Australians at War Film Archive

Albert Elrington (Bert) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:39 **Okay, if you'd like to just give us a brief summary of your life, starting with where you were born.**

Well, Sergie [interviewer], my full name is Albert Francis Elrington. I was born at Leeton in the Riverina of New South Wales on the 12 November, 1916. I was

01:00 born at my grandmother's farm. She was a well known midwife in a little area outside Leeton, about four miles east of Leeton, known as Five Bough. And she had a lot of grandchildren, which was a big family, and she, in addition to bringing most of her own grandchildren into the world, she brought many, many other children into the world at Five Bough during her years of residence there.

01:30 We stayed at Five Bough for a couple of years and then we moved to a small neighbouring town south of Leeton called Yanco. We resided there until I was four years of age, then we returned to Leeton again and subsequently moved into Leeton, where I commenced my schooling at the age of seven years.

02:00 I attended all my schooling at St Joseph's Convent School at Leeton. It was an average schooling. It was conducted by the sisters of St Joseph's who were well known in that area. They came from Goulburn, that was their headquarters. My brother and I, my only brother, Gerard, we both attended there. We had

02:30 some funny incidents at school.

It's probably best not to talk about it at this stage yet.

After schooling was finished, I'd reached my intermediate year and I'd incorporated bookkeeping in that, my syllabus, but it was in the Depression years and I was offered work in the Leeton

03:00 cannery. Now, to get a job at that time of my existence was very rare because there was just no jobs around, so I never hesitated, I took it. My father was unemployed, my brother was unemployed, so at least what I had through my salary was something for my mother to run a family on. I started at 27 [shillings] and six[pence] a week; gave Mum 15 shillings, and I kept the rest.

03:30 It was a routine job in the cannery. I stayed there for about five years and then I was offered a position travelling for a life insurance office, a Sydney firm, which I took. It meant purchasing a car, I'll go into that later on, and I stayed in that work for about five years again and it went, my

04:00 territory included Griffith and once a month at Hay. When I left that job I started with the Irrigation Commission as a chainman [person who does the chaining in a survey team] with the engineers and I was only in that position for about 12 months when I was inducted into the war. I had previously endeavoured to join the air force but

04:30 my typing ability was not up to standard so I was advised to come back at a later date, but I never got back because the army intervened and I went into the services in October 1941 and was immediately posted to the Bathurst military camp. We only stayed there for about six months and then we moved

05:00 on to Sydney and we were there for about another six months and whilst in Sydney we were camped right in the heart of the city in Centennial Park. From there we moved over to Western Australia because the danger was there with the long coastline. We were in the Western Australian areas for about two years moving from just out of Perth

05:30 right up as far as Geraldton, at the expiration of two years the battalion was moved back again to the eastern states and we came up to the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland. I was only there for a matter of a couple of weeks when the battalion was abandoned, it was broken up

06:00 and we went as reinforcements and, together with four or five other fellow members, I went to the 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion. And very soon] taking up residence there I was advised to go down and come

back to Brisbane and undergo a 12 weeks clerks training course, which I did, and then

06:30 after 28 days home leave at the finish of that schooling I came to a succession of staging camps and, eventually per medium of an old trans-steamer, I arrived up at Aitape–Wewak area, where my battalion had preceded me. They were up in the forward area, so after spending one night at base we moved up and joined them in the area where they were.

07:00 I stayed at Battalion Headquarters. It, of course, was my first experience of actual warfare. Very strange, but you soon got accustomed to the routine. The battalion was very highly thought of from upper echelon. We had a very good

07:30 commander, Lieutenant Colonel Roy Gordon. He was a very astute commander and he was very highly respected so, in September, of course, the war finished. During the process of the war, evidence was obtained that the Japanese had indulged in cannibalism of our dead and any other non-Japanese.

08:00 So they had to be brought to justice, which they were with a medium of a war crimes trial. Why our battalion was chosen to conduct it I don't know, but it was and I was inducted into the war crimes trial as the deposition or typist, deposition clerk or typist. It was a very unusual

08:30 situation, a situation obviously none of us wanted to be in. We didn't want this to happen, to talk about what had caused or the coming of the, of the trials, but it was a fact and had to go on and when the evidence came out we had to have a feeling a resolution. You couldn't imagine

09:00 a fellow human being stooping to a depth of depravity be eating a fellow human being's flesh and, I suppose, at that time and for quite a while after my feeling towards the Japanese bordered on hatred, but with the effluxion [process of flowing out] of years you tend to mellow and my feelings are not anywhere near as intense against them now as it was then.

09:30 On the 21 January, when I came back to the mainland [Australia] I was discharged. I returned to Leeton after we were married. We were married at Parramatta on 23 January, 1946, and we proceeded down through the,

10:00 the eastern part of Victoria and back around through to Leeton. I stayed there for six months then both my wife and I decided we would move and we did. We moved back to Sydney and there I immediately gained employment with the Repatriation Commission. I stayed at the headquarters in Sydney for about four months and then I was directed out

10:30 to the administration staff at the Repatriation [General] Hospital at Concord and I stayed there for five years. In that time, our first three boys of our family they were born in Sydney. About two years after I took up with the Repatriation Commission it was changed, its status was changed from a

11:00 commission to a Commonwealth Department and that gave everybody concerned, including myself, the right to try for a promotion through the whole gamut of the public service. I applied for and was appointed as clerk to the division of Riverina back in Narrandera, an adjoining town of Leeton. We took up

11:30 there in about 1951 and we stayed there for 11 years and, in that time, our two daughters and our youngest son came into our lives. In the early '60s I applied for a promotion in the Telephone Office to locate, a position was located either at

12:00 Mackay in Queensland, Bundarra in Western Australia or Shepparton [Victoria], and I was appointed to Shepparton and that's how we eventually came over here. And we resided and have been residing here now for about 40 years. It was a lovely, enjoyable life. I enjoyed my work. It was a very interesting period. The

12:30 whole process of providing service was transferred from the aerial, the old aerial construction into the underground and that meant a great deal of work for everybody concerned, but my wartime health conditions caught up with me and I was eventually discharged in the early 1970s from the public service. I remained in residence

13:00 where we had taken up earlier at Murchison [near Shepparton, Victoria] and then I went into various post-war, post-public service interests and until in 1999 we decided to dispose of our nice village home there and we came in and took up residence where we are now at the Av'e

13:30 Maria Retirement Village [Shepparton] and we are very, very happy.

Excellent, thank you very, very much.

Good.

Okay, thank you. That was a good introduction as well. Can we start by, I'll get you to tell us more about your parents and their background?

Yes, my parents were very typical country people. They were both born and reared in country districts.

14:00 My father was born in Echuca and my mother was born at Wagga or somewhere, I forget now, but of

course they met and married. My Dad had no formal education, he just had a basic education. He was not

14:30 trained or equipped in any facet of the professions or anything like that. He was just a working man and he had various jobs to earn a living, sometimes he was self employed. He had a lorry and three horses and he used to go down to the Murrumbidgee River, cut wood, bring it

15:00 back and sell it and that's how we lived for a long time. This was whilst we were living at Yanco, but eventually we moved back to Leeton and he got work itinerantly but, of course, the Depression then came and it affected everybody. He had no permanent work. A lot of times he was working on relief

15:30 and to help the finances of the family, during the fruit picking season or the processing season, my mother used to work alongside a lot of other women at the Leeton cannery processing fruit. And my brother, most of the time, was unemployed so

16:00 we found ourselves, we purchased a little block of land about two miles west of Leeton and we built a very plain building there, you wouldn't call it a home but it was a shelter and we stayed there for a number of years. And I did a lot of my schooling from that home and it

16:30 meant that I used to have to walk two miles into school everyday and two miles home again, but I did it and I think the exercise done me a lot of good.

Did your father have any background of the First World War?

No, not my father directly, but he had two brothers, one Albert

17:00 was killed in France in 1916 [Private Albert Elrington, 17th Battalion, 26 years, died of wounds in Lagancourt, France, on 16 April 1917], the year I was born, and I was never told but I think I might have been called after him, just to coincide.

This is your uncle?

My uncle.

Your Dad's brother?

Yeah, my uncle was Albert and, as I said, my name is Albert, but my birth coincided roughly at the time he lost his life. He was killed in France and another uncle, Bill, he returned

17:30 but he was affected by gas and that affected his life greatly. He became very addicted to alcohol and almost ruined his family life, his married life and my aunty, Aunty Con, she was a great lady and she reared their two children and my Uncle Bill, he died a young man.

18:00 He had a small farm at Leeton but he never stayed on it, he couldn't handle it. On my mother's side, she had one brother, David. He was in the First World War, he returned.

Was everyone basically, from what you could see at the time, were all these returned soldiers especially your family…

Yeah.

…were they terribly affected by the war, either psychologically or

18:30 **physically?**

Well, only Uncle Bill, as I just mentioned. My Uncle David, he was wounded in the war and he had a pronounced limp, it affected him that way. It never affected him greatly. He never resorted to alcohol or anything like that to drown

19:00 his problems, but he sort of got above that. Other than Uncle Bill, he was the only one, that I feel, that was affected. Apparently that gas, a certain content of that gas obviously remained in their systems

19:30 and they had these problems with it, afterwards.

So what did you know about the First World War?

Very little because, actually, I was only born in the middle of it and it was only what, I can't remember, I wasn't old enough to remember my Uncle Bill telling me much about it.

20:00 I wasn't in contact with my Uncle Dave, he lived in another part of New South Wales, so I never had an opportunity of gaining any information about the First World War from him. So the only sort of glimpse of what I had of the war was really what you found out from men in the area where you lived and you knew had gone to the war. Some of them were

20:30 quiet characters. A lot of them, like my uncle, they became inebriates [drunks]. Others, they settled back into life and they made a success of life. Others, didn't settle back and you could classify them as 'failures', so it was a cross of the spectrum of life, what happened and what didn't happen to them but

21:00 there didn't seem to be a great deal of talk about it. I didn't know anything about Anzac Day, the marches in those days, I assumed they were on but I never went to them so I didn't learn a great deal about the First World War other than what the history books told us.

Tell us about your schooling and what you learnt in school, just in general?

21:30 Well, there was a general education at school. You learnt, you know, we were under the sisters. They were great women, they were dedicated women and if you were a bit wayward, well, it made it hard for them. Some pupils, of course, were but by far and large,

22:00 there was not a great deal of trouble at the school that I was in. We went through from just year to year. My parents, obviously not being wealthy people, they found it very, very difficult to even give my brother and I sixpence or a shilling a week towards our school money. There were no fees. Any money that you gave towards your schooling was

22:30 voluntary and if you couldn't pay and the sisters knew you were genuine, they wouldn't discard you, they'd teach you. My first school was in a little building, small building, one room in my first class. Then the next strata of my schooling was in the church. It was a school during the

23:00 week and then it was all cleaned up and converted and became a church on Sundays and reverted back to a school on the Monday. So, we were just in the big open church. We just had our classes, our classes were settled in certain areas. The acoustics were not good, of course, but we survived. Then I finished my senior schooling in a converted

23:30 house and that was very congested and it wasn't a good situation to try and learn your studies in. It was very noisy but, again, we got through, but just as I finished my schooling there was a new school building built and, of

24:00 course, the whole scene changed and it became what it still is today, I think, what it still is today. The one big school building is still coping with the school at the present time.

What was the name of the school?

St Joseph's Convent at Leeton.

Was it mixed or just boys?

Oh no, mixed. No, there was no segregation between boys and girls there, just a mixed schooling. It worked out good, we

24:30 never sort of were aware that we were sitting with the girls and vice versa. We just blended well and got on well together.

Can you tell us more about the Depression years? Obviously, it was quite hard, employment wise, how did it affect your family?

They were, it was very difficult. As I said, my father was unemployed and being a country man, he had country abilities and he got together about

25:00 a dozen rabbit traps and he found out where the rabbits existed and he used to go out and catch the bunnies and, to a large extent, that was our meat. Then at the same time, he was permitted under government regulations to catch possums for their pelts and, of course, that brought quite

25:30 good prices. It was very strictly processed, he had to conform strictly to the regulations by the police. He had to hand the pelts into the police and they had actually processed them through to the buyers. I can't remember now whether Dad got his money through the police or directly from the buyers, but you had to adapt in certain ways like that and

26:00 to get sixpence to go the pictures or the matinees, quite often, we used to go around to small orchards, after the pruning, and pick up the pruning droppings, put them in big bundles and they were burnt. You adapted in a lot of ways. When we were living out of Leeton we owned a cow and that was a great help.

26:30 It was my job every morning, before I went to school, I had to go down around the canals wherever she'd been put the night before, bring her in, with no shoes in frosts because I had to save my shoes to go to school in and when I came home I had to take them off again. My grandmother, she had a small orchard and

27:00 she was very good to Dad. She gave him work occasionally when she needed it and remuneration from that, that helped. So you just went from anything to anything that would give you, but most of the time he was employed under relief. During the Depression days, money was granted by the state government to the Leeton area which was all, the sewerage was installed and all

27:30 the unemployed men, they were given employment for so many days in a week in rotation. They never received any money, they just received food orders and they would go to the grocers, the butchers and the bakers and you hoped that the food that you got from that food order would see you through to the next food order.

Is this like ‘sustenance’?

Pardon?

Is this

28:00 **‘sustenance’?**

Yes, it was sustenance [‘work for the dole’ type scheme introduced during the Depression to employ the 75 per cent of the population out of work; projects were generally public works schemes in which payment was just able to ‘sustain’ the workers]. Yes, it’s a form of sustenance but then before, in the earlier part, my Dad worked on the Irrigation Commission in the construction of aerial electricity lines. The shire had the control of it and they employed labour. It was hard work. They had to dig the big holes

28:30 by pick and shovel and they had to manhandle those big poles into the hole, stand it up and set it up. There was no machinery to help them but, again, like all those people in those days they survived, but quite often he would have to leave home on the Monday and be away for the week in the outer areas of the district erecting these aerial [power]lines and then

29:00 come home on Friday afternoon.

It must have been quite emotionally taxing, all this hardship?

It was and yet, I think, when you look back in retrospect, you learn a lot from it that, I think, helped me through my life. You realise that you had no alternative but

29:30 do the best you could in the Depression days, but it gave me a great goal when I grew into manhood, that I would gain permanency in my work. That’s why I sought and obtained employment in the Commonwealth Public

30:00 Service. I was always frightened that I could never stand unemployment and I wanted to be employed so that I could get on with my life, rear my family and so forth but, yes, it was hard but yet we learned and we had nothing and yet we didn’t desire anything. We just accepted what we had

30:30 and we tried to be satisfied and by far and large, we were satisfied with it.

At school, I suppose you would have been taught a lot about the British Empire?

Oh, very much so.

Can you tell us more about that? How was it important in your lives?

Well, my

31:00 father was not a great monarchist. He certainly wasn’t anti-monarchy so as far as my home was concerned, like the background of the English, the English background which came from our forefathers, it was never spoken of highly or greatly and I think the,

31:30 the knowledge that I gained of the British Empire as such was mostly through our school books, geography books, history books and, of course, there was great emphasis placed on geography in those days. We used to have to draw our maps, our world maps and

32:00 put all the, we certainly knew all the capitals of the world and things like that, we were very versed in all that kind of thing. It was only later on, in latter life when we travelled and went to England and other places that I think I really fully realised the value of my school lessons because I

32:30 was in London, say, and you realised that you were treading the streets of a city 1000 years old and where my predecessors would have been and I valued it more, I think, on my overseas trips when I went there than what I did in my school days. I think by far and large, the Australian people of my

33:00 day, my younger days, as I say, they never, they respected the monarchy but they never made a great feature of it. They just got on with their life. That 12,000 [miles] distance between the two countries was always evident and we were an isolated country and, as such, I think we tended to get on with our life in our own way most of the

33:30 time.

Can you tell us about the differences between, from your view or your experience, between Catholics and Protestants?

Unfortunately, the word ‘bigotry’ was very prominent in our lives. There was a great division between us, unfortunately,

34:00 and it also, when you’re speaking of Protestantism, I think, you had to also include Freemasonry because Freemason was based on Protestantism and, of course, as such, it was, it apparently would appear to be ‘anti-Catholic’

34:30 and we respected, we lived with each other in peace but there was always that division. If I go back to my school days there was an incident that revolved around a young boy who went to a state school. Now the town of Leeton was built on a hill, a circular hill,

35:00 and my school, the convent school, was just over the ridge on the south side. The public school was well over on the west side. This young boy lived on the south side and he used to make a habit of coming home every lunchtime for his lunch. Now he did the obvious thing,

35:30 he'd kind of keep in a straight line but to keep in a straight line he had to come through our grounds, the school grounds. We put up with it for quite a while. He was a great little boy, he'd make no trouble, he'd just mind his own business and walk backwards and forwards through the school but because, typically, we had and it was part of our lives, he was 'public school', we were 'Catholic', so we warned him, "Don't do it!

36:00 Continue what you're doing and you'll pay for it". He didn't, so one day we grabbed him, we got the rope lines of some of the outer school boys, they used to drive in with a sulky, we tied his hands behind his back, we put this rope and put a loop in it, put it over a tree, put it over his neck and we were going to hang him. Now that's a terrible thing, but fortunately,

36:30 somebody, the sister on the playground and she came very quickly and stopped the whole procedure but from memory, I think, that poor little fellow, he never came through the grounds again. Now that was one feature of where we were doing what we really didn't know what we were doing or why we were doing it.

So you had full intention, your group had full intention of literally 'hanging him'?

We were going to literally hang him,

37:00 yeah. That was our way, terrible wasn't it? But that was how your mind worked and there was great rivalry. We used to play cricket between the two schools, we never ever won but there was great rivalry between the two systems. And I can remember in my young adult life we went

37:30 to a ball, a dance at St Peter's Anglican Church one Wednesday night and there was always that antipathy there, even when we grew up, the division remained and you would find the Protestant boys and girls were on one side of the hall and we were on the other, but somehow or other we got together during the night and it brought it

38:00 home to me anyway, how stupid we were with this form of bigotry that existed between us. We realised we were just a group of young people together, out for a night of entertainment and we mixed and enjoyed ourselves and that was my first lesson, I think, in teaching me how narrow [minded] and stupid we were. I think we were, on our side of it, we were just as much to blame as

38:30 they were because we had that bigotry feeling towards them, the same as us but it, today, I don't know, I'd like to think it was gone, but sometimes when you just prick the finger sometimes, it will just rear its ugly head again.

You came from a Protestant background, didn't you?

I did. Both my

39:00 paternal grandparents, they were Anglican and my grandmother was a very strict Anglican and she attended her church services very regularly. My father and mother, they married in the Catholic church in what was termed then as a 'mixed marriage', and because he was non-Catholic they couldn't be married before the alter. They were married in an anti-room of the church,

39:30 but 15 years before my father died, of his own volution, he converted to Catholicism and that wasn't very, even at that latter part of our lives, it wasn't very well received by my aunties and uncles. My grandparents had gone on.

So you had the best of both?

Yes I did, I'd see the best of both, yes. That's why I think

40:00 I, hopefully, I learnt to respect both of the dominations because I was a part of both, yes.

Excellent. We've just run out of tape so we'll have to stop.

Tape 2

00:38 Colin [interviewer], just to pick up where we left off, another incident that occurred at that time of my life was that in my days the aeroplanes were very, as you know,

01:00 basic. The old Tiger Moth's and a lot of the young owners of those planes they used to come around and

participate in the country shows on the adjoining fields and you could go over there and go for what they called a '10 shillings flight', up and down. But, anyway, on the first day of the show we went down there, my friend and I, and he was a bit of a larrikin this young fellow and he said,

01:30 "I love watermelon". He said, "Go out on the field and pinch me a couple," and he said, "I'll give you a free ride." So, my friend wasn't short of a shilling, he went up the street and bought one and we went down to…he gave us a ride. But it was a school day so we were pretty sure had we requested permission to go down it wouldn't have been granted so we wagged [didn't go] school

02:00 and so we duly went down, had our flight, and the next morning the Reverend Mother, she was in charge of the school, she was only a tiny lady in stature but she was a very strict in her manner of running the school, and she said very sarcastically, "Did you enjoy your flight?" We said, "Yes, sister". She said, "Come out the back and see what I've got and see if you'll enjoy that!" and that was

02:30 six cuts [hits] each of the cane, so we paid for our absence. We could understand sister reprimanding us because we broke the discipline of the school so we had to pay for it. That was another incident in my school life…

Alright, I wanted to ask you, if you could tell us a

03:00 **bit more about your parents? What was their background and what sort of parents were they?**

My parents background was, my paternal grandfather, he originated at the border town of Mulwala and he apparently

03:30 was with a large family, particularly of boys. He had quite a number of horses with [earth-moving] scoops so when Leeton was opening up the northern irrigation channels they migrated over there and they fell straight into work with the, you know, digging or, I suppose, channelling out the canals. And

04:00 my grandmother, she opened the first, what was then known as the first Tent Town Boarding House and everybody was living in tents, of course, and that's how they started their early days in Leeton. And then when, of course Leeton became established and all that work finished, well, then they purchased a,

04:30 a small, about a 30 acre orchard and developed that and that's how they remained for the rest of their days in Leeton. On my mother's side, my grandfather, who had migrated from Tipperary in Ireland as a younger man, he became interested in farming and he took on

05:00 share farming in the wheat country, east of Leeton, up around Mount Gangamine [?], Coolamon, and with the money he accrued from that he came back to Leeton and established his own farm. He then went into dairy cows, naturally with all hand milking, only about 50 or 60 was their limit, and

05:30 besides that he did cropping, seasonal cropping. They spent most of their, well, all their lives on their respective properties and they all passed away from those properties. When their time come on this earth and they left it, it was from there. They were hard days. But at

06:00 least my grandmother used to separate the milk in the separators and the cream in the big cans and used to take it into the Leeton butter factory and that was their main source of income on my mother's parents' side and, of course, from the fruit in the fruit season they used to pick all the fruit and send most of it to Sydney markets. They did not participate

06:30 very greatly in processing, having the fruit processed at the Leeton cannery for some reason or other. They went to the fresh markets. Next question?

