Australians at War Film Archive

Alfred Mellor (Alf) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 5th March 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1531

Tape 1

00:41 **I'll open the bantering. Well really we just need to start with your childhood. Where you were born and where you spent?**

You know who I am.

01:00 You are rolling are you?

Yeah we are.

Okay right. Well I was born in Joyce Crescent, Canterbury. I have 3 sisters and they were also born in my family's home, my mother and father's home. I was born on the 2nd November 1915 which happened to be Melbourne Cup Day and Patrobas actually I have found out was the horse which won

01:30 the cup. Although it was wartime they still had the Melbourne Cup. Anyway my father was the superintendent of the Canterbury Baptist Church and as was the custom in those days they held their Sunday School picnics on Cup [Melbourne Cup] day. He was at the picnic which was in an estate about 2 miles away from where we lived so

02:00 apart from somebody losing money at the Cup he had a great big win because young Alfred arrived while he was at the Sunday School picnic. They called me Alfred after my grandfather Alfred and they called me Burdette after my mother's father so I am named after my 2 grandfathers. After about 2 days thing weren't going very well with the young chap

02:30 and he wasn't feeding properly so the doctor came and as my mother tells me there was a small ligament under the tongue which was not properly placed so he curled his little finger and whipped it out and then I apparently resumed normal feeding but after about 5 or 6 days my heart wasn't beating to well so things weren't looking too bright in the Mellor household. So he mixed

03:00 a teaspoon full of brandy and warm water and poured it down my throat and I've never looked back so that was the start of the. I, my paternal grandfather died in 1911 as a result of an accident on board a ship and he never saw a one of the 13 grandchildren which were born which was a most unfortunate thing for the whole,

03:30 all of the family and my mother's side Burdette Lancock and his father Frederick had come out from Yorkshire in 1876 and they started up the very famous Laconia Woollen Mills in South Melbourne. He and his wife Mary they had 13 grandchildren also but they lived to see them all born and

04:00 they saw 2 great grandchildren. That was all but it most interesting because Burdette Lancock's birthday was on the 25th of October, he married in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne on 25th October, his birthday and on the 25 October in Salisbury in South Australia my father was born. Most remarkable. So that was the,

04:30 was the Lancock side of it for the time being in our little story. My sister Ruth was born 18 months after I was and Joan arrived about 5 years after I was born. Margaret arrived 18 months after that. On my 6th birthday I didn't receive any presents although I think I got a couple from my mother and father.

05:00 It was arranged by another of the parents of the boys and girls that were coming that all the presents would be going to the Uralla Hospital for crippled children in Charlton. So on Christmas Eve my mother and I took the presents to the hospital and gave them to matron and they were distributed the next day of course on Christmas Day when Father Christmas arrived.

05:30 to the kids but I can always remember the unfortunate children that were disformed or disfigured or not quite right and they, neurological problems with the brain and so on. I always remember that. So that was that. I attended

06:00 a little school called St Uthers in Canterbury in 1922 and then about that time there was formed a new

school called Carey Baptist Grammar School. It was the first Baptist School in Australia ever to be formed. My mother being pretty close to the Baptist Church in Canterbury there were well aware that the school was going to be formed and as I was rising

06:30 7 it was about time I had to go to another school so they put me down for Carey and I started there as a foundation scholar on 23 February 1923 with another 68 boys. It was an the start of something very wonderful because as you will see when we progress and as someone once said

07:00 many years later I probably never left Carey. I never taught there or anything like that but that will develop as we proceed. I left the school in 1933 and not the most brilliant of, brilliant academic characters although I did manage to get leaving honours

07:30 but sport was my great attraction and the last 2 years of school I was captain of the athletics. I also received colours for athletics football and tennis and I was a prefect in those last 2 years so I took a pretty hectic part in the school activities and as I say there were only 68 boys started. When I left about 250.

08:00 I, during that period I did have 2 years in the boarding house. My mother and father were in Queensland for some time and they put me in and I enjoyed it so much that I stayed a boarder and I used to come home for weekends which wasn't a bad idea. I had a good shower or bath and a good feed of course, not that the boarding house was awful but it wasn't quite as nice as home.

08:30 During that period my mother also had a very serious illness. She almost died of a pneumonic, of pneumonia but managed to recover. I left school not knowing what in the world to do. My father he was a manufacturer of woollen textiles. Mainly outerwear,

09:00 underwear. Mainly swim suits, bathing gowns as they used to call them also pullovers and socks and singlets and what have you and during the war of course he was manufacturing these things specifically for the troops so he never saw war service. I finally

09:30 got a job with a J B Ware & Sons, a stockbroking firm. I started there in March 1934. I knew nothing about stockbroking. I didn't really know much of what they were doing anyway but that wasn't the point. I had something to do. I was licking stamps and running messages all around the town and every Monday morning I had to go in and change

10:00 the blotting pad in higher ups in the firm, the partners. Refill the inkwells. That wasn't a very arduous job because I was once a monitor in school of course in the classroom and I was accomplished in filling ink wells. Anyway the year passed until Christmas Eve and the office manager summoned me and he said 'The senior partner

10:30 Ricketson wants to see you at 5.00'. Well it occurred to me that the senior partner would want to see me to sack me and that would be the prerogative of the office manager but I still had a day of wondering. Well he was a very aviril sort of man and he had the general manager with him and he said 'I'd like to know something a reaction that you or

11:00 your family may have. The general manager is going to London on the 19th of February 1935 and we want you to go to London office for 2 years experience.' Well that wasn't too bad a Christmas present because I was only 19 and I did go to London for experience. Well perhaps we will come back to that. Come back to the family. My grandpa

11:30 and grandma Lancock owned a property on a cliff top between Sorrento and Portsea and it was a family home and they had had a, they had my mother, a sister and 2 boys and they all had their families and we used to go down there for Christmas every year, sometimes school holidays until it got too big and then the 2 brothers they went elsewhere

12:00 but it was a remarkable place because we could see shipping going up and down the bay and the fisherman down below and sometimes we had horses and rode out on the beach and did a lot of fishing and the marvellous thing about this was we learnt to deal with, we boys particularly,

12:30 learnt to deal with the element of the water and winds and so on in the water because it was quite a training. Sometimes we were taken down there for our holidays on the bay's steamers, with Warether or the Hygeia. They were paddle steamers, they were large and fast they used to do about 28 knots and then there was a little cargo boat and that little cargo boat sometimes took luggage and supplies down and on 2 occasions it took the

13:00 cow because my grandparents owned Frognal in Mt Albert road and half the 9 acres of Frognal were paddocks and they had a few sheep and a cow and so the Frognal cow used to go down by boat to Portsea which was a bit odd I suppose but nevertheless it was done. I also became a member of the scouts when I was about 12 and that was a,

13:30 that was a very important part of my life because scouting was a training facility. Also you met fellows from other schools, other types of families and so on and they met. It was a good mix thing and it was a very active troop. It was connected to the Canterbury Baptist Church in that they used

14:00 to meet there for their weekly meetings and the camps usually were at Easter and they were usually at

the Don Road half way between Launching Place and Hillrock [?] and on 2 occasions we, we had 6 boys from the Uralla Hospital for Crippled Children in those camps and here once again

14:30 I became in some way cognisant of neurological disorders. At any rate that was that. I also learnt music at school but I can't play a note now but I used to play at speech nights and a few things like that. Now we go onto. Do you have any questions at this stage?

Oh yes I have. Just going back to your school years

15:00 **you sort of skipped over those a bit. You started, you said you began your primary schooling at Canterbury.**

At a little school called St Uthers.

St Uthers right. What kind, what type of school was that?

It was a girl's school. They took boys up to about the age of 8. It was run by 2 ladies who owned the school.

15:30 They turned out some very wonderful people actually. The Turner family there were 3 girls and they turned out, Dame May something or other I can't remember her name anyway and some of the old boys of, when I say the old boys they were there for 2 or 3 years and went to various parts of walks of life

16:00 and my 3 sisters went there before they went to Melbourne Girls Grammar School.

And then Carey Baptist began. That was the, you were in the foundation.

I was a foundation scholar of the Carey Church, Carey School at least which was founded by the Baptist Church. Most so called private schools were founded by churches and then they,

16:30 Melbourne Grammar was founded by Ministers, Geelong Grammar was founded by famous members of the church and Wesley College and so on. it was the way they started these things. Xavier College of course was founded by the brothers of whatever it was but although Carey was founded it was still a Baptist school. It is still recognised as a, not quite part of the

17:00 Baptist Union but it is of the Baptist faith, denomination and I think last count there were only about 3% of the pupils at Carey out of the 2,000 there who have any relationship with the Baptist denomination but that goes for so many schools. There are 40 different types of religion in the schools particularly with Asians coming in

17:30 and so forth.

So what was Canterbury like? I mean the area, the neighbourhood back in the 20s.

I would say it was low middle class probably if you could call it low middle class. There were some lovely homes because in the land boon that they had in the 1880s Canterbury and Camberwell

18:00 and Hawthorn and Kew to for that matter they grew and they and some of the more affluent people or maybe some of those that didn't make money out of the land boom built lovely homes around that area. It was the railway line ran of course from Flinders Street. Originally it went only to Hawthorne

18:30 and then it went to Box Hill and during the land boom they took it all the way out to Ferntree Gully because there were treeless land at Ferntree Gully which was useless but it went for all sorts of fancy prices. They used to have Saturday afternoons they'd have these lands sales with huge areas of land subdivided and marquees, food, booze, bands and that was as I say before my time but my father remembered all that.

19:00 And there were, of the churches in the Canterbury area itself there was the Baptist Church, the Congregation Church and the Presbyterian Church and a Methodist Church. They were all pretty close together. Canterbury was of course part of the Cambellwell municipality. It spawned Balwin after a while which also became part of the municipality.

19:30 My grandfather Alfred before he died in 1911 he had moved from Malvin to Canterbury and became fairly active in the municipal affairs. He wasn't in the Council or anything like that but he was a voice you could say. Transport, other transport. There was a

20:00 bus that used to run along Canterbury road and otherwise it's just as it is today.

So it was paved streets.

Yes sorry paved streets. Some of the lesser streets were not fully mechanimised and they had as the centre tarred and then loose stones and so on along the sides. That caused me to

20:30 have an accident actually. I was riding a bike down one of these streets and a dog ran out and knocked me off my bike and I've still got the scar across here. But that's another thing.

So your parents bought a house in Canterbury?

Yes they bought a house in Canterbury, Joyce Crescent, Canterbury. They also had a spare block of land on the west side of the house which some stage

21:00 during our my sister's, my younger days they turned into a garden and then years later they acquired a piece of land on the other side of the house and when my father had recovered from his coronary in 1935 and 36 they built a tennis court there so we were very privileged people as children as were my Mellor cousins and my

21:30 Lancock cousins but we know, we knew where we stood. There was no hanky panky. We towed the line. Discipline was strong. As far as my own family was concerned it was a very loving family, very loving mother and father but we learnt right from the early, early stages that

22:00 and as they grew up and that we learnt that perhaps we were luckier than many other people and there wasn't any room for liberties and all the families were the same. We were very fortunate people.

Why do you say we were privileged? In what sense do you mean?

We were privileged in that we were able to, we all went to good schools, private schools.

22:30 We had this lovely holiday home down at Portsea. Probably each member, each family had it's own motorcar in the 20s. I suppose, the incomes were much higher than the average. We were never

23:00 regarded as ourselves as part of the social fabric of society as maybe one would think themselves to be in Toorak these days for instance but it wasn't like that. It was a, there was no display of affluence or anything like that. As far as my family were concerned my mother and father

23:30 were good Christian people, they were active in the church at Canterbury. We were required to front up for many years. Christian endeavour in the morning and there was church in the morning, Sunday school in the afternoon and there was church in the evening. I got a bit tired of that after a while.

24:00 I don't know if there is such a definition and I did later on assist them in the late 30s of standing in the North Melbourne Baptist church but I did have something to do with it being posted overseas. That might have had something to do with it but I became a bit disenchanted with this ritual to start with and I suppose one today could call me a lapsed Baptist.

