

# Australians at War Film Archive

## James Scott (Scotty) - Transcript of interview

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**Some parts of this interview  
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are  
noted in the transcript and video.

### Tape 1

00:41 **Good morning Jim and thank you for joining us. We'd just like to start with a brief summary of your life from when you were born to today?**

Well I was born in Port Pirie in 1920 and my

01:00 father had a fruit property in the Wirrabara Forest and because of the, he had to then take his fruit via trolley to Port Pirie which is a long draw. And he then found that was too much so he sold out and went to live in Marabaha trying to get his future back that he was, he was a carpenter,

01:30 'master carpenter' they used to call them in those days where they built from the foundation right up until they put the gutters on. Now we were there for roughly about 3 years and then his friend who was in Adelaide suggested he come to Adelaide at the time because there were some buildings. So he came to town and at Myrtlebank where he was stationed,

02:00 where we were stationed in the house there. And he got a job for a couple of years and then returned to Clare. Now in that period of Myrtlebank I went to 2 years of school, I started my schooling there for the first 2 years. When we drifted back to Clare my granddad, we were originally Clare people, my granddad had a shop there who was Mayor of Clare for some many

02:30 years. His son was Mayor of Clare later on and his son, so there's three Scotts were Mayor of Clare. And he during the Depression, there was no work at all so he got a job with friendly farmers and that was 10 shillings, 1 pound a week and we had 4 kids and his wife. And then he decided that he would go to Berri

03:00 where he had 2 brothers which there was a little bit more work up there so we finished up at Berri. I had, and I would be about 9 years old when I went to Berri. I went to Berri School but being shifted around so much I lost interest in school and when I got to the age of 14 I left and went out and got a job at 15 driving

03:30 a utility, or they used to I think they used to call them buckboard [vehicle with a body formed by plank on wheels], a car cut down into a, they called them a buckboard, driving around supplying ice to people with ice boxes. Then we, my Dad got a block of his own and we shifted to Glossop, which is not far away from Berri. And I stayed there working around the place on

04:00 fruit blocks and his block until the war started. And there was four mates, three mates and myself and when the war broke out they got itchy feet and they then formed the 6th Division, the Australian Government. Then some of the boys were in the militia at the time

04:30 and they were in camp at Woodside and on the 13th of October 1939 the government went right through the River Murray for volunteers for the army. And we then decided that we'd joint the army, the 4 of us. So a few days after we travelled,

05:00 a train load of around about 300 people, or lads from the River Murray from Berri, Coby, Loxton. Anyway they filled that train up and we landed at Woodside. We had to walk up about a mile and a half

to the camp from the train. We carried a lot of gear that we didn't need when we got there, but we didn't know at the time. And we

05:30 were in these tents, old World War 1 tents, a round tent, and you laid around it with your feet towards the pole, most uncomfortable because everybody seemed to have to walk over one another to get outside. So I can tell you some stories, some funny stories as I go if you wanted them?

**Oh we'll ask for the, yeah we'll get the stories**

06:00 **later, we just get the brief overview now?**

So from there in probably about 3 weeks we were entrained to go to Puckapunyal in Victoria, and we became the ASC [Army Service Corps] of the 9th, of the 6th Division sorry, the 6th Division. And we stayed there, we stayed there just before Christmas and we

06:30 turned around and came home for Christmas and we had our Christmas and went back to Puckapunyal. There we done some more training and then I got crook, I got pleurisy because we were out bivouacking [camping] and this was, this would be in the, about

07:00 March and then I had to go to Corporate Hospital and I was there for about 5 or 6 weeks. And when I came out I had to go for a review and the doctor informed me that I wouldn't. Like you to go for a walk around Melbourne for 2 hours. I walked around, I wasn't even looking at the town itself I was more concerned in making

07:30 my mind up whether I go or whether I don't. "Would I go or not, would I go or not?" that was the longest 2 hours that I think I spent in my life. When I got back he said, "You know you're too young and if you go to a cold winter climate you might suffer, but you could go to Egypt where your going and you'll probably be all right," so I said, "Okay I'm going."

08:00 So on the 5th of March, 5th of May we left Melbourne in the boat called Empress of Canada. The first time we'd ever been on a boat that big and it was very fascinating to think that there was possibly around 6000 troops on it. And as we left the wharf

08:30 there was a lot of people there and they were all waving and singing to them and we were singing to them as it was, Wish me luck and goodbye and Now is the hour. Now is the hour was a Kiwi [New Zealand] song and that was lovely song and we sung those two songs and every

09:00 troop that was on that boat were on the top waving goodbye. Then we got out to the sea and then there was a about another.....there was the Empress of Britain, Empress of Canada, the Andes had all New Zealanders on, Mauritania, Aquitania,

09:30 I'd have to look at me notes from thereon I think. And these were the biggest boats, and the Queen Mary, the biggest boat then of the world. We then sided up alongside it and off we went to Perth where our boat being a smaller boat we pulled in at Perth wharf and then from there they loaded some more troops on. We had a day's leave to get off the boat so they could

10:00 have more room to put their stores and things on and then we off. So we got out into the ocean and were heading towards India, Ceylon and orders came that we take all our winter clothes off, cause we were going into winter and we all got shorts and shirts

10:30 and etc. Another week I suppose we then travelled towards the Middle East. All of a sudden my mate next door in a hammock said, "What's happening?" I said, "I don't know, something's happening. The boat seems to be wobbling around a bit." So we found out the boat had turned, we turned south, south west, we were going

11:00 south east, more east than south. Then we landed at a place called Cape Town, not Middle East, Cape Town, and we spent a day there, or they, sorry we spent about 4 days there but we had 1 day leave. And we went off the boat

11:30 and there was a gharry, I've never seen a gharry in my life and it was a big Negro bloke on the end of the rickshaw, a there long rickshaw the gharry. So he said, "Do you want to go to town?" which was probably about 2 mile away. So 3 of us hopped on this gharry, which a gharry's very high and when he picked up the rickshaw we thought we were going over backwards, but what they do is

12:00 they wind themselves up on this, walking quick and practically running, and then slide themselves up along the rickshaw and they balance, our weight against his weight against the long rickshaw. And it's fascinating to think that he takes one step about every 10 yards, just floating along, amazed us, and every time he did that we thought we'd go over backwards, it was very high, that was very interesting.

12:30 Do you want to know all those little things now?

**We'll come to that later, we'll...?**

Oh well I won't go into those details yet, okay sorry cause I've got a lot of them. You only want me to get to the war and back, sorry. So then we loaded up again and we were off. Now how the Germans didn't know that we were in South Africa God knows, cause everybody else knew. And we went

13:00 right around the African Coast to a place called... Oh dear, it wasn't North Africa... Oh dear, gone.

**It will come later.**

And we stayed there for a day, I'm not quite sure what it was all about, we stayed there for a day and that was our first action, and Italian came over and bombed us but

13:30 Italians bombed from high up they never came down close, so we had no trouble there. So off we go again and we had some of the biggest armed ships in the world at the time, we had the HMS Hood, the HMS Nelson, the HMAS Sydney and they were all close into us because we had a lot of big ships.

14:00 And then we had the Australians on their bombers, not bombers the big flying boats, they come in and they waved their wings and say g-day daily to see if we were all right. So we finished up with, we finished up in... gees... River Clyde in Scotland

14:30 and that was fascinating, I'll go in later about that. We got off there and took a train and we finished up in our camp at a place called Salisbury Plains, Tidworth was the camp that we were at and we were there and we made our camp there. And we were

15:00 on guard for an aeroplane field there which had Lancaster bombers, which the Germans like bombing and we were there guarding in case. But I didn't do too much of that I got called up and went to a petrol station with another person and myself and we were operating this petrol station for all the troops and the Australian Army

15:30 that were there. Well their trucks and whatever needed petrol for. We then went down South to Colchester, we could hear the bombs and see the fires from where we were camped when they were bombing London, they bombed hell out of London. And anyway we were there for a while and got mixed up with aircraft and things

16:00 and that, then I've forgotten what day. I think we landed at Clyde on the 17th June, 17th of June and we stayed at Colchester to, I think it was about 8th or 9th of February

16:30 and then we, which was the best looking back, looking back the best experience I ever had and the loveliest experience I ever had in the 9 months in England. So we got a train back to Scotland got on the boat again and we headed out to the Middle East. That time we had a little boat,

17:00 wasn't very comfortable but they squeezed us in on this little boat. We then stopped at a place called Durban, we were lucky we had Cape Town going over and Durban coming back and that was a pretty place, we stayed there for a week. And then we headed north east, north west again around the Cape to Port Said in Egypt where we stayed.

17:30 And we got a train from there to Palestine camp there, we camped at a place, they called it different names there and we were on 84, '84 camp' meant nothing, it was just the name for it. So we were there, we had quite a lot of leave looking around the place and

18:00 until we, they decided that we should go up to Tobruk, or up the Western Desert. Now what happened was when we landed, when we went to England there were, be probably about a, not quite sure whether it would be half of the 6th Division, oh no wouldn't be half, would be.....

18:30 it's all there somewhere. There were probably 2 brigades and half of ASC and there was all bits and pieces because we were the rear guards when we left Australia and when we got to England we had a bit of everybody and they formed some more infantry divisions there. And 9th, 10th

19:00 and 12th was there, there was a 30, 31st and 32nd Company, I think they formed over there. And when we got back to Egypt the 6th Division was filled up by reinforcements so then we became the 9th Division. Originally we were the 6th but the 9th Division we became. So that meant

19:30 that the 6th Division had gone up to the desert and they went up as far as Benghazi and we, and 9th Division then went up and took over and they came back, 6th Division and they went to Greece so we stayed up in Benghazi. And then through

20:00 bad information they found out, the 6th Division had chased the Italians up, they were easy meat, chasing Italians; they didn't want to fight. But when we got up to Benghazi they then had some Germans land on them and they came over, we didn't know that and I don't know why our information didn't know

20:30 but all our blokes were all up there and then we got attacked by the Germans because we weren't prepared for that. In the next probably 3 weeks we were chased back to a place called Tobruk which the Italians, we knocked, that we'd.....attacked the Italians going up and they just ran and left it as it was, they left a lot

21:00 of prisoners behind. Tobruk was a half circle, had a reasonably, had a good port, but a little one, not very big and from there they for some reason they put out all around the area, and it would be I think there's about 37 miles in a half circumference because the other side is the sea,

- 21:30 and about the deepest was around about 10 miles. But all around there the Italians built concrete forts and these forts, whoever may have been in them, very difficult to get them out, if they were like the Soldiers of the Australians or the Germans they were very difficult to shift. So we were there
- 22:00 on April the, Good Friday, Easter Monday sorry, Easter Monday came and we'd got rid of about 60 odd thousand Italians which we had captured and we were guarding them. Then we had a surplus of all the smaller Units because transport, there was no need for big transport
- 22:30 along roads or anything like that, or carrying troops any distances like we were, and cause it was so close. So half of our AASC, Australian Army Service Corp which we were put into the 'foot-sloggers', which I didn't like, I can tell ya. So on this particular day, Easter Monday 1941 we, our platoon
- 23:00 was spread amongst the artillery in case the Fritzes [Germans] came and they wanted protection. But all hell broke loose and we had 7 Hurricanes, think they were Hurricanes, also we had 9 Matilda tanks, they would have lasted about an hour,
- 23:30 we had nothing then, cause the Germans attacked with I don't know how many tanks, they attacked with a lot of tanks. But what the infantry did was allow them, the tanks to go into Tobruk or further on from the front line and they keep their head down, because their in these concrete blocks, they had no hope, and they done the infantry over, the infantry couldn't follow the tanks. And
- 24:00 there were, if my memories right our artillery were point blank range shooting tanks and I....pretty sure there was 36 of our tanks got knocked out. That was the biggest set back of the German Army since the start of the war and they never got over that, they attacked once more but the never got into Tobruk, it
- 24:30 was too much for them. That was under the best general the Germans had had called [Erwin] Rommel. They had no hope of getting in while the Australians were there. Then we started to build up a bit and the British sent troops up to Tobruk through
- 25:00 Mersa Matruh and Derna and through that country up along the coast of Egypt into Libya to rescue us, but they couldn't so they stayed there. We stayed there for 9 months and we was starting to crack up health wise so they had to be relieved, we were relieved. I got wounded in Tobruk and that put me back a bit but, and
- 25:30 then we left Tobruk, bit by bit on little boats and we came back to Palestine again, and then we had leave and then we went up to Syria. Syria.....oh Christ what's the bloody, they were in control by the French, Free French, Free French?

### **French Vichy?**

Hey?

### 26:00 **Vichy?**

Yeah, Vichy, and the 2nd... Oh come on Jim, the 7th Division, "We'll fix them up," they went up there and attacked them and they came back and they were in Palestine too. So then we went up to Syria, the 9th Division,

26:30 we went up and stayed there in Syria and Lebanon, most beautiful country, Lebanon, nice to go up there for leave. We had no troubles up there it was quite nice country and then the 7th Division came home and they were going up to Singapore but they turned around and came back because it got a bit sticky and they landed back in Australia and they went up to

27:00 New Guinea. And then we were left over there and it was most enjoyable. I suppose I'll tell you that what was happening, it was all political we were, Britain and the Yanks were landing our stores at

27:30 Alexandria, that's in Egypt, and they were landing there supplies for Russia, stupid but I know, and they were dropping trucks and we would then take those trucks through Egypt, through Palestine through Syria and put them on the boarder of Syria and the Turks, Turkey. Just lay them up alongside

28:00 the boarder, never see anybody, turn around and come back. And they'd take them all through Turkey and put them on the boarder of Russia, which is fantastic, fantastic we thought because they couldn't get them through the north because there was too many submarines and they bought them up this way, so that's what was happening. So we just put our time in

28:30 Syria. Then the people that took over us in Tobruk the Germans just walked in and took it so that meant that the Germans were free to go down to Egypt and go onto the oil wells in the Middle East, that's what they were after. So we then had to rush back, through Palestine, through

29:00 Egypt, through Egypt what am I talking about, capital of Egypt...

### **Cairo?**

Cairo, through Cairo and we met the Germans about roughly 80 miles be west up along the coast at a place called El Alamein.

- 29:30 And then that would be in 1942, late 1942 I should think... No it would be later than that must have been in 1943, early 1943, I'm not sure about that, I'd have to check on that. So then we started to build up there because the Germans, they had a lot more equipment
- 30:00 than we did. Then I think at that time we had too many generals changing, I think we had 4 different generals changed and the thing that I think was an advantage to us was when on the run back from Alamein, I forgot about that one, when there's a run back from Alamein there was, oh now I've forgotten his bloody name
- 30:30 general, he was in charge and his staff. They went out in the desert to come into Tobruk without going down, in case they ran into the Germans, well it was wrong the Germans caught them, that was the best thing that ever happened, they caught this Pommy [English] general. Pommy generals didn't go down with Australian Army, not one bit, they were too much, say English,
- 31:00 too much, on so much higher, you know they were having a hell of an opinion of themselves because they went to certain colleges and anybody that goes to certain colleges in England were the best. And an Australia general called Morshead [commander of the Allied garrison during the Siege of Tobruk] took over from Tobruk and that was totally different. But from then to El Alamein we had 3 generals, one general was...
- 31:30 Oh dear it's in me book....
- That's fine we'll come to that later just...?**
- He took over from I think... So anyway we had to go down to El Alamein and we stayed there until October the 3rd, that must have been 1942,
- 32:00 yeah I think it must of, oh 1942... Yeah would be. Where the hell am I?
- What year?**
- Yeah.
- No were still at Alamein?**
- Yeah 1942.**
- Would have been like 1942?**
- 1942, God gee, 1942 yeah, must have had Christmas up there...
- 32:30 Yeah must have been 1942, that's right we had Christmas over there. And on October the 13th 1942 the allies let off nearly, nearly a thousand guns on the Fritzies, and that fixed them, and I've never saw in all
- 33:00 my life so many aeroplanes. The Yanks had landed there with all sorts of aeroplanes and before that in Tobruk you never saw them. There was hundreds of them, hundreds of aeroplanes that they bombs thrown out of them and tanks, I never saw so many tanks, all American tanks. So [General] Montgomery [commander of the 8th Army] made it that he would not attack until
- 33:30 he had, that he was ready to attack and that meant he had to have a lot of equipment. So then of course the end came and the Australians and the English and the South Africans and the Indians, South Africans and the Pommies chased them back up to Benghazi where the Yanks landed up there and of course that's when they got defeated. But for us we went back
- 34:00 to Palestine, stayed there and had a rest and then the time came for us to come home, cause the Japs came up the top. So we loaded ourselves up and went to Port Said and there was
- 34:30 a big blob out on the sea, just a big blob and they said, "That's the boat you're going on," and I thought, "Big blob," and I never saw anything as big. So we go out there in barges, would be about a mile and a half and there was a hole in this ship and it reminded me of when you walked into
- 35:00 John Martin's lift area, they had the big, and you walked in and there's lifts everywhere, it reminded me of that and that was the Queen Mary. And we just walked in there off the barge, got in the lifts and they just took us up where we wanted to go on these lifts, and I was amazed never thought I could see anything to heavy so big that could float. And that was
- 35:30 roughly about 85,000 tons that boat. And we were on the, they had a high deck, a sports deck, a promenade deck and A, B C D and I think it was D, we were on the water level and there was a one bedroom dorm, we had 6 in it. So each night,
- 36:00 oh that's another thing I forgot to mention that my brother in law who was in the foot-sloggers early I conned [tricked] him in to coming over with us, I said, "You'll get killed in that bloody foot-sloggers," so he came with, he was with me, he eventually married my sister. And every night we were frightened in this thing that we'd get torpedoed, cause you'd have no hope, and in
- 36:30 their passages they'd have controlled doors where they could shut off a whole stretch that got hit.....

**So where did you go once you boarded the Queen Mary, where were you going?**

We come home. And away we come home and that was very fast, the Queen Mary if there's anything about or, zigzagged all the way so that the torpedoes, the

37:00 submarines couldn't get a bearing on them exactly. And that would just go, it would just go, it was fast. So we landed in Sydney, we had 14,000 Australian troops on that boat and the record was 21,000 thousand Americans, that's a lot of troops on a boat, that's how big it was. So we landed in Sydney and there was a little girl that I liked very

37:30 much and she joined the army, we used to correspond to one another and she was at... Oh Christ...

**Oh that's fine, we'll come to that later when we get to that part of your story.**

Goulburn I think, the train stopped there, so I sent a wire and

38:00 there she was in the uniform, she was as fat as mud, God she was fat, moon face, she was nothing like that when she joined. I'll show you some photos of her later, I don't know what the hell she was feeding herself. Anyway we had a good old laugh and when I left I thought, "Well that's it." I couldn't get that out of my mind so onto Adelaide we came and we had our leave. Short leave and then back up to Queensland to train as a amphibious

38:30 troops and our division was made with barges, they didn't call them barges they called them 'troop carriers', and they were to feed the troops as they went through the jungle along the coast, and we had to come in and be there when they landed. And then I claimed my brother, he was younger than I

39:00 I claimed him so there was the 3 of us in the family there then. So I spent another 9 months up there in the jungle and then I came back, got malaria and I came back and I got, eventually B class where that stops me from going overseas any more. And I just played

39:30 around in Adelaide doing little things and then I'd get leave, 6 weeks' leave at a time to help my father on the fruit block. Eventually I got out on about the 13th of January 1945, after 5 years and that of course finished my war service. And then we got married, I got leave, oh in 1944

40:00 I got leave and I'd had a few beers, I'd seen my wife earlier on leave, she came on leave, she had her place too at Berri so I saw her then, only a few days and she was off again. And they had in the town here where the railway station is a place there you could go and

40:30 just settle down and have a beer or drink or have a feed, or what do they call it, I forgotten what they call it, run by people, it was just a little rest people for people who were like me who were lost in the city. I got leave to go on a few days out. So I wrote to her and I said, "It's about time you and I go and get married,"

41:00 they weren't real flash about me writing, and she got this letter and she must have thought about it for a bloody week...

**Well we'll talk more about that when that comes up.**

Oh no, I'm sorry.

**No that's fine were just doing a tape change at the moment.**

## Tape 2

00:31 **Jim I'll just take you back to Port Pirie where you were born. What memories do you have of Port Pirie?**

None, no I've been back there since but I haven't got any memory of Port Pirie at that age, no.

**So how old were you before you moved, it was to Myrtlebank wasn't it?**

Yeah, I'd be about 5, well I hadn't gone to school

01:00 so first grade, what's that 5, 6 yeah.

**And what do you remember of school of starting school in Myrtlebank?**

Oh it was, I had 2 sisters there to you see which is a help. And oh I got on quite well at school, I was a rebel as my sister used to say,

01:30 "If there was any trouble, rest assured you were in it." But apart from that well I was just a normal kid at school for 2 years I spent there. And that's about all I suppose we just come home and do what other kids would do. Quite a lot of things we did do, over the road from us, where we lived there was an old

02:00 soldier's home called Myrtlebank Soldiers Home and we used to wander over there quite often, we were only little blokes and that was interesting because they used to talk to us, and they were all dying over there because you could hear them coughing all the times with lungs and all this sort of caper. And then behind that was the Catholic school, all the Catholic people, all the nuns

02:30 and the fathers lived across the road. And that was a, we used to have a tin just an ordinary fruit tin and poke a candle up in the middle of it and put a handle on it and that was our torch you see, we could crawl up there, there's a big pipeline, you could crawl up this pipeline and see what was going on in the bloody Catholic church and all around.

03:00 Till we got hunted out and they put a gate on it so we couldn't do that any more, and that was an afternoon, Saturday or Sunday fill in that's all, we didn't do much. Not much to do really at that age.

**So what religion were you bought up with?**

Presbyterian.

**So what did you find out about the Catholic church that you found interesting?**

Oh it was just the nuns walking around and kids and

03:30 things like that, that was all. They always said, they always put it down as there's a... channel underneath the main road over to where all the fathers lived, they reckon that was the go-between, whether it's not I don't know, but that was put down hundred years ago, we wouldn't know. But anyway that was just a story,

04:00 they blocked us off from crawling up there. We looked other things, but there wasn't much to do. Another thing we joined the Church of Christ there because we, the Presbyterian wasn't there and that was just around the corner and we loved going there because when they had their initiation they ducked them in water and we reckon that was real fun to see them all ducking in water. At our age of course we weren't that old,

04:30 we were bought up in a very religious family. My grandfather was a... Oh what do you call them? Where they go and can fill in for a minister. I've forgotten.

**A pastor?**

Yeah, yeah they, he'd only go when they were short, God it's on the tip of me tongue but anyway that's what they used to do.

05:00 And our church I used to go 2 times a day which is fun going to Sunday school we had a lot of things that I told my grandkids, we used to go to Sunday school because we liked it, we used to have picnics and all sorts of things. We'd go out as a club more or less go out in the bush and farmers would take us out, all that sort of stuff.

**So what did your father do in Adelaide when he moved?**

05:30 He was a master builder and when the Depression came the building slumped and of course he couldn't get work for building of what he built and he came from Wirrabara, why he bought a fruit block up there I don't know. He could have gone up the river with his brothers but he didn't and he finished up up there. So

06:00 then he found out that wasn't his line then, so he retired to Merabrah to do a bit more building and then his friend, a bloke called Brown, said, "Come to Adelaide and I'll keep you going." So Dad, but that only lasted 2 years. He went back to Clare where his granddad had the shop, not his granddad my granddad his father had a shop there. And my mother used to make, she was a quite good dressmaker, little kids clothes

06:30 and he used to go out and work for a farmer where he could get a job and he'd bring home meat and milk and eggs and things and that's the way we lived.

**Do you remember moving back to Clare?**

Oh yes, yes I remember moving back to Clare and going to Clare school. Yes I went to Clare school and get in a bit of trouble there with the kids. I had a sister she was a big girl and if I looked

07:00 like getting into trouble I couldn't run to her quick enough because she'd stand there with her case and there wasn't a boy who would worry her, she'd knock them all over. So then we went, stayed there till I was probably about 9, 10 then we went up the river and I finished me schooling up there.

**So what kind of trouble did you get into that your sister had to get you out of?**

Oh cheek, cheeky, I was a cheeky little bloke.

07:30 There I used to stir them, I still stir them, yeah I'm a stirrer, even my grandkids today go crook on me cause I'm stirring, they don't know whether I'm fair dinkum or not. That's just me, my humour, bad humour sometimes but I get a kick out of it. Yes just the humour I could tease them and then run and if I couldn't find me sister gee whiz I was in strife, but I got through all right.

**And what did your teachers say about you?**

- 08:00 Oh they used to go crook. See the whole situation's different, my teacher used to live next door to my grandfather and we used to call her 'Granny Ward', and she was a very old lady. But she'd have about 40 people, 40 or more students in her class, that's how it was. There complaining about 15 or something today but there'd be 40 and we had
- 08:30 no trouble with our teachers because you knew if you'd done something wrong you were going to get a hiding. I used to get the cuts for doing silly things, fun things that didn't seem to, well the teachers, they lose their sense of humour sometimes. So then I, when I got to, I got sick, I got some sickness that I still
- 09:00 don't know what it was and I was out for 2 years of schooling, didn't go for 2 years because I had this sickness and that put me back. So when we shifted to, up the river at Berri we, I couldn't get into school there, I went to school but I was a dunce and it was no good so as soon as 14 came I left. And I got work around the place
- 09:30 until the war.

**And what did your father do when you went back to Clare?**

- Oh he, he went out and worked for farmers. We had a lot of relatives in Clare and out around the place and he used to work there off the farm until, oh he'd do a bit of building work and help them on the farm.
- 10:00 Fill in the time hoping for something better, but things were real crook. I have seen people with all their furniture put out on the footpath because they couldn't pay their rent, just everything they had in the house just put out on the footpath and they just sit there and they don't know what to do and that was the Depression, that's wrong but that's the way it is.

**What other things do you remember from the Depression?**

- Oh
- 10:30 kids at school no shoes, same old clothes, we were much the same but my mother was, she was a very clean she wouldn't let you go to school dirty clothes. Pair of shoes, you'd have to make them wear and wear and wear. Just no money around and people starving,
- 11:00 but the thing about it was, and the swaggies [swagmen - itinerant workers], we called them swaggies. They were people on the road with a swag on them looking for work and I don't know how many times my mother would give them a feed and they'd want to chop some wood or dig a garden or do something from payment of it, very rarely would one just say thank you and go, they'd hang around wanting to do something, that was the sort of people they were those days, there was hundreds of them.
- 11:30 So I think that altered ones life a lot, bought up in those years because you've been very careful ever since, particularly with money wise. I turn my neck if you spend too much money, put it in the bank or invest it or something like that and they just laugh at me because they never had that experience of being without it, and on the
- 12:00 verge of starvation. Yes that was a critical time when we went through that period. There's some hard stories to be told about the Depression, no money about at all. And people were so honest, people, there's no pinching or thieving like there is today. You could go to a dance, now all our girls, the generation, they'd make their own frocks
- 12:30 and things because they couldn't afford to buy it. They'd go to a dance and they'd all look beautiful in long frocks and things they'd made. And there was no grog, no drugs there was just a pure life as we were born to it and it was different to today. I just get so sick of people, so sick of governments, I get so sick of the way people carry on
- 13:00 today which is wrong to my way of thinking and I've got no patience with 3 people in my life, that's druggies, boozers and, druggies, boozers, what's the other one? Drugs, boozers and, oh Christ, anyway...