Sorry?

Next question?

Sorry, I thought you were continuing, I didn't mean to interrupt. Tell me,

07:00 **your parents?**

Oh, my parents back there, well, they, as I say, Mum in her pre-married days she went out as a housemaid into bigger homes and, as I say, Dad, well he just, for a greater number of years, as I mentioned before, was associated with the

07:30 Irrigation Commission on establishing of aerial electricity lines and outside of that work, well, he just had itinerate work. In his latter years he sort of, I suppose you could say became self employed. He got together an old four wheel rubber-tyred lorry, an old

08:00 horse, and he used to go around the farms, the sheep farmers and he'd buy the dead wool off them. When the sheep had died he'd process the dead wool, and he had an outlet in a store in Leeton that processed the wool and he put in his post [?], "l like retirement days doing that hobby". And he used

08:30 to get, you know, reasonable living from it and he was independent, he was out in the open so it was a sort of healthy kind of exercise. As I say, they were just, they weren't educated to a degree that they could take on a profession or anything like that, so they just had to depend on either being employed or

as Dad did, more or less become self employed

09:00 and, of course, Mum stayed home and looked after the home.

Now was one of them more in charge of the disciplinary side of things in your family?

Well, no, Colin, I think, if anything, we disciplined ourselves greatly. Either one of them were not great disciplinarians.

09:30 Whether we were good boys and didn't need it, I don't know, but we were left to our own devices greatly. They were good parents, they were very caring parents and they did their best to care for us within the orbit of their circumstances. As I say, they were very humble homes and

10:00 we just had the bare necessities but, again, we existed and, again, I think later on life benefited from that harshness or hardness of living and established our lives more on a, on a more stable basis

10:30 than what he was able to do. At least my education was reasonable and to a standard where I could join the Commonwealth [Public] Service. My brother, he never had a great education, not because he couldn't have had it but he just wouldn't knuckle down to learning. He wasn't a, you know,

11:00 a vagrant in any way but he just wouldn't learn, he'd go to school and he wouldn't learn, so he had a very limited education, but he came into the services and, with my help in the service, he became what they called a petrol clerk in the transport department and he was responsible for that, and then after the war

11:30 he got work in the Leeton RSL [Returned and Services League] Club and he spent all his post-war life in work with them. He had no great desire to travel anywhere away from Leeton, he loved the town and he was quite happy to live his life out there, which he did.

Now, tell me, as a young man, and really we're looking at before the

12:00 **'30s in the 1920s, and you said 'your parents left you largely to your own devices', what were these devices and what sort of things did you do for fun?**

Oh, well, you had to make your own fun. I was not a great person with my hands, as the saying goes, but I can recall when we were living out of town, two miles out, I went up to the town tip [rubbish dump], it was up on a big hill just above

12:30 where we lived and I scrounged some light timber and I brought it home and I made myself a pair of stilts and I became quite adapt at walking on them. I used to sit up on the fence post and strap myself onto the little buttresses what you'd put your feet on and I'd be off. I'd walk for miles in that, with that thing and

13:00 in retrospect, it must have done me good because I was out in the open and we had the barest of toys. I think we scraped together a cricket bat and ball and we used to play cricket in the back paddock somewhere with our friends and then

13:30 I think I was always, I always had a likeness for flying, but I never took it up as a latter occupation but I made myself a little aeroplane like a Tiger Moth type of thing. Two double wings, out of wood and I put it on the post outside and it was there for years. It used to have a little propeller going around and I always looked upon that but I,

14:00 I was pretty easy, I sort of, I was looked upon, I think, as a bit of a 'good boy' by everybody, I don't know why. It was a close community where we were, only two-acre farms so we were living close to each other and on the north side of us there was a family with two girls and I was a good playmate with them, particularly with the youngest one. The oldest one,

14:30 unfortunately, was a Down's syndrome girl but she used to be with us, too, and I spent a long time, a lot of my playing days with the girls. I don't know if I was ever called a 'sissy' [effeminate] or not, but I never thought anything of it. My brother was the opposite, he liked the hurly-burly of boy's life. They'd go out thieving watermelons and things like that, but with the access of all the [irrigation] canals around us we learnt to swim,

15:00 and we learnt to swim in a small canal where you could put your feet on the ground and then gradually we graduated to the big canal which was just north of our farm and we learnt to swim in that. It was a very swift stream and it was a dangerous water if you couldn't swim properly, but we tackled it and we beat it and we used to swim there. Whenever we got a few, you know, sixpence we'd go into a [movie] matinee

15:30 on the Saturdays and we used to attend church, of course, regularly every weekend. I suppose by far and large I, as I say, had very average school days or growing up days but we used to play on the roads a lot at night, in the hot nights. I can recall we used to, had a game we worked out

16:00 that if you saw a vehicle coming, one fellow would lay on the road flat out and the other would be standing over him waving his hat or something and then we'd hoy [flag] these vehicles down and, as

soon as we saw them stop, we were up and off, but, anyway, we nearly got caught one night. It was late in the night and there were a lot of big boys, they were farm boys, they

16:30 were coming out, where they lived out of town on the back of a lorry. Safety regulations in vehicles in those days were very vague and they used to stand in a mass on this lorry and they stopped and, of course, they took after us and if they caught us we would have paid for it, I think, but we headed off across a canal bridge onto an offset road and some of our other mates unbeknown to us,

17:00 the channel was dry in the dry season and they secreted themselves in this channel, put sheets over their heads and, as we approached, up they come. Well, we were petrified! We didn't know which was the worst reprisal, pass the ghost or stay and get our behinds kicked with the men, so we took on the ghost and we went passed them

17:30 but that was a kind of simple fun, it wasn't very involved. We just lived simple lives.

What do you remember of, I guess, the cultures of the times, the 1920s? There was a lot of new fashions and music and changes happening, what do you remember of that?

Yes, there was.

18:00 I always had a good ear for music, as the saying goes, because particularly on my father's side they were extremely musical and, thank heavens, I inherited his love of music and particularly on the films they were a great source of entertainment and in the…Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, all those old 'crooners', as we called them,

18:30 they played a great part in our cultural life, or I won't say our cultural life, our social life. And I learned, I think, to appreciate what I term as 'good' music, real music. Unfortunately, today, what we get now, to me, is not music, it's good for the people that want it but it means nothing to me. So, we were

19:00 and, as I say, we used to have our yearly school concerts and I did have a little bit of a singing voice as a kid and I always got good parts to play in the concert. I used to give a couple of solo renditions and then in the second half we used to form an operetta, a play and quite often I was the only boy amongst a lot of girls in the play and that took up the second

19:30 half of the concert, so music, I suppose in a way, has been a great part of my life as distinct from professional music, just music as such.

Now your parents were fairly religious and you had a fairly religious upbringing…

My father had an open mind on religion. He wasn't a, as I say, he was never an active

20:00 participant in the Church of England when he was of that faith, but my mother was very strict and she insured that both my brother and I went to Sunday Mass and all that every time there was…and quite often back again on the Sunday night to the night devotions. Yes, it was very [much] part of my life and I don't think I've

20:30 lost anything by it. I think it's been a good standard to stand by, to have to stand on to.

Were you a strong 'believer'?

Yes, but I hope I'm an open-minded believer, like I believe entirely of the facets of my own religion and I try honestly to respect other people in their beliefs and, I think, I've got as many friends

21:00 in life away from my faith as I have in it and which I'm very proud of.

Now given that you had a couple of uncles who served in World War I and you yourself were named after an uncle who'd died, what was your impression of World War I given the

21:30 **little bits that you'd picked up from here and there and the stories and information and so on, what idea did you have of what actually happened there?**

In my early life?

Mmmmm.

Well, as I mentioned previously, I was too old, or too young I should say, to remember any facet of the First World War and

22:00 like a lot of soldiers from the Second World War, the majority of soldiers in the First [World War], as I found, they would not speak very greatly about it. I can't ever remember either of my three uncles sitting down and giving me a background of their service life, particularly in France and places where they served, I just never received it and

22:30 therefore it and, my Dad not being a serviceman, it was not a part of our early growing up life and therefore I sort of had, I suppose, just an average interest in the war, what caused it and why we went to war and so forth and so on, but it never came because [of] my father

23:00 not being a part of the war picture as such, it was never discussed very much in our home and it was only by films or our history books that I got a basic background of the First World War.

I realise that you wouldn't have had much,

23:30 **but based on the films and little bits and pieces that you picked up, I guess I'm after a general impression of what you might have had of the time, was it, did you think it was a time of great adventure, for heroes or did you, was it something that people talked about in 'hushed' times that shouldn't be discussed by children which**

24:00 **was a horrible time?**

No, I never thought much of the horrors of war, as such. It never played on my mind or it never affected me in any different way and, as I said, not having any great discussion with anybody closely associated with it, it was something by far and large, it was not a part of my life. It never entered my mind very much and I would

24:30 say I just had a very broad knowledge of what the war was all about. I think I was too young to realise or come to realisation as we do in later life, war is such a useless thing to happen, it proves nothing. I can remember, of course, the theme was greatly, the First

25:00 World War was the world war to end all wars and we know from history that never eventuated. In what, another 15 or 20 years, we were at war again! So, I think that was the lesson I learnt or one of the lessons I learnt, that we never learn as a nation or as people of the futility of war, but yet

25:30 what was the…it was like, I suppose you could ask the question of the First World War because we weren't directly involved, our country was not directly involved, "Why did our men have to go?" Well, I think the only reason for that that I can see and everybody else would, was that it was our close association with the 'Mother land' and I think the men made it a great adventure to them, they saw it as a great adventure

26:00 and when they come out on the recruiting drives they just got caught up in the euphoria of it all and probably signed on the dotted line sometimes before they realised what they were doing, but I think it's in you. You become apparent that, when the men came back you saw…

Sorry, we'll just have to stop for a moment.

26:30 **Alright, I'd like to now ask you a bit more about the Depression years and I wondered what sort of things, particularly your mother, what sort of things did she do to get you**

27:00 **all through, to get by, to find food to feed the family?**

Well, she'd just had to resort to a lot of basic food dishes that in the normal times, perhaps, she wouldn't have to but with the scarcity of money it meant that there was scarcity of food to prepare the meals.

27:30 Quite often she was at her wit's end, particularly so of a tea time when she'd have nothing basic that she could prepare a normal meal. She often put together what she called 'fries'. I think it was a mixture of flour and water and that would come up in a

28:00 brownish finish and we'd just apply tin jam, which was cheap and quite often we sat down to a basic meal of just these fries, and at other times she would fry the bread and we would put fat on it when we had no butter with pepper and salt and that was our, that was all the food

28:30 we had to eat. Of course, the food in those days was very basic, you grew a lot of your own and that was a great help and, of course, having our little cow, well, that meant that she had milk, she had cream, she had butter, so that was a help. That was the way, by far and large, most families got through it.

29:00 Of course, living in Leeton there was plenty of fruit and that was cheap. Sometimes they'd give it away to you so you sort of put that altogether. And I can remember one time as a school kid, in my day then, pigeon shoots were, they'd use clay

29:30 birds, now as they call them, in those days they had live birds and, of course, towards the end of the afternoon shoot there'd be a heap of dead birds and I can remember going down to those shoots, going behind the screen where these dead birds were and getting as freshly killed ones as I could, it might have been half a dozen, tie their legs together, carry them home to Mum and she would immediately cook them and we'd have pigeon pie. Which I suppose in a way was a

30:00 delicacy, but you used your wits I suppose and used whatever was open to you as a means of gaining food and went accordingly. Things like that, you know, and, as I say, my grandmother was good to my mother and father. She used to help them out with a few shillings, as the saying goes, here and there and

30:30 without that perhaps to stand by, we would have been in pretty dire circumstances, but we were not on our own. There was nearly, I suppose, on average of every second or third of half a dozen families, they were in that same position as we were. Housing, that was another thing. A lot of this

31:00 housing, temporary housing came along in the form, nearly all liquid used to come in four gallon kerosene tins and it became a common factor as far as housing was concerned, and I'd get these kerosene tins open them out and flatten them all out and then I'd go down to the river and get the light timber, what they call saplings, brace them all together into a building,

31:30 clad them with flattened kerosene tins and that was our homes, our living homes for a lot of people. There was a colony of these that eventuated in Leeton. I forget what it was known as now, 'Shanty Town' or something, but I believe the same thing happened in Shepparton here on the river flats. A lot of those types of dwellings, you know, were put together and people lived in them.

32:00 They were certainly not a palace but, by far and large, they kept the heat and the rain from you and that's how we lived.

Do you remember going hungry?

I remember bordering on going hungry, not real hungry. I don't think I was ever ravenously hungry but, yes, there were occasions when I was hungry

32:30 and not having, you know, a balanced diet all the time I think that caused more hunger pains a lot of the times than normally what you would have had but, yes, I did but, as I say, quite often sometimes you'd go to bed and you'd feel as though you had not had sufficient food, but you had no

33:00 alternative than to just go to bed and sleep it off than put up with it.

Do you remember seeing any 'swagmen' or men from the city?

Yes, they were a great part of our lives. Where we lived out of town, as I say, we were adjacent to the big supply that still brings the water from the other side of Narrandera, through Leeton and right out to the Griffith, that's the big main supply canal. And

33:30 on the banks there were all these light trees, they were a bush tree and they were prevalent and quite often the swagmen [men who travelled widely in search of work carrying their possessions in a pack or 'swag'] when they were coming through, because of the closeness of the water for them to make their tea, their cup of billy tea [tea made in a metal can or pot or 'billy'], they would camp under these trees and they were a great assortment of characters.

34:00 They range from just ordinary labouring people to professional men who'd been put out of work and they just had to 'hit the road', as I said, and become swagmen. They learnt us a lot. We learned from them as far as a lot of the amenities side of our life. They were a part of our lives and they were grateful for any small

34:30 help that a housewife might be able to give them. It might be some sandwiches or some kind of food. They'd usually go to the housewife and say, "Look, can I cut you some wood and can you give me a meal?" That's how they existed, and there was the welfare societies and that, the churches used to help them, or the presbytery's used to, the priests helped them, the ministers

35:00 and I think St Vincent de Paul had just started then and they were in most towns of reasonable size and they would give them a 'food order' and that's how they existed. At that part of our life, they were an integral part of it and it was just the circumstances that, of course, made them come out into the country. I think they realised that

35:30 perhaps there was a better chance of getting a meal outside where food was grown than perhaps remain in the city where all food had to be transported to it.

Well, when you say that they were a big part of your lives and that you'd learnt from them, what actual interaction did you have with them?

I suppose in those days you trusted people. You never thought of paedophilia. As a boy, I never thought of

36:00 it. I don't think I would have known what it meant. So you'd go up to the camp fires and they were glad of the interaction with you as a fellow human being as we were with them and we'd just sit down and talk to them and they'd tell you their life story, so we weren't afraid of them. They weren't a danger to us and they were very courteous to the

36:30 women, they'd, the housewives that they'd come in contact with. There was nothing like this 'attacking women' or anything like that. I'd never heard of it. They used to keep a lot out on the big stations because there was quite often a better chance of gaining a bit of temporary employment on a station, you know, rouseabout [unskilled labourer in a shearing shed], as they call it, than they would

37:00 obtain in the town. When I was in the electoral office in Narrandera after leaving the city, we were told we had to do it, we acted as agents for the employment agency. That was at Leeton, but we were a subagent, and I can recall one character, all we knew him as was 'Joe',

37:30 I think he might have had a small monetary pension of some kind, he seemed to be independent. And there was a big station out Narrandera where I was and this station owner was a very hard man on his

workers, he never seemed to be satisfied, whatever they did was never right and as a consequence quite often, sometimes

38:00 families, the husband and wife and children, they'd go out, he'd dismiss them and they'd be out on the road again. So we decided, my friend and I, that we would not send any more people out to this station for work because of the way they were treated. Anyway, this Joe comes to us one day and he said, "What have you got, boys?" and we said, "Nothing, Joe". And he said, "Oh, you must have something". "Oh," we said, "we've only got so and so

38:30 but we won't send you out there". "Why? Tell me about it", he was very curious. So we told him and it appeared to be a challenge to him and he said, "I'll go out". And we said, "Well, Joe, you know what you're going into," we said, "we'll see you in a couple of days". Well, six weeks went by and eventually Joe did come back and he came in and we said, he'd become a friend to us you know, and we said, "Well,

39:00 Joe, where have you been? Surely not out at so-and-so's?" "Yes, I've been out there all this time". And I said, "What do you think of him?" "The bloody man's mad," he said, and I said, "How's that, Joe?" "Well," he said, "his old homestead was falling down around about his ears," he said, "his sheep were out in the dams, getting bogged and he was leaving them there to die instead of pulling them out and saving them and", he said, "he had us rebuilding his old

39:30 fences around his homestead". So he said, "I said to him one day, Mr so-and-so," he said, "you're a bloody fool". And the station owner said, "Why Joe?" And he told him, you know, what he was doing, he said, "We should be out," he said, "on those dams saving your sheep but, no," he said, "you wouldn't get any satisfaction. You wouldn't be able to stand over us". "Anyway," he said, "Mr so-and-so, I'm finished! I'm going!" And, strangely, this station owner must have liked

40:00 this man, he got to like him and respected him and he said, "I don't want you to go, Joe.", he said, "I want you to stay here". "No, I'm going". "Well, alright." so he realised he wasn't going to stay so, he was about 20 miles out of Narrandera, and he said, "Well, I'm going into town," he said, "I'll give you a ride in".

We'll just pause there?

Tape 3

00:34 So to continue, they duly arrived in at the township of Narrandera and he let Joe out and in the old town of Narrandera there was a hotel on every corner and there was one just across from where they had stopped and the station owner said, "Are you going to come and have a drink with me, Joe?" And he said, "No, Mr so-and-so, I'm not!" He said, "Why?"

01:00 "Because Mr so-and-so," he said, "I'll only drink with gentlemen!" And turned his back on him and walked away from him, and I thought, "Well, you know, there was a man [who was] money wise, a powerful man, and there was just a plain ordinary workman, he had his principles and he stuck to them and he refused to have a drink with him". That was a lesson I learned, in a way, of human

01:30 behaviour. The country living, of course, was quite different to the city. You were accepted with one another, you were dependant on each other a lot, particularly your social and other outings and social life, but that was the way the country people

02:00 lived and they were very independent…this man only had his swag and yet he had his independence, he had his principles and he stuck to them and, I suppose, that also, the characters that used to come through our office, particularly men travelling through, they used to work for St Vincent de Paul

02:30 very well. They'd find out from the town they were leaving, was a St Vincent de Paul operating in the town they were going to, find out all about it and, of course, they would come to us, so they'd come to us and he said, "Where is a St Vincent de Paul representative?" And I said, "Well, he's a businessman down the street." So I directly went down to him, and this businessman, after the close of business, he used to walk

03:00 across to another corner pub and have his drink there, he enjoyed his ale. And, lo and behold, the man that he had given this rather generous food order, in as much, I suppose, he got a pound of butter instead of a quarter of a pound, this gentleman was going around hawking this pound of butter and he didn't realise he had come to the man which had obtained the order

03:30 and he tried to sell him the pound of butter. So, that was the humorous side of it, and I know that the St Vincent de Paul people learnt a lesson from that and they said, "Well, it's just ridiculous, giving a man a pound of butter that's on the track, who's got no refrigeration or anything to look after it and it just melt into nothing". But this fellow wanted his beer and he was prepared to go without food to get his beer, this man on the track. That's the way they worked. So, you had a lot of fun like that.

04:00 **Now, if I may change the topic a little?**

Yeah.

Tell us what you knew about the tension between the British and the Germans in the lead up to the war?

World War II? Well, mostly from the newsreels and media, that's where we learnt about what the situation was. We realised it was very tense. Everybody had a

04:30 horror of [German dictator, Adolf] Hitler, initially, followed by [Italian dictator, Benito] Mussolini and, of course, ultimately, by [Japanese premier, Hideki] Tojo in Japan, and we were hoping against hope that World War II would not eventuate but, of course, that was a fruitless hope, it did and

05:00 nobody liked the fact that we didn't want to go and kill our fellow man or be killed. We weren't war-minded people but we realised that for our own security and safety we had to do what we did and we had a great, I suppose, a certain amount of fear. As a nation

05:30 at that stage of our life and, of course, still, we were never closely threatened by invasion and to a large extent, actual warfare was something we could only envisage and imagine and the fact that we were still, literally speaking, 12,000 miles away from us, at great distance.

06:00 We, as I say, we didn't want the war. We wanted to get on with our lives and be without it but when we came to the realisation that it was there and we had to be a part of it, we did and we couldn't understand the ideology that these dictators were showing. It was,

06:30 again, foreign to our way of life. Now, for instance, my wife had Germanic background through her parents, her grandparents, and I think up till that point of time we accepted any German migrants that could have been in our country by then, before then, because they were German and because

07:00 of the First World War we never really shunned them or detested them, we just lived with them. They were just living in our community the same as anybody else but, unfortunately, when the war came I think that feeling changed in a lot of cases and animosity towards the Germans took place.

07:30 Now, of course, at that time we'd had a lot of early migration of the Italians into our country and Australia…I never had a feeling of ill-will against the Italian as I would have had against the German because, I suppose, we looked upon Mussolini as just sort of coming into the back of Hitler. The opportunity was there so that feeling wasn't so

08:00 as intense against the Italians as it was, perhaps, against the Germans and there was a lot of terribly unkind acts perpetrated against the German citizens by the ratbags of our country in those days. I mean, Anne was living in Sydney in those days and she said she used to go into an Italian fruit shop where she bought lovely fruit from in King Street

08:30 and one day she went past and here was the whole business trashed. Those people were harmless. They did nothing to deserve that, just because of their country nationality. So war, it changed us, whether we liked it or not and quite often it wasn't to the best of our way of living. It was quite often the adverse way, the opposite way.