24:30 Be that as it may.

What were those Baptist church services like? Were there singing and?

Well they were fairly standard things. I mean there was the opening, welcome the opening prayer, there was a hymn and probably the secretary of the church would read the announcements

25:00 and church activities and so on and then the choir would probably render something and then the in the morning service the minister would say a few things to the children and then they were excused and then there would be a hymn and then there would be the sermon. Another hymn, the benediction and that was it.

25:30 There was no, it was very stereotyped I'll put it that way. Some of the churches these days go on with all sorts of things with halleluiahs and God knows what with imitating the southern Baptist of the USA [United States of America] and this is okay, this is fine as far as I'm concerned because I don't attend church any more but that was sort of how it was.

26:00 Sunday was really never a day of rest as it may have been intended to be because these 4 activities and of course, Sunday lunch was always a big dinner. It was a hot meal. It was always a 3 course meal and of course Sunday evening was just tea well of course the other days of the week dinner was at night and everybody had their lunch wherever they were. Be it my father

26:30 at his mill or wherever, my mother at home and we kids with our sandwiches at school.

I just had a thought about Mailing Road in Canterbury and there was a theatre there. A picture theatre. Was that operating when you were a kid?

It was. The Mailing Theatre was operating. There was another theatre and it was the Broadway Theatre in Bourke road Camberwell looking straight down Burwood road towards the city and that's no longer there

27:00 but the building of the Mailing Theatre is still there. In fact I think it is a big second hand shop or something like that. The other theatre was the Rivoli, the old Rivoli which of course is now 8 or 9 different theatrettes but still the same site. And there were Saturday afternoon picture shows. We were allowed to go to certain

27:30 ones as Mary got up a bit as designated by our parents. One the favourites of course was the famous dog Rin Tin Tin and a bit of Charlie Chaplin and a few things like that. Well we lived near the East Camberwell Station and we only had to walk about 15-20 minutes down to Camberwell and also the there were no supermarkets.

28:00 The milk was delivered every morning in a billy. Well the billies were put out, the billycans were put out and the milkman would come to the back door and fill them up and then of course they were changed into bottles but he always still delivered them. The grocer always came and put the groceries on the kitchen table. The butcher did the same. The

28:30 the hardware man was called an ironworker. He had a shop down in Canterbury. There were 2 doctors and 2 chemists. One at East Camberwell shops and one at Canterbury and the ice man, because we had ice chests. The ice man brought the ice in up the back door and put it into the ice chest

29:00 and we kids would follow him out hoping to get a piece of ice from him which he was usually pretty good at doing. The grocers shops. There were open bags of beans, open bags of say lentils and rice and things like that as well as the biscuits. You could buy broken biscuits for a penny a bag

29:30 and the what else was there? There was no problem in getting a doctor to come and see you. That was part of the deal. Home visits were just as important as surgery. There was no child welfare place until much later.

30:00 I think that's all of the shopping. My mother used to go every Friday either to the Peran market or to the Camberwell market for vegetables and then at times Frognal had a bit vegetable garden and small orchard and quite often

30:30 the produce of that would be delivered around to the 4 families. There was a very famous fish shop in the city and frequently my father would, he used to travel by train from the Montague Station to Flinders Street [Station] and then catch a train to East Camberwell but often he would hop off and if he had the change and he would go into this fish shop and buy fish.

31:00 It was the best fish shop in town apparently. Good fish to but of course we had plenty of fish down at Sorrento and Portsea because we used to do a lot of fishing down there.

So this was a fish shop was supplied by local fisherman?

Yes mainly. There was a minor market but nothing like the fish markets of today. If they had their own favourite fisherman suppliers as far as I could gather.

31:30 **Do you remember the Vic Market back then?**

Was the Vic Market? Not very well but we used to go occasionally to the Vic Market more or less to see what was going on. I don't think mother ever shopped at the Vic Market but it was part of things to do, to see the Vic Market.

And in Camberwell Market where was that located?

Still where it is, where it is today. Behind the

32:00 shops, behind Bourke Road and to the north of Riversdale road. It was still, it was nothing as large as that but the Peran Market still in the same place.

So what about your, I'm just trying to get a picture of your childhood in that area. I mean I wasn't, I was a suburban area

32:30 **wasn't it but it was kind of close to the outskirts of the city.**

Yes it was.

Was it a little bit rural?

It wasn't far away to being rural. For instance, there was no such place as Northbourne. Most of the, you know White Horse road well going from Canterbury to White Horse road there were dwellings and maybe a bit of strip dwelling along White Horse road but to the north of

33:00 that there was virtually nothing. It was all farmland. On a Saturday frequently when we were scouts we would go from the hall in Canterbury and run along Bourne road and on Bourne road stopped at Belmore and it was just a track from there on and from there on it stopped at Doncaster road and from there on well you could see the mountains.

33:30 It was all just paddocks and when I built in Northbourne in 1939 I was the second house in the street and to the north of me there was nothing. Nothing all the way down. From that point of view it was rural but it had been, they had in the earlier days they even had vineyards in the Canterbury area. In fact in the area up from the Canterbury Station running back up the hills, up the hill there there were vineyards

34:00 but that was well before my time.

So do you remember the Depression years and ?

Yes I do.

You do? And how did it affect your family?

It didn't affect the family very much actually. It affected my father's business. In fact one of the reasons he went to Queensland was during the, he took about 3 or 4 months off and went to Queensland

34:30 with my mother and he went up there as a commercial travelling activity really trying to sell his goods but it never meant we had to leave school. I don't recall it had much affect on what we ate. I can remember the chaps coming around and knocking at the back door and

35:00 selling pencils and matchboxes trying to get a penny or two. My mother always supplied then with a cup of tea and a sandwich or something like that. The unemployment, the frightful business of a man being out of work not being able to look after his family must have been absolutely, I don't know they were so despondent

35:30 and so, it was terrible but I know that an uncle of mine on my father's side he had a real estate agent at Camberwell and on a Saturday and as the butcher was closing down he was selling meat cheaply and he'd buy, he'd wait to right at the end and buy meat as cheaply as he could and he

36:00 would spend all Saturday afternoon going around giving meat to some of these people that had little food if any in the Camberwell area.

So you saw its affect around you?

I saw it but it didn't affect us. As I say perhaps that's another reason for me to say we were a very privilege lot. It didn't affect the family mills. They were still selling blankets and that.

36:30 At a reduced amount but they had reserves so it didn't affect them very much.

So your father didn't have to lay off workers?

He had to lay off a few people but it really did not affect us. At school the headmaster took a voluntary cut

37:00 of 15% and the masters took 10% reduction in about 1930, 31. It was restored in about 1935. So it was.

Did you know about that at the time when you were a student?

No I wasn't aware of that no. I've learnt that since of course.

Did they alter, did they lower the fees at school or?

No they didn't lower the fees. The,

37:30 it was hard for me to compare what the fees were like compared with the average wage or the basic wage in those days. My school days were the equivalent of 15 pound a term and a bank manager, he was probably on 450 to 500 pounds a year so that, you know

38:00 the cost of living was equivalently down in relation to that.

So what else, what else did you do as a kid? You had 4 sisters,

3 sisters.

3 sisters. Did you have a brother?

No I didn't have a brother. I was the eldest. My 3 sisters all went in the guides. They were,

38:30 Joan and Margaret, my 2 younger sisters they were very good swimmers and they were in their swimming team and my elder sister was a great sprinter and one year she was the Victorian 100 yards champion and they all did well. They all did quite well at school but there was, there was,

39:00 there seemed to be, there was more of an accent, more an accent on the Lancock association then there was on the Mellor side. It could well have been because we didn't have a grandpa Mellor. None of us did but after Sunday school most times we would be picked up,

39:30 or we would walk which wasn't a bad walk down to Frognal which was down near the end near Bourke road and all the families, the 4 families would gather. It probably happened twice a month and we would all gather for afternoon tea and the afternoon tea was afternoon tea for all of us and cakes for the kids and so on and if anyone happened to be learning the piano

40:00 they were prevailed, much against their will to give a piano number on the piano and once that was over then grandma dispensed her shilling to each one of us they were brand new shillings. They were, the Union Bank was the bankers and grandpa used to bring home, they had a supply of, the teller would give them a supply of brand new

40:30 shillings and that went on right up until she died in 1935. Even when I was away I still got my shilling to my mother and then we were let loose into the garden and we would run all over the place like headless WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and the girls used to go and see their, they used to incubate their own chicks and so on.

41:00 We kids, we boys would climb trees and eat fruit out of the garden and so on and away we would go and so on. On other occasions we lot my mother and father we would walk up to where my grandma Mellor lived which was only about a mile away from church and have afternoon tea with them and then pile in and go home, have a roast tea

41:30 and go to church again.

Tape 2

00:31 **So you are going to tell us about your years at Carey.**

At Carey the first few year there I was in form 2 and I became dux of the form which was good I suppose and in the first 2 years of the school we youngsters were in the old house. An old house

01:00 called Geraldurine which is built in 1884 and was the principal house, principal building on the site when it was bought in 1922. There were 5 brand new classrooms built and then a brand new preparatory school was built in 1925 so we all moved down to this area and had a very lovely head of preparatory school. A Yorkshire lady. Very, very attached

01:30 to her boys. Loved music, we sang every morning. She was very keen to make us participate in doing things, making sure, doing things to our advantage so we learnt to be tidy, so we learnt to be dress properly,

02:00 that we learnt to manners were very important, to help each other was important. To play sport, well the only sport we had was football in the wintertime and we had some cricket nets down there in the summertime. There was a very big play area in the prep school.

02:30 She was, and then every year I was in the prep school which I think was about 4 years we had a play. The play. A very important thing. I can't remember what they were but the mother's made costumes for us. It was a very strong mother's group and Ms Metcalfe who was our headmistress she

03:00 encouraged this and the mothers loved Ms Metcalfe and it was a very happy, very happy place down there. On one occasion, it must have been, what happened in 1927? I can't remember but the whole of the American fleet just about came into Port Phillip Bay and she allowed any of the boys whose parents

03:30 wanted to take them down to Port Melbourne to see the fleet that was fine and those who couldn't go she arranged with a lady more or less across the road with a 2-storey house and a block out the back which looked right down over the bay. There was no skyscrapers in Melbourne so we were allowed to look at the American fleet. She was that sort of a lady. She was doing things for her boys and when my son Michael started at school

04:00 and Ms Metcalfe was still there and she greeted Michael by saying 'Michael, you're the first of my grandchildren.' Because he was the first of any of the boys she had taught who had come to school and just digressing a bit. I was very fond of Ms Metcalfe. I saw quite a bit of her after school and I went to her 90th birthday and she died 4 weeks later and I gave one of the eulogies at her funeral.

04:30 That's how people loved Mettie [Ms Metcalfe]. Then I went up into the senior school which I think was form 4. We had very fine master at the entrance in Senior School. He was a very good person to have between prep school and Ms Metcalfe and senior school headmaster and the headmaster was a very strong disciplinarian. He really was.

05:00 He was the old, he was Australian but he had spent 18 months in England at a British school before. He was the old English public school disciplinarian. He wielded the cane with some vigour. He got me 3 times to but I deserved it I suppose. But and by this time the school had come up to about 200. It remained pretty static for the rest of

05:30 my time there.

What did you get disciplined for?

I got disciplined for throwing stones and fortunately I was too accurate. At, one stone hit the boy in the face. We were having a fight actually and I got 3 on each hand for that. I suppose the punishment fitted the implement which threw the stone. Hit my hand. Another occasion I

06:00 raided the boarding house but that was some years later. I'd ceased to be a boarder and there'd been a big film night on or something and I decided after the Saturday night show we would raid the boarding house and tipped a few boarders out of their beds and of course the pillow fight followed and of course we got caught. That was well deserved I think. Another occasion

06:30 I still disagree on this he caned me for getting 2% in intermediate geometry and I didn't think that was going to spur me into learning intermediate geometry at all. But that was his way.

