn the horse around, and put the horse in back to front, Put the horse in the wrong way with his backside out the front, and we'd put them back

to front, and they'd come out and not know why their horse was back to front.

- 37:00 That was all the fun we had in those days, but it was good fun. They used to have quarts of beer in those days. Big bottles. They were a quart. The quarts came out just before the war, and the young fellows would come in, and if the bloke standing at the door, if he smelt beer on their breath, not allowed in.
- 37:30 Oh, no. They wouldn't have you in. No drink allowed. So they used to hide it. They had their quarts and they would put it in a bladey glass...you know. They'd put it in a bladey glass. And some of the fellows there were older than us, they'd say, "We're going up to get a quart of beer." We'd say, "Jeez. Don't go up there." "No, there's a dance on tonight. We watch the blokes, where they put their beer and sneak up and get a quart of beer."
- 38:00 We were only young fellows. We'd say, "We wouldn't go up there. Dad would give us a flogging if he caught us drinking grog." Anyhow, they'd go up and get the quart, come back, rip the top off, big quart of beer. They'd have a big wobbly boot before...They were only about fourteen, or twelve, and they'd have a wobbly boot. God, laugh. And then, what was funny, just to have a bit of fun. They had about ten hurricane lamps
- 38:30 and they had them all alight. All the hurricane lamps alight. And we went around....My mate next door named Jimmy Hinch. He used to be there, and I was on his front veranda one day, having a yarn to him, and he said, "Here they go. Here they go," he's saying. I said, "What's the matter, Jim?" He said. "You watch it. That's the girls going up through the scrub, diving up through the lantana there," he said.
- 39:00 "They're going up to the toilets," he said. I said, "I'd be blowed if they're walking up there." "Yes, they are. In the Fountain's paddock there," he said. "There's only about two toilets here, and there's about fifty down there. So they get a hurricane lamp and go up to the paddock part." And Jimmy said, "You watch me turn the lights out." I said, "What do you mean turn the lights out?" "I know what you are doing!" He sang out.
- 39:30 Down go the lights. The ladies were going up to the toilets. "I know what you're doing!" he said.

Tape 6

- 00:30 **Bill. Tell me about 'Monty', General Bernard Montgomery [commander of the 8th Army]?**

Well he was to come up and visit us you see, up in the desert.

Where were you?

We were up there.

Syria, is this?

No, this was up in the Western Desert. He was coming up to visit us, so they get us out on the parade ground, all spick and span, and waiting there.

- 01:00 Two hours after, Monty arrived. It was fifty degrees in the shade, and we were standing there. He always said, "No doubt about Australians." We were talking to him there, and we said, "Why? What's the matter?" He said, "They're always laughing." He said, "I always know when I'm near Australian lines." He said, "They're laughing."
- 01:30 Bullets flying everywhere, shells flying everywhere and they're laughing." We said, "It's better than bloody crying, isn't it? He said, "Give you give you blokes a slice of bread, you'll walk half a mile to light a fire, or if there's a fire there you'll toast it. I always know when I'm near the Australians." That's what he told us. On the parade ground, he told us that. He was pretty right, though.
- 02:00 "Give them a slice of bread," he said, "And they'll walk a mile and they'll toast it."

Did you like Monty?

Well, yeah, he was one of the boys. He had a laugh with us, and everything. He put one of our hats on, one of the diggers hat on, and he was walking around in an Australian hat. He was quite good.

- 02:30 **Now just travelling back again to your Militia days. Now when did you join the Militia?**

When I joined the Militia at Marrickville I was sixteen. Oh, gee, it was a long way back, wasn't it? I was sixteen, that's how old I was when I joined the Militia. So that would be back a long way. I'm eighty-three now.

So 1938.

- 03:00 About then, '37, '38.

Did you join a Militia battalion?

No, it was a Militia unit, that's right, yeah. We used to be the AASC. It was the Australian Army Service Corps, what it was them days. Well, them days, we had horses, and we had limbers, what they called limbers. They were a bit vehicle,

03:30 they weren't trucks or anything. We would hook the horses up to the limbers, like the Lighthorse used to. We'd get up on the limbers and all the food would be on the back. We'd go out to where the battles were, where the Infantry were, and we'd take a hot meal out to them. If they wanted a hot meal, the Army Service Corps fellows would take it out to them, with these limbers. And then we come back to Liverpool. I was in Liverpool camp when the war broke out, actually.

04:00 And a lot of the boys, or men, they signed over in a mass. They joined straight over, went to the army straight away. But I was too young, and I couldn't get in then, so I waited until I was seventeen and I told them I was twenty, and I got in then. So that's the way I got in.

What sort of things did you do on the militia camp?

Well we did Vickers machine guns, mainly. They were the big water-cooled machine guns

04:30 We used to have the water running down to keep them cool. We used to do them, and then we'd do horse work. We'd go around on the horses and all that sort of thing. We'd have to practise taking the limbers out with all the food on. They had the cooks there. The cooks would be doing the cooking, and they'd pack all the food up for the fellows. There might be a hundred or two hundred militiamen out there.

05:00 We'd have to have all their rations for them, and take them out to them. That was the job of these boys, for the Army Service Corps. That was our job.

Do you remember any exercises against other Militia groups?

Not in the Militia. We didn't go out on too many exercises, only into camp.

05:30 Every year we went to camp for fourteen days, and that's when we used to do some exercises then, but mainly with the limbers and the horses. That's all we had. We didn't do much else. There was nothing much else, because they were all working people, men at work, and they would have to get their holidays to go to camp. And we'd all come together, and go to the camp. Of a night we used to do exercises,

06:00 at night. We'd go out at night with the horses and go around the mob. Whatever the Militia were doing, we'd have to go out where the Infantry were. There wasn't a lot we could do. And it was just towards when the war started, that they got us vehicles and got us mobilised. We had big trucks. They just got them when the war started. That's what we had.

06:30 World War I. Had you heard stories from World War I?

Well, I heard a few stories from World War I. A couple of chaps that I knew when I was a young fellow. We used to go up to his place, Mr Hogan, he was a Vickers machine gunner in the First World War, but he had his thumbs cut off there. What they used to do you'd put your fingers underneath the front and pull the catch out

07:00 and put your fingers in like that to push the button in. If they captured you, they cut the tops of your fingers off there. The Germans used to do that, and you couldn't be a machine-gunner any more, because you couldn't press the buttons in. In the First World War, that's what happened to them, yeah.

And this fellow was missing his thumbs?

Yeah. Well if you had the top off your thumbs

07:30 the little part of your finger there wasn't big enough to push the button in and make it fire. And that's what they did. Old Mr Hogan had both his off there. And I said to George, "What happened to you there, George?" He said, "That's the worst of being a machine gunner, when you get captured." The Bren gunner like we had, was all right, but the Vickers machine gunner, that's what they used to do to you, if they captured you.

08:00 So he was a POW [Prisoner of War] for a while?

Yeah. He was for a while. He got back from the war. I think he said it was in Villers-Bretonneux, or somewhere up there, where the heavy fighting was. He was a POW.

And what other stories would he share?

Oh, he never spoke very much about the war, Mr Hogan. He was quite an old fellow. He used to do a lot of fishing, and that. And we used to go down to

08:30 Saltpan Creek in Sydney, up to where the Mascot airfield is and Canterbury there. Saltpan Creek used to run out right out through the East Hills, and right around through there, and we used to go out there fishing a bit. You didn't do a lot. You didn't talk to him much about the war. He got a big photo of him at

home sitting behind the machine gun. But he'd gone long ago now, of course.

09:00 His family and the boys and us, we used to be a few together. We were good mates and we used to go together, trapping, shooting and all that sort of thing.

So why did you join the Militia and the AASC in the first place?

What, to go in the Second World War?

No, in 1937, 38?

Well, it was something for us to do.

09:30 There wasn't a lot you could do at nighttime. If you were bike riding, you'd go down to Canterbury or down to Bankstown and do an hour or so's training or something. Some of the boys, they didn't do that sort of thing, so we said, "What's say we join up the Militia and learn something?" So we joined up. They were the Army Service Corps, but we had Vickers machine guns and Lewis guns. That's why we joined.

10:00 It was something for us to do, instead of sitting around. We used to go down to Marrickville, and they used to pay us good money. I forget what our rate was. But we used to get paid every twelve months. Before Christmas, we'd go down and they would put on a party for the militia boys and we'd all be there. It was good fun. We got a few bob out of it for us, too. But we were keen. We were good shots. By Jesus, I tell you what, we didn't miss too much.

10:30 When my grandson went to go away to Vietnam, and to go up to the Islands in the war up here, they went out on the range and he was shooting well. I used to take him out here roo shooting, and when we go out through Tenterfield and round there. About twice a year, we'd go out shooting, he'd come with me and I'd teach him how to shoot. And the instructor there said to him, "Who taught you how to shoot?"

11:00 He said, "My grandfather taught me how to shoot." "Who taught him?" He said, "He taught himself. He knows how to shoot." He said, "Yes, I can see that." He said, "You'd better come here and teach me how to." He said, "You can shoot alright." He was a good shot, too, that's what they said to him, "Get him to come here, too, the old digger can teach me, too." But we used to teach them how to hold their breath and stop

11:30 just before they're going to pull the trigger, just squeeze the trigger. Take your first pressure and just wait, and then when the target come up, just touch it, that's all you had to do. I've got them on my rifles out here, touch triggers. You pull your trigger back and she's set. And as soon as it comes into view, you haven't got to pull your trigger, you just pull your gun off. I just touch the side of it. I just touch the side of it, she goes straight off. Hair triggers they call them. I have them on all my rifles

12:00 **Did you ever consider being a sniper in the army?**

Oh, I could have, snipers is alright. I've handled their weapons and that. But the trouble is, you might lay for hours. I liked to be where there's a bit of shooting going on. You might lay for hours, all day and all night, you might get one shot or you might get a dozen, too. But I just wanted to be up where the mob was.

12:30 **So now, you've joined the army, and you went to train at Ingleburn?**

Yeah.

Can you share with me some of the training that you did there?

When we first went in...Well, the first lot of boys, when my brother went in, he was in the first batch. You'd go into the quartermasters store and he's just look you up and down, "That'll fit you." And they fit where they touched. That was it.

13:00 Your shirt might be coming out here, and your trousers might be down the bottom. You'd take them up in the shed and get the knife and cut half the legs off them, to get them to fit you. That's what they give us when we first went. When we first went in, to go to the Second World War, we had axe handles, wooden handles, for rifles. We never had rifles. That's a fact. Anyone will tell you. We had nothing until they started making them. They were making them at Lithgow, small arms factory.

13:30 That's where we got the guns and the ammunition was made. But we went to camp with wooden guns. That's what we had. Wooden guns.

Did you have to run round and go 'bang'?

Yeah. Run round and say, "Bang! Bang! You're dead!" Cowboys and Indians. That's right. That's what we had. And then it didn't take long, but we got issued with rifles then. My rifle was number 91900. I'll remember my rifle till the day I die.

14:00 And my bayoneted number is 58927. The bayonet had a number on it, and your rifle's got a number on the top of your rifle, where your bayonet fits on. And mine was 91900. That was my rifle number. I remember the number of my rifle. If someone grabbed your rifle, you knew he had the wrong rifle. I kept my rifle spotlessly clean, because you had to be ready. It was no good having it half blocked up

with rust.

14:30 They'd inspect your rifle every morning. "Port arms!" And you'd port arms, and you'll pull the bolt back and put your thumb down like that. The officer would have it up about his height, and he'd look down your barrel. If he couldn't see that shining on your knuckle there, you'd be stood aside, and it would cost you a quid or two. You'd be fined if you had dirty rifles. You had to be good. No mucking about. All our rifles were inspected every morning.

15:00 **So how would you clean your rifle, what was the process?**

You had the pull through in the butt. In the butt of the rifle, you would pull a little brass tag up, and we'd have a pull through down in there and a little oil bottle down in there. And that would be always full of oil, and you'd have your pull through, and a bit of four by two that was on your pull through. They'd all be there. You'd pull that butt out of a morning and pull it through. Shining through like that. That's how you cleaned your rifle.

Did some of the fellows not bother to do that?

15:30 Sometimes, they got into trouble. Some of the blokes would get a wobbly boot on at the canteen one night and they wouldn't bother cleaning their rifle. "She'll be right." Get out on the parade ground, "Examine arms!" "Oh, right, what have I done?" She'd be on for young and old then. Along his gun. The sergeant major walking beside him with the book. "Gotcha!" So we had to be ready.

16:00 I always kept my rifle clean. I was sorry I had to leave her.

Before you got the rifles, with the axe handles, did you think to yourself, 'What on earth am I doing in the army?'

Oh, we used to think, "What have we done to deserve this? Thank Christ we've got a navy." That's what we used to say. Well, we had nothing else.

16:30 **You were obviously a good shot. When you got to the rifle range, were some of the fellows....not so good or even lousy?**

Some of them weren't real good shots. But it's marvellous, though, when you got down on the mound beside them, and showed them where to aim and that sort of thing. You don't aim directly at the bull of your target. You aim a little bit below your target. You'd aim at six o'clock if you want to get the middle, because when you go off, your rifle jumps.

17:00 And you'd have to know how to do it. Well, you put your arm through the sling of your rifle that way, and that stops the jumper. That keeps her down, see. You put your arms through like that, and then you got her up on your shoulder and your front's down. And you've always got to get a good elbow place, for your elbow, and you don't move that arm. If you move that arm, you've got to re-sight every time you aim, but if you keep that arm still, and you pull the bolt back with this one,

17:30 push the other arm up...You don't keep shifting this one up here or up there, because if you do, every time you do, you've got to reset again. So you keep that arm as still as you can. That's the shot. That's the secret of it. But then when you load your rifle, you take your time, get on to your target. Three hundred yards was no trouble with the .303 rifles we had, they were good rifles.

18:00 **Most rifles are geared to a right-hander. What did the fellows do who were left handed?**

Well, my brother was left handed, but he could shoot alright. But he had to get used to it. He was used to left hand, see. Whereas we'd have this hand in the front, he'd have the right hand in the front, see. But the left-handed chappie was always awkward to try and train, because you're standing there with him, or you're watching him, and he seems awkward to you.

18:30 But Heck was a good shot. He could shoot alright.

But the bolt. Was that still on the same side, or were there left handed rifles?

Well, some of them had a left handed bolt, but not many. Nearly all were right handed. But he'd go over the top like that, and pull back with this hand. He'd pull the bolt up and back like that. But they looked awkward, it was awkward to see a left ended bloke shooting. I've got a rifle out there now, a Sako,

19:00 it's got a left-handed butt on it. It's a right handed rifle with a left-handed butt on it. Because the fellow who made it, he made it especially out of special wood for it, and he made it out for a left-hander. But I'm a right-hander. I didn't give it back to him. I said, "No. I'll hang onto it." She's a good rifle. It's a .243, and I keep it out there.

So the army never tried to get left handers to change to right?

No. I never seen too many of them. No.

19:30 Mainly they were all right handed. From what I seen, anyway.

And on the rifle range...Sometimes guys, whether with the machine guns or with the rifles, they make mistakes. Were there accidents that occurred in your training?

I never seen anyone get hit at all. But what happened, a fellow would pull a rifle off. A rifle would go off. Luckily, they were always down the range.

- 20:00 But there's always that chance. When you fire, they're back in here, and they're looking up, and the bullets go through. They'd put a pointer up to show you where your bullet went, you see. So you were back three or four hundred yards and you'd see where your pointer was, and you'd try to alter it. If there was a bit of a breeze blowing this way, you'd have to allow a bit more for the wind. And gradually you would wear your rifle in.
- 20:30 But I never seen any bad accidents. We had very strict...Our NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and our officers and ourselves, we were very strict. When they'd go down on the mound, we'd make sure everyone was down and then we'd move along. The sergeant major was generally there, and the officers were there, and we'd keep our eye on the blokes, you know. Point the rifles directly to the front and make sure they kept them there. We were very strict on that.
- 21:00 I never had an accident. We had one during grenade practise. It was in England, the trenches were dug, of course they're not all straight. You dig trench his way and then you go that way. You zig zag, you know. One chap threw a grenade and it didn't have, apparently the pin out of his hand, and it dropped back into where we were standing. So all we did was duck up around the corner,
- 21:30 and that's the only reason why they have trenches like that. They don't have a straight line. Duck around the corner, quick march, said a few Hail Marys and dived for ground. She went off, but it never hurt anybody because it was around the corner from where we were. But that's when you start saying, "Nearer to go are thee."

Did grenades have a time mechanism to them?

- 22:00 **Oh yeah. Three second grenade, mainly. A three-second grenade, you'd pull the pin out and hold the clip down. And then you'd hold the clip down and then you'd throw it. The seven-second grenade was in what they called the E-Y Rifle. It was a rifle that had a grenade charger on the front. It was an ordinary .303 rifle and they were especially wound...**
- 22:30 **by a wire, they were wired in that way. And you put a grenade in the top and you'd push trigger that way, and she'd go out and the grenade would burst when it got out. They were generally seven seconds. Where we tricked the Jap a little bit...Our boys that were up there had four second, or five-second grenades, mainly four. When we went up there, we had three-second grenades.**
- 23:00 **What we would do, if we were out in a clearing....You couldn't throw a grenade in the jungle much because there's trees everywhere. You hit a tree and it would back and land in your haversack [back pack]. So what we'd do, we'd pull the pin out, we'd hold it back like that, and count, one, two and let her go. Before he knew where it was, it was on the back of his neck. See, she'd go off in one second. As soon as you threw it, you flopped down yourself. You've got to drop, because the base plate plug**
- 23:30 **on the bottom of a grenade, about that round, it just doesn't explode up, it just goes one piece, and if you're out on the grenade range, you'll hear that go whiz. That's the base plug from the bottom of the grenade. That's what they'd do.**

So just so I understand the rifle.

The EY rifle.

You don't put a bullet in your gun to fire the grenade off the top?

No.

- 24:00 It's got a special cartridge in the bottom, no lead in the end of it. It's just got a what's her name bullet in there with no lead across. It's a special made cartridge. You put it in the bottom, and you turn your rifle back that way, and you pull it that way with your finger. It's not facing like the other rifle. And you'd fire it and you push it down with your thumb, like that, and hold it that way, and you guide it to where you want it to lob. You've got an idea where they lob when you practise on your range.
- 24:30 The rifle goes off, you pull her back, put another cartridge in. I could show you on a rifle. I've got one out on the veranda there. It's not the .303. I've got what they Indians used.

So in that respect it was almost like a mini mortar?

Yeah, that's right. That's what they're like. Just like that.