You didn't join up a

09:00 **militia battalion before the war started?**

I was inducted into a militia battalion, yes.

Before the war started?

No, no, no. I'm sorry. No, no I didn't. I was not orientated to the services in those days. I just wanted to get on with my life as it was so, no, I was not in the militia and not having a strict or a strong service life in my family, I was not, you know,

09:30 in that frame of mind to go into it, so I didn't bother.

What were you doing the day war was declared?

I must have been at work. I can't really think right on the point of what happened because it was a case, at that stage in our minds, it was a case of when was it going to be declared.

10:00 We'd reached the stage of acceptance that it was definitely going to happen and so, I think, when it did happen there was no great drama, we just said, "Well, you know, it's happened and that's it. It's official now". As it were, they were playing 'ducks and drakes' [manoeuvring] with each other before, so we did it right at that.

What was your reaction to the war beginning?

I felt it was justified,

10:30 because why did we have to put up with these dictators trying to force their way of life onto us? We had done nothing to them. We couldn't see where we deserved it so we couldn't understand why it was forced onto us so we just,

11:00 we had to accept it and because it was so far away and we weren't impacted with it in a factual manner at that time, well, it wasn't a sort of a, I don't think, a reason for us to give a great deal of thought as it would [be] with the English, who were under attack, you know, from the first day of

11:30 war. They were a part of it initially and we weren't, and in the broad sense we never became a part of it other than the intrusion of the Japanese midget submarines into Sydney Harbour [on 31 May 1942]. I think that was the closest. Then there was a bombing up around Townsville harbour during the war. That was the only factual aspect that I can recall that we had of the war in the real sense so we sort of never, it never became a

12:00 great factor in our day to day lives until, of course, eventually we became a part of the process by joining the [military] forces and then we realised that we were a part of it.

Now I understand that you wanted to join the air force?

Yes, I tried to get into the air force. I thought it was more of a gentleman's [force] than, I wasn't looking forward to going to a foot sloggers [army], and so another chap and I

12:30 from Leeton we went down for an interview and he got in, he was accepted but I wasn't and so I, as I say, came back home and I was practising my typing with the intention of reapplying, but it never eventuated. The call-up came and I was inducted in before I could go back again.

13:00 **What was the attraction of the air... can you give us a little bit more of an understanding...?**

Of the air force?

Yeah, how did you see the navy, the army and the air force, what contrasts?

Well, I thought when it come to dress and conditions, I thought the army had the wrong end of the stick and to a degree, they did. I mean a part of the air force uniform, you'd wear a tie, whereas in

13:30 the army, the old SDs [?] they were buttoned right up to the neck and they were not as, you know, acceptable from a point of view of dress. And the navy had quite a distinct uniform, but I had no desire to, the water never attracted me so I had no desire to join the navy. I was a land-lover, I think, and I wanted to stay that way, but now, looking back in retrospect, I

14:00 wouldn't have changed anything that I've experienced that I had, and life that I had in the army. I don't think I could have had any better in the air force but, you know, we were sleeping on palliasses [straw-filled mattresses]. That's a straw big mattress, where the air force had their beds and their bunks propped up, so looking at it more from, I suppose, personal convenience, that was the only thing that had actually applied with one against the other.

Which year

14:30 **did you actually join the army?**

October 1941 and we were inducted into Bathurst camp. It was a very good army camp, well equipped, good huts and everything like that, but Bathurst being in the colder zone of the state

15:00 and coming from the hot plain regions, we certainly noticed the coldness of the temperature of the city. It was a very pleasant town to go in on leave and all that kind of thing. But in my younger days I was down on a shooting expedition at the river and I finished up putting

15:30 a .22 [calibre] long, as they called it, rifle bullet, through one of my toes and that, when I come into the army and having to adapt to the big army heavy boots that caused a lot of trouble with me and for quite a few weeks I was on what they called 'light duties'. I wasn't able to,

16:00 to go out and do heavy marching, which some way down the track the army medical officer must have got sick of me being on these continuous duties so he said, "I'm going to recommend that you [go] before the medical board to see if you are suitable to continue on with your army life". So eventually that happened and I had to front up between

16:30 the medical board, it was all doctors and, I think, the president he must have had it set against anybody that was put before him. I think he thought, "Well, here's another bloke just playing up to try and get out". So he, in his opening remarks, he made that well known to me and I said, "Excuse me, sir, can I say something?" And he said, "Yes". I said, "I didn't ask for this board, I was told to report and

17:00 undergo it", and I said, "that's reason number one". I said, "Reason number two, I don't want to be out of the army". Well, he sat back in his chair, as the saying goes, and he just went through the processes and, of course, it come out that by recommendation of the board I was to stay in the services. So, had I played up I could have got out, but I wanted to be with my friends and in my own, best of my ability, in my own

17:30 way I wanted to play my part in defence for my country and that's why I wanted to stay in the services. Had he discharged me, I think I would have gone to the air force and probably re-enlisted there, I don't know.

By 1941, October, the Japanese were on the scene then down Malaya?

They what?

I believe the Japanese were entering the war against the British and the Australians?

Yeah, Pearl Harbor [the United States Navy base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked by the Japanese on 7 December 1941, sparking Japan's opposition to the Allied forces and the United States], yeah.

What was your

18:00 **reaction to the Pearl Harbor strike?**

Well, it was just again the cruelty of it all, the subtlety of it all. How they just come in when the city was sleeping, more or less, and just blew it apart, and with the terrible carnage of life and all that kind of thing, like the Axis [powers], like the other two parts of the Axis [German and Italy], you asked the question,

18:30 'Why did the Japanese come in?' What had forced them? And the only reason that I could see was addiction to power. They wanted to become a world power, the same as other members of the Axis and that's why I always had a, like most other civilians and servicemen, I had quite adverse thinking towards all those three

19:00 countries.

Are you talking about the Axis?

Yeah.

With Japan and Germany?

Yeah, yeah, but of course they [Japanese] went with great preparation. They were very well prepared for it. It wasn't as though it was just an after thought that had happened. It was premeditated and very well thought out because they

19:30 were a great force then, an amphibious force they had. They just come on down through the Pacific Seas [Ocean] and they were obviously with the intent of invading this country. Well, why not because we had everything that they didn't have. We had all the natural resources in this country that we know we have which they were short of and

20:00 a great land mass uninhabited, which they could bring their hordes in and settle into. So, it was a great goal to aspire to, to come in and invade us and take us over.

Now, when you first enlisted, where were you eventually transferred to? Were you sent to any particular unit or were you just sent

20:30 **to a camp?**

No, I went straight into the 56th Battalion, that was one of the three battalions of the 5th Division in those days. And, also, there was the 54th Battalion and, I can't recall the third battalion, but both the 56th and the 54th, I'm sure now, were in camp at the same time at,

21:00 oh what's the name of it? At Bathurst.

So you were part of the 5th Division?

Yes, part of the 5th Infantry Division.

Now this was militia?

That was a militia division, yes, even though we went in as a militia enlistment but we were in there full-time, of course, but then eventually, not long

21:30 after, a few months, we were told that we could re-enlist in the Australian Imperial Forces [AIF], which we did. So I don't think we were retested. We were granted a new number and then what they call 'the next number',

22:00 because all the states have a prefix, NX [NSW], VX [Victoria], SX [South Australia] or QX [Queensland], according to their state and that's how we eventually came in under the big umbrella of the Australian Imperial Forces.

Tell us about your first training camp?

That was prior to that, we went to, just out of

22:30 Camden, a little town called Narellan. That was a three months camp and that was, of course, our first initiation into military life and it was a complete turn about of your life. One moment you were an ordinary civilian leading your own life and the next you were in and you were under strict disciplinary and military orders and that was hard to take,

23:00 but you had no alternative, you had to take it and as time went on, day after day, the life gradually, obviously, grew on you and then you gradually became more or less adaptable to accepting the, you know, the code of military supervision,

23:30 but I was not a great accepter of discipline. For instance, I couldn't understand why I, as an ordinary human being, had to salute another bloke who was the same human being as I was. Why did I have to do it? In the early part of my army life I wouldn't do it. Luckily, I never got into trouble through it, which I could have but I didn't.

24:00 But then many months or years after when I was in the outback country where we were in Western Australia, I thought of this matter of discipline one day and I thought to myself, "You're just a fool. You can't beat it. It's going to be here with you as long as you're in the services". And that day, at that time, you had no idea how long you were going to be, how many years of your future life.

24:30 So, it turned out to be just a mental aberration in my mind and I accepted it and there was no trouble.

Did you find that, well, I suppose you weren't in the AIF so you wouldn't know the contrast necessarily?

No, I wouldn't because, you see, prior to us going into Bathurst it was originally habitated by the original battalions that formed the original AIF. They did all their training

25:00 there and they did that great overland march from Bathurst to Sydney and there they joined the troop ships and went over across the seas to the Western Desert [Northern Africa] so the camp had additional AIF soldiers in that camp before we took it over. We knew of them. They were, we knew the

25:30 background of it. They said that all prisoners in those days were given an open invitation, "Stay in prison or join the AIF". And, of course, I would say to a man they joined the AIF, so…

That's actually true, is it?

That is a fact, as I understand it. So, to say the least, you had some characters from a point of view of humanity in the original AIF.

Are we talking about hardcore criminals?

26:00 I don't think so, I don't think murderers would have been allowed to, I don't know, but I think it might have been a wife-beater or something like that, but they were hard men. They had lived a life, they'd gone through the Depression like myself and, you know, they were no nonsense men. They were tough men as history has proved them to be, they were great soldiers.

Well, obviously,

26:30 **the training requirement and regimentation of AIF life would be quite different to that of the militia, in certain respects?**

Well, to a point but once we got in there permanently, we come into the broad authority of discipline and training because we were training actually to meet the anticipated invasion of the Japanese. Whereas they went over there and furthered their training

27:00 in the desert before becoming involved in the [North Africa campaign] battles of the desert such as Bardia and Tobruk and those places.

Did you find that the officers, initially when you were training, were extremely strict?

Some were, some weren't. Some were very sort of, you know, they all made you observe discipline but they were not in the sense strict disciplinarians. They never

27:30 enforced a harsh discipline on you and, of course, that evolved into your training, but we found them by far and large as we term it 'good blokes' and they had a job to do according to their rank the same as we did according to our rank and each of us did our jobs accordingly, but off duty we were just on a man to man

28:00 basis. Some of them, they had great pride in their authority, in their rank, and as such they demanded respect all the time, off duty and on duty. Others were not that way, they did not involve that in their thinking or actions, they were more tolerant.

28:30 **Were there any regulars in the militia, the officers?**

No, they mostly had been militia men. They were very well trained men in army training and discipline because of their training in the militia.

Tell us about the training, your initial training?

Pardon?

What sort of training did you have initially, what did it involve?

It was just,

29:00 you know, out on marches just field training. It was a pretty heavy physical training program. You'd go out there early in the morning and you'd go out into the field and go through all training aspects. I never was involved greatly in that because of this problem with my foot. I was not ordered to go on parade, as the saying goes,

29:30 and therefore I was exempted from those rigid training processes that other fellow infantrymen would have gone through, because then when I eventually showed that I had to remain in the army I eventually finished up in the administration side, in the orderly rooms or the office,

30:00 battalion office or the company office, they were termed as orderly rooms. So, I did not have a great background or experience in the rigid field training.

Now, you said you had a problem with discipline?

Yeah.

How could you circumvent this process of discipline, I mean authorities, salutes, etc?

It was just that mythical block, mental block that I had as far

30:30 as I can understand with my thinking, was because it transpired, when you saluted your fellow officer you're not, in theory, saluting the man, you are saluting the King or Queen's uniform [commission, actually], because all officers, in theory again, receive their commission from the

31:00 King, that was the theory of it, and that was what you were giving the courtesy to, it was the King or the Queen not the man. But I never differentiated between the two and that's why I had this mental block. That's the only thing I could think of.

It was only a mental block?

It was only a mental block.

But you still carried out what you needed to do?

Oh, yes, sure, yes. I never broke the regulations, not knowingly. I adhered to regulations and everything, yes.

And because

31:30 **of your impairment, your foot…**

Yes.

…you were basically doing other duties that were…

What they called light duties. I might go down to the kitchen and help peel the spuds or something like that, you know, potatoes for dinner. Very mundane kind of duties, yes, but then as time went on and I didn't have to go into the rigid field training, I

32:00 adapted to wearing the army boots and after a certain time they ceased to affect me. I wasn't aware… but by that time I was entrenched into the administration side of the army and so it didn't matter, I wasn't walking, I was just walking from my camp, my tent to the orderly room and just going on with my daily

32:30 duties there in the orderly room.

Did you find that there was tension between the militia and AIF, from your experience?

Early in the part, yes.

Tell us about this tension?

Well, the AIF, rightly so, they referred to us as 'chocos' [chocolate soldiers] and that was a derogaitery way of describing us and, as such,

33:00 they, I suppose in their minds, were saying, "Well, why aren't those so-and-sos in with us? Why are they sort of in another phase of the army that is away from us?" I think in certain leave situations, perhaps when the amber fluid [beer] got, you know, flowing between the troops, quite often you'd find that that could

33:30 be the reason why they'd have fights, but it wasn't very deep, it was more or less…

Just friction?

Yes, just a sort of a friction, but there was a certain, a very small percentage of men who did not volunteer to come when it was available, they did not come over into the AIF, they remained as militia men and they remained their whole army life, they remained that,

34:00 but some of them would have seen active service. The early ones, of course, they did. The initial battalion that went to face the Japs [Japanese] initially were a mob of militia kids.

39th [Australian Infantry Battalion]?

Yes, and they never had a weapon, they just trained with broomsticks, but they come out just as seasoned as any AIF man would have out of a harsh battle. I mean, the

34:30 differentiation between the starters meant nothing.

Tell us more about the 56th Battalion, what was its area of recruitment?

Mainly the south-west region of New South Wales. It bordered, the headquarters in the militia days was at Cootamundra. Then it bordered right, it bordered

35:00 right from Young, Grenfell, Temora, Cootamundra, all the small towns right down through Junee, Wagga, Narrandera, Leeton, Griffith, in that Riverina area. That seemed to be where they drew most of their personnel from, so we had a kindred background as

35:30 far as where we came from. We were all from more or less the same sort of background, country boys. There was a few odd city boys come into it somehow or other, I don't know, but we had a few city boys but they quickly adapted. We accepted them. We sort of didn't have anything against them or them against us. We all become…it was a very good battalion, it was very good comradeship in it.

36:00 We trained to the best of our ability and our desire always was to train as best as we could and be as efficient as we could for the day when we had to come actually face to face with the real situation of war.

So you were basically an infantry battalion?

Yes, it was the 56th Australian Infantry Battalion.

It's sort of, I suppose, a little surprising

36:30 **that they kept you on and didn't transfer you to a different role because of your impairment?**

Yes, it was. I think the first happening from that, of course, was this medical board. Now, had I been discharged, well, I was history, but when I wasn't, well, then, I suppose,

37:00 who would want me? What battalion commander would want me to come in as a reinforcement to his battalion? I had no great military background to offer him, I wasn't a specialist in any way, so, you know, it just worked out that way that a position became available in the battalion orderly room

37:30 and I was invited to accept it. But before I did accept it, I found out fully why the vacancy occurred, what had happened to the person that I was replacing, and I found out who it was and I went to him. I said, "I've been offered your position, I understand that you are going and I want you to know that I didn't do anything to force my way, force you out

38:00 so as I could get in". And he said, "No, I accept that. I understand, Bert." he said, "I've done the wrong thing". I don't know what he did, and he was going back to the ranks and I was invited to fill his position and that's how I started in the administration side of my, eventually for my whole army life.

How long after your enlistment were you in administration? How long was this process?

I'd say within the first

38:30 12 months, it might have been the first six months. The vacancy came and I just went into it. I seemed to strike a good rapport with the adjutant, he was the chief administrator, and after I was in the orderly room one day and he come up to me and he said, "Bert, do you want a stripe?" I said, "Is it a lance-sergeant?" And

39:00 he said, "Yes". And I said, "Is there any pay in it?" And he said, "No". I said, "No, thanks. I don't want it". "Okay." he said, he was quite complacent about it. He said, "As soon as someone down the track…" He said, "I'll soon get you into a composite rank of corporal". Which orderly room clerks were and

39:30 we had just arrived in Western Australia when one day during the lunch interval I was just laying down having a spell on my back in the tent and one of the orderly room runners came down and he said, "You've got to report to, you've got to go before the CO [Commanding Officer]". And I said, "What for?" And he said, "I don't know". Well, I just left as I was, no hat or anything on, when I

40:00 walked into the orderly room there was the adjutant and he said, "Where's your hat?" And I said, "Down there". "Oh," he said, "here", it was a tin helmet on the hook, "Now, put that on". And I was paraded, as they call it, before the CO and the whole process, what it was all about was to appoint me as a corporal. I can recall the strange look, the CO looked up from his papers and saw this apparition standing in front of him with a tin helmet on. He

40:30 never said anything. So that's how I came and then the adjutant said to me, "[You've been promoted] With the point of view that you're to take over the administration of the Headquarters Company in that

orderly room". And that's when I first, when I went down to that, and for all my remaining days in the 56th Battalion I remained in that position.

Okay, we've run out of tape...

Tape 4

00:35 **Alright, now the point where we left off, you were still in training, I believe, we started to go into Western Australia.**

Yeah.

I don't want to jump ahead too much but I understand you spent some time in Sydney?

Yes, we did.

Based in Centennial Park?

Centennial Park.

Alright, can you tell us a bit about that time?

Well, it was quite an interesting period

01:00 because more or less towards the end of our stay there, the unfortunate incident happened with the Japanese submarines coming into the [Sydney] Harbour and, of course, that was a tragedy because it took life, they sank some of our shipping as you know and we lost life in that and, of course, they lost their own lives too. I had been into the city

01:30 on a bit of unofficial leave and I had a leave pass and I'd just came back and I was advised of what was going, what had happened and what was still going on, and we were told to get our .303 rifles and they gave us one round of a magazine, five shots, and we put that in the magazine and we were on standby then. About an hour after word came through that

02:00 it was all clear, so that incident was over. But it was, I remember one incident, I came out of my tent, I think it was, somewhere just on dusk and here was this strange person in the shadows near our transport, just staring at me. It

02:30 was as though he materialised from nowhere, so I challenged him and I said, "Who are you?" He never answered me. I said, "You are on prohibited property". Well, with that he just turned around, melted into the darkness and he was gone, but that little incident showed that perhaps, what was he? Was he a spy? I don't know, but the fact he never identified himself, remained silent and

03:00 why was he there? I don't know, but it was very, very good for having the city so close when one had leave to go on. You could just walk out of the main gates on, I forget the street now or road [Oxford Street], catch a tram and go straight into the city. But the Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters

03:30 Company was occupied in there, and the rifle companies they were all stationed around the beaches, Bondi and all through there. They were on duty for the beaches in case, say, if an overlap came from those Japanese submarines. There might have been something following behind that, but then nothing transpired, that's all it was. It was just another phase of our army life with

04:00 very few happenings and then eventually, of course, we finished our stay there and we found out we were going to Western Australia.

Before you'd been issued with a rifle, had you been trained to use one?

Very rarely, because it was just through my ignorance of fire arms that I had this accident. I went to a work mate of mine who was quite

04:30 competent with fire arms and I wanted to go and ask him for a loan of this rifle. He wasn't home and I spoke to his elder brother and he thought it through and he said, "Oh well, I think if Gus was here he would have loaned you the rifle, so I'll do likewise". An automatic rifle. Of course, we just went down to blow away a few birds in the trees, just

05:00 for shooting, but through my ignorance of fire arms I omitted to put the safety catch on and there was still one, what do they say? 'Up the spout'. Mine was taken off because when we came back to our bikes, some other people at the river had come and thieved all our cut lunches so we were a bit upset

05:30 about that and we were just standing sort of looking out at the river and I didn't realise it but the next thing this rifle went off and that was the result. One of my friends was down on his haunches and he jumped up and he said, "What's happened?" I said, "I think I've shot myself". He said, "You think? Don't you bloody-well know?" So I looked down at my sandshoe and there was powder on the

06:00 thing and then I took it off and there was blood from where it had gone through the toe and it brought another funny instance. This is a follow up of the Depression. People had a lot of vehicles and they didn't register them and this young fellow with his wife and couple of children, he'd put an old utility together and he'd come down, I think to get wood, and when he heard the

06:30 problem he came over, "Look, put your bike on, I'll run you back into hospital". We just got out of the river area and onto one of the roads and you wouldn't believe it but who should be coming along the front towards us was a police sergeant and his motorbike. This chap done the wrong thing, he swerved straight around and he went straight around into the bush

07:00 and, of course, the police just followed us in. The policeman came over and said, "What's the problem?" This chap says, "I'm taking this chap in to the hospital, he's had a rifle accident". The old sergeant never got out of his side car, he beckoned me over and he said, "What happened?" And I told him and the only retort from him was, "Don't

07:30 you know you shouldn't be using fire arms on Sunday?" I said, "I realise it now, sergeant". He said, "Alright, get back onto that bus and go and get it attended to". I don't know what happened to that young fellow, whether they charged him for an unregistered vehicle or not, I don't know, but that was a sort of a dramatic Sunday. I could have been sitting on a log and had that rifle up under my chin and still could have

08:00 killed myself because I [un]consciously pulled the trigger. I didn't know I'd done it, so all these accidents, as the saying goes, nine times out of 10 they could be worse than what they were at the time. I was in hospital for a few days but there were no bones broken or anything, but a sliver of lead, I'm carrying that to this day and every now and again I do get a reaction

08:30 from it because the bullet just grazed the bone you see and, apparently, some slivers of lead from the bullet as it was going through stayed in the toe that was my reminder of my near miss as far as rifles go. No, I shouldn't have handled it because I'd never handled it before. My father wasn't into fire arms so we'd never had them in the house or anything

09:00 and I knew very little about them.