You bordered for 2 years?

I bordered for 2 years yes and I went home every Friday night and I came back every Monday morning.

You mentioned that your parents went to Queensland during that time.

Not the whole time

07:00 no. They were away for about 4 or 5 months. When they came back they said 'Well that's that' and I said 'Please no, please can I stay.' I enjoyed the boarding house very much indeed. It had to other advantages. One was I could play sport to quarter to six at night. Football or cricket or whatever, tennis and the other one was I was compelled to do my homework because there was a master in charge of prep every night.

07:30 I had to do my 2 hours homework which I may not have done perhaps as well even under the stern view of my father so that was, that was good. And also the boarding house was a very friendly place and of course you met a lot of country boys. My mother would always, my mother would always arrive with a case of oranges for matron or something like that.

08:00 The meals weren't exactly brilliant but we had one thing that we used to call blow fly pudding which was really a rice pudding with raisins in. The raisins had swollen during the cooking of the rice and the unfortunate thing was it was almost impossible to get your spoon in to get the rice onto your plate. It wasn't too

08:30 bad. I had worse in the army.

So you, so what subjects did you study? What was your interest?

Well I did piano, I learnt piano at school from the visiting mistress, the piano teacher. So that was once a week I had piano. I mentioned but I played at

09:00 a few speech nights. I tell you not from memory I had the music there. I was not very good, not very good. They couldn't find anyone else to play on speech night. I don't think I could find the middle sound in a piano now. I did drawing, I was humanities. I did drawing which I enjoyed very much. We had an interesting drawing mistress. History, geography and of course for

09:30 the intermediate, the public exams I had a language, that was French and you had to do English and I didn't do, I wasn't particularly interested in sciences really. I didn't get with that. I had to do arithmetic and algebra but geometry was an absolute disaster. I know why because I didn't like I didn't want to do it. As a matter of fact later on when I

10:00 wanted to go into the army and I wanted to get into artillery we will come to that later I know but I went to Taylors Coaching College because with artillery you have know a bit about if you are going to progress you have to know logarithms and survey and I wanted to get into all that so I went to Taylors college for 3 hours, 4 weeks I came out doing trigonometry on a slide rule. I wanted to do it which goes for a lot of things in life doesn't it.

10:30 **So you completed your leaving certificate is that right?**

I completed my leaving certificate and I did one year honours English which was pretty good because I really went back for an extra year because I was 18 when I left school. The in 1928 a visit was arranged with Kings College

11:00 in Adelaide. It wasn't a sister school but it was founded by a congregation, a Baptist congregation over there. Anyway that went on for many, many years every even year Carey to Kings, every odd year Kings to Carey and I was chosen to go over to Kings and I played football, tennis and debating and I had a wonderful appointment at (UNCLEAR – Boundria Park) but I went to Kings and that started something which I will come back to later on

11:30 which virtually involved the whole family in many ways and then I went back in 1932 with the team and stayed billeted over there and so on but we will come on to that one.

So were you thinking about a career path at that point?

I had no idea. I didn't, I really hadn't given it much thought at all. In fact I hadn't given it any thought at all.

12:00 **What was your father saying to you?**

What was he saying?

What was he saying to you about possible careers?

Well he really wasn't saying much at all. I did know what I didn't want to do. I didn't want to become a textile manufacturer and he was aware of that and I was the only son but he understood that. He realised that okay if that's what he doesn't want to do

12:30 then no doubt something else were. We were not encouraged at school in those days to endeavour find something to do except the science boys. Well they knew what they wanted to do. They wanted to go to university because they were doing chem science and maths and that was there bent anyway. Where they ended up in what branch of sciences is another matter. So no, there might have been I don't know how.

13:00 I can't speak for the other fellows and when I did leave school Dad said 'Well what are you going to do?' and I said 'As you know with great respect I don't want to come to South Melbourne and make outerwear and underwear and so on.' He said 'That's all right. We'll have to get a job won't we.' I'll come to that in a moment. 1932 and 33 were great years at Carey for me. I was a prefect.

13:30 I had won the athletics championships for 13, 14, 15, 16 and I was in the tennis team and I was in the football team, I was in the cricket team and I was in the swimming team. I was in the 5 team. I was the first Carey boy to be in all 5 teams so can you really understood perhaps that work wasn't a priority. Schoolwork wasn't a priority.

14:00 I was a member of the school magazine committee, the library committee and the Christian Union. The Christian Union was set up there. There was no Chaplain really. We used to have visiting ministers who would come and teach religious education I think they used to call it which was scripture in other words.

14:30 **That's extraordinary in those interests and involvement. How, I mean you must have been a very outgoing social kind of person were you?**

I was at school I think yeah. Well we were a small school. We knew, just about knew everybody and as we grew up and got up into the senior school

15:00 well we didn't know much about the prep school. We were the big boys I suppose anyway and I had very good, some very good masters. The vice principal he went on and become head of Kings that why these competitions started and Reverend Headley-Sutton came. He had been a missionary

15:30 and a teacher in the mission field in Bengal and he came the vice principal of Carey. A very wonderful man and a man of great understanding of, he had a great sense of humour. He taught us how to laugh about Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and I don't think anybody had laughed so much in an English lesson but he told us the funny side

16:00 of things. It was dry stuff. Well we thought it was once and he was very understanding. He was a very understanding man. He acted as headmaster for one year. He was very good indeed. He was a person that a lot of old grammarians after they left school would go to his home and see him. He was just near the school and so on and

16:30 he, he was called Blossom because there was a show on at the Tivoli Theatre and some character, some clown was called Blossom. I don't know, he wasn't a, Sutton wasn't a clown but he got Blossom somehow. So he was a wonderful man. S L Hickman, we were come to him again when we are talking. He became the first junior master of the Foundation Carey

17:00 and he taught French and geography and English and he was the assistant sports master. He became the sports master and he was a great fellow. He was a good disciplinarian and a very understanding person at all levels of things at school and he left in 1932 and when he left everybody was really disappointed but we'll come back to that because there is a big story there.

17:30 Steele taught Latin and I didn't do very well for Latin so he thought I had better drop Latin and the alternative to Latin you might find extremely strange was bookkeeping. You couldn't have 2 poles apart of 2 subjects so I took up bookkeeping. He was upset because I didn't do any good at Latin but again he probably knew

18:00 that I didn't want to learn it. You do with these things don't you.

Okay so you went on to get this job at J B Wares and you told us about being at the bottom of the pile and the office boy and so forth. So tell me about your progression through that company.

Well then I was office boy for a couple of months and learning the way to go through buildings and short cuts and so on

18:30 and then they put me in the script department which dealt with all the handling of the share documents and the bonds and so on. I was in that section for a while and then I went over to the stock exchange and some of the brokers had telephone boxes in the basement of the stock exchange and we had to have the box always manned because no one except members or stock exchange staff

19:00 could go into the trading room of the stock exchange. It was not possible at all so and there was a considerable amount of dealing between the other states because each stock exchange in each state was autonomous to itself and they had their own market and many quoted much the same stocks as we did in Melbourne so there was buying and selling, buying in Melbourne and selling the margin in Sydney

19:30 or on the other hand buying in Sydney and selling in Melbourne and that sort of thing so there was a, the Wares phone box was pretty busy because they were dealing with Perth, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane, mainly Sydney of course. Adelaide was all the mining stocks so I had a stint over there and then I was back in the office for about 2 months I suppose doing various jobs around the place

20:00 before Stanleyforth Ricketson gave me his Christmas present. Now there were conditions. One was they wouldn't pay my fare. That was all right. My grandmother sorted that out. It was 210 pounds return. I didn't come that way but the return is another story. Anyway and

20:30 he said while you are there I would like you learn shorthand and typewriting because he said 'I'm leaning to the fact that it could be an advantage to have a male assistant and perhaps if you measure up, no promises of course Alfred, no promises but maybe something could work out.' And he said, what else was there? He said 'One of our boys is over there at the moment.

21:00 We know that there is accommodation diggings for, where there is a bedroom there for you with other facilities and it's being held and the other thing is your salary at the moment is 25 shillings it will go up to 2 pound sterling and you will get 2 pounds a week living allowance and Mr Lourman is going to London as I told you on the

21:30 ship and he is going to stay in England for quite some time. There are 2 managers over there, 2 joint managers and there is about 14 staff in the London office. So that was the story. No doubt you want to talk to your parents over Christmas.' There was great joy over Christmas I can tell you certainly as far as I was concerned. It was all set, that's okay. So I sailed on 19th February 1935 on the Otranto. The Lourmans were on

22:00 board and George said to me, Mr Lourman said to me 'Look we travel very quietly. We will be on C deck most of the time and we don't go down to breakfast but we would like to see you from time to time. You have a good trip.' I did actually. So that was that. 2 days before I sailed by father had a coronary. So what to do

22:30 and he said 'No way am I going to stop you going.' He was in bed for weeks as they used to do in those days and he convalesced for about 3 months and he lived and he didn't die until 1966 so that wasn't too bad. On the trip

23:00 it was the last ship carrying visitors and officials going to the Jubilee of Queen Mary and King George, George V. There were quite a number of personalities on board. There was the leader of the opposition, Bob Menzies, Joe Lyons, the departmental heads, various people of some note and so on

23:30 and I was really chuffed because one newspaper article said that the Otranto was loaded with people for the Jubilee including Mr Alfred Mellor of J B Ware & Sons who was going to manager the London office and Mr George Lourman the general manager of the Melbourne office. This is the paper. Office boy to office manager.

24:00 Very exciting but also she was a bit of gala ship because of the people on board and so on and she called into Adelaide, Fremantle which of course instead of Perth. She circled the islands in the Indian Islands which are now part of Australia, I can't remember the name of it. Cocos. Bombay, Colombo,

24:30 Bombay, through the Seychelles made land for North Africa at Cape Guardafui which is the Eastern cape of the continent. We had a day in Cairo, portside and at night we went through the straits of Sicily with [Mount] Etna blowing it's top off. It was absolutely marvellous.

25:00 Naples, sea of France which is the port of, the great gambling place, Monte Carlo. So we had a day in Monte Carlo and a night at Monte Carlo. Black tie job in the casino we were only just let in because it is usually black tie and tails, passports to get in. Sea

25:30 of France, Marseilles, Gibraltar, the Island of Palma and then we made land for Plymouth and couldn't see it because the whole of the coast of the English Channel was in deep fog anyway they always used to call at Plymouth to offload the mail because they used to put the mail on the train straight up to London and save a couple of days. And then around

26:00 and I got off at Tilbury. On board was a family, the Nicholas family of Aspro and the father and mine, Alf Nicholas were great friends and he said to my father 'We'll look after him.' As a result Maurice, his son and I had a table to ourselves in the dining room. Everywhere the Nicholas' went on shore I was one of their party which of course was absolutely wonderful, absolutely wonderful

26:30 and there was others. Maurice's sister, there were 2 sisters from Sydney and another girl from Sydney and another fellow from Melbourne and there was about 6 or 7 of us and we had a most wonderful time on the trip over. We really did. We had lots and lots of fun.

Was it a very luxuriant ship? The accommodation and

27:00 She was about 16,000, 20,000 tonnes. She was commissioned around about 1912 I think, something like that. She was very comfortable. I wasn't on cockroach alley. I was on E deck. Every alleys have cockroaches on board those ships at any rate. I did have a porthole but it had to be closed when things got too rough and I had it to myself so that wasn't too

27:30 bad. Baths were seawater baths and the, you, every cabin had its steward. Stewards for a lot of cabins and they'd make your bath in the morning that was the luxury part of it of course.

So warm seawater?

Warm seawater. There was no swimming pool but they swung a canvas sort of thing between the masts where you could have a dip

28:00 and of course we crossed the line with King Neptune coming aboard and that sort of thing. Gala nights and.

That was a bit of theatre was it?