- 25:00 You just hold the front of your rifle and 'foom.' You'd push her up or pull her back. If the grenade goes further over, you want it back towards you, you bring her this way a bit towards you. You've got to watch which way the winds blowing. When the grenade goes up, the wind is liable to take her one way or another. You've got to watch all that. That you've got to watch, very quickly, but she goes. We never used those in action at all. We used them in training sometimes,

25:30 just to give you an idea of lobbing a grenade at a certain thing. But we never took them in action. I never seen them.

Why not?

I never seen them. Where we were fighting was all jungle mainly. We had them in practise. When we had them back down on the ranges, we'd have an odd shot or two of them, but not very much. We were mainly using the live bullets all the time.

26:00 **In respect to your training at Ingleburn, did that prepare you for the war? The war in the desert and the war in the jungle?**

Oh yeah, we done live firing, everything was live firing. We used to get down on the ground and crawl under barbed wire that high, keep down, live machine guns going over the top of you. Bloody Oath.

So it was good training?

It was good training. We had good officers and good training. They were good fellows there. They were very strict.

26:30 And you had to do as you were told, otherwise they would sort you out quick. You were trying to do your best, because you were with a group of blokes and you wanted to go with them. You didn't want them to go one way and you get left behind. So we'd always stick together and do the right thing. And later on, when we came back with the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] fellows, I used to go up to the hills, and we used to the course up there.

27:00 Just the other side of Brisbane. There was a course up there, it was a very good course, good training, jungle training, warfare. It was good. My word.

Now just in respect to the war and engagements. Everyone is different and when we face stress, or fear, we respond differently. Where there men that...

27:30 **When they got to the war, there was self-inflicted wounds and things like that?**

Well, I never saw any in our unit, but they tell me that there was some chaps that, their nerves went on them. Perhaps it happened, but I never seen any in our unit like that. In Syria...This wasn't a self-inflicted wound. There was a mob of chaps fighting ahead of us,

28:00 and I was on the side of a road, and as I was walking up, the other boys were spread out. We were in an extended line. And once chap was laying...I see him in the edge of the gutter, of the road, so I went over to him. And he was laying there with his hands like this, he'd been wounded, but the medics hadn't caught him. They didn't know him. They were picking up chaps that were wounded and some chaps that were killed, not far from him.

28:30 I went straight over to him and I said, "What's the matter, mate?" He said, "For God's sake, shoot me. I've got one in the gut." And I said, "God, mate, I wouldn't dare to that to you." "Oh God, I'm in trouble," he said, he had blood all over him and he was laying in the gutter. I said, "I'll get you a medic." I said, "I can't do too much. We're advancing now, I've can't stay back, I've got to be up with the mob." And he said, "Oh, no, put one in my forehead." And I said, "No way."

29:00 I seen a bloke, I sang out to a medic, I said, "Over here, mate, for God's. There's a bloke here with one in the guts." He said, "Oh, where about is he?" I said, "Just here, where I am." I said, "I've got to go on." My blokes then were thirty yards or more ahead of me, and I was wanted in the fire once we started. I said, "Here's here. Will you pick him up?" "I'll get him in a minute," he said. They had a blitz wagon, and they had a lot of stuff on the wagon like

29:30 mesh and stuff like that, so they could lay people on. And they were picking up chaps that were wounded and that, and taking people back. He said, "I'll get him." So I went on then. I didn't go back. But he was the only chap I seen. He was fairly badly wounded, but he wasn't a self-inflicted man, and his unit fellows had gone away, forgotten about him, and he was laying back there. It's quite easy to do, to get left in the battle.

30:00 They pick you up later on. But I just managed to come along at the right time and they got him. I never seen him again, poor fellow, I do hope he survived.

Were there occasions, though, where fellows asked to be injured and shot?

That was the only chap that I struck. Most of our chaps that I seen, they were either killed or...

30:30 One chap was shot through the face, but he survived till he got back and then he died on the table back there. I didn't see any of our fellows...though some of our boys were badly wounded, but they were pretty hardy blokes. They didn't chuck the towel in. There were often times, when you'd see some fellows and you'd think to yourself, "Well, it's better if the poor fellow died." He was suffering. But you couldn't do anything, you didn't dare do a thing like that to a fellow.

31:00 It was, in some cases, I suppose, it would have been...If the poor fellows had died, they'd suffered a lot. Especially when in the jungle, when we had a long way to go back. Carrying them back was worse, because you're wounded and you're pretty bad...The Fuzzy Wuzzies. You couldn't get a more gentler

type of man than they were. They were marvellous guys. A lot of us wouldn't have got back only for them. I don't know whether I would have got back, except for them.

- 31:30 Because they looked after us that good. They would do anything. The poor fellows couldn't speak our lingo [language], they'd make signs and we would do the same for them. It was quite strange, the war up there, especially when you're with a different country to where we were. I think most of our fellows, they were very well trained. And even at Ingleburn, we used to go
- 32:00 down to the rifle ranges there and they would keep us on the mark. The officers were well trained. A lot of them were Duntroon men. They had come from Duntroon, and they were good. I couldn't speak too highly of them, what they did for us, them blokes.

You mentioned a little bit about when you went to England, because the Queen Mary was detoured.

- 32:30 **You shared a little bit about training. What about London? Did you ever go into London and have a look?**

I got in there once, to London. We never got much leave. I got in to London one time...We went in there, there was five or six of us, went into London, and we were there, near Australia house.

- 33:00 We went down to a place...They told us, if ever the air raids come on, to get to a house or to get somewhere, don't be out in the open. We were there four days or five days, I think. There was an air raid came on, and we went to the place there. I forget the name of the little village. A lady there was there in her house, and she said her husband was in
- 33:30 the evacuation of Dunkirk. He was a major, but she didn't know where he was. He hadn't come home, and she was on her own there. And we stayed there for a couple of days. They used to allot us places where we could go and stay with people, to help them. At night time, we used to go out, when the raids were on, we used to go out and help the air raid wardens and all those fellows doing the things.
- 34:00 We went to Birmingham one time. Because you could go from one side of England to the other, with no trouble. It was only a little country. They couldn't believe how far we'd go, we'd go for miles and miles, and they'd look at us as if to say, 'God.' We went over to a place there at Birmingham, and they bombed it one night and oh, they flattened it.
- 34:30 Because Birmingham was a manufacturing place, that's where they were building the guns and making the guns. And they wanted to flatten it, so they really flattened it one night. We were there helping the air raid wardens, and that sort of thing. But our officers, they knew where we were. We weren't sort of cast away. They knew where we were, at nighttime we'd be there, and we'd go back to a certain area where we'd get our meals, sort of thing.
- 35:00 They knew where we were.
- So that would have been the middle of the Battle of Britain.**
- Yeah, that was it. September was the battle of Britain. It was raining aeroplanes then, we reckoned. They were coming down everywhere, stacks of them. But when the Spitfires [British fighter aircraft] got up and got into them, that made them chew their rice. They shot them down very quickly. But there was planes everywhere.
- 35:30 Not only night, but daytime, too. They'd come over in mobs. But mainly at night, just on dusk, they would come over. They would be bombing all night. Little children there, and some people had air raid shelters in their back yard. But if a bomb landed direct on them, there was no hope. But that was the best thing they could do at the time. But when the children used to go down
- 36:00 under the railway, we'd escort them down, take them down. And their mothers and fathers and uncles and all that would go down, and the air raid wardens would take over and take them down. Keep them there all night. You'd hear them. They were a pretty happy crowd. Some of them were singing and some of them were playing piano accordions and that sort of thing. You had to do something and that's what they used to do.
- 36:30 That's all we could do over there. One bloke riddled our pot of tea once. We were over at Bulford Fields, and he swooped down out of the sky and riddled across and strafed us, but we were each side, in the trenches at the time, and we were working, doing work at the time. And he just come from nowhere and riddled right along. We had a four-gallon pot of tea there and he just riddled the pot of tea.
- 37:00 The tea went everywhere and we called him all the German names in Australia. We didn't get any more tea. But I bet his ears were burning. But oh, no, there was lots of times that things would happen when you were out in the open. We were, what, six men to a tent. We had bell tents over there, the round tents.
- 37:30 Pommy tents as we called them. Bell tents they were. And just outside the tents we had the trenches, and we just dived out and straight into the trench. You had to. If you start running away you get blown up pretty quick. We went down into them. Half the time they were half-full of water anyway, but you didn't worry about that when you had a bullet flying after you. You dove into the trench. But the

barracks and what the British soldiers had, and what we had there,

38:00 they were about as good as you could expect until war time conditions. We went out to Stone Henge one time. We had a bit of time to leave out, and they said go and look at Stone henge, so we went out, about or ten of us in a vehicle...And the Pommy [English] Home Guard bailed us up and wanted to know who were. We told them him we were good Australians, so he was satisfied. So we were right.

38:30 But he didn't know who we were. We were strolling around looking at the joint.

The Home Guard's like "Dad's Army", isn't it?

Yeah, the British Home Guard. They did a good job, too. They were walking round on the ball all the time, you know. Because they didn't know a lot of us, but they knew as soon as we sung out who we were. Bloody Australians. Trouble makers, they reckoned. But we never got into any trouble or anything.

39:00 What we couldn't get over, over there was...Just near, what was it? Not at Stone Henge, we come back from Stone Henge, and we were at another little place there. There was an orchard there, fruit and that, plums, some kind of fruit anyway, and there was a big paling fence all around it. Anyhow, we camped down the road a little bit, and we went up there one day,

39:30 and it was just like it was at Tills Head Lodge. We said to a bloke in the pub. We said, "What's all this fruit over here?" And they'd say, "Oh, we can't touch that. It belongs to So-and-so." And I said, "Well, it's falling on the ground over here." He said, "Oh, we can't touch that. We'd be in trouble." "Trouble be damned," we said, "We're going to get into her." So we went over with the sugar bags and filled a few bags

40:00 and took it to the kitchen and the cooks made us a few savouries with a bit of fruit.

Tape 7

00:30 **So you took the fruit off the trees.**

Oh yeah.

What happened?

We just took it over to the pub when we went over. Mainly what they were drinking there was apple cider. They said it was a good drink.

01:00 We had a couple of glasses of apple cider. And we were talking to a few of the British people sitting there, and they were having a drink. They were drinking the beer and all that, and we couldn't do that, because we never knew when we'd be called out. Anyway I said, "What's all the fruit over here?" "Oh, we can't touch that. It belongs to..." some bloke. I said, "Where's he at?" He was away in India, some other where. Like all the British officers were in India at that particular time. "Well," we said, "Get stuck into it." "Oh, no," they said, "Don't get caught with that. The coppers [police] would lock us up."

01:30 "Well, damn the coppers," we said. "We're going over tonight, and we're getting stuck into a bit. Do you want a bag of fruit?" "Oh jeez, it's a bit dicey." They were frightened. "We'll bring you over a couple of bags and we'll leave it in the pub and you can help yourselves." We got a couple of bags and took it down to our kitchen, then we went back and got some more and took it into the pub. And the publican, his eyes were jumping out of his head. He was frightened, too. They were all frightened.

02:00 We said, "We'll leave them out the back here. You know where they are, just go and help yourself." Anyhow, it didn't take long before they woke up, they took them. It was a little place there, up in Wiltshire where we went one time there. We got a few things there, rabbits and things we used to knock off and give to them.

02:30 But they were frightened. They weren't game. "Oh, no, we wouldn't do that." We couldn't work it out, the Australians. They'd go hungry first before they'd go and pinch something. We must have been bad or something, rogues.

Now after England you then went to Palestine?

Yeah, we came back down.

Can you share with me the type of training you did in Palestine?

03:00 Our Infantry training was much the same all the time. Infantry soldiers did the same thing again and again and again. You've got to keep doing it to keep on the ball. If we had new recruits in there, we'd have what we called the...The CO or some of the officers would be there, or sometimes the sergeant majors, and we'd have the bayonet drill. You've got the long rod

- 03:30 with the ball on one end. I don't know if you've seen them at all? A ball on one end and a ring about that round on the other. I'd say it would be maybe about ten foot or longer. And you'd get in, and there were blokes there with the rifle and bayonet, and you point the rod at him and he's got to put the bayonet through the ring. Bayonet training. That's what it was for. Just training. You'd swing it around this way, or go that way, and he'd have to stick it through the...that sort of thing.
- 04:00 Then we had bags, like big sugar bags, on boards. You'd run along and you'd go over a hurdle, and you'd run along, and it and out, bayonet drill. You'd run around, you'd go further in, get another couple. You might go a hundred yards or be doing that, too, for bayonet drill. Bayonet practice, they had dummies there, too.
- 04:30 **I understand with bayonet drill in World War I was that it was important to have a bullet, so you could get the bayonet back out again.**
- Well, they used to have that sort of thing, but they had a grid on the end of the bayonet, and if you put that into a bloke, and you go to pull it out, and he was a bigger bloke than you, and he'd pull over, he'd pull the gun out of your hand. So they woke up to that, eventually, and they never had the bayonet with that in our war.
- 05:00 We never had that. We had just the straight bayonet, like we have here, because of that reason. If you run along and stick your bayonet in a bloke and you couldn't get your bayonet out because it was sticking in. He'd pull you over. So you'd cop it. So they woke up to that, eventually. You'll see that in that Gallipoli book I've got there. It shows you the fellow in the trenches with the bayonet with a hook on it.
- 05:30 And they'd get into close combat with a bayonet, and the bloke would slide it up and get the hook, and he'd go like that and pull the rifle out of your hands, a little hook on it. So they done away with that now, too. So all we have now is a straight bayonet. We don't have any hooks on it, or nothing like that. Well, now days, they have a short bayonet on the rifles now. We always reckon you're going to go up and shake hands with him before you kill him.
- 06:00 But we used to have the long bayonet. That was what we liked. They were good for opening paw paws and fruit like that. We'd just chop them down the middle, we'd open up fruit like that. They did have them, but they weren't much chop. They got rid of them.
- Why did you do bayonet work considering in World War II there weren't any...**
- 06:30 Well, we never used the bayonet a lot. It is marvellous, though, if you put a bayonet on and you run at a bloke, and you've got a bayonet on, it gives him a nasty feeling to see him coming towards you. Especially if he's got a cranky look on his face and he's going to make fruit for the sideboard out of you. We always had round magazines with bullets in.
- 07:00 I'd slam a bullet into a bloke before I ran up and shook hands with him, as we used to say. We're not shaking hands with them, we're shooting them, and that's what we used to do. If we were in a position where we had to fire...that's what we did. In parts of the New Guinea jungle warfare, there was bayonet drill used a fair bit there. We were in jungle warfare and we were in the bushes, you know. It was a bit hard, there.
- 07:30 I don't remember us using the bayonet drill. There were some in Syria. Some of the fellows used bayonets there. They were caught in a position where they couldn't get out, and they had to use their bayonets to fight their way out. But I never had a position of that at all. We had the Thompson sub-machine guns for a while. See, that was the big round ones. Al Capone, we used to call ourselves, and we'd put fifty rounds in the mag,
- 08:00 and we'd used them. But they were a heavy weapon to fire, but they were a good weapon. Then we got the Owen guns, then. When we got here and we went up to New Guinea, we got the Owen guns. They were very good. Light to carry, see. The other guns were very heavy, when they had fifty rounds in, point five ammo [ammunition].
- My understanding with the Tommy guns is that they used to freeze up in the jungle?**
- Well, we never had one freeze up on us. I never had one freeze up on me.
- 08:30 They probably did, too. Well if you drop it in the mud, something is going to happen. It was always pretty muddy there. I used to try and look after my weapons a fair bit, if I could. Keep them clean. When you are going through the jungle, you've got to be ready. It's no good having your gun on your shoulder. It's too late then. So we'd have the rifle magazine full, at all times. I used to keep my mag [magazine] full.
- 09:00 And we seen something, then we had to be ready to get into it. Some of the Japs were on the larna, they'd get monkey cunning, and they would be in the top of the palm trees. They would climb up the palm tree and get in there. And you had a job to see them. But when you got the Widow Maker [name for weapon] out, and give them a burst of machine gun fire up into the tops of the trees, you soon found out whether they were there or not. That's where they used to sit, though, and they could pick you off.
- 09:30 Later on when the Yanks came in, I had come back wounded by then, and the American were on the other side. They said the Americans would come to our fellows and want our .303 rifles. They were too

good a rifle. They said, "Oh gee, these are good rifles." They'd give you anything to take one of our rifles. Because, one of our fellows up there, when they went back up, there was a Jap in the top of a coconut tree up there, and he said

10:00 to the Yank, "Go on, drop him down." The Yanks used to come in with those short rifles. They couldn't even get near him. So our fellow just switched her up onto three hundred yards and put one in and down he come. We could drop them. Three hundred yards was nothing, up in the trees. You'd just pick them off. But the Yank's little rifles, unless they were real close, they weren't much good. That's why they liked our rifles. They'd go four or five hundred yards, the .303, into them.

10:30 **But the Yanks' [American] rifle didn't actually have a bolt. They could just keep pulling the trigger?**

Yeah, they were automatic, yeah, pretty well. We had the single shot only.

So the Yanks rifle was far better in close contact, because they could fire off a few shots?

Yeah, it was pretty good in close quarter. It was like our submachine guns. Like our what's her name guns. They were the same. Short range. But oh gee, the Owen guns, they pulled them up quick, they were very quick.

11:00 **Coming back to the Middle East, Palestine again. The Arabs used to give the Australians some headaches steeling stuff?**

They did for a while, but we got square with them. We knew how to handle these wogs.

What happened?

Well, you do double guard over there. We used to guard the...

11:30 The army petrol dumps. So what we'd do to trick the wogs was, we'd double the guard. One bloke would be coming this way, and the other bloke...two on each end, and you'd be looking behind that bloke, and he'd be looking behind, you see. That's where we'd go. Then we'd get to the other end and they'd do the same. We'd double guard. And that ruined them from pinching the stuff.

12:00 The army boots up there, we had those red boots, the Australian Army boots, had them big hobnails in. They didn't last long in the desert, with the heat and that. The hobnails would fall out of them, we'd get other boots. So the wogs come around to our camp see and we'd say to them, "See that bloke up there?" It would be our CO, you see.

12:30 We'd tell them to sing out something to him, "You mongrel! Him a mongrel!" "Get out of here, you devil! Who told you to say that?" "I don't know." No one would be there. "Colonel So-and-so! Him a mongrel!" Anyhow, we got these wags and we thought they were a bit smart. They'd come around the tent. And you'd have your kit bag as your pillow, and then all of a sudden, boom, your head would go back and they'd be running.

13:00 See, there were four men in each tent. Four men on that side and four men on the other side. And they were pinching what's her names left, right and centre. "Right," I said to one bloke one day, he'd come through on the donkey. He'd be riding the donkey and his missus would be running behind him. They always did that. Women never rode the donkey.