Can you just clarify for me exactly how the shooting happened? It fell over, the rifle?

Pardon?

The rifle had one up the spout?

Yes, I filled the magazine up, I think it had about, automatic you see, it had about six bullets, I think, and I thought, "I'll count them". That's how I was careless,

09:30 I missed one somewhere and obviously the one that I thought had gone was still there, but had I been used to rifles, irrespective of whether I'd counted them or not, I would have put the safety catch on as soon as I stopped firing, but I didn't and so…

And the rifle fell, did it?

No, I had it down resting on my foot

10:00 and, of course, I had my right finger in the trigger area and it was just resting on my foot and I [un]consciously pulled the trigger…

Oh, okay,

And that was the end result.

How old were you at the time?

Oh, I was about 17. It was in my late-teenage years.

Okay, now given this accident and you mentioned that

10:30 **you've been, you had very little training with a rifle, can you tell me exactly what training you did have and were you using real rifles?**

Well, in the services I had very little too because of the fact, you see, I was not classified as what you would call a frontline troop. I was on administration and that's

11:00 normally in the background, so with all the rifle training that was a part of the normal training of an infantryman, which I should have had, I didn't have and I was not very good at, I was not a good shot. I remember when we eventually went out on the range, we had to prove ourselves and there was a corporal allocated alongside of us and he was

11:30 to be our guide, we were firing at a range circle and I told him, I said "I'm not a good shot". "Well," he said, "stay here till you qualify". I don't know how many extra magazines went through my rifle before I qualified because I didn't qualify in the first allotment of shots, I was supposed to qualify in, say, 50 shots, I don't know.

12:00 It might have taken close to 100 before I got through, but he said, “You’ll qualify alright. I’ll make sure you’ll qualify”. So he broke the rules really and kept pumping the bullets into me to keep going till I did. That really summed up my ability as a shot, it was foreign to me in every sense of the word and I don’t think I’ve handled a fire arm of any kind

12:30 since I left the services. They weren’t a part of my pre-war life and they never became a part of my post-war life.

In Sydney when you were issued with a rifle, given the antipathy towards guns, how did you feel about the possibility of having to shoot somebody, spy or an intruder?

I don’t think the

13:00 the real possibility penetrated my mind. I don’t know, we were just standing around. It was fairly tense the situation but we never panicked, as the saying goes, and so just a matter of course, I think. The same further down the track when I was more or less confronted with the enemy later on in the Idabooak [Aitape–Wewak?] area,

13:30 I don’t think it entered my mind then, “Would I have to kill a man? How would I feel?” I don’t know. If I could just go forward of that for a moment. We were in a foxhole and we were there all night and the enemy were down below us and the thought went through your mind, “Well, this is the real thing. This is what you’re trained for and this is what you’re here for”. And it was an eerie experience, so I thought, “What would my reaction

14:00 be in pitch black, the enemy appeared before me?” I still can’t answer you that.

What was the culture in Sydney like at that time?

The what?

The culture and the atmosphere amongst the people in Sydney in the middle of the war and the enemy sort of looming up to the north?

Well, I think, because we were ‘on the inside’, as the saying goes, we were attuned to the

14:30 possibility but the outside people, the civilian people, they were very apprehensive. I know my wife, Anne, she was in Sydney at the time when the submarines come in and it came over the wireless [radio], I think, what had happened and she said she was in the flat with two or three other women and she said they got under the table. What they would have done if somebody had of broken through the door and attacked them, she said,

15:00 “We would have had no idea!” but that was the first thing they did. It was just for some form of protection, she said, “We hid under the table”, but obviously, we never did that kind of thing because, as I say, because of our training and our background at that time, we were in tune with the possibility of it, I suppose, that it could happen and we were just sort of,

15:30 I suppose, you could say a little bit easy going. We had the fatalistic attitude if this happens, so what? If it doesn’t happen, so what, but thank god, it didn’t happen. You know, you often wondered to yourself if you’re confronted face to face with the enemy, what would your immediate reaction be? And I don’t think you could answer it, you wouldn’t know until…but was I frightened in that foxhole? Yes, I was because I was

16:00 in the middle of the unknown.

Okay, now when you were in Sydney did you have any, or if so, what did you do when you went on leave?

Mostly, I loved dancing, ballroom dancing, and every opportunity when I was on leave whether it was a dance, I’d go to a dance, and if I may venture on this experience I had, I went to a suburban dance and my

16:30 partner was a complete stranger to me, it was a service dance and these girls were very generous. They used to come and be there as partners for us and, anyway, this dance was a competition dance in the form of the prize was free tickets to the theatre, State Theatre, which was a lovely picture theatre so I said to this girl, “Would you like to come?” And she said, “Yes.”, so I went to her home, escorted her in, and it was the

17:00 time just after the Americans had arrived, and on the way out an American serviceman he composed what became a very popular war song and he entitled it, ‘The Aussies and the Yanks [Americans] are Here’ [written and performed by Johnny Nauer]. That’s the title of it. It was very popular and he was a guest artist this evening with the State Theatre orchestra and he had a nice pleasant voice

17:30 in Bing Crosby mode and he sang it and he just got around to the hit line when, of course the place was in complete silence listening to the music and the singing, when a voice from up in the bleachers somewhere, I would say [a] semi-drunk Aussie digger [who] had drunk a lot of alcohol during the day, went to the picture theatre and was sleeping it off, and just at that

18:00 psychological moment, and it couldn't have been timed any better, this big sleepy half-inebriated voice came over the air in loud tones, he said, "The Aussies have been here all the time, you bloody fool". Well, pandemonium set in. The music stopped, the singer stopped and the theatre erupted. That was a lighter side of your leave,

18:30 one of my lighter sides and, I thought, it was a very unique thing because had it been all planned out, it couldn't have happened any better than it did because the theatre was packed and it just blew the top off it.

Can you remember any words to the song?

No, I don't. No, I don't. That was the theme song, 'The Aussies and the Yanks are here'. It was one of those hits that the

19:00 popular singers of the day used to sing like, something like, one of our popular artists was the English singer Gracie Fields. And she was a great drawcard to the troops and she came around the troops in a lot of areas all over the world, entertaining them and the songs had very nice music in them, real music content in them, rhythm and good lyrics,

19:30 and they were sung in either, singers who pronounced their words, their diction was correct so, you knew, every word that was said, and with all due respects for what we get today, I don't know what they're saying.

I'm not sure either.

No.

Now, can you remember any other instances where you had interaction with American servicemen?

20:00 No, that was the, I don't know if I should mention this one…but, again, I, whilst I was there I got a bit browned off and I went down to the air force recruitment area to see if I could transfer, at this point in time, from the army back into the air force. So I went down and they put

20:30 me through a trades training test, you know, for a fitter or something like that. Well, I was hopeless, I didn't pass and that was down on the bottom point of Woolloomooloo and I had to get up on to the, to where the trams were running to get me back to Centennial Park and I just turned out of this depot and before I realised I was just walking up this street and, it was only when I got

21:00 so far up, I realised I was in the red light district. And it brought it home to me when I heard a banging on the door across the other side of the street and here was a big black American serviceman hammering the door down to try and gain entrance, so and then on the side I was on I could see somebody sitting on the step of a little unit and it was an old lady and

21:30 the closer I got I could see she was talking to somebody on the inside because she was turning her head around, and by the time I actually got to the front of this little place, it was a red light house, and the old lady had gone in and here was the madam or the girl of the house she'd come out and taken the place, well, she must have naturally thought I was in that area, I was there for using her for her purpose, which of course I wasn't,

22:00 and she said, when I went past her she said, "Are you coming in, love?" And I recognised her and respected her for what she did and I said, I never abused her or anything, I said, "Oh, not today love, I'm in a hurry". I said, "I'll come back some other time". She said, "Okay love, I'll be here". And that was it, but that was the only phase I noticed something about the Americans but, of course, they were around,

22:30 around you everywhere you went and, of course, they were well dressed, a lot of money, and they were very popular with our girls, extremely popular. We had a battle to combat, you know, they were inundating them with boxes of chocolates and silk stockings and everything like in which the girls…you know, in those days they just weren't around but they got them. They had them in their canteens and everything and we were a bit envious of the Americans in that

23:00 regard. I was never involved, but there was quite a few spats between the two forces because we were, we were simply jealous of what they had and what we didn't have and that brought out, particularly the boys if they had a day out on the amber fluid and they got primed up and that's what would happen. Either the American military police or

23:30 ours, they were not far away and they used to, they'd break it up quick. It never got into anything serious, I don't think.

Did you ever see any fights between Australians and Americans?

No, I didn't see anything like that evolve, no.

Did you observe much about the Americans and how they interacted with each other?

Not really because, I think, you know, you would had to have been a part of their,

24:00 their culture, as it were, to sort of work out what it was and whether you agreed with it or not. I never, I was never in location where they were and I never interacted with them in any way. It was just a…

Did you see any distinction between the 'blacks' and the 'whites'?

It was very, very prominent. It was just something you felt was there.

24:30 You'd never see them together, they were always moving separately. No, they never, to me they never integrated.

What else can you tell me about what life was like during the war in Sydney?

Well, we didn't seem to notice it much because we had our huts, like the Kooza hut [?], the Red Shield hut for Salvation Army, and as far

25:00 as having our meals, we used to merely frequent those places and they used to have a basic meal that we could buy. It might have been a pie with sauce or it might have been a pie and mash but, I don't think, I can't recall having very many meals away from the service huts and, of course, they were there for our purpose and the authorities ensured that they had food there to,

25:30 to provide us with.

What about changes to the landscape and the parks and the streets?

Well, the streets quite often became very, you know, there was a lot of hoardings on vacant buildings, there were a lot of hoardings went up, like boards to protect the windows. That was quite common and even in active businesses they still

26:00 boarded their windows up just in case, I suppose, somewhere down the line the invasion might have come. But the services were there, like the trams run, the trains run and life on the exterior seemed to be just going on as usual, but there was a shortage of a lot of clothes

26:30 and different footwear, for instance slippers. As the war went on, the manufacturing, of course, had ceased, they'd sold it and you couldn't buy a slipper and that affected the civilians the same as it did the servicemen. We didn't look a lot for slippers, I used to buy them for my mother if I could, but we had enough tonnage to carry around without putting slippers in there amongst our goods because we mostly carried what we had in the

27:00 pack, you know, 60 pound pack and you carried, what you had you carried, so you were down to the bare minimum of clothes and everything.

What about the effects of things like rationing and blackouts?

Of course, the blackouts were prominent but it affected us no more adversely than it would the civilians.

27:30 Food, the civilian was working on ration tickets for food and some articles, I believe, when you spoke to families it wasn't easy to get the proper food that you wanted because it was not there to be had. We never experienced that because I think the priority, if there was any, we got it and our meals were just basic meals. Hard

28:00 mash and we had a good variety of meats. We had meats and a lot of stews. Sometimes when the cooks were out of fresh meat they'd commandeer all our cans of bully beef and we'd have bully beef stew. And when you were hungry it was just as palatable as if it was,

28:30 if you'd have got something out of the big hotel. No, we certainly were never hungry and we had the what's-a-name rations and the hard biscuits, always had them, carried them and if you did come to a crisis anywhere and your food was not available, you always had those to chew on, and they were hard to eat but they were very sustaining, they were very nutritious so we always had them in our pack.

Alright, so then from Sydney you were transferred

29:00 **to Western Australia?**

Yes

Can you tell us about your trip there, was it your first time on a ship?

No, we went overland by the Nullarbor [plain between Port Augusta, SA, and Perth, WA], we went by troop train. It was quite an experience. I think we went across from here to Adelaide and then we stayed in the showgrounds there

29:30 overnight and then we rejoined the train again the next day. And, of course, the food, the cooks had the mobile kitchens and they were always a part of the train and whilst we were just sitting there travelling, the cook was preparing our meals and we used to stop and go out and take our dixies [eating bowls that double as cooking pots] out, get our ration of food and then we'd go back on the train again.

30:00 There weren't sleepers, of course, we had to sit up all the way and that was quite a long journey of a

number of days but, again, we looked upon it as rather an experience because we were seeing a part of Australia, of our country, that we hadn't seen before and probably wouldn't, you know, theoretically wouldn't see in war days again. It was a harsh land but we survived

30:30 it.

So that, when you first arrived in Western Australia, did you go to Perth or Fremantle first off?

We went to a staging camp, I think, it had the name of Swanbourne. It was just on the outer phase of Perth and then we stayed there for not a very long period of time and then we moved in short moves north up the coast and, eventually, with

31:00 quite a few moves in between Swanbourne or Perth and others, the focus was the big city of Geraldton. And then we set up camp on vacant land behind the airport. The airport was a training camp for training the

31:30 air crews, I think, and the old, I forget the bomber, is an old recognised early, very basic plane, but they used to go up and land and up again. After a while it used to drive us silly…when we first went there because it went on day and night, but with effluxion of time we got used to it and we just accepted it.

32:00 Then from Geraldton, some of our specialised troops went out on the bivouacs [temporary encampment]. I remember our sigs [signallers], they went out into the barren land, way out on the coast where these natural obstacles were, they were just rocks going up, I forget the name of them now but I should remember it. They went out there training

32:30 for, on the field training, and I remember we went out on a big vehicle to pay them one day, to give them their pay, and the CO came with us and I remember him bringing his rifle in case he come across any 'roaming game', but nothing happened. That's about all that took place there. I think they were training for amphibious training, too,

33:00 on warships and things like that. That was in the Geraldton harbour, it's quite a nice harbour. And the old seaplanes, there was, they were there, they were stationed there and Geraldton itself was quite a nice country town.

33:30 We used to go in there on leave and go to a few dances and pictures, with your mates, if they wanted to have a few drinks you'd go with them to the hotel on a day's leave and they'd have their drinks and you'd just sit with them and wait with them and then we might go, as I say, later on at night to the theatre or something like that.

Can you tell me a bit about the conditions in camp?

Where?

The living conditions in your camp?

34:00 It was very basic but it was very clean. Like it was up to yourself, the hygiene was very strictly policed and you had to keep yourself, your body cleaned. You had daily showers and you had about six to a tent and you had to roll your bed swag every morning when you woke up, and before you left the tent it had to be tidy with your

34:30 equipment and your rifle, if you weren't using it, just laying on your pack. And then during the day if after your dinner you may go down and have a bit of a lie down and you'd just lie on the floorboards and then put your head up against the pack for a pillow, but there was a hygiene section and they used to look after the latrines and the showers

35:00 and if the boys wouldn't voluntarily have a shower and keep their hygiene fully up to scratch, they'd be grabbed and stripped and put under the shower. That happened more than once!

By the other men?

By the other men, yes. So, I mean, the men disciplined each other in that regard, some of the boys were a bit adverse to having a bit of freshwater on their bodies

35:30 so they knew them and I used to ensure that they did.

When you say that hygiene was policed, was it policed from above as well?

From the, yes, from the discipline side of the unit, there was hygiene

36:00 group of men under a sergeant, and he was an old Northern Irelander and he loved putting anybody under what they called a 'charge sheet', bringing you up before the court, and if he got any dissent from what he wanted, his pet phrase was, "I'll charge you, I'll charge you!" as if to say, I'll put you on a charge sheet and put you up before a

36:30 court martial, and he was known for his, that was his, I don't know, a way of enforcing his discipline, I suppose. But that platoon, they were never on duty because working all the time was taken up during the day carrying out their duties.

Did you have 'short arm inspections' [venereal disease health checks]?

Yes.

37:00 Yes, they were regular. Always unexpected, never pre-announced, of course, and, yes, they were a common and a very essential part of our personal hygiene. And sometimes if the boys had been playing up with the girls in Rowe Street in Perth and they might have had only a minor infection, but it showed up and the next thing they were out of the battalion and off

37:30 for treatment and in due course they'd come back again.

Would they be disciplined as well?

No, very rarely. I think it was a disciplinary action but I can't recall it ever being carried out. They just looked upon it as a human phase of life and accepted it as such and I think the officers, they had their ladies of leisure, just as many as the boys did.

38:00 **Did you ever have lectures or seminars?**

Oh, yes, from our medical officer, we had health lectures and, you know, he used to point out the obvious to us, and quite often on a company basis or sometimes parade, a full battalion parade.

What's the obvious?

Mm?

What's the obvious to people who might not understand, what is the obvious that was pointed out to you?

38:30 The danger with loose sexual relationships, if you didn't take the precautions of what was supposed to be taken with the old condom, well, you were warned that these diseases could be, could be, you know, infect you.

Now, were condoms issued or available to you?

No,

39:00 not that I was aware of. No, I think you had to use your own protection, like commonsense again.

You had to buy them?

Yeah.

Or could you get them from the Q store [quartermasters store; equipment supplies]?

No, no. I don't think they were available through the Q store, not to my knowledge. You used to have to go out as a civilian did and go to the chemist and pick them up.

Now when you got leave, what sort of things did you do?

Usually dancing, as I said, I loved dancing and

39:30 I think in Perth there was a lovely dance hall there. And we, another friend and I, went there and we got friendly with a couple of girls and they were, at the end of it, I

40:00 said to one girl, "Are you coming here Wednesday night?" And she said, "Yes". Well, I said, "Can I call for you?" She said, "No". I said, "Okay". I said, "Have I done something to offend you?" She said, "Of course you haven't but…" she said, "the fact is you're only young and I'm a married woman". Well, it set me back because I always used to, if I was to become interested in the opposite sex I always used to try and ensure there was no impediments in any way. If you wanted to, you know,

40:30 form a longstanding friendship, but when she told me, the first thing I did was look down and grabbed her finger, she had a wedding ring on alright, she wasn't hiding anything. "No", she said, "I'm on my own and I have no young family or anything", too young to be, hadn't been married long enough to have a family. And she said, "Do you think I'm doing anything wrong by coming here as a married woman and just participating in normal

41:00 social events?" And I said, "Of course you're not!" And she looked at me and she said, "Anyway". I said, "Look, I won't see you again. I'm going further up". And she thanked me for my friendship and that. I said, "Will you promise me one thing?" And she said, "What's that?" And I said, "Will you promise me that when your husband comes back and you go back in your marriage, you'll be

41:30 the same girl then as you are today". And she looked at me and she said, "That's a strange thing for a strange man to say to me". Well, I said, "I try to respect women," and I said, "I'll respect you because you're a good woman and I'd like to see you remain that way". Whether she ever did, of course, I wouldn't know.

Okay, I'll have to get you to pause there, that's the end of the tape.

Tape 5

00:34 **Okay, so tell us about your foray into WA?**

Well, I'll just continue on. I settled into my work as orderly clerk for the Headquarters Company and I had a very good rapport with my senior officer, my captain of the company, and he trusted me a

01:00 lot, you know, to carry out the duties of the office work without great intrusion by his part. And I recall one day, I had a memo that I typed that had to go back up to headquarters and it had to have his signature and I found him, he was reclining back on his bunk in his tin and I just walked in and I put the pen and paper to him and I said, "Would you please sign this, captain?" He did

01:30 and he handed it back and he looked up to me and he said, "I trust you, don't I?" And I said, "I don't know, I suppose you do". "Yes", he said, "you come to me and you say look 'sign this, sign that' and yet half the bloody time I don't know what I'm signing". And, again, it brought it home that the trust of one fellow human being to the

02:00 other, it's always there in some phase. I never thought of it that way but he did and he was a very interesting man. We used to go out in the field on pay days, we were out all day waiting for the troops to come in and then get their pay and then had more to come in and you put the whole day in out on the field where you were, paying

02:30 the troops and he was, you know, you'd get talking and it transpired that he came from Thornton up in the hill country, around Maryborough or somewhere…not Maryborough, Marysville, or somewhere up there, and his family were in a big way into sawmilling, and he used to

03:00 quite often talk of his family life and quite often they'd talk of their personal family life. Their own wives and families. We never lost our association as human beings, wherever we were. That was always in the background. The eternal hope was that the war would finish and we'd be able to

03:30 leave the service life behind us and get back and resettle into our civilian lives and get on with our lives. Of course, eventually it came, but until that became a fact, well, in the early part of our war service that was a long way off and you were just sort of hoping that, for something to happen so that it would eventuate but you had no idea when and, of course, that went on from what? From 19…,

04:00 19…, what '36 to '45? Was it '36, the war?

'39.

'38? '39 it was, yeah, '39 it was.

Thank God it wasn't '36 to '45.

No. So you see it was a six year period of our lives and there were a lot of servicemen who actually did serve in that period, you know, went initially in the services and came out at the end.

Now, when you first went to Perth, tell us what was

04:30 **happening in Perth from what you saw and the American presence there?**

The first thing that hit us was to a certain extent they looked at us as interlopers because those were the days when interaction between states, particularly between Western Australia and the eastern states, was not very well established. We never had the airlines that we've

05:00 got today. We did have the train so that there was not a great deal of liaison between the eastern states and Western Australia and, I think, they looked upon, in a way, they looked upon themselves as not being a part of Australia. That's the feeling we got.

How's that?

05:30 Well, just the distance. The huge distance and we never had the big communications that we've got today like TV [television] and all that kind of thing.

But when you were in Perth, what did you find as far as interaction was concerned, between you and the WA chaps?