That was very wonderful. Absolutely wonderful and I never forget going into the King Tutankhumen's museum in Cairo. I couldn't believe my eyes. The wealth of gold

28:30 and enamel, 2,000 and 3,000 years old and you could see it. Beautiful sarcophagus. It was wonderful, truly wonderful. So that brought me down with a thud. My fellow lodger met me at Tilbury and he had been waiting all day because the ship was late because of the fog and I think we got our diggings at about quarter past 4 in the morning right on the other side of London.

29:00 **So did the luminaries on ship did they mingle? Did they mingle freely?**

Yeah, she was quite a big ship. She was not stuffy like the liners are of today. Oh yes, quite a bit of coming and going. We youngsters, you know we 17 to 21 years old I suppose amongst us the 6 or 7 of

29:30 us. We had a lot of fun. We played a lot of deck coquet together and usually chatted and every lunch time we would gather around the canvas swimming pool and have our lemonades or whatever it was and coming in and then I met, I met a very fine young man he was a bit older than we were. He joined the party at Colombo

30:00 and here's another story because he featured through my life later on.

Okay so you got to Tilbury.

I got to Tilbury. Tilbury was the London port for the P&O orient line ships and the HMS Otranto was an orient line ship. Nearly all their ships began with the letter 'O' and they were black and white. Black hull and white. The P&O ships they were all white.

30:30 So I was, I had arrived and take my position of general manager of Wares, London office and anyway I was in. The house I lived in was a 2-storey house. There was a great row of terrace houses on a bend of a street near

31:00 the western Norwood Station which is south of London and it was owned by Mrs Dickson and she took in lodgers. She had one son living there. There was Alan Carter, another lodger and myself. We all had our own bedrooms and we shared the bathroom and Mrs Dickson couldn't understand why we 2 Australians wanted to have a bath more than once a week but soon educated her that that was the custom in Australia

31:30 and she didn't mind after a while. It cost me 35 shillings of my 2 pound living allowance. My fare cost me about 3 shillings a week. I was running short. Alan Carter and I we used every weekend to our great advantage. We went here and we went there and I remember one Sunday in the advertisements said 'Spend a day in France' so we got the boat,

32:00 we got a train over from Dover to Boulogne and Boulogne was France. It was a bit of a port, a small port, mainly a cargo port. Anyway we drank our vino and sat on the wharf crunching French loaves or something and we had a great day out in France. So we were usually home for dinner at night. We were rarely home

32:30 for Saturday or Sunday lunch. It was plain food. I never really liked brussel sprouts since because she didn't know how to cook brussel sprouts. There was plenty of cabbage and cauliflower. Occasional carrots, lots of potatoe, corned beer and sometimes mutton but we lived. What for 35 bob a week including a bath every day if you wanted it.

33:00 She was a great old soul. We used to pull her leg about Australia and tell her stories about various things. Some of which were pretty apothecial if I might add but she enjoyed. She was a nice old thing.

So what was your work there?

I started, again I was now the messenger. Every morning I used to have to go the bank of Australasia

33:30 The office was 39 Lombard Street which was not far away from bank corner. In fact very close to bank corner because Lombard Street ran into bank corner not far away from the monument and it was about 3 minutes from the end of London Bridge. The train stopped at the junction which was south of the river and walking across you could look down and see the wonderful tower bridge and so on. It was on the top floor of 39 Lombard Street. It is rather interesting

34:00 because the 3 x 9 figures came up. Carey was 349 Barker Road, Que. I joined J B Ware & Sons at 349 Collins Street, Melbourne and here I am at 39 Lombard Street. I don't know if it ever did me any good but it was a rather interesting coincidence. So I used to go down the hill to their bank and that of course became ANZ [Australian and New Zealand Banking Group] and pick up their security box every morning and take any particular messages. They did have

34:30 an occasional messenger who was a uniform fellow who did for other offices you see. I used to do all sorts of things in the office. I used to do work in the script, I used to do bookkeeping accounts, filing, anything that was required to be done except investment advising because I wasn't qualified for that anyway.

Were you getting training?

Pardon?

Were you getting training?

I was getting some training too yes.

35:00 For about 4 months I did front up for a couple of nights a week at bookkeeping and typing classes. Not bookkeeping, shorthand typing classes and that was awfully dreary and these 4 or 5 young people were still in London and the Nicholas' were there and they used to ask me out to various functions and so on and so forth. So that went by the board

35:30 and when I got back to Australia 2 years later Ricketson never said 'Can you type?' He never asked me anything about it and Mr Lourman was a very. Anyway Miller, George Miller, Miller and George Clark were the two managers and they were very nice. I'd say there were probably 35 or something like that. Apart from Alan and myself all the staff were

36:00 English people. There were a couple, there was one girl there who was a real cockney. She had a real cockney accent and she was quite a character. Anyway she had a job to do there and she was a lot of fun. Mr Lourman was pretty good. He never had a son of his own, he had 3 daughters and he seemed to take to us. On one occasion I will meet you at St [Saint] Patricks Station and we are going on a ramble. A ramble being a hike in other words.

36:30 Rambles, even then the English were mad on rambles. They are still mad on rambles. So we caught the, he said 'I will meet you at St Patrick Station and we will go up to this place of Wendover and we will walk all along such and such a canal to Tring where we will have lunch and then we will go another bit and then get a train back to London.' So we met him and here he was standing in a first class carriage with the door open so 'Here we are boys, come on, sit down.' And Alan and I did smoke a little

37:00 bit. He smoked like a chimney and the great rage, the expensive cigarette was named the Balkin Brany [?] cigarettes. 'Have a cigarette Al' so we smoked our Balkin Brarny's and we hardly got going and along came a tray of morning tea. This is the way it was done in those days so we had our morning tea and we got out at Tring and started to walk

37:30 and about half a way along he looked at his map and he said 'According to this map there is a pub a bit further on. Maybe we could enjoy a cider.' So we enjoyed a cider and then we went on and then we had lunch and we walked along this other canal and picked up this other thing and he said 'Oh well, you're not going back to your digs tonight. As you know Mrs Lourman and I are staying at the Cumberland Hotel.' That was where he was living actually which was the first hotel in London for every room to have a bathroom.

38:00 It became known as Kangaroo Corner after a while. Probably the reason being you could always get a shower so we went back and had a sumptuous dinner before being sent on our way. Now he did that 4 or 5 times in our first year. On one occasion he took us up to Henley and we arrived and we had lunch at the little hotel looking right at the finish of the Henley rowing straight and he said 'I do apologise

38:30 I tried to book an electric canoe so we could go on.' This was dream stuff for this 19-year-old fellow. 'You are going to have to punt me.' Neither of us having punted before. We got in and he was a bit like a walrus, he was plump and fat and so we put him in the punt and punted him up and down for a while and parked under some trees

39:00 and then he said 'Let's get rid of the punt. On the other side of the river there there are facilities where you can hire bathing trunks and things so we'll go for a swim in the river.' So we went for a swim in the river. Over and back again. Then the same thing happened again we got the train back and went to the Cumberland Hotel once again. But it was very good and then he said 'In the middle of winter. You have been very weary, you have both had colds I think you had better take

39:30 2 weeks holiday out of London.' Alan went somewhere down the coast and I decided I would have a week in Scotland. So I found there was a hotel on Tarbett on Lock Lohrman so I got myself up there. Third class, third class sleeper it was called. They were just benches and you got a grey blanket to Glasgow and it was raining like

40:00 mad in Glasgow and another train all the way up to Tarbett up to this hotel and it was full of snottish Englishmen up there claiming to be Scots and they were up there trying to fish and anyway that didn't

matter. I went for walks and I spent a whole day out at Obain at the Highlands Games which was a wonderful show. A magnificent day and about in the middle of week I went in to

40:30 dinner one night and to my extreme surprise there was my Uncle Ted and Aunty Doris Lancock sitting there. They didn't even know I was there and I didn't even know they were in England. They were touring up around Scotland and so on and so forth and they shoofed off the next morning. So I went back to London and I bought a 8 ounces of

41:00 Scottish cloth. That wonderful Scottish cloth. What do they call it? Anyway took it back to London to have it made up and when I got back to London I had about twopence halfpenny in my pocket. Well I had a bit more than that and I had a week to go before I got my next pay so I thought well I'll do it. I got a cab to Grosvenor House

41:30 because I knew the Nicholas' were still there. Fortunately Maurice was home and he said 'Come up' and I said 'I've come to borrow 5 pounds.' And he said 'That's all right. I'll fix that up. What are you doing?' and I said 'Just a moment.' He went away and he came back and he said 'You're staying with me for a week.' So I had my 5 pounds and went back home and got some gear and stayed at Grosvenor House for a week. He was a bit of a spoilt brat. He had everything. It ruined his life.

Tape 3

00:31 **We are still in London. If you can just give us a sense of what London was like in 35, 36. We were talking off camera about you know being the peak of the British Empire and all that. What was it really like?**

Yes well London in 1935 in particular so we shall start with that was alive with excitement with this great 25 year

01:00 celebration. It was something that hadn't happened and furthermore it happened at the end of the Depression and it was an opportunity for overall release. Bonfires all around the whole of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland I suppose and the fleet

01:30 The theatre was in full swing and some wonderful people coming forth into the theatre an people seemed to be walking along with jointly, jaunty walk in their step and it was pretty good.

02:00 But then of course King George died, I think he died in 1935, he died in 35, any way he died, and at home I saw the proclamation of Edward right at (Bank Corner, UNCLEAR) at the Mansion house. He was proclaimed King in there, near there any way that was that. At Christmas time I received a cable from my parents saying we will see you early in March because

02:30 my grandmother had died and my father was told he could travel, and so they and my eldest sister Ruth came across and they were there for about 8 months. But I was still working. I did manage to get a couple of weeks holidays here and there. They travelled all round all over the place,

03:00 but the tone of London was still pretty exciting, I'd had a winter by the time they'd arrived and the winter wasn't so bright it was difficult, difficult to see sometimes at 3 o'clock in the afternoon they were the real pea soupers, they were the dirty

03:30 yellow stuff that came down and of course there were probably 2 or 3 million chimneys which were belching out coal which now of course you can't do. Sometimes you go to board a train down at Pressnoid [Preston Road?] Station to go to town, there was no way you could see as to where you could get in so you just opened the door and a fellow might fall out in your arms because it was so packed anyway. So that went on and then when my mother and father came I left the diggings and I joined them and they stayed at 2 and 3 hotels here and there

04:00 one was for quite a while, they stayed at this Cumberland Hotel. And then I travelled by train straight down from Cumberland which was a marble arched town down to (Bank Corner, UNCLEAR) and then on to the office. Rumours were flying more and more about Edward and Mrs Windsor, and Mrs Simpson at least, it wasn't Mrs Windsor then.

04:30 and the hotel room I had was on a side street and a big block of apartments on the other side and frequently you'd see the royal car outside and that's where, that's where Mrs Simpson was staying and of course things got worse and worse, never once, there was only one radio station that was national, never once anywhere in any newspaper anywhere in Great Britain was mention made of these carryings on

05:00 and it was not until, until we got to New York on the way home and there was a broad sheet on the wharf there "King to marry Wally in June"! And this was in November, 1936. Well anyway the rest, the rest is history. But my mother and father come over there, my grandfather

05:30 Laycock decided he was lonely and he was a pensioner, sort of an old man by then so he just decided he'd come across, well that just about ruined my mother and fathers time over there, so much so that

they sent for a person well known to everybody as Timmy, Timmy had been a sister at the hospital in Melbourne she'd saved the life of Bert Laycock Junior, there was no question of that, she became a sister to all the family, she then became the companion to

06:00 Grandma and Grandpa Laycock, so an urgent cable was sent and Simmy came, Timmy came over and got hold of the old chap, she could deal with him and so on. Anyway in the long run we all came home, we went on the Queen Mary's second voyage from Southhampton to New York, it was a filthy trip, no women were, all women were advised never to leave their cabins for days. They had the shopping

06:30 arcade on the ship was closed the hairdresser was closed, everybody was closed, there were ropes on the companion ways, nobody was supposed to be on the deck, mother and father, My father and grandfather and I we and Timmy we were okay, but mother and Ruth were in a shocking state. Anyway we got to New York and then we travelled from New York and we went to Detroit, and then we went to, on the way we went

07:00 to Niagra Falls, then we went to Detroit and we went through the Packard plant of Detroit. Unfortunately the Ford plant was closed, and then we went on and in Chicago we joined a train carriage which belonged to Canadian Pacific Railway, this is in Chicago, and we went all the way attached to an American train, all the way up into

07:30 Canada where we were put on a siding and we were picked up by a Canadian Pacific Line going out to Canada so we went on down to Vancouver. So we saw one or two things on the way, and then we sailed on the Orangi, a Canadian Pacific Liner she was all the way down to Sydney, calling at, had a wonderful day and night in Hawaii

08:00 Fiji, Auckland, then Sydney and then home and I fell in love with a little girl on the ship on the way home, but I never married her. As a matter of fact things got a bit probably along the lines, so her mother and father thought. Because they came on to Melbourne to and then down to Portsea and we saw quite a bit of them for a couple of weeks, but he came to me with a proposition

08:30 he said look if your really serious he said "There's a job in my bank back there in Seattle" if your serious. Anyway that never eventuated.