13:30 Anyway, we got this Arab and we're talking to him there. We said, "You like good boot, George?" "Oh, very good boot." We'd show him an old boot. "It's a good boot?" "Oh, very good." "You come tonight, you give us money. How much money for good boots." "Oh, so many piasta." And he'd work it all out. We'd say, "Alright," then we'd go down to the boot maker there. There was five hundred blokes in the battalion, and we'd have heaps of boots there and he'd throw them all aside, left ones here, right ones here.

14:00 We said, "You come down tonight, George, you bring the money, we give you very good boot." "Righto." So we put all the left boots in one bag and all the right boots in another bag, see. So he'd come down and we'd say, "You want good boot, George? Show you good boot." We'd show him a boot. "Oh, very good." "Righto, how much? Pay the money." Give you the money and away he'd go.

14:30 He'd have a bag of left boots, see. And Joe Blow would come along on his donkey. "You want boots, George?" "Oh, yes, very good boots." "I'll show you boots." "Very good," he'd say. "How much a bag of boots?" So much money, he'd pull the money out and away he'd go on his way. So one bloke's down there with all left boots, the other bloke's down there with all the right boots. We got square with a few of them, see. And then they'd come down after petrol. We'd be walking around there,

15:00 and they'd say, "You got good petrol?" And we'd say, "Very good petrol, George. How much? Big Drum?" Because the boys in the Army Service Corps, they were loading petrol in all the big trucks and that, and they had empty tins, heaps of tins. So we grabbed a tin and put the water in it, about that far from the top. We'd say, "Got a mug of petrol there?" Get a mug of petrol, pour her it in the top, and she'd float around on top of the water, see. And we'd get about

15:30 half a dozen of these down in the dump where we had them. And we'd say, "You want petrol tonight, George?" "Oh, yeah." "Very good petrol coming in. Very good. You come tonight and bring your donkey,

petrol each side of the donkey." "Oh yes." "Bring your money." Yes, bring the money." So at night time we'd sneak around, the boys would be at the canteen. It was our night off, we didn't have to go anywhere, it was in the camp, and the canteen was there.

- 16:00 A couple of boys would sneak down, we had no duty to do. And along he would come on the donkey. "You come for good petrol, George?" He'd say, "Petrol, yes." "Come here." He'd screw the top off. "Put finger in there, George." "Oh, very good petrol." She only that much petrol in it. She's full of bloody water. And we'd say, "How much? Give us the money."
- 16:30 He'd give us a heap of money. "That's a bit weak, George. We want more than that." He'd give us a bit more. Away he'd go, on the donkey, with his petrol, and he'd be digging his donkey away. Another bloke would come along. We might sell six tins one night and it was only water. So we used to trick them. And then they'd come along. We came back down out of the desert. The first time we came in from up Mersa Matruh. And we had ammunition.
- 17:00 German ammunition, Italian ammo. We'd say, "Oh, good bullets, George." "Oh, yeah, bullets!" They always wanted bullets. "What do you want bullets for?" "Oh Arab Yahoodi!" They'd go like this. "Kill the Arabs? Kill the Jews." All this. We'd say, "Oh, very good, George, very good, George." You come tomorrow night, we'll give you good bullet." They'd say, "Good bullet? Plenty bullet?"
- 17:30 So we'd get up the tent, and we'd have a screwdriver and a pair of pliers and we'd pull the lead out, tip all the powder out and put it back in. And we'd do two or three hundred of these a night, and have them all ready for the next night. And George would come down, "Good bullets." He'd have a look. "Oh yeah. Never fired?" "No, they're good, they're good bullets." "Give us the money." We'd give him a bag of bullets. I don't know how many poor Jewish blokes never got shot,
- 18:00 because they'd put one up and pull the trigger and she'd go, 'joonk.' And she'd jam up in the barrels. She wouldn't come out. And we got square that way. But we used to get a few quid out of them like that. All the boys were on to them. Left and right boots. Bullets with no powder in them.

So why were they all called George?

I don't know. They called everyone George. "Hey, George!"

- 18:30 But when we'd go onto a railway station, we'd get square with them. They'd sing out, "Eggs are cooked! Eggs are cooked!" Like a lolly boy at the picture show, and he'd have all these eggs, all lined up. You'd want a feed of eggs. Get half a dozen eggs and eat them on the train, on the way. And when you'd break them open, they'd be black. They'd be that old, I suppose they'd had them that long and they boiled them and boiled them and boiled them. We thought, 'Ahh, we'll fix you mongrels.'
- 19:00 So we got square with them with the boots and with the ammo. It was dog eat dog over there, at times. We got square with them.

Now a big part of men going away and army life, is the recreation time?

Oh yeah. We didn't get much leave. No.

Did you get to brothels and stuff like that?

The only time we went around was if you were on guard duty.

- 19:30 Mobile patrol, they used to call them. We were in Palestine, so sometimes it would be into Tel Aviv or some places like that, you'd go in and you'd do a night patrol around. But there was British soldiers, there were thousands of troops in those places.
- 20:00 But if you go on the town picket, what they call the town picket, you'd go to where the provost were, and you'd book into there....Ten o'clock that night, there would be a patrol right through, and all the blokes had to be on the buses and back home. Unless you had a leave pass, say for three or four days, you show a leave pass, you could be on the street, but if you couldn't, you had to be on the bus. That's what they used to do over there. And we always had to carry our rifle with us.
- 20:30 Which was bad, but you never knew when a blue would start, and if you had no gun you were history. So we used to go there...The first time we found it a bit strange. Well, I only went in twice, as far as I can remember. We went in to Tel Aviv, and there was a hotel there, a Jewish hotel motel...Me and a mate of mine, he lived out the other side of Lismore,
- 21:00 and we went down onto the beach. And we had been swimming there. We were all swimming away there, and we were standing on the beach, thinking there must be some way to change our cozzie [swimming costumes] here. We had an old cozzie with us. We were standing there and standing there, and blokes would come up, and drop off, pull their clydes on, away they'd go. We said to a bloke, "Where's the dressing sheds here?" An old Pommie bloke, I think he was, he laughed. He said, "There's no dressing shed, mate. Drop the tweeds. She's right."
- 21:30 Pull your trousers on, dive in, you're right. I said, "I'll be blowed, there's women here and all." He said, "Don't you worry about them," he said. "You watch them. They strip off and dive in." And I said, "No, I won't be in that." And Scottie said, "Well, I've had my last swim." I said, "So have I." And they were stripping off on the beach and they were just walking out into the water. A man would come back and

he'd have no boots there. I said, "I'm not falling for that."

22:00 So we never went in for a swim there. But that's what they did. That was their lifestyle, apparently.

And short arm parades. What are your memories of those?

Yeah, we had plenty of them. And our padre used to give us lectures on those parades and all. Too right. The padre would come out and say to you, especially to the chaps that were married men over there.

22:30 He'd say, when you were going into such and such a place, wherever you were going on leave. He said, "You go to those places, you come back with a disease, your wife's got it when you go home, your family's got it, you children have got it." He said, "It's not worth it. Three minutes of running around with one of them and your life is ruined." And they used to tell you, on the parade ground. And they'd come along and give you things to take with you.

23:00 But Eddy Ducks was our corporal in one of the places in Cairo, and he said thirty something thousand went through in six months, through the medical place over there. That's a lot of people. But they used to drive it into us fellows. But over there, if you interfere with the women or anything over there, it was the women that got you.

23:30 It wasn't the men. They said, "The women will get you." One of our fellows got a bit full one night, at Kilo 89, and he went down on the grog and that and started to interfere with some Arab women, apparently. They said, "Now if you do, and they catch you, they'll rip your stomach out. Rip your stomach out and fill it full of stones and they'll sew it up and drop you on the side of the road." And one night one of our chaps disappeared and they found him two days after...

24:00 They had done the same to him. They ripped his stomach out, filled it full of stones, sewed him up. He went to interfere with some of the women, apparently, in an Arab village down below. So you never went near them, you kept away from the wogs up there. We used to say, "Why do you call them 'Wogs'?" "Oh, very good wog." We'd say, "You're a WOG." Arab would say, "Wog?" "Yeah, you're a WOG." "Wog?" "Yeah, 'Worthy Oriental Gentleman'." He'd pat us on the back, "Very good, very good, very good."

24:30 And when he turned round we'd say, "Mongrel." But that's what we used to call them. Worthy Oriental Gentleman. They reckoned it was good.

After Palestine, you went to Mersa Matruh?

We went to Mersa Matruh.

What was there?

Well, it was barbed wire entanglements. Mersa Matruh is up on the border.

25:00 It's not that far from all the action. POWs. We had a Prisoner of War camp just down below us. They'd bring in some Italians, and chaps were bought back into there. Oh, it was a well-trenched place. It had barbed wire and all the trenches there. They poured them through there. They pushed them through there, the first lot that were through, see. That's when we were coming from England then. They went in and that was in January,

25:30 and that was in January, they went up into there. And then they went right up through Tobruk to the other side, and then the Germans came in, then. The German Army came through, see. Our fellows then had gone back and were going to Greece. They came down, and then we came up. We said, "If they're going to take Tobruk, we're going to be second line defence here." We dug in there. We used to go out on night patrols and different things like that.

26:00 We used to watch what was doing.

Did you come into contact with the enemy?

Not really, not to fight them up there, we didn't, our battalion didn't. Mainly our worries there were minefields and that. There was minefields set there. The Arabs and what'sitsnames, they set so many thousand mines in the place and they never kept a map reading of them.

26:30 The Germans would have a post in the ground, and it'd have a skull and cross bones on it, ring around on it, up about that high. And if you struck any of that, you know there's a minefield there somewhere. But they would just put them in and they didn't know where they were. Some of our boys ran down to the beach in the Mediterranean to have a swim one evening, they let them go down, so much out of each trench could go down. Say, nine or ten you could duck down.

27:00 And they got blown up on the way down. They ran into a minefield on the way down. They didn't have a map of it, a reference.

I understand the importance of having a map and a reference so they know where they are. But why would the Germans put up a signpost so you would know where they were?

Well, they used to come to our place, looking for us, our wire. And if they never had it marked, they wouldn't know where they were either. They'd come into our lines.

- 27:30 We had the barbed wire along the front here. We'd go out this way. Well, in case they were watching us, we'd never come back the same way. They'd say, "Go out a thousand yards this way tonight, and go along a thousand yards, and come back in a thousand yards this way." So they'd get you ready. They'd say, "Half a dozen of you, you're fighting patrol tonight. You're out there to fight, not to dodge them. If you see them, you shoot them." Well, you'd go out on this patrol.
- 28:00 They'd say a thousand yards, well, you had a compass, but a compass wasn't much good to you in them times, in the dark, and there was no trees, so you could say, well, there's a tree out there, I'll take a bearing on that. What we used to do, we'd pick up ten stones, a thousand yards, ten stones we'd pick up in your hand. The bloke would be out the front, taking the bearing, so he knew which position, the other bloke...One bloke would be here, counting the steps.
- 28:30 And when he'd gone a hundred yards, or whatever it was, he'd say, "Whooh," and he'd drop one, and away you would go again, then you'd drop another one until he had none left. That's his thousand yards. He was out. Righto, well then, you'd get out to there...And sometimes you'd lay and listen, and you could hear the Germans, or Italians, playing piano accordions and things like that.
- 29:00 And then you'd go a thousand yards that way back. And you were still within your own lines, but you were out in the front. Then you'd come back. Once you went out there through your barbed wire, we booby-trapped that, where you went out. If they seen you go out, they'd say, "Oh, they went out that way. We'll hop in there." When they go to go in, they'd get blown to hell house. We'd have a booby trap there. You'd go up the other end and the pass word up that end
- 29:30 would be, "Lovely Legs," or something like that. They couldn't say their Ws, the Germans, so we had them foxed. All the passwords would be "Water" or "Water Can" or "Water Cart" or something. They couldn't say 'Water', the W. All our passwords would have a W in them. And one night, ours was "Lovely Legs". So we goes out this way, and we goes along, and the bloke up the other end, he knew it was "Lovely Legs", but the corporal that was bringing us in...
- 30:00 They sung out to him to halt, "Give us the password." He said, "What's the password?" "I don't know!" I forgot." I said, "It's too bloody late now. We'll get a bullet in our guts in a minute. We'd better do something." He said, "It was something about women...Oh! Women! Legs!" He said, "Come down here. You've got the wrong bloody password, but we'll let you in. You're on the ball." It was "Lovely Legs" and he'd forgot it. We got to there,
- 30:30 but by jeez, I thought we'd get one. You could hear the rifles clicking and the boys were getting ready to open up. But all the passwords over there were all with W. Always kept a W in them. I don't know what the Italians were, but we always had W with the Germans around, in case there was Germans about. Catch them.
- You said you left booby traps once you came out. Surely, then, therefore there were booby traps everywhere from nights of patrols which hadn't been cleaned up?**
- 31:00 Well, see, you'd go out that way. This was in our own battalion area. If we'd go out, we'd have our booby traps, we'd go out, they'd reset booby traps there, and cover it all in. Well, you'd come back into a battalion area...Once you came through the front line and back in, you were in safe ground then. There was nothing there except your own mob. The machine guns were all set. And what you used to have, you'd have your trench and you'd drive a peg in here,
- 31:30 and that would be my left of arc say in here. I'd drive a peg in here and a peg in there. They'd say, "That's your arc of fire." If you come under fire, that's as far as you go. When you bring your rifle around and you tap that stick, that peg, that's as far as you go, because the other bloke is out there and you'd end up shooting him. So that's where you went. You come to the right...If the enemy's coming this way, once you hit there, you wouldn't say lift it over the top and get into them down there,
- 32:00 because you had other cobbles down there. So that was your arc of fire. The next bloke, his arc of fire would come to that mark there, and that one there. Because at nighttime, they used to send out what they call a listening patrol. You were either a listening patrol or a fighting patrol. And if we were a listening patrol, you'd go out about fifty yards, it might be around about that or a bit more, but around about that. And you'd run the sig wire out. And we used to build what we called a 'Sanga.'
- 32:30 We'd pick rocks up. There were rocks everywhere in the desert, and we'd build a place for two of us to lay in there. It was a pile of rocks about that high, so you'd just be below, if a shell landed there, it wouldn't hit you. You could make them about that high, because every rock you picked up had a bloody scorpion underneath it. And that was right. In the desert, there were scorpions as long as your finger, and they'd curl up and they'd be coming like this at you. So we'd have to build the sangas in the daytime, if you could,
- 33:00 but there would be still scorpions under them. You'd go out, you'd take the machine gun out there and you'd set it up there and you'd be there with it. You and your mate. You'd be there for an hour, it depends what the officer told you. You'd be out there for two hours, out for an hour. And you'd have a sig [signal] wire running from the dugout where you were...And the wire would be there and the boys would be in the dugout,
- 33:30 just laying there, there were sandstorms with sand and lice and Christ knows what. And if we seen

someone coming in, if we were a fighting patrol, we'd open up on them. If we were a listening patrol, we weren't to fire. We were just to listen. Unless they come right onto us. And you'd be laying there, and they'd come towards you. You wouldn't fire if you were a listening patrol. All you were there to do is to listen and observe what they were doing, if you could in the dark, sort of thing.

34:00 But they had vary light pistols, and they'd fire a flare up and that would light all the ground up everywhere, so you daren't move, as soon as you moved, you were gone. And that's what we used to do. But when you go out there to lay in the sanga, if someone came along, you'd give three pulls on the wire, and the fellows, there be eight of them, in a section, odd, in the little dugout, and they'd line up along the trench. And they knew exactly where we were, and they'd have their guns tabbed,

34:30 so they wouldn't hit us. We were out the front, and they knew we were there. They would go there, and other blokes would (UNCLEAR). And we'd be out in the middle. They wouldn't dare shoot us, because it was set up. That's how we used to have it, so that we'd know.

In the fighting patrols, did you actually engage?

Oh yes, in fighting patrols you did, oh yes, you opened up on them. But if you were listening patrol, you were out there just to listen. Sometimes, you'd be out there listening, and you'd have a gas mask on the front here,

35:00 and they were the worst thing in the world. They sat you up in the ground about that high. You'd go to ground, but you had a gas mask here, and you were going up and down like this. And you'd see a patrol of eight or nine blokes coming towards you, and then they might veer off this way, and you'd think, 'Thank Christ for that. They're gone.' But otherwise you would be laying there, just trapped. But if you opened up, you had a sitting shot, because you'd be waiting for them to come in. We'd have all loaded rifles and everything ready.

35:30 One Christmas time, I'll never forget it. I was out there on patrol, it was Christmas Eve, I think it was. Round about that anyway. Me and another little bloke, Billy Little his name was, and we were out on this ridge part and he said, "Do you know, Bill, it's Christmas time." I said, "Yeah, Christmas time tonight, Billy." He said, "What are we going to do if the three wise men come along?"

36:00 I said, "We're out here as a fighting patrol. What are you going to do, shake hands with them?" He said, "Ohhh." I said, "They won't come here. They came years ago. They've been gone long ago." And he said, "But we're out here on fighting patrol, and if three men come along, we are supposed to shoot them, aren't we? I said, "Well, you shoot them. I'll stand here and watch you." And he said, "I was just trying to think that."

36:30 I said, "I don't think we'll see the three wise men, Billy. Don't worry about them, mate." But just the things he said, you know. He was a funny little bloke. And we go back, and when we go to go to camp up in New Guinea, he'd say, "We lid down here Bill. We lid down here. This will do us." I'd say, "Never mind lidding down..." He couldn't say 'lay down,' he'd say 'lid.' "We'll lid down here. This'll do us Bill, over here."

37:00 I always called him 'Lid Down'. Poor old Lid Down. He came form Condobolin, Billy Little. The different things that blokes would say. Sometimes in the trenches, we'd have a session, and blokes would sing songs and that sort of thing. You could crawl up toward the wire, towards where Tobruk is now and go up toward the Tobruk part,

37:30 and you could hear piano accordions being played in the trenches. In the trench itself. And all over the desert, it was quiet, and you could hear everything. You could hear them. But if you touched the wire, they tins hanging on the wire and everything...Little bells and things all along the wire, and if you touched the wire, look out. You copped everything. It was ready, they were waiting for you. Too right.

38:00 But we were lucky. I never ever got trapped in anything like that. And one night....I went out. We got a new officer came over here from Duntroon, officer he was. Nice fellow. But he'd never been out before, and we went out on a patrol with him, and we were walking out. We went a fare way out, we were. And we had to bring some wire back, cut a piece of wire to bring back, know the thickness of the wire.