It was quite good really but, as I say, this sort of feeling come out occasionally. I remember I was again at a dance and we were doing this dance and I happened to say innocently to this girl, I

06:00 said, "I'm used to doing this dance a certain way, which is…" I soon adapted to it, but it was different to what I had been doing and without sort of saying anything more, she sort of pulled her body back away from me and she looked at me and she said, "Are you from the east?" And I said, "Yes", and very sarcastically. But she said, "Everything's different over there, isn't it?" And that sort of gave me the

06:30 feeling that we weren't, in the broad sense, there were certain aspects of our association that didn't cog, but they couldn't have been more friendly. It was nothing to be walking along the street on leave and a car to pull up and say, "What are you doing, diggers?" "Nothing". "Would you like to come home and have tea with us", that was very, very common. They were very hospitable

07:00 and we really greatly appreciated that because… And I remember we went to an evening social one night and the owner of the home met us at the door and his first introduction was, "Make this your home while you're here. It's your home". And I thought that was a lovely acceptance of strange people into a person's home.

07:30 He was very genuine about it and we had a lovely evening there with him, with him and his family, because I think in most ways, most families that were still in the civilian field, would have had some relative or friend or somebody away in the services and I think that that was an avenue of them

08:00 interacting with us in the manner that they did.

Did you find that that hospitality existed in the eastern areas?

No.

Not in New South Wales, not in Queensland?

No, nothing like that at all.

So people wouldn't ask you to come in?

No, oh the odd one might but very rarely.

That's very interesting.

No, that's true but this, again I say, the remoteness of that state, it seemed to, as I say, the

08:30 fact that we came from the eastern states, in the broad sphere seemed to me, or appear to me to be foreigners. We were people from another planet and they hadn't, until the troops kept coming in for their work, they hadn't experienced that influx of people from other parts of Australia.

Did you find people from Western Australia to be backward initially or…

09:00 **did you at all?**

No, I wouldn't say they were backward.

Like technologically or culturally?

No, I don't think so. I forget now how we gained entrance to the university there but we were taken into a top secret part of the what's-a-name…where these people were working on

09:30 camouflage, working out different aspects of camouflage and it was top secret and the only fact that we got there or were invited in there was because we were servicemen. A fellow civilian wouldn't have been invited in there. No, I think they were forward. As good as…in the broad sense. They never had the volume of industries or things like that like we had in the eastern states, but what they had they

10:00 were very proficient in it.

Were there a lot of Americans in Perth?

I can't recall seeing many Americans in Perth, no. They seemed to remain on the eastern states area, somewhere here, and I think from the eastern states they might have started to go out through to the [Pacific] islands, but I can't recall many American servicemen in Perth at all. Certainly not in the Geraldton area, there was none of them there when we were there.

10:30 **When you were in WA, you said something about a priest you had met?**

Yes, there was a lovely cathedral, a Gothic cathedral. It was based on the Gothic architecture. And there was a mission on and I attended the mission and I went into the confessional box and, of course, as you know, the

11:00 confessional box is all in darkness and there was a little slid[ing] door there and the priest is on that side, you're on that side, and theoretically he can't see who he's speaking to because it's all in darkness, and before I started my process of the confessional, he said, an Irish voice it was, he said, "How do you think the

11:30 war's going?" And I said, it was just the time the Coral Sea battle had been taken on and won [7–8 May 1942] and I said, "Well, without the American navy in the Coral Sea," I said, "I think we would have been in dire trouble". "Oh yes, oh yes, I'm sure you would of, indeed. I agree with you." And his opening remark was, he said, "Is it raining?" Outside, see, and I said, "Yes", because it was

12:00 raining. He was a funny little character but, anyway, when we had a discussion on the war and all this

kind of thing, a short discussion on the war, he'd say, "Alright boys, get on with it, get on with it". I hurried out in the finish and forgot what I went in there for.

Was this in the confession box?

Yeah, the confession box. That was the introduction. So, again, you were coming up all the time with the human facet

12:30 of your fellow human beings, you know, in various ways. That was certainly an unexpected one but it happened.

It is strange. It almost reminds you of Maxwell Smart [lead character in the 1970s American television comedy Get Smart,].

Yes, exactly.

Like a big bubble coming out of the house?

Yes, 99 [Maxwell Smart's number, in a parody of James Bond (007), was Agent 86, and his offsider was a female who we only ever knew as Agent 99].

Tell us what happened after Perth, I mean you were going around the coastal belt of WA, what was the atmosphere amongst the people? Did they see them being invaded, potentially?

Well, we were in isolated areas and we

13:00 never, we had practically nil liaison with our fellow civilian. We were in big open farming areas in land that was not good and wasn't good for farming, and therefore it was just land owned as an external part of a holding and we never had any great liaison with the

13:30 farming people in those farming areas. We were in an isolated position.

Where were the cities you actually…?

When we left Perth we came up the Midland Junction [northern Perth suburb], that was the big railway centre, the same as Eveleigh in Sydney, or whatever it is here, and after we left there, they were only small, more or less merely country villages

14:00 that we set up camp in the region of these little communities. They weren't very big communities at all and when you left Midland Junction, what I recall of the towns, there was very little, if anything, there were no large towns until you reached Geraldton. There was that rare Spanish community near New Norcia…

14:30 **Where's that?**

That was on the way up between Midland Junction and Perth. It was a Spanish monk's…founded in the last century and it's still very prominent in travel. It's a unique…they were originally all Spanish priests, or Doms [Dominican; a religious order founded by St Dominic] as they call themselves, and they

15:00 were very talented. They established a winery and they had a great lovely art gallery, one of the best in the world, not big, but the pictures they had on show were very valuable, they were all standards, and it was just a unique fraternity that just established themselves more or less in the middle of nowhere. I don't think there was a town, there might

15:30 have been a small town adjacent to it, which I don't, can't remember what it was.

Was there [an] actual Spanish population around there or just monks?

No, just the monks themselves, just the priests. Years afterwards, a chap I was in the army with on the east side, when I went back to his hometown once I enquired of him and they said he had gone over there and he had joined them, but I never knew him though. I only went there and visited once, I

16:00 think, while we were in the service days. Never went back after that.

When you were in Sydney you felt that it was quite possible there'd be a Japanese invasion on Australia, when the subs [submarines] would come and take Sydney Harbour?

Oh yes, but then, of course, they had come into New Guinea and the poor old militiamen, they were the first people that confronted them and, of course, they were just

16:30 butchered because they weren't trained, but, yes, I think the fact they had got down into New Guinea, it was obvious with the next step if they were successful there, we were going to be invaded. There was nobody to stop it. All the English navy was across on the other side of the world and with the little navy we have, we wouldn't have stopped it, but the Coral Sea battle, that broke the back of the Japanese invading navy and that's,

17:00 I think, what saved us.

Now you went to Geraldton?

Yes.

You were doing training I presume?

Yes, just all training.

What sort of training are we talking about?

Just a normal infantryman's training. They had their training grounds and they were training very heavily on a day-to-day basis. And there was an incident just out of Geraldton,

17:30 I think it was there, where what they call the carrier unit, the mobile, the small carriers, the mobile units…we had a platoon of them and they had an officer who was not very popular. He was very unpopular and it transpired that he had a lady friend, I think,

18:00 in Geraldton and at night time he would commandeer an old BSA [Birmingham Small Arms] motorbike and he would putt putt into town. So on one of these excursions there were two of his troops, they got their heads together and they caught a great number of very

18:30 huge bull ants, they put them in this bottle and they kept awake into the early hours of the morning, when they heard the bike in the still of the night coming, they snuck into his tent, they opened his sleeping bag and they released these bull ants. You can imagine the pandemonium that went on when he got into the tent. Well,

19:00 he knew, surmised correctly that some of his men had done it, so at the end of their normal day's training he would make them go in and come out with their full packs and he pushed them through further training. My captain commanding the…he didn't know what was going on and one afternoon,

19:30 what it was, we were watching it from further back and he was with us and he said to the company sergeant major, "What's going on, sergeant major?" And he told him. "Oh", he said, "this is going to stop!" And he went straight down and he stopped the whole proceedings. And I don't know if ever that officer found out who the culprits were that initiated that way

20:00 of getting back at an officer they didn't like.

So the whole platoon was punished?

The whole platoon was punished, yeah.

So they would have all hated him even more, I presume?

Yes. His initials, I won't mention his surname, but his initials were 'S. G.' and they abbreviated that into 'Stabber George'. He was known as 'Stabber George X'. He was not a popular officer.

20:30 He was a, I grew up with him and went to school with him, like in his latter years, but he, as the saying goes, he seemed to have a chip on his shoulder, in civilian days as well, and he carried that into the army and he never had a very hospitable life, not with his troops. He was accepted by his fellow officers and all that, I think, but

21:00 again, it showed the…. Later on, when I went to Orange, that's the headquarters of your place [Australians at War Film Archive production headquarters], one of my old townites [person who grew up in the same town], he had established a bicycle sales and service business, and I said to this chap, and it was years after, we were talking about our old days and I said, "Jack, did you and so-and-so

21:30 initiate those angry ants into his sleeping bag?" And he said, "Yes". So, you know, you were coming up against human happenings all the time, it never stopped.

What are the tensions like in a military unit like a platoon that you found?

It was usually very good. You see, we were in an isolated position. We had,

22:00 had to depend on each other for comradeship and human relationship, human liaison and, as such, I think we all considered there was the best part of a thousand men scrunched into a battalion, I think perhaps we were living an unnatural standard of living. We had cut off access to our wives, our girlfriends, our women, and we were just an isolated masculine sort of

22:30 group in existence. I think, generally speaking, we got on very well.

Well, what about the times you didn't get along, when you had tensions?

Oh well, there was always the malcontents, out of 1000 men you got one or two of them and they broke regulations and they paid for it. I know one bloke, he fell out with an officer

23:00 and he challenged him one day and he said he was going to finish him, yeah. He confronted him with a rifle.

He confronted the officer with a rifle?

Yes, that's how bad the feeling was. But, fortunately, nothing happened, but he was charged, he went

through court martial and he did his service in military jails.

Did you ever hear of people or soldiers shooting officers?

23:30 No, but I heard that the initial AIF that went overseas, that the officers in their training days went onto the boat with them, they never reached their destination, they got rid of them over the side during the voyage.

Where was this? On the way to the Middle East?

Yes. That was common thought.

Really?

Yeah. Yes, they

24:00 never mucked around, they went the whole kaboodle.

Very interesting.

Yes, again, you had all the emotions of human nature come to the fore and that was the bad side of it, but I believed it happened.

What was the relationship like or relations like between

24:30 **Catholics and Protestants in your unit?**

Which?

Catholics and Protestants? The sectarians, was there any sectarian problem?

No, no. It had its humorous side in one way. Sunday Mass for the Catholics was always early in the morning and the service for other denominations, as they were termed, was around about 11

25:00 o'clock in the day, and quite often when we had gone and come back from Mass we were given the rest of the day off. We could go on leave so the ORs [other ranks; enlisted soldiers], the Protestant boys, they realised what was happening so very suddenly we got a profuse number of converts. They started to come

25:30 into our Mass so they could get an early release and go on leave, until the poor old padre, in desperation, he got the commanding officer to call a battalion parade and the whole thing was sorted out. So that was the humorous side of it. No, we got on well together. We accepted each other's rights and opinions and that was it.

Why do you

26:00 **think it died down during the war?**

The what?

Why do you think all this tension, the sectarian tension, died down during the war?

Well, I think that there was more on our plates to deal with than, and to be involved in than stupid sectarianism. As we did in civilian days, we were different people, I think. We changed our outlook on life. We took a simple outlook in life. We just sort of went from day to day in our service

26:30 life and as far as our fellow…I mean, all we asked of him was to be a good mate and you never thought of his religion or his background, whether he was rich or poor, he was what he was at that time and place, you accepted him on that basis and he accepted you.

27:00 **You said you were doing training, infantry training in Geraldton…**

I wasn't, but the troops were.

Right. What were you anticipating, what were the officers telling you?

Well the, I think the official thinking from the 'establishment', you know the War Office and all that, was that long unattended coastline that was part of our

27:30 land in Western Australia would have been the very place that an invading force would pick to come into the country, so we weren't very…there was a long thin line but that was the best that could be provided in case that may have happened and we were there to do the best we could to resist them. But beyond Geraldton it was

28:00 still a long coast and it was all unattended so, I think, that was another purpose of why we were there, was to be in situ, on the spot, if and when an invading force came through there. And, of course, that would have been the Japs. Of course, when the back of their invading troops was broken in the Coral Sea battle, they had no ships left

28:30 and so it never eventuated. They seemed to remain in New Guinea.

Was the [HSK] Kormoran, the German raider that sank the [HMAS] Sydney off [Western Australia], when was that?

That was one of those 'top secret' things. We weren't made aware of it, very much, and so, I don't think publicly, after the

29:00 happenings of the war was made public and everything was released, what had happened, but…

So no one knew the Sydney was sunk, for months?

No, I don't ever recall being officially told in my service life that the Sydney had gone down and was sunk by the Kormoran.

Did you hear it unofficially?

No, I can't recall ever having heard it unofficially. No, one of those top secret things that you put under wraps until it's all finished.

Were there any

29:30 **other foreign troops in WA at the time? Dutch troops, Indonesian troops, Dutch marines?**

No, there might have been a few people on the navy side of it. They might have called in to Fremantle or somewhere like, being in the Indian Ocean and come in for R & R [rest and recreation] or get more stores or something, but there was no great volume that

30:00 I was aware of. I know, there was just really Australian…as I said earlier, I don't recall many, if any, Americans being ever there, there was just the Australian troops.

I thought there was a fair presence of Americans in Geraldton?

I can't recall it, no. They weren't in our time, definitely not.

30:30 **How long did you spend your time in WA?**

I think it was about two years from the time we arrived to the time we went back.

Which places, outside Perth and Geraldton, which other towns did you frequent or visit?

Well, before we went up around Geraldton we went down to a little coal mining town of Collie [200km south-west of Perth] and we did

31:00 what's-a-name training there, jungle training, and we went through the gas cylinders, the gas rooms, and we had to do our belly-climb on the ground with live fire coming over us. And then we had [to] cross the Collie River, they had a flying fox [gravity-fed pulley and cable system that allows one person to cross an obstacle], and with full pack up and guns we had

31:30 to just grip the two hand pieces and when they released the fox we went down straight across the river and landed on the other side. I remember one day, he was a big boy, he didn't belong to us, I don't know where he came from, but the system clogged up and he was about halfway over the river when

32:00 the pulley jammed and with the impact of it, it just shot him like a bullet and he finished up in the drink, clothes and all, rifle, pack and everything. There again was the unforeseen humorous side of things.

You were doing jungle training?

They called it jungle training.

Sorry, I missed the place again, where was it?

Collie.

32:30 **Where exactly is that?**

On the outer parts of Perth. I think it still has an active coal mine, it did in those days, and I think it might be still valid there. It was known as a mining town.

I'm very surprised they'd actually have jungle training in Perth?

Yes, because all the jungle training that did take place was isolated primarily up around Appin.

Yeah, so this wasn't obviously jungle, it was more like rainforest.

No, it wasn't even rainforest. It was just,

33:00 ordinary forested land, that was all. No, as far as the jungle's concerned, it was just a myth, but we went through the training that you would have done anyway in the jungles up in Appin.

Tell us about the methods they taught you when you went to this jungle training course in Perth?

It was

33:30 self sufficient, and in jungle fighting it was nearly always man-to-man, you were on your own. You might have moved sometimes in reasonable [sized] platoons, but half the time you could have been up on your own or ones and twos so they trained you along the lines so that if in the future you were confronted with that situation, how to deal with it and what to

34:00 do and all this treats you to be self sufficient, really, and, you know, think for yourself. Don't pretend [rely] on mass orders or anything. Not like the English army. They worked in platoons and, of course, it was different warfare anyway, but in the jungle you had to be self sufficient otherwise you wouldn't have lasted.

What did they tell you about the Japanese at that stage in Perth?

Oh nothing, I don't know whether they knew a great deal about them

34:30 really, other than what they'd experienced in the Kokoda Trail. We knew they were ruthless people and if you come under their control, your life wouldn't be worth tuppence [two pence]. They were very harsh on prisoners and all that kind of thing. We were aware of what type of enemy, if and when we did confront them, what we were up against, and it proved true because our prisoners of war and

35:00 all that kind of thing, but when I got up into the jungle it was a moving type of warfare. There were no set lines or boundaries, it was just that you could be crossing in an area somewhere a short distance away from the enemy and unless he made himself known, you didn't know he was there. You'd pass each other and you wouldn't know they were

35:30 there. That's how it worked, you were very mobile. But the jungle training, as we termed it, it was very basic. We had to put our gas masks on and go through the gas chambers just so that you had done it and also the live ammunition used to

36:00 fly low over you when you were crawling under a wire, you know wire traps. You kept down alright because if you raised your head you might have got a bullet, but that was all it was really. It was just the basics.

So did you know that the Japanese, for instance, used snipers to climb up trees?

Yes.

You did know that?

Yeah, we were aware of their methods.

What did you think about that method?

Well, I

36:30 think it was, from my point of view, at that actual time of warfare it obviously paid dividends in a lot of ways. I think they were like these people in Lebanon and Iraq that are blowing themselves up [suicide bombers are largely a tool of the Palestinian people's fight against the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel], I think they were sitting ducks. I think once they got into that tree most of them realised that they wouldn't come out. If they

37:00 revealed that they were there and our troops knew they were there, I think they'd come down as dead soldiers, they wouldn't survive, so it was a hazardous part of their fighting.

But in a jungle that would be difficult to see?

It would, yes, but I think they'd probably have to try and estimate the area of where the fire power is coming from or the sound and

37:30 anything else that might reveal their whereabouts.

Did the Australians mimic any Japanese tactics?

I don't think so. I think they were always their own men and they did things as the way they wanted to do it, but I'm sure those initial militia men, when they came up against those highly-trained Japanese troops,

38:00 they would have had a very rude awakening as to how damn good soldiers they were because they were brainwashed, Kamikaze [a member of a Japanese air force corp (used late in the war) whose mission it was to crash their aircraft into an Allied target, such as a ship] and all that kind of thing. It was an honour to die for your country.

And you were told all these things?

Yeah, it was like the Kamikaze pilots. You know they used to, when they were taking on

38:30 our navy and the old ships with the funnels on, they'd ram their planes, fly them straight down the funnels and they'd blow up, but that was their purpose. If they sank the ship, well, they went to their Japanese heaven, I should imagine that was their belief because they gave their life for their country.

I understand you volunteered for a parachute company?

Yes, I got a bit blasé with the routine and

39:00 monotony of the routine life and I thought I'd like a change so I volunteered, but I never got to first base, they wouldn't release me and none of the others either. There was other members of the battalion, not many, but we were told more or less when we put our applications in, they wouldn't be granted, so we

39:30 never put a great emphasis on it because we knew we wouldn't go anyway.

That's a huge jump in what you wanted?

Yes, well, you got a little bit fed up with the day-to-day routines, you know, and you were looking for something for a change, as the saying goes, and something different and, obviously, you would have gone into a

40:00 front line zone, which they did around Nadzab [New Guinea] and those places, you know, they'd be the parachute jumps.

We're going to have to pause. Out of tape.

Tape 6

00:33 **Alright, we're back on. You mentioned earlier in your training you did some gas training, could you tell us a bit more about the gas training you did?**

It was very, very minute. They just had these mobile rooms in the area where we were training and they just instructed us about the gas

01:00 masks and the element was we had to go into the gas room and stay there a certain amount of time and just come out and that was it.

Was the gas in there?

Oh yes, it was full of genuine gas alright.

What sort of gas?

I don't know. I'm not scientific minded so I don't know what kind, to me it was just gas. It was lethal gas, whatever it was. It was fair dinkum because the training was as close to reality as they could make it. It was the same

01:30 as we had to wriggle on our tummies under these wires with the live ammunition coming backwards and forwards over us. If you raised your head you were gone so you kept your head down and the same with the gas, you just went into it and out of it and that was it.

Okay, now this was still in Western Australia, wasn't it?

Yeah.

Now what did you do after training there?

After training?

Yes.

Oh, we used to go on leave. Sometimes if we were in the vicinity of Perth

02:00 we went into Perth. Such as Geraldton, well, we only had Geraldton to go to so we used to go into Geraldton and go to the pictures or the dance, you know, that's all the entertainment that you had available to you were films or dancing and, of course, you'd go in and you'd have a meal in a café. You might have a big steak and all that kind of thing to get away from the routine of camp rations, but

02:30 it was just an hour or twos break away from the camp environment and into a civilian environment and back out again.

What did you do after your jungle training had finished?

We kept moving then, I think we moved on further up back into the coast area and kept, step by step, moving on to different locations.

Along the Western Australian coast?

Yeah. Speaking of the…we were taking over from a certain

03:00 battalion and, I think somewhere near the Norcia area in Western Australia, we passed each other on this very narrow road. We were going north and our units, our replacements, were coming south in convoys and our Q boys [quartermasters; supply staff] they put all our Q matters in big bags. And

03:30 at that time we were wearing the old gaiter, that's a thin strip of cloth and you wrapped it around and around your leg between the knee and the what's-a-name, and it didn't last very long but, I don't know, it was one of those phases of military apparel that you wore. But this boy had this gaiter on and the trucks were

04:00 just crawling to pass each other, they were that close and he went to sleep across, diagonally, and his leg was poking out and the down-going truck it had a hook on the side of it, it hooked into his gaiter and it pulled him out of course. He might have fallen three feet and, of course, he was asleep and he hit the bitumen

04:30 and he was out to it, so a bossy young officer from the down-going convoy he come along and he said, "What's going on here?" You know, he was very officious. And I just explained briefly to him, I think I was an NCO so I spoke up. "Well," he said, "he's got to be moved. We can't hold the convoys up. Pick him up and take him away." And I said, "Excuse me, sir, will you take responsibility for him?"