**Your mother sounds like a very generous woman and it must have been difficult feeding 4 children and a husband and then still paying swaggies that came through?**

Still paying rent too.

- 13:30 **Yeah?**

Oh yes well that's the way it was you see. We, my grandmother and grandfather they were well off, he had a shop and he was, I'll show you his house later on. He had a magnificent house, he had a maid to come and wash up and maid to do the cooking and I was a pet because I used to go from my school

- 14:00 left up into one side of Clare and grandma used to say, "Hello Jim. I know what you want." And all I wanted to do was get into the... Oh what do you call it? Put stuff in, a room in the kitchen?

### **In the pantry?**

Pantry, and it was a big one, big one and it was all full of bloody chocolates and

14:30 biscuits and things, because she didn't make them, the maid made them. I used to fill my pockets up and I'm on the other side of Clare and I'd walk home, my mother says, "Gee, you're late Jim." "Hmmm." "Where have you been?" "Hmmm." She'd know damn well where I'd been, we never had biscuits or anything like that. But that was the way there were hundreds of people were worse off than us even. And then we got the,

15:00 things looked up about, just before the war in about 1935, 1936 it started to look up a bit and then the war came and cause there was so many unemployed people they had no trouble getting volunteers. So that's the way it was.

### **How would you describe your father?**

My Dad, he was the eldest of a family of 9, very

15:30 generous, very loving and very kind person. I don't think he could ever do anybody any harm, wouldn't be in him to do that. And he was no, tell you another thing, no alcohol was ever in our house, never ever in our house. And he was one of

16:00 5 boys, my Dad he was the eldest of 5 boys. And he always the one to look after his parents, seemed to be, had the responsibility to look after his parents. They were snobs, I'd say they were snobs, in fact I'm sure they were. My mother came to Clare from Port Pirie as

16:30 a servant to one of the doctors, Doctor Smith and cause when the eldest boy of a clan like Scott's to marry a girl of her standing was the last straw. So they, he built his own house in Clare, had one child in Clare, the eldest girl

17:00 was born in Clare and then they couldn't put up with any more and they moved to Port Pirie where her people were. He couldn't put up with it any more what she was suffering through marrying him. That's how things were in those days.

### **What kind of things was she suffering?**

Oh humiliated because she was, "Don't worry about her she's only domestic," Wasn't good enough. You had to

17:30 have a profession or something, another one she came in and she worked in his shop as a, oh tailor, or something like that, she got on all right. Oh that's the way it was those days, the family was very snobby and we still had some of his kids were snobby.

18:00 In, I was about 17 and I had a job and it finished and I said to Dad, "I'm going to Adelaide." The two girls, two sisters, went down to Adelaide each summer and worked in a friend's café and I said, "I'm going down to see my sisters." So I rode my bike, I was a bike rider at the time, and I rode it from there down to Henley Beach and stayed there for a little while

18:30 then I thought I'd go to Clare. Went to Clare and stayed with my aunt for a while and she said, "Do you want a job?" and I said, "Yeah, I want a job," so I got a job 10 pound, 10 dollars a week and my keep. And if you ever go to Clare and you go past the showgrounds as soon as you pass the showground there's a long line of trees, there's a house back up there and that's where I was,

19:00 stayed there 6 months. But I being a bike rider I joined a bike club. So I joined the club at Clare and all these clubs in those days had a meeting place, and the meeting place was one

19:30 café in Clare. There's no women or anything like that attached to it. And then I was in this particular group this particular night and my aunt and my sister happen to be, she happened to be down there, or she lived with them for a while because granddad was dying of cancer and she was the eldest one,

20:00 she stayed there and helped. And as they walked along this group I was in she sung out, this is the aunt, sung out, she says, "Jim, don't forget you're a Scott." Now that was most unnecessary and that's the snobbiness that came out in these people. And that was rife around the country in those days, all

20:30 towns would have had that, and Clare had them. And of course as the time went on that broke down and that wouldn't happen now because all the older people was of that feeling are gone.

### **It must have been very difficult on the poorer members of the community who were suffering the Depression?**

Yeah, oh yes there were some rough people around, unfortunately not rough in physically, rough as far as living was concerned. But

21:00 people helped one another where they could, a lot of people fed other people's kids and things like that, but that's the way it was. You were no better off only you probably managed things a little bit better. But the thing about the Depression, and I've advised my grandkids this, if things get tough, go and get

- 21:30 a block of land somewhere where you can have a cow, you can have WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and you can have a pig if you want it or a sheep, and I said, "You're half way home." And when the Depression was on we lived like that, we lived with our WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s we lived with our sheep cause the farmers gave Dad, or when we went up to Berri we had our cow and we had our WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and we had pigs. And all this was mainly fed off our fruit block
- 22:00 this is all feed and that's the way we lived. My mother used to have pork duffing all around the bloody room, all hanging in this shed, wherever we went, you know the old German type of stuff, she wasn't German, she was Scots but we used to have all that sort of stuff, and that's the way you had to live. And I had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, I was interested in WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, I had to have WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and get the eggs and I'd sell the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, pluck them and sell them to whoever wanted them for a few bucks, few
- 22:30 pence. So you had to be like that.
- Did your mum continue working through the Depression?**
- My Mum?
- Hmm your mother?**
- No she never worked when she was married. The only thing she done while she was in Clare was make kids clothes for the shop to swap for groceries. But once we went bush, or went up to Berri that didn't happen she was too busy
- 23:00 looking after us and making stuff out of pork and that sort of stuff that we used to kill.
- And how different was Berri compared to Clare?**
- Oh different altogether, different. In Clare there was, wasn't as much to do, it was a farming area, big farming area and they didn't employ many people but when you got up to Berri being fruit,
- 23:30 growing fruit they had to have people to pick the fruit and cut their apricots and process their fruit, which I picked an orange, they just had to have help and that was a great help to the people, a lot of people used to come up there for harvest. And I never have any photos of those people the way they built shacks along the river, some of them were
- 24:00 magnificent, some of them were cut out of trees and made shacks out of bushes and things like that. And we used to get our manure in bags, Hessian bags, oh about a metre high and probably 18 inches wide and they used to make huts out of them, sew them altogether, but keeping in mind the house that we had, that was lined by hessian, not like this is was hessian lined. Ceiling was
- 24:30 lined by hessian and that was painted with, now I've forgotten something easy, and that made the walls stiffer, that was the way we lived, that was the way it was. Old houses hessian lined and galvanised, hot as hell; no air-condition, nothing like that but we lived that way. I think we were a pretty tough race when they, when you had to put up with those conditions.
- And**
- 25:00 **how did you keep cool in those hot summers?**
- Well you didn't, you just laid in bed and accept it all. What we used to do is go out on the lawn and lay there, a bit of a lawn or out underneath the veranda. But you couldn't do that here today, this is how it's all got, you wouldn't want to sleep out on the lawn you wouldn't know what's going to happen to ya, but up there. And you never shut your doors, anybody could walk into your doors and out if they liked, no keys, that's the difference.
- 25:30 **And you got your first job when you were in Berri?**
- I got me first job when I was about 15 at a place called Tiravale. They were doing what they called 'London Layers', they'd take fruit and they'd glaze it and they'd sell it as glazed fruit. They used to employ about 70 or 80 girls and I used to help them
- 26:00 load and unload all the fruit coming in and going out and the other one was when I wasn't doing that I would be carting ice around to people's places. And they, I had a utility, a buckboard as it was with a box on it and I used to fill it up with ice blocks and take it around to people. But what they didn't
- 26:30 have was a division in this box, should have had a division and of course I didn't give it a thought and I was unloading all one side didn't I and I went around a corner and all the ice slipped over the other side and arm over head the car went. So then I thought, "That's it," so I went and worked for a couple of blokes that I knew on a fruit block then. And I was doing that
- 27:00 until the war came along and I joined the war.
- Weren't you a bit young at 15 to be driving a truck?**
- You could do anything when you was 15, oh nobody cared about it as long as you drove properly.

**And what was working on the fruit block like?**

Well that was hard yakka [hard work] in a way. You start at 20 past 7 of a morning

27:30 and knock off at 5 and the same thing applied Saturday 20 past 7 and you knocked off at 12 on Saturday. So if you wanted to go to sport Saturday, which I had to, bike racing you were scratching for time, but that was the thing, that's the way it was and that's what you accepted. You never get people to do that today 20 past 7 but that's the way it was and

28:00 I'd ride 7, 8 miles to work and that didn't worry me but that's the way it was everything was, kids always used to go to work on bikes. I could of got a job in a packing shed but I preferred to be outside, I loved horses and you harness up a couple of horses and your disc or your coulter and away you go. And then until somebody says you've got to plough the piece of

28:30 ground up and you've got a single file plough which would cut 10 inches and you've got one old Ned [horse] in front of ya and you'd do nothing else but walk all day behind this old horse. But you were fit, you could get any, nobody would be any fitter than we as doing that work, you were fit. And just walking all day behind a plough, ask somebody to do that today, then of course tractors came into operation and that then altered everything.

29:00 **So you said you worked with about 70 or 80 girls at the fruit block?**

Oh yeah.

**That must have been very interesting for a teenage boy?**

They teased buggery out of you, they did they, they'd do all sorts of things to upset you these sheilas [girls], oh yes. It was funny but by God you got jacked off. The thing they used to do is when you unload the fruit you'd unload it, you'd load it from a truck

29:30 and there was little railway lines come up, and these girls are all in rows. And you had one railway line going this way and when you loaded it on, you'd have buckets, I don't know how many buckets, about 40 buckets on them I suppose and you'd push them up to perhaps that row. And if you left that for a second, and you'd got to line the wheels up to run down there,

30:00 some of these girls would come along and just lean on it and give it a push you see and of course when you pushed it fell off, didn't it. Then you'd have to stack it all back and you could see the buggers down there laughing their heads off, having a go. Oh I wasn't the only one, having a game with me until you got rotten and tell them off. Yeah you always had to check it every time and they'd cheek you, say all sorts of things to you, the older ones, you didn't even know what they were bloody talking about, still learning life I was.

**Did you get a**

30:30 **crush on any of the girls there?**

No I never, I was too rapt up in sport and I wasn't, I just liked everybody and there was nobody special then. I did have a girl that I liked a lot but she gave me the dump and got onto someone else and that worried me for a while.

31:00 And then this other girl I used to see her a lot but she was that bloody shy, she used to work in the shop this girl and Friday nights was the 9 o'clock shopping hour, Friday used to work 9 o'clock. And I could be waiting out there thinking she'd knock off and I could take her home, walk her home or something.

31:30 She'd stay behind until I got jack of it and I'd go see and then she'd walk home when I wasn't there. So this particular night I rode up the street a bit so that she couldn't see me if I was there or not, so when she stepped out to walk home, she only had about 150 yards to go, I rode up alongside of her

32:00 and I walked alongside of her until she got, you know she got in the gate and that was it. That was it for a couple of years, I give her away I couldn't get close to her until she started dancing and then the war and then she sent me some nice cards and then she,

32:30 I don't know what happened but she was coming home, we were coming home, we got our mail at Perth on our way home, they kept it there because they knew we were coming home from the Middle East. And I got this letter to say that she, didn't say that she was on with another bloke or anything just said, she was off and "I think it's just time we sort of," oh no she put it very

33:00 diplomatically that she had. So I just let it float, it's up in the sea somewhere floating around I thought, "Oh well, bugger it, I won't worry about it." And she's the one that I rang at Albury and she's, and that's the one I've got out here, that's the old lady out there she's still with me and it will be 60 years in a couple of months that she's had to put up with me.

33:30 I don't know whether she should of changed her bloody mind or not I don't know, that's a long time ago.

**So where were you when you heard the news that war had broken out?**

Home in Berri, it was in the August I think if I remember rightly, I'm not sure I think it was August it

broke out. We lived in a town of ex-serviceman fruit blocks of the First World War and of course it was all war people, most of them. And you

34:00 sort of, they don't tell you a lot but they'd tell you a little bit, it's all the pleasant side and very rarely you got to dirty side of it, only in papers and things like that. And being, Dad never went to the war, me uncle did and all the blokes around me their father went to the war and they had this RSL [Returned and Services League] branch there, Loxton RSL, ah

34:30 Glossop RSL. So we sort of become one of them in a way and as soon as it broke out we thought, "Oh well, they went, I suppose we go." But I didn't intend to go so early, I didn't want to go so early but me other mates said, "We're going," and I said, "Well, I can't help it. I've got to go too, haven't I." So we had to go in, have a medical test and sign up and then take this piece of paper out

35:00 our parents and get them to sign it because we were under 21.

**Now you mentioned earlier that the government had done a volunteer drive?**

Yep.

**What positions were they offering or how were they enticing people to come forward and volunteer for the war?**

Oh I think it was just purely publicity in local papers and the main paper. They started off

35:30 from Broken Hill and they came down from Broken Hill to Renmark and different towns they had a different date for recruiting. And then the big part of encouraging people to join was later on when they were advertising 'Your mates are overseas they want your company',

36:00 or 'This is where you should be'. But then there's a lot of people in certain franchises of industry or in certain works that they couldn't leave them because they were experienced in that particular work. I had a cousin that wanted to join up at the same time but he was in the railways and they wouldn't let him go, release him.

36:30 Whether he could, if it had been me I'd have told them to go to that other place and do what I want to do and join up but he couldn't and he eventually got away after a couple of years. But they had some claim on them and then of course all the publicity that came, 'Your mates are there and they want you to help them' and all this sort of stuff. They did an inscription then

37:00 and they did in the later ones which I don't know, there was a lot of blokes that didn't want to go and they'd do everything they could to get out of it, which they were aware of. But that's the way it was and that's the way they got 4 divisions of people which consisted of about 20 odd thousand troops, they were all volunteers.

**And how did your father feel about you wanting**

37:30 **to join up?**

Oh well, then I had to go and join up he said, through my sickness, "You won't get in," he said. He couldn't do anything he just stood there, but my mother's the one I felt sorry for because she had a brother killed in France and his name was Jamie and

38:00 mine was Jim and then that I think she's the one that would of suffered most.

**And what about your sisters, what did your sisters think?**

Well one's 2 years older and another ones 4. One, that came with me that was in the militia, Jim Simpson he

38:30 married my younger sister, well she'd older. And the eldest one he was in the army too and I met him in Palestine, he was in the 7th Division and he and a friend of mine, he was in the toilet and he said to this bloke, "Do you know a

39:00 bloke called Jim Scott, Jim Simpson?" He said, "Yes, straight over there." So he came over and that was me brother in law. So the 4 of us out of the family went and lucky I was the only one that was wounded, the others all got off scot-free, we were lucky, very lucky. But I felt sorry for my Mum I think she was the one that, she

39:30 would have prayed a lot for me. She was religious and I've got out there a Bible she gave me with a little black cat in it, that never left my pocket.

**And what advice did she give you when you left?**

Oh I don't think she had any advice for me, it was, if

40:00 it was anything would be, would have been something about Christian, God and all this stuff, cause that's why she gave me this. It was difficult to carry all the time but I did and it was quite a, fairly big Bible. And then I got a

- 40:30 my girlfriend sent me a 21st birthday card, I was in Tobruk and that had a mirror and that went in the other pocket, so I had a Bible in one and a mirror in the other, why, you never know why and you never know what effect that could have had, cause there was some close shaves, very close
- 41:00 shaves. But.....oh, that's the way it is, and nothing I can do about it at the time.

**Well we have to change tapes now.**

## Tape 3

- 00:39 **Before we move on Jim, there's just one thing I'm interested in; you became a truck driver when you were in the army but when you were young who taught you to drive?**

Oh in those days

- 01:00 you, most people on the properties would have an old buckboard or something like that. In fact when we first went to Berri in around about the.....late 1920s we had a trap, or they could call it a buggy and we went to, we went into
- 01:30 Berri with a horse and trap and then it was just an experiment on how old people used to. And a lot of them around at the time but my Dad had an overland buckboard that his father used to have on the, on his business delivering wood and things,
- 02:00 and he was given that by my grandfather when we came up to Berri. Everybody could drive it so when I got my official licence I could drive it so we got around in the, in a buckboard, Overland buckboard, American car. And the way it was there that I could pick up 4 or
- 02:30 5 people, young people girls and boys, or young lads and go to dances and things, and that's the way we went to dances. And petrol was quite cheap and that's way the we got around in the old buckboards mainly, all buckboards because you could use them as a passenger vehicle or you could use it around your garden, cart stuff. Lot of them had cars, wealthier blokes, and the
- 03:00 thing was there if you went out and bought a new vehicle you were wealthy person and you were judged according to what you drove. That's the way it was those days.

**And for those of us who have never laid eyes on a buckboard, can you describe it, what is a buckboard?**

Buckboard is normally today you would call them utilities but those days a buckboard was a car

- 03:30 and you cut it, the back seat out of it and put a tray on it, and so as you can carry stuff around on it and it only makes then a one seater car, the front seat was the front seat and the back of the front seat was the buckboard. And most of these were canvas, very rarely did they cut up a sedan with a steel hood, because they
- 04:00 were flash cars, they were too expensive to chop in and make a buckboard of it. And that's the way it was you made a buckboard of it and a buckboard became a buckboard right up until such times as they bought out a utility which was made factory wise, became a utility, and of course all buckboards then became utility. But you could put 4, 5, 6 people in the back
- 04:30 of it and go dancing and all our clothes and look after them, and that's the way we got around.

**And how easy was it to drive?**

Oh, they were easy to drive, being a young person. But most of them only had 2 wheel brakes, that was the back brakes, the front brakes never had brakes on them, just 2 wheel brakes. And you had canvas hoods which become cold in the winter, summer time you could,

- 05:00 you got some breeze coming through and in the winter time if we went on, we used to come to Adelaide in them, but it would take us all day, where today it's about 2½ hours, 3 hours. And sometimes you could take the floorboards off it, it had floorboards and when you wanted to cool down you'd take the floorboards off and the heat of the engine with the breeze going along used to bring up some heat of the motor
- 05:30 to warm you inside providing you didn't stick your leg through it or something like that. But that was another way, air conditioned, warming up a car. But they were all mostly, everybody had a buckboard, all started off with buckboards, then when they got a bit more money they'd buy a car. Prior to the war I suppose it would be 12 months would it be, I don't think it would be, about 6 months I bought a car,
- 06:00 it was a.....and I didn't finish paying for it and I handed it over to my brother in law at the time and he kept it and kept it until he joined the army and it was stuck in Dad's shed.

**So if you bought a car how did you get your licence?**

Oh police station, yeah

06:30 just go along there and tell them you want a licence at 16, it was, you didn't have to go for a drive or anything if you were a normal person then they'd just say, "Yeah okay we'll fix you up for a licence," and you got it and away you go. But you keep in mind that those cars I could ride a bike as fast as some of them motor cars, oh yes, 40, 35 mile, 25 miles an hour.

07:00 Yeah, oh yes I had plenty of motor cars in my time.

**Well prior to enlistment what did you know about World War I?**

Well they, I knew quite a bit because when you have a little town like that you, they had every Anzac Day they'd

07:30 have a memorial service and we have some photos out there that my wife's father was planting some trees on Anzac Day. And there's a body of people, we'll remember the dead by planting trees, there are some trees Victor Harbour has got a lot,

08:00 there are other people in different towns have called little parks of different names of Anzac. And Victor Harbour if you go down there you'll find that the trees in the front of the foreshore have got names written on them, 'In memory of...' And particularly up along the river where a lot of soldiers were, after the war and Loveday, Moorook

08:30 you've got Berri, you've got Glosset, you've got Waikerie, there all from returned soldiers places, blocks that they took over once the war was finished. Of course this, now you've got Calltonga and you've got Loxton which is about 400-odd up there, blocks that were put in after the war, soldiers settlers. So there's a memorial in every town wherever you go up the Murray

09:00 you've got all the names of the people that left from that particular town, on the war memorial plaque but it's normally in the oval, and then you've got the dead that also passed away, you've got them there too. So it was a pretty big thing to live in a town such as that and you knew a lot of history and

09:30 Anzac Day you'd always, always that was a day you've got to go and remember the dead, and most people do that.

**And what stories had you heard about the war that stuck in your mind?**

Oh Gallipoli was the one that stuck, that's the one where we lost so many people where it wasn't a necessity to have done that. And when you look back there's

10:00 Gallipoli should never have happened, that was a bad mistake on, actually it was [Winston] Churchill [later Prime Minister of Britain during World War 1] he was in charge of the, of the marine, I know they've got a name for it, I've forgotten what they called it now, but he was in charge of that and he landed in the wrong place. And it's the same thing

10:30 happens today, why did we go to Greece? We had no hope, no hope whatsoever doing any good in Greece whatsoever, but they had to send us there. And they, and Churchill he sent us there, he was the one who wanted to help Greece. And there were no other troops at that time in Europe so they had a whole German Army on them, they had no hope which was wrong. And the other one was

11:00 when they, in charge, whoever was in charge at that time in Singapore. That was another great mistake made in Singapore. And that should never have happened because all their guns and they had 2 of the biggest battleships, newest battleships in the war, was anchored there. All the guns faced out to sea and not inland and the thing

11:30 that I think that hurts me most of all is that you had a division in Tobruk, we held the Germans up with all the armoury they had, they had the best armoury in the world, we held them up for 9 months, 1 division plus a few auxiliary people. And in Singapore

12:00 there was a division of Australians over there that had to surrender and they never should have had to surrender because the Japanese Army then was nothing like the equipment that the Germans had, and all because it was English lead which I myself feel that I never ever would want any of my kids or my family be involved in leadership by the British again,

12:30 no way. They haven't got the ability to see further than their bloomin' nose and it's; should never happen. And it's where these people, and I just can't remember the college that they go to in England, there's a college suppose to be right up the top of the world this military and once you've been to there, gee I wish I could remember [Sandhurst], once you've been

13:00 there you are so much superior to anybody else that hasn't and that is totally bulldust.

**Well given your anti British leadership sentiments, who were you fighting for when you wanted to enlist?**

We were fighting for the Commonwealth. Because we thought, "Because we are a Commonwealth

- 13:30 nation, Britain was our leader of the Commonwealth and that is the reason and if anything should happen to us here we would expect them to retaliate and come to us, same as we did over there." But see they had South Africans, you had Indians and the New Zealanders and us.
- 14:00 **Well when the war was declared nothing much happened for a while but I'm wondering how keen you were to get into it and go and fight a war on the other side of the world?**
- Well that's just because of England, what was happening there was the Germans were going through Poland and Belgium and all through there, and
- 14:30 keeping in mind the French built a Maginot line [defence system] right across most of their country and that was going to stop everything, but they went around it in Belgium.
- But did you feel like it was Australia's business to be going over there?**
- No, no it was, I think because the First World War we went to help Britain and that was our duty
- 15:00 as a Commonwealth to go and help again, and I think that's, I've got nothing at all against any English troops. When we were mixed up with them so close at Alamein and Tobruk, they wanted to come to us because of the way we operated. And I want to say that I've got nothing against their troops their troops are good fighters, but
- 15:30 they all, we were, oh as I say they want to join us because we were much more freer in our outlook and the way we fought. No I think that was all about the United Kingdom, we are a part of it. And of course the Canadians were the same, they all went, that would not be, that does not apply any more.
- 16:00 **Okay well now I'd like to talk about the 4 mates, you 4. The 4 boys that joined up, tell me who you were, Archie, Simo, Perky and yourself, tell me about?**
- Well it was, well when we joined, every person is a mate,
- 16:30 every person that's got a uniform on is a mate and you are, deep down you are obliged to help in whatever circumstances that arises. That's the sort of a duty that you expect from however, as long as he's got your uniform on you would help him regardless of the cost. But in that same set up is, there is always
- 17:00 some closer mates, there's got to be because you can't go on leave with a whole battalion, you can go on leave with 4 or 5 something like that. And this is bought about by in Simo and myself we played footy against one another prior to, and we got to know one another quite well. And then he used to call in, because Militia Headquarters up the Murray was just down from where we lived,
- 17:30 and he used to call in and see my sister on his way home and every now and again. So we got very friendly and he's a nice person, very good person.
- And who was Simo?**
- Simo was a corporal in the militia, he was a, he was working for his uncle on a fruit block at Barmera. His uncle was a war veteran, First World War.
- And in relation to your family, who**
- 18:00 **was he?**
- He wasn't, he was my, he married my sister and became my brother in law. And then you've got Perky, I didn't know him of course he was from New South Wales and I didn't know him at all as a close friend until England and then I got to
- 18:30 him and he was the sort of person that appealed to me and I appealed to him. But we had another one, Rickie Warden, he was another very very close friend. So there was the 4 of us, and if we went on leave we'd make sure that we all went together, or if there was a split, there was one Rickie and Perky went to London, Simo and I
- 19:00 cause we were Scotts, Simo had the relative up there so we went to Scotland. And we had a week in Scotland which was very very funny week, I don't know if you want me to tell you all about it now or later on?
- I'll ask you about that a bit later. And what about your brother Archie?**
- Well Arch is 3 years younger than I, nearly 3 and he was, when I left,
- 19:30 he was delivering messages around the Berri Post Office, snowy-headed kid, and they didn't know anything about him, interest in army because he was too young. But while I was in Tobruk and got knocked over I wrote to my Dad and said, "For gods sake do not, under no conditions allow your son Arch to come, put him
- 20:00 in uniform, absolutely stupid Dad," and I told him there was enough in it and to keep him out. But in the

meantime he joined the army, he joined up. I don't know how old he was because that was 1941 and he was.....I was 21 he must of joined up about 18 somewhere.