38:30 So that when they went in to attack there, you could push the Bangalore Torpedoes under the wire. They'd blow up and blow the wire back about fifteen feet or so, then you could run through. That was the idea of the Bangalore Torpedoes. But the engineers used to do them. We were walking round one night out there, and I looked down, and just near about that height, sticking up in the air, I had a look down,

39:00 was a German landmine thing with a wire around it and a skull and cross bones on it. I said to him... Grosvenor his name was. I said, "Have a look at this, sir." He said, "What?" I said, "This is a booby trap here somewhere. I don't know where. But we might be in the middle of one, or we might be on the edge of one." You don't know." Because they would mark the booby trap and they would put a mine there, one there and one there. And there would be three. You could ride

39:30 a push bike over the tank mine. They were big heavy mines about that big and that deep. But you go over on the bit to the left, three feet to the left or to the right and you get a small mine. They were like an ice-cream cone. They were a little big bigger than an ice cream, full of powder, enough to blow your foot off, blow your leg off. You stepped out there, and you were gone, then. So he said. "Well, we've got

to get out of there." I said, "Yes. We've got to get down on our hands and knees."

- 40:00 So we had to get down on your hands and knees. That's the only way to get out of a minefield, if you are in the middle of one, and you don't know whether you are on the edge or where you are, is get your bayonet out, one bloke gets here and the other there, And you prod the ground with your bayonet, like that. Not that way because you'll set it off. You prod around like that and the other bloke would prod around, and he'd come to where you were. Then you'd move forward about two or three feet, or whatever you'd covered, and then you would do the same thing again.
- 40:30 We done that for about an hour and a half, and we didn't know where we were until we were out. But no one was game to stand up and walk, because if you stood up and walked, you got blown to hell. Apparently we were on the edge of the minefield, and we were lucky. If we'd have been in the middle of the minefield....They were five hundred yards long and five hundred deep, a minefield in the desert. If you get in the middle of a minefield and you've got five hundred yards to go on your hands and knees, by Jesus.....So that's how you get caught, see. But we were on the edge.

Tape 8

- 00:30 **Were you going to say something about Heck? I was just going to ask you a question, just about you guys were very close as brothers and I wanted to...**
- Yeah, well, we were the only two over the Middle East,
- 01:00 out of the bunch of us, because the other brothers, they were later going in. My brother Ray. He could have went in. He was the third eldest, but he was working in Sydney in an ammunition factory there, and he never volunteered to join. He was married, and he just kept working and he was called up then. They had no family.
- 01:30 They asked him where would he like to go and he said, "Into Artillery." So they put him into artillery. He was in the 2/5th Artillery. Heck and I, I was more or less eighteen months trying to catch him. We just missed each other each. He'd be coming out, and I'd be going in. That's what mucked us up a bit. And then he went to Greece, and then he came back from Greece, and then
- 02:00 we went up into action, and they went up into action in Syria. They were on the coast road in action, and I went up the middle. So we were miles apart again there. You know. Until the action over in Syria and the Foreign Legion and the other fellows sorted themselves out, the Vichy French...and who was going to go back and who was going to fight for those. Well, we had to
- 02:30 keep going around and mobilizing them and keep them together. That was our job. So they wouldn't start fighting on any of us fellows, again. We had to keep our eye on them. It was then, that I found out where his battalion was, and seen the CO, and he said we could come in. We came in tougher, and I got in, and we were training and we were along the coast of Syria. Even though there was no killing and no shooting going on, there was
- 03:00 live ammo and everyone was carrying guns and ready for action. Well then, just when we were about to leave to come back, he got yellow jaundice and went to hospital. Then I left with....Our division came back and we landed in Ceylon, and we were in Ceylon for a while. We were on an armoured train there that used to go from Gall to Trincomalee,
- 03:30 through the jungle, because they thought the Japanese would come in there. And then they thought they would land on the Adaman Islands. And then they were still arguing in the government. The 7th Division fellows came in from Egypt, and they said, "They're going home." Our governor at that time, he said, "No. These fellows are coming home. They've been away too long. They're coming home."
- 04:00 They sent some of the 7th Division up to Burma. And the Japanese, of course, were waiting for them. They captured them. So we left then to come home. When I got home, I went to Melbourne, and I went up home, supposed to have had about fourteen days leave, I had three days, and back I went to Wallgrove Camp again. Heck never got home. They went up into El Alamein.
- 04:30 The battalion went up into El Alamein up there, and he went back into the desert again. He got a bullet through the leg up there. He came home. But I was then up in New Guinea, fighting up near Kokoda. He, later, got called to go. The battalion he was with, they went to Balikpapan, and up through the top end there. Then I got hit
- 05:00 and I came back, and he was still up there, and we missed each other by a whisker, more or less. That's all it was. I couldn't catch him. But I do think it was a better thing in the long run. Because if we had been together, he would have been worrying about me, and I was always worrying about him. When you hear the shells going and the bullets flying, you'd think, well, 'Jeez, I hope he's not on the end of one of them.' But you didn't know.
- 05:30 It worked out alright. He got through the rest of the war and he got home, even though he had a bullet in the leg. But I got back alright. We sort of pulled through, more than what some poor fellows did. We

had some blokes come up as reinforcements today, and then the next morning, when we went into battle, they were killed that morning. They hadn't even fired a shot. We had two chaps up in New Guinea, young men,

06:00 they were only about seventeen, I suppose they would be. They wouldn't be any more. They were running out of men by then, by the time we got back and went up. And these young fellows came up, and they were in a bit of a dugout. Oh, it wouldn't be twenty yards away, I suppose. And a shell from the Japanese mountain gun plopped down right between the both of them, killed the both of them. They never even fired a shot.

06:30 All they were in was in the dugout there, the little trench. But it was just the luck of the draw. You never knew when you were going to cop it. I had a little Bible in my wallet about that big, little square one. When I was going to school, our scripture teacher gave us all a little Bible to keep. When I was going to the war, Mum

07:00 wrote a little note in it, "Take care of me" or something. I put it in my pocket. Then I got another one from the King. The King sent out a Bible, a little Bible with scripture readings, for all armed service personnel. I've still got mine on the table there. I put that in my basic pouch, too. Because I had my basic pouch. I had my ammunition in there, and I had ammunition in this one. I had two lots of ammo. And a sling of ammo round my neck.

07:30 I kept those. I bought them back from the war. They were a bit hard blown now because of the wet and all that sort of thing, but I carried them all through the war. But our scripture teacher was very good. When I came back she had gone. She may have died, I don't know. She was an elderly lady.

Did they ever come in handy? The Bible?

Yes. Often I used to sit down, if I had a chance, and have a bit of a read. It had little psalms in there,

08:00 little things to read. It didn't do me any harm. I'd just have a read of it now and again, if I had a few minutes. Some of the boys were the same. They would have a read and put it away in their wallets, sort of thing. But the padres we had with us were really good chaps. They were real nice fellows. They'd help you where they could, if there was anything wrong. But what I think, I don't know,

08:30 when we went to the war, Mum was a pretty strict....They were talking about getting mosquito bites and all this. Mum was a great believer in a thing we used to call Fisher's Phosphorine. I don't know whether you've hear of it or not. It was in a bottle about this big, and it was called Fisher's Phosphorine, The Great Nerve Tonic.

09:00 They used to give it to people to steady their nerves down. Anyway, Mum said you want to take a jar of Fisher's Phosphorine. You have two drops in a glass of water, and it's supposed to keep you on a level track. Now when we were going, me and my brother too, she said, "Take a bottle of Phosphorine with you. Put a few drops in your water bottle, and when you have a drink of water, and you're down, fill it up again.

09:30 Put some more in it." We laughed, but that was Mum's idea, so we said we'd go with it. So I had a bottle of Fisher's Phosphorine, The Great Nerve Tonic, it had written on it. It was just like water, but it had a bitter taste with it. I carried mine and when I got over to the desert....When I was in England, actually, I got the first one. "Parcel for you, Bill." And there was a little parcel this big. What Mum used to do was,

10:00 to do was, you know the little Vienna loaves of bread you used to buy, with the little curls on top. She'd cut the nozzle off them, pull the middle out and put in the little bottle of Fisher's Phosphorine and stuff the dough back in the middle of the bread. And she'd wrap it all up, and that would be a parcel like this, for me. I get this and I'd think, "What's this?" "For you, Bill." I'd open it up, a bottle of Fisher's Phosphorine, Mum had sent me. So I put a little bit

10:30 in the water bottle in again, and by that time of course, I had run out. I used it in England. I'd put a few drops in my water and drink it up. It might only last two month, three months. Then....we went up into Syria and all that, and I got four all the time I was away. Four in three years she sent me. I got another one just before I was coming home from Egypt,

11:00 or from Ceylon, I got another little loaf of bread, and I knew what it was. And when we got home, I said to her, "I've still got half your bottle of Phosphorine there." She said, "Oh, you got it, did you?" I said, "Yeah." So I took it to New Guinea with me and I didn't take any more. But all the fellows...We were dropping like flies with mosquitos, you know. But I never got fever,

11:30 I never got mosquitos. No flies, or nothing bit me. The only thing I got was the little what's her name that used to creep onto us.

The leeches.

Yes. They used to come onto us at night and bite us and we'd pull them off. I never got any sickness.

12:00 I was never on the parade one.

And what was in this Fisher's Phosphorine? Can you remember what the ingredient were?

No. Any elderly old people may know. I don't know whether you can still buy it. I don't know what the ingredients of it were, but it was a nerve tonic, and good for anything, insects. It sort of steadied you down, apparently. Not that I wanted much steadying down.

- 12:30 Mum was happy if we took it, so we said, "All right, Mum. We'll take it." But it was just this Fisher's Phosphorine, the great nerve tonic. They used to advertise it over the wireless. So that's what we took.

What did other blokes...Did other blokes have...

I don't know if any other blokes had anything. I just used to pour a bit in the bottle. I'd have my swig of poison and down she'd go.

- 13:00 I never was on sick parade once. Only when I was wounded twice, in the leg and in my arm. I don't know whether that had anything to do with it or not. But they were dropping like flies with malaria, in New Guinea, and I was just here with a short sleeves shirt on, and I never copped any. Whether it did help, to this day, I wouldn't know. If I knew some bloke who knew anything about it, I'd ask them.
- 13:30 I never knew anything about it. I've never heard anything today. But I tell you what, it must have done the trick, because it saved me. I never got crook. Even when we were coming home, fellows were going down with Malaria and that. I never got crook, and I was with them, we were altogether. The mosquitos, we used to go like this, swoosh them off our arms, handfuls of them. I never got any sickness from it.
- 14:00 So it might have survived me. But Mum was good like that. She'd get the bread and everything would be in the bread. You didn't know whether it would be a bottle of that or a little small bottle of whiskey, shoot it over to us.

Was that a common way of smuggling things?

Yes. That was a common way. If you put it in a loaf of bread, it didn't get shook around too much. They used to just throw them anywhere. When we were way up in the line, they chuck them all

- 14:30 on the back of a truck, the mail, and away it would go, and be bouncing all over the place. But I never had anything broken. It always came there alright. I was pretty lucky, I suppose.

By the time it reached you, wouldn't the bread be all mouldy?

Oh, the bread would be mouldy, but you didn't worry about the bread. The Phosphorine was good. The bread would be mouldy, and she'd be hard as a board, too, half the time. But it didn't worry us.

- 15:00 Mum would pack it in tight and it wouldn't move much and she'd just wrap it and it would go. There was a mob of girls in Sydney called the Gainsbury Girls. They used to have ladies stockings, Gainsbury stockings. They adopted our battalion, and they used to send us balaclavas to put on, to cover our face, and stop all the frost, when we were over in the desert.
- 15:30 And they used to make gloves for us to put on and that sort of thing. We couldn't use them when we were fighting, because we couldn't use the triggers with the gloves. But when we were in Syria, after the war was over, that part then, we were right up on the Turkish border, and it was freezing, and we used to go out on lorries at night time to go on patrol, and our face would be white here....
- We'd be standing up in the back of trucks with our rifles, and we'd be all just like ghosts.
- 16:00 But that kept us dry and kept us warm. They were a good lot of girls. But I only went down there once, on an Anzac Day. I haven't been back there, really. Probably the factory would be gone now, anyway. I've never heard of it again. The Gainsbury Girls. That was their name. Gainsbury's. They were in George Street, I think, in Sydney. They were good to us. When we came back from the war, we went up and seen them and thanked them.
- 16:30 Before I left to go up to here, I went and seen them, and told them I probably wouldn't be see them again, I was coming up here, and that's what it was. So they were good.

Just one more question about the bread in the post. Was there any inspections, or censorship of things that might have been sent from Australia, in the mail? Did they check it?

- 17:00 Oh, the doctors used to check our mail. We could write many letters. I got two letters, all the time, from home. All we had was a green card, and it just had on it, "I am well." "I am not well." And you just crossed out 'I am not well.' We'd look along, and we'd cross out, and cross out. You were always well, no matter if you had a bullet hanging out of you. You were always well, because Mum would worry.
- 17:30 How we used to get the message through, they'd read the letter, and the doctor would cross that out or cross this out. We had a simple card and we crossed it out. And it'd say. "How are you today?" I write on it, "I'm very well in Rookwood today, Mum. Everything's fine in Rookwood." Rookwood's big cemetery in Sydney, you see, so she'd say, "Ah, things are not too good."
- 18:00 The boys might as well be dead, they're in Rookwood. That's how she'd know where we were. We couldn't say, "Oh gee, it's lousy here, Mum." We used to just say, "Oh, might as well be in Rookwood today, Mum." That's about the strength of it. She'd know, then, that I was having a bad time. That's how

we put it through. I wasn't saying anything against the enemy, or anything. We'd say, "We might as well be in Rookwood."

18:30 Did you figure out a code language before you left home with your Mum?

No. I never had time to do anything much. We just had to get away. That's all we had to do. Train, train, train. The boys went in January, and had February, March, April, May. We went in the 5th of May, so we had three moths to get into shape. Though we were in pretty good shape, because we used to run a lot and do a lot of work.

19:00 Even when I went into the battalion, I was in pretty good shape, I always kept myself in fair condition. We used to run up the mountain, just out of Holsworthy. There's a big hill. They'd have a hurricane lamp on top of it and they'd get you to run up. So one bloke would run up and he'd get up there and swing it round and put the light half way down the hill and he'd run back. The next one would go up, and he brought the lamp down a bit closer.

19:30 And the officer down below never woke up. We used to bring the lamp down the hill a bit. "Pick the lamp up, turn around with the lamp and put the lamp down." "Yeah, righto." You'd put her down. Then we'd put our coat around it and run down the hill about a hundred yards. "Where are you now?" "I'm up here. I'm here." "Where's the lamp. It's right. See it?" "Yes, she's right." Away we'd go.

20:00 You had to be cunning.

You mentioned before that your mother received a telegram about your shrapnel wounds?

Yes. The army sent a telegram back, "Wounded in action." That's all they'd say. "Your son William John has been wounded in action in Syria on such and such a date." And that's all you'd know, and they'd expect you then to drop them a line or something. But we used to write letters, but Mum didn't know, it would be months before they'd ever get them, you see.

20:30 And cables. They'd send cables to you, and you wouldn't get it...Well, Dad died in August and we didn't get a cable till Christmas. He died in August, we didn't know. We had no word about it at all. That happened to a lot of fellows, at different times, over there. So we just sort of carried on and away we went. But nothing else that I can remember there.

21:00 We battled on from day to day. Every day was a....We'd always reckon every day was a bonus. We'd say, "If you see the sunrise and see it set, that's a bonus." The next morning, you see her come up, well, you are lucky to get another day. But we never used to worry too much. We had enough to look after ourselves. Food was hard. We got fairly good food in the desert,

21:30 but it was hardest in the jungle up here. You'd get eight men to a tin of bully beef, and you'd get a little bit that big, and that would be your dinner, tea and breakfast and all. We were pretty hungry at time, there. I knocked a Jap over one night there, they had bags of rice with them. They had like a birdseed bag on their belt, full of rice. We were going up one part there,

22:00 and some of the boys, they'd got some rice bags. This chap had a bag of rice on him, so I took it off him. And my mate was coming up out of another battalion, and he was going up the front, too. And he said, "Where are you camping tonight?" I said, "We're stopping here." He said, "We're just camped over here." He said, "We're going up at daylight, in the morning." I said, "We're going to go up at daylight, we'll be behind you." I said, "What have you got to have a feed?" I said, "Well, I've got half a bag of Jap rice here." "I've got a bit here." He said.

22:30 "We'll put her in the dixie and we'll boil her up." It was raining like Billy-O [raining hard], so we got a tree that leaned a bit, and we had little packets of stuff, they used to set it alight, and put it under, and boil it up, you could put the top on....As long as you could keep the rain off it, you know. We put our dixie on and the rice came up and everything looked good. We had a good feed that night.

23:00 He had to go over to his unit. His unit was only about two or three hundred yards away. He had a feed and I said, "I'll see you in the morning, Steve." "Yes," he said, "I'll see you up there, mate. We're going up there early. We'll be ahead of you, but I'll meet you on the other side of the bridge." I said, "Righto." So away they went. Anyhow, there was a shooting going on, we could hear them fighting up there, and we were all ready and away we go, the CO said, "Up we go." So away we went, we got up there.

23:30 And there was a couple of blokes killed on this side of the bridge, and some on the other side, and I said to one of the stretcher-bearers, I said, "How's Steve Sheldon going up there?" He said, "He ain't." I said, "Oh, don't tell me...." He said, "Yeah, he got hit into the middle of the bridge, fell down into the river, and we haven't seen him." He was only a short man, he had a fair lot of ammunition with him, and when he hit, he fell into the water,

24:00 it was flowing pretty hard and away he went. We never seen him again. He lived at Marrickville. I used to work with him before I went to the war. We worked together. He was hoping that he'd come over to me, which he did. And that's what happened to him, I never seen him. I didn't know his mother. He had a sister but I didn't know her, either. But it was too late when I got back after two years. I didn't know them.

24:30 When we went into action in Syria, I got my Syria note there, and we all signed the note, and I put it in my pouch, and I got through and everything, and when we came back...I was only going through it a couple of years ago, and I just was just tallying the fellows. There was only about four of us left now that survived the whole war. All their signatures are on the note.

25:00 But that's the way it used to go.

Bill, just one question about your brother. How much difference was there between you two?

Oh, Heck was six when I was born. He was six years older than me. The eldest brother, Wally, was seven, Hecky was six, and Ray was five. Mum had one each year, three years running.

25:30 And then we had no more then until I was born later on, and then there was about two or three years between each one of us. That's how the ages went on. Two of them have gone now, since the war, Heck's gone, and my other brother's gone. He was in the 2/25th Battalion, he's gone.

26:00 They're the only two that have gone. And one brother is very sick now, at Bankstown, in a hospital, he's in a coma they tell me. Wally is still alive. He's 90. He's the eldest brother. But we've poked along fairly well, considering. I've survived so far.

What were the restrictions at the time about brothers being in the same battalion?