05:00 He looked at me very hard and he said, "What do you mean?", as much to say who am I to question him. I said, "Sir, I did one course of first aid and one thing I remember very clearly was if you think a person was injured in an accident such as this," I said, "unless you know how to move him, you did not move him. Now, sir, I ask again, will you take the responsibility?" And I knocked the wind out of him for a while and, anyway, I let him off the hook

05:30 because I said, "Look, our Don R [dispatch rider] has already going back to the end of the convoy and he's bringing a medical officer up". "Oh alright, alright. Let him stay, let him stay." But, you know, you've got these impetuous young officers and they were full of authority and I thought, "Bugger it!", they could have killed a man. He might have had fractured ribs or organs penetrating with broken ribs or anything, he could have been a mess and as it was, he never ever came back to our battalion. He was down graded medically and he

06:00 finished his days in a non-combatant area. So that was just one little phase of our movement going up there.

Can I just pause you for a moment. Sorry about that. So how long were you moving along the coastline for?

Sometimes we moved fairly frequently, other times we got into a

06:30 bivouac area and we stayed there for quite a while, but I think when we originally reached Geraldton, we stayed there the longest of all our movements in the west, at Geraldton, as far as time went and that might have been six months, I forget now.

But after you went to do jungle training, this would have been

07:00 **1944?**

Yes, about '44 it would have been, yes. It might have been early '44 or mid '44, correct.

And then you went back to the coast and did more moving with coastal patrols?

Yes, we moved further up the coast and they went through the…as I said, not having to be a part of it, I wasn't very interested in what actual training did take place but it was the normal infantry training that you would expect for troops to go through and they used to go out on

07:30 bivouacs and go through the motions like in a situation that might have been close to actual warfare and see how they'd react and so forth and so on.

And did you do any training at the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland at all?

No, I'd only reached there about, no, when we were there as the 56th, I still did my orderly room duties and,

08:00 therefore, I never did any training. And when we disbanded and we went as reinforcements and, as I said, myself and about four others and machine gunners, I didn't go into, I stayed around headquarters. The other troops went into the companies because they were company trained. I stayed put and I was only there about two weeks when they instructed me to go back to Brisbane and do this course.

Okay, so you did

08:30 **an admin course?**

An admin course of 12 week's duration.

Alright, can you tell us a bit about that and what you were trained in that?

Yeah, well, we went back by the old slow train, of course, the military train and it took us about, I don't know, four to five days to get from Atherton back to Brisbane.

So you did go to Atherton?

We went to Atherton, yes. We were in situ there for quite a few weeks before I went into this new battalion which was on

09:00 the Atherton Tableland and from there, as I say, I was instructed with a fellow, another clerk from D Company, we both went down and attended this course and it was located, we were camped actually in the 'Gabba' cricket ground [located in the Brisbane suburb or Woollongabba, references to the ground are generally shortened to the Gabba]. You might have heard of the big American bell tents, like a South American Indian igloo, with a bell-top

09:30 type of thing and they spread out and there were eight of us slept in it and we were all toe to toe. And we used to go to our meals in those days in a little old fashioned wooden grandstand, something like you'd find in part of a country village. That's what this grandstand was in, now this magnificent ground as we know the Gabba today. It was just a complete difference and we used to have our meals there and we'd

10:00 fall in and we'd go out the north gate, turn right, turn right into the next street and just into that street we'd turn right again into a public school and we had one classroom taken over and that was our place of learning. We were in school in our classroom and the children were in the neighbouring classrooms at the same time. We

10:30 never interfered with them and they never interfered with us and we learned a lot about the army records and all the administrative side of it all, it went right through it, and at the same time we learnt touch-typing. And, I think, down the track, the ability that I did gain as a typist, I think, was the very reason why I was chosen to go into this

11:00 subsequent trial, the war crimes trial, because you had to type the evidence that was spoken so you had to be pretty proficient in your typing ability. That went on for about 12 months and it came to its end and I was lucky I did some revision the night before on the administrative side of it and, I think, practically every paper I revised, there was a question from it in the

11:30 exam. The result was I did very well, I came out with 91 per cent and passed, which was third [highest in the class]. The highest in the class was 93 per cent, the second was 92 per cent and I was 91 per cent, and my typing in my official test I reached over 40 words per minute but in my typing test I reached about near the 70s. That came to a conclusion and

12:00 we had, again, an interesting humorous phase. We had a regimental sergeant major who was English and he was very regimental and he was a typical regimental Englishman and he was very hard on discipline. When we used to line up we used to line up around the oval and, of course, we were on a semi-circle and he couldn't sort of …so he got the carpenters involved to build him a big stand like a racecourse judges' stand

12:30 and he used to climb that of a morning and, of course, we were completely under his gaze from there on but without fail, nearly every morning when we'd came out to go on parade, this big stand was out in the middle of the pitch. The boys didn't have time to pick it up and drag it out there. Well, of course, the language from this old sergeant major, and he was absolutely frustrated,

13:00 he abused them uphill and down dale, he never stopped. That was another humorous phase of that part of it, but anyway I got 28 days home leave from there, so did my friend. We had our home leave and then we went back from staging camp to staging camp and, eventually, from Townsville we embarked on this old troop ship and with one stop at Milne Bay [New Guinea] and another stop

13:30 further up, where a big battle had taken place, a beautiful harbour there. We eventually arrived at the base camp at Aitape and we stayed there overnight, and the next morning we put our full pack up and went up into the jungle and joined up with the battalion again.

Do you remember what the name of the troop ship was?

No, no. It was a real old tramp.

14:00 It was, we were lucky to get there. It's very, very vague. The cook used to, he cooked in open vessels on the deck and he had two big 44 gallon drums and a couple of planks along that and he used to put his mess dishes on there and we used to go past him and they'd throw it into the dish as you went past. We'd just sit on the deck and have our meal. No, it was very basic. But if I go forward again, it was different when we came back.

14:30 We came back on an English aircraft carrier and we had proper bunks and it was quite different.

Can you tell us a bit more about life onboard the ship?

No, it was very mundane. I think when we got into Milne Bay the Americans had taken over completely and they met us, the amenities side met us, and they had their van there with all, predominantly, cigarettes and chocolates and things and they

15:00 were, we were just leaning over the rails of the ship and they were straight down below us and they were throwing up cartons of cigarettes and somehow or other a carton fell into my lap and I didn't want it, I didn't smoke so I said to my mate, he smoked, I said, "How much do you want? Take what you want." So he took what he wanted out of it, I think they were old Camels, you know, the stinking old cigarettes, and there were plenty of takers onboard around me. I soon got rid of it. Then we went up to this next

15:30 stop which the name of it just omits me now and we went on land there and we stayed for a week and we were under the Americans there. And that's the most fraternising I had with the Americans right throughout the war was up in this New Guinea base, and they were nice people. They were mad on our boots, on our army boots, and I know they came over to us where we were and they were giving us watches, beautiful watches,

16:00 for a pair of army boots, but I got there too late, the watches had run out so I kept my army boots, but a lot of the other boys, they willingly gave them away and got these lovely watches, but we went to…they had their own baseball field there and we used to go down and watch them play baseball. One of the little chaps there, I'd seen him in films before, he used to take the part of a jockey, Frankie Darro [American actor; sometimes credited as Frankie Darrow], I think

16:30 his name was, and he was one of the serviceman there, and it's quite interesting to see in the 'flesh' a film actor, but they were very hospitable and made us very welcome. But it brought it home to us what they had and what we didn't have: facilities, refrigeration, everything you asked for, they never went without anything.

17:00 They had every facility that could be had, they had it and they were very wasteful in the way they used their war appliances. I remember when we did eventually get to Wewak, there was this beautiful little fighter plane on the tarmac, it was just standing there, and I said to somebody, "What's going on? The plane never goes away". "Oh, no," he said, "there was a Yank, I think he ran out of petrol and he

17:30 just put it on the tarmac, walked away and somehow or other joined his …" and to the day I left Wewak that plane was still sitting there, just abandoned there. So no wonder we envied the poor old Yanks because they had so much that we didn't.

So where was your first actual posting in New Guinea, where did you first set up?

18:00 Where was it? At Aitape, that was the area. It was known as the Aitape Wewak area, all the area between those two points was where our battalions were in action there. It was really a clean up like it had no bearing on the

18:30 ultimate way the war went, the containment we were in. It was just to clean up these Japs and get rid of them and, I think, there was reported to be around 150,000 in New Guinea, full stop. How many was in this area, I don't know, but they were pretty down on stores and that because they had no lines of communication, they were all gone and they were really cut off and isolated because,

19:00 I think, the closest then to the Japs had been around about the earlier campaign areas. And I think they had become so isolated when the war had finished we were told that certain numbers in small pockets, they wouldn't believe the war had finished. They wouldn't accept surrender because they wanted to fight on.

When you were based at

19:30 **Aitape…**

Yes.

What were you personally involved in doing?

I was back with Battalion Headquarters in administration.

What sort of things were you doing there?

All the daily records and everything like that.

What sort of records?

Casualties, sickness and if a person moved out to hospital or something like that and he went on what they called the 'X' list, he ceased to be an active

20:00 member for the time he was away and when he returned again he was what they called 'taken off the X list' and brought on full strength again. Just routine army records, but I forget now, 50 years down, 60 years down the track, I forget the routine of it but there was always plenty to do.

What were the conditions like there?

They were pretty basic. We

had two-man tents. I carried my half of the tent; you carried your half and then when we got together that night we joined them together and made two bunks above the ground made of timber and tied them together and put our canvas part of a bed and that became our bunk and,

at least, you didn't have to sleep in the jungle mess that was underneath you. It was just a routine life and because we just moved up the coast and eventually we came to our movement there in Wewak proper. Wewak was an old German pre-war settlement that was policed by German

priests in the Catholic church there, they were German Catholic missionaries that were there. Aitape remained the base all the time, the big hospital, the big camp hospital, it remained there, it never moved up with us and if you fell sick they put you into an air ambulance and transported you from Wewak aerodrome back to Aitape and then when you went through your course of treatment and

recovered, you were airborne again and brought back again.

Now you had some jungle training and you'd obviously been given information on what jungle warfare was like, but how did the jungle actually measure up for you when you got there and saw it?

Well, I had a strange experience being in headquarters,

about once or twice a week all the documents that come from the field, all the various documents had to be taken down to base and they in turn were sent back to Echelon Records in Brisbane where we had a clerk and all these documents went to him and he recorded them in official records. Now I had to go back

from, I suppose, it was never measured in distance it was always measured in time, and it was about four to five hours. I know I left early after lunch and I never got back to the base till just on 5 o'clock, I think, and I'd only been over that route once when I was coming up to join the unit, but I remember we had to come, a lot of it was along the banks of a big river, what they called the Danmap

River, and for quite a bit of it we went down onto the base, the river was dry but it was very stony. It had a very stony base and I went back along that and I was in this river and my feet were getting sore, so I thought, "Well, I'll go up onto the bank and I'll go along the bank". But at the point I did all this there was no track when I got up top. There was just a ravine and I thought the track was over on the other side of that river. So I went down this ravine, up and I

found I was in a succession of ravines and I got into about the fifth ravine and I realised that I was going nowhere. So, having trust in the good Lord I got the rosary beads out and said the rosary, asking for help and when I settled down and cooled down commonsense prevailed and I thought, "Well, the stream was going that way," and I thought, "well, now that water's got to go back into the river". So, I followed that ravine down,

very hard it was, fallen trees and big rocks and, of course, eventually, I came back into the river and I was on course again, but I was that physically devastated. All I had for firearms was a sidearm and revolver, service revolver, nothing else, so I took it off and took my watch off and everything like that and I just went into the river, boots and all, fully clothed and I just lay like. What's the saying? Like a big rhinoceros. I was really flaked.

And I stayed there and just emersed myself in the lovely water for about half an hour, about a quarter of an hour, and then I got up and got myself all together again and then I went on and went there. But talking about the fluid there, the fluid situation of your enemy and you, two days after another servicemen was instructed to follow my footsteps and do the same thing, somewhere on the way down, I think it was, he

come across, he didn't know it but he come across a Japanese and he was wounded. Now, I often thought of that and had he been fatally wounded and when it comes to this cannibalism, now that body could easily have been cannibalised and we wouldn't have known a damn thing about because back in base, back in the Battalion

Headquarters we would have been in their minds, on our way back or on our way down and 48 hours, 56 hours could have elapsed before it could come to the realisation to somebody back in the Battalion Headquarters that it was me, I was overdue, and in all that time this cannibalism, there was an open invitation as it were for that body to be

cannibalised, but fortunately this young bloke was wounded in the shoulder or somewhere and he was able to get out of it. But that gave you a background of what the warfare was like, it was very fluid, no lines of action, no set lines, oh occasionally there would be but very rarely.

Now, did you have any problems with insects or disease while you were there?

Yes, that was very rampant the old malaria and hookworm. Hookworm was an infection you gained if you went barefoot, like some would go barefoot in the shower, just an old bush shower, that vermin could be in the ground and it would come up through your bare feet,

27:30 and if it wasn't treated it was a very dangerous, blood disorder and that was common. Malaria was common, of course, but irrespective we used to take our Atebrin [antimalarial drug] tablets and at night time we always had our mosquito nets over our bunk. So you took all the best precautions you could but you still become infected. I know I became infected once and I had

28:00 to go back by an old Hudson aircraft air ambulance and I was back in Aitape for about two weeks, by the time I went through the course and came back again.

What was it like?

It was horrible. The treatment they used to give you was a sort of a 'bomb', they called it. It must have had a lot of anaesthetic in it and you used to take it

28:30 in a form of a very thick mixture and it would bomb you out. You were out to it all day and the theory was that the contents of that bomb that you took, it killed the vermin in your body and then eventually you'd come out of it like any other anaesthetic. Hookworm they used to treat, I think, mostly with injections.

You didn't get hookworm?

Mm?

29:00 **You didn't get hookworm?**

I got hookworm.

Oh okay.

Yes, I was treated for hookworm at the same time that I was treated, it was doubled, for the malaria.

Alright, did you have any contact with the New Guinea natives while you were there?

Yes, we had New Guinea carriers with us. What they called the 'ANGAU' [Australian And New Guinea Administrative Unit], the 'ANGAU Troop'. They were all New Guinea natives and they all had an Australian officer.

29:30 They were under his command and on one occasion we had this big ANGAU group camped with us in the same region and it transpired that it had been an old Japanese camp and unbeknown to anybody, when they were leaving they buried a great case of,

30:00 what did they used to say? Hand grenades, and at night, it got chilly in the night and, of course, they just had their lap laps on and they lit this big fire to sit around and not long after they lit it, the heat penetrated into the bloody what's-a-name [hand grenades] and there was a great big

30:30 BANG! The shrapnel flew everywhere and one big chap he got, well, it appeared to be a serious wound in the stomach so the doctor saw him and he determined that he had to go back down on the coast to the base to the hospital for treatment. So his own boys, they got a stretcher and they carried him down and there had to be volunteers to escort

31:00 that group down there so I thought it was up to me to do something. So I volunteered and together with another chap, we were armed, we were the escort for them, and we got down just on dusk after a lot of hard walking through creek beds and [that] sort of thing, deposited him in hospital. And we had to stay the night so they directed us around to a ward where there was no

31:30 patients in it but there were beds there so I camped there, and the next morning when I woke who was alongside of me, he'd come in late that night sometime, I never heard him come in, was the Catholic padre of the area and he had come in. And although I had met him previous at different areas and going to mass and that, so it was nice to see him, but what made us a bit annoyed, when I walked out of

32:00 the ward or tent, just across on a stump of a tree was this big New Guinea boy, still with the bandage around him sitting down there smoking a cigarette and I thought, "You big bludger, you forced your poor little mates to carry you on this stretcher", you know, shoulder stretcher through all the hard terrain and there he was sitting down, smoking a cigarette 24 hours after, so he couldn't have been very badly wounded.

32:30 **Now did you go out on any patrols and stuff?**

I went out on one or two patrols, I volunteered. I was going to volunteer for one patrol but then something come up and I couldn't do it so I had to stay, but they got in trouble and the forward scout, who was the New Guinea boy, the enemy got him, they killed him. They were pinned

33:00 down, each platoon of the Japs and our boys were pinned down, but of course, he was out in no-man's-land [area between the Australians and the Japanese patrols], but somehow or other they raised a counter attack against the Japs and they moved them out of their area and, fortunately, were able to recover his body and they brought him back. Now had he not been able to recover and had he not got out the next morning,

33:30 cannibalism probably would have occurred on him because it was rampant in the area, but luckily…and he was a lovely boy. The chap that got him must have been a good shot because he had a bullet hole right in the middle of the forehead, so he wouldn't have known anything about it, but he was just, the body was laying there in a tent, a big strapping boy in the prime of his life. A tragedy to see it, that was war. So

34:00 I missed out on that, but another time I volunteered where they had to take up ammunition for… platoon's ammunition. And this is where we got pinned down on the perimeter and we had to stay all night, and we each got into a fox hole and the Japs were whatever it was, 100 feet down below us, we were in the top of this high perimeter and they were down there and, look, you know, you don't mean to

34:30 be harsh on your fellow man, but they were animals and they knew we were there of course, and, obviously they did it because of that, but they were running through the jungle screeching all night like animals and it was very uncomfortable, to say the least, because you never knew…you'd put your hand up and the darkness of the jungle is that dark, you put your hand up and you wouldn't see it, and you can imagine, you

35:00 know, "What do I do if these blokes come up the side of the perimeter and they're in front of me before I realised it, how would I react?" Thank God I never had to find out, but that was my really, one and only reality in close proximity to the enemy and, as I say, because of the darkness I didn't see them, but I certainly knew they were going on.

35:30 So the next morning, eventually, an order came through that we were to vacate the fox holes and we were to move back to the battalion base again. But on the way back, word came through from a forward scout there was possibly enemies up in front so we were going very quietly and I had to do the wrong thing. We were walking in slush half way up the leg and you didn't know what the terrain was under you,

36:00 you were on a track, that's all we were and, of course, underneath this slush there was the root of a tree and I got my foot into it and down I went in this slush, straight down, face and all. Well, of course, it broke the tension of the whole thing and just as well the Japs weren't up the front because they would have known we were there just because of this accident of mine which I really had no control over, it just happened. So even in tense

36:30 circumstances, there was always humour, well, nine times out of 10. And, before, when we took the ammunition up to this group, they were behind a big fallen tree, and there was at least one or two Japs just out in the kunai grass and they were their in fox holes and they were pinned down. And they [the Australians] had grenade dischargers on the point of a

37:00 .303 rifle and when you pulled the trigger that activated the grenade and it forced it a certain distance in the air, and they were trying to get the grenade dischargers onto these Japs. And they weren't having much success so the officer came and he just said, "I want volunteers to crawl out in the kunai grass," and he said by word, "guide our

37:30 rifleman towards the enemy where he was". And no one volunteered. And one little bloke, little short bloke, said "I'll go, sir". He [the officer] said, "Why are you so anxious, Shortie?" And he said, "When we were in the skirmish with these buggers yesterday, that Jap out there got my bloody hat and I want to go out and get it". So he went out and the next thing, he directed them and the next thing, WHOOF! Well, the Japanese soldier went to his heaven where he was killed.

38:00 So, that was my really only confrontation, if you can call it that.

Did Shortie get his hat back?

Mm?

Did Shortie get his hat back?

He got his hat back, I believe he did, yeah. We were directed to go back just after this happened but, as I say, they were a commando group and they were tough boys. They literally lived off the land. Sometimes, if

38:30 they could get in touch with the back troops, they would bring an air drop forward into where they were in the enemy country and drop their supplies or something that way, and that was the only way they could get supplies into them. Otherwise, they'd just copy the New Guinea native and make them [meals] out of yams or some kind of native

39:00 fruit or something, but they were tough, they had to be.

Did you have any contact with the New Guinea natives apart from the ANGAU men?

No, not really. We used to pass them in the villages and there was an old saying, some of them young New Guinea girls they were very attractive women, and there was an old saying amongst the troops, 'For every day we

39:30 were there the Marys [native women] used to get', in our opinion, 'become whiter', because they were lovely women in their own right, very attractive, but when they lost their youth and they went into

domesticity and marriage they soon become old, what you call, solemnly women, like our own Aboriginal women, after many years of marriage and

40:00 child bearing. No, we were directed not to have liaison with them.

Okay, I'll get you to pause there. That's the end of the tape.

Tape 7

00:37 **Do you want to keep going from where you left off?**

Where was I?

New Guinea, ANGAU.

ANGAU, no.

You were talking about the native woman.

No, we never had close, with the Asian women. I can recall one day the battalion orderly room tent was down on the beach. It was only one of those occasions. The

01:00 sergeant and I were on each side of the tent and we both had our typewriters and we were typing and the next thing I looked up and here was a New Guinea native sort of around the tent, looking down on us, you see, and in those days I was, well, I was even slightly red haired but certainly fair haired, and he looked at me very intently and in his broken English he said, "Master," he said

01:30 "You got peroxide?" And I never was a jerry as to what he was all about and the sergeant he was laughing and he said, "Don't you know what he is on about?" And I said, "No". And he said, "Well, they used to peroxide their hair and in that state they were very acceptable to the Marys and this was a part of their courting". So they'd literally give you anything to get a bottle of peroxide, so I said,

02:00 I said, "No, no". I said, "Me, all the same colour as the piccaninny [small black child]". He said, "Oh, okay." But he had a lovely little hand-made lacquered toy that was a native canoe, it had a little outrigger on it and it was very beautifully made, and I tried to bargain with him and I'm always one for nothing but he was too cute, he wouldn't come at me. He wouldn't accept my spiel and I never ever got it.

Some of them are pretty good at bartering.

02:30 Oh, yes. Later on I bartered in Mexico and I beat him, a Mexican in my travels.

When you were working in Aitape and Wewak, were you under ANGAU?

No, no. No, ANGAU was under us, under my battalion commander. There was 1900 or so, it was a very big group, they were attached for commander discipline under my battalion

03:00 commander, Lieutenant Colonel Roy Gordon.