- 20:30 So then he became in a battalion that went to Darwin, he was in a 10th 48th which was a cross between 2 Company's '10th 48th' they called them. So he was up there and he was going nowhere but he was there anyway, and then
- 21:00 in 1943 when we came back from up there, from overseas we had our leave and we went up to Cairns, training for operation on the water as, we were landing craft personnel. Then he wrote to me and he said, "Can you claim me, I'm
- 21:30 going rusty up here?" so I wrote to him and claimed him and he came to our unit. That caused a little bit of a problem with me because of the fact that if anything should happen to him I would feel responsible and that I did not want. But he wanted to be a returned soldier and until he came to us he wouldn't get it.
- 22:00 It never hurt me much between Simo and myself we'd been together so long and we could expect anything. So he came and we were at Port Moresby getting ready to go up the coast with all our supplies and troops, and we were still in the ASC
- 22:30 but we were in charge of the landing craft for supplies and we had trucks on these big boats loaded with ammunition and supplies and things and we'd have to drive off. So I said to him I said, "Well, there's going to be 3 lots of different times, 3 days different. So I'll go on the first lot and Simo's going to go on the second and Archie you come
- 23:00 on the last lot because I don't want you on my boat." So that's what happened and we landed that way for the next 2 or 3 landings and he stayed in headquarters and I stayed what I was doing. We'd meet every now and again until about the last month, he came to my unit, and the war as far as we were concerned the Yanks had took over from us,
- 23:30 but there was still raids and we could expect Japs landing. Sometimes the Japs landed behind us, we had one occasion they landed behind us we didn't know they were there, but that's what happened so you had to be very careful. So we didn't have much trouble after that and he came to me and stayed in my unit until such times as, I got malaria and he got
- 24:00 crook. And we were sleeping alongside of a river and we were in and out of that river and it was just the way that we had to, going in and out of this water to cool us down. And he was mucking around he wasn't too good so we went to the RAP, the Regiment Aid Post the next day on this particular dump and then the Doctor looked us over and took our blood tests. So came the next day, got back the
- 24:30 next day and I found out he said, "Who's J Scott?" I said, "Me." He said, "Oh you'll catch the barge this afternoon, you're crook." I said, "No, I'm not crook, he's the crook one." "No you're crook you've got malaria." I said, "Oh." That's what happened, so he was all right, he was left see. I had to leave him and I thought he was crook more than I. So I went back to Lae which is about a day and half trip by barge at that time, then they flew me out
- 25:00 in an old Douglas 3, DC3s they called them, quite a sturdy old plane, it was the first plane I'd ever had a ride in, never been in an aircraft before. And they had fold up seats that came out and went back, and they folded up against the wall of the aircraft and allowed us to fill it up with supplies and use them as a bomber.
- 25:30 Food bomber, we used to fly over and push the food out the back and that used to feed our troops where we couldn't get. So when they carried troops they'd fold these seats out, made out of cane. So away we go and there's 2 ranges we had to fly over and, Owen Stanley's one and I've forgotten the other one. And it dropped, well
- 26:00 I reckon it dropped about a thousand foot and I thought, "The backside's fallen out of the bloody plane." And it just went straight down and then when it finished the drop we went another couple of feet because the seats all collapsed and there was about 35 of us in the plane all crook and you would not believe how we felt. Eventually got to Moresby and very happy about getting off the plane, and we went into
- 26:30 the hospital at Moresby.

**Well we'll come back and talk about New Guinea a bit later on and more about your brother but I was just.....?**

Oh sorry, if I go off the line just tell me.

**That's okay, I was just interested to hear how and when Archie joined up. But perhaps you could take me now back to that day that you first enlisted. You went to Berri?**

Oh yes went to Berri and

- 27:00 there was quite a lot of people joined at Berri and we just went in and there was a table, behind it was 4, 5 fellows in uniform and they just asked you a few questions and you fill out a piece of paper and you

sign it and then you go down a bit further and there's a medical officer there who checks you out. Not very thoroughly but he checks you out

27:30 because you've got to, when you got back to camp you got a more thorough inspection of your body. And you just went home, come back and it's all signed up the paper and your accepted then in the army and that's it. And then you went home and you waited there until you got your call up and the time of the train would come through that you'd be on and you head to Woodside.

28:00 So you're down at Woodside, and that was quite a lot, probably around about 300 of us. And of course there's a procedure there, what they do to you, you want to hear that later on.

**No, well, tell me about the procedure at Woodside?**

Well when you, there's no station at Woodside near the camp, at the camp you've got to walk and you get off

28:30 train and walk probably about a mile and a half, perhaps 2 miles. We did not know what to take when we went, we took a lot of stuff that we shouldn't of taken, but we didn't know, did we?

**What did you take that you didn't need?**

Oh extra clothes and all this sort of stuff, soaps and shaving gear, we didn't know. We finish up after marching there, they march us in 2 rows,

29:00 I haven't said anything about his yet have I? They march us in 2 rows and all the information I ever got from my neighbours and people that had been in the First World War was all about soldiers and infantry and how they got done over and shot and all this. That's the thing that stuck in the back of my mind, I did not want to be in the

29:30 foot-sloggers we called them. But as you look back on it there's a lot of difference between our war and their war, but we didn't know that. So when all this line up came up I didn't really know what was going to go on until the officer came out and bragged about how good the people look and how.....strong these fellows came from

30:00 Maroo and give us a bit of a rap up, bit of, bit of nothing really, just giving us a bit of a praise up. Then the sergeant came out and from then on, I always remember a sergeant, never seen a sergeant walk around without some paper he's got in his hand, he's always making out his busy, and that went right through the war, you'd see a sergeant and he'd have a piece of paper, there'd probably be nothing on it, just the way he works. He comes out

30:30 and he said, "From now on" he said, "We will, I will read a list of the type of people we want and who are interested in, of the certain regiments that we've got the full." So he starts off with, "Ambulances, artillery, who wants to be in artillery? Who wants to be in the mortars? Machine gunners? We got any machine gunners? Step out." Well this is the way it went, and I'm thinking in the back of my mind,

31:00 "I don't want to be any of those, I didn't know what I wanted to be in but I don't want to be in foot-sloggers," I'm saying to myself. And then he came to, "Who wants to be an ASC?" that I had no idea what it was and I said to him, "Can you tell me what is ASC?" He said, "Supply, driving trucks and supplying the goods and chattels, whatever you've got to cart up the front line or whatever troops want. That's what we're looking

31:30 for, some drivers." So I'd never driven a truck in me life, I'd driven utes [utilities] and things and I stepped out, and he said, "Okay." I don't know how many of there was there could have been about 20 of us and they marched us away. And then he said, "Okay the next will, all of you now will become the 2nd 10th Infantry Battalion Reinforcements," and I said, "God,

32:00 wasn't I lucky, I got out of the foot-sloggers just in time." But Simo he was in the militia and he went from the militia to Woodside for a camp and they were in the camp when the war broke out so they formed the 2nd 10th Battalion while he was at Woodside and he transferred from the militia to the infantry, to the battalion. So after I

32:30 sort of settled down and went and seen him, I said, told him what's happening and he said, "Didn't you want to come with me?" and I said, "No I don't, the foot-sloggers are out." I said, "I'm going to drive trucks and that's better than bloody foot-sloggers." Foot-sloggers though, he said, "Do you think it is?" I said, "My word I do." I said, "I wouldn't." I said, "Come over with me?" He said, "I'm happy." So the next day I saw him again and I said, "Come on you get done over here, you get a rifle and a bayonet, I don't want to get that close." He said,

33:00 "They got room for me?" I said, "I'll be back." So I go over and saw the bloke, I said, "You got room for a good driver?" He said, "Yeah." So he comes over, so the 2 of us in the ASC. But that had some funny repercussions later on. So anyway that's what happened and we became in the ASC and he retained his 2 stripes. And then of course we were there, fascinating what

33:30 happens, we were there, we marched and marched and marched and I think I know every post, every rock, every little bit of chip of the window or anything like that around Woodside, I marched and

marched and I was beginning to think, "Where's me truck?" Cause we had to go then, pack up and went to Puckapunyal, that's 90 miles north, north east of Melbourne. And we just got settled in there

34:00 end of December, I reckon we went over a week before Christmas and then turned around and come all the way back to spend a week with our parents for Christmas, 1939, 1940. It was so funny, I found out later that's typical army too, that's the way they do it. So we stayed there and had Christmas and went back again, then in

34:30 between that and we went away I had another week at home and then that would be.....probably in late January, February. Then they had a bivouac [camp], we went out for 3 days making out were chasing tanks and we had a few trucks and jumping off them and running and all the things you hear about.

35:00 And I got crook so I was in the Corporate Hospital from the time I went back there for 6 weeks, I got crook. And then I had to go up, have I said anything about this yet? Then I had to go, I thought I'd mentioned something about it?

**Well tell us a bit in more detail?**

Oh well when I got back to camp

35:30 after that they called me out and just before I left camp to go to Corporate Hospital, a few days earlier they took x-ray and they took x-rays and of course unbeknownst to me, I didn't know anything about it. So when I came back from hospital I got called out and they said, "Private Scott?" "Yes sir." They said, "You are a suspect." I said,

36:00 "What of?" "TB [Tuberculosis]." I said, "I can't be." They said, "Yes you are, you've got to go back to Doors Road, to Corporate." So back to there and they said to me, "You were here before." I said, "Yeah I know, you let me go." He said, "I don't know what they're talking about." But he said, "You're all right because we took x-rays before you went." I said, "I tried to tell them that." So I had to go back to camp, but before I went back to camp, the officer,

36:30 medical officer that was at Corporate. He said, "I want to see you." So I went in there and he gave me a little talk and told me that I was too young, if I go into cold weather I shall probably get crook because, "This is what happens to you when your chest is subject to cold weather and you could get pleurisy again." So I said, "Oh

37:00 Christ." He said, "Go for a walk." He said, "If you go to the Middle East you'll be all right." He said, "Well you go for a walk and tell me what you want to do." So I went for a walk around Melbourne and I'm saying to me self, "Do I go, don't I go, do I go?" And, "I don't know." I didn't know. I went back to him and he said, "Have you made your mind up?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You're going." I said, "Yes."

37:30 "Well," he said, "You'll be all right if you go to Egypt." I didn't go to Egypt though did I, I went to England. And that was summer time it was beautiful but winter come along I was, I wasn't going too good. I would never ever live in England, cold, Jesus Christ, summer time beautiful. So that's what happened, I've always had

38:00 bit of a weak chest ever since but otherwise I'm all right.

**Well before we talk about the trip over you mentioned earlier on when you were talking about your childhood that you were a bit of a rebel. How did you, given that you described yourself as a bit of a rebel, how did you take to the army discipline?**

Oh well it's a funny sort of a

38:30 set up. You've got, you've got 2 different people, you've got people that think they know and they don't know and then you've got other people that know all by the book, which doesn't always work out. And then the 3rd one is a

39:00 person that is very similar to your own views but can't always put them into operation because of the law, routine orders and all that sort of stuff. And I found that out right throughout my war service that you get, go from corporals right up as high as you'd like to go, but you've got these people

39:30 in one case I can give you this. There's 4 lads that joined up and they all became corporals very quick because the major, and it's the only person that I could miss shooting anybody and shoot him I could have done it, only one person throughout my army career, could I shot, and I couldn't have had a grey hair

40:00 for it. He was a person that had too big a head and he was a person that with these, he was in an insurance company and quite a fairly big figure in this insurance company and we wondered why all these blokes that we knew that weren't any better than we were,

40:30 all getting stripes and corporals and sergeants stripes very quickly they all belong to his unit and all belonged to his company that he was running, the whole lot of them. And that left some very good people that would have been much much better dealing with troops than

- 41:00 the people that he appointed. And it would turn out later on as I can explain to you what sort of people they turned out to be. And they were there to tell us what, and they were the sort of things that stuck in our mind, normally, I'll consider that normal general troops that like a fair go, like myself, and most of them are like myself, views that we'd earn a corporal
- 41:30 or private and go and advance would be fair dinkum people. And I cannot understand why that had to do that sort of thing but that's what happens and apparently is that what happens right throughout, well happens in civilian life and carried onto to normal army life. One indication, I don't know whether I should say this right now, but one
- 42:00 indication was that I was.....

## Tape 4

- 00:34 **So to continue with your story Jim, after you recovered from your pleurisy tell me what happened. You were walking around Melbourne and you then agreed to go over. So tell me about your final pre-embarkation leave?**
- 01:00 Well what happened then; was I went back to camp and we just carried on for just a normal camp, training. Mainly route marching, keep fit, for about another fortnight I would think, and then we had embarkation leave. So off we come back to South Australia again
- 01:30 for embarkation leave and we were home for, I think it was about 10 days. Then we, being in the upper Murray we had a good friend up at Renmark that took us in a ute from there to Mildura to catch the train back to Melbourne. That meant that if we went to Adelaide
- 02:00 we'd have to go the day before so we'd lose a bit of, we'd lose a day with our people so it was better that we go up to Mildura and catch it and we'd be back in Puckapunyal the same day. And then we got the order that we'd be moving out, now what transpired up to then was the advance guards of our unit went to the Middle East,
- 02:30 oh I'm guessing, probably just early, late December early January. January, March, about the end of January they went and the main stream went.....about April and that left me behind
- 03:00 for the rear guards. And then our turn came and we on the 5th of May 1940 we landed at Port Melbourne and there was a boat called the Empress of Canada. And
- 03:30 that boat was a huge boat, I feel as though it was probably about a 34,000 toner. It was a big boat for what we'd ever seen or been on. And then after a day we were all loaded up and there was hundreds of people on the wharf
- 04:00 to wave goodbye. Suppose to be secret but it never was. So we were up there, we went down and put our gear in our hulls, the hulls of the boat were quite big, they had then fore and aft and we were in the forward one and we were on beds 3 high, steel beds 3 high and where they couldn't get the beds
- 04:30 on the slope of the side of the hull they had hammocks. So we were lucky we got a bed, we didn't have a swinging hammock, hard to get into and you could fall out and you'd have to sleep on your back all the time. But anyway we were all loaded up and they decided to start moving out. And I think that was the worst feeling I've ever had, that I had to move
- 05:00 out and we sung 2 songs, it was actually beautiful really because the voice right through and then the people on the wharf were singing, whilst we could hear them and they were singing those songs, Wish me luck and Now is the hour, which was a Maori song, which a beautiful song when they sung it, the Maori's [Farewell].
- 05:30 So as we got out and we drifted out of sight and we go down to our hull then, the hull of the boat where we were and sort of talk around and sit down I suppose. I had to climb up on the 3 beds.
- And was there anyone standing on the wharf seeing you, saying goodbye to you?**
- They all, they stood on the wharf until we got out of sight.
- Who was saying goodbye**
- 06:00 **to you?**
- All the friends that were, probably Victorian people, mainly Victorians, none of our people, South Australian people came over, cause we didn't know, but the Victorians, there were quite a hundreds of people there, all Victorians. Maybe some New South Wales I'm not sure. And they were singing until we got out of sight and of course all that stopped then.
- And do you remember any of that song?**

Oh yes I could sing it to

06:30 you now, yeah Christ yeah, never stopped whistling it.

**Can you give us a song, how does it go?**

I can whistle it better.....

07:00 ..... Oh that's good, isn't it?

07:30 **Thank you.**

What's the other one?

**Can you just tell me what the first couple of lines are, what in words?**

"Now is the hour when we must say goodbye... sailing far across the sea

08:00 now is the hour..." I've lost that there, sorry.

**I imagine that would have been a very moving song?**

Yeah well the other one was, you're not taping all that are you, just tape the bit that I know. "Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye, cheerio here I go on my way, give me a smile

08:30 I can keep all the while in the... I'll be there, wish me luck as you wave me goodbye... oh so long," just cut it off, I should know, if I thought about it I could of got the piece of paper with it on, I could have sung it all, but you'd better cut that little bits off.

09:00 I wouldn't want that in there, gee whiz. But they were the songs that we sung, but the Maori's Farewell one Now is the hour, they're the ones that sung that. But then of course when we all went down and the thing that worries you a lot was when all our troops were down you'd say, "God are you coming back?" That was the worst part of it, who's coming back? And you know

09:30 that there's a lot of us not coming back and that's the hardest part I think of saying goodbye as we did. Then when we got out of sight there was big boats, if I can remember big boats, there was the Empress of Canada,

10:00 Empress of Britain and the Andes, their New Zealanders [the New Amsterdam?], Queen Mary, Mauritania and Aquitania, I'll check that I think there was 6 of them.....they were the biggest boats in the world.

10:30 And most of them had been converted over completely from civilian, they had swimming pool, but as I said before that was for the officers with pips and beautiful army girls, not army girls, nurses. They used to annoy hell out of us because we were down below and there all up top, you could see them all talking together. So anyway that's the way it went and Perth, we stopped

11:00 there, cause ours was a small boat we went and stopped at Perth. We had a day there to get us out of the road because they had to load other troops on our boats, big boats had to stop outside. So then we, next day we loaded up and away we went to the Middle East.

**And how closely did you and Simo stick together on that**

11:30 **that trip?**

Oh close yeah, we were very rarely apart, oh no we were close all the time. Yeah Simo and I were very very close all the way through.

**And who else was on the ship?**

12:00 **Well on the ship was just our Australians, probably 6, 7 thousand of us I should imagine, that's about the quantity our ship would take, I think. We just, what else was there to do, we were just walking around doing a bit of exercise and wasn't much we could do. But we go,**

12:30 **going to the Middle East which was from Perth, and normally they called into more supplies at Ceylon, bottom of India, which we were heading towards. And for some reason, we didn't know then, but the whole convoy turned around and went south. Otherwise it should have kept going east, sorry west,**

13:00 **south west to go to Port Said in Egypt. But this turned around, the whole convoy. And what was happening there in Europe it was getting to the stage where Dunkirk was on, when they were clearing out of Europe, the British and the French, French Forces. They were leaving and they were going back to England.**

13:30 **So in that period I suppose old Churchill thought, "Well I'd better get some troops over here from Australia," because we were floating around and that's what happened, they diverted us and we landed in Cape Town. Cape Town was a very pretty place, you come into Cape Town and**

you've got the flat mountains, they've got a big high range of mountains and the Cape is on the foot of it, from there to the sea.

14:00 Do you want me to go on with that? And there was a table top mountains, well it is a table top, it's flat and it's huge. So we were fortunate that our boat was small enough to pull into the wharf, the bigger ones had to stop out at sea. And we were next door to the Andes which is Kiwis [New Zealanders]. We were there for a week, but as it happened,

14:30 I don't know why we were there for so long but, first 3 or 4 days, we didn't have leave but the Kiwis were off twice next door, they had leave twice. So they decided then, some of us decided then that we'd walk off the boat, never ever heard of before you know. So we organise it were going to walk off the boat, so the time

15:00 came and we just walked off the boat and lined up in front of the boat in columns. One of our blokes said, "Come on get marching" and gave us the orders and we marched. And we had to go up between big sheds and then we came to a fence, very high fence and there was South African Guards on this fence. But as it happened that when you came up,

15:30 between these big sheds the fence you could only see, as we turned around to go to the gate, you'd only see about 50 or 60 people, troops, couldn't see what was behind. And our boss, chief says to them, "All these boys marching this morning." They said, "No, they've broken rank and gone." "Wow." Well it was all on then of course. And he rang the guards

16:00 to shut the gates so that they couldn't go. When they were told to look behind to see what's coming, behind the sheds they open the gates and said, "Good luck." Outside there, we didn't know of course, there were 2 trucks we were near a brewery, there was 2 trucks loaded with grog. Well when they say, when our troops saw it they just jumped up on the truck and took over the back of it and the truck driver went

16:30 on delivering his goods and all these Aussies on the back having a good old drink, it was funny, I couldn't get on it. Anyway we marched up and then we all broke and went our own way. I struck a girl and a companion and they were talking and they said, "Would you like to come home?" I wasn't interested in any bloody grog or anything like that, that was the least of my worries. So

17:00 we went home and they took us up in the car to table top mountains which was very lovely. We were in for the day, so they took us up there and took us home and had tea and showed us around, showed us around in the car. We were lucky but that was what was happening, not only to us. The South Africans were very good, they were taking the troops home and all this sort of caper. So next thing it's getting a bit late

17:30 we thought, "We'd better wander back," and as we get in the main street they got police. They'd have a few police up the front, probably about 4 up the front, 3 or 4 down the side and 4 at the back and when they catch you they stick them in the middle and keep marching, going to take them back to the boat. But when they saw an Aussie up there or something he'd take off, and these blokes would take off after him so were there and no guards. So we'd go again,

18:00 this went on at least until about 12 o'clock at night, it was funny. But we knew we were going to be in the soup so we may as well make a go. So we wondered back and then we had to go up before the boss the next day and in that book I've got it all written there how much money I, we were getting 5 bob [shillings] a day and I think I got 5 days fine. 5 bob a day, they used to call it '5 bob a day tourists', this,

18:30 because we went to England, so we done a few bucks, dollars, pence, hard to get out of. So we went back and everything was all right again.

**And was it worth doing your money?**

Oh yeah, well why should all those people next door have all the freedom and we didn't? So we didn't hurt anybody, so that's what happened.

**And how many of**

19:00 **you?**

Oh probably about 4,000, easy yeah probably 4, 5 thousand, cause they had no hope of stopping us once we got that many out there.

**And you all, all 4,000 of you all got docked?**

Oh yes, Simo lost his stripes, he should never have come. And this was all arranged and all the sergeants and officers knew about it, they knew about it, but they didn't come, they'd loose their stripes. Simo was, he was a bloke that was full of for

19:30 the troops and he should of stayed home, he'd have been a lieutenant, he would of come a lieutenant because he was the oldest corporal in the, in our unit. So anyway that's what happened and we got to

England and no more said, it was just one of those things that happened, but it was funny thought. Yes it was very funny but

20:00 in those places where the First World Soldiers had gone it was amazing how we got treated, amazing how they treated us, just like coming home to your family the way they treated us. England was the same, Scotland, that's another story, haven't got there yet, Scotland was magnificent to go up there.

20:30 They, where are we now, where do you want me to go now?

**Well you've just left Cape Town?**

Okay we leave Cape Town and we head north, now how, I thought I'd told you all about this yesterday?

**It's okay we can just go over it again and get more detail?**

So anyway we left Cape Town and how the Germans didn't know we were coming is something screwy, doesn't make sense because they got submarines out there, they had a lot of submarines out in

21:00 that ocean and they could of blown us I'm sure. But in our travels we saw so much rubbish floating on the water that these ships, some ships had been blown up and all their goods and chattels were floating on the water, we'd be driving through all that. But we had the biggest battle ship in the world at that time, the HMS Hood, we had the HMAS Sydney, big boat,

21:30 so many destroyers and we also had.....flying, Australian flying boats, Sutherland flying boats, that's it. And they were flying along and they'd come real close and wave their wings and say g-day and all this sort of caper. But the Hood was such a big thing and when you looked at it, come up along side our boats, you'd see it and you'd

22:00 think how could a big piece of iron float, it just amazes you to think that that thing could float. Anyway we got there, went around south east Africa and went up to a place called Sierra Leone, little island, place, well not so much an island, they're in trouble up there at the moment. We stopped there in a big bay, I don't know what for, the population,

22:30 or dark people came out in boats with bananas and pineapples, whatever, and they'd thrown down a string, rope and put something on it and you'd bring it up and you'd throw some money in their baskets. And we were all leaning over to them. And the funniest part was one come up with a monkey and this monkey ran loose amongst the boat and of course they're not allowed in England, and gee did they have some

23:00 fun trying to catch this monkey, just a little monkey. Anyway that's what happened. Then we left there, we had one Italian came over to bomb us but he was so far away the bomb didn't go anywhere. Italians were noted for high aerial bombing, if your going to get bombed down close it will be a German, but Italians they didn't want to come down close, they didn't want to be in the war. So we landed in

23:30 Scotland.

**And what was the mood like before you landed?**

For us?

**Amongst the troops?**

Oh good because we were landing in Scotland, oh yes we'd been on there for about 6 weeks from the 5th May till about the 19th June, and we just wanted to get off it. We pulled up in the.....what's the river.....

24:00 well pulled up, oh isn't it terrible, the..... River Clyde....

**It doesn't matter.....?**

Clyde, Clyde River in Scotland and we spent probably about 3 days on that before we got off because there was so many of us, in other boats. And we went to the pictures and come out about

24:30 quarter to 11 and it's still daylight, that we couldn't get over, twilight, it was beautiful, beautiful twilight. So eventually we got off and got onto the train and that took us down to a place called Salisbury Planes where all the Military Headquarters are in England, Salisbury Planes. And we finished up in a little town called Tidworth and Tidworth Pennings and Tidworth Park, just a little place that's where we

25:00 made our station while we were in there. And we were in a tent camp, camped in tents. That was quite pleasant. Then a corporal came to me one day, Corporal Jones, I don't know why he picked on me but he was a Victorian, come to me and he said,

25:30 "I want you to come with me, and we're starting a petrol bowser to maintain petrol for our troops, maintenance and there's a place." I said, "Yeah, that will do me, instead of sitting here on guard," and we were digging slit trenches in case the Germans came over and they were frightened of the Germans landing near the airports and we were near an airport, we were guarding an airport where Lancaster

bombers,

- 26:00 big bombers were landing, and they were digging these trenches. And it was funny it was all white, all white chalk they were digging up, it amazed me I'd never seen it before, white chalk, no dirt, just chalk slit trenches. So they were doing that and that got me out of that and we went to a depot, Pommy [English] depot, it was quite nice it had,
- 26:30 we had a little room to ourselves which was on the end of the officers' quarters. Just the 2 of us and we had to be on duty from 6 in the morning until 6 at night and we had a little corner of this, the big parade ground where our trucks used to come in go out. And we had this little petrol pump, I've got photos of that, and we used to just fill their tanks up with petrol. And then we finished at
- 27:00 6 o'clock and we'd go back to our room which was a very nice room.

**So where was the petrol station in relation to the camp, the tent camp?**

Oh probably could be 2 or 3 miles away from various camps, or more in some, some of our blokes would be 5 kilometres away I suppose. And our infantry that we had they were

- 27:30 stationed around the airports and along the coast cause Dunkirk had just finished when we got there so they were expecting the Germans to land behind them, but they didn't. And all along the coast they had a lot of petrol drums, stationed there, and oil drums, and if they landed that was all going to be lit up, but that never happened. So as the trucks come through we'd fill them up and away they'd go, and
- 28:00 then this particular place was a recruiting depot for Pommy soldiers, or civilians. And true they'd come in and in 2 hours they would out of their clothes in uniform, out on the parade ground within 2 hours, girls too, women too. We used to sit and watch them, those sergeant majors are very strict,
- 28:30 far superior in strictness and in method than ours would ever be. Some of the things they said to us they'd get knocked over the head, the English they had to take it, especially women, we used to like watching the women, boy did they give them a stir. They'd be lined up and they'd say, these are sergeant majors, "Put those big boobs up, put them out, put them out
- 29:00 stick your bum in, swing those arms," and this is the way, there screaming at these poor girls, poor buggers didn't know what to do. And their first initiation gees were they tough and then the boys there were just the same they were brewing after a few minutes, we felt so sorry for them. But anyway that's the way it was and that was our entertainment for the day and serving petrol, had a good job
- 29:30 there. So when you went to lunch, we had to eat with these, and my mate was a corporal and this never happened to our army but it happened to them. But if you had a stripe and there was a line up of 30 or 50, 100, 50 or 60 anything up to a hundred troops waiting to go in, these blokes would just walk up
- 30:00 and go, and just bloody, "Excuse me," and go straight in, they wouldn't line up cause you're, that's another thing I disagree with. So that's what happened and then.....

**So what was it about the difference between the Brits and the Aussies?**

Stricter,

- 30:30 much much stricter, and there wasn't that freedom that you had, no how can I put that without insulting people. I don't insult the troops themselves, the officers are different, troops are good, they make beautiful bloody troops with ours. We were an army that had freedom to appoint that when
- 31:00 you're fighting you were an independent, although you're still as a unit, if you could understand what I mean and you could do things that you think at that particular time, where your corporals or your sergeants could be 30, 80 feet away, you got to do it with your own mind or your own common sense what was best at that particular incident. Whereas the Poms would want to be
- 31:30 told all the time because that's the way they were trained and they could miss out of things, they could do more harm to themselves sometimes than the good that they do to themselves. The officers are so strict in their rules and regulations, you could, we found that the English, there walking down the street and one of their officers come past, they'd have to salute
- 32:00 straight away, "Salute," this is out in the open world, no regimental army about it, just salute. So what we used to do, they'd expect us to do it so we'd go to scratch our ear or scratch our head or something, put our hand up to an ear and make them salute for nothing. And this eventually broke the habit that we pass on the street that we'd just ignore them, didn't have to salute them any more, we don't even salute our own officers out in the bloody street, why should we
- 32:30 salute them? So this is the thing that annoyed us and it's not referring to any shame at all on the troops, it's just the system that they operate which was most unnecessary.