26:30 Well, you do worry about them. I'd sooner we were separated. The best thing, I think, was when Heck and I separated. Because he'd be fighting on one front, and I'd be fighting on the other front, and you'd see the ambulances coming back with wounded in, and you'd see them going to the hospitals, stretcher bearers carrying blokes across....You knew about where they were fighting, but you didn't know exactly. I used to say to the stretcher bearers,

27:00 "How's Heck Booth going? Is he still going?" "Last time I seen him, Bill, he was shooting alright, he was going alright." "Oh, that's good. If you see him, tell him I'm still battling." "Righto." Away they'd go, and you wouldn't know, and we wouldn't see them until after an action was over.

But were you officially allowed to be in the same battalion if you were brothers?

Oh, they made it eventually that you could go together. They stopped you at first when the war broke out. They said that brothers couldn't go together but then,

27:30 after the Syrian campaign, Heck could claim me. The elder brother could claim you, but I couldn't say, "I want Heck to come to my battalion." Because he was elder. He could claim me. So he claimed me to come to him. And that's how they used to get together. And that's how we happened to...I gets to his battalion eventually, then he got sick and went away, and I went away the other way. So we got separated again then, see.

28:00 Did he try and claim you?

Oh yeah. He claimed me and got me to come from my old battalion to his battalion. And then the Syrian campaign afterwards. And then when we were about to come home, he got yellow jaundice. He went to hospital and we had to go home. Away we went, and I missed him then, because I came home here. He stayed over there, at El Alamein. He went up into the desert again to El Alamein. He was fighting up there again, where I come home and went up in the jungle.

28:30 So we were spread far apart. That's the way it went..

Just on a slight diversion. Your tattoos? Did you get them during the war?

I got that one on during the war, up in the trench in Mersa Mature. A little Arab fellow put it on for me up there. Sitting up there one day, we was talking, and he come down with a donkey...They used to come down with the camels or the donkeys, and they were loaded with grapes. Big heaps of grapes each side of the camels.

29:00 And he pulled up near where we were, actually he was going through, but he couldn't go through because we were firing the mortars over the hill. He was only going into our target area so he had to stay with us. (BREAK)

29:30 He pulled up there, we couldn't let him go because we were firing the mortars over the hill. He was going into our target area, so he stayed with us. We were sitting there in the trench, and I said, "Can you put a tattoo on for me?" He said, "I can put it on for you." He put it on, no trouble at all, he had the needles and all. I just brushed her over. It's not faded at all...a little bit. It's getting a few scratches here and there when you are down the back into the bush.

30:00 And this one here's got a few scratches on her. You get them when you are down the back. This little bird. But I never got any others. No.

Was he actually a tattoo artist?

Yeah, they do. They do it with ordinary needles over there, no electric machines. He just had the needles, and he'd go like that. Dip it into the ink, go like that again, just do it over. That's what they

used to do.

And how did you communicate to him what kind of tattoo you wanted?

- 30:30 He had a little thing with tattoos on it, he pulled it out of his shirt and showed me. I said, "That'll do." Because palm trees was alright for them fellows. They were in them all the time, and he had no trouble to put it on for me. Most of our fellows we got our...The CO told us to get our number put behind our watch. Because if we got killed,
- 31:00 sometimes we wouldn't have our dead meat tickets [identity tags] on. You'd lose your tickets. So they'd look under your watch and it'd have your number, so they'd know who you were. It was tattooed under your wrist. Some fellows said, "I don't want tattoos on me." So they said, "Have it tattooed under your watch." They'd take their watch off and write the number there. My number was 10124. That was when I went in. My brother was 4849.
- 31:30 He had a four-figure number. I had a four-figure number when I first went in, but then I had to stand off while the other officers came in, and then they called me again and then I got a five figure number then. Because mine is only ten thousand. I was in the first ten thousand.

Did you get your number tattooed on you as well?

Yeah. I got it up there. I had it there. But she's nearly off now, because I had a...

- 32:00 cut off me there, and that sort of nearly cut the number off. NX10124. You can nearly see it, but it's partly off. But the blood transfusions and all that sort of thing never affected it.

And what about the tatt above that one?

Oh that one. I got that up there somewhere. That's only the horse and jockey.

- 32:30 But I had my number there and this one there, but I never got any more done.

Was it a common thing for fellows to get tattoos at that time?

Oh, some fellows got them. But I didn't worry too much. I was just talking there with a chap and he put it on for me. I didn't worry that much. Most of the boys got their number underneath their watch,

- 33:00 just in case, but I had my tickets here and my O Group, O positive O negative Group....See a lot of men died during the war, they weren't killed, they were badly wounded, and the doctors tell me after the war that there was blood groups. They didn't know that they had O group. O4, Mary
- 33:30 is O negative. The doctors told me after the war that had they have known it might have saved some men's lives. If you lost a lot of blood they would say, "Righto, mate. I want a bit of blood out of you to put into this fellow." If you were O group and this bloke's A group, it doesn't match. So they had to find an O group positive donor for you,
- 34:00 and O group positive so that I could give you blood the same O group positive. I was A group, which they didn't know them times, but I was A group and if they gave you O group blood, then it clogged up, and some people died and that's what it was. Now, of course, they know and you can go to the blood bank now.... I now mine, I gave fifty odd pints of blood. They used to use me a fair bit in the theatre.
- 34:30 But O group, I'm O group positive. O4M but anyone if they didn't know it would kill you. That's what happened to some of the men, they told me. That's what the doctors told me. That's how it worked.

Just a few questions Bill about the Queen Mary.

- 35:00 **You mentioned that you were on a very long journey, on that one convoy on the Queen Mary. How many men were on the Queen Mary and can you describe the experience of being on that ship for that period of time?**

I couldn't tell you how many men was on it. I've got books there probably that I could have shown you, but I didn't look them up. But we were full. The whole of the Queen Mary was loaded. The nurses were in main deck, ninety seven.

- 35:30 That's where all the nurses were. And we used to go on duty on the staircase at the bottom, and the nurses used to be up on the main deck. We used to have guard duty at nighttime at the deck. No one was allowed go up those steps to where the nurses were quartered. We used to do guard duty all the time we were there. Look after the girls and make sure they were all right.
- 36:00 We used to run around the deck. Big decks. We used to run around the deck for training, to keep physically fit, running around and around the deck. And then we had boat drill. The siren would go and it would be boat drill, and you all had to run out and put on your life vest, and be there at the boats on the deck of the ship. But it was eighty feet from the deck, where the bow of the ship is, to the water.
- 36:30 And when we were going around the cape between Victoria and Western Australia, the waves used to come up nearly over the top of the ship. Eighty feet. We used to go down like that, and you'd see the water up here, and then she'd come up like that, and the wave over the top. On the Queen Mary, too

right. Up in the front part of the ships, there was a big glass tube, a big round tube.

37:00 We used to go up in the front there and that would be for submarine watch. And you might do two hours on there, that's down the hold a bit, and into the front, there was a big glass circle and you'd stand there. And you'd see the waves go down and you'd be there like that and you could see out. If there was a submarine near you, you could see the periscopes. We used to watch. And it was the same when we were coming back from England, too.

37:30 We had twenty-six machine guns mounted on the decks of the ship that we were on coming back. They used to be out there all the time, night and day, on the deck, because of the aircraft. Because it was eight or nine ships in the convoy. You know. But that's what they used to watching for.

Are there any stories you can tell us about seasickness?

Oh, well, I didn't get sick, but a couple of the boys were very sick.

38:00 A Scottish chap onboard the ship there...One of the chaps there was very sick and he said, "You know what you've got to do son." We said, "No. What have you got to do?" He said, "Get that big mug, and turn that tap on. There's a big tap," around the side of the ship, where they put the hose, ready to hose the decks down. "Fill it up with salt water, drink her down," he said. "Fill it up again. You'll probably bring it all up, but from then on you'll be alright."

38:30 So the boys used to get a big mug full and they'd drink it down and they'd be vomiting it up, it made them crook, but they'd be alright after that. Well, that's what he told them. He was pretty right. Some of the blokes were very crook. pretty sick. They couldn't even get up. But they were alright once they drank the salt water. You just drank it down and it made them alright. I don't know. It must have worked somewhere. now you are alright. I don't know. It must have worked somehow.

39:00 **It is almost as good as the nerve tonic.**

Yeah, it was.

With so many blokes on the one boat are there any stories you can tell about the shenanigans?

There was a few chaps died on the boat. Not on our boat, but when we were coming from England, back, there were some British troops came with us. They were coming back. There wouldn't be a couple of days go by

39:30 and the boats would all stop. They'd signal the boats to all pull up. And there would be a burial off one of the ships. Someone would go down off the back of the ship into the middle of the ocean. But they couldn't stop too long because of submarines all around, and we were very careful. One morning we were going along, and I looked down the side of the ship and there was a couple of chairs and things floating by, going by. There had been a ship sunk ahead of us.

40:00 **A ship in the convoy?**

He wasn't in the convoy but he was ahead of us somewhere. Probably a merchant ship that had been sunk a day or two ahead of us. But all the parts were floating by in the water.

And what were people dying of in the convoy?

Well most, I understand, what they were dying of was the heat. The British people couldn't stand the heat and it was terribly hot in there.

40:30 Especially coming down Africa there. Even though we were out, the decks of the ship were that hot, the tar in the middle of the ship, you could see it sticking up. They'd have canvas things over the top, but it didn't make any difference. It was hot. The British troops that used to go to Sierra Leone, they used to get two years double time for what they did. They'd go for twelve months and get two years pay for it, they tell me, because it was that bad. You couldn't stay there. It was that hot.

41:00 I don't know. There was quite a few chaps buried at sea. Not on our ship. We didn't notice any on our ship. On the Queen Mary going, we went alright. We were okay.

Can you remember any sea songs or military song that the blokes would sing on the ship going over?

Oh, not really. We had some officers with us who could sing. They were very good.

41:30 They used to sing Soldiers Of Fortune Are We. I know that was one song they used to sing. One of our officers was very good at that, he used to get up and sing.

Do you remember how that one goes?

Oh gee. I forget the wording of it now.

\n[Verse follows]\n "Soldiers of fortune are we.\n We all stick together,\n Like birds and a feather\n For soldiers of fortune are we." \n

But it was a long song and we used to sing it.

Tape 9

00:30 **Just talking about the songs that would be sung, that you can recollect?**

I don't know. It was mostly the bands used to play for us, and they used to have pretty good music.

01:00 What was the one...Our band...Our marching band was Sussex By The Sea. That's an English one. The other battalion that I was with was Waltzing Matilda. That was our other band. We used to play that. They used to play that there. They'd meet us out there and play Waltzing Matilda.

01:30 **And what about when the blokes were together? Would there be any particular little rhymes or limericks or songs that they would sing together?**

Oh dear. I can't remember at the moment.

02:00 The CMF fellows used to sing songs, different songs. We have a battalion reunion coming on the 3rd of July this year, with the 41 Battalion in Lismore is meeting them, and we're having it at the RSL [Returned and Services League] Club in Lismore. And most of the fellows,

02:30 or what are left of us, is going to have a big turn out there. It would be a wild turnout, I should imagine, But there's not too many of them left there. I don't know what songs I can think of that they used to sing.

If you can't remember, that's alright. I wouldn't mind actually asking you a few questions about Syria.

03:00 **You mentioned that you were hit by shrapnel in Fort Khiam?**

That was near Khiam.

Tell us about how you received that injury and what that experience was like?

I was on the gun shooting, and it was one of their mortar bombs went up. They out-ranged ours by about three hundred yards.

03:30 Our gunners couldn't get to them, at that stage. It just exploded....it might have been twenty yards away from me. I was just down behind some rocks shooting and it smacked me, I felt a whack on my leg. Some went over the top of me, but it just hit my leg. And the CO...I could feel the hot blood running down my leg and that, and I said, "Oh, jeez. I've got a prang on my leg."

04:00 He had a look at it and said, "You better get something done about it." I said, "Oh, I'll wait..." it was in the afternoon, and it was starting to get towards night, and I thought, 'Well, I'm not going to get out now. I'll wait until later on in the evening.' It wasn't too bad. It was just shrapnel in there and in there. It was a cut here. I got a cut there where I got a bit through there. So they stitched it up there and pulled it in. It stung for a while,

04:30 but I couldn't run much with it, but I just got along the same as the rest of the fellows did. And I walked back. When the fighting eased down a bit, I went over to our medical orderly bloke, he had a look at it, and he said, "Oh, you better get something done about it. You might get something in the leg, and lose the leg." So he said, "We'd better see about it." So we seen the CO and the company commander and he said,

05:00 "Well, you better get back and make sure it's right." I went back the next morning, I went back with the truck. I was only back for...Well, the fighting lasted five weeks and I was back in the front before the fighting ended. So I wasn't away long. About a fortnight I was away. That's about all.

And did you feel that it was going to be fatal or that the injury was critical?

No, it never worried me.

05:30 I found it not too bad. It never worried me that much, except now and again, it used to get a bit tight around the muscle. But I came home, and I went on through there and then I went up to New Guinea, and it never worried me. So a good enough test up there, up in the jungle, up in the hills, a pretty good there. The only bad one I got was this one, of course. That was the worst one.

06:00 They took a tendon out of my leg there. They took it out of right there and down to there and there and they put that tendon in there, so I could move my fingers, because I couldn't move my fingers. They put it in there and it's not too bad. I can move it a bit. But this worst part for this was when I was on the railway and shovelling blue metal all day. We used to have to clean up the middle of the track and both sides. Well, there's four men in the gang, and we'd have two in the middle and one on each side.

06:30 What they've got now, they've got a truck that comes along and it just lays it along the middle and lays

it along each side, and they go along in a train, they don't have to shovel it now. We used to have to shovel it. You'd do a mile a day, which is a fair bit of shovelling. My hand used to play up a bit then, but you have to make a living, so I had to work. I couldn't get a pension or nothing, because I retired...Even up to when I retired,

- 07:00 If I had of went to the repat, [repatriation hospital] perhaps, and seen them about it before I was sixty they said, "You might have had a chance of getting a bit of pension, but you have no hope once you're working over sixty." To get a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] pension or anything. So no worries. So I battle on and that's the way it is.

Just going back to when you returned to Australia after that shrapnel injury.

- 07:30 **You mentioned earlier that your Mum didn't recognize you, and she thought that you aged. What do you think were the things that most aged you, to the point where your own mother couldn't recognise you?**

Oh, I think what most of it was, was that she didn't expect me, anyhow. She only got a letter from me a week ago, and I'd beens in Egypt then, and the next minute I landed at the door. So I think she got a bit of a shock, then.

- 08:00 I'd been away over two and a half years, nearly, and I was seventeen when I had gone. And I had aged a bit, I suppose, when I got back there. And when I knocked at the door, she didn't expect any of the boys home. She thought Heck and I were still over there, and the other boys were up into the jungle. She didn't know what to think. And I'm standing there with a hat on and steel helmet and all the gear, and she just looked at me and, "Who are you?"

- 08:30 And then we got inside. It was all hell let loose, then. She didn't know what to do, I was home. Then a couple of days after we got a telegram to say, 'You've got three days to be back here.' I said, "I've got to go." Well, that really rocked the boat then, because she didn't want us to go, because Dad had gone and she was on her own, there was no-one else in the house. I suppose it rocked her a little bit.

- 09:00 That's just the way it went. And some chaps were just the same, because they had gone home the same as me. Some of the married men even got home. They were six and seven years older than me, most of them. Well, the CO, he used to have a battalion runner, he'd have a company runner to go with the messages from here and there in a quick hurry, and he said, "You're a young bloke, Bill. You be my runner."

- 09:30 I was his runner for a while. I used to be racing here and racing there with messages, you know. Of course, they'd be looking out for me. They'd slap one into me quick, because they knew I was running to get somewhere. And then he got sick. Our officer went away, and we got another runner then, another company runner, and they give me a break then, and another chap done the compony running.

- 10:00 They'd give you all a turn because it was all learning something. And that's the way it was, the way it went. But I survived it.

So in that two and a half years before you went to New Guinea, what do you think was the experience that might have changed you the most?

Oh, you mean before I went up to New Guinea, after coming home from Egypt?

Yeah.

Oh, well, I don't know.

- 10:30 I think a lot of it was in England when the Germans were bombing the place there. We see little kids killed in the street, they were bombed, and the mothers were crying, the family was killed and that. There were a lot of bad thing there, I thought, I used to worry a bit. But as the war went on...You don't ever get used to seeing people killed. But when you see a lot of mates that you joined up with,
- 11:00 that you camped with in the camp, and we went on patrols together, and the next minute you see one of them knocked off, it's pretty hard for a while. Because you've got no counselling in them days. Today, you've got counselling. You see in the paper where people get counselling, and all that, and that's fair enough. But when I come out after the war, after four and a half odd years,
- 11:30 I went down to the barracks, from Concord Hospital, I discharged from there, and a fellow came out and gave me a suit of clothes. Well, I didn't know whether I'd wear them or chuck them in the fire. They were an old pair of clothes. I don't think one of the swaggies [itinerant workers] would wear them in them days. He said, "Here's your coat, mate, here's your suit, here's your hat. Congratulations. It's a job well done." And away you went. That was it.
- 12:00 No one said, "Can I help you and do anything?" They asked me what job I would like to take on. What I would like. When I told him two or three ones, he said, "They're gone, they're gone. You've got no hope there, mate. None there." I said, "What can I do?" They said, "Well, just look around and see if you can find something." I said, "Thanks very much." And I got a train to Bankstown, and walked out from Bankstown to home. And that was it.

Did you accept that at the time? Or did you feel....