What were they doing in Australia?

Touring, touring she was a very good singer, at least her mother was a very good singer, and on board ship at a fancy dress she went in her husbands tails with a sheaf of

09:00 music and went as Padarouski's pianist and won. Anyway we corresponded for a while but that was no good, anyway Sally fell in love with somebody over there and I went my own way anyway, so there we are. But Michael my son was married in Carmel in 1966 at the little church in Carmel, and I sat down in the front row with my then wife

09:30 at the wedding and standing in front of me was Sally, Sally who I had fallen in love with, she was she sang look she had a beautiful voice got her mothers voice, look, just like her mother. Anyway when it was over she, we recognised each other there was no question about that, we knew who we were, but as soon as it was over, just before it was over

10:00 she went, she off, never saw her again.

That's incredible?

Yeah that's incredible ain't it. So anyway we're back in Australia aren't we?

We are. Just to sort of summarise, wrap up that experience. You are fortunate that very few Australians of that period got to travel, got to see the world like you had. What did that mean for you having that, it was 2 years wasn't it abroad?

Well so much so that I would say,

10:30 I have said to all the young when you leave school go because of course they are doing it these days. Go before you tie yourself down and do what you have to do whether it's occupation, profession, marriage what have you. Wonderfully broadening thing, no doubt about that and as you say I was privileged to see things that few would

11:00 particularly young people. See there were only abut 6 of us on that ship and there were probably only about 5 or 6 coming from Vancouver to Sydney and they were all people middle aged and elderly. Oh no, as I said a moment ago before we came on air again I wrote this

11:30 book a lot of it from memory because it was ingrained wasn't it and the fact that it happened to me had never been expected. Any of it having been over there and got that so much of it hadn't been expected so anyway, now is there anything else about London that?

Just one more question. Just to tie in what we will be talking about later. During your time there it probably wasn't

12:00 **necessarily the case that war seemed imminent, mid 30s I guess but were you informed? Did**

you feel like you were aware of what was going in Europe, continental Europe especially Germany?

Yes there were murmurings and Churchill was saying a few things. Nothing taken very seriously. The fact that things that Hitler and Mussolini were

12:30 gearing up for something were never taken. The English public they weren't concerned about it. They had a Jubilee on their hands. They had things to think about. Talking about Mussolini coming over on the ship we came up to the coast of Eretria coming into Aden and Mussolini was then getting

13:00 pretty hectic in what he was doing and we got to Naples and pulled up and right on the other side of the wharf was a cargo ship and she was loaded barbed wire, she was loading ambulances, she was loading vehicles and the Naplean police on the wharf there were urchins looking for money and you,

13:30 people were throwing things over it and everytime it landed near one of these policeman he'd kick it into the water because by then the Brits were not exactly palsy whalsy with the Italians. So even this, I'm talking about 1935, March 1935 so things were, Mussolini went down with his practice run.

14:00 **What about America because later you would met more Yanks? What did you make of the people in the States?**

Well we were travelling I'm, later on I met a lot more people but you will know about that. To my knowledge we didn't meet any Americans apart from the person who showed us around the Packard plant

14:30 and I'd personally being a bag, no really the only Americans we met were Sally and her family and a few other Americans who wee also travelling down so I mean that was in a different way. That wasn't getting to know people, that was holiday stuff but later on I can talk about Americans because I went there a lot.

Okay so we've come back to Australia, back to Melbourne

15:00 **and is it straight into work again?**

Straight into Wares. They had, they had moved from 349 Collins Street to 365 I think it was to a brand new building called Cable Cook and I went in there and started up just after Christmas and they said 'I don't know what we are going to do with you.' They found plenty of filing to start with. In the filing I came across, I had to file

15:30 the reports from the investment advisers interviews, telephone interviews with clients and it was quite obvious from what I saw that, that there were a number of complains from clients 'Look I told you to pay that money into my bank account and you sent me the cheque' or 'I asked you to hold the documents so I could come in and sign them.'

16:00 When the share certificates come back you put them in the bank and things, instructions that were never carried out. They might have been permanent instructions or just occasional instructions so I went to a fellow called Giles Alpress who was the head auditor. In fact he became the trustee of the partnership. He was older than I but I was at school with him and I said 'Look what about this?'

16:30 and he said 'We are concerned.' And I said 'Well can I make a suggestion? Can I be in a discussion?' so he and a couple of others got together and I said 'Look there's got to be a point where money comes in and goes to the accounts department, shares come in from the market or from clients and goes to the script

17:00 department. Something in the middle which tells the accounts or tells the script department not to post it out to Mr Jones but to ring him up and all these other things.' So we worked out what was called the Client Settlements Department and I set up that which I enjoyed very much and I was a success so that's the thing

17:30 so okay that was 1936, 1937. There was usually the J B Ware & Sons annual ball and the day before the ball Mr Ricketson's secretary would come down with the ball programme with certain names already marked on it such as Mrs Ricketson or Ann Ricketson or Betty Ricketson so anyway that was part of the

18:00 deal and that was a lot of fun. So and then I married, I married Phyls. A girl called Physl Darl. We had been going together for about 18 months of something like that and we built a house over at Northbourne. It was not a very good idea in the end but I'll come to that

18:30 and I know it grieved my mother very greatly when we did get married however, we married and we carried on and we had a son Michael on 15th August 1941 and of course by this time war was going. What was called the phoney war was on. Not much was going on anywhere really and then of course

19:00 Pearl Harbour came and I thought oh well, you know I'd better think about this so I did and I went and saw a formal master of Carey Grammar School who had been in the navy in the First World War and he was down at headquarters there because there was a scheme going called the Yachtsman's Scheme by which if you had some

19:30 sort of knowledge of the sea and boats you could enlist as a sublieutenant on probation and you would go to England and for 3 months you would do your course and come out as a lieutenant or something. So I went down and said 'What about this?' and he said 'Well there it is.' He said 'You're going to be awfully lonely.' I said 'I'm going to be away anyway probably.' And he said 'No, no.

20:00 You might the only fellow on the one ships and they might be corvettes or minesweepers don't make any mistake about that. You won't be on a battleship.' He said 'I know because it happened to me in the First World War. I got very lonely from time to time.' So he talked me out of it. He said 'Why don't you stay on the ground? Forget the air force. You've got a son, stay on the ground.'

20:30 So I thought well it must be the army and I wanted to get into artillery and as I mentioned when I said, when I failed in geography I then went and learnt how to do trigonometry and slide rule stuff because I wanted to get into the survey part of the guns and

You had some prior knowledge. Why was it that you chose artillery? What was it about that?

Because I wanted to get in to,

21:00 I wanted to get into either anti-aircraft or field guns. That was my desire to do so. I knew they existed but I didn't know anything about them at that stage of course. And I knew that just to go in and become a gunner there was little likelihood of going up a bit, a non commissioned rank or whatever but if you had this additional knowledge I mean

21:30 you could learn to be in a gun crew because there was this laid down thing that you did that or you did that or whatever but I wanted something that was different. As I say and I enlisted on the December 1941 and then almost immediately and then went out to Caulfield here 2 or 3 nights sleeping in the stands getting

22:00 kitted and all that sort of thing and then off to Puckapunyal.

Can I just ask you where were you at Wares? What were you?

I was still running the Settlement Client Department and being a departmental manager I was entitled to morning conferences and morning conferences started at 8.30 every morning. The Department people and they were chaired by Stanley Ricketson himself. This huge board table, this great round table and so on and so forth

22:30 so I did a lot of things because of that. Occasionally I'd have to do my newspaper morning stint which was having the papers delivered by 5.00 in the morning, mark the things that were deemed to be important at the conference and read it at the conference and so on and so that was an enjoyable part of J B Wares. Ricketson was an interesting man.

23:00 He used to come around every Friday afternoon to all the departments and say 'How do you do?' and chat to somebody or something like that and when war broke out because he had been in World War I and he had been wounded inaction and he had received a DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal] which is next to the VC [Victoria Cross]. Distinguished Conduct Medal is I'm certain than the Military Cross anyway in action and he was promoted to captain in the field

23:30 in action so he was, he had been very supportive of his old battalion. In fact 3 of the message boys they were all 5th Battalion men and he was very generous to some of the chaps from his battalion that were on hard times or had been ill or something like that all through those years so he let it be known that

24:00 perhaps you young fellows you might have to think about this and if you do decide to do something about it and you are married and he'd help to make up what salary you are getting adding to the pay that you are going to get from the army, navy or air force so a few of them did go so that was, that gave me other, more thoughts for consideration

24:30 and so that was that.

Was your considered a reserved occupation or?

No definitely not. No way. My 2 Sym cousins they went into the navy, boys I mean. My 3 Lancock cousins they went into the army. In fact and one came out.

25:00 Actually he was out at rifle practice up in Darwin and he was holding the rifle and instead of holding the rifle and looking along the rifle with his right eye he was looking along like this with his left eye. And the officer said 'What's the matter with you?' and he said 'I can't see out of the right eye.' So bye, he was shot down south and put out of the army. No good. He was blind. So that was that and then a couple of the boys went into the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], one went into the WAAFS [Women's Auxiliary Air Force]

25:30 and my sisters, one of them went to, Joan and Margaret by this time, they were teaching at Melbourne Girls Grammar School. Joan, Margaret was teaching craft, particularly weaving and that sort of thing and Joan was helping in the music department and Ruth was helping at some kindergarten. So when the Japanese, when the Americans

26:00 arrived they took over Melbourne Girls Grammar School and sent the junior school up to boarding

houses up at Marysville and Joan and Marg spent a year or so up at Marysville, up there but then there's another story. Do you want me to break into this part because it is part of the war really?

Yeah, sure.

Anyway we must go back to my visit to Adelaide in 1930 because I stayed with a family called

26:30 Evans and they were out of Engerston by the Barossa Valley. They had sheep and wheat down on the flats and their boys were at Kings College so after I went up there and stayed there and great friendship started because I went in 32 again and stayed with them and some of their boys came over and stayed with us at Canterbury and so on and one of the lasses, one of the Evans girls

27:00 I got a bit keen about but nothing ever came about that so there were great friendships. And John Evans, one of the Evans boys, John Evans had a brother Lindsay and a sister Mary and another sister. John went into the army and Lindsay went into the army.

27:30 John fell in love with my elder sister Ruth and in 1941 married her and went for 4 days honeymoon I think and he went off to his Regiment which never left Australia. Lindsay went into the 6th Division. Lindsay was

28:00 in an infantry Battalion and his greatest friend who was also a Kings boy we knew very well was his Captain and he got killed on the wire at Tobruk and by this time before he left Lindsay and Joan were deeply in love, there was no question in love. Everybody knew it. When the news came back

28:30 this is in 1942 that, 1941 that Lindsay had been killed it was told to her by the minister of the Baptist Church John Morley who was a great friend of my mother and father. He was only about 10 years older than I and Mrs Morley told me that when Joan was told

29:00 about 4 or 5 weeks after that Mrs Morely said 'I have never, ever in my life seen such grief.' Just absolutely flattened her anyway that was that part of Joan's story. She became a famous teacher and so on and so forth. Never remarried, never married. That was there evacuation.