**Well it is natural for people to compare each other and maybe sometimes wind them up a little bit?**

Yes it's just a comparison and yet

- 33:00 we fight with one another, we fight as a team, each and every one of us, we'd fight as good as any other when were out, this is in the war side, not together. So that was the way it was and that's the way, I don't know whether it is today or not I wouldn't have a clue. But there's lots of incidents like that that does happen.
- 33:30 So then these poor creatures would come in and leave their cars and all that sort of stuff in this big shed and they'd come up to us and say, "Well can you sell us some petrol, Aussies?" and I said, "No we can't sell petrol." "I want to go home," and I said, "No we can't sell petrol, we're not here for that." He said, "I've got a car," and he said, "I want enough petrol to go home for the weekend."
- 34:00 I said, "Look I can't help you." But he said, "You can use it if you want to but leave enough petrol for me to go home on the weekend." I said, "Gee, that sounds good." So I had a talk to the corporal and when 6 o'clock came we'd go, we'd go for a tour. Yeah we went in his car and I'll tell you what, they were flash cars. Sometimes we'd go to Salisbury, Salisbury's about, just roughly about 17, 18, 20 mile away for a night, as long as you were back at 6 o'clock in the morning.
- 34:30 And this particular incident were driving along and it's a coupe, no cover on it we could, you could see who we we were, and out of the bushes, these particular bushes going to Salisbury there right close to the road, they hop out and they've got bayonets and they say, "Hold it." And we stopped and, "What's the password?" "Password?" never had a clue what a password was. And then
- 35:00 they knew who we were then and they said, "Where are you going?" I said, "We're just going to Salisbury." He said, "Well you should have the password." I said, "Where do I find out?" He said, "It's the day, the day and the date." I said, "Right, remember that," so off we went and we'd spend, oh 3 or 4 hours down there and back and we'd go to another town the next day and we were enjoying this immensely. And
- 35:30 till we.....

**And what did you see on those trips?**

- Oh there's always at night, couldn't get away at daytime, it was always in the evening, twilight's still on. And we used to have a talk, oh a lot of girls would get onto us, you know being an Australian. But there was nothing sexy about it, it was
- 36:00 just that they'd take us home or they'd come in the pub and have a drink or just sit and talk and this sort of thing, learn how they live and that. No sex involved in it, as much as I'd have thought I'd like it it just didn't happen. That was the way it was until then they decided it got cold and we had to then move to Colchester in the south east of England and we went into barracks
- 36:30 there. Barracks were beautiful, they were new barracks, they were huge. And then it got cold then we had, I got a truck then, they gave me a truck and I had to work with other boys, Perky and Ricky and Simo, delivering ammunition and petrol all around the place. In some cases we had
- 37:00 4 gallon petrol tins, I don't know whether you've ever seen them they used to have them years ago, they were square 4 gallon petrol tins, and they'd hold 4 gallons, I think 4 gallon tins. And you used to have to load these up and take them to a depot and unload them, and that was hard work because you'd have about 300 or 400 of them in a truck and that kept you busy. And
- 37:30 Perky and I on this particular trip we decided, I said to Perky I said, "Oh we're about a hundred and ten miles from where our depot is." Once you got off the main highway and go around the lanes there were some beautiful places, different little places and they were beautiful, these little lanes they called them. But this time I said to Perky I said, "We'll try some other way in going home," which we did. I can't remember the
- 38:00 town because their maps, English maps don't show all the little towns they only show the bigger ones, there's too many of them. So this town was only a narrow street, it was only road made of old bricks, not bricks, wood and it was starting to get cold and ice was on the road. I've never driven on an ice road, not in these trucks, they were big trucks,
- 38:30 well I'm driving down and I said to Perky I said, "Gee it's beautiful isn't it?" and were looking at both sides and the veranda's came right down to the gutter, that's the type of village it was cause all little shops with their village gutters, oh I think you'd be battling to pass 2 trucks, I didn't never had to but I reckon you'd be very close. So
- 39:00 I thought I was going too fast and I put my foot on me brake and instead of going this way I was going that way, sideways. I said, "What's that?" He said, "A veranda post." I said, "What?" He said, "You knocked it, another one and another one." I said, "Jesus." And a wide truck, you see it was wider and as it was going down it was knocking the veranda posts and of course you know what happened. There was 4 of them gone and it stopped, "Oh God,"
- 39:30 so I got out and all these Pommies that owned these shops boy did they call us for everything, they read the riot act and told us, "Go and learn to drive." I said, "I've never driven," that was the worst thing I've ever said. "I've never driven on ice before." "Well go and bloody learn," and all this and the Pommy pointing to us and we felt humiliated. Absolutely because I couldn't stop the damn thing, anyhow I

finished up with,

40:00 we gradually got it and wriggled out and got out but before we did that a woman came out, lovely old lady and whizzed down there and she come up and put her arms around us and she said, "Oh don't worry about a few veranda posts," she said, "You come over here to help us fight this enemy we've got, what's worry about them a few veranda posts, were lucky we've got you here," and give us all a love, and that really helped us, made

40:30 us feel better. So back to camp I had to fill out a great report, so that was one experience with the population but they all loved us with our badges and hats and things on.

**So the veranda didn't fall down?**

Yeah, oh yes they fell down, oh yeah fell off, knocked the posts off. Our government I suppose had to come to the party and put it back, I don't know, I didn't go back to find out. So

41:00 then as time went on.....

**Well we might just stop there because our tape.....**

## Tape 5

00:31 **It sounds like you and Perky got up to a few little escapades whilst you were in the country. What else happened apart from the truck?**

Ah now, what shall I go back to the Middle East or carry on?

**No were still in England at this stage?**

Oh well we didn't much

01:00 apply in England as much as Perky and I. Perky, there was 4 of us, there was Perky and Ricky Warden and Simo and I. Now we did go into London, the 4 of us, we spent 2 or 3 days in there and that was,

01:30 yes we went in there and spent 3 days, 3 nights and 4 days, something like that. We did London over but we were very frightened in London because the Germans had really bombed it and we didn't want to be there when a bombing raid. But we went into all the places that you'd expect to go; into the cathedrals and into Trafalgar Square,

02:00 we walked over the London bridge, made ourselves a bit of a nuisance in some of their pubs, you know talking to people and you get involved with all kinds of people and you have a few more beers. Then we got onto a cab that was driven by a horse, and I don't know how far away this was, I would think it was probably

02:30 about 10 miles I'm not sure, seemed a long way to go to get out of the town. Anyhow this cab driver knew what he was doing because the longer he took the more he, pay he was getting. And we stayed at this pub and the two of them got onto a couple of sheilas, and one went one way and the other way and we said, "We'll see ya later" and Perky and I stayed there and

03:00 I think it was Rick and Simo. So that was all right nothing much happened. And then we went back to camp and in another short period we went to this place again, this particular pub, it was quite relaxing pub to have a few beers and talk to people, which is the main thing. And these two

03:30 these two blokes thought they'd go and see these 2 sheilas and they hadn't been, so off they went and it wasn't long before they were back. And I said to Perky, I said, "What the bloody hell's going on?" I said, "See them coming," cause they had to come through this big sort of a walkway to get to this pub and you could see them coming.

04:00 So when they got back the fact was when Simo knocked on the door the girl came out, she said, "Run away, me husband's home," he'd been in the army see. And this other, Perky he done the same bloody thing he came running and said he had no luck I said, "Why?" He said, "The bloody husband home." They got leave from their unit at the same time. So we thought that was a hell of a joke, we never went back there any more,

04:30 it was funny the way they carried on. So we went back to camp and that was the finish. And then got a bit cold and we had 7 days leave, we applied for, Simo and I applied for this because we had Scottish ancestors and we'd like to go to Scotland, so we got 7 days. And we went into, from there we went into a place called Clapham Junction was

05:00 a place where we had to catch the train and that was the Flying Scotsman. So we got on this train and keeping in mind there's no lights around, no light lit up and when you get on the train there's just a little spot light above your seat, that's all. So we sat down there and got to Scotland, Glasgow and we

- 05:30 booked into the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] place there and put out bags, all our gear in a locker and we then went down the street and there's a tour around Loch Lomond. I'm not quite sure what time of the day it was but they said they'd be back by night. So we hook on it and there's 2 Kiwis and 2 of us and the crowd was full of all sorts of people, Scottish and you name it. And the way
- 06:00 we were carrying on they got such a laugh out of us, we were bloody comedians, it was just the way we were talking and they thought, "This is great." So when we got to a place called Helen's Burrow, that would be probably about, just off, 20 mile from Glasgow, we got talking to a bloke that had a theatre and he was an Australian of the
- 06:30 First World War and he said, "Come over and have a look at what I've got." So we went over and had a look at this theatre. By this time of course the bus has gone, we didn't think about the bus. So we got talking to him and he said, "What are you doing for tea?" I said, "Oh we haven't made any arrangements, we've got to catch the bus." He said, "Oh, the bus has gone." I said, "Oh, thanks very much." So we stayed for tea with this fellow, he was an Aussie, so
- 07:00 we then said, "Okay we'll see you later we'll go down the town and see what we can do," it wasn't far, a couple of street down. We went down there and there's a dance on, so we go to this dance, boy I've never been to a dance like it, it was beautiful. We had that many girls trying to get to up to have a dance it was unbelievable and our badges and, we had to watch our badges they went
- 07:30 and me bloody hat I was frightened that was going to go, and they just want souvenirs from Aussies, that's all they wanted. I said to Simo, "What are we going to do now?" I had been dancing with a girl, she was a nice looking girl and another one would come up and push her away and she'd dance with me, that's how it was. I thought it was good, but when you got a good one it was nice to stay with her, but you couldn't. Eventually you, the end of the dance came, and I said to Simo I said,
- 08:00 "What are you doing?" He said, "Oh I don't know." So he's talking to a girl in, what do they call them now, an air force girl?
- WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force]?**
- WACK or something?**
- WAAF?**
- Yeah she was an army girl dressed in a English Air Force uniform. So I had another one on me wing and she said, "Are you going to take me home?" I said, "How far?" She said, "Oh, just around the corner." I said, "Yeah all right." So I took her around and they
- 08:30 was Scots you see, cause my mother's Scots you see. And went around there and she said, "Come on you've got to meet my mother and father," and this is what it's all about, she had to meet us. So I went in there and I was there for about half an hour and I said, "I've got to go back and see me mate cause he's got to get a bed for me." "You want a bed, well go and get your mate and you can stop here." I said, "Look
- 09:00 I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go and see what he's done, if he's fixed up something I won't be back. But I thank you very much for the offer but if we can't I'll be back in a few minutes, or half an hour." Got around there and this girl was going to take us home to an old castle that they are in and most of the fellows, some of their fellows are on leave and your quite welcome, so off we go with her. We get up this old castle
- 09:30 and she brings us out supper, supper, Christ it was about 1 o'clock in the morning. And then in the morning she comes and wakes us up and says, "Your breakfast is ready." We went down and had breakfast and they said, "Well, how are you going to go back to Glasgow?" I said, "I don't know, we'll have to find out." She said, "Well one of the boys will take you back, they're going." So we got a ride back to Glasgow with a RAF [Royal Air Force]. And it was a perfect day,
- 10:00 so we thought that was real good. So then the next day we go over to.....Edith, Edinburgh cause he's got a aunty there and he was James Young Simpson, his name and James Young Simpson was the first person, I think I've got it right, that used chloroform and his got a plaque up on his door, 'James
- 10:30 Young Simpson'. But his Aunty Kate he called her, I think it was his great aunt, I think it must have been his great aunty. So we go looking for this place, we got back to Glasgow, we booked into a pub. And there was this, when you go looking for places in these old places, old towns like Glasgow you've got rows of buildings all the same,
- 11:00 and we walking up and down and he's supposed to know where she lived and he didn't. But we came to one that had a plaque on it, this is the place where James Young Simpson first used chloroform, something like that. I said, "Well, this is got to be it." He said, "Yeah this will be it." So he knocked on the door, and you don't know what's behind the door you know until you knock on it, until you go in too. We walked in there, oh we knocked on the door and the butler come, butler
- 11:30 dressed up as a butler comes, and he says, "Where you from?" and he said, Simo said, "I'm James Young Simpson, I'm a relative of James Young Simpson, he used chloroform and I'm from Australia." "Oh, come on in." So we go inside and he said, "Who do you want to see?" He said, "Aunty Kate." So he goes

to the end of the steps, going up

- 12:00 and a maid comes down and takes our coat, our overcoat, takes our overcoat, it's getting cold then. So we go up the steps and here's this little old lady sitting in a chair and stands up and welcomes us in and after a short period he starts talking about him and she starts talking about her people and then out
- 12:30 comes the photos and I hear him say, "Yes I know her," and I say, "Bulldust, you don't know any of them, he's all talk." He satisfied her, "Oh yes I remember him." He didn't remember them at all, I didn't think he did anyway. So she said to me she said, she must of looked, I was a bit out of it, I didn't know, so she said, "Would you like a little wine or something?" and I thought, "Well I'm not a
- 13:00 wine drinker but I'll have one." So I had a wine and eventually after quite a considerable time the relative come on. I don't know what, he was some officer, colonel or something and he had something to do with Edinburgh Council and all the yak yak. So he took us up and he said goodbye to Auntie Kate, I said,
- 13:30 "Goodbye aunty Kate," and we've got to go back for tea, according to them. So he took us up to Edinburgh Castle and I was amazed, it's huge, it's so big you can't imagine it and the stones, it's so big I wondered how, there's got to be something, how the devil they get these stones and things up on this castle.
- 14:00 It was huge and all these ack-ack guns [anti-aircraft guns] are on the high point. So after about an hour's touring, we went down and it was getting near tea time. I said to Simo I said, "Simo I'm not going back with ya for tea." I said, "It's, you go back." He said, "Yeah I thought so." I said, "You go back I'll go down the street," and I said, "Okay." So I went down looking for a café or somewhere to have a feed
- 14:30 and when it's dark you've only got a little light, big as a little alley I reckon, stuck on a door and it's just light and it's shinning down and nothing could see above it, up above. And then you open that door and then you go into the next door and when you open that one there's a light and that's where, it opens up inside and it's all lit. So I found this café, I walked in, I suppose
- 15:00 there'd be about 30 sets of tables down in a couple of runs and probably 30 people or so and I had to walk right down to get one of the tables down below. And all I heard was, "He's an Australian, he's an Australian, look, an Australian." They probably got all this from the First World War but never seen one before, a real live one lately. So I
- 15:30 sat down and I suppose within 3 minutes, very short I had 4 girls sitting around the table with me, 4 Scots girls sitting around the table, asking me all sorts of questions. So I enjoyed that and I had my tea and they had whatever they came in for and that was very good and filled in a bit of time. So then I,
- 16:00 well they all went bar one and I was talking about Scots and how my mother was tangled up and all this. And she said, "Would you like to come out to my place and have supper?" I said, "Yeah, that would be right." Well I didn't ask how far though did I? So we got on a bus and it was 7 miles out, but to get the 7 miles I reckon I went about 40 because there was the bends and turns and turns and bends.
- 16:30 So she took me inside and met Mum and Dad and had something to eat, and by about this time she said, "Do you know, you'd better go now because the last bus will be here soon." I said, "Oh Christ I don't want to walk that far." So I said goodbye to the parents, she took me to the bus and I gave her a little Aussie kiss and then hopped on the bus and went back to me room. Talk about funny, and
- 17:00 then as I went in the room, into the hotel there was a light and the door, the first door didn't quite shut quick enough and I hear these footsteps, girls footsteps coming down and they stopped and this girl said to the other one, "It's an Aussie, it's an Australian, it is an Australian."
- 17:30 And I turned around and I said, "Yes, I'm an Australian, do you want to meet me?" So I said, "Come in here," so they came in where it was light and they met me. I said, "Where are you going?" She was going up to the castle, I said, "How do you get there?" She said, "Oh, up there." I said, "Well hang on a minute." So I went up and Simo's in bed and I said, "Hey got a job for you." He said, "What?" "Come on, get dressed, come down here. I want you to meet some people."
- 18:00 And very rarely you'd do that sort of thing. Then he comes down and I'm down there talking to these sheilas, then he comes and we walk them home. Worst thing I ever did, cause she walks up these steps, steps, turn left, steps, steps steps, turn right steps, steps.... until we got I don't know how far up and I said, "Hey, let's sit down for a while." So we sat on these steps and we got
- 18:30 talking to these girls and I said, "Well now where do you go from here?" "Oh up a few more and then in our room." I said, "Well I reckon I'll say goodbye to you from here." I said, "It's nice talking to you and learn all about the castle and things," so I said, "We'll part." And one said she worked in the pub and you must go down there in the morning and I'll give you a drink, say farewell. So we went down to this pub in the morning and Simo
- 19:00 only drank soft, he never drank wine or beer or anything. So I went down there and had another farewell goodbye and we had to catch the train to go back to London. So wherever we went in the country we were rushed about our badges and things, how popular the Australians were it was

amazing, never expected anything like that at all.

**And what difference did you find between the Scots and the English?**

19:30 Well firstly I could understand most English people. Bit hard to understand Scots when they talk quick. There wouldn't be a lot of difference only the difference is because my blood is Scots there was a bit more favouritism than probably the English, but as people they were all lovely people that we struck, yeah very lovely. You could,

20:00 in Scotland there I walked into a shop there and just talking, there was a lovely women, young girl behind the bar and she got interested, didn't take her out or anything and I said, she was a lovely girl. And she just wrote to me and sent me her photos and go so friendly because we were Scots, I think that's what did that, only because we were Scotsman. But

20:30 wherever we went, wherever we went we were there and people just thought we were just it and of course we could accept all that, and we loved that, I mean you don't knock that back. But there was no, there was no sex, I never had sex up there all the time I was there, it wasn't that type of, I suppose it was there if we

21:00 went looking for it I suppose, there was plenty of opportunities to go home with these people, they'd invite you home, just the way it was. But very very lovely but then of course we had to leave and come back to the Middle East to wog land [Palestine], that was totally different.

**Before we get there I'd just like to ask in London there would have been very visible presence of the war?**

Oh yeah bombed, yeah buildings were blown to pieces, yeah, yeah so

21:30 we looked around there and we, that was terrifying. We didn't want to stop in London because we couldn't relax and you didn't know whether the old Junkers, that's the German bombers were coming to come over and plaster it again. But we were, the air force was starting to get a little bit on top in late, in the late Christmas,

22:00 we had Christmas in 1940, 1941 Christmas, I had in England and we started to get on top as the British people, as the English did with their Spitfires and the Hurricanes. They started to get on top and then the Yanks' big planes started to sneak in a bit. The Canadians had started to come into England, quite a few Canadians, weren't many Americans,

22:30 quite a lot of Canadians and they were mostly air force people. They came in and I could of put the whole bloody war there but it didn't, as it turned out I wouldn't want to either if I had to go over and land where they landed and got knocked off. But as a tour it was very good, very lovely.

23:00 As it was turned out for us, cause there's only 2 of our particular party got killed and one was in a bus and the other one got ran over, left in England. But considering how the Australians would go on leave, they'd go all over the country and cause a lot of them would be full of booze and that sort of stuff, that's nothing we never, we had a few beers and that's as

23:30 much as we were involved in.

**Coventry got quite a bashing as well?**

Yeah Coventry got wiped out, we didn't get to Coventry but that got wiped out and where we were, in Salisbury Plains we could look down the south, south east a bit or south west, I'm not quite sure and you could see the fires and the bombers, fritz bombers, you could hear them and you could see the

24:00 fires that were burning from that far, that was 70 miles, so they got a lacing. Yes that wasn't good when we walked through London and seen what they were doing, but as I said we didn't want to hang around there, not on leave.

**And did you know of any Germans who had crashed in England, or who had crashed in the countryside?**

Never, oh we saw some planes knocked out, but normally when they got shot up they'd seek to the, they'd go

24:30 to the sea, they'd land in the sea, there's a lot of water around England and most of them went, head out to sea and dive bomb them out there. I've seen a lot of our bombers come in with bits and pieces shot off them, seen them. But we've seen Fritzes come along and do some strafing on our way home from fighters, we've seen that. In fact one

25:00 particular time we were at Boofoo, not Boofoo.....down south, Colchester, we were playing 2 up and a big building was on the left and on the front of us, the way we were standing there was another lower building where we had our trucks, or garage. But the other half was wide open and we

25:30 were there playing two-up [Australian betting game with coins], probably 70, 80 of us playing two-up and a Messerschmitt came and he just flew over the garage and he pulled the trigger, but had he come the other way he would have cleaned us all up, but were just lucky that he went over. And as they go out

from England they strafe anything they can see as long as they had enough petrol to get across the river, sea

26:00 to get home, that was their main concern. But if they came over with the bombers, which they did, they had so many fighters, but bombers they'd be up above the bombers, cause they know that our fighters would be above them. And they would come home to go back to Germany or France, wherever and they'd strafe anything they could see. We were very lucky that they came that way because I never saw so much money around in a circle and nobody

26:30 wanted it, we all, nobody wanted it all blew through and left it, we all went back too. Yeah those sort of incidents happened quite often which sort of break up the party a bit, time spent.

**What other close calls did you have in England?**

Oh that was about it I think in England we were pretty;

27:00 there wasn't much that we had in England, they were mainly bombers that came over we didn't, we went along the coast but there was no fighting or shelling. It was pretty quiet compared to what we got when we moved over in the Middle East, it was pleasant, very pleasant in England and we had to go cross

27:30 one side of England to the other to get onto the boat and come out. We went from Colchester over to Newport which is on the other side of the coast, on the eastern side I suppose it is, the eastern side of England, near Scotland and Ireland, that side. And then we left there and caught the boat and came out to the Middle East, we had a little boat, it was only a little, horrible little boat it was but we got to South Africa.

28:00 We had leave there, South Africa and that was amusing, we had a day's leave there, we were only there for about 3 days. The smaller boats could get in, the bigger ones can't because they were too big and the smaller ones would get in to refuel, they couldn't carry as much as the bigger ones. So we got off at the wharf and that's when we

28:30 went down and got a rickshaw into the town and then we got there and we were walking down the street and there was big building, probably I found about 3 storeys, it was a big sort of a warehouse and the 3rd storey had all women in there typing, old fashioned typing. And we just had to talk to a bloke down the bottom about something or rather and that

29:00 was the 3 of us, Simo wasn't there then it was Perky, Ricky and I. And we could hear all these typewriters, thinking, "What's that noise up top?" We didn't know it was typewriters. He said, "It's typewriters." "How many women you got up there?" "It's full." I said, "You're kidding?" So we go up, go up and have a look, go up and have a look all right and all the typewriter stopped, absolutely stopped. And then

29:30 some of them come up to us and by this time they were all talking to us and we had a cup of tea, they made us a cup of tea, something to drink and something to eat and we stayed there for about an hour or more. And there again see, and one lady, in Durban, yeah Durban, one lady I've got an old book there, one lady gave me this book about the 1914 to 1940

30:00 and it was about Australians travelling through and she was an old lady and she remember the first lot that went through. The First World War diggers [soldiers] and the Second World War diggers, she gave me that book, I'll show it to you. Anyhow that was what happened there and we walked out, I got a photo of one of the girls there, had a photo taken with her, the 3 of us you know, photos. And then we went up and had a look at the gardens and

30:30 didn't have a lot of time there, had a good look around and then the thing that amazed us there was they've got monkeys, little monkeys. I don't know how many there were but you'd see them everywhere you went there these little monkeys that you had to keep your eyes on because they were, they could walk along and put their hand in your pocket without you knowing it. Amazing and if you had a watch or anything in your pocket it would be gone, and you had to tie your hat down

31:00 because that would go, anything at all they'd, they'd be walking down and they'd be on your arm on your head before you knew it. But gees they were fascinating, whether they've still got them there, but boy they were quick, yeah these little monkeys, only little fellows. So when we went back and got onto our boat and we headed to Port Said then, we landed there. Stayed there for, oh we got off there and this

31:30 is the first time now that we've started talking about the Arabs, totally totally different to what we'd been used to, or what we'd been involved in in England and Scotland. And we got on a train it took us to Palestine,

32:00 it must be the worst train I've ever been on and it's a short wheel base thing and it shook you around, I don't think you could get as shook up if you were stuck in a washing machine any more. God it was rough, so we had all this journey to go back to Palestine and then we made our camp there in Palestine. And we were

32:30 there for, well I don't know how long we were there for, until we got all ready and then we, we became the 9th Division after that, we were an independent sort of a mob and we then became the 9th Division and not the 6th Division as we were. We were the 9th Division now so we went up and there we got our trucks and

33:00 etc., etc., and then we went up, back through Egypt. This must have been.....January.....January in England, February, must have been February or March sometime, it must have been March I reckon, late February March somewhere. And then we had, we went up,

33:30 going up to the desert to take over from the 6th Division and they were coming back. So we went up there and all the little towns on the way, we started to talk about the wogs then.

**So on the ship over to the Middle East what did they tell you about the Arabs?**

Not much at all, no on the ship coming back from England,

34:00 no nothing, just told us we'd be landing there and we didn't know a thing until we got to Palestine, camped there and then. No anything, we had to learn ourselves about the Arabs. You get a book but you couldn't understand the book, and the moneys and things we learnt that quite good, you had to. But no

34:30 we didn't learn much about that. On this particular trip we learnt more when we came back and stayed longer. See we were in Palestine for 3 different, 3 different stations. We first went there from England then we came back after Tobruk, we were in there and then after Alamein we were back there for quite a few weeks before we packed up to come back

35:00 to Australia. So we re-visited Palestine 3 times, that amounted to quite a lot of days.

**And what did you think the first time you saw Palestine?**

Well Egypt was something that took me back to the biblical days where you've got the...

35:30 Oh God, come on Jim... The... What's the.... I've got to think, the Nile, the Nile. Then you had the... Oh....

**Pyramids?**

Pyramids, you saw them from a distance then, but we saw the Nile as they used to do

36:00 in the olden days, and they still did it then, was they have a track along the Nile and they pull these barges up the Nile with people and we couldn't understand it at all. And they'd pull them along and then you had these boats with a big sails on them out a bit further and they were all sort of loaded down, and some of them would have to be pulled along. I don't know whether it was shallow water or they can't get up there, I don't know.

36:30 And then the donkeys, I felt so sorry for the donkeys, God the things they put on the donkey's back is amazing. And then the camels of course they, they just overload them to blazers, it's fascinating to see how much they put on these animals. So then of course we went by train and we went past Beersheba, Beersheba is the town that the Australians had their Light Horse Charge [famous World War 1 incident],

37:00 charged the Turks at Beersheba and there's a cemetery there with all the diggers' death signs on it, how many died there and all this sort of stuff. We went through that and we finished up in Palestine which is mainly desert sort of country but then when we got to... Can't remember now, we got to Palestine...