- 12:30 Well, I thought I might have been able to get a job in wool classing. I liked wool classing. I thought I might be lucky and get a job there, but there was nothing going. And there was a job at...As the fellow told me at central Australia with the police force up there. And he seen me there and had a good yarn to him. Everything was alright, until he seen me hand. "What's wrong with your hand?" I said, "I've got a bullet through her." He said, "Can you use it?" I said, "Not really well."
- 13:00 He said, "Mate, it's no good you coming for this job." That cooled it. I just said, "Well, what can I do?" I went around to Marrickville and I went around the woollen mills. They were all flat out then, making uniforms and that. Everyone said, "You'll get a job there. You'll get a job there." When I went down, "No, no." Everywhere you went. "No, no." I thought, 'Well, a man might as well have got his bloody head blown off if he comes back here and he's got nothing.' So that was the way it was.
- 13:30 **You mentioned before that you weren't entitled to a pension. But did you get compensation for wounds or injuries that you sustained?**
- No. I got a twenty-five percent pension for that, years ago, many years ago, but I haven't go anything for it now. I've just got to put up with it. But I'm not worried. I'm here.
- 14:00 I'm moving around. There are a lot of fellows worse than me. So I looked at it that way. Mum and I together. That's it. We've been married now, sixty years, so we've done alright. We poke alone. We haven't got long to go. We've got a few more years, with a bit of luck, so that's just the way it is. Oh, no, I don't regret it. I went and I served my country and that's all I can do. I can't do any more than that.
- 14:30 I reckon if you live in the country, and you're not going to go and serve and fight for the country, then you might as well get out of it. We were very British in those days, in our young days. I remember at school, we used to come out of school there Monday morning, and we used to line up on the parade ground, and a boy and girl would go out and we'd hoist the flag. We'd put the flag up.
- Which flag would you be hoisting?**
- The Australia flag.
- 15:00 And the whole class would be all lined up. "We honour our God, we serve our Queen, and we salute our flag." And we'd salute our flag, and we'd go in to school. Every Monday morning that was always done. That was part of the setup. And then we'd have Empire Day. We used to sing Land Of Hope And Glory, and all those songs. You'd never hear them today.
- 15:30 But we tried, about three or four years ago here, to try and get an Australian flag put on the desk of each teacher in New South Wales. A little flag about that high on a nice little stand for the teacher to put on their desk. And they held us back. They wouldn't have it. They said, "No, we don't want it. We couldn't do anything about it. We just asked them because we thought it would be nice.
- 16:00 But they knocked us back. They said, "No, we don't want any of that." So it never done. I thought it might, but it never went, so that was it.
- So when the war was declared, and you decided to enlist, what were some of the reasons behind why you wanted to go to the war?**
- Oh well, my mates were going. We used to go out swimming in a little pool in the bush out towards Kentucky.
- 16:30 We used to go out there Sunday and have a swim, half a dozen of us. Little cozzies on and away we'd go. And we'd sit on the bank there talking, and the war declared, it was on. And we said, "Well, we're going to go to the war." And the boys said, "Jeez, we're a bit young, aren't we?" I said, "Ah, push our age up. We'll get on." We said, "Yeah, by jeez. We're not going to let the Germans come out here and take our swimming hole," we said. "We'll get stuck into them."
- 17:00 So Georgie Hogan, the two boys there, Georgie, and Jackie Island...about five or six of us there. "We'll get down and join." They said, "We'll have to pull a fastie." I said, "Oh, don't matter. We'll go down." So we pulled a fastie. Of course, I got in. I was a galah, I got in. I got through. The other boys went up and they couldn't get in. I don't know how I got in. I was tall enough and everything, but they didn't get in.
- 17:30 Anyhow, away I go. And they wrote to me and they said, "We're going down next year. We're going to get in. Lock our age up, Bill." They got in alright, and the poor devils went up to Malaya. I got over there, and they wrote to me and said, "We're coming over, Bill. Hang on to them till we get there. We'll all be together again." I said, "Righto." And blow me down, the next minute I got a letter from one of their mothers, "The boys have gone to Malaya." And then I heard then...
- 18:00 capitulated....They'd all got taken prisoner and they were shooting them and murdering them, and I said, "Well, that's the end of it." And I didn't know till I got home, and when I got home, most of them were killed. They weren't there. There's only one of them now that I know was alive. The others never came back. They went up there and they got killed, and that was it. It was tough, really, loosing them all, but that's the only reason, we just went to the war. We thought,
- 18:30 "Well, our fathers went to the war, and so-and-so went to the war. Good enough for them? Good enough for us." That's how we went. That's all there was to it. Not that had any grudge against any Germans, or

anybody else, but we thought, "Well, if the boys are going to fight for it, we better go and do our chop." There was four of us in our battalion who were sixteen. One bloke was fifteen. He got over to the Middle East and then they woke up

19:00 and sent him home again. He is still here in Kyogle. He was only fifteen. He went over there, got all the way over there, and into Palestine training, and they found out he was only fifteen, and they shot him back, poor devil.

Did he look old for his age?

No. He never went again. He stayed here. But he was disappointed.

So in those days...

19:30 **Could you give me an impression, Bill, of what people thought of the Germans as an enemy?**

Oh well, they didn't like them, too much, I don't think. Dad didn't say much about them to me. When we were going, he just said to me, "I don't like you going to France, you'll freeze to death there, son, if you go to France." He said, "It's a cold country. A cow of a country," he said. "It's freezing." He said, "If you're in the desert, it's hot, but at least you're alive."

20:00 He said, "But over there it's no good." But he wasn't in the army. He was in the navy, he was on a cruiser, and it was a New Zealand cruiser on loan to England. Dad was a New Zealander, see, and they happened to be over there. He said they were in the North Sea, and the rough and tumble over there. He said, "Shovelling ice off the deck of the ship every night and every morning, it was cold." He said, "I hope you never go there. Wherever you go," he said, "I hope you never go there."

20:30 We were half way there, on the way we were going, when Dunkirk was on, I thought we were going to land there for sure. But we never. We went straight into England, so we were lucky. But we never got into Germany, or over into the other countries at all. We were in the desert all the time and we stayed there.

Was your Dad in the First World War?

Yes. He was in the First World War. He was a stoker on a ship. Of course they had coal burners them years,

21:00 you had to shovel the coal into them and keep them going. That's what Dad used to do. He was on the ship. It was a New Zealand ship on loan to the British Navy.

Did he ever tell you any stories about it?

No. He never mentioned it, very little at all, he didn't say much about the war. Oh, he used to say, "I lost a lot of good friends, but that's the way of the world."

21:30 He never told us much at all, really. We never knew much about it. The only things we knew was what we read in books, and things like that about the war. Sometimes, the chaps we knew, the older fellows we knew, would have a yarn to us about little things that happened in the wars and that. But other than that, war wasn't even mentioned much at home, and we never bothered him about it. But the photograph of the ship that he was on. We got a big photo,

22:00 and we sent it to the War Museum and it's up in the War Museum in Canberra. The ship, down in the water, and the waves coming up over it. The HMS Challenger. That was the one he was on. And Mum gave it to the War Museum to keep. Other than that, that's all we've got of him, really. I've got his watch, his gold watch and chain, inside. He left that for me when I came back from the war. He said, "Give this to Bill."

22:30 And I got his gold watch and chain. The other brother got his shotgun. Dad had a Greener shotgun, a very expensive shotgun, and he left it for him. He's still got it, They don't go shooting now, of course. I would have liked to have got it. I would have liked his shotgun, but I've got my own rifle here now. I've got plenty.

23:00 I don't want any more. I've got nine, rifles and shotguns, that I use occasionally but I've got a licence for them and they registered and all that sort of thing. I go out...The little grand daughters, they're they are ten or twelve, and they come out with me sometimes, they come out for a shot. We go out the bush here. Drive the car out to my mates place and they have a poke around. Knock a bunny over and they enjoy coming with me.

23:30 But they don't shoot of course, at all, but they like to come out. We go out sometimes of a summer. I took them out a couple of years ago, and said, "We're going out tonight to camp." We had a little three-man tent there and they said, "We'll come Pop." Alright. "You've got to go in your tent. Now when the dingoes howl tonight, don't get frightened and want to run home." "Oh, no, Pop. You'll be there, won't you?" I said, "Yeah, I'll be there. I'll be camping just outside your tent." I've got a swag and I just throw it on the ground,

24:00 one we used out in the bush. So we put the tent up and went out there, and I think it was about ten traps I put in. We caught a couple of rabbits that night. I got them down and skinned them and packed them up. Blow me down. I hadn't heard a dingo out for about three months, and we were laying down

there, and they are talking with the little lamp alight in the tent, and the dingoes start howling not two hundred yards up the hill.

24:30 They said, "What's that, Poppy?" I said, "It's a dingo. Don't worry. They won't hurt you." "Oh, a dingo. We don't want to stay there with them, Pop." "You stay in your tent. I'm camping here. I've got my shotgun beside me and don't worry about it." And they settled down after a while. They only howled for a few minutes, the dogs. They were crossing the ridge up here. They howled a bit and then away they went again the other way, but the girls were a bit frightened. I knew what would happen.

25:00 **Just going back to one more question about Britain. You mentioned that before you went to New Guinea, that was the place that probably had the most impact on you, in that two and a half years before you came back home.**

Well the most would be....The most I remember was Birmingham, when they bombed it. It was terrible. They really bombed Birmingham, from one end to the other. They came over in droves

25:30 and they really flattened it. That would have been the worst I've seen in the mash ups. The people and the homes and everything. London was bad enough, but Birmingham, being an industrial area, and all the people, all the workers were there. Oh, that was terrible. We were bringing bodies out from underneath big buildings that's crashed.

26:00 Little ones, the children with their mothers, and they were smashed. It was really bad It was the worst thing I've seen, I'd say, Birmingham. Coventry was another one that was bad, but I wasn't down at Coventry. A few of us went over to Birmingham, and by gee, it was bad. They really smashed it up.

Did you ever see an air raid?

Oh, yeah...

Can you describe what that was like?

Oh, you'd see the air raid.

26:30 We were out in the open, more or less, when the air raids were on. A big flare would be up and it would float around, and as soon the flare floated had floated around, you'd listen for the bombers. The bloke with the flare would be way ahead of them. It would have to light the country up before the bombers got there. It would be floating around up high, and as it got down lower, they had it timed, I think. You'd see for miles around and you'd hear

27:00 woom woom woom, and hundreds....There might be two hundred aircraft in one hit, and then another hundred behind them. There might be five hundred aircraft in one wave and they'd just pattern bomb. Everything. Drop them down. Straight through. Pattern bombed the lot. Everything was smashed. Trees, everything. It didn't matter what you were. They shot a few down and they'd get shot down...

27:30 And they'd come down on the parachutes. Some of them couldn't get out of the plane and they'd crash. And you'd go out the next morning, we'd see the crashes and they'd be all dead there, the pilots, all the German ones, and some of our fellows were shot down, too. They'd go up to intercept them, and they were shot down, too. It was terrible, the air war. When Britain got the Spitfires...

28:00 When they got the Spitfires, well they were very fast and by gee, they caned the Germans then. They would bring them down. They were crashing everywhere. Too right, mobs of them.

Did you ever go into any of the shelters?

No, I didn't. I didn't take any trophies or things like that.

People were in the railway stations underground. Did you ever go into any of those places?

28:30 **Oh, yes. We used to go down...we'd go down every morning to bring people out and the children out, and then they got a lot of their children on carriages and sent them up to Scotland. Some went to Ireland. They were crying, they didn't want to go, but the mothers thought it was better for them. They would have got killed there. England was in a bad way. But that's the way the war went.**

29:00 **Can you describe the conditions in the underground stations?**

Oh well, it was pretty stagnant at night time, and now and again a train would come through, but mainly the trains never run much because all the people were laying where you'd get out the train. But yeah, the Underground there...

29:30 It would be like Central in Sydney, under ground there. It was very stagnant, the air. And then with the bombs dropping outside, the dust used to come down underneath to the platforms. They were glad to get out of a morning, and get into the fresh air, stand up and shake themselves a bit. Poor devils. They had a hard time, very hard. I felt sorry for a lot of them,

30:00 especially the children. You never want to see it here. Anyone who ever said it was alright, they were never there. By jeez, you get an air raid...You imagine an air raid in Sydney now, and what would

happen down there. Oh, jeez, she'd be murder. But that's the way it goes, that's the way it was. I felt very sorry for them. If we could have done anymore for the people in England, we'd have stayed there.

30:30 but we had to fight a war. We couldn't stay there any more. We had to go. Well, then the Americans came in after, and that helped them a lot, too. Because they had money, and it bought the country back. The country was battling. But that was all we could do. We had to go and that was it. We went up into Scotland. And oh, the Scottish people up there were wonderful to us.

31:00 We were route marching, up at Cherry Tree Barracks, up at Colchester, and all sorts of different places. We just had to go on to the war. That's the way the world was. We would have liked to have stayed there and helped them, but we couldn't do it. But they survived, they stuck together. The Home Guard was good. They were wonderful those men in the Home Guard. They were out all night fighting fires. Everything was alight. They'd drop these

31:30 incendiary bombs and they'd catch everything alight. They'd just burn. A garbage bin lid was the best to put over the top and smother them, that put them out, if you could and you couldn't always do it. You risked your own life because there was bombs dropping everywhere. They used to just blow up and away she'd go. You had to be weary all the time. It was worse than in the front line, actually, I reckon. All the bombs that would be falling around you.

32:00 **How did the garbage bin lid actually smother the flame?**

It smothered the flame. If it was on the floor, you'd put the lid over the top and hold it there a minute, she'd be out.

The fire? Not the bomb itself?

No, this was just the incendiary bombs. They called them bombs. They used to come down like that. The big bombs they dropped were five hundred pounders. They were big stuff. When they dropped them you knew they were coming down. You'd hear them whistling.

32:30 But the incendiary bombs, they were smaller bombs. They weren't really bombs, but you'd call them bombs. They'd drop down on a roof and they'd roll down. Some would go down a chimney. Them English houses, all close together, that bomb would come down through a chimney, you got that row of houses and the chimneys are like this all the way through, and they'd drop a stick of incendiary bombs in there, and they'd go down the room and in the gutter. The house would be alight and in five minutes there would be roaring fires.

33:00 You couldn't do anything about it. They would just all alight. And we used to run around and do what we could. We had our training camp, we were down at Bulford Field a lot, we only got away a few times to help. They'd ask us could we come, and the CO and the officers would come and get together and help them. But other than that, no, we just had to put up with it, the way it was. But it was tough. They were tough, but they stuck together.

33:30 They battled her out, you can't blame them, I don't blame them. England in them days, when we went to England there, there was only one Aboriginal chap in our company. You went over there now, it's all a mixed race of people in England now. I remember we went down to London, and I had a chap with me, he was an Aboriginal chap, in our battalion.

34:00 We got down to London and got out, and we were going to do something, and a little kid came up with his mother, and he was staring at him. Here he was all done up in an Australian uniform, but he was a black man and we were white fellows. He was the only black fellow that I ever seen over there, at that particular time. There was nobody else there. Now, of course, the country is ridden with different people of different races and it's all there.

34:30 They used to call him, "The Cowboy With Red Boots." They used to call us. Because we had red boots in them days, when we first went away, and then we got black boots, because our boots wore out. We got black boots then, and we had big hobnails into the bottom, so we could climb through the dirt and stuff. You could hear us walking down the street in them. Like a battalion army coming down the street, clonk, clonk, clonk.

35:00 That's all they had that I can remember there.

And the Aboriginal soldier that you just mentioned. Was he in your battalion?

Oh yes.

Did you know much about him?

Oh, no. They come from Bankstown. Godfreys there name was. They lived up in Simmet Street in Bankstown. Up the hill a bit from us.

35:30 But he joined up and enlisted and came away. He was a local chap there. He was the only one, that I can remember, in our battalion there, and then we got an officer. He was well known in New Guinea. He was an Aboriginal officer, he was a lieutenant, and he was a dashed good soldier, too. He was up there with us. When we come back to here then. But I only seen the one chap when we were away overseas. He was the only one.

36:00 **And what was the attitude of the Australian soldiers, the white guys, to the Aboriginal soldiers?**

Oh, good. He was one of us. We were all in together. We were all together. We used to sing that song, Soldiers Of Fortune Are We. All stick together, and they used to sing Soldiers Of Fortune Are We. But, oh, no, there was none of that...

36:30 in the battalion with the fellows. They were all solid. If a bloke got wounded over here, and he was yelling out and wanting help, no-one would say, "He's a black fellow, leave him there." We'd be there. It didn't matter how many bullets were flying around him, you went, and that was it. And it's a bit funny today. You see some fellows, they say, "Oh, this bloke's a Catholic, this bloke's a Church of England..." This bloke is something else.

37:00 But that never comes into you when you're fighting a war. A man's a man, and he was wounded. We didn't care who he was. You went over to help him, and that was the way it was. We never discriminated against any man whatsoever. Gee whiz, you never thought of that. We'd help one another. If you got hit helping a bloke? Well, too bad. That was all part of the setup. You went into action to help a bloke, and that's what you do. You fight together. And if you go together, then you go together and that's it.

37:30 You don't know much about it when you get hit square and square with a bullet. You have got to hop in, and do your bit. If you're all in the front line, you're in the front line, and that's what you're there for.

What was the attitude to the Indian soldiers?

They were good soldiers, very good soldiers. They were fighting in Syria, the Indian soldiers. They were fighting just over from us. We were down looking at a valley where they were going up a valley. And Sir John Slim was their leader.

38:00 He was a marvellous man in Australia. General Sir John William Slim. He signed my...certificate when I got my commission. He was a great chap. The Indian chaps, they would take their boots off, take their tin hats off, throw them down. Put their turban on and away they'd go. Pull out their Gurkha knife. Every time they'd pull that Gurkha knife, they'd draw blood.

38:30 That is their religion. If you'd seen a Gurkha pull his knife out, someone's going to get their throat cut. And that's their religion. But the Gurkhas, they were good fellows. We were with them a lot. Had a lot to do with them later on in Ceylon, when we come back there. Good soldiers, very good, every one. We were sitting there watching.

39:00 They just threw their boots off, they had British army black boots and they threw them away. Threw their steel helmets off, put the turban on and away they go, with the knife out. So look out, here we come.

Tape 10

00:30 **We'll just continue on. I noticed you showed me the long knife, what's that called again?**

Machete.

What did you use that for?

Oh cutting through the bracken, the trees, we cut our way through. But we didn't use it a lot.

01:00 We used it when we got up into the thicket a bit, but it's pretty tough when you got blokes on the other side, you don't know if you're chopping away and they're waiting for you to come up. We had it with us. We used it when we were got into the thicker stuff to chop a little bit of a track through. When you've got blokes on the other side waiting for you, well you didn't want to make too much noise, see. You go along quietly.

01:30 We used them, though, if a limb of a tree might be in your way, give it a couple of slices and chop it off, no trouble cutting with them. We had them, we liked them. I don't think the Japanese...I never seen any. The officers had swords. We used the machete that's all.

And you've got a number of notches on your machete?

02:00 Oh, they're bits where we run into a bit of trouble. We'd use them a bit. A couple of times it was pretty tough there. The Japanese lay their fellows out in the sun, and they were badly with dysentery, and bad poor fellows, and they were in a bad shape. And we were going up on the track and there was one or two here and there, laying there.

02:30 And our stretcher-bearer, a chap called Eddie Ducks, he said, "We can't leave them. We've got to give them something." I said, "I'm not giving them anything. I'm going, we're fighting. We're going up here." Well, he was a stretcher-bearer and he said, "Well, I'm going to give this bloke a drink of water. It looks like he wants a drink." So they got down beside him to give him a drink, and we walked on. We'd only

gone fifty yards, we mightn't even have gone that far. And what happened....The next minute a hell of an explosion and what happened...

03:00 He got this chap, he put his hand under his head to pick him up, water bottle and give him a drink, and he just rolled over like that and a hand grenade was in the back of him and blew him up. It killed him. Killed me mate, the ambulance fellow was down to give him a drink of water. And that's what the Japanese used to do. They'd put a grenade into the back of a man that was dying, or crook, and he'd lay there. It was more or less suicide. Kamikaze, sort of.