29:30 My wife went and lived, so I went into the army. My wife left our house at Northbourne. We let our house in Northbourne. My wife and Michael went to live with my mother and father and my sister Ruth they were at Canterbury. That wasn't a very good idea. Phyls was a difficult person. She never understood why her husband would want to leave her and go into the army particularly when we had a boy.

30:00 Never did, never understood it. It was a terrible situation over there but relief came because in the end she went down to live in the Lancock Portsea home for a few years. Had some help and by this time, shortly after that our twin sons were born so she had a big handful. No question about that. She did have a bit of help but nevertheless

30:30 it was not good for her. It was tough stuff for her there is no doubt about that.

It must have been difficult decision for you as well.

It was very difficult and really it was not until that she went over to Canterbury to live and it was a while that I had been in the army that I knew. I'm afraid my mother took it, she I'm afraid. I don't mind talking about this because it is well known

31:00 and my mother took the brunt of the whole thing and in fact, Phyllis looked for mother to do all sorts of things that she should have been doing. But that was that. In the end when the war was coming to an end they went back to Northbourne in the end before I came out of the army. So I am in the army aren't I? Is that right?

Yeah. Well this is really interesting

31:30 **but you talk about how it impacted on your wife and the family situation. What about with your parents? What was their perception of your decision? How did they respond to it?**

They were not devastated. They were surprised but not surprised. They knew I had been thinking along these lines and they were most helpful in various things

32:00 such as the letting of the house and arranging for the rent to be paid and all that sort of whatever had to be done. They accepted afterall some of the nephews and nieces were out. They were already right into it. Japs had arrived up top and they understood my reason for it I think.

It seems a harder thing, it seems the older you are. I mean we've spoken to a lot of

32:30 **vets who are in their early 80s and you are a little bit older than that, that the older you are the harder that decision is. You are established with work with family and you want to do your bit but there are a lot more decisions to make.**

I was about 26 I think. I think that's right.

So when you did join up you were I guess one of the older.

Well I wasn't one of the young fellows straight out of school like so many of them were. Particularly after the Japs came in.

33:00 There was a great scatter to join up various forces after Pearl Harbour there is no question about that. Particularly the young fellows who left school and one year shot down over Germany aged 19. Still that's another story. So

Are you going to tell us? You have mentioned your

33:30 **enlistment but can you remember the process, I mean the medicals and the process.**

Oh yes I signed up at the Melbourne Town Hall and I was given a weeks leave because this was right on Christmas so I was given a weeks leave to sort things out and then I had to report and officially I think I was taken on strength 29th January 1941 and I went straight to Caulfield where I got my pay book and I got my

34:00 kits and so on and slept on a bag full of straw called a palliasse to sleep on in the grandstand and then we were shipped up, trained up to Puckapunyal to start training. And after about, it must have been about 2 weeks, 2 or 3 weeks we saw a whole heap of fellows marching out and I don't know where they

34:30 ended up. I think they were going up to the islands although 1942 the Japs were already up. I don't know where they were going. It was stated they were going overseas somewhere. Anyway after about 6 weeks an edict came. Oh yes, with the Japanese getting into Moresby and so on, trying to get over the top there the militia units who of course were called up immediately war broke out

35:00 they and the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] hadn't come back from the Middle East, 6th, 7th or 9th Division at that stage. The 8th was in Singapore somewhere and these militia units had to be reinforced. There was no question about that so they reinforced them from the intake of Puckapunyal or other training camps in other states.

35:30 Of course this to the guys who had joined the AIF was disaster. To be posted to a 'choco' unit was a terrible thing. That was what was said. That was the attitude. But 'Okay you are posted' so you went. I went to the 2nd Field Regiment then stationed at, I got into artillery by the way then stationed at Seymour

36:00 and then we were there for just about a week or two and then we marched up to Avenel which is only about 10 miles up. We camped up at Avenel for a few months and did training and then we marched up to Puckapunyal from Seymour which was a bit of a hike still we marched. We did more training at Puckapunyal and by this time it was determined. The authorities in Canberra and the headquarters

36:30 of the military said there was such a thing to be installed as the Brisbane line and the Brisbane line was a line drawn virtually 100 miles north of Brisbane below which nothing was to be allowed to be taken so the regiments, the Victorian regiments from Puckapunyal, the Victorian divisions, we were the 3rd

37:00 division we were sent up and we ended up south of Brisbane for a while and then we went up to north of Brisbane to Maryborough which is about 100 miles I think and by this time I received 2 stripes as a corporal or as a bombardier as they are called in the artillery. This was getting onto, in fact it was,

37:30 let me get it right. It was August 1942 and the battery commander sent for me and said 'You have been chosen to go to the officer's school at Holsworthy in NSW [New South Wales]. Pack your bags.' So I went to Holsworthy which was a 3 months course and it was some course too. The Regimental Sergeant Major in charge of Holsworthy was a

38:00 former English artillery Regimental Sergeant Major and he knew how to control these aspiring supplicants I can tell you but he was very good and very fair. It was tough going but I met some great blokes. I passed but in the, we got 2 weekends leave within that 3 months leave and one weekend I rang up these girls Maisy

38:30 Park and Eileen Park who had been on the (UNCLEAR) team because we had been in touch from time to time and I said 'Any chance of a lunch?' and they said 'Where are you?' so I went out there and who opened the door but this fellow Ken Casey from the rubber plantation at Penang who had joined the ship in Colombo in 1935 and had become great friends. His father was a broker on the stock exchange so I got to know them when I was in England

39:00 of course and in uniform, airforce uniform. Great surprise. Anyhow he had been caught in Penang. Just before they took Penang his wife had had a baby 3 days before and they got her onto a ship with another small child and he got onto a ship a bit later and got to Fremantle and when he got there he was told the ship his wife was on

39:30 was torpedoed and sunk. However, she did turn up 5 days later so and from then there is a long story about the Caseys and it not really part of my story but he was a great friend of mine and so on and so forth. But these coincidences do happen.

Can I, you covered a fair bit of time with the training but it would be great to hear a little bit

more about that period. Your rookie training for example because this is your first.

The rookie training

40:00 was, was pretty basic. There was a lot of marching of course. There was a lot of gun drill, a lot of rifle drill. There was a lot of rifle practice and there was a lot of learning to man the guns. We had old 18 pounders which weren't that great but nevertheless they were gun. Learning by heart the gun rule book because there was

40:30 a particular way you must operate a gun otherwise you might muck the whole thing up. You might accidentally drop a shell into the infantry or something like that and how to maintain the gun. How to pull it to bits how to put it together. How to pull a Bren gun to bits blindfolded and then

41:00 there was everywhere we camped we had to dig slit trenches and then in the survey we had special training. We had, we went out with the ottolights and practiced surveying in a position where a gun troop was to go, a troop of 4 guns was to go and an imaginary shoot

41:30 where the enemy was in such and such a place and so on and how to survey them in so the officer who was way up in the infantry directing the firing of the guns would have able to accurately say up 25 yards or something like that on the meter of the gun and we also had to learn morse code. We had to learn signalling.

Tape 4

00:30 **Yes like we were saying it would be great to hear a bit more about. We were talking about how you managed to get into artillery which was your first choice.**

Actually it was through luck. I went to Puckapunyal I was marched into the area where they were getting to teach us how to become artillery blokes, become gunners in other words. Same way the engineers were taught to become zappers

01:00 and the signallers and all that sort of thing so it was just pure luck that having done all this preparation that it was useful. And referring back to this question of going into this militia unit where this awful brand of choco was prevalent it was absolute disgrace that it was ever, that nickname, well it was more than a nickname,

01:30 ever got about. Anyway we merged all right. We found that they were nice blokes and they found that we weren't too bad either. It, you soon settle in camp. You find your levels when you are mixing with a whole heap of other guys that you've never known before and you don't know what they were like and the fellows that I met during the war were tough fellows. Some that,

02:00 you wouldn't think they would hurt a flea but you'd swear by them in an action. They couldn't have been better mates in any action and there are others who thought they were pretty good and they would be just useless. The levelling was, that was something that the army taught me. The levelling and the comradeship.

02:30 So here we were. We were up in Puckapunyal and we were up in the Brisbane line and I went to the Holsworthy school.

So what happened get to Holsworthy in a sec. You were up in Maryborough and Brisbane for a while. What were your roles there?

Maryborough we were down in Brisbane

03:00 at Jimboomba we were really staging. It wasn't a camp we just had to establish something. It was the end of a branch for something or other. I think it was just a method of getting up to Brisbane. Took us about 4 or 5 days on the train anyway. So then we did go up to Maryborough. We were there for manoeuvres and joint manoeuvres

03:30 with the infantry and with the Sigs and all that type of thing. Regimental and battalion manoeuvres and lots of it. Lots of it. So that was. There was nothing, there was no war. There was no war and for so long and for so many nothing.

04:00 There was sport and but the battery commander that we had there was no way he was going to let you get bored. He kept us organised and so on.

So it might be good at this point until we get much further into it just to explain what skills you had been learning, how the troops were working, the breakdown of the battery, the way that you would sort of cooperate with infantry and sigs [signals] and so on. Just so we get a

04:30 **bit of background as to how you were.**

Well the you in a regiment there were 3 batteries and in the 2nd Regiment there were 3 military battery

and I was the 7th battery of the 2nd Regiment and we were placed in batteries and within the batteries we were placed in troops

05:00 and there were what was it now, let me get this right. There were 2 guns to a troop and 4 guns to a battery. I think that is right. I've forgotten this I'm sorry. I've forgotten this because I think there were 24 guns in a regiment.

05:30 **So that's, well the breakdown is there so**

8 guns in a battery, 4 guns in a troop, 2 troops for every battery so that adds up. That's right and the of course sometime only a troop would be deployed in exercises and then of course we would have live shoots. Up in Queensland in particular we used to have

06:00 live shoots I think as a battery, our own vehicles and there was the business of feeding us and the business of communication and ammunition and the sigs lines and the sigs and also radio or wireless as it was called there and there would be an imaginary

06:30 incident which had to be dealt with and it was there on the map. They planned this where it was and the live shoots always took place in an area, which was reserved for live shooting. Carved out of the jungle or somewhere or other or somewhere up in Queensland out in the mountains, undulating pastures or whatever and so on and so forth

07:00 and it was just a matter of getting used to doing this automatically as it worked out.

And you were, you said you were a corporal by the time you got to Queensland.

Bombardier.

Bombardier.

Yes, I was a bombardier by the time I got to officer's school.

What did that mean? How did you fit into the?

That didn't mean that you got better meals of anything like

07:30 that. What it means you are a non-commissioned officer and what probably, well you did something which probably the gunner, even though we weren't on a gun. They were called guns like all the other units had their own name. The gunner, in the survey team

08:00 there was an officer in charge to start with and he was the one which delegated the various things. There was a sergeant and 2 bombardiers and 4 of whatever there was. They were gunners, OR, ordinary ranks and we all had what we had to do and there was a fellow. If I recall correctly

08:30 the bombardier was the chap who was in charge of the ottolight and the actual, all that particular part of the work of the accurate readings and so on and so on. This is if I can recall correctly and I apart from that I really can't recall what the set up was, it was,

09:00 it was, it worked anyway.

So you said at this point, it was as if the war was not on for you. You were in training, you were holding the Brisbane line but you said your commanding officer managed to find things for you to do. Other than those manoeuvres and so on how would your time be spent?