37:30 along the coast all along there is orchard, very lovely country when you get over so many miles towards the hills, well that's all desert but along the coast where we were we were camped amongst orchards and vines and things like that. Palestine very nice place, you had to watch the Arabs, some of them, cause they'd

38:00 take you for a ride. And they were, it's a country of, as we learnt about Arabs all through the Middle East, all through the Middle East, Cairo right through to, a lot of brothels. And we

38:30 were taught that, "Don't go near them because there's so much diseases around and you don't know who's got it." I was just, what was I? 20....20, 21, I was young, I never, it's a funny thing I should say this at that age I didn't know what sex was,

39:00 at 21 today they got it at 15, that's how stupid the world's gone. And then I said to one of the fellows that knew all about the Middle East, I said, "Tell me why so many people, kids, got white eyes?" Got real blobs, white eyes, and that's through syphilis and gonorrhoea and that's what happens to

39:30 people that get stuffed around the place. I said, "Is that a fact?" and he said, "Yeah," and I said, "That's the fix for me," that fixed me. And as much as I would have liked to but I didn't, cause I didn't want to have, I didn't want to have this look in their eyes and it's horrible when you see them like that, little kids and that that have been born with it. But all the time I spent in Palestine, which is quite some time

- 40:00 and in Egypt and in Syria you can treat them, you don't treat them, your mind seems to take them back to a thousand years and there's no difference. They've gone back thousands of years when you go over there, the buildings are the same the people dress the same,
- 40:30 it's the way they act the same, they've never been, there's no change. Well what you can read in the Bible, well what you can see there today there's no change, it's the same old thing. And when you get around to it you go Jerusalem you see all the old buildings and things. I don't know how long Jerusalem is and all those churches they've got there, I don't know how old they are but they go back to the biblical days
- 41:00 and that's how people are. This is the way, my view of it all is, they had no modernisation there, they still walking around with camels and horses and goats and all dressed up and you can't see their faces, I mean that's the religion but there's no modern trend in it all. There houses are still the same, the modern houses today, why they build houses today with little tiny windows
- 41:30 nothing for the breeze to go through or anything like that. And they've got all these citadels, citadels... what do they call, that's not right, big round concrete buildings. And you go into them, not always, you go into them and they've got all these little pokey rooms and seats sitting all around, it's difficult for people like us to go there
- 42:00 and understand.....

## Tape 6

00:41 **We're rolling so tell me about.....?**

Easter Monday is in April isn't it? Well we would have been Easter, April, January, February, we would have got

01:00 back in Palestine about March from England, early March and we would have been up in Tobruk about the end of March. So it's all summer time in the desert, I think, I'm not quite sure if it's winter or summer at that time of the year, I don't know. But anyway.

**And what did you know about Tobruk before you went?**

01:30 Never had a clue, the only clue we had was that the 6th Division had gone through and gone right up to Benghazi, that's right up the top of Libya. And we knew the 6th Division were up there so that's all we knew and we were on our way up there, the 6th Division, part of the 6th Division ASC was on it's way up there.

02:00 That's coming back from England and 6th Division was pulling out to go to Greece and the 9th Division took complete control of the situations along the Libya coast. And we got as far as Tobruk, our section and that's when we were there,

02:30 when the run back from Benghazi started and we were then in Tobruk until November.

**And when was it do you think that you felt personally that you were really part of the war?**

I think that was going up, going up to Tobruk and passing all the little towns on the way where the Italians

03:00 and the enemy, which mainly Italians at the time left all their trucks in the valleys to be burnt, they were all burnt out and there was a lot of them, and that was the first time we thought, "Well this is war now," that we saw the enemy trucks and all guns and everything that they'd left behind. Stores of ammunition that we weren't game to go near in case it was bugged, so we

03:30 had to watch what we were doing otherwise we could have got blown up. So that was right up until we got into Tobruk. When we got into Tobruk we were guards on roughly around 60 to 70 thousand Italians. And we were there and, until probably about a month or so

04:00 for them to be disposed of by boat, they were taken out by boat. And then in Easter Monday the Germans launched their big attack and we were then a part of ASC which had no further work to do in the ASC section we

04:30 were reinforcements and infantry to the 15th Battalion. And it was at this stage that the Germans decided to put their major attack on the Australian troops around Tobruk. On Easter Monday 1941 we were attacked by German Infantry and tanks,

05:00 shells bothered us a little, the aircraft were strafing and bombing and it made a place that nobody really wanted to be in but we could not get out of it, we were there, there was no way out so we had to put up with it. But on the day as it proceeded we were starting to get on top, we had tanks

- 05:30 shooting at us, we were in, disbursed between artillery guns for their protection if any infantry was to come through. And our artillery were shooting open sights at 800 yards to tanks which is not the norm, there's an artillery 25 pounders were blowing them to billy oh.
- 06:00 They too were shelling us at a very close range and on one occasion when we had an Italian dunny can they used and it consisted of tins, roughly about 4 gallon tins that we knew them of, stuck on top of one another full of dirt. It would be probably
- 06:30 about 10 feet square and as they done their business so would the dung beetles, which are quite large and hundreds of them, would take then down into their burrows, or wherever and it was always seemed to be a clean sort of a dunny to have around. But we never used it as a shelter or anything because it stunk.
- 07:00 When tanks popped up at a very close range to us and killed 2 of our artillery guns, put them out of action, we then decided we'd better jump in this dunny can for protection. Which roughly about 6 of us did and they, the Italian tank would have been probably
- 07:30 about 6, 700 yards away, which is not long, or not far where you've got a gun that's capable of shooting much further. But the funny part about it was I popped me head up to see where this tank was and I could see a dust popping up, and what was happening was, the artillery
- 08:00 shell that it was firing was bouncing along the ground, it got out of range as far as the power of that bullet and it started to loose its range and to finish off with the last few hundred yards or so it would just bounce along the desert and just every time it bounced it caused a little dust. And I ducked me head and said to Perky, "Duck your bloody head. It's going to hit us." Well it took the
- 08:30 side out of our, out of the Italian dunny, took the side out and there was dust and God knows what. So when it come good we were all alive and we were very thankful that dunny can, cause we got up and walked away. But then on the day what the Germans did they'd come in with their tanks, which on this occasion it happened, and their tanks are full of infantry
- 09:00 and then when they get into a certain distance they'd pop out and dig themselves in, which happened. And when it was all over, as far as the tanks were concerned, the artillery eased up, we still had bombers and strafers coming in and we have some photos here of some of the planes shot down. But there was too many of them
- 09:30 to shoot them all down but we scared them a bit and things calmed down pretty well. But then our Bren guns carried out a little roam around the place to see what was happening a little further out and they come under fire, rifle fire, machine gun fire. And on top of the hill they found 105 Germans all dressed up, all dug in and they were popping at
- 10:00 us. So they were surrounded and then they were marched into our compound where we were and we then were their guards. And it was unbelievable for us to see the way we were dressed, shoddy old dirty old clothes that hadn't been washed for weeks, and they in their beautifully dressed equipment, their clothes are spotless. And to think that we got them in a compound there,
- 10:30 there was 105 of them. So I said to one I said, "So how do you like being caged up?" and he could talk English this fellow and he looked at me and he says, "Ha don't worry, we won't be here long, it will be you." And I walked away and I thought, "You bastards might be right too," because we never had a clue what was going to happen, that's our first enemy encounter, but it didn't turn out that way. But when the dust had cleared
- 11:00 we found that we had artillery and anti tank guns knocked out, 36 tanks, now that was a big heap and we felt that we won the day, we had some killed, sure but the Germans suffered heavily and they only ever had one more attack that was, you could call an attack after that the whole time we were there. And I thought that was a good indication that
- 11:30 we could control them from then on, which we did until we handed over in, late in November. But in the meantime from then on where we were then, we the ASC reinforcements went up to the 15th Battalion and this was after Easter. Calmed down it was just an ordinary shelling and bombing and there was nothing to get bombed,
- 12:00 7 or 8, 10 times a day. We got used to that and we were that good that we could see a bomber coming in and we could then, we would say to him up there, "Not yet mate, not yet, now let them go" and that would miss us. We got so used to knowing, when we knew that they were going to land on us we'd go for cover, we had it pretty well sorted out bar.....

**Well can you tell us how**

- 12:30 **could you tell?**

Well you tell by the way it comes out of the plane and they never go straight down, a bomb, it goes out in a sort of a.....bow like sort of a bomb, how would you explain that? It would have a little bit of a hook on it as it leaves the plane and then

- 13:00 you can have a quick look, cause you haven't got long, and you could see that that bomber is gonna drop them over your head. Now if he dropped them 70, 80, 100 yards further back that bomb would be starting to drop and not got a sort of a bow in it as a bomb come out, it's the flight of the aeroplane that makes that bomb go out in front of it sort of altitude,
- 13:30 not straight down and that gives you some idea. But there was a time where Perky and I just standing around soaking up the sun I suppose you could say and then a bomber came over and he let his bombs go and we said, "God, geez, quick," and we jumped in our pit, we had a little pit with a
- 14:00 old bits of timber from buildings covered over and that sort of stuff. And that bomb landed oh probably 8 or 9, 10 feet away, it wasn't a big one thank goodness and it buried us, we thought we were gone that day. It buried us and our mates came and dug us out. But that's the only time that a bomb got close to us. But then.....

**Well can you just tell me a bit more**

- 14:30 **about that first incident when you were buried?**

Well the first thing you think of is that your body feels good, no aches no pains or anything like that. And you move your body around a bit to know that you can still handle it, it's still stuck to you, your head's not loose, it's still there so from then on you think, "It's not so bad." And then if you can you

- 15:00 always talk to your mate and say, "You all right?" or something like that. But by the time the other fellows saw us, just come and dug us out, we weren't down far but you see we could have been unconscious or anything could have happened, and we would not have known. But yeah we got out of that one quite good.

**And where was your pit positioned?**

Hmm pit?

**Yeah the?**

Oh we'd probably be a mile

- 15:30 and a quarter from the town itself in the outskirts of the town. See what happens there is you only, you've only got a hole in the ground, that's all you've got, the deeper the hole the better, but not always, but that's the way it is and you have a bit of a cover over it, with a bit of Hessian or bag or whatever, and that's the way you lived.

- 16:00 And that's how thousands of us lived, just under a hunk of dirt and if you're lucky you could go for a swim, if you got around to it in your time. You were relieved and you go up and perhaps have a swim once in 3 weeks. But everybody had the same smell, if that same bloke popped up now smelling like that, you'd kick him out cause everybody was the same you didn't notice it.

**And the day that that bomb went off**

- 16:30 **and buried you in your pit, how, do you recall how loud the bomb sounded?**

Oh there's certain different bombs, they've got bombs that will go deep, the size of the different bombs have got a different noise about them. You've got 'scatter bombs' they call them, they can explode, hit the ground and explode or explode where they want them coming down, if

- 17:00 they want them. If there flying a thousand feet they can set that off to go for 900 feet above you, scatter you, there's all kinds of bombs. But depending what a bomb hits it would be the cause of the loud of the noise whatever hit it. Now on this few days after Easter Monday we had no air protection, none whatsoever

- 17:30 and we would get strafed, these Germans would come over and play games with us and strafe. We had a pit, not a pit, trench, slit trench dug where we could jump into and it was on a right angle, right angle because if there coming one way you get in the opposite, so as you've got the

- 18:00 wall facing you, not long ways, you get me. Well this bloke was up there and he was a Messerschmitt 109, that's a single engine Messerschmitt fighter and he had a game with us. He'd dive along the ground, cause we had nothing to shoot them down with only a big ack-acks and if they were off line or they were shooting somebody in the high or bombers coming over at the same time these blokes used to play with us. They'd shoot us

- 18:30 along this trench this way and we'd run around this way, and he'd do a bloody circle and come back and go this way so we'd run around this way. He must of got a lot of fun out of that, cause we didn't, but that happens. And then there's an Italian twin plane, what the hell he was doing there I don't know, they called them something else, I can't think of the name now. But they had the old twin wing plane, old type, don't know what he did, why

- 19:00 he came over, but this happens. And he done a circle and when we got up close to him with our shot guns, with our bullets, we were shooting at him, he done a flip like that (indicates), a loop, and I felt so

sorry for this bloke, if I could of got out and dug some dirt from him underneath he would have made a clean circle, but he didn't he ran out of ground and course he plonked down, I've got a photo of that, quite interesting. And these are the sort of things, every now and again

- 19:30 something like that, no reason but they do, they pop up. And then of course what happened we as foot-sloggers we were going to go up the front, we had to walk up there, and they've got a, the Germans had a plane they called 'the Milkman', it's only a little plane. And it used to fly outside of our range of big guns, we had some big ack-acks, 3.7
- 20:00 they were big guns, but they kept out of that range and they just circled our area, or air where they could without the range of guns. And they used to spy on us and probably telephone it back. And this bloke, called the Milkman, and we were going up the front and he must of saw us and he got the artillery too, and we huddled around an old fence, there'd be probably 15 of us.
- 20:30 We haven't got to the front yet, to go to the foot-sloggers department, and I reckon we would have had about 60, 70 shells, and I'm pretty sure they were out of a tank, shot around us. How we didn't get hit nobody knows, it was absolutely amazing and everyone came over; they had to hit us, but we were lucky we didn't get shot there.
- 21:00 So then we went on our way, cause when you hear a shell you know your not going to get hurt because they've gone past you, it's the one that you don't hear is the one that knocks ya. So we were split up then into 3 different sections, oh no Ricky and I were in the, Perky went up, they took him away and put him in another section. And we were in the front line then, dug into a hole, sandbags and the barb wire was just probably
- 21:30 20 or 30 yards in front of us. Now we never had an instruction of anything about foot-sloggers or their action or anything, nothing whatsoever. So the night came and they were going out on a recci [reconnaissance], you've got 2 different people, you've got people that go out on a recci, that's "Keep out of fights but have a good look around and try and get information." Then you've got a fighting patrol,
- 22:00 a fighting goes out looking for anybody to shoot up. And there the 2 that are used the most, and this night we were going out on a recci, there was possibly about 8 of us. And never been out in the front line or handled a rifle, I had 5 shots out of a rifle, that's all the shot I'd had up until this time. And they said, "How
- 22:30 you feel?" I said, "I don't know, I'm not bloody happy about this lot." He said, "Oh hang on," so he goes and gets something for us to drink. We took a glass of this, well that was about the worst thing that I'd done because I grew that big that I could walk into a tank and turn it over, I was so powerful. And guess what they did in the First World War, if they'd want to go over the top they'd fill them up with this,
- 23:00 oh what do they call it?.....gee whiz, certain wine. And all it does inside them, they'd grow up so big inside that you go and charge anybody. So I had this and I went out there and what we do there is, you're in a V and you walk along and you drop down every now and again, another 7 or 8 or 10 steps you drop down to get your eyes on the horizon to see if there's anybody
- 23:30 coming. And that's what we did all night for about 2½ hours. And I came back and I wasn't very happy about it, nothing happened. So then I think I was moved to another one, another section that was bigger and closer to no mans land. Where you have your boundaries and
- 24:00 to the German's fence, boundaries, that's no-man's land. It can vary from, you can hear them talking for miles, just depends on the circumstances, the hills and the valleys where they are. But when I got to this one, I went there because one bloke was shot and I had to take over from him. And this is how fate can alter things in life, this bloke said to me,
- 24:30 they had 3 little sections to sleep in, 2 to a man and they had a round circle where they had a machine gun and the rest built up with sandbags. And then as I walked up and the corporal in charge he said, "You're from South Australia?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well there's a South Australian out there now
- 25:00 on the listening post, you can go with him if you like and I'll ask the other bloke to move over cause he's a Queenslander and he'll be with his mate." I said, "No don't worry about it, forget it," I said, "I'll just go along, I'll go with this bloke from Queensland." So that was the way it was and in the morning a mortar come along and went in and killed the 2 of them. Now
- 25:30 if I'd have gone in there I wouldn't be here, that's how it happened. The idea then was that we had to go out 100, sometimes a 150 yards, and you have a white string, white piece of tape and you go out and you've got to, and you lay there just on the ground listening and there's Italians, I don't know how far they were, I don't know could be 100 yards just over the hill and they were singing, you could hear them singing and talking in Italian,
- 26:00 it was quite interesting if you could understand what they were talking about. So this occasion, and I've got a string too and that's got a bell on it. So you lay out there for 2 hours and if you ever thought anything was easy, boy that's the hardest thing I've ever bloody had to do, just lay there for 2 hours just looking around to see if there's anything coming and if it had you've got to ring the bell, I've forgotten now how many times. And then you change

- 26:30 over of course. And that was at, and then probably a few days later there going to go out on a fighting patrol, I thought, "Oh God, a fighting patrol." So you're all armed and there would be most likely about 12 of us, 12 or 15, I think about 12,
- 27:00 and I was made a 'getaway man', so that happens if there's a blue on [a fight] I've got to get away, come back and tell. But you see it's all mined around the place and you've got to be careful. So on this occasion you always have 2 engineers that go out first and they test the ground and leave a white tape and you follow that. Oh it just so happened that the bloke in front of me, come from New South Wales, and
- 27:30 his name was Scott, same as mine, and we would be probably 7 or 800 yards out and he stepped on a mine. You've got 2 sides of a mine, you've got 1 that will blow straight out from the ground and then you've got another one that will blow up and it will go again. Well that's the one that went, blew up, he stepped on it and I had to be exactly behind him, no wider
- 28:00 no width, no this side, actually straight behind him for some un... God knows reason. And the mine went off, he stepped on a mine then it comes up, jumping jacks they call them, and it went up again about 3 foot and went again like that, and I copped it in the head and it knocked me tin hat off. And I had an experience I've never ever
- 28:30 heard anything like it unless you've killed a pig, and you kill a pig and if you've killed a pig well you'll know how they scream, well this is how this scream was, the bloke in front of me. And then he gurgled, the worst thing I've ever heard when he gurgled and you could hear him gurgling and I thought, "Christ," and I saw the blob out there and I reached to get me tin hat and it was all sticky, and it wasn't mine there was half a bloody head in it, as I found out after. And
- 29:00 then at that precise time I had blood running down me head, down the back of me neck, and I grabbed me head to see whether it was here, me head was right and then in a second I thought, "Gee, that poor bugger." But there was 4 in front got killed too and that mine went that way and never went back, had it gone back, but for some reason he must of stopped the lot and it went forward. So I was in hospital, they took me out to hospital and,
- 29:30 until, oh about a week or so later, and I went back and they put me in another section. And this section, much, much better for me anyway because it was well sandbagged. So in a couple of days time they called me back to the ASC because somebody got
- 30:00 knocked off and they were short of drivers so then I went back driving. Changing over troops and so on.

**Well just going back to that moment that the mine went off, I can't imagine what that must have been like, that experience. What happens to your body in that moment?**

Well

- 30:30 you're just so surprised and shocked, but at the same time it was, it was expected, you always expected that maybe one day it would be you, and that's the sort of life it was. It's, the thing is I'm so sorry the bloke got killed, so sorry, the ones I'm more or less sorry for
- 31:00 in a round about way, which is cock eyed, is the ones that wounded and you're trying to get him back, you're trying to get this bloke back, and a mate and I put our guns each side of us and he had one and I had 2, I carried them. And we put this bloke over, between 2 guns, he was, we had behind, he had his 2 hands on 2 guns and I had my hand on 2 guns, one each gun,
- 31:30 and we laid this bloke across it, and he was crook, he was legs was all bleeding and twisting about, he was still alive and he could still talk a bit. And we were trying to carry him in and he'd slip down, now we'd have to pick up and put him back and the bloke that was killed was killed, we couldn't do anything for him but we tried to get this bloke back and eventually we got him back and he survived but he had his leg blown off, or hanging. And there the sort of things that
- 32:00 are harder, you're dead, your dead - that's it, but when you want to get that wounded bloke back so he can live and that's the hard part about it. And then you say to yourself, "Geez, that could have been me," and you never stop worrying and you never stop thinking, and even to this day how come I survived when it's been so close to me and that blokes killed alongside of me, and that's very difficult
- 32:30 to work out. And you never succeed in having that clear of your mind because it could have been him, both Scott's too, didn't know him he came from Queensland. But that's the sort of thing that happens, I don't know....

**It is very very inexplicable and soldiers often talk about luck?**

Yes I suppose

- 33:00 you call it luck, I don't know what luck is any more, I think it's just a word we use for some other expression that I can not fulfil.

**Well how much do you think you went into shock when that mine went off and killed the 4 men?**

Oh your head, my head wasn't mine, it was full of somebody else's head or something,

33:30 a cloud or something, I didn't have much feeling in it, I didn't, and you sort of had trouble with your eyes, you sort of dumb a bit. You could talk, whether you was talking clearly I don't know but others understood. But you didn't talk, no words just spoken just, "Help this, help that," it was, everybody was dumbfounded when that happened, because we weren't expected,

34:00 and if it was expected it would probably be different. But then again you see that was that and I went back to the transport and then one day I was called they had a, this is only about a fortnight before we were ready to pack up. I was called out with Perky, 2 trucks, this was early morning, early morning, just broken day,

34:30 we called out and we had to go out to this, where they had a battle. Now I think there was 27 killed, I've got it in my book, I think 27 killed and I'm not sure if it was 100 all told or another 80 or something like that wounded. And we went out and

35:00 they all standing around and these are the sort of things you can never understand. You've got our padre, you've got the German padre, you've got German and our blokes swapping cigarettes, talking and the other poor buggers are picking up their bits and pieces from these blokes that are all blown to pieces. And I've seen us, could have been me with

35:30 a half a head, no head, arms, guts, all just thrown in the back of a bloody truck, like sheep, just thrown in. And then you take them to the, to where there going to be buried. And that's the sort of thing that you get, you don't get used to it but it's a thing that you've got to do and I suppose you don't want to do it and it's a hell of a shock to you.

36:00 But it's an accepted fact that there's a war on and this is going to happen to some people but when you've got that many and you've got to bring them back and just thrown them in the back of a truck, like that it was very criminal when you think about it, but that's the way it had to be. So being in the ASC you come up with all sorts of jobs to do.

#### **Well just going back to**

36:30 **the day that you were injured on the back of the head, what did you do when you were blown up, did you fall to the ground and?**

Yeah, oh yes as soon as any explosion is you go to the ground as quick as you can because that's the safest way to be. You don't stand up because you're subject to all sorts of thing, but when your flat on the ground, you've

37:00 got a bit more protection. But it didn't last long, you didn't stay long, because I wanted to get up to see what was going on and whose crook, cause you didn't know.

#### **And how long after the mine going off could you move to safety?**

Oh we just had to turn around and pick ourselves up as quick as we can because what happens there you see the Fritzes knew we were there then and they,

37:30 then they start open up with machine guns, so, and that was our problem too, coming back with machine guns. Yeah that sort of stuff was, I don't know whether, if I was in the infantry to start with and trained more and had more experience of what was expected, but I never, 5 shots out of a bloody rifle, that's all I ever had.

38:00 And that scared hell out of me because it used to belt into me shoulder, big .303s that we had. And that's another thing that I will never forget is the fact that why was it that we, the Australians, were sent to war with an old gun that the First World War people had it and we were fighting Fritzes that had modern automatic bloody guns. A lot of our Australians

38:30 today would have been home here if we'd have had the same equipment as they had, but no we had to put up with those old guns and that was the, that was something I'll ever forgive politicians for, allowing that to happen, should never have happened but there you are that's what does. And you can't fight a war where you've got a bloke, well we finished up with some Bren guns that come out from England, that had 30 shots, you could pull the trigger and 30 shots you had,

39:00 with a gun like they gave us you've got to go that one shot, another shot, by the time you get loaded up and you've got someone in the gun your one shot if you don't get him then you've got to reload and you've got 10 and your out. You can have a bloody bloke sitting there with 30 shots, some of them more, some of them 100. So that was wrong but that's the way it was,

39:30 the way it went. And then we come out and then we, what else happened in Tobruk, where we got out and then.....

#### **Well you did spend 8 or 9 months in Tobruk, that's quite a long time?**

Long time, particular with the tucker that we were eating, that's what bought it on, we

- 40:00 had to get out because of the food that we were eating, there's was nothing much just bully beef and biscuits and that sort of stuff. Water was a problem. You'd have a, I suppose about a litre and a half of water, and you couldn't wash, you might be lucky if you cleaned your teeth, the rest was drinking, but you had to drink, it gets hot over there. So those sort of thing
- 40:30 you had to go by until we got out and then of course we had to go back to, that's about what happened in Tobruk, we handed over, didn't last long and it was captured. But then we went to.....

**Well we might actually stop there and change the tape, cause it would be good to talk more about the general living conditions in Tobruk and the.....**

## Tape 7

- 00:31 **Before we go further into Tobruk I just want to go back to when you were guarding the POW's [Prisoners of War] and that was quite a big camp, which would have been quite a task for you I'm sure. Did you use any of the POW's as batmans?**

Yeah, they used to get our dinner for us and clean our rifle for us, do anything we wanted

- 01:00 they'd help us, not suppose to but they did. The Italians didn't want to fight, they were pushed into by the Fritzes and they didn't want to fight. But when we got rid of them in Tobruk of course that was it and we were mainly fighting Germans from then on. But there's another story after El Alamein about Italians

- 01:30 but we haven't got to Alamein yet.

**No, no were still in Tobruk. It's interesting that you should say that the Italians didn't want to participate in the war and they were being forced by the Germans and being in this camp with the Germans. Did you notice any animosity or friction between the two?**

Oh we wouldn't, because we wouldn't see the two together, see we never got that far, we'd see the, we didn't capture many Germans.

- 02:00 But Italians they just surrendered, you could not get a German to clean your bloody rifle or anything like that no way, but we never caught many Germans, there weren't a lot caught because they came and when we chased them back up to Benghazi we weren't there,

- 02:30 we stopped at Alamein and we were there because when they got up there the British and the Americans done them, that's where they got caught up there. But didn't, never captured many Italians, Germans. So we only caught those 105 originally that we caught at Tobruk.

**And in Tobruk you were now in the rifle section, which is something that you didn't want to do**

- 03:00 **when you enlisted. How did, what kept you going, what made you stay a part of the war?**

cause of me mates, that's all, I couldn't get out of it. And then, you, when you've got mates that are mates there's nothing you would do to hurt them, you are one of them and they decide to do this, well you go

- 03:30 along and that's it. You can't be on your own where you've got decent people, decent mates that would stick up for you so you go with them. You never leave them unless you want to do the dirty on them or something like that, you'd never leave them.

**And how did you support each other through the tough times?**

Well there's, you just keep going

- 04:00 with them, there's not much support it's a matter of looking after one another. I can't explain it other than that, "He's like me and he thinks of me as I think of him" and that sews a partnership up. But that's the way it is and when you're fighting, every person that's out there fighting, and could be knocked off or injured

- 04:30 is all your mates, there all mates of the same, there's no better or older, younger mates, there all the same when their fighting. But when it's all over you have your little group of mates that you associate with much more than the others, but there all mates when it comes to a sticky bit, when it comes to something sticky.

**And was Simo and Perky and Ricky with you throughout Tobruk?**

Yeah, yeah,

- 05:00 well Ricky was unfortunate, he got shot, I think he got shot by a sniper and I think he probably was, he was the type of fellow that would take a risk unnecessarily. I think he was having a shot at somebody and a sniper got him first and a bullet hit him in the top of his shoulder blade and ricocheted into his liver, or lung, lung and he died of wounds.

05:30 But I think that's what would of happened but I never really found out, cause he was that type of a fellow.

**Where were you when he got shot?**

I was, would be a couple of mile away I suppose in another section.