What was the purpose of ANGAU?

Well, they done all the carrying of stores and, if they were available, if you had casualties, well, they'd take the casualties out for you, take them back to camp hospitals or RA [regimental aid post], whatever it is. Some of the camp

03:30 hospitals were very small and very minimum, but they got some attention there and that was their purpose, mostly stores. They were great blokes, you know, without them I don't think we could have got through because the climatic conditions were very, very harsh and, of course, we went in there unused to the climatic areas so we

04:00 felt it very hard because some of the terrain there. I remember going up steep hills or mountains, you literally had to get down on your hands and knees and toil your way up. You just couldn't, it was that slippery and decimated with heavy rain you just couldn't stay upright and walk up. That was hard and I remember we were going

04:30 up one hill and on one side of me was the batman and the adjutant and on that side of us as we were going up this big steep terrain, the solitary remnants of a tree were sticking out the side of a hill and straddling it was the adjutant. He was having a spell and I said to my friend the batman, Bill, I said "Bill, there's your boss over there, are you going to go and help him?" He said, "No, bugger him. At

05:00 this point of time he's on his own". He said, "He gets there under his own steam, I'm not going to help him". So I think we got up there and a long time after the adjutant strangled him. But, again, [there] was the humour in that. Little points, but it broke the monotony and the rigidity of the situation you were in because you were under a certain amount of stress all the time. Even the climate was stressful,

you were never free from it.

05:30 **Now, when you were in Wewak and Aitape, which one did you go to first, Wewak?**

Aitape first and then the battalion, all the battalions moved up. We were on, the 6th Division was on the coast. I think the 7th Division was either on the hinterland or they were up on the top of what they called the Torricelli Mountains. There was a big mountain range, it was up away from the coast and,

06:00 I think, the 7th Division was in the Torricelli Mountains and they were fighting the Japs that were up there.

You never went up there though?

No, we never went up there. We just stayed on a course of our own terrain with the area we were allocated to and just progressed slowly up there, and not long after we reached Wewak, well, fortunately, the war ended so we stayed there for Christmas. The war ended, what? September? And we stayed there

06:30 until just after Christmas and then we boarded an English aircraft carrier that was in the area and we came back to the mainland [Australia] on that.

What was Aitape like?

It had been raised, there were a lot of coconut plantations. It was built, the Aitape I knew, was really in a coconut plantation.

07:00 That's all I remember of Aitape as such and I don't think there was any government buildings there. I think they would have been all bombed out of existence in earlier battles. It was fairly open country for New Guinea country. As we progressed we really got into the real jungle aspect of New Guinea jungle but Aitape, no, it

07:30 was, as I say, it might have been jungle area cleared to establish these plantations and that is why the country is more or less open.

Did you ever run into Japs there?

Not around Aitape, no. It wasn't until we got into the Wewak area. As we got closer to Wewak we came in contact with them from there on.

Tell us about your operation to Wewak, you're

08:00 **doing all the logistical help there?**

The logistics, what do you mean by that?

Were you involved in any supply?

Mm?

Any supply?

No. No, no. We weren't involved in that. That was handled by what we would call our quartermaster. He was the man that handled all supplies, he was the officer that handled all the supplies that

08:30 covered food, clothing, ammunition. He was in charge of all that on the administrative side, so not being associated with him I never became involved in that side of it, but it went smoothly, you know, they were a very efficient battalion.

So you were actually involved in the operation itself to move towards Wewak?

I was just on the administrative side, but what

09:00 emanated in and out of the Battalion Headquarters orderly room, or office, as you like to say, I became involved in the processing of certain aspects of the administration side of it, yes.

Tell us about the Japs when you were moving to Wewak?

You'd never know, as I say, where you'd come in contact with them. I can recall, I think we followed up a day

09:30 after a skirmish had happened. It was in an established Japanese village and, of course, they were shifted out of that village and they had casualties, I don't think we did but they did, and the Japanese dead were just left where they fell. They weren't buried, we didn't take time off to bury them so they were

10:00 just left to the jungle and they, very quickly, in the intense jungle heat and everything, their bodies would have deteriorated very quickly and they would have gone into just…and, I suppose, when the war finished, where that man fell the day before, I suppose weeks after you'd be picking up a skeleton there, but we couldn't take time off to bury their dead. We had enough to look after our own.

Were there many Japanese dead?

Well, it was

10:30 hard to tell because they were dispersed and in certain areas there could have been. In that area where the ANGAU boys got into trouble when they lit the fire, one of the boys he weaved his way up the mountain, it was his old village area so he went up looking for fruit, and he just

11:00 wound his way up a weaving route and there he was looking down the barrel of a Japanese machine gun and it was trained down onto our area where we were. But you couldn't follow the Japanese mind, we assume it might have been lunchtime so he just left his machine gun where it was and went higher up into an area where they

11:30 had their camp established and so he came straight down again, he advised his ANGAU officer what he had found. He in turn advised our commanding officer, so they sent a platoon up and not long after, it might have been an hour, we heard gunfire, and when they came down they found a nest of Japs there and they'd cleaned them up, dispatched them. Now, had he operated that machine, that

12:00 machine gun, he could have got a lot of casualties because we were just, we didn't know he was there and we were just sitting ducks, as the saying goes, we would have been. We were just congregated in, you know, we weren't dispersed in any way.

Was that a woodpeck[er]?

A woodpecker [Japanese 7.7mm heaving machine gun type 92], yeah.

What were the nicknames for that gun?

Well, it was a peculiar sound, it went PECK! PECK! PECK! They got that gun and brought it back and they set it up and we all had a go at firing

12:30 it. When you pressed the two what's-a-names it activated it and it was PECK! PECK! PECK! Very slow and very concise in the spacing of it and that's where it got the name and it just sounded as if someone was saying PECK! PECK! PECK! That's where it got it from.

I think it had other nicknames as well?

I don't know.

Dukey or something?

Ay?

Dukey?

It could have been, could have been. I

13:00 don't know. I never come across any other name. But that became a sort of a trophy of war and I don't think we carried it, we left it behind somewhere. They brought it back from there and then they [the Japanese] were further up and it turned out that they were at a stores depot so they just put a

13:30 match to the whole lot and burnt it all down, everything they had there. There might have been a certain number of men there but they were dispatched in the fire, weaponry fire and they were just left as corpses.

There wasn't really much resistance was there?

Pardon?

There wasn't much Japanese resistance?

No, there was not.

14:00 I think in retrospect, had we not gone up and pushed ourselves in that area, I don't think they would have bothered anybody. I think they were content to sit back, they would have been content to sit back and just lead their lives out as best that they could in the situation they were in.

Any prisoners taken?

Yeah, I think they took some prisoners. My battalion didn't take any but I think prisoners would have been taken because a lot of them surrendered, but

14:30 I was not aware of where they were taken to. I assume they would have had prisoners of war camps somewhere established in that area and they'd take them there and guard them. There were very few prisoners taken on both sides. Nobody wanted prisoners. I had heard of instances where Japanese surrendered and come in over [under] the white flag

15:00 and our men just ignored it and they shot them, but I think those men later on were brought to justice for murdering them, which they did.

What? Australian Soldiers?

Yeah.

Really?

Yeah. Well, you see the men had surrendered and under the terms of war [Geneva Conventions] they should have been accepted as such, but they didn't.

Why would the commandoes care?

Well,

Because they were clearly winning the war and...?

Well, I don't know.

15:30 Well, they did. They must have been conscientious people and they couldn't see the taking of life unnecessarily even if it was your enemy, particularly, as I say, when he had given up all his rights as an enemy, he'd forfeited those and he was under that white flag of surrender.

What about

16:00 **the PNG [Papua New Guinea] native?**

Yeah.

Were they, genuinely, they seemed to be supportive of the Australians but there were some tribes that went with the Japanese?

There were some tribes that went with the Japanese. They were crazy Japanese, yes, and when their village was taken over by the Japanese, they surrendered to them and they become servants of the Japanese.

16:30 Oh, yes, they were. And, of course, they [those New Guineans who cooperated with the Japanese] were treated as an enemy, the same type of enemy as the Japanese, because they actually accepted the Japanese way of life so they became, in fact, Japanese in that respect.

How would you differentiate?

I don't know. I don't know how you differentiate. It would be like, something like the situation our boys had in Vietnam. They say they didn't know the enemy from the friend over there in Vietnam, in

17:00 the villages and natural places of living and I think it would be the same up there. I think the ones that went in with the Japanese would have been with them. They would have been in the Asian with the Japanese all the time and so if you come across a group of enemy that did have natives with them, you would have to assume that they were

17:30 enemy natives and you treated them accordingly. If they weren't, they weren't associated, they hadn't associated with the Japanese and they were still their own people in their own country, they were free people and that's why they linked up with us.

Did they have much choice do you think?

The New Guinea people?

Yeah. I mean were they volunteering their services or were they basically compelled

18:00 **to either serve the Japanese or the Aussies?**

Well, at the time that the Japanese invaded them and took over their country they either had the option, I think, and join them and succumb to their control or stand apart and become an enemy, because when that would have happened initially, we weren't there. They never had us to fall back to at that point in time,

18:30 so they would have become enemies of the Japanese and, I suppose, they were hunted by the Japanese and a percentage of their own people at the same time, but when we come in, of course, they had a friend instead of a foe so they, of course, come to us straight away for protection.

Not all tribes had obviously been involved in supporting them?

I don't think so, no. Well, it depends, you see, there were certain parts of New Guinea that never came

19:00 a part of the war scene, anyway. The war never happened there and they just went on living their lives, I think, in their tribal and village manner as they did always, and I don't know whether that was the situation with any of the New Guinea natives where we were up in the Highlands of New Guinea and places like that, I don't think the Japanese penetrated right up there.

19:30 Not in mass and there would have been some sections of that portion of the island that was immune from any kind of warfare at all. The warfare never got to them. So they just carried on their ordinary

life.

Now we were talking before about the Japanese not resisting once you got to Wewak area?

Yeah.

Were you surprised?

Not really, because we were acquainted with the situation that we were going into.

20:00 But, again, it was a case of, irrespective of what we thought individually as members of the services, we were directed to go there and engage the Japanese, whether they wanted it or not and that was, I suppose you could say, as simple as that. That was the situation from where we come into it.

The type of Japanese soldier

20:30 **you'd encountered in that area in northern New Guinea, what did they look like and what was their condition?**

Their conditions, I don't think were very good because they were in complete isolation. They had no stores to, as I say, supply their food or their ammunition or their weaponry and as such, they were not in a very good

21:00 condition at all, and physically, because they weren't on proper food rations, I don't think they were in very good health so they never offered a great resistance that I'm aware of. As I said, I think if we'd have left them alone they wouldn't have bothered us, but it transpired very quickly that that was the reason we were there and were put into that

21:30 area, was to get rid of them. And that's what we did, but I think it was just self preservation, the resistance they put up. When we attacked them, well, they just tried to protect themselves but very rarely, I think, would they have initiated an attack against us. I suppose on occasions they did, I don't know, but from where I sat, I wasn't aware of it anyway.

22:00 **Which battalion were you with at this stage?**

The 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion. It was what they called a corps troop. There were the Pioneers, the machine gunners, they were specialist battalions, and when it come to going into a battle area they were attached to the division, infantry division or divisions that were in that area.

22:30 And from my commander, he would have come under a brigadier, say, belonging to the 6th Division. We were attached to the 6th Division in our case and other machine gun battalions would have been attached to the 7th Division in the same way. Once we were under them we were with them for discipline and control. We were

23:00 entirely under their command, but we were not an integral part of their logistic makeup.

How did you feel about the war at this stage, what did you know was happening?

I had a very mundane attitude I think, as far as I can recollect. From the time I went into it I was wishing

23:30 the thing would end and we could go back and lead our normal life again, and I think that desire never left you. You were always hoping that some kind of miracle would happen that the war would end and this war business, we could just walk away and forget it and leave it. That's what we wanted all the time. Perhaps if we'd have been a seasoned fighting machines or

24:00 we'd been engaged in other battles before somewhere or other. Our battalion actually was in its initial form, it was engaged in the Syrian campaign [June 1941; as well as Greece and Lebanon] and on their way back they were directed to come back to Australia and they got in the vicinity of Java and, for some reason or other, the convoy went in there and, unbeknown

24:30 to them, the Japanese had already occupied Java so they went into an occupied area unwittingly. And all the infantry companies, they were all taken prisoners, then they became prisoners of the Japanese in the Java area and they remained prisoners of war for the rest of the

25:00 war. But the Headquarters Company and Battalion Headquarters was on a different part of the convoy and they somehow found out what had happened and they obviously bypassed Java and they continued on and that's all that came back to the mainland [arriving on 8 August 1942], and that formed the nucleus of a reformed battalion. And even the chaps I was with, they were not original

25:30 members of the [2/3rd] Machine Gun Battalion. They'd already come under the Japanese as prisoners, so it was a reformed battalion that I joined and, as far as I know, their first combat area was the one we all went into from here. But, as I say, we had a damn good commander and he was very highly respected and the men respected him. He was what we termed 'a good soldier'. It was a well

26:00 discipline battalion and it did what it had to do and it did it very well. They had their casualties of course, but by far and large they were successful in what they were instructed to go in and do, they did

it. That was it, after the war was finished we only stayed there for about, I suppose, up till just after Christmas and boarded

26:30 the troop ships and come home. Discharged straight away when we arrived back on the mainland.

So were you in PNG when the war ended?

Yes.

V-J Day [Victory over Japan]?

We were still in the Wewak area. We stayed there, where we were when the war finished then we just over a course of time embarked on the…I think the whole battalion came back on this English

27:00 aircraft carrier, which was sent out, I think, into the Pacific area to carry troops home because we never had the great number of ships that were suitable, in the area anyway. This was a very big one and we had one plane on it and when we got back into the vicinity of the mainland they used to put it in a catapult and shoot it off and

27:30 go into, say, Brisbane or wherever it was, it only went up the Queensland coast. I forget now whether it came back but it went off one day, anyway. And it was quite interesting to see the catapult when it activated just went like a bullet off the edge of the ship and it was airborne obviously when it left the deck.

So what was your reaction to the A-bomb [atomic bomb] being

28:00 **dropped on Japan?**

Well, I had no compassion for the Japanese for the very fact that I never became aware of what valid reason the Japanese had or thought they had to come into the war in the first place. The Allies weren't attacking them and I just put it down to the war machine that run that country at

28:30 the time as being very war-minded and they were the aggressors, and I know records are revealed that men in the top echelon of the armies, they said that had the atom bomb not dropped or been dropped when they were and brought the war to a conclusion,

29:00 we were building up our forces to go in and invade Japan. Now, you could very well imagine easily the number of casualties that that would have brought about in the Allied armies, so although it decimated a great number of many thousand Japanese civilians, I felt that, well, better for them to go

29:30 than some of our future troops. Because had we tried to invade them they would have resisted, naturally, and our loss would have been far more in excess of what it transpired had the bombs not dropped and brought the war to conclusion. So, as far as I was concerned, it was justified even though it was a horrific way of doing it but, again, there's nothing nice in any

30:00 phase of warfare, it's all horrible.

Was it an anticlimax when it ended?

I think it was, yes. It was because, from memory, I can't think of where the Allies had this atomic bomb, it just seemed to materialise as it were out of nowhere and I don't think we had any great pre-knowledge of the

30:30 bombs, as I say, being there to be used in the fashion that they were used. So it was an anticlimax really, but I think it brought that phase of the world war to a conclusion much earlier than had it gone through the normal processes of warfare.

What happened to you when you came back to Australia?

To Australia? As I say, I was discharged on the 21st

31:00 January [1946]. Ann had come out of the air force a few months before and she'd done all our preparations for our wedding and, as a result, our wedding was set for two days after I was discharged. We were married in St Patrick's Cathedral in Parramatta. Then we went on our mobile

31:30 honeymoon. I had a little car left from my pre-war days. It was bought off, my Dad bought it 'off the blocks' [cars are literally put on blocks of wood (usually placed under the axles) to preserve the tyres when not in use], as the saying was, and took it to a mechanic and he tuned it all up again so we had that to use. After our wedding we went down the south coast of New South Wales, right across the border into Gippsland and worked our way up through Gippsland, Melbourne, Shepparton and back to Leeton again, where I was returning to go back into my work.

32:00 I took up residence, we rented a flat or usage of my grandmother's home, but we only stayed for six months and then we moved, of our own choice, back to Sydney again.

I skipped over an important part of the War Crimes Commission which you were involved in.

Pardon?

The War Crimes

32:30 **Commission?**

Yes, that emanated just prior to leaving the New Guinea area.

How long were you actually with the commission for?

Just one session. It was filmed. Why it fell [to] our battalion to be processed or to bring it about, I don't know. I think, again, it was because of the standard our battalion was looked upon by [the] higher echelon. And it was filmed and

33:00 then, because of my, well, typing ability, somebody had to go and do the deposition work and I was chosen and that's how I went into it. And then, of course, the terrible background of cannibalism that had gone on, it was all brought out into the open in this trial.

So you had to take an oath of secrecy for 30

33:30 **years?**

I did. I had to take an oath, if I can recall, for 30 years and I kept it. I never ever revealed to Ann any aspects of that trial.

Have you since?

Oh yes, well, as you recall,

34:00 a strange, call it a coincidence if you like, I was reading the, here we are, I was reading the Australian newspaper one day and on an issue dated the 19 November, 1993, this item appeared and it

34:30 was headed 'War Time Japan Allowed Cannibalism in PNG'. Now this item goes on to say where the higher echelon in the Japanese Army approved the troops to eat or cannibalise the dead of the enemy but not of their own. If they proved that they cannibalised their own dead, they were shot on the spot. So…

35:00 **This was official?**

This was official. They found in the Australian Archives in the Australian War [Memorial] by a Japanese professor, Dr Yuki Tanaka, he found it and he passed it back to Japan and this item I believe came out in the Asahi Shinbun, the well known Japanese

35:30 paper, and from there, this is where the Australian paper picked the whole thing up and it said it gave 'complete approval' for the Japanese to actually have carried out cannibalistic acts on our dead. So it wasn't that they did it on their own initiative, the troops. They were told they could do it.

Was this a minute [type of official internal correspondence] written by one of the commanders?

Yes. That's what

36:00 the archive shows. That's what this Japanese doctor, Tanaka, found in the archives. He found this minute.

What sort of, I mean what were the range of war crimes you had to deal with?

Only cannibalism.

Only cannibalism? And how many acts of cannibalism were reported?

Can't recall now. I don't know. From that version, it's hard to determine whether the cannibalism was carried out by the

36:30 Japanese in other campaigns or areas other than Papua New Guinea. By the way that reads, it would appear it was isolated into the Papua New Guinea area only. That's my interpretation but I can't prove otherwise, but I assumed that if it happened in the area where we were it could have happened in other areas. That means there could have been other war trials commissions in other areas the same as it was in our area.

37:00 So I assume that the typewritten evidence that I would have typed, perhaps would have finished up in the archives and what the trial proved of acts of cannibalism was more or less

37:30 proven to be correct by that.

Was the act of cannibalism from what you had researched, was it extensive?

Fairly extensive, I believe, because, you see, these men, you're not making allowances for them, but these men were on their normal rations as what they would have had when they went into New Guinea,

they never had it in New Guinea any longer. They were

38:00 just living off, literally, off the land.

So they were starving, you're saying?

Yeah, they could have been starving and, as Tanaka said there, he said, "Perhaps we should make allowances for the condition of the country and the condition of these troops". Well I suppose that's an excuse for what they did but, again, I would not condone that because I went back to the…as I saw it, why were they in the war? They put themselves in that

38:30 condition and as far as I was concerned, I had no pity for them. That was a fact of life that that condition would exist.

Now you said before that you really had a strong dislike for the Japanese after the war, and as you got older that you tended to mellow on that?

I really think that if I be honest with myself, yes, that is the situation of my thoughts on the matter now, if

39:00 I was asked.

Why? Why have you mellowed?

Why?

Why have you mellowed on your view towards them?

I don't know. Passing of time, as the years went by that phase in my life became more non-active and, I suppose, by far and large, it went out of my life. At a certain point there in my life it became nonexistent, just because of time.

39:30 **So you'd already stated to us what you thought about the Japanese then?**

Yeah.

Now how do you feel about them?

Not in the same degree of, I won't say hatred, but not in the same degree of 'not accepting them', certainly now at this stage in my life, as it was at the time of my association with the War Crimes [Commission], because when it was placed before you, it was

40:00 horrendous. One of the officers describing when they went back into the jungle to recover what they thought was the body of a, they knew he'd been killed in a skirmish the night before but darkness come in on them so they couldn't go in and get him. When they went back the next day, he was that mutilated that literally the officer when describing it, he said, "When we found what was left of him we could wrap his remains up in a pocket

40:30 handkerchief". Now you can imagine the impact that that would have had on every person associated with that in that war crimes hearing, how we felt, and I say that with no exaggeration, we had a deep hatred for them at that point of time.

It seems from what I've gathered, not just from you, from other Veterans, the Japanese also seemed to have an extremely strong hatred of the Australians as well?

I never became aware of that because I

41:00 was not in close enough in the Asian with them. They could have, I don't know. You found that from opinions of other people?

Yeah.

Yeah, that quite possibly could be so, too. Yeah.

It's just fascinating. There seems to be just a complete barrier?

Yes, you'd go through the whole gamut of human feelings.

Okay, we'll have to stop.

Tape 8

00:35 **I'd like to ask you a bit more about your time with the war crime tribunal commission?**

Yes.

But I want to be quite careful that we limit it to your own personal experience of what things

you heard and saw and what you went through rather than getting off onto things

01:00 **that might be established elsewhere.**

Oh right, yeah.

They will be in other places. We're here to get it from the 'horse's mouth'.

Yeah.

Okay, so tell me how did you get involved in the War Crimes Commission?