Well can we because of what you just asked we have to come back because when we came back from Holsworthy

09:30 the battery had come back from Maryborough and was situated at Cooroy. Cooroy is the railway station, used to be the railway station that you went to Tewantin and to then what was Noosa which were a few old fishing shacks and between Cooroy was about 10 miles inland. It was on the main line right up to Townsville, Cairns and it was about 10 miles

10:00 from the lagoon at Noosa and we were half up a bit of slope and then there was a mountain behind us and so on. When I came back that's where we were. He announced 'We are going on a bivouac' so that was, without guns which was the rifles and all that sort of stuff. So we set off and we had a 4-day bivouac

10:30 and went down in the scrub down towards Noosa. Well there was no Noosa then and then inland a bit through the scrub and slept under the stars on our coats, tarpaulin coats or whatever they call them. Ground sheets and then he said 'I'm going to give you 2 days holiday.' So we marched down to the beach. Actually where

11:00 half way between where Coolum and Noosa is now. There was nothing there of course. So we swam and had a good time and on the way back we crossed the bridge where there was a bit of lagoon. I don't know how these things happen but somebody found a grenade, pulled the pin, threw it in so we had a feed of fish. But's that part of the army. So there's that.

11:30 Then we had a big visual shoot there. That was a big. We had 3 Battalions and 3 Regiments and all these ancillary things. The vehicle people the LAD [light aid detachment] as they used to call them and then that took us around through to

12:00 the 1st of July 1941, 43.

So Holsworthy had been?

I'd been back from Holsworthy for quite a while. I left Holsworthy in November 1941, joined the regiment, the battery was now at Cooroy and then virtually

12:30 until 1943 the commission came through and the rule was once you were commissioned you had to leave your regiment within 24 hours and go and be posted somewhere else so that was fine. So I left the 2nd and I went down to just below Toowoomba with another fellow who was my great friend and we ended up with the 4th Regiment for 6 weeks

13:00 for play, sustenance and some or other. Did nothing and then I got home leave which was fortunate and by the time I'd finished my home leave all these officers mainly of, we were infantry as well because the AIF had come back by this stage were being gathered up and particularly

13:30 artillery officers and we were all sent up to a camp at Sellheim which was on the Burdekin River about 10 miles the otherside of Charters Tower and that was a holding camp for unemployed officers and I was there for nearly 3 months. We had nothing to do. We didn't, we didn't, we didn't have parades.

14:00 We swam in the Burdekin River. We were allowed up to Charters Towers once a week if we could hop a train or a truck or something like that. Charters Towers was very busy. It had been a wonderful gold mining town and Charters Towers gold was renowned. The old stock exchange facades was there, the old bank facade was there and there was a picture theatre and

14:30 there was a big American air force camp there. Well it was more than a camp. The airforce nurses section there. There were some Australian nurses in an AIF field hospital and it was a pretty busy. We had nothing to do. We played cards, we read books, we walked around the place. It was absolutely soul destroying because we got to the stage where we had nothing to do and we didn't want to do anything. We wanted to do nothing.

15:00 It was as bad as that and then 8 of us we got posted to the 2/4th Field Regiment in Port Moresby so that was the end of the, that's where we started a few things up there.

Before we got on to that I would like to just clarify a few things.

15:30 **What did the officers training entail at Holsworthy?**

It entailed a bit of Marshall law, military law not Marshall law. Military law. It entailed training as an observation post officer. An observation post officer is an artillery officer who goes out with the leading infantry and

16:00 if there is a position that is tight or there is a position to be attacked the infanteer officer will call or can call the guns to fire and this observation officer if the fellow who directs 10,000 yards away or whatever it is. I'll come back to the guns in a moment. I think it is 10,000 yards away. The gun is 10,000 back behind him

16:30 so that if the shell will land where he wants it to land. So he has to be very familiar with his surrounding country and in the jungle that wasn't terribly easy. Fortunately I was never a FOO [Forward Observation Officer] thank you very much

17:00 and interesting enough in the 2/4th I think I don't know how many military crosses we got but if there was 5, 4 out of the 5 would be to the observation officers because of where he was. So we had to learn that and we had live shoots to prove that we'd learnt it.

17:30 Not only real live shoots but we were examined, we were examined by the instructors who were mostly gunner officers who had come back from the Middle East and they sort of knew about things so that was. But in training for the real thing we had a huge shed.

18:00 We had a mock up of country and we would have to work out instructions. We were given a brief, a situation, given a brief and we would have to work out how we would handle that with guns back here and it was a question of lights. If you hit one of the what was called the forward defence lines, the FDL, the forward

18:30 defence lines you apparently kill about half a dozen infanteers and you didn't get any marks for that and the gun drill. You had to learn the gun drill off by heart virtually and there were pages and pages of this book about how, not just how to load a gun but how to deal with. How to run a command post because alongside every troop or battery of guns there was a command post.

19:00 and the command post was the person who got the orders or instructions from the forward observation officer. The forward observation officer to the command post officer or the assistant command post officer directly to the guns to the gun sergeant and the gun sergeant would then give whatever orders

had to be to the gun crew and of course the most important bloke of the gun crew

19:30 was the fellow who was sighting the gun to the instructions where the gun had to be positioned for the shell to land 8,000 miles, 8,000 yards away. So you had to learn about that. I ended up being a for a while, in action for a while I was an assistant command post officer and

20:00 then and also we had to learn morse code. I don't understand why we had to learn Morse code and we had to understand what motorcycles were all about. It went through my mind that if I went to New Guinea I didn't know what I was going to do with a motorcycle up there but it filled in time and we were given

20:30 as officers, we were time and again drilling each other. There must have been 100 officers in the course. Fall in and all the rest of it and march around the oval and so on. We were budding, hopefully budding officers and the regimental sergeant major he would be there and he would be tapping his stick all right and so on.

21:00 There was a lot of exercise to keep fit which was important and there was also, there was also for some sort of men. We used to have military test, what do you call it? Competition

21:30 on military terms as to what they meant and so on and so forth. A bit of military history was taught to us. It was full on. It was full on and we had work to do at night as well as long as daytime but we had 2 long weekends leave in it which was pretty good.

So would you go into Sydney itself?

I went into Sydney.

22:00 The first one was when I went to see the Park girls. That is where I met Ken Casey after all those years and on another occasion I went and stayed with some friends of my mother and father and they were, I can't remember where they were now but I had a weekend with them which was very nice. And then as I say we were unemployed.

Which was

22:30 **up at Charters?**

Charters Towers. I went back to the regiment but then up to Charters Towers and it was early December 1943 the 2/4th Regiment were in action. They had 2 batteries up in action over the Ramu Valley and Nadzab and 1 Battery was still important and the regiment headquarters was still in Moresby so we 8 officers

23:00 from this pool and my friend and I were together fortunately. We stayed together all through that part of the war and so the CO [Commanding Officer] was a sort of enterprising sort of fellow he said 'Right oh you guys. You think you know all about being an artillery officer you are going back to school for 3 weeks.' So we had a very intensive school run by one of his blokes.

Sorry that was in Port Moresby?

That was in Port Moresby.

23:30 Then we were apportioned to where we were to go and a couple of them, the 54th Battery and 8th Battery were up in Ramu in action and the 7th Battery was down here and I was allotted to 7th Battery as assistant command post officer. Ross Holes was 7th Battery as FRO [?], he was my friend. Then they withdrew 54 Battery back to Moresby and by this time the Japs [Japanese] had been driven from

24:00 down near Lae up through Nadzab and up through the Ramu Valley and we were cleaning up in the Ramu Valley and up in the mountains and the ranges there and the 9th Division were coming up the coast so anyway the time came and the 7th Battery to relieve the 54th Battery and we were the only battery up there by that time. They'd made

24:30 some pretty good advances so I was up there and we were in action there for 6 or 8 weeks I think. Up in the foothills there and it was very interesting. Very interesting.

What had you made of New Guinea itself? You arrived at Port Moresby and how long did it take you to sort of acclimatised and?

25:00 I don't think I really acclimatised to the humidity really. I couldn't claim I did no, not really. It was certainly, in Moresby I'm talking about Moresby but up where we were we must have been up a 1,000 ft or so. It was still sticky but there was a bit more breeze up there and the nights were sticky and of course you are surrounded by kunai

25:30 grass. There weren't many trees. 8ft high kunai grass and of course, not that it affected me but it caught a few people kunai grass rats and they had a particular wog that fed on them and that was the scrub typhus wog and it killed some people. If you got caught with scrub typhus, if you were bitten with scrub typhus you could say see you later pal,

26:00 up the top. You never saw them better they died. A great friend of mine at school he had a sister and what might have been the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization] then and she was doing a lot of work on looking for a cure for scrub typhus and she was about to inject a mouse and the mouse jumped and the needle went into her thumb and she died 3 weeks later. But that was a,

26:30 fortunately not many did get scrub typhus. Mosquitoes were the thing. They bit you everywhere. You had this awful Atebrin stuff. You used to take Atebrin tablets that you took as soon as you arrived and you looked a bit yellow like you had a liver problem but they obviously did help. They prevented, I'm sure they did.

27:00 But a lot did get malaria. I got it myself. It got it up there actually but it wasn't too bad so I was able to stay there.

Were you, were the raids still happening at Moresby when you were there or?

No they weren't, no they weren't. The American air force was there and they had their bombers there at Jackson Field and they had Mitchell bombers and they ran the,

27:30 they ran the taxi service. They ran the coasters, the DC3, 2 and 3s. Transporting troops and provisions and ammunition to those who were way over the top of the mountains over there and but here are a couple of occasions there, nasty occasions where I think it was a Liberator took off

28:00 and it hardly got, it just got airborne and crashed to the ground right on top of the, on top of 4 companies of infantry. Killed nearly all of them. A few days later another one took off and crashed. So they made a few enquiries down at the Jackson Field and they found the 2 fellows

28:30 who were maintenance fellows on that park bay and took them out and shot them. That's what the Americans used to do.

What they claimed it had been sabotage?

It was, they knew it had been sabotaged. It couldn't be anything else. They found another plane that had been tampered with and it was something to do with stuffing up a particular pipe lead of the auxilliarant fuel for take off

29:00 so it didn't get through to the engine. Shocking. That was the 2/23rd Battalion, 2nd Division. That was why we were there. It was most interesting. The trip over the mountains to get to Dumpu which was the little field where we had to do everything. They took off and we went up and up and up.

29:30 A whole lot of planes. Planes to the right, planes up top and then we got up into the fog, top of the mountain into the fog and on we went and on we went and we used to feel, you know you could feel yourself starting to descend and then we came out of it and there were planes on top and planes everywhere. Most extraordinary. Blind flying I know there no fellow in his tower to guide us. So anyway we landed at Dumpu

30:00 and then I ended up I joined this particular battery and we were on this little lake and I stayed then and then back to Port Moresby. On one occasion I went forward. We marched all night to blast a particular stronghold of the Japanese and the CO said to me the next day 'Why don't you go up there and have a look and see what the gunfire had done.'

30:30 We cleared this knoll of all its vegetation just by dropping 25 pounder shells on them all night long. Every minute 4 rounds went up and so I had a look at that and then I met a few people who I had known back in civvy street up there and it was quite interesting. And the ACPO [Assistant Command Post Officer] of the post is required to ensure that the forward observation officer, it is part of the drill draws

31:00 a panorama of the ground he can see and my friend Ross was one of the forward observation officer and he sent his panorama back and I thought 'This is not going to wear.' Lovely hills near a beach like this. We were in the middle of the jungle. A river around behind it. It went back to the CO and it came back and he said 'You tell Holsworthy to get of his back and get out and draw it properly.'

31:30 So I sent it up to Ross and said 'You'd better do something.' I phoned him up and I said 'You'd better do something.' And he said 'Yes I did. I was lying flat on my back for a week. I made it up.' So any rate I went back to Moresby and back to Australia.

So how long were you up in the Dumpu area?

I was in the Dumpu area about 6 weeks. I think I was in New Guinea, it's on my records

32:00 somewhere. Not long. I had probably, it might have been 4 months of something like that I think.

Is there anything we can say about Moresby itself? You mentioned some of the other areas.

I didn't see much of Moresby there was an American officers club. No we never went much into Moresby. There were wrecks in the harbour and damage around the foreshore and

32:30 so on where the Japs had been pelted it but I didn't know much about Moresby. Just the Jackson field and where the regimental headquarters were, the battery headquarters were and the regiment for that matter.