**And how did you find out?**

Through our ASC Headquarters because we were still ASC, we were only on loan to the Infantry and

06:00 anything that happened our officer would take over, normally our officers if anybody was killed they'd write a little letter to their parents, send home, tell them what happened and whatever was necessary. Oh yeah we'd soon find out, hmm.

**So what did you do as soon as you, when you found out that Ricky had been shot?**

Oh nothing we could do, we went to the, Perky

06:30 and I we went to the cemetery and had a look around and then some of the boys got stuff from the old houses and things that had blew up and made a little memorial for him, on his grave, and of course that would be all wiped out after we'd left, when the war was finished and then that would all go back to the normal war service graves, just with the cross and whatever,

07:00 that's what would be there now.

**Can you describe for me Ricky's grave that you built?**

Well you just go up to a house, lot of houses around and picked up some tiles or steel or whatever you want. And then keeping in mind where you've got say, just say

07:30 I'm not quite sure now, say you've got a thousand members in your unit, of all different kinds of professionals, whatever they may have been. You always find somebody that can come along and build, if he can't your mate would have to and so on. Then in that time if they can have it, whoever they are they can have it made without much trouble. But in

08:00 the end they would be pulled down, there was 3 of them, there was him and Lowry and another friend of mine, they all got them. But then again you see I feel sorry for blokes that had, cause he's only got a stick there until they get a little cross. A lot of people don't want to make it that way, they want to wait until it's finished

08:30 and everybody's in the same, that's the way it was.

**So when you built Ricky a grave did you have a ceremony or anything to.....?**

Hmm?

**Did you do anything to mark his passing?**

No nothing we could do. Only thing you do is you go up there and see him and say a few words, that's all you can do. You've got to keep in mind that while your doing that

09:00 their burying 4 or 5 more down the road, it just goes on all day. I think we had roughly about a thousand troops buried in that 9 months that we were there, just about 1000. And I think one of the worst parts of it, sure loosing Rick, but was when Perky and I got on the boat to go away and sat down and not a word, never spoke a bloody word,

09:30 for a lot of miles I suppose. Then I just patted him and said, "Come on Perky," I said, "We'd better think of something else." And I knew that he'd be thinking of Ricky, cause we went in with 4 and come out with 3. And God, we could of come out with none, 1, 3 or 4, you wouldn't know. I suppose that's the way you look at it, I don't know.

**And you were carrying your Bible that your mother**

10:00 **had given you at this stage, what was your faith, was your faith helping you through this?**

Well I come from a fairly religious family and my mother was religious and we used to go to Sunday School quite a bit,

10:30 and when I got older I was a Knight of the Methodist church, so there was something inside of me and I don't know what it was, I wouldn't have a clue, but there was some sort of a contact there with something and I can never tell you what it was. And then when I left, my mother gave me this Bible and a black cat

11:00 and she was very religious. And then having the First World War she lost a brother in France, his name was Jamie and when I said goodbye to her, she

- 11:30 said, "God will look after you Jim." Yeah so he must of, hmm. So that's the way it was and I carried that Bible, it was a nuisance at times I can tell you, but I never let it out of my sight and after all those
- 12:00 years I bought it home, gave it to her back and then when she died I got it again, it's stuck out there. And I don't know, it's something I do not know and I can't understand it, truthfully I wouldn't know. But then every night I was away over there I used to have a little prayer, and I think
- 12:30 something somewhere I got the benefit of that, but I don't know, wouldn't have a clue but I did it cause I thought I don't want to not do it so I kept doing it right throughout those vicious days of war, Alamein and right through there and up in the islands. It was just that little prayer and I was thinking of my mother most of the time,
- 13:00 cause I think she was doing a lot of praying. But that, wouldn't have a clue but that's what happened anyway and I've been around a long time since so I guess there's something there cause I'm 94 now and I'm still going, oh 94, 84, Christ you are going stupid, 94
- 13:30 Christ, my Dad he died at 82, no sorry 82.

**Well just Tobruk would have been very harsh conditions and you mentioned before having to go without water. I mean what did you do to sustain yourself during the harsh conditions?**

That's all you could do, just wait

- 14:00 until the supplies came through to you and keeping in mind that was a big job, getting supplies to the front line. And you only had, see where we were in the front line you couldn't stand up during the day, you could not get out of that hole during the day,
- 14:30 because the moment you got out of it you'd cope a mortar or a shell or something cause they know you're there. There was some, and then when it got dark, and darkness over there was quite light compared to what it is here, darkness is dark here over there it's not as dark you can see more. And you come out of your hole
- 15:00 when it's dark and you have a feed, whatever they bring up to you, usually bully beef and biscuits or, that's about all I can remember, we got so used to chewing up anything you could get. Vegetables things like that you never got, fruit or anything like that. So that's what it was but the hardest thing, the hardest thing
- 15:30 that I would say you had to do with the war was using your bowels, you could have a piddle, you could do that in a bottle or something, but you try and lay in a hole and empty your bowels. I'll tell you what it's a very very difficult thing to do, and you can't stand up, you can't get out to do it so you try and work your body as far as you could do it
- 16:00 of a night time, if your lucky. But if it happens during the day, that's trouble, it's difficult and it changes a person a lot because it's against his principle, or against his nature, it's against everything you've been taught to lay there and you might have a mate alongside of you, you've just got to shut off. That was the hardest thing that I found, it's a necessity,
- 16:30 but that's the way it is, you don't hear about those things, but that's the way it was. So that's what you do when you get right up close to the war and you can't do anything about it. And then there are other areas where, Tobruk the Italians built some decent old forts, fortification right around Tobruk. And I often
- 17:00 wonder why they did it, they were in Libya and they wanted to stay there, I often wonder why - nothing in Libya only dust storms and dust. And they were there and I don't know, really know why they built these huge, they were huge, you could drop a bomb on the roof and it wouldn't hurt you. The concrete was so thick, they had concrete around it and in the front ones, they had these up the front
- 17:30 and at the back another one there and another here, this wouldn't have a tank trap around it, these would have a tank trap around it, like a, if you took the centre out it would make a decent swimming pool. And you could get into one of them and you're safe. The only way you got out of them and the only way they won, took one off us was with a, got up close with a tank and kept shooting until they got a
- 18:00 bloke up there with a flame thrower, and then put a flame thrower through it. And of course, you're up the creek then, you stay in you get burnt, so you had to come out the other way and surrender, we lost one like that but they never got that close after that. But that's the way it was there.

**When you left the hospital after your injury, where did you go from there?**

I went out to the unit where I was in the 15th Battalion

- 18:30 but they gave me another job in another part of where I was, I wasn't out the front line any more. They put me in this place as a, I'd have to take messages to the next troops down, or message you could call it, "a messenger," and that's what I'd have to do. But I'd come back to this place, and this was well built up and it was safe
- 19:00 and the Germans had been in it and they had papers and books, I wish I had read German I would have

known what was going on, I could hear 'Churchill' and all these odd names every now and again, but it was all out in German. Very lonely I was there on me own and all the shells would go over the top and I was happy when I went back to my unit after that, they called me back. So I went back and I was there for a few more,

19:30 about another fortnight, 3 weeks to a month or something, taking the troops up, the infantry up and then bringing them back, the reserves, the ones that want a spell. I was on one load, loading up one load and they get up on the top of the back of the truck and this bloke was talking and I put me hand up and gave him a nod and he said, "What do you want?" I said,

20:00 "How'd you like to be in Berri now?" He said, "Be better than this." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "You're Bob Atkin, aren't you?" He said, "Yeah," and I told him who I was, he used to board with us. And then I got in the truck to drive away and an officer gets in the other side and he started up and he said, "Do you know anything in the ASC about Jim Scott and Jim Simpson?"

20:30 and I said to him, I said, "Who the bloody hell do you think you're talking to?" and it was Peter Nicky come from Berri. So every now and again these things would pop up and change our life a little bit and talk about things, so yeah that popped up. There the sort of interesting things that pop up.

**You also, just going back to when you were in the infantry you mentioned the old, you had weapons from, left over from World War I, how did they cope, how did the weapons cope in the conditions of the**

21:00 **heat and the dust?**

Who?

**The weapons, like how did they handle?**

See what happened was World War I they had so much contact with man to man, well that's no so in this war that we had, there was when you got close enough. But usually you got blasted out with tanks or bombs or strafed. And not so much in Tobruk but in Alamein where we attacked, we used it there, got close to them but

21:30 it was just a different war to the last war and the Second World War, so much different. And we had these old rifles, we shouldn't have had them, but they had stacks of them stowed away.

**So when you were back with the ASC, what were your duties then?**

Oh just driving around

22:00 supply, picking up troops and dropping them off here, and ammunition, distributing ammunition around the place. Anything where they wanted a truck, didn't matter what it was and we would put our trucks about a hundred yards apart, you never ever get close, put one truck close to another because of aircraft. So that's what, we had to play safe all

22:30 the time. And you can't make a mistake if you can avoid it cause then that will cost ya cause....

**Did you see the consequences of trucks travelling too close together?**

Oh yes, in an incident in El Alamein, were in Tobruk now - but are we going to Alamein?

**We can if you, just...?**

Well I think Tobruk is about all I can...

**I just want to know, before we get to El Alamein, how you had your stripe taken away?**

23:00 **from you?**

Well I had a mate, he used to work off and on to my father before he joined up. And I joined up before him and he joined up in the 2nd 48th Battalion and he was in Tobruk, I hadn't seen him up till then, he was in Tobruk

23:30 we didn't even know he was in there. But anyhow out of the blue he comes to our unit, he was a corporal and I still don't know from this day how, he was a corporal in the foot-sloggers, could get a transfer to a place that we were in and our transport. Unknown because you couldn't get out of the infantry, they were always short and they always wanted

24:00 people, why should he come to us when we had to go to them. It surprised me and I still don't know to this day, unless it was cowardice or something I don't know, that happens, cowardice, but he came and he got crook and they bailed him out, he finished up he went back to Palestine sick, I don't know what he was sick for. So he left his kit pack behind

24:30 and he wrote a letter asking me if I would go through his kitbag and anything important to bring it to him, "When you come out and throw the rest away." Well I made a shemozzle of it, I picked up a little gun, this gun was in a box and it was all in pieces and if you didn't know anything about guns you wouldn't know what it was, but it was, I reckon it was a little hand gun, a women's hand gun.

- 25:00 And it's about, oh it would fit in my hand, fit in there and that's how a women's hand, what the hell he wanted it for I do not know, but it's just a little thing all in pieces. So like and idiot I bought it, put it in me bag and forgot all about it and went down, and I'd been speaking to him and I found he was down in Palestine after we come out of Tobruk. I never thought about this thing just forgot all about it. So when we came
- 25:30 to go, and when we went to Alamein, this was after coming out of Tobruk, come out of Tobruk, late 1942. And we went to Alamein in probably, oh I don't know it's in that, June perhaps I don't know, just not quite sure. And I never seen him,
- 26:00 so when I got to Alamein they gave me a stripe, a corporal stripe because I was in charge of the machine gunners. And the day I got it I was called up in front of the beak [judge], I call him beak because he was a, not a very nice major and he accused me of having a gun of the enemy's. I said, "I haven't got a gun of the enemy's."
- 26:30 He said, "Yes you have." I said, "No sir, I haven't got one," and I said, "It don't belong to me," and I told him the story and I said, "I haven't met him and I'm waiting to give it to him." He said, "Well when you walk out of here," he said, "you're back to a private again." So I was a corporal in the morning and I was a private again in the afternoon. So life went on, Pavy's got home and he was in Doors Road and I saw him when I come home from the
- 27:00 Middle East and saw him and I said, "Would you do me a favour?" and he said, "Yeah I can do that." "Would you write to Costello, that's our major, and tell him that that belonged to you and it's no part of my, wasn't any part of my worth whatsoever?" But you know he didn't do it, did he? He didn't do it. So when we were in the islands and we looked like getting ready to come out, the corporal, the orderly room came out
- 27:30 with this box and he said, "Here they're going to give this back to you." I said, "What is it?" They said, "That gun." I said, "Look, I'll tell ya what I'll do with you." I said, "You go and tell that major to do what I think he ought to do with it because it's not mine and I don't want a part of it," and he said, "Never done that." I would have been a sergeant cause people under me at that time they got sergeants and I would have been a sergeant or probably more. That's always crooked on
- 28:00 a person that so close and not having the stomach enough to contact those people and tell them that that wasn't a lie, I told them the truth. But that's what happened and he died since so that finishes that.

#### **So when you left Tobruk where did you go from there?**

- We went back to Palestine. We went back to Palestine and we were in rest then, we were having a rest and we
- 28:30 finished up up at Syria, we went to Syria. But before I go there we had a weeks leave in Tel Aviv, not quite sure now Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, probably Tel Aviv. There would be a thousand jewel shops in Tel Aviv, every inch's a jewel shop and when your dealing with, as we called them wogs, I shouldn't call them wogs I should call them Palestinians I
- 29:00 suppose. But I'm talking army now I'm not talking my civilian life, in civilian life I call them Palestinians, but when you're talking army life it was wogs. And we went in and he's going to buy and engagement ring to send home to my sister, this Simpson. We went about 4 shops and Perky and I, and he's getting so fussy, he didn't really know what to buy then and he didn't know how to take the wogs down, you don't take wogs
- 29:30 down if they say it's a hundred dollars you say, "No it's only 50 I'll give you 50," and that's the sort of business you've got to do, every time you buy anything over there that's what you've got to do. You know bloody well that a hundred dollars is far too much. Finished up with, I said to Simo I said, "Well look we're going over to the pub so when you're finished come over there." He's a tea totaler. So we went to the pub and
- 30:00 then he comes in and he says, "I've got another one to look at," so all right we go with him, can't find it, oh we go in the pub again, so every time we go in a jewellery shop we go in the pub and we were getting bit ripe you see, we'd had him, "If he couldn't find an engagement ring in all those business by now I don't know what." So eventually we go over to him, "We'd better go back to Perky and have a look." So we go over to him and he's got this ring and he said, "I think I've made it," I said, "Geez, it's about bloody time," and he said,
- 30:30 "Yeah," he said, "Can you tell me do you think that would fit your sister's finger?" I said, "Christ I wouldn't have a clue, oh hang on." So Perky and I go out in the street, we go down the street and were looking for a wog women. And we sight one up and we ask her, "Would you like to do us a favour?" cause you've got to find one that talks English which wasn't always easy. So we took her back and took
- 31:00 her inside this jewellery shop and I said, "Hey Simo's she's all right, this lady here she'll be right, she's as big try, it on her." You know what happened he tried it on her and now she's engaged to Simo see, it was a shemozzle so Perky and I, we said, "Get out of here Perky," so we left them, we left them too it, so we blew through the pub again. Anyhow Simo eventually catches up with us and I said,

31:30 "How'd you go?" He said, "Gee, was I lucky I hadn't paid for it," and it meant that the women and the bloke behind the shop had to fight it out and he said he don't know what the hell they were talking about in Palestine language. But he finished up, he got it, oh funny it was, it was real funny.

**I'm just curious how did he get that ring back and how did he propose?**

Well

32:00 he put it on this girl's finger but the shop keeper, he's a wog too, so he had to get it off of her because Simo hadn't paid for it.

**Oh no, no how did Simo get the ring back to Australia and how did he propose to your sister?**

Oh I suppose he posted it back, well yeah he'd have had to post it back. Yeah I bought the same time, I bought Dorothy a, now what do they call it...

32:30 a bangle, they make them over there, hey darl what do they call that bangle I sent ya? Filigree bangle and I sent that home by post, oh yeah post takes a while. She sent me a card in Tobruk for me birthday and it took 4 months, so eventually you get them, birthday present, yeah got it on the 4th of April, so it takes a while.

33:00 So these are the sort of things we used to come up to and...

**Just to go back to Tobruk briefly, did you have your 21st birthday in Tobruk?**

No I had my 21st birthday.....in England.

**Right and how old were you with the birthday in Tobruk?**

21, oh 21 yeah I was 21 in Tobruk yeah and 22 in Alamein and January 23 up in the islands.

33:30 **So how did you celebrate your birthday in Tobruk?**

Oh you don't, no, no you don't, there's nothing you can do.

**Did you even mention it to your mates?**

No hang, oh dear, I was 21 in England, see in January the 31st in England I was 21. Yeah I had a blow up in there.

34:00 Then we didn't get to Tobruk in January or February or early March, got into Tobruk. Then I had my next birthday in Palestine.

**So what, how did you get your orders that you were going to El Alamein?**

How do you get your orders?

**Hmm?**

Oh well what happens then;

34:30 we were in Syria and we were in Syria, just filling in time resting, beautiful place and beautiful people in Syria, there a cross between a French owned, or French country Syria was what do they call them, like we are to Britain, oh what do they call them, what's the word, anyway. And then they

35:00 oh lost track.....oh what was I doing?

**You were in Syria and you were told that you were going to El Alamein?**

Yeah well then what happened then was that the people that took over from us in Tobruk, they surrendered and then the Germans were coming straight down to Egypt and going through

35:30 looking for, they wanted to get into the Asian countries where the oil was. And so then we got orders that we've got to pack up and go back to Egypt. So that's how we just got our orders, so packing up and were getting out. And we took probably 5 or 6 days to get to Egypt and then to Alamein was 80 miles east of

36:00 Egypt, Cairo. So then we were up there then for, we must of got there somewhere around about January, February, March, somewhere about March I think, I'm guessing a bit there and we didn't do anything until October, October the 23rd.

36:30 Boy that was on then, but we didn't leave there until late, got back to Palestine again. But Alamein was vicious, that was vicious that was very difficult, very hard fight. But it killed a lot of people, Alamein.

**Were you back with the infantry at this stage?**

Hmm?

**Were you back with infantry at this stage or were you with**

37:00 **still with ASC?**

Oh no I was in the ASC no, I stayed with ASC right throughout the war then from then on until the war gave up. What happened there was same old score, up with ammunition and all that sort of stuff. But apart from that I was in charge of the ack-ack and we had our little ack-ack guns placed in around our troops. And anything that came along that we'd like to shoot, we'd shoot. Quite often

37:30 we used to shoot, we saved one of our Pommy pilots from aircraft, we were very proud of this particular incident. They came along and our fellow wave their wings like that, let them know that it's there's or ours. And they were only about a hundred feet of the ground these two and what was happening he'd be chased by a.....Messerschmitt, Messerschmitt yeah

38:00 and he looked like knocking him out. But he was doing a bit of firing but he had to get down low enough to get his level and as he got down that low he just so happened, we just so happened to open up as our plane went and he copped a bit and he went straight up like that (indicates). I've never seen a plane up till then go straight up as high as that and boy did he go, took off and he must have had a powerful motor.

38:30 So then of course anything heavy come along we'd have a shoot at, we were a bit light, we could have been a bit heavier guns that we had, could of done more damage but it kept us going. Alamein was a, we changed our general. Our generals were changed quite often, some of the generals we had were British

39:00 and they may as well have left them at school for all the good they were, we changed them. And then in Tobruk we had our own general, General Morshead which was totally different to what the Pommy generals were. And we got to Alamein we changed 2 more times, twice, got rid of 2 generals, or Churchill did. Until he got onto a little bloke called Montgomery, he was a little fellow but

39:30 turned out to be a very shrewd fellow. And he sorted things out a bit and he would not attack, well this time we had German and Italians facing us, about 85 miles I suppose from the sea to the Depressions, they had the Depressions over there, made in sand and water, you couldn't drive a truck or anything like that, had to walk through. And then they, he said that he would not move

40:00 against the Germans until he had the full requirements of air and tank numbers which he didn't. And he got a lot of aeroplanes from America, I've never seen so many aeroplanes, I never saw so many tanks, General Grant tanks they bought over from America. And on April the, and in the meantime we was carting ammunition and stuff up there, and in the meantime

40:30 23rd of October 1942 hell broke loose with our artillery. We had just about a thousand guns, if you can imagine a thousand guns going off all at once. Well on the other end you'd be scared stiff because that's a lot of guns.

41:00 And took us about 3 days before they start backing off, and I never saw.....we had aeroplanes that I never saw existed, the Yankees came along with single aeroplane engines, fighters and they had the front of it painted like a shark, Sharks Squadron. And a Squadron, oh dear Jim,

41:30 think a bit, about 9, 10, 18 aircraft I think. I took some photos of it but my camera's so far away that all you could see, the camera, all you could see was spots, little aeroplanes and they'd be hundreds of them, I'm not kidding hundreds of aeroplanes, bombers and fighters, I've never saw so many. And tanks they went everywhere tanks

42:00 and of course.....

## Tape 8

00:35 **Jim we will move on and talk about Alamein but before we do I just want to go back quickly to Tobruk, and ask you a bit about how you wear Tobruk as a badge of honour now?**

01:00 Now Tobruk.....Tobruk was something that showed the world that the Germans could be stopped. Up till then the Germans just went through Europe and captured whatever they wanted to

01:30 and they had the British and the French over there and they all got pushed back until their expert Rommel took on chasing us. And he could not, once we got into Tobruk, there wasn't a thing he could do about shifting us, typical Australian spirit. As he said,

02:00 "If I had the 9th Division with me we'd have run over the world by now," now that's what Rommel said, that was his words, he praised them so much. And then he got knocked out by that group of people that he admired so much, it was we that destroyed him, and it all came from Tobruk.

02:30 Now whereas any other section of fighting during the war that was so determined to hold a piece of ground, nobody would have done that, right throughout that war and it come back to you become a Rat

of Tobruk,

03:00 which I think is admired by a lot of people and we were one. And that's I think is the way it was, I think we all decided that, "He's not going to get us, he's not going to take that country," because as soon as we left, what happens he just walked in, no Aussies there, he just walked in. And that just shows you what we were like,

03:30 and there was only about 23,000 of us and that's the way it was. And it goes through, right through this war very similar. But what hurts me a lot is when we as a division and did what we did in Tobruk against the finest general in the world, is Rommel, and with the equipment they had, we lost a division;

04:00 up here with the Japs, they had to surrender. Know why? Because they were controlled by a bloody stupid bloody Pommy colonels and brigadiers or generals and that's what happened.

**And what then do you think was the key to the Aussies' success?**

Key?

**At digging in, what....?**

Australians,

04:30 Australians and we had good people supporting us, such as the Royal Horse Artillery, the English artillery of gun battles, they were terrific. They were the best gunners God put on earth that mob, they could shoot a fly on Rommel's head 10 miles away I reckon, they were so accurate. Yeah there the people, we had an Indian Brigade with us, we had some Indians and then the Polish Brigade, the Poles

05:00 took over from us. But no it was just because we were Australians and the thing mainly is our general was Australians which understood us, and I think that's what it is. I'm not running down the Pommies, we had a battalion, a division of them there they were good, but it was the English generals,

05:30 there the ones that we didn't, no liking for. But the Pommy men themselves were good, no worries, good blokes.

**Well when you were in your Unit, received orders to pull out of Tobruk, how unsatisfying was that?**

Oh we got to the stage where health wise we'd been there too long on tucker that we

06:00 were eating and that had started to deteriorate. Our bodies started to deteriorate, or they were starting to get diseases that they didn't want and if we'd have stayed there much longer we'd have been a lot of sickness coming through us, and that was the reason why that we had to get out and get some decent food into us. And when you're living like that for that amount of months it wears you down.

06:30 And they thought, well they'd better get them out and get some tucker into them. But the other people that came, the other people that took over from us they just let them walk in. But, which was disappointing to us to think that we'd held it for so long and left a bloody thousand blokes behind dead and they just walked in, and that's what happened. At Alamein it was totally different

07:00 we had some British stuff there and they were all top notch units. But as it always is if there's a tough fight alongside or going or whatever you'd find the Australians are there, it's the Australians that will be alongside the tough, if the goings tough they'll be there, they'll put them in there first. But Alamein was the one they put them in alongside, in the sea, in inland and where the Germans were opposite us all the time.

07:30 The Italians you never, they never put us in with the Italians, or where the Italians face us, we had the Germans. But that's what it was and then, there's more in Alamein.....

**Well I was just going to take you back then to the build up of Alamein, Alamein was a slightly new situation?**

Yeah it had to be done.

**But before I do there's just one more question I want to ask you before we move into Alamein**

08:00 **one thing that happened at the end of Tobruk, you may have got word that the Japanese had entered into the war?**

Yep.

**How did your Division react to that news at the end of 1941?**

Well another thing happened too while we were in Tobruk the Russians, Germans attacked Russia. Now that was a big help because they had then

08:30 had to supply the front where the Germans were attacking Russia and the Japs, they must of come in.....what month they came into it.

## **December?**

December 1941, okay. Well we were out then, that's right we were out, we were in Palestine then and we were camped alongside the 7th Division

09:00 who had just finished dealing with Syria. And they were packing up ready to go home when the Japs started so they were on their way home. And we would have wanted to come home too but we couldn't, they kept us there for Alamein, so the 7th Divvy [division] was rushed home for that.

09:30 **Well how worried were you when you heard the news?**

Oh we were concerned. We didn't, we didn't expect them to go so quick, you see they went down south to Papua New Guinea pretty quick down there, they got down there pretty quick. But then of course it was only what 6 weeks, 7 weeks and the 7th Division would have been up there with them, so

10:00 that was a help. 6th Division was, would be on their ginger too because their leaving Crete, they got out of Crete, so the 2 divisions would be heading home which leaves us over there. So....

**And what were the rumours that were flying around at that stage?**

Well what was happening was that it took a while before they surrendered

10:30 they were poking, coming down into.....into oh what's that place.....Singapore. See they took a while, when they declared war on us they were coming down to Singapore and it took a while to break out of Singapore and then come down to south, and oh, we wanted to get home, we didn't want to stop there,

11:00 we wanted to get home, yeah sure. But sending 2 divisions home, I suppose they'd be battling to get transport to send 3 home in a hurry, I don't know. But then Alamein was there and I suppose we just had to stick it out, so that's what happened.