03:30 And that happened a few times up there. They blew themselves up to get one of our blokes. One of our stretcher-bearers was worth a lot to us, because if we never had a stretcher-bearer, we had to put up with whatever's coming. And we were in a bad position then, when we lost our stretcher-bearer.

And you tell me about one or two of the stories of when you used the machete?

04:00 Oh, well, there was only one time there when I used my machete. A fellow killed one of my mates up there, he shot him, and he killed him, and I sort of got a bit annoyed with him, and he was running down, ready to kill another bloke. I just pulled my machete out and I sliced him across the throat with it. That stopped him alright, shut him up.

04:30 But I didn't use it a great deal, but sometimes, when it comes in handy, you never know when they're going to spring on you. That's the only time I ever got really cranky with them. When we heard....What made our fellows really wild was when we heard that they run some of our nursing sisters up on the beach. And they murdered them, and put them out in the water, and opened fire, and shot them.

05:00 We said, "Well, no quarter given and no quarter asked." That was enough for us, we reckoned. If they do that to our girls, well, that's good enough for them. There was no question asked and no asking. Every kill was a winner as far as we were concerned up there. Even, at one stage of the game, one of our padres went to our officer and said he wanted a revolver and he wanted ammunition. He said, "If that's the way they're going to fight,

05:30 I want to have a rifle or a gun or something to defend myself." Which he did, too. He took a weapon and he....Oh, some things were pretty bad, you know. You're not to put up with that. There was a limit to what you'd do, even though they were our enemy. They spared nobody. They just killed everyone.

So did they take Australian prisoners?

Oh, I don't think so.

06:00 I never seen them take any, not with us. They might have taken some up in Singapore, or up there. But then they killed most of them anyway. They never took any prisoners with us, no, they shot everybody they could get their hands on. They killed you. And we reckoned good enough for them, good enough for us, and one in, all in, and that's the way we put it. That's the way it was.

06:30 **So this fellow that had killed one of your mates and was about to kill another, was he charging forward? What was the situation there?**

Oh, they were just coming through the bush. Just running forward at us. Coming down at us. And we were going through, and they were coming down, coming at us. A lot of the boys were shooting, too, they were shooting them as they were coming down, too. But this bloke happened to get in a bit closer, and he whacked the young fellow and down he went. And I just happened to be in a

07:00 bad position there at the time, and I grabbed my machete out and I slashed him. Some of them were throwing grenades, too. You had to watch them with grenades being thrown and different things. It was really a shemozzle. Every man for himself when it comes to that sort of thing. And we had to use what we had with us. We had a lot of ammunition. We had a fair load. We had eighty pound

07:30 with us when we were going up...what they called the Golden Stairs, it was up like that. We had eighty pound in our pack and half a blanket. We had a blanket each when we left, but when it got wet, it was heavy. So we cut our blanket in half, and we had half a blanket each. That was the way we carried it. It was too much. By the time you get ammunition....The machine gunner had pouches full of ammunition, all loaded. The same with all us fellows. We had a hundred rounds with us,

08:00 riflemen. And grenades. Grenades were pretty heavy. We were loaded.

When you were fighting, I guess, on the Kokoda Trail, did you see Japanese atrocities or Australian reprisals?

Oh yes. Just after we went through Templeton's Crossing, I was on a patrol up there.

08:30 We went out one morning. We'd only gone about two hundred yards along the track. We come across three of our blokes laying in a heap, and they had the calves of their legs cut out here, cut straight out....They were eating them. We went straight back and told our officer, he wouldn't believe us. I said, "Come with us." So we took him back out and showed him, and he couldn't believe it.

09:00 That's what they were doing. They were cutting the calves of their legs out. And other boys would vouch for that, too. That's what they did. They were hungry, and they cut them up.

So are you saying that there was, in a sense, a form of cannibalism there?

Oh yes, oh yes. They were hungry alright, because a lot of them had come in from other the other side, down through Singapore and they got up in the mountains.

09:30 They thought they were going to have a walk over, and go straight down to Port Moresby and have the whole lot. Well, they thought they would take Milne Bay. See, they went into Milne Bay, but our fellows beat them, and our fellows held them there. They used to lay down and kid they were dead, and when our fellows would walk past them and they'd stab them in the back. So we woke up to them, what they did to the fellows there at Milne Bay. Every Jap they seen, they shot him, whether he was dead or not.

10:00 That's the only way they got through. They beat them. That's what they did. They were foxing. I wasn't down there, but I've got a cousin who was down there. He was down there fighting, and he said, "What we did we shot every one of them. That's the only way we knew if they were dead or alive." They'd let them go through and then shoot them. It was pretty hard. It was a tough on over there. But they weren't far off Moresby. And if it wasn't for those Militia boys, and those boys that were up there,

10:30 by God they fought alright. I reckon any of those blokes who went up there, they deserved a medal for what they did. By jeez, they did. They fought hard. It was tough.

And given you shared about the Australians and their calves being chopped out. Were their Australian reprisals toward the Japanese?

No, I never seen one. No, I never seen our fellows do anything like that. No.

11:00 And most of the Japanese...Well, a lot of them that were killed up there, they had white gloves on them. The Japanese used to put white gloves on them. I don't know why. It was something to do with religion, I suppose. But they'd have white gloves on. We were walking up through on the Kokoda Track, and where some of the men were buried, they had buried some of their men, and you'd see a hand like that, sticking up out of the grave, with a white glove on, and that would be a Japanese grave there.

11:30 A lot of them never even had marks on them. In the grave, they were just buried there. The roots of the trees come right across everywhere, and you couldn't dig a deep hole there. You'd just put them down where you could, and shoveled the dirt over the top. Our War Graves Commission were coming along, looking after our fellows as best they could. But there were places there where we were fighting, off the track, and into the jungle...

12:00 I don't know that they'd ever find them, a lot of the men that were killed up there. It was way out in jungle country. There was wild pigs running through the bush of a night up there, singing out and squealing, and you didn't know what was there. It was the worst country I ever fought in. And all the time I was way up there....You'd get off the track...On the track, it was only that wide.

12:30 You stepped off, you'd go down thousands of feet each side of you, off the track. The trees are all there, but we used to lie on the side of the track, and lay around the tree like that, if we laid down at all, we laid down around the tree. Because you couldn't go off down the track anywhere. You just stayed there. And then the Japs would be singing out all night, keeping you awake. They would have a special mob that would come up, and they'd be throwing grenades and singing out all night,

13:00 keep you on your nerve, and then they'd go back just before daylight in the morning, and up would come the front line soldiers you'd been fighting all that day, and they'd been back and had a night's sleep, and you'd been awake all night. And that's how they used to tie you up a bit. Well, that's the way the fighting went.

And you mentioned that with there wounded or ill men, they booby-trapped them. What other booby traps did the Japanese have?

13:30 Well, what the Japs used to have was a round...It was something like a boot polish tin. It had a piece of Hessian glued on this side, and a piece on that, like made out of a sugar bag. And in the trees, where the big fig tree comes down like that, the sleeve of the tree, our boys used to run up into there. They thought the big branch of the tree coming out like that, about that high, would protect them from the bullet.

14:00 But it didn't. You could put a bayonet through it. It was only sap in the tree. And in along there, they'd throw one of these, and no matter which way you threw it, it rolled over, and the bit the of Hessian would cover it over. If you went in there and you trod on it, it would blow your foot off. That's about all it would do. But if you blew a bloke's foot off, it takes two or three men to take him back. That was the idea, to weaken you and you were out of men. And that's what they used to do. They had them, and you never went in there again.

14:30 A few boys got caught with them, they did. But then, what we used to do in the finish, with the Japanese...A condensed milk tin, we'd put the hand grenade in the condensed milk tin, pull the pin out, and the click would go like that inside the tin, and she'd be in there. We'd tie a bit of twine around the leaf of the grenade, hold her there,

15:00 and the other bloke would run a lawyer vine across the track, and tie it onto a tree on the other side, low down, real low down, across that, throw a few leaves around it. Put the hand grenade over there,

put a couple of sticks down there in front of it like that, so it wouldn't pull through. The Jap would come along, forward scout, and nine times out of ten he's looking up, and he'd get his foot caught in this twine. He'd kick it like that,

15:30 and as he did, the hand grenade would come out...Whoompf. We'd get him. And that's how we got a few of them. We had three-second grenades, and their grenades took a lot longer than that to go off. But we had three second grenades, and by the time it'd pull the pin out, one, two, he was gone. As soon as we heard that noise, we knew exactly where they were on the track. We thought, "Oh, he's so many hundred yards down."

16:00 And we'd fan out and just go through the bush real quietly. We'd wait for a while. There was stuff on the track, we'd put a heap of food on the track for him, he'd come down....and have a look at that, wait till they had half a dozen there or more, then we'd open up on them with the machine gun, get them that way. But they had lots of tricks. They had spikes that they put in the ground. If you run along, it would go through your boot,

16:30 stick into your foot, stop you. They had them there. But I never got to them. When I was on the main track, but after the boys on the other side said that they had spikes driven into the ground, and when you're running along, they'd get you, through your boot. They'd stop you that way. There was a bit of everything in it. I never struck it from there. But it was

17:00 the cruellest fighting I'd ever seen. They never buried many men, many of the boys that were killed up there in the battles. When we went up, as we were pushing through, we were pushing up we were burying men everywhere. They were our fellows, Australians, we were burying them all along. Sometimes they'd been dead a week, a fortnight, a month, some of them.

So what was the worst situation you found yourself in there?

17:30 Oh, I think the worst situation was fighting up on the Kokoda, on the Track itself. There was a lot of casualties there.

Was there a specific incident that was the worst?

Oh, well, I think up on the Track where I got hurt, when I got, was one of the worst incidents there. We were fighting everywhere. They were fighting over this flank, they were fighting down here, they were fighting in the middle. It was just bad everywhere.

18:00 You didn't know where your left hand and your right hand was coming from. No matter where you went, there was enemy at you all the time. You were lucky to get out of it. I didn't think we'd ever get out of it, really. We just had to fight on and that's the way it was. We lost a terrible lot of men. Gosh, you wouldn't read about it, the men we lost. Our casualty list in our book there, pages and pages of men that were lost.

18:30 Even men that I knew....Other men that were there, they were killed later. We lost a terrible lot of men. I don't know what the casualties were, but the killed in the book there, there's three or four pages of our men killed. One lot was in an aeroplane. They loaded the aeroplane up for takeoff, and the plane crashed with the lot of them in. Killed them. They were going over into the Markham Valley then.

19:00 They dropped down by parachute into the Markham Valley, and the plane blew up, they were killed, the whole lot. And the other two planes on the ground, they were loaded with men and ammunition going up, and they went up in smoke, too. Hell of a lot of men killed there, that day. That was in 33rd Battalion.

Did you admire the Japanese soldier?

Oh well, I suppose...He was a good soldier. They were good.

19:30 They were only doing their bit, I suppose. But they were cruel. They didn't need to be so cruel. If you were captured, you were a Prisoner of War, and you were captured then fair's effort. But there were terrible things that they used to do to fellows. I couldn't see myself doing it to them, what they did to our fellows.

Such as?

Oh, well, they would bayoneted them. Put them against a tree and bayoneted them.

20:00 A little boy that lived up here, a young fellow, he was up there, and he was only seventeen. He went up there, and the CO gave him a message to take around to another company commander, It wouldn't have been three hundred yards, he's only a young chap. He disappeared, they never found him for a while. They found him bayoneted to a tree. There was that many bayonet holes in him. They just bayoneted him that much, and pinned him to a tree and left him there.

20:30 They found him dead. Those sorts of things, we never done things like that to them. But that was the way they fought. Well, it made your blood boil that much then that everyone we spotted, you shot, and that was the way we were going to get out of it. They said, "We've got to get ten to one, each of us." So we just into them, and that was it. We reckoned if we were going to get home, we were fighting for our own country.

21:00 We were fighting for plenty of other people's countries over in the Middle East, what about our own? When we got home here, and we said, "Well, this is our country now, it's a different story." We were into them from then on. That's the way it was.

Given that some of the reserves, warfare and battle was new to them, did some of them shirk under the responsibility of fighting?

The Japanese you mean?

The Australians.

No, I don't think so.

21:30 Well, I never seen any of the boys up there run away or run back or anything. They stood their ground and they were into them, and that's the way it was. I don't remember them having to chase anyone back, not that I know of. Over in the desert, the boys stood their ground and fought them, and they did the same in the jungle. If they hadn't of, we wouldn't be here today.

22:00 We'd be pulling rickshaws. That's where we would have been. And if they don't watch out, I think they'll be doing it again soon. It mightn't be the Japanese, but I tell you what, they'll want to watch, because things are bad. If they get down here again, any of them from up there, well, God help the women if they get down here, like the Japanese were when they were...Your life wouldn't have been worth two bob then.

22:30 If it's a different breed of Japanese now? I don't know. But they were pretty cruel. As far as I could see.

You were injured, obviously, and you came back to Australia. Can you share with us the story of meeting Mary and what happened there?

Mary used to come into the ward.

23:00 6th Division, our 6th Division blokes, they kept us all in one big ward, probably because we were a bunch of larrikins. But we were all pretty badly wounded and that. Mary came into the ward, and she used to give them a wash and help them, like blokes like myself, I could only use one hand. She'd wash your back for you. And I got to know her coming into the ward, and seeing us, and all that sort of thing. One day they had war bonds, they used to have war bonds at the time.

23:30 People used to put money in and they'd have a big concert somewhere and we were invited out to go to War Bonds, and Mary and some of the other nurses that were there, they came with us, they had to come with us to look after us. And she came out with us a couple of times and that's how I got to know her. I forget who it was...Someone was to come out,

24:00 and have a concert, but he never turned up. We all went down to this war concert and he never turned up. We had to come home again, then. That was one night that we went. Gracie Fields sang one night there. I forget some of the ones that sang there, but they were really, really good concerts they had. But that was how I come to meet Mary. She was a country girl, she was down there.

24:30 She had an auntie at San Souci and she used to go over to her place of a weekend. She'd go there on her days off. But apart from that, I only seen her when she came to the hospital, back to work. I didn't know her much then. But that's when I got to know her, then. I was in hospital for a while and then I went away, up to Ingleburn for two or three months, and then I came back to have an operation. They'd check me out again,

25:00 I'd have physiotherapy out there for a while, and then I come back again. Operation again. I had a stack of operations on this. Each time they were putting parts in there. Rather than just take my wrist off there, which they thought they'd have to. And they'd do that. But that mark there has never ever gone off there since I had the bullet through my hand there. I don't know what it is. I've put it in the x-ray machine myself, I've x-rayed my hand, there's nothing in there. But that mark

25:30 always comes back in hot weather, in October or November, it comes out here and it stays there, and then it will go away. I don't know what it is. It might have been gunpowder, but there's nothing there. We've x-rayed it. I've x-rayed it myself. And the doctors have x-rayed it. And we can't find nothing there. We don't know what it is. It's something, it just comes out.

And so after the war you joined the CMF?

26:00 Yes. I was asked to come back, after the war. It was when the Korean War started, they asked me would I come back. I got a letter from Eastern Command, in Sydney, if I would like to come back for two years and help train the National Service men that get called up.

26:30 Some get called up and they go overseas. Some just get called up for two years and they had to attend parade every fortnight, down at the showgrounds, they had so many, and would I come back and help train them. And I said, "What do you want me to train them in? Infantry? Tactics? Or what?" And they said, "Well, we've got an assault pioneer platoon of blokes to do booby traps."

27:00 I said, "Yeah, but I haven't had a lot of experience on booby traps and land mines, but I'd be happy to

go." They said, "Well, we can send you to do a course at Singleton." I said, "Righto." So for two weeks I went down and done ago course. I seen them at the hospital and they said, "Yeah, we'll give you two weeks off to go down." They had to get someone to take my place, there was no one here to do x-rays, and anyone who had to have x-rays went to Casino. That was for a fortnight.

- 27:30 So I couldn't be away too much. I done a course down there, came back, and I'd passed my course and everything was right. I rang a mate of mine in Grafton. He was an officer in the Middle East, and he said, "Did you get a call up, Bill, to go back?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "I did, too. What say we go back?" I said, "Oh, Jesus, I don't know." He said, "I'm going back. Come on.
- 28:00 Join up with me again. Only two years." I said, "Righto." So we rang them up and said we'd go back. We were Scottish regimen then. We had to go and get our kilts and all our gear and put our gear on. And the recruits came back. They were coming out of Singleton and to report here, and I had to come here to meet them. Of course, they had to go and get Scottish dress on, and we were having a laugh at them getting Scottish dress on. Anyhow,
- 28:30 we formed the platoon. I lined them all up and had a yarn with them. There was about twenty five of them, about that. And I told them what we were going to do. "We're going to do booby traps and we're going to do minefields, and I'm going to use live ammunition, no blanks, and I don't want none of youse to get blown off, because I'm responsible." "Righto." Our first job we gets is at the bombing range at Evans Head, down there.
- 29:00 They done a day's bombing on the airfield there, the Airforce. They said, "There is a few bomb unexploded, they're down here, you'll see the fins sticking up out of the ground." They had gone in so far, they were sitting there. Could we blow them up. I said, "Alright." So I got a couple of the blokes. I only took two with me. "We're going down to blow up these mines." So down we go and there are these bombs, and we're walking around and we had a metal detector with us to pick them up.
- 29:30 I found one there and it was only about that far down, it was sticking out. I told the blokes, "Now we're going to let it off." And I had to show them how to let it off, so we wouldn't get blown up, so they wouldn't get blown either. So I loosened around the bombs, I sent them back about a hundred yards or more. They were on a wire to me, and I'm telling them what I'm doing, "I'm digging around this bomb, and I'm doing this, and I'm doing that," explaining to them. Then I got the sticks of gelignite,
- 30:00 put it around the bomb, put a sandbag around each side, to hold the gelignite in, and I put the fuse in it, and I give myself a three second fuse each, three seconds, so I measured out, that would give me a fair chance. You don't run away, if you run, you fall over, you get blown up. So we had to work it out, and walk back, so I could get on the ground, or below ground level, and she'd blow up. So I done that, I went down and done the first one.
- 30:30 And we got below ground, we lay there, and up she went. Holy Jesus there was a prang. They knew exactly then what we were looking for, so I took them all a bit further, and we found another one with the fins sticking up about that far. I showed them there, and I said, "Now you watch me. This is what we're going to do." I showed them on the ground first. And they were with me. We had no gelignite there. We just put it around this bomb, it was still in the ground,
- 31:00 we set it all ready, and I said, "Now you go back," and I told them what I was going to do, and I set her and away we went. So we got two or three done that day, and we were there the Saturday and the Sunday. I got these chaps, one of the platoon sergeants got him, so he was right. So we all knew what was to expect. From then on, I trained them and trained them. I used to take so many down each time, and I put them through.
- 31:30 And that's how I taught them. Then I taught them how to put the booby traps on the stove. Put one on the stove and the detonator inside, and someone comes and opens the oven door, boom, away she'd blow. I taught them how to do all that. Well, I was there for twenty or twenty one years. I was only going to be there for two years. So I'd ring up and say, "Look, I've done my two years. You've got to replace me." "Oh, Christ no, Bill. Don't tell me you're going.
- 32:00 You're in a good team of blokes there. We don't want to loose you. For God's sake, will you stay with us?" "Alright." Another two years. Another two years. That went on and went on and went on. And I was sixty, and I'm still taking these blokes out in the bush out here. The golf club out here wanted me to blow some stumps on the golf course. They needed some stumps blown on the golf course and would I blow them? Good experience. I said, "I'll bring them out," out we went. We blow these stumps out, roots and all,
- 32:30 and filled the holes in and did all that. They were quite happy we done that. And it went on and I was sixty. And I thought, "Oh, Jesus, I'm still leading the boys around." They didn't want me to go. They said, "Don't you go, Bill. You go, we go." I said, "No, no, no, no. The battalion's got to go on." So there was a chap here and I got him studying up a bit. His name was Connie Galacien [?]. I studied him up and he decided he would stay. I wrote down and told them, "You either send me a walking stick or you put me off."
- 33:00 But, anyway, I retired then. In 1970, I retired. But I'd been in fourteen years or something, instructing them and all that. Taking them to camps at Singleton. We had big navy guns there, fifteen inch guns, and we'd blow the muzzle off the guns. "Chop her in half. Blow that off."