Only because as I can remember, my battalion was authorised to carry it out and being a member of that battalion and, I assumed, that my superior officers felt that I had the ability

01:30 to carry out the duty I was entrusted with. That was to efficiently put into writing or typewriting, the ability to type the evidence as it was spoken by the people giving it. I feel that had it went to any other battalion, I wouldn't have been involved in it.

You mentioned you were involved for one session?

02:00 **Yeah, well, I think it's a whole…I forget now, it's all vague. It's like this, it was an all-day session. I don't think it went into two days.**

It was just one day?

I think it was one day, what I can recall. I wouldn't swear to that. Again, the old time factor has taken a lot of my memory away from me, in any detail.

Okay, can you walk us through step by step, starting off by describing

02:30 **the room?**

That's something I can't recall, I've often thought of it. Was it a room? I don't think it could have been because there were very few buildings in that area. I think it must have been a tent, I don't know. Such a question, I can't answer, Colin, because I just can't recall in my memory just what the background of the War Crimes Commission was. I'm sure that it wasn't out in the open. It

03:00 was in an enclosed area of some kind where there was a huge marquee, I can't recall.

How many people were present?

Well, then again, I think at least three, what would you call, judges or the equivalent of judges, myself. There was no Japanese involved. It was purely

03:30 Australian personnel, on the evidence that was taken into the commission that was coming from Australian soldiers and Australian personnel, so, well, if you had brought the Japanese in you would have had to bring an interpreter in because they couldn't speak English so, again, I think the numbers that evolved around the composition of the

04:00 commission, it wasn't a great many. I don't think there was legal, sort of equivalent of legal officers, that would have been putting somebody on trial and questioning and answering them. It was just all a spoken type of evidence of what had actually happened relative to the cannibalistic act that they'd carried out

04:30 and in that evidence I'm sure they would have given details of how it happened. What they found when they recovered the dead. What state they were in and, as far as I can remember, it evolved around basically that sort of aspect of…they put it on record and it became a legal document, I suppose, proving that this terrible act of

05:00 cannibalism had actually taken place and it was placed on record for posterity in the form of this trial.

Given that you say no Japanese were involved,

Yeah.

And presumably no cannibal victims were involved?

No, no.

Who's going to testify?

Most of the officers or the personnel who discovered these mutilated bodies. They were the key figures

05:30 and, of course, we all had to assume and there was no doubt that it was, it was an accurate version of what had happened. How they found them and the whole situation. It more or less revolved on verifying and documenting on oath what the situation was when they found it and how they handled it from there on up to the point where it was

06:00 coming to this war crimes trial.

I realise that this would have been a very long and very difficult day to sit through but, if you can, try and tell us as much as what you remember that was testified that day?

Again, the time has taken my memory away. Basically, it revolved around, again, I don't know if many cases of cannibalism was brought

06:30 forward. Whether it was in multiple numbers or if it was just a single one. I can't even recall that, I'm sorry but it was just the, as I say, the officer or personnel in our unit where it happened. They were on oath to give a version of what they actually found. What the situation

07:00 was as they found it and how they handled it and I can't enlarge any more on that.

You mentioned before an officer who testified that the remains of a man had only been put in a handkerchief?

Yeah.

Can you elaborate a bit on his testimony, any more of what he said?

No, he was very definite, of course, to the extent of the mutilation that had obviously

07:30 taken place on that deceased soldier, and most of his evidence was really revolving around that particular aspect of it. That made up the greater content of his evidence, as I recall, of just how he found it and what his reaction was and how there was very little left of that body to be recovered and brought back for

08:00 a decent burial.

When he says, I realise this is getting very gory, but when he says 'there was only enough to put in a handkerchief'?

Yeah.

What exactly does that mean?

He was speaking literally. Obviously, that wouldn't have been the true case, but the remains of that body were so mutilated and gruesome that that's how, I think, in his words, that was his way of

08:30 trying to describe the actual situation of the degree of mutilation that he found when he recovered the body. That is the way he described it and explained it and, I think, he was only using a phrase of that nature. Obviously, it couldn't have been that way at all because the whole frame of the body, it would still be there.

How did this affect you at the time?

Well, I was

09:00 absolutely horrified because immediately as he explained it, well then, obviously your mind got to work and you were trying to visualise just what was the situation and, I suppose, being human, you might have put on the thinking of it that perhaps was not quite as what you thought it was but the fact by

09:30 the way he described it, you immediately…you were revolted to think that that kind of cannibalism or the emaciation of the body, the human body, had taken place and was carried out by a fellow human being against a fellow human being and you couldn't comprehend why at that point, in that time. You had to have time to think it through and say, "Was there a reason behind the Japanese doing it? Were they

10:00 starved?" and all this, you never had time at that point in time to think it through. Perhaps those thoughts came into your mind after the whole affair was finalised and then you say, well, did you come to the conclusion, "Was there any form of, the smallest amount of justification for them to do what they did?" And in my mind, I was perhaps, because I was

10:30 so shocked at the situation that was revealed to me, as I saw it, I was in no frame of mood to allow any leniency towards my thinking, towards the Japanese involved. I still felt that they were, literally, just a mob of bastards, and, I think, that feeling was with me for a long, long time after but, as we mentioned previously, time is a great healer

11:00 and perhaps my thoughts now are certainly nothing to the degree of ill-feeling, if I can use that term, than what it was in that particular time in my life.

Now tell me about

11:30 **your position at this time because I understand you were in Wewak for quite some time after the war?**

The war finished, from memory, I think, in September 1945. We were there until after Christmas and that could be a lapse of, say, four months before we were able to

12:00 leave by the medium of the English aircraft carrier so it had moved into 1946, the early part of January when we would have embarked from that area and come home. I forget how many days it took us. It might have taken us four or five days or a week to come through the waters and eventually come to Sydney and be discharged.

12:30 **Now, of course, we've missed something out here and that is the end of the war. How did you hear about this and what was your reaction?**

Well, we were happy and with all that terrible tension, at least the reality

13:00 had arrived that the war had finished, but we accepted, I forget how, it just came through the normal grapevine, if you can use that word, of communications down the trap and, of course, we were in touch, I think, with wireless. I remember we went to a thanksgiving Mass in the chaplain's tent…no, it was outside,

13:30 it was just outside his tent, and it was right on the point on this, like in Bishoway [?], say, the western side of the Wewak point, it was a semi-moon harbour. And we disbanded from Mass and the next thing, we looked across onto the eastern side of the harbour and there were great spurts of dirt coming up and we could hear artillery and it transpired that the

14:00 Japanese had not accepted the fact that the war had finished and they were still fighting. The troops over that side of the harbour, they would have had to retaliate or otherwise be decimated. There were no means of the Japanese being advised through their channels of communication because they had none.

14:30 I don't know how we got word to them. I suppose we done it in some form but a lot of them wouldn't accept it. And I believe that in isolated cases that there were Japanese that lived on the jungle for months after, before they eventually got around to accepting that the war had finished, but we were jubilant. We thought, "Great!". In my case, I wanted to get home to marry Ann. That was the

15:00 was the first most common thought in mind, I wanted to get on with my life, and then you visualise, well, then you'll have to resettle again after four years of a strange existence that service life was, again back into the mundane days of no war, but time again, we just slipped back. I often

15:30 thought, Colin, that if we could have carried back into our civilian life, the wonderful sense of comradeship we had in the services with our fellow servicemen and we transplanted and we put it into our association in our civilian days and that was accepted, it would be a wonderful world to live in, but we soon realised that we'd come back and we'd

16:00 just slip back into our old routine of life, a little society here or a connection there and it's something that we've always just had to be able to look back on and say, "Well, it was a great experience". It was one of the pluses of service life. You got that complete acceptance and understanding of your fellow man, but you soon found out when you got back into civilian life it didn't carry through.

16:30 The people that you had to link up with again, they hadn't had that experience so they were just leading life as they knew it. A little click here, an association there and, whether you liked it or not, you just had to sit right back and become a part of it. But, I think, I've often looked back on those days and that was one great aspect that we had and it helped Ann and I because we

17:00 had both experiences of service life. On our honeymoon we were around somewhere down in Merimbula, I can't think of the little place, only a hotel there, we stayed there one Saturday night and there was another couple, only the four of us having dinner that night in the dining room and we'd had our meal and we had a bit of a chat and we had got to the point we were breaking up and I didn't realise it but I must have said to Ann,

17:30 "Are you ready, mate?" and this chap immediately picked me up. He said, "You've been in the services!" And I said, "Yes. How did you come to that situation?" He said, "The way you addressed your wife". We were both still in that frame of mind, so recently being back in civilian life that we were just

18:00 talking as we would to our fellow servicemen that we were still with, and I thought, "Well, that's the way it is". When we were further up into Dandenong or somewhere we were ringing up one night and, as I say, we'd only been married at that point of time about three weeks I suppose, and Ann didn't realise it but she was fiddling with her wedding rings and we were sitting, another lady was waiting and this woman

18:30 said to Ann straight away, she said "You've just been married?" You did everything to cover that possibility up of coming out and Ann said, "How did you realise that?" She said, "The way you're playing with your wedding rings". Those little instances, they were all viable and they were a part of your life, a very nice part of it.

So there were some good

19:00 **things that come out of it?**

There were some great things came out of it, yes. As I say, you'd walked into an old tent and with these

worldly goods, you had practically nothing but you still had your mate alongside of you and opposite you and you really valued it and when you come back to reunions in the years that went on, that old comradeship, it came out very quickly.

19:30 The way some of the chaps used to address their mates was pretty crude and they'd use the old adjective, "You bastard this," and, "You bastard that," but you accepted it in the manner in which it was intended. It was comradeship, it wasn't the other way, and some of the language that was just with the men, it

20:00 was terrible. The old sex word. I remember our little Church of England padre, a lovely little man, and he was horrified with that and he couldn't accept it and he got the commander to call a full battalion parade, I don't know whether, this was up in New Guinea somewhere, and he took over and he nearly got down on his knees and pleaded with the men to

20:30 desist from using this as he said it, "The in and out word", that's how it affected him and it was, it was rampant, and when you thought it all out, you're proving nothing, it meant nothing but they didn't realise they were saying it. It just become over a matter of time in that background, it had just become a part of way with their speech. It wasn't nice at all.

21:00 The service life could have affected you in a lot of ways, for instance, a lot of young boys particularly, they got into their pattern through the comradeship of drinking. You had to be a digger to drink otherwise you were an odd bod, and I think a lot of them started smoking because the culture was there and you were a part of it

21:30 and they didn't want to be the odd bod out so they joined them and they smoked. They drank and, I think, a lot of the boys that started in those days it remained a part of their life and, I think, as far as alcohol was concerned in a lot of cases it became a great damnation on their life, they became alcoholics because of

22:00 the atmosphere that was there. You just wanted some form of relief away, you were sort of…you never had your mother to be with you or your wife or your father. You were on your own and it was one way, I suppose, of getting a false relief and you took it. Not that I'm a saint, but I didn't. I would not accept it and I didn't. I went through my army days

22:30 without ever becoming indulged in drink, and, looking back, it's never affected my life. It's never affected my friendship with anybody. My comradeship with my fellow servicemen in those days, it never affected that. I accepted their way of life. If they wanted to drink, in turn they accepted my right not to drink, but I remember going into the hotel one day in Perth and I joined my mates, they were in earlier than me and

23:00 I used to have a squash and I said to this lass behind the bar, "What do you want, digger?" she said. "What would you like?" And I said, "I'll have a squash, thanks". And she sort of looked and all of a sudden it sunk in and she said, "What?" I said, "I'll have a squash, thank you". And with that she turned around to the boys and said, "Look, what

23:30 do you think of your fellow digger, he won't even have a drink of beer. What kind of a man is he?" And she was really denigrating, but she got no response and, I think, she was looking for the cellar door to jump down and get out of the way. It rebounded on her very quickly. She made a fool of herself. So you had little instances because you weren't participating in that way of life, it had an adverse reaction on you. We went on a Burns

24:00 Philp [Australian based tobacco company which has recently moved into the food industry] trip up to Hong Kong later on and the captain, he happened to be a Swedish captain, he was an alcoholic and one of the passengers, he was a self-confessed alcoholic and there was only 14 passengers and we all had to sit at the captain's table so we were under his eye, as it were, all the time and he couldn't understand that Ann and I would not be a process of participating in

24:30 alcohol liquor because he was always drinking a toast to this and a toast to that and he wouldn't accept it. Neither did this Pat, he wouldn't accept it either. And they made our up trip hell but, fortunately, when we got to Hong Kong, Pat went on of his own volition by air to the Philippines and he came back under his own steam. The captain was paid off in Hong Kong.

25:00 His agreement had ceased and he was replaced by a Filipino captain and he was just the opposite. He never worried you at all, he was a little gentleman and it was just a case of, I said to this Pat, I said, "Pat…", you know there was this canvas that was the only means we had of having a bit of a splash in the water, we'd put our costumes on and get into this big canvas on the deck, I said, "Pat, you could fill that canvas swimming pool up with

25:30 drink and you can drown yourself in it". I said, "That's your business but because I don't drink, please accept the fact that's my business and Ann's too", but they wouldn't. So, I think, as an individual I always try to stand on my own two feet and I would not back away from any kind of situation that I didn't agree with. I wouldn't

26:00 agree to it or become a part of it. I felt if I was right and, I think, nine times out of 10, I was, I still had my principals and, hopefully, I've still got them.

Alright, I wanted to ask you what you did when you came back to Australia before you were discharged?

26:30 Very little, because I just went on day leave because I was just waiting for my papers to be formulated and reach a stage where I was to be discharged. Until that day arrived I just used to walk in and out, I used to go into town. Ann was living with her mother and father in a suburb of Sydney and I used to go and be with her and we'd spend our days together more or less going to theatres and being together.

27:00 The most important day was when we went in together and bought her official engagement ring. The only ring that I could get together up in the islands was cut out of a two-shilling piece, you know, take the centre out of it and they'd put a little shell as the what's-a-name to it. So, I sent that back to Ann and in theory that was like one,

27:30 so she wore it as such and of course she got ribbed very, very smartly from her fellow troopers, "Is that the best wedding ring your husband can give you?" But that day we went in and got our official engagement ring, that was a very important day in my pre-discharge days. We just used to go back to camp to sleep, just to bed down, come out the next day again, have a meal,

28:00 have breakfast, so really nothing transpired as far as service life in those few days between [dis]embarking the ship and we went into a camp in the western suburbs of Sydney, a fair way out actually, well past Parramatta, so to get into town was quite a train ride to get in, but

28:30 we weren't there very many days in that state when the discharge come through and then, of course, when you walked out the gate you realised you were a civilian once again after all those years of that strange live. It was just left behind you. Then, of course, with the time, and I had to go back to work so you soon fell into the routine of civilian life again.

29:00 **We touched on it briefly but after the Japanese surrender, you were still living in, well camped in Wewak?**

Yeah.

What were the conditions like there, was there a lot of changes once the war actually ended?

Not a great deal.

29:30 The great medium of conversation, of course, was what were we going to do when we returned back to civilian life? That was the paramount thought of our minds. The realisation had come to us that the war had finished and it was only a matter of time for the procedures to be carried out for

30:00 discharge and our mind was concentrated nearly 24 hours a day in our waking hours on getting back into civilian life and imagining how or what we were going to do and how we were going to adjust to it, and we sort of quickly forgot. The conditions in Wewak as far as a jungle setting was concerned, they were bearable, we were in tents so we just led our normal day,

30:30 day by day. I always used to pop down from headquarters into the tents of the troopers and get talking to them, and they were just as engrossed in getting back into civilian life as I was so it wasn't a great feature in our life really, just routine.

Now you mentioned this briefly before but

31:00 **tell me about any interactions you had with Japanese POWs?**

Very little, the only interaction I had was in the area of what they called Cape Wom and that was where the surrender procedures were all set and that's where Major General [Horace] Robertson [commander 6th Australian Division], he was the general in charge of that area, they had

31:30 all the Jap generals including the 'big boy' [Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, commander Japanese XVIII Army], they were all in captivity under our command. And the day of the surrender I was directed with a very important document, it might have been something to do with this war crimes, I don't know, but I was directed by my adjutant to board a jeep and go [take] it down, and take it down personally and hand it in to army headquarters,

32:00 and as we come out, we'd just come back out onto the road again when this great convoy of Japanese personnel was coming in to go into Cape Wom to go to the surrender procedures and, I suppose as far as a 'live' Japanese goes, that was the closest encounter I had had because, as I say, one day we found there was Japs

32:30 been killed, they were dead Japs. The supreme commander of that area, Lieutenant [General] Adachi, he was a damn good little soldier. Our troops tried to set traps and trap him but, no, they could never capture him. He was too cute for them but, anyway, of course, when the war ended, he surrendered. He was the typical Jap, very short in stature sitting in the jeep,

33:00 very impassive in their encountments, staring straight ahead and the great samurai sword was on the floor of the jeep at his feet and, I think, really, in that situation while he was sitting down, the extremity

of the sword was over his head, that's how small he was, but he was there sitting with a little Jap cap they had on, their war cap and,

33:30 of course, I don't think he understood a word of English. There was quite a varied number of troops that were, the Don Rs [Despatch riders] had pushed our jeep off the road so we wouldn't impede the convoy, so we just had to literally sit on each side of the road while the convoy went through us and I can recall very vividly the type of bastards that the Japanese were called by the troops. It was,

34:00 I didn't know that there were so many variations that could be placed on our birth right until these boys let it known, but of course they were impervious to it, they couldn't understand so they just, as I say, they just kept their business straight ahead and they just ignored us, but it was an opportunity for some of the boys to let steam off that had built up over all the years that we were fighting them. I thought to myself, only for you and the likes of you,

34:30 we wouldn't be here. We would never ever come here and it was true so that was the closest, I think I can recall, ever getting to the Japanese. There was quite a convoy of jeeps with different strata of Japanese Army in those jeeps. They were all following up and they went to the…we never went back for the surrender ceremony, we weren't part of that so I don't know what happened there. They might

35:00 have been only half a mile in from the coast on what they call this Cape Wom area, where it all happened. That was my only association dealing with Japanese.

Okay, now after the war when you returned to Australia and returned to normality, what affect do you think the war had on you as a person?

35:30 I don't think it had any adverse affect on me because I felt that, in a strange way, I had gained a lot of service life which was brought about by the war and, I think as mentioned, my experiences with my fellow men. No, I don't think it had any adverse affect on me.

Positive affects then? Did you learn things from the war?

I

36:00 think I learned from the comradeship of your fellow men, something that I would never have learned in civilian life, because in civilian life we are all centred in our own little mode of living and we associate with the men we work with or associate with the people we work with, but in the service life, whether you liked it or not, you were there together and you had to live

36:30 in a compatible manner with each other otherwise you couldn't have existed, and I think that was a great thing that I felt of service life, I gained from it, so it wasn't all wasted, and when I went back into civilian life I thought, "Oh well, I've just got to knuckle down". And it wasn't very hard to settle back. You soon got into the routine. You realised that you were no longer under army

37:00 control and discipline. You were your own person again in every sense of the word. You went back to your work, you went and did your work. You did it in conjunction with the people that you were working with and at the end of the day, you went back to where you were living and I had Ann to go back to and she had me to come back to where we were and we were just engrossed in our new mode of living and

37:30 I never, don't think ever, lived a great deal in the past once I got back into civilian days. You realised you were intent then on establishing your life on a permanent basis, particularly after you were married. Establishing a home, starting a family, and they were the main purpose of your life back in civilian days and the old war days just

38:00 gradually disappeared into a fading memory.

Did you ever dream about the war?

Pardon?

Did you ever dream about the war?

No, I never had any nightmares about it. No, it never affected me that way. Perhaps I would have had dreams of facets of war. You can't control your dreams, can you? So in that affect, I think I did, but when I woke up in the morning and I realised I was in my own civilian bed again and in my own civilian place of living,

38:30 it just went out of my mind. It never became integrated in, it never became an obsession or anything like that. No, it never affected me.

Did you talk to your children about your experience?

In the broad sense. I never went into great detail. They were not broadly interested, particularly in the lighter side of your

39:00 life. I never dwelt on the harsh side of it very much, not that I had a great deal of it, but the part that I did, I never dwelt on it. In a survey that I completed, it's gone now into a book, it's been written on the same facet of, this phase of my life that's gone into a book, it's written by two journalists,

39:30 husband and wife, and they've entitled the book, what is it? World at War, Australia, Japanese Today, and they were going back onto it and they asked very pertinent questions, it was a questionnaire, and they asked very pertinent questions along the lines of did I have hatred for the Japanese?

Alright, we've only got a

40:00 **couple of minutes left now.**

Alright.

So if there is anything you'd like to add, please say your peace.

Well, there was one humorous side of my life when I went to Sydney, I joined the Repatriation [Commission] and after four months I was out at the hospital. It was a very big institution, probably at the time the biggest in Australia, had a great huge staff, 1500 active beds were occupied, which, it was a big hospital,

40:30 and on weekends a clerk on his own had to come in and be on duty. You had to handle all aspects of administration that occurred on that day. And one Saturday morning, early, I was confronted with a big strong looking gentleman still under the influence of alcohol, very belligerently demanding "I want to see a doctor".

41:00 So I excused myself and went down to a back room, I contacted the doctor and warned him of the situation he was coming into. He eventually come up and he took him through to the consulting room. He went through a medical examination and he explained that under the regulations he could not admit him because he was not a sufficient medical case to do so. The only way he could admit him was under a very dire situation

41:30 known as an 'emergent admission'…or an 'emergency admission', it was essential that that person had to be admitted. He never fell in that category. So he explained to him in a very nice manner, "Go back to your own doctor after the weekend and go through the normal processes and we'll admit you". But he didn't accept it. He became very, very belligerently and he challenged this young doctor to fisticuffs…

INTERVIEW ENDS