**So by the time Alamein come around you had had time to rest and recuperate?**

11:30 Hmm, yes we were in Palestine. Funny sort of things happened when we went on leave. Perky and Ricky and I, no Perky not Ricky he got killed, a couple of others, we decided we'd go AWL [Absent Without Leave] because we couldn't get leave and go into the bad parts and the red light area. So we did, got a taxi,

12:00 and you get a taxi and a wog driver and you pay him enough they'll do anything for ya. So he took us into this party, which was out of bounds of course and no leave pass out. So then we go to this place and there's upstairs room and there was dancing and grog and all these parties, they've got rooms, little rooms

12:30 stuck on the side of the walls where a door goes. And women come out, it's real entertaining, it might be oh 5 women, might be 10 women, like a parade these women walking around and all these blokes sitting around and you just take one and go off. Had a few beers, just to see the different sights, so anyway some Pommies were there and the Pommy Police came in,

13:00 we didn't have the women, as I said before no way cause I didn't want those bloody eyes like those, that frightened hell out of me. But there were some, the Pommy bloke starts arguing the point with one of them and they must of rung up and got the Pommy police to come. And the Pommy police came and they probably like us didn't have a leave pass see, and they start a fight. The Pommies start fighting the police and cause

13:30 next thing I know we were in it, we were on the Pommy's side fighting the Pommy police see. So we decided we'd better go and the Pommy sergeant comes up and he says, "You'd better get out of here because your police are coming too, I've contacted them." So we thought we'd better get out, so we got out and down alongside the, our blokes went up, they came in pretty quick, they went up, cause we were out. And were standing

14:00 beside this car, we didn't get away and this wog come out and he's got a, what do they call those bloody things they put over, a sheet of white clothes, like the wogs use, put that all over us and we stood up there and then he gave us a funny old thing to stick on our head. And the 4 of us are standing up there like wogs, standing there, our blokes go up there and come out and couldn't see anybody and then one just happen to come past

14:30 and he saw our bloody boots. He come up to us, it was as funny as hell, he come up to us, "Are you Aussies?" we wouldn't talk and he pulled one of these bloody things off our heads and it was us all right and he said, "I'll give you 10 seconds to get out the joint." So anyway and old wog came along and got in the car and drove us home. They were funny people those wogs they

15:00 do all this for you if you've got a few bucks, few dollars or whatever, they'd do anything for you, so that was that one. But that also going on, so anyway that was, where are we now that was the finish of El Alamein although I'll tell you another little story about trucks. New Zealanders stopped going up the front with a convoy of ammunition, they were going up and they stopped one behind another and a shell hit them, and it all blew up and killed

- 15:30 them all. And this would be oh, a few weeks earlier when we saw it, it was out in the desert a bit and the wind had blown the sand off their heads and all these, about 10, 11 of these Kiwi's laying there dead and all they've got is their head showing where the sand has blown off them. And that's one reason why they should never be close together, should be a hundred yards apart,
- 16:00 and that was the way it was. But going back to Syria, we were up there and that was a lovely place Syria. We were resting up there and I was the armourer, they gave me the job of the armourer, looking after the rifles and things. And they came to me, one of the lads came to me and they said, "You haven't been on
- 16:30 patrol. They've got a name for this, 'the street of the thousand arseholes.'" Now that doesn't sound good but that's what it used be called, and I never knew what it meant either. So he said, "Do you want to volunteer for it?" He said, "Your eyes will fall out of your head." I said, "Oh bulldust." He said, "True," and you never volunteer for anything unless you know what it's about, so I said, "All right I'll see if I can get on one." So
- 17:00 eventually I got on the, on this patrol and in the Middle East if you ever went out on patrol of that nature you carry a bayonet and it is all remember right through the Middle East the Australians and a bayonet, from the First World War, how expert they are with a bayonet. And no matter where you were in the Middle East
- 17:30 if there's any shenanigans going on you put your bayonet and hang your bayonet down there and you would not be touched. It's a law that you don't touch a Aussie with a bayonet. And that's been handed down to us. Anyway away we go, there's 4 of us and we got these bayonets, and what happens up there is quite a few of the soldiers, I've only heard of 1 but a few New Zealanders
- 18:00 have been killed on going through these places outside of the, outside and no where near the red light, keep right away from the red light, and they knocked them over for money and all this sort of caper. So we have a patrol that patrols these areas in case one of our fellows get a bit full and put on an act, that sort of stuff. I'll give you an indication of why
- 18:30 they do, they used to have cabs up there in Syria and they got drawn by horses, and this bloke came out of the YMCA one day, both of them full, and they come from Queensland and one said to the other, "Oh boy I feel like riding that bloody horse over there." I don't know whether he had one or two, probably two horses,
- 19:00 and this other bloke said, "Well I'm not going to ride it," he said, "I'll ride it." And he walks up, jumps on the bloody horse with a cab on it and took off and of course the old wog's screaming murder cause he's taken off and this blokes sitting on the horse driving it. Went up about 200 yards and he got off and walked back, he said, "See I told you I'd have a ride." He said, "This is the sort of thing that happens when they get a few grogs in them." The same thing can happen when they get a few grogs and they go chasing the women or something. So we set off
- 19:30 and the streets, narrow streets, you might get a donkey or a camel through them, or a narrow thing, and in these rooms you would have one room and they all sit around, could be 1 women, 4 women, 5 women, you never see many blokes in these places, all sit around and this particular time was cold and they had
- 20:00 a fire in the middle, and they'd all sit around this fire. And all around the wall there's doors, little rooms, and they'd go in there and pick their women and cart it off into these rooms. And then you can go for another walk, and this would be, oh wouldn't say a mile of it, but goes on forever, turn the corner the same old sort, this way turn the corner same old. Then you get into another bigger room and there's
- 20:30 shemozzle going on and everybody's singing, blokes and all mixed up and were looking for any of our blokes you see. So that was, coming back there was one road, one alley we hadn't gone to and we stopped and we said, "Will we go in here?" and I said, "Yeah, we'd better go in here," and there's 3 Aussies and they had these 3 sheilas and I said to them I said, "Come
- 21:00 on, you're going home." He said, "Yeah I want to go home but we can't." I said, "Why?" "They took our money." I said, "What do you mean money?" "They took our purse and we're not going until we get it." So we had a shemozzle and we got all the information that they pinched, but no money, the money had all gone, there was no money left. So he said, "Well come on we're getting, we're not stopping here." So after that we got out. But that opened my eyes because
- 21:30 there's thousands of them, and that's what it is a street of a thousand arseholes, that's what they called it. But Jesus that's the funny side of army life but you had to watch it all the time cause it's, see it's the same old story goes back thousands of years and that's happening over there.

**Well the imagine of the larrikin Australian digger was born in World War I,**

- 22:00 **do you feel like in some way you were treading in that tradition?**

Oh there's a tradition, not saying, I think the, I think that started off with country kids, not so much in the city, country kids I reckon bought that into bed with horse riding and all the things they used to do on outback

- 22:30 and you couldn't do it in the city. But not saying their not in the city, and I think that's where the Light Horse, the Australian Light Horse was mainly from country kids and that you see larrikinism comes in all forms and it comes it doesn't matter where you are you'll always get some larrikins that will do anything cause they can, it can be the bad or it can be the good things, but there's a lot of larrikins
- 23:00 around and a lot would like to be larrikins if they could let their head go and different times when their in the army they've got that freedom to do it, cause they can get away with it. Yes we had some larrikins that would do anything, "Oh you expect that bugger to do anything, yes that's him, he'll do anything," and that attitude sort of come and stuck, I think that's the way that would be. Oh yes you'd have larrikins and wherever
- 23:30 they are I think in all forms. But being Australians they expect to be called larrikins I think.

**Well back to the war, towards, later in 1942 the 8th Army was being massed for the battle of El Alamein. Who were the other nationalities that were**

**24:00 massing there along with the Australians?**

Oh we had some Indians, we had some Britains, some British units, Kiwis, South Africans, not many because they got captured you see in Tobruk. I think that's about it that we had, I don't think there's,

24:30 I think that's about all we had, I can't remember seeing any others.

**And what was the mood then, the night before the big battle began?**

Yeah well people, we wouldn't have know about the night before, we probably would of because we'd been told to harness up, like to keep our loads up. We would know

25:00 something's happening by the amount of stuff we'd been carting up to it. Just how much they needed. But when it was over we went for a drive and there was shells about every 7 or 8 feet, holes, mortar shells, tanks shells, you name it, the holes were all just through that, where the Germans were, they

25:30 couldn't of lasted, they must of got knocked to blazers. So when it was over, there was one particular area where they had a gun, the Germans built a gun and put it in the ground, concreted it into the ground and it was an anti tank gun and they cleaned up about 20 tanks before they could get it. And they put a mine field out in front of it but I often wondered why

26:00 they'd have cleared a mine before they could get at this tank and of course they get knocked over while their doing it. I couldn't understand why the air force weren't there to help them to drop a bomb onto it or something. That caused a lot of casualties and then the Scots, the black watch they got tangled up, and they had hand to hand fighting and they were left there as it was and when we come up the day after,

26:30 when they retreated they were all there and the way they were killed and that. And then these tanks, you couldn't have a look inside because of the flies, the bodies were still in their tanks. And even we took our dinner with us, you couldn't, it was hard to get in the car, into the truck and open it up because of the flies, and the flies on the windscreen was that thick you could hardly see, that's how many flies these bodies

27:00 bought. So one of our trucks was having a look around and he got in a mine field and he had to climb out, I yelled out to him and he had to climb on his truck and come back and get out and we hooked a tow rope on him and pulled the truck backwards. Mines everywhere, mines horrible things everywhere you don't know where they are. So that was about it.

**And where were you**

**27:30 the night that the battle began?**

Well we would be probably about 8 miles behind with truck loads of stuff ready to go up. That's about all we'd be doing is waiting until we got orders to supply, where to, where were going. And then when it was all finished we had our

28:00 tent, suppose you'd call it a tent, a bit of canvas stuck on two posts and we just laying in it, dust comes, dust goes doesn't matter, we had no roof, sides or anything were just laying there on the side of the road, main road. And then the Italians, I'm not sure how many come out but could have been a hundred thousand, 80, 90 thousand, and they came out when the Germans had

28:30 broken their line and got going, they left the Italians behind, they didn't want a part of them any more. And these truck loads of Italians coming through and they'd stop, nobody with them, no guards no nothing, they wanted to know where the POW camp is and we'd say, "Keep going, keep going." And this particular truck stopped and we walked around the back of it and Perky

29:00 said, "You wait here until I come back," he said to the driver, and quite a lot of those people can talk English. So he walked around the back and here's a suitcase thrown out on the ground and we look up and here's a, I don't know what rank he was but he must have been pretty high up in the German army, all polished up medals and God knows what on. And the Italian wanted him out, they wanted to kick him out, all the rest, full of Italians this truck and they want to kick this German general, or whatever his

name was, out.

29:30 Oh he spiced up, "No you're not going to you've got to take...." "No." They want him out, they were trying to push him out, they didn't want a bar of him, I said, "No, you've all got to go." And this German wanted his bag back I said, "You're not getting it" so he didn't get it, we put it in our tent and went through it. We got all the little knick knacks out of it. And then the Italians would keep coming, they were coming for 2 days, just driving themselves in big trucks looking for

30:00 the POW camp, nobody's interested in stopping or anything just letting them go. I don't know what happened down the other end, must have had a lot of them, so they didn't want to fight.

**And what knick knacks were there?**

Oh a watch and pencils, combs, what did I get, I've forgotten now, I got some damn thing out of it....oh there was a pair of little nail clippers. Oh these sort of things you'd never get, we just went through it and tipped it all

30:30 out, oh no I'll tell you what I got a beautiful pair, oh Christ's what's that....a beautiful pair of khaki pants. Oh I said to Perky, "You're not having them, I'm taking them." And that was the first time I ever saw a zipper on a pair of pants, had a zipper. That's right these beautiful pair of pants and I thought, "You beaut," so I brought them home mind you and we were on leave,

31:00 I don't know, oh sorry about that, we were both on leave we two, had to be, and we went to a dance and I had these pants on, these lovely Fritz pants with a zipper on them. And as I was dancing around I'm poking my body into her you see and she said, "What are you doing that for?" and I'm poking my belly into her, this belly into her and she'd say, "What are you doing that for?"

31:30 I said, "Well me bloody zip's busted," bloody zip wouldn't work and it was down and I couldn't shut it. So I had to keep pushing it into her belly so that nobody would see it until I got her outside the dance. Christ that was the finish of me German pants, yeah beautiful pants they were, the first zip I'd ever had, so that was a score there. Oh there's all these little things that happened to us and, until we got back into the....

**32:00 Well where were your mates Simo and Perky during Alamein?**

Oh Perky was here he was in the truck, he was driving a truck. I was in machine gun you see, and I'd go on the trucks when they were short that's all. And Simo was a sergeant and he was in charge of a group in the area, could have been 20 miles wide I don't know, big area, but he was

32:30 in charge of a group doing something. We didn't see much of one another then until we came out because we were all over the place, moving around, that's the type of unit we were, just hocking there and hocking here.

**Well what other duties and responsibilities did you have at Alamein?**

Well that's the only responsibility, I was a ack-ack gunner, that's the only ones I had

33:00 and then I'd be called on for anything in the meantime, there was 3 of us in our unit and 1 of us could go away, we had 2 sets of guns, and if they were short of drivers one could take over today or do, and that's how it operated on. We just stopped there until we were, the air force had cleaned up and all the bomber,

33:30 blown up their aerodromes and, never had any more trouble with aeroplanes then. So we were just unnecessary after a while but it didn't matter, just in case.

**And was it at Alamein that you were delivering the dead to the cemetery?**

Pardon?

**Was it one of your jobs at Alamein to deliver dead bodies to the cemetery?**

No, the ambulance took over that,

34:00 and they would deliver them. Because they had a lot killed but they had the ambulance and another body to take over and they weren't throwing them in the back of trucks like we did, they put them in ambulances, covered body truck, which we didn't have. So they done all that but Alamein, oh gee, I just off hand I can't remember but that was worst than Tobruk, yeah.

34:30 The cemetery at Alamein with all concerned was in thousands, thousands, big area. And that's when you go through a cemetery and you see the rows and rows of little crosses, is when you start giving a lot of thought to why war becomes. Up until then it doesn't mean much but it does when you see those crosses,

35:00 "That some poor bugger's laying there and it could have been you," but that's the way it is, there's no explanation to that saying why I should or should not be there, it's just the way things are.

**Well you were delivering stores and ammo [ammunition] at Alamein but I'm just wondering how close you would of got to seeing the carnage?**

- 35:30 Seeing the carnage? Oh well the worst carnage I saw was when we attacked the German post and we had to pick up all those bodies, I think it was 27 dead and, oh it's in my book a hundred wounded or something like that. And you just threw them all in the back of a truck, it's all, I think I mentioned that before haven't I, so that's enough I don't think, you always see
- 36:00 1 or 2 knocked off but not in a big 27 heap which was all disfigured and blown to pieces. It's amazing how you sort of try and forget these things, or not let it interfere with your normal place, but it does come back every now and again.
- And what about,**
- 36:30 **I've heard of deception plans and phoney tanks and....?**
- Pardon?
- Deception plans and phoney tanks and.....?**
- Oh yeah at Alamein, when we got this new general he tried all sorts of things to deceive the enemy and he would ask
- 37:00 our company for spare trucks or anything and tow a heap of bags behind them and they'd make such a dust in a certain area, might have 10 or 20 trucks with bags and cause a storm, dust storm. You go over here today, and getting towards dusk, so the enemy could see this big cloud of dust and then next afternoon late
- 37:30 he'd have them over the other side, or he'd shift them around so that the Fritzes would think, "Gee, they're building up over here, the tanks must be filling up on that side," and that's the sort of thing he was doing, trying to trick old Rommel into thinking that their going into attack that area and this area and that sort of thing. And then they had some wog bloody people making tanks
- 38:00 out of cardboard, just a cover up and they'd sit them there today and then tomorrow they'd shift them somewhere else, 5, 6 10 mile away and then shift them over there, and that's the dust that their carting and when the dust stops they'd leave these tanks behind you see cause they know that the aircraft up there are photographing and all this, and it's just to deceive them as our bloke wanted them to.
- 38:30 I don't know whether it did any harm or did any good I wouldn't know. But we had a lot of tanks.
- And how did you know that Alamein was all over?**
- Oh that was because our troops had to go up further with supplies. They had a main road, a bitumen road, or some kind of bitumen road, was a main road right through to Mersa Matruh, that's
- 39:00 that's about the end of Egypt, up to the Mediterranean. And you could go there and with all the Italians coming back and all the trucks are going up further and further and further with supplies they knew that it had had it, and then even the aircraft they were, instead of bombing them in the front line where they were, they'd be bombing them around Tobruk or following them up, bombing them when they
- 39:30 helter skelter shooting up the main road going up to Benghazi, right up North Africa. They could follow them, the bombers would be bombing them all the time, they'd have no peace, yes they'd be doing them, doing what they done to us on our run back from Benghazi what we done to them, only we were much more heavier. So that was the way it was. We were glad,
- 40:00 what was left of us to get out, and cause when we got home here the islands were absolutely totally different, different altogether.
- Well that's a good spot for us to stop and change our tape and swap.....**

## Tape 9

- 00:31 **So when you left Alamein you came back to Australia, and how was it to come home again?**
- There's nothing better in my life for us to come back and see Australia. It is unbelievable how you felt because you come
- 01:00 back to all the things you love and where you belong, this is yours and it's just the way it was. It was, I don't know what heavens like I haven't been there but the way they talk about it is must have been beaut, because Australia was that way and the people that you knew, you lived with you were born with them all. But you knew, yeah lovely.
- What was the first thing you saw from the ship?**
- 01:30 First thing I saw from the boat was the coast of Perth, we stayed there, stopped there I think to cup our

mail and unload the Western Australia boys, and that was the best. We were in the, coming home from Egypt we were in the Queen Mary which at the time the biggest boat in the world and we had 14,000

02:00 odd Australians on it. And when you think of 14,000 on a boat it's impossible to say, how could you get on a boat, but that's how big it was. And that went right until, they had to take our blokes off at Perth, they take them off by barge, they couldn't land there.

02:30 But we had to then go to Sydney, so we went from there, from Perth around to Sydney where we pulled in and then we got news to say the we'd be going by train to Adelaide, from Sydney and we will be stopping at Albury for, the train stops at Albury.

03:00 I immediately sent a wire to one girl who was in camp there that I'll be stopping at Albury on the train. So I was hoping she would get it, cause on the mail I got from Perth it was the finish of our relationship, at the time that didn't worry me

03:30 much because I'd never been, couldn't get close to her, so I thought, "She was only young when I left her." But I'd like to see her so we stopped at Albury, this women was in the army then, was about twice as big as she was when I left Australia.

04:00 I thought, "Gee," it was her, so we had a bit of a sweet up and a cuddle and I had to catch the train and head for Adelaide.

**So you'd broken up in Perth but when you got to Albury were you back together again?**

I got a letter from her to say that she'd found somebody else or something, I've forgotten exactly what it was. And then I saw her in Perth,

04:30 in Albury just to say g'day to her because I knew she was camped there in the army. Well when I left there I said to Simo I said, "Well Simo," I said, "You're going home to get married." I said to Dorothy I said, "Go and get your leave and come home and get married." She said, "No I can't do that." But when I left there I knew, I knew that I'd eventually finish up with her.

05:00 cause that's the way it was, just by that little smooch I had which turned out to be true. So we got to Adelaide, we got on the bus and come home to the river, and it was lovely coming back to the river. And there weren't many boys around my age because they'd gone, they were all gone, but there was all the girls, 14, 15-

05:30 year-old kids were all 18 and 19, God there was heaps of them, cause there's no blokes around. So we went to a few dances and said g'day to me parents, I think there was about, might have been a week and back to Adelaide and then caught the train and we were going up to Queensland then to train for

06:00 the jungle training.

**Before we get to New Guinea I just want to ask you how was your home coming?**

Oh God, we had celebrations all around the place, we went into the pub, the old Berri pub and all me mates that were still there came down and my Dad came

06:30 in and mates father came in, and it was a real old celebrations type of thing. And that's the first time in my life I ever seen my Dad have a beer, I think he had 2 small ones and he never stopped talking, and he was never like that, he was always a quite person. So he talked and talked and talked and he had a few beers, must of done him the world of good.

07:00 So anyway we, and then they had a dance, welcome home dance and that was about it, spent most of the time with my family. And then of course we were off again and.....

**I just want to ask how was your mother when she saw you again?**

Oh she was gorgeous, she was relieved I think, she was just like she always was when I was home and

07:30 yeah she was relieved, because they were getting older and we still had the bloody war to fight in the jungles and I suppose they couldn't relax 100% yet. But they were, they were good, good to see them again.

**And where was Archie?**

Archie was up in Northern Territory, his unit went to Northern Territory and

08:00 it was an infantry mob. So he wrote to me and asked me to claim him, an elder can claim a younger, I said, "All right." So I did and when we got up into Queensland, after about a month up there I was out with a truck and came in and a bloke came to me and said, "Somebody in that tent wants to know you. I don't know who he is but he's looking for you." I said,

08:30 "Well who the hell's that?" I'd forgotten. Went in there and this bloke's stood up, patted me on the head and said, "G'day son." He was 6'3" - and when I left him he was a paper boy running around delivering papers, letters in the post office. So he'd grown tall. So eventually we were altogether, brother

- 09:00 in law with us, he had his wedding, he had his wedding in Berri, Simo, and went on a quick honeymoon. So we were altogether the 3 of us then, training up in Queensland. And we were the Water Division from then on, the people that done all the attacking by the sea, ASC become the Barge
- 09:30 Controllers and Food Controllers and that sort of thing. The same as we were doing before only we had to do it in boats and jeeps along the ground, where we couldn't get them to come we had to deliver food in jeeps, which quite a nice little universal vehicle the jeep, got us along way. These things that you wouldn't think were possible because we,
- 10:00 that was 4WD [Four Wheel Drive vehicle], the first time we had 4WDs, but the whole area, when we were at Mill Bay, that was our base when we went to Queensland. But in the meantime we had these barges, American owned and American driven, we would, they'd come up on the beach and we'd drive out trucks on it there and they'd land us again and we'd drive them off and all this sort of caper.
- 10:30 Then we shipped over to Milne Bay, that's south east of New Guinea, down there and we then sorted ourselves out and they were going to attack Lay. And in the meantime the 7th Division and the 6th Division they were up in the mountains fighting their way down through the
- 11:00 jungle to these places we were going to raid by sea. So we set off and we had 3 shipments to go, so I was on the first lot that went, Simo was the 2nd and my brother was the last to go and they landed behind me. We were, we were very lucky,
- 11:30 we were all in the one area of the river and 9 Japanese bombers went overhead and we thought we were going to cop it because we could of copped a bashing, cause we were all in a big group cause in the jungle you can't sort of, not like the desert, the jungle is very close and not a lot of space in the jungle where we were at the time. Anyway,
- 12:00 they let us go and dropped the bombs on some American ships, we got out of that one. So what happened there was the infantry was closing in, the 7th were coming down the Owen Stanley Ranges and our division had gone up into Lae, they had about oh 10, 12 mile to go to Lae, up the river and then we were taking them up and sorting them out. Then Simo came
- 12:30 and he said, "We've got to, we've got to go bush." I said, "Right, how many do you want?" He said, "3 of us." I said, "Well count me in, I'll go with ya." So we had 3 trailers, sledges they were full of supplies and a crawler tractor and this bloke was from the engineers and he's going to take us up
- 13:00 to a certain point, there's about 5 miles. 5 miles in the jungle is a long long way I can tell ya when you don't know where you're going. So he took us up about 5 miles into the jungle and the foot-sloggers were coming through and we were having to have supplies there. Well we waited 5 days and nobody, the tractor driver left us and come back,
- 13:30 about 5 days went past and nobody's, haven't seen anybody. All we got was every now and again we'd get a shell, the Japs had a big gun and it just pointed anywhere I think, and a shell would come and if it hit the mud it would go 'plonk'. If it did hit a tree it would scatter and make a hell of a noise. But the funny part about this was we were dumped off
- 14:00 with all this tucker alongside of an old shed made out of straw and stuff from the jungle and the stink, I said, "I'm not going to sleep in there." Another bloke said, "I'm not either." Simo said, "No, I don't think I'll sleep in there either." So we made a bit of a bed outside and I just hooked up onto two trees, a hammock sort of thing, and I've got a machine gun, and I've got to put that under me bed
- 14:30 and there just done the same as me. So half way through the night one fell out and he said, "I'm going in the shed," so the other bloke decided to go in the shed and I said, "Well I'm not, I'm going to stop here." And then I heard rustling and I thought, "God, don't tell me, the bloody Japs are coming." So it was rustling and making a hell of a noise so I just slipped over me bed with me legs and sitting there with me machine gun and then I heard a snort
- 15:00 bloody pigs, wild pig, these buggers I could have shot it if I'd seen it, but anyway I go in there then and I'm in there too. So we wake up in the morning and a bloke comes through and he said, "You've got to go back to base, leave your stuff." It was no good anyway it was all rusted. So we went, walked our way back to the sea and they've got a little depot there by this time and the infantry had gone through the day before
- 15:30 and had a battle with the Japs, and we had to walk from there up along the coast which would be about 7 miles to our full depot. And all these bodies were floating in and out of the water, that brightened us up a bit. But the difference is see in the jungle somebody had to get shot or shot at or you had to see where they were if you could, but in the desert you could see for miles and know exactly,
- 16:00 over there you could see where the planes are going, but here in the jungle you couldn't, you'd hear them but you didn't know where they were, which was difficult to learn. So as time went on we'd load up again and we were going to land at another place called Finch Haven and we landed there and it was, I landed first again, I wouldn't let me brother come with me.
- 16:30 Didn't matter with Simo, but Arch had to come in on his own. And we landed there and between the sea and the sandy strip, still had some trees on it, was about a hundred yards and behind that was a

seepage or a creek which was then in places a hundred yards and in some places about 20 yards. So when

- 17:00 we landed all our ammunition went up to the right and all our food stuff and light stuff went to our left, we didn't mix the two. So that went on until the 3 barges come in, Simo and me and brother and then they bought a bulldozer in and that was making a track through so as we could get out gear out into the higher ground. And then we had a labour
- 17:30 force come from the Yanks, they had a labour force and we got about 20 of them, in the section I was in, in the soft food section I had about 6 and the others were up further or on the barges unloading or loading. So I said to these fellows, "You been to war yet?" "No, no haven't been to war." I said, "Well do you know anything about it?" "No we just come from training in America and went on a lot of
- 18:00 tours." I said, "Well now I'm going to tell you something, what you've got to do is this. The Japs will come through here because it's a little piece of ground and they know what were doing and they'll machine gun us, while they're going all the time, or they might drop a bomb," and I said, "What you've got to do is do exactly what we do," now I said, "When you hear machine gunners or you hear the Bofors, we've got Bofors as our ack-ack gun and that will
- 18:30 that will go 3 times, boom, boom, boom quick and they'll let us know if there's enemy about and then they give you one when it's finished," either that or it's reversed, I'm not quite sure, long time ago. So I said, "You hear that," but I said, "Watch us," I said, "As soon as we shoot through that water you follow us, don't be mucking around, quick." Of course it came didn't it, and we shot through, haven't got time to help people, grab them and say, "Come on, quick," because
- 19:00 those bullets don't stop for that. So we shot through this water and got to the other side and waited until we heard the Bofors and we come back, it's about neck high in places. We got back and we had 4 bloody dead chaps, 4 dead ones and 1 wounded and I thought, "Oh Christ how could we have avoided it? I don't know because we couldn't have told them any more." But what they did they stood and looked at the aeroplanes, they hadn't seen anything like that before
- 19:30 you see, not told anything, I don't know how they trained them. So this bloke got hit in the leg so I said, "Come on" and he was nearly crying. So I got him over the shoulder and walked him through this water over the other side and put him down and I said, "Now you wait here I'll get the RAP" - that's the Regimental Aid Post - "to come along and fix you up." I said, "You know you've got a bit of a snick in your leg," I said, "You'll be right." And he started crying and he said,
- 20:00 "I'm only 21 and why'd I do this?" and he's going on like that and I thought, "Yeah well can't help that." I thought, "21, Jesus, I was in the soup at 21," poor bugger I left him and he said, "I'd like to thank you Aussie very much for doing what you do." I said, "Mate I'd do that to anybody here at the moment." So that was okay but the interesting part about this was
- 20:30 we had, our side to help us we had white Americans on that side to help Simo and those people they had black ones, dark ones. And dark people they were characters you could always get a laugh out of them, they're real character people, they say some funny things. I liked them a lot because they're such characters. And this bloke come down the next day and he said, "Some of them got killed?" I said,
- 21:00 "Yeah unfortunately." "Oh we were all right." I said, "Yeah," I said, "They'd have been all right too," but I said, "They didn't quite catch up with what we should of done, I couldn't do any more, all they had to do is do what we did." "No," he said, "They looked at them didn't they?" I said, "You saw them?" He said, "Yeah we did too, but we got a foxhole to jump into." I said, "You got a foxhole?" He said, "Yeah." I said,
- 21:30 "What are you doing with a foxhole?" "Oh good foxhole." I said, "What were you doing?" He said, "Oh I get into." He said, "We're handling big boxes up there." He said, "We made a beautiful foxhole out of boxes, we got in there." I said, "You did well." I said, "That's all ammunition." He said, "It's what?" I said, "Ammunition, you open it up and they're all ammunition, you'd have gone all right." He said, "God," he said, "I was down here," he said, "and I was running like, running like hell," he said, "and I was saying to the Lord,
- 22:00 'I'll pick them up Lord if you put them down, you put them down and I'll pick them up.'" All this sort of caper you see, that's the sort of thing they'd do. You'd get a lot of laughs out of them they really encourage people to listen to them and laugh, they were really good, so that finished that. So we just feed our troops and
- 22:30 moved onto the next spot and moved on until we got to about another, by this time were going up by barge, or by jeep you see and the next spot was about another 20, 30, 40 mile up and we landed there. But there was, you always had to be on the lookout all the time and the Americans,
- 23:00 don't know about the Americans, they, I wouldn't want to fight with them, I would not want a part of fighting with them, to be part of their unit or anything, cause they've got no sense in a lot of ways, none whatsoever. We go out on a patrol, which we have to, just to have a squirt around where we are, have a look around
- 23:30 they'd have a wireless going, they'd talk and they'd have a smoke. We used to go, "Don't come out, if

you're coming out with us you don't do nothing like that, you do what we do and that's nothing. Sign language with us, we come right up close and talk in a whisper, no more than that." So we wouldn't go out with them any more, no wonder they got shot up they do. So then there was

24:00 orders out that we were in the Song River, Song River was a bit north of Finch Harbour and the Yanks are not to shoot anything, nothing south of that Song River. Well we had a barge come in on this particular day and he comes over and shot the back of it off, and lucky our 3 blokes were up the front, if they'd have been in the back

24:30 they'd have been killed. That's the sort of things they do, you don't know with the Yanks. So as time went on we went up further, another 70, 80 miles and this is what was happening all along the river now, we'd go in with our barge sometimes and we'd get shot at, we'd gone too far so we'd back off. If those Japs would have let us in they would have cleaned us up but I suppose they got trigger happy once and think, "I'm going to have a shot at these," and by doing that

25:00 they let us know so we'd get out quick and go back a few more miles because we'd gone too far, a bit risky but it's the only way we could do it. Until we got up to a place called Wewak and we camped beside Wewak, quite a few miles and the Yanks came up and they wanted Wewak because they got a airport there, airport and a.....air platform, what do you call it? Airport,

25:30 where they can land their planes, that's what they wanted. So we left them to attack that, we got out and we come south then till I got crook and then I got evacuated out to Moresby and I got a boat to come home to Cairns and then I come home by rail and then I was in hospital, I had malaria, I've forgotten how many times.