- 33:30 They'd allow me so much gunpowder, so many primers and all that stuff. So we put sandbags around, put the charge around the gun and we'd cover it all with wet sandbags and pack it in, and we'd go back and let her go. Chop it off. And then there was a battalion down there of Hunter River Lancers. They said, "You'll never chop that barrel of that gun off. You'll never chop it off."
- 34:00 I said, "Alright. You watch us." And we packed her up and we blew her off. We took it back to camp in a truck with us then, and we took it into the officers mess and stood it in the corner by the fire. It was wintertime, and we took it back. But then I retired after that. I said, "I had better go. You blokes go on." And when I went, the boys gradually cooled off. They said, "You're going, the old mob's gone, we don't want to..." We got an officer there...
- 34:30 Not the chap that I put there, there was another officer came, he was a bank Johnny and I didn't know him much. He came from somewhere else to here, and he was in the bank and he was an officer's lieutenant or something. I said, "Alright. I'll show you what we've got to do. You're taking over from me." And he said, "What will we do?" I said, "You're in a pioneer platoon. You've got to do booby traps and minefields." I said,
- 35:00 "All that sort of work. And you'll handle explosives and detonators and all that." "Oh, I'm not handling detonators," he said. "My hands. I'm in the bank. I'm not doing that." "Never mind your hands," I said. "You've got to use these detonators and show these blokes how to blow them up. You don't blow it up by putting matches under them." I said, "You'll have to do it." "No, no, no..." Anyway, he stayed about two months, he got a transfer from the bank and away he went. He didn't want to stay here. So the other young officer that I taught,
- 35:30 he had a shop down there, and he was a good young chap. I taught him and he took over. And the boys went pretty good, then, there. And that was as far as I went. I discharged out. I went over to Lismore and I had a big farewell at the barracks. I got a lovely certificate from Sir William Slim, thanking me for all the time I gave to the battalion. I'm discharged now with the rank of captain of the platoon.
- 36:00 In the regular army, I'm discharged with the rank of captain. I went out then. I went out from a Scottish Regiment then. The Argyle and Southern Highlanders, we were. We went back to Infantry battalion, 41 Infantry Battalion, and that's what we are today. They still contact me for things they want doing, they ask me about things. They ring me up, or write a note to me, and I write to them and that's all. I was never a flash
- 36:30 front line soldier, I don't think. I just done my job and helped the boys, and took them out and trained them. That's all I did. I survived, I suppose. I went for my commission over here from a lieutenant. I out here, three weekends running, they put me through the griller. I qualified for lieutenant, and then I qualified for the captaincy. I've been that ever since.
- 37:00 **Since you were working with booby traps, what mistakes occurred during that time? What mistakes occurred with the boys using booby traps?**
- Oh well, mistakes could be, they...When you lay a booby trap down, and you put a cord along onto the booby trap....If you're going to come to a place where there is booby traps, you always follow the loose line. Don't cut the red one,
- 37:30 because if there's a line that's pulled tight, it's on the head of the detonator, and if you pull that, there's charges here, up you go. You cut the loose lines and follow the tight line. That's a good explanation to do if you've got booby traps anywhere. Because if they are loose, they're not doing any good. They're just sitting there. That's just a fox. You cut your loose line. But if you follow the tight line,
- 38:00 if you're going to blow up, she'll blow up. We used to teach them how to blow up a building. We had a booby trap there, and it had a bubble in it. And I'd just squeeze that bubble. I'd have that booby trap there, red ones, blue ones, green ones....We'd want to blow up a stump or something. So we'd put it underneath, pack it all up in the morning, or that night, we'd have it all set there, and we'd leave it.
- 38:30 They'd say, "Well, that's an eight hour booby trap." "Righto, eight hours." We'd have the thing eight hours, we'd squash the glass, and there's a wire that runs through the glass, and that would start to eat the wire. And in eight hours, that wire goes through, she blows, snaps. I could set it underneath a booby trap now with a twenty-four hour booby trap in it, and I could go away, I could be a thousand miles away,
- 39:00 and in twenty-four hours, she'd blow up. Whole building would blow up. That's the way the booby traps were made. Special. To blow them up. And we were taught how to do it. On a train. When the train comes along the line, you notice that the line goes up and down like that when the wheel goes over it. You have a booby trap there, you dig in under the end of a sleeper, put it in there and you've got a thing that you screw down on it. You put your charge in there, underneath there,
- 39:30 and put with a washer or a screw in there and put it down into the charge of the detonator. And away you go. The train comes along, roaring along the line, and down she goes. Up goes the train. You could be miles away. But you set her there, and when the train comes, she'll blow alright. No matter rain, hail or shine. She'll blow up. Roads. We used to put them on corners of roads,

40:00 on a bend in the road, we'd put a booby trap from one part of the road to the other. Another booby trap we used to set, we'd get a drum of sump oil, on a corner in the road, and we'd pour the sump oil and let it spread all over the road. They'd come roaring along in the vehicle, as soon as they hit the corner, shhh, around they'd go. Over she'd go. You got them. And when they got you, you shoot them.

Tape 11

01:00 **With your wartime experience, and you fought against the Germans and the Japanese. Who was the better soldiers?**

Oh, well, the Germans were a good soldier. They were good soldiers. The Japanese were good soldiers, but we never got the Japanese out in the open. If we'd have got them out in the open, it might have been a different story. We got the Germans out in the open, and they were good soldiers.

01:30 By jeez, they were. I don't know...The Germans weren't cruel. I'll give them that credit. If you were down and you were wounded, I've never heard of them hurting the fellows. As a matter of fact, some of our fellows that were wounded there, they'd come and give them a drink of water. They were wounded, and they didn't kill them, they left them, with a drink of water with them.

02:00 But oh, I don't know. I think the Germans would have been more sympathetic with you, even though you were wounded. I don't think they were as bad as that. You never heard of the Germans shooting the nurses and running them out on the beach and machine-gunning them, like the Japanese did. That was terrible. I mean, they were only there to do a job, and if a Japanese was wounded, they would do as much for him as they would for me.

02:30 But to deliberately run them back out in the surf and machine gun them is pretty rotten. I reckon it was. Pretty tough. But I think the Germans would be more sympathetic towards the fellows wounded and that sort of thing. I do.

You spoke about the leeches in New Guinea. Were you given salt or matches to get rid of them?

We had nothing. We had soap.

03:00 Now we used to rub the soap around...the top of our boots, you'd rub the soap around it. But the trouble is, four o'clock in the afternoon, you could set your clock by it, she'd pour down. And by jeez, when I say pour, she'd pour. The rivers would come up. You couldn't go anywhere. You were stranded. You'd lay there, that was it. And for the leeches, of course, it was a picnic. They'd come out off the leaves like this and they'd get onto your head like this, and you'd pull him off, and you'd feel a bit of skin come with it.

03:30 And the next minute you'd have the gravy coming down your face. And you'd do the same thing on this side. They'd be coming in your boots. The rain would wash the soap off, and you may as well have had nothing in the first place. You could cross a creek, a river, the rivers would go down of a day, we'd cross the river, and all and the soap that we put on our boots would be all washed off. You couldn't do much about it. If it was a good warm day, and you had it there, it wasn't too bad.

04:00 The leeches didn't come out much of a day, but at night time, when it rained, that's when they'd be out. They'd be all over you, like flies, and you'd be pulling them off and pulling them off, and they'd be going down your neck. You could feel them going down, and you'd be trying to reach them, you'd get your mate to pull them off for you. When we were going back, wounded, and the young chaps were coming up to go to the line, they hadn't been in action, and they seen us coming back with all blood running down, and blood all over us,

04:30 one bloke said to me, "Jesus, mate! You've been badly wounded, have you?" I said, "No mate, I'm alright. It's the bloody leeches." And he said, "What?" I said, "It's leeches. You wait till you go up there, you'll want a blood transfusion." "Will I?" He said. "You probably will," I said. "Have a look at this." I pulled my shirt up a bit, "Jesus!" Big leeches that had been hanging onto me. But that's what it was, the leeches. They were the worst. They were bad up there.

05:00 **I take it they also got in around the groin area as well?**

Oh yeah. Everywhere. Oh, Jesus, yeah. We had one time up there, one of our blokes wanted to go to the toilet. He was a bit of a larrikin, and he went through the bush, I suppose he would have been about twenty yards from us. He goes to the toilet, pulls his strides up, and he's just running back, and a Jap fired a shot from somewhere, he didn't know the bloody Jap was there.

05:30 The Jap was somewhere, and he hit him right across the backside. He come back and he jumped down in where we had a bit of a dugout thing, and we were bloody roaring laughing at him. Through the cheeks of his backside, he was shot straight through both of them, both sides. He said, "Shut up laughing, you mongrels!" He said, "If you bloody tell my wife I was running away when I got shot, I'll bloody kills youse when I got home.'

06:00 He was running back to come into action and he was shot right across the backside. He never lived it

down right till the day we discharged. We'd used to say, "Sit down." "I can't." "Well, don't stand up, you'll draw the crowds. They'll shoot you and hit us." He was laying down and he'd go to get up, and he'd say, "Oh Christ!"

- 06:30 I'd say, "They reckon if you take a deep breath, it's a lot better." "I've had enough deep breaths!" But oh, Jesus, there were some funny scenes. He said, "I've got to go out." I said, "Yeah, you're not stopping in here. You've got to go out there." And he run out. I don't know where the Jap come from. We never seen him. And he was running back, we heard 'pwwwwft' The next thing, "Owww!" "What's the matter?"
- 07:00 "I'm hit in the coit!" He said. Oh God, we give it to him when we got in the dugout though, in the trench. There were some funny sides that came on. They were a laugh, some of them. Oh, we had one session, where was it?
- 07:30 Two Japs that we'd seen taken back one time, up there, they brought them back. And we were in the bushes there. An officer's standing there, and two fellows, and another officer with them. They bought these Japs back, and we were just here, and they were standing there talking to them. And the officer was trying to get the Japanese interpreter to ask them what the trouble was.
- 08:00 They wanted to know something. We couldn't quite catch what they said. Anyhow, we were just sitting there, watching, and this bloke turned around and he spat fair in the officer's face. He never hesitated. He just put his hand up like that and he went 'shoonk.' Down fell the Jap. And he's flopping around like a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK with his head off, and his mate's standing there, see, and he said, "You! Tell him to tell me." By jeez, he couldn't get there quick enough
- 08:30 to tell him, whatever it was he wanted to know. His mate was shot. He shot his mate straight away. He said, "This bloke was going...bllelelelel." I don't know what the bloody hell he was saying, he was telling him, all that he wanted. He ha the other bloke there and he said, "Right, you blokes are going back now." He's got the two native boys there, and he said, "Now put their hands behind their back and wire their hands together." They wired their hands together like that, behind their back. The two native boys, the Fuzzy Wuzzies, he said, "You take them back."
- 09:00 "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes." And they're laughing. Away they went. He said, "They won't go far." He said, "There'll be a shot down there." It wasn't twenty minutes...bang! bang! Back come these two New Guinea boys, laughing. He said, "What happened?" "He run away, we had to shoot him to stop him. He run away." He said. He didn't run away at all, he just shot him. After what they had done with their women at Kokoda, see.
- 09:30 They tied their women up onto tables and they were just lining them up, these Japanese blokes, raping them and everything, on the tables. And they never forgot it. They wouldn't take one prisoner. They'd shoot him. So these soldiers got them to go back and they went back and they shot them all.

The officer...Did he shoot him?

Yeah. He shot the bloke. He shot the Jap bloke. He spat fair in his face. He turned around and just went boom. Down he went, that was him.

10:00 Didn't he get in trouble for that?

No. No one knew anything about it. There was no one there. Well, they shot our officers. One of our officers was wounded. He went down to the creek to have a drink, he was having a drink, and they come along and shot him in the back of the head. He was having a drink of water, and they shot him. Yeah, they didn't worry up there, in the bush there. No, this fellow just shot him. That's the way it was. Way up in the no man's land, in the bush, he shot him.

- 10:30 We weren't twenty yards away from them, when it happened. I don't know where the officers were. I didn't know them. But they were officers in the line, they were up there. There was five or six battalions all up there fighting at the same time. That's what happened. He got away with it. We couldn't do anything about it.

11:00 Just to sum up. All that we've discussed and war itself...Since we are discussing these things for the Archive, which future generations will access, what would you like to say to those future generations that will watch this, about war?

Oh, well, I'd just like to say them, don't go to war if we can get out of it. We don't want wars. They're no good.

- 11:30 Nobody wins. We haven't won the war now. The Japanese people are coming out here and friends and all that, with us. Look at all the men that were killed in the wars. Where did we get? We never gained anything. I mean, I don't think we gained anything by them. There are people that I know, they're Japanese people and they talk to me, I'm quite friendly with them. I hold no prejudice against them. But war is war. If your country goes to war,
- 12:00 what have you go to do? You've got to go to war and fight, or you don't go and that was it. I wouldn't like to see another war and young fellows go again. I wouldn't like to see....No good. Because families get killed, and young fellows get killed, and it's not on. It's no good. Nobody wins. I don't think we've won anything. I'm wounded a bit, but that's nothing. I'll get over that.

- 12:30 I would say to them, look after your country and look after your kids, and do the right things. You don't want to be shooting people like they are today, wherever it is today. You walk down the street, you never know when you're going to get a bullet in you or something like that. That's not living. We don't need to go ... Honestly, I think that...I'm not a real religious man, but I think that if
- 13:00 all the people you see lined up going to football matches, going to cricket matches, going to sport, if half of them would only go to church on a Sunday, even if it's only every second Sunday, I think the country would be better off. I honestly do. We'd be better off. Because it doesn't hurt to go to a church. I'm not a real religious man, but I go to church. But I meet wonderful friends there. I go down of a Sunday morning,
- 13:30 Mary and I, we have wonderful friends, we have a yarn and a laugh. We take the kids out to picnics and different things and we have a good time. But I hope them kids never grow up and they've got to go to war. I wouldn't like to see another war. And the next war is going to be worse than the first one, and this one, because they've got rockets now, and all these sort of things. It's going to cause more deaths, more people killed. We don't gain anything.
- 14:00 I don't think we've gained anything by it. But, you've got to be ready. What they did here, at the present time, I don't think they should have never have stopped the national service. I think the national service is a great thing for the people, young people and the young women. It doesn't do any harm, to learn how to handle a rifle, how to do this. And nurses, you've got nurses and sisters there, and ladies and young girls can go for sisters. There's no load to carry to be able to
- 14:30 look after someone if they're wounded or something like that. First Aid courses and things like that. But I don't think we gained much by going to war. The war is over. All men are killed everywhere. Look at today, over in what's it name. American soldiers have been killed there, and I don't think we've gained a lot out of it, really. It's just one of those things. But you've got to be prepared, I suppose.
- 15:00 But each war is getting worse and getting worse now and it goes along. And young fellows...We can't afford in this country to loose young men. Look at the number of men we lost in the First World War, sixty thousand killed. That's a lot of young men. If we had them here today, that would be a lot of good men. And they were good young men. It's generally the cream of your country that go away. Young men that go to the war.
- 15:30 And if they come back...The government are fairly good towards you if you go to war. I look at it this way. I volunteered, come what may. That's the way I looked at the war. A chap who is forced to go to the war, well, it's bad for him. It's pretty tough. Some of the boys that went to Vietnam, conscripted, more or less, I feel sorry for those men that went. It's not easy.
- 16:00 I wouldn't like to see anyone march off to war again. It's no good...as far as I'm concerned.

Do you have any final thoughts for the archive, or us today?

I think what you people are doing now, and perhaps later on, when we are dead and gone, you are talking to young chaps...

- 16:30 It gives them an idea of what they are up against. I think they're doing a wonderful job. If they can show these things and let the young people see what we put up with....We're not whingeing about it. We battled along and got through. Times were tough. When they look at these things we've gone through, they'll probably laugh. They'll probably say, "What a bloody mob they were." Well then, your families are going along now,
- 17:00 you'll go along, years to come, they'll be all different when you're older, and that's what happens. That's the way the world goes on. You won't be sitting there with bloody crystal sets and a bit in each ear, trying to see if Don Bradman is going to win something or something like this, like we were. But we were happy then, it was the way we lived. That was the way we lived. We couldn't do anything else. That was the way it was.
- 17:30 That was the way the cookie crumbled. It was funny, but then, years have gone on now and look at we've got today. We never dreamt of anything like this. I never dreamed that we'd have records there, we could put a record on, and do things like that. And now, that's old hat now. They've got different things now. That's old hat, the old records. They were good machines, and everything, but they're out of date now. But I think it's just a wonderful job what you're doing, showing the people how the other half lived, I reckon.
- 18:00 That's the way I reckon it is. I don't think I could say much more. I just go and live how I like to live. Poke along. I never hurt anybody, I don't think, to my knowledge. We just take every day as we poke along. Mum and I battle on, the kids have grown up and they've gone out now.
- 18:30 They've done their whack, they're working away, trying to make a living. That's all you can do.

Well, we'll call it a day there. Thank you very much for your time. And we appreciate your sharing.

That's alright, mate. It's been lovely to have you here.

Thank you.

I'll never forget the both of you for coming up. It's been really good.

INTERVIEW ENDS