26:00 **Can I just take you back to getting crook in New Guinea, how, what happened there?**

There's all these diseases, a lot of diseases in the jungle, I can't remember most of them now. Malaria's one of the worst then you've got hook worm, that's another one. Oh dear there's another 2 that you, one is, oh why can't I remember that one,

26:30 one is very poisonous, if you get it your lucky if you live, oh isn't that terrible.....

**What did you have?**

I had malaria, I had other stuff with me stomach, I should get one of those books out, it's all in one of those papers.

**So when you got malaria and your other illness and they evacuated you, how, did you say goodbye to Archie and Simo?**

Well Simo,

27:00 Simo got crook, you know anything about hook worms?

**Yeah?**

Simo had to go to the toilet, and of course up there it's outside isn't it, out in the bush and he happen to look down and he had this worm protruding from his bottom, and he couldn't talk. So when he'd finished he came up to us and he's

27:30 very excitable about what happened to him and he's telling Perky and I and I said, "Oh you silly bugger you've got bloody bomb happy you are." We wouldn't believe it. "You're bloody bomb happy." He said, "No I'm not." I said, "You are, you're bloody bomb happy seeing things like that, going on like this." And then he said, "Don't you believe me?" I said, "No I don't." Perky said, "I think you are bomb happy." Anyway eventually he's going to go to the doctor, so he went to the doctor and bloody hookworms all right, so he

28:00 got evacuated out to Port Moresby Hospital, he's in hospital then. Then Perky got out, he got malaria and he went and then when we finished up with the Yanks at Wewak and were wandering back and stopping at different places and still working with supplies and things, cause all our troops were all along

28:30 the coast. So we stayed alongside the river and I said, "Gee I feel crook," and Arch says, "I'm crook Jim." I said, "You are?" He said, "Yeah I'm bloody crook." I said, "Well we'll go to MO [Medical Officer] tomorrow." So we went to MO and take a blood sample. So I turn up the next day and he said, "Which one of you is JE Scott?" I said, "I am." He said, "You can get on the barge, few

29:00 hours' time and you're going back, you've got malaria." I said, "What about him?" He said, "No he's all right nothing wrong with him." I said, "God, I reckon he's worse." I reckon it would be him but he didn't. So we get back to Lae by barge, which is a long way, day and a half and then I fly out with an old Douglas DC3, we called them 'biscuit bombers' because they've got a door at the back and we can load them up with food and drop them

29:30 out where we can't get to, push them out overboard and they drop, they're only a slow old plane. And then alongside they've got seats that fold up like that and when we cart people we unload them, bring them down or drop them down rather, and the others they fold up and you can put more food in them.

So there's about 30 of us or more so were all in this plane to go over the [Owen] Stanley Ranges, they're high

30:00 and it dropped about a thousand foot, I've never been in a plane before, first time I've ever been in an aeroplane and it went down like that, and this is normal things that can happen over there in those old planes. And when it stopped another crash, the seat collapsed and the 35 of us all looked at one another and didn't know what to do, at least we got to Moresby. There was Simo there was myself and 2 days after

30:30 I get a message that my young brother's in the infections ward and he's got yellow jaundice and I can't see him. So there's the 3 of us in Moresby altogether. Simo went home, Arch went home and I'm still there and a doctor that I had, when I went to school I had a problem,

31:00 a bloke called Doctor Sangster and this doctor in this ward was a Sangster. So I made myself known to him, well he said, "That's strange." I've forgotten his brother's name, he got killed flying a plane, Clyde Sangster must have been. Anyway he said, "How do you feel?" I said, "All right" He said, "See that post up there?" about 2, 300 yards up. I said, "Yeah." "Can you run up there and back?" I said, "No

31:30 way." He said, "Well, go back to your tent." And this was happening and they were going to pull the tent down, I was the only one left and I couldn't work this out. And I was not sweet, I was not keeping company I was a very friendly with one of the Nurses and she used to invite me up to the nurses quarters where they sit out under this

32:00 nice little pergola sort of thing and they have biscuits and a drink and all this sort of thing, of an evening cause this nurse was interested in me, she was quite a nice kid, she'd come from Sydney and she'd say, "Well come up and have a drink?" I'd say, "Yeah I'll come up and have a drink, it's better than sitting in this bloody old tent." Anyway I said, "It's about time I went I think," and I had to go and see the doctor and he said, "Yes you can go." He said,

32:30 "You've been crook," he said, "You get crook of a night time and all that." "I don't at all." But this nurse was on the night shift and she was putting down all sorts of things to keep me there, bugger it I didn't know this until the doctor told me. So I said to her, "You've been keeping me here." She said, "Yeah, didn't you like it?" I said, "Yeah if it have been in civilian life I reckon it would have been good." So I honked home and they pulled the tent down, bloody funny it was. So we went home, I went home then and

33:00 had leave and then I become 'B class', which made me unserviceable for any more action. So I played around there with another company for a long time and just fiddled around and I'd go home, I'd get permission to go home and help Dad for 6 weeks, harvest leave. Leave wasn't any trouble to get, and then I was going

33:30 AWL because nobody seemed to care, bugger me, didn't bugger me they could care, so I was going AWL until they said, "We've got a job for you." So they put me on a truck and I had to go from Marion Road where it crosses Anzac Highway, where just around the corner up a bit further there's an old house, it's still there, big house. I don't know whether

34:00 it's opposite the church or not, somewhere up there on the right hand side. And that was our base and they put me on this truck to go out to the airport, that's out at, the airport out, oh what's the airport out there?

#### **Parafield?**

What?

#### **Was it Parafield, was it at Parafield?**

Parafield yeah, God come on, Parafield. "Go out to Parafield and pick up all the troops or anybody that lands there and distribute around

34:30 the town." And then the officer would say, "Then drive me into town." They're going in for a bit of a booze up and they'd say, "What are you doing?" I'd say, "Just waiting for orders." "Oh," he said, "Well just drive us into town." I was just a run about with a truck, I was getting a bit jacked off so I didn't want this because it held me up going AWL, messed up my set up you see. So next time

35:00 I got 2 officers in the truck and were going to town and I'm all over the road, one side of the road to the other and this bloke said to me he said, "Are you all right?" I said, "Oh yeah I'm all right." He said, "Well what are you wobbling for?" "Am I wobbling?" I said, "I don't know whether I'm wobbling or not." He said, "Yeah you're one side of the road to the other." I said, "Well I'll tell ya what I've had that much malaria that the lights, I can't see properly with the lights, the lights come on and I shoot over that light and I shoot back to that light."

35:30 Anyway the next morning I get called up to say that "You're finished driving," which I wanted to be finished driving so I got, I did that for about oh 4, 5 months, but it held me up, I wasn't doing anything just sitting around. So eventually they gave me 6 more weeks leave to go and help Dad, and I come back

36:00 and then eventually they decided they were giving me away so that finished in the.....

**So when were you discharged then?**

Discharged in January 1945.

**So how was it coming back to civilian life after the army?**

Oh difficult in a way because there's no young people around I suppose, my age concern,

- 36:30 and there drifting back, drifting back. There was plenty of good jobs around, cause everybody wanted people, but I stayed with Dad and just worked around the place for 12 months until one particular person, what was happening see when I went away they were all horse drawn vehicles as far as working on the land, we had
- 37:00 2 horses, or 3 horses working our property. But there was no tractors because the war interfered with the tractors so they had a Works Council that you, that they came up the Murray and they said, "We'll get some tractors from America and appoint somebody to do all your horticultural work for you because you can't do it." So that's
- 37:30 what they did and they appointed 3 in our area and it was strange they were all Shabell, Shepparton and Scadden, between them they had 11 tractors and they never went to war, they could of, they never went to war and I understood after a while why. So when I came home, Shabell he asked me do I want a job? And I said, he wanted a tractor driver,
- 38:00 and I said, "Not really." I said, "I don't want a permanent job tractor driver." "What do you want?" He said, "Can you come and do it for 6 weeks so I can have a spell?" Well "6 weeks won't hurt me," so for 6 weeks I drove his tractor around and done the work for him and every hour I'd say to me self, 15 shillings it costs to me about 3 shillings cost of petrol about this and then
- 38:30 that bloke's got that part down there and everyday I'm earning him such and such and in a week I'm earning such and such and in a month I'm earning such and such. And I went home to my wife, I got married, we got married, got married before I got out, and Dad had 2 houses, we did this one up and we lived in that. And I went home and I said to her I said, "Do you know we could be pretty well off if I could take over that business."
- 39:00 So I thought about it, I could of stayed with Dad and I should of, looking back on it I should of bought the place off him, 3,000 pound was a lot of money then, but I could of. Then I said to Shabell, I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "Oh I'm buying a block," he said, "I've had me run in this game." I said, "Okay well I've just bought a new tractor,
- 39:30 I got the powers that be to get me a new tractor, cause I'm the first one home from the war that wants to be involved in this and they helped me and I've got a tractor and I've got equipment so I don't want any more tractors." He said, "All right," he said, "Well you can have all the clients." I said, "Okay," take all me clients. And then Dad decided he'd give the block away so I
- 40:00 said, "I'll buy your house," so I bought his house and I paid 740 dollars I think for his house, pounds, wow dollars. I paid for my tractor and equipment, I walked out of the packing shed with a bill of around about 700 pound for the tractor and cultivator and a few things. And I took on this
- 40:30 contracting job and I found out it was 14 hours, sometimes I'd leave at dawn and I'd come home at dark and the work was there and I had 2 years before I went to Loxton, they were just developing Loxton then, putting divisions in and fences and posts and pipelines for water. And I worked my stomach out, but it was good work
- 41:00 I didn't mind it because I was getting good money and then I bought a 705 pound new utility and I went over to Loxton in July 1948.

**Well we'll have to leave it there because we've got to change tapes?**

Yeah so from then on I stayed with it, very good money, no wonder they were.....

## Tape 10

- 00:31 **Well Jim coming home you mentioned earlier on in the day you were 6 left of 60?**
- Pardon?
- 6 men left out of 60 in your area or is that?**
- 6?
- 6 men left?**
- Left what?

**Okay I'll ask a different question, just tell me a bit more about the soldiers**

**01:00 Settlers block and the Repatriation Scheme?**

Oh well they came out and they were going to do what they did after the First World War and that was Loveday, Winkie, Monash and Berri to settle the war service people in on fruit blocks. And so quite a big area and that's the First World War, so the Second World War came and they added a bit to that

01:30 at Loveday, Loveday was a settlement for war service, not a lot of people there, 20, 30 perhaps. But Loxton was the biggest, that was over 400 so they bought farms and cut it all up into small allotments and they were busy putting pipelines and all that through it. And then at Cooltong was another one outside of Renmark, so that was the area that they were coasting along to put returned soldiers on it. And so what you had to do was to then fill out a form and

02:00 that went back to the government and then they came along and had an interview with you and asked you different questions, "What your ability is, married with kids and what your experience is and where you worked," and all this sort of caper. So when that was all finished with then they'll send you a letter to say where you go,

02:30 they're opening up the first lot in Loxton with 66 blocks that they would open up in 1948, July 1948, you'd be notified. But the interesting part about all this was I was doing very well with what I was doing and I could of bought any block in Berri area, which I look back on and I should of. But because it was a new area, it's going to have permanent spray

03:00 systems instead of the old furrow system where you had to get up every so many hours and go down and change it all over and all this, we'd turn the tap on and the sprinklers would come on and you'd only have to water that system, the way it was and it sounded very good. But what was happening to me was I was going very well in what I was doing, the tractor work. So I went along and I had this interview,

03:30 I don't know how I got it quite frankly and this, when your dealing with people and when they send a committee out to interview people, I think they should interview people that know something about what their talking about and not just plain just straight out office clerks to go and investigate what you doing on the land, something they know nothing about it. This is, I get,

04:00 I get a bit sick of those type of people, not the people themselves the way they are selected. So come along and I had about 4 people to talk to and most were all sort of just asking me questions of what I've done, they know all about this because it's all written down. And this particular bloke, and he said, "You've got 2 tractors?" I said, "Yeah I've got 2 tractors," and I said, "I've been contracting with them," and I said, "And I'm quite happy with what I'm doing with 2 tractors." He said, "You

04:30 know what you want to do?" I said, "What, what do you want me to do?" He said, "When you get a block you want to sell one and put that money back on your block." I said, "I'll tell ya what I'm going to do with it, if that's the case I'll sit it on me bloody mantelpiece for a souvenir sooner than sell it." I said, "You're not talking right." "And that's the way I operate see." I said, "That's fixed it." So I went out there and I wished to God that had worked so I wouldn't have got the block as it turned out. So anyway then you put in a selection,

05:00 you have a selection day, you go over there to the river and you select what you want and it says you are expected to put in for every block in your selection and your choice. Every block, I'm not going to put in, Simo's with me, he's going to. I said, "I'll put in for 3 blocks," 3 out of 66, and I said, "Simo, where are you going to put yours?" "There," I said, "Okay I'll

05:30 get this one, so we're mates." So I said, "That's it." I couldn't care, so I put in for 3 blocks, what happens? I get me first choice, don't I. So the time comes and I move over to my first choice and Simo gets his first choice. And then I built a, I was good at these sort of things I built a shed,

06:00 just a shed, just enough for 2 beds and a bit of room down the bottom to do a bit of cooking. And we put that on our boundary so as we could stay the night, they had places over there for us to stay but your all in a big coop like army stuff again and I didn't want that. So we stayed in this place, old hurricane light for a light, when we wanted to stop over for the night, cause we had our cars. So after quite a bit of this

06:30 I said to Simo I said, "We'd better leave our cars home for our wives and we'll buy motorbikes," so we bought a motorbike. Wasn't a very big one but it was a motorbike and 2 big blokes like us, she was battling I think, so we'd go over there with our motorbike, just the 2 of us and then we'd come home of a night time. And all we done was planting up and just doing normal things, we had no water, they'd come around with trucks. And so then I said, "I'll bring one tractor over here and I've got me own water cart

07:00 and I'll water me own place" and Jims. Well that started you see and then I found out that I've got to water somebody else's, somebody else's, so that meant that I'm in business again. So I couldn't stop over the other side so I had to get out of there and come over, so then I had 2 tractors, so I had 2 tractors working and I'm getting more busier there than I was over at Berri. So when we, we got a hut, they

07:30 come along and give us a hut that we had to put up and then eventually our house, we didn't get that

for another 2 years. But we lived in this hut and bought the family over and sold the place I had. So then I had 3 tractors and I had all the work that was there because the government gave me all this work and I had that much of it. And Simo had a new tractor and he done a bit and that's the way it was

08:00 and then we got out house and by this time the property was starting to look up all right and it grew and I bought another block and everything was beautiful. But unfortunately the pipeline from the pumping station came up alongside my block into the corner of my block and it ran out into a huge channel. And that channel had to be full of water all the time

08:30 because that channel goes out for 4 or 5 mile and the only water people have got in their houses and so is out of the channel, they've got to dip it out of the channel or pump it out, that sort of thing. But unknown to me that water is, a crack, it cracked that channel and it come down and of course I'm getting all the water underneath and finished out I had to pull out half me trees because of seepage. And

09:00 I thought "Oh," so anyway what happened then was I had a bloke working for me so I sold me tractors, we come to town to educate 3 daughters.

**So you sold the block?**

No I didn't sell me block I left it behind with this bloke that was on it, was working for me. He was getting enough off it to keep his wages going and I said to him,

09:30 "I'll go away for 4 years and you can fix this system of watering up so that I won't get it, fix the channel up." So I come to town and I got a job with the government, Department of Agriculture and then I was working inspecting potatoes out at a particular place and the Potato Board came to me and offered me a job as supervisor of the Potato Board. So that

10:00 lasted from 1963 I came down here to 1972 and then I had a blow with the manager, I couldn't get on with him so I told him where to go and I told him what to do with his job. So I went home and stayed there for a while and we had a daughter in,

10:30 overseas and Dot wanted to go overseas, so she went over there for 2 or 3 months and then she come back and then they went to America and Canada, so she went back over there. So in the meantime I took me van and went up to Queensland and my youngest daughter wanted to go, so I went up with her and she flew home and I stayed and I got a job in Queensland with selling furniture and doing up old

11:00 furniture and buying stuff like that, I stayed for 2 years and come home. And then I got a job with the City Council as a Supervisor Garden Department, so I stayed there 4 years, I had a house which was \$10 a week, they gave me a house. Then we bought a nice little shack at Normanville

11:30 so we moved, I decided to go to work one day and said, "I'm finished working." I was 58 years old and I said, "I'm finished working." And I bought a boat and moved down to Normanville and I go fishing every 5 minutes of life, I just get out there on me boat and fish as much as I could.

**Well what happened to your original Soldiers Settlers block?**

After 4 years they wrote to me and I went up and had a look at it and

12:00 it was a disgrace. See after rubbing out 9 acres I planted it up with vines and I was the first person in South Australia to plant up vines under sprinkler and the government and all their experts they got couldn't stop me from or telling me how to control downy mildew, that gets on the leaves and eventually kills the plants.

12:30 And so I said, "Oh you can have it back," I just handed it back, I didn't want it, give it back to them and they sold it. But the unfortunate part about all this was I go up there now, and not long after I did this, they got watering, they water their vines on a pipe just hanging down about a foot off their vines, going down into the trees, they've got little drippers on every vine.

13:00 And I looked at them I think, "God that's what I could have done, why didn't somebody tell me," but you see nobody knew then. And deep down when I go and see all these vines growing under that system I get really down in the dumps because I never wanted to leave, it was my life. It's a free life, it's a good life, you're not going to make a lot of money on it but you can live off it and there's enough work there to keep you

13:30 fit and your free and cause I had to walk out and leave it. But anyway that's what happened and I retired when I was 58 and I enjoyed myself ever since. And I got very crook 10 years ago, I was backward and forwards to Dawes Road and I said to my wife I said, "I can't be bothered going backwards and forwards all the time," so I sold me place, I built a new place while I was there too, built a new place, so I sold

14:00 out and I bought this place in 1994 I bought this. So I've been here, but the funny part about this was I bought that little old shack, I altered it a bit but didn't spend a lot of money on it cause I'm that type of person I can do anything to a house and that was, I sold it for \$63,000, I bought it for \$20,000, sold it for \$63,000, the bloke was down there about 3

14:30 weeks and there selling it and he wanted \$120,000 for it, no \$220,000, \$220,000 he wanted for it, oh God what did I sell it for if that's the case, \$220,000, absolutely, so there you are how's that.

**Well we've spent a lot of time talking about the war today when you look back on those times how do you think your war experience changed you?**

15:00 When I came back I spent a lot of time in Dawes Road for nerves, nerves, I still suffer from nerves, you get depressed, I don't get depressed that much any more, I get down in the dumps quick. Stomach problems, that upsets me system, I suffer a lot from that, -

**This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.**

17:03 But the nerves was the thing that, my main complaint, I get a pension for nerves, not a big one but it's a pension. And its pure nerves that upsets me stomach if I start thinking about it, I find going to sleep, I have trouble sleeping, me head takes over and the things I think about, or things that go through me head of a night time

17:30 just absolutely. I'll tell you something funny, absolutely out of my character I couldn't sleep one night so I said to the wife, it was about 2 o'clock, might not have been 2 o'clock, she got up to go to the toilet and I'm laying there and I said, "Oh Christ." I got up and I come down here

18:00 and I had, he died, I had a bloke I used to go fishing with a lot, nice fellow, and he was that way that if he had a nice glass of wine before he went to bed he'd go to sleep like that and we, being away with him in caravan and things we have even played cards at the end of his bed, it's a big caravan they had and his wife

18:30 would, I'd say, "He's not asleep." "I bet he is asleep," she'd say and he's asleep all right, yeah just as quick as that. So I thought, "This time I'm getting up and I'm going to have a bloody swag of booze." Got up and had a big glass of port, I've got a bottle of port out there and I sat in this chair, I thought I'd turn the television on and I saw one film and I got up and had another glass, that didn't make me tired

19:00 and I'm sitting there and not asleep so I went and had another one, I had 3 glasses of port. And I was as loaded as a bloody cricket, I watched 2 films and I went to bed at 4 o'clock, half past 4 or something, couldn't, no idea of sleeping, I don't know. So I got some new tablets from the doctor yesterday so I'm hoping I can sleep, but that's the nerves taking over.

19:30 **Well when you look back today to all those years ago, 60 years ago, what do you think stands out as your proudest memory from the war?**

Proudest from the war... I suppose there's a few. One I suppose I can look back and said I've got some, I've been involved and met such a beautiful lot

20:00 of honest good type of people and that's where you find good people are, where it get tough and the main help that you get from them during the war I think that is. And then when you marry a person that has so much

20:30 love for you that she accepts all those horrible nightmares you have and you got 3 kids that are wonderful girls, they've 3 good husbands, some of them have been married a long time. And I've got 8 grandkids

21:00 and at the present moment none of them are no-hopers, they're all brilliant - no drunks, no druggies, they're all beautiful kids and I think that's, that is something that I appreciate and I think that's got something to do with my upbringing and the family I've been involved in. My grandfather and grandmother and all that I think

21:30 that's got something, and then I married a women that's got all that love too. And I think I just put it down to that that I'm still going, I've been in Dawes Road and had those two kids run up to my bedroom, or bed and climb all over me and those are the sort of things that,

22:00 I've been so close to committing suicide quite a lot of times. But that's just stopped at times, it's all through war nerves playing on me, yeah.

**And in what way do you think it helped you to marry a women who had also been in the services?**

Oh this goes back to school days and prior,

22:30 prior to war. She, her parents used to live on the road into the Berri school, oh Berri oval which I....

**What I'm after here is how much do you think that your wife having been in the army and been in the services helped you?**

Oh I'll put it this way; her father was a sick man

23:00 caused by war and she has got a very understanding mind about people that have been to the war and what's going to happen. See her father was gassed during the war and he died very early in life and they had a lot of problems, sickness with him, wasn't his fault, it was due to the war. And with me the nerves

23:30 is what really worries me, still does to a point but I've got through this far and I'll guess I'll get bit further. But there are at times when I could have put me self away easy and that's the understanding she's got how far it went. I think she could of married somebody better and she wouldn't have had so much bloody worry than I but that's the way it is, I think

24:00 I've been a worry to her with bloody complaints. But apart from that we are very happy people.

**Well unfortunately were coming to the end of our session today, I'm just wondering if there are any words you would like to put down on record for future generations in relation to the war and your war experience?**

24:30 Well it's quite simple isn't it, is to do away with wars, how you can do that hasn't been found yet. And it's time that people, the normal ordinary people got together and just don't have them. But as long as you've got the political setup that countries have got and when they allow people

25:00 individuals to take over as dictators then shoot them, shoot them before they take over, because we've had so many lately. And that's the sort of thing that we should concentrate on a better and a firmer United Nations, that's what they should be doing, getting in early before the damages

25:30 starts. And you can see around the world today how many dictators we've still got to put up with and their the ones, the thing that worries me more than anything today is Muslims, Muslims, call them what you like, whenever a person regardless of what religion, and they have a religion of their own that can go

26:00 and blow themselves up to kill other people and there a believer of God, they all want to be shot, cause there's no way I could put up with that, why should w? What's a good Muslim, is there any good ones, I'd like to know because I don't believe there are, when they believe in the God that they believe in that they can

26:30 blow up people, they've blown up their own people, doesn't make sense to me. Don't understand it so, and I think, and this is just my personal view we will be snowed under with them in a short period of time, they'll come down from the north and we will not be able to stop them. That I think is a foregone

27:00 conclusion.

**And what about any last words, final words for the day?**

Well I just hope that what I've said is something, there's something to learn by it or you've got a bit of history and I've just told you what my views are and what happened to me during the war. And if there's

27:30 anything to learn by it learn it but I hope somebody gets some fun out of reading it anyway. I just think it's something my wife dobbed me in for, and I dobbed her into, so we'll see.

**Well thank you very much for speaking to us today it's been a real pleasure.**

Yeah oh well thanks very much for being such nice couple of young ladies to talk to. You're brilliant.

**Thank you.**

Yeah thanks very much,

28:00 good.