So you were actually at Moresby where there guns in place there that you?

No, no guns in placement at Moresby. Not it was just a holding camp there. There were no Japanese down around there. They had been scurried out

33:00 by that time or killed but there were a few Japs where our guys were. My word there were. Quite a few. They had a mountain gun up there mounted somewhere up there which every now and again they used to fire down on the flat near the airport, the airfield we would have pictures shows and the white screen would go up

33:30 and it was claimed that it was a see through screen, a white sheet I suppose or something and the Japs would be sitting up in the mountains on the other side watching the screen or so they say. I don't believe it myself but and this mountain gun used to fire occasionally at just nothing. It used to fire. Never came near anybody.

So what was morale like. I mean when you left Charters Towers it

34:00 **was**

It was terrible. Officer morale was shocking. We soon picked up when we got as far as the blokes who came with me to the 2/4th we had the 3 weeks training course and that got us out of any lethargy we had and so on. Oh yes and of course we knew, 4 of them were sent over after the training course they were sent up to 8th and 54h Batteries into action. They went straight into

34:30 but the other 4 who were 7th Battery we had wait. But moral was good. We knew we were going to relieve at some stage so we knew something was going to be on. But earlier than that when the Americans and the infantry of the 7th Division or one of their battalions had taken Nadzab which is up near Lae up the river,

35:00 up the valley they were going to be dropped in by the Americans and our CO who must have had a great imagination, mad as a meat axe at times. He persuaded General Blamey to allow a crew of 4 gun crews with these short 25 pounders as they were called, specially made for the jungle, to be dropped by the Americans.

35:30 So some 28 of our blokes were dropped, learnt how to parachute in. They didn't drop with the guns exactly but they were about 8 miles away from where they landing. It would have been a complete mess if there were Japs there. It took about 50 years and the Americans finally gave with Australian authority gave permission

36:00 for a medal to be struck for these gunners. Half of course were dead by them. Interesting though.

Did they ever manage to recover the guns?

Oh yes they found them. Open area apparently. Well it was open, I know it was open. But they gathered them up finally and fired them up. Just a little bit of these things which happened.

36:30 **You said morale obviously picked up when you joined 2/4th Battalion?**

Oh yes the morale was, the regiment was in action you can't anything better than that for morale.

What about after those awful tragedies with the Liberators crashing and that loss of life there that must have been?

That's part of war I'm afraid. There was another tragedy to. There was an infantry platoon which I thinks about

37:00 30 or 40. They were in a mess line up in the valley there and the Yanks were bombing and bombed them. The Yank just readied the position. As it turned out the American commander of that particular squadron he went right up there from Moresby, he flew in and went to the battalion

37:30 and apologised. Still. There was so many tragedies and so many accidents. We lost 32 Carey boys from the school. I mean the school had only been going a few years and they were accidental.

So how well prepared and equipped were for the

38:00 **encounters you were about to face? The terrain for example, were your guns appropriate, was the training?**

Yes, oh yes no doubt about that. Difficult. Terribly difficult and I had a map you see that was probably 2 miles from here to there and you have to go up a jolly thing and it's going to take you 4 hours. How

38:30 the infanteers on Shaggy Ridge and beat the Japanese I don't know. How they fought on the Kokoda Trail it's incredible, the bravery, the determination and 'I'm going to keep going and I'll keep going until I die I suppose.' The terrain was not good. I was not subject to a lot of terrain

39:00 I can assure you but they used to say occasionally that some of the guys climbing the, had been in action but climbing these mountains they were so exhausted they'd even throw their toothbrush away. These are stories of course but an example of the difficulty.

So when we should spoken briefly about Dumpu and your six weeks there but it would be good to get a picture of

39:30 **exactly what you were doing. Now you were assistant?**

Assistant command post officer.

Right.

We were dug in as it were alongside the guns which of course were in gun placements. Manned by the gun crews themselves. We were the communications centre and I had to keep a diary of anything that happened. I had to keep a diary

40:00 of the 7 Mitchells went over going up to Bogajim to bomb there. 6 Mitchells came back so I had to put all that sort of stuff. Who visited the command post. The padre of one of the battalions walked in for a cup of coffee but all this sort of thing and it went down to the CO and he sent a message back to say 'I've never seen a command post log like it in my life.' I think that gave me,

40:30 gave me or was a reason why after coming back to Melbourne I was posted to regimental headquarters as assistant adjutant. I'm sure that had something to do with it.

You were pretty thorough.

I was yeah.

So what, once you were sort of set up there at the command post what was a typical day? How much action were you seeing up there?

Sometimes

41:00 absolutely nothing. If FOOs weren't requiring gunfire there was nothing much to do at all. Keep it in order and things of that sort. That was automatic anyway but most of the time, not most that's not right but you could go 3 or 4 days and they'd never fire a shot in anger but it just depended on what was happening

41:30 right up forward and what was required. But we had one fellow forward observation officer. He won an MC [Military Cross]. He perfected a new means of ranging. If you've got a target that you want to hit you've got to range a gun.

Tape 5

00:30 When we got to Port Moresby we thought the conditions up in Dumpu were pretty awful but Moresby in February/March was just beyond the pail. It never stopped raining and there was mud and insects. It was just miserable so the regiment

01:00 was very glad to know that we were going home. I think it was late March from memory and I think Canberra was one of the ships that transported us to Townsville. We stayed in Townsville and had about a month's leave for everybody. It was a Victorian regiment basically so everyone went back to Melbourne. I had leave and I suppose we had

01:30 a good 2 or 3 weeks leave and then the call went out that Melbourne wanted the division to put on a divisional march through Melbourne. We were called back and we ended up at Watsonia camp. The division was all over the place. I think it was sometime in the middle of April and we marched through Melbourne and it never stopped raining. We thought we'd had enough in Port Moresby

02:00 but it was a wonderful march and the crowds were absolutely brilliant and then everyone finished their leave and the regiment then went back to Petrie which is just north of Brisbane. I didn't I'll tell you why later. And then the Queensland boys, the Brisbane Mayor said he would love a divisional march so the 7th Division marched through Brisbane. Again I understand

02:30 it was a great success. I wasn't there. We stayed in Petrie for a while. Not long. Only 2 or 3 months and then the orders came to that we were to retrain and we were going up to the tablelands. The adjutant was away at an adjutant school and it came to me to do the manifest of all vehicles and equipment so we would know what was required by way of rolling stock. Take stock and

03:00 anyway I did that and then I went on down to the adjutant school and by the time I'd finished it was about 3 weeks course. It was also at Holsworthy the regiment had gone up to the tablelands and I was in Brisbane I was ready to retrain there and I was just about ready to leave the static camp there and I

was summoned to

03:30 report to a Captain Reid Smith. I knew a Captain Reid Smith. I knew him very well indeed as a matter of fact. He had been at Kings College and we'd fought and battled on the football field, Carey and Kings and so on. So I reported to the Captain Reid Smith not knowing that it was the very Reid Smith that I knew so we exchanged things and 'You're not going today. You're off draft. What's more you mightn't be on draft now for a day or two. I don't know if you know but my darling wife June

04:00 is up here in Brisbane.' We knew June. She's still alive actually. Most of the most extraordinary person. Nothing was every wrong with everybody, everybody does everything and get is right. He said 'Your instructions are for today you are to go out to where June is and you are to play golf with her.' That was rather nice and anyway I stayed there for about 3 or 4 days and I said to Captain Reid Smith 'I think the army

04:30 might be missing me. At least the regiment are going to be. I shouldn't be down here waiting like this.' So I went to Cairns to Townsville to the [Atherton] Tablelands and I was met by the 2IC [Second In Command] of the regiment and he called me for everything. What had happened was in preparing the manifest for the vehicles I had left one regimental headquarters vehicle off and it was his vehicle and I was a disgrace to the regiment, I was a disgrace to the brigade. In fact I was a disgrace to the whole 7th Division.

05:00 He was a sort of pretty fiery character. He simmered down and he bought me a drink in the mess so that was all right. We were camped just outside of Atherton on a very lovely area which incidentally is now on the whole flooded and is the whole Tinaroo falls in the irrigation dam. We were there for nearly 9 months and it

05:30 got a bit boring but then training started again in earnest. It was obvious to everybody especially since we had a big divisional show that things were about the happen and we were going to be called upon again to do what we were in the army for and all of a sudden the brigadier of the brigade

06:00 addressed us all and said 'You're not going. [General Douglas] MacArthur's cancelled the whole thing for which you were destined.' Of course morale it just disappeared. The CO again he was pretty inventive about these things. He ensured that no one got leave. There was no way you were going to leave and woe be anyone who decided to shoot through.

06:30 Anyway so the first thing we did he said 'Well we'll get a brewery. Any brewers here.' So there were a couple of brewers in the regiment so they set up a brewery and regimental headquarters got some great big copper urn and all the equipment and they sent a signal down to some former member of the regiment who grew hops in Hobart so the hops came up. I don't how they got it on a plane but they came up and so they made beer.

07:00 Very good beer and the officers were allowed to buy 2 bottles a week and I think the troops had a free issue I think of 3 bottles a week. Anyway that was that. Then he arranged a horse race in Atherton. There are 2 lakes up there. Two beautiful little lakes. Lake Berry and Lake Mitchum and we went swimming there and so on and so forth and he managed

07:30 to keep the regiment pretty well together and then the training started again and it was quite obvious that something was brewing. To cut a long story short there we finally were being sent to Morotai and the latrine rumour. I don't know if you have ever heard from your interviewees have been talking about a latrine rumour but if ever wanted to know anything

08:00 go sit on the latrine rumour, go sit on the latrine and you will hear anything about the regiment, what it is going to do, home leave or nothing. It's a funny place. Anyway it was okay, it's going to be Borneo. So the regimental train embarked from Townsville in May. The whole of the regiment was on the

08:30 General Anderson of about 25,000 tonnes. She had been built for a pleasure ship in the Carribean. She as an American ship and American crew and so on. She was pretty fast and was escorted by a destroyer when we passed through the New Guinea area and so on and then we sailed on our own for about 6 weeks, 6 days to Morotai. Two meals a day, breakfast and dinner. No lunch. A

09:00 completely dry ship. The captain opened the canteen for the troops once a day and they had never see, all the years they had been in the army they had never seen such magnificent things to eat and enjoy it as happened to be in that American ship's canteen. The officers, we ate in the officers mess with the others. And an advance party

09:30 had left ahead about a week before including the adjutant and 2 or 3 other people and they were the advance party to join the planning party for the campaign about the happen and when we got to Morotai they were, they hadn't arrived. It appeared they were in a heavy storm. They were in rather light aircraft, vessels and they were delayed so immediately we got to Morotai I was

10:00 told to report to brigade and I became for a whole week the regimental liaison officer between brigade and the regiment in the planning and being told what the Balakpapan landing was all about and where we fitted into the whole thing and the code name was OBO2. Don't ask me why but it was. But the adjutant came back so he took over.

10:30 Morotai was an awful place. We thought, we thought Port Moresby was bad but Morotai was mud, mud and mud. Rain, rain and rain. Fresh water was very scarce and we freshened up in the sea. That wasn't very pleasant water anyway it was full of snakes and it was a creepy crawly place. Anyway the planning went on and the whole division left from Morotai

11:00 to go to Balakpapan and about it must have been about 4 weeks. I think it left on 1st July or something like and it left without me because 3 days before that I had been taken to the Australian hospital there with chronic, galloping dermatitis. I was covered from hand to foot. Absolutely, all over my body and within 2 days I was

11:30 on an RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] ambulance plane which took me back to Townsville and I was a sitting patient. I wasn't a stretcher job and from Townsville. I stayed there for about a week while they gave me a bit more treatment and then they took me down to Brisbane and I was in Brisbane for a bout 5 weeks.

Before we got to Brisbane lets go back to Morotai because I think there are probably some

12:00 **more there that you could talk about that you may not have thought of yet. But particularly your role. You said that you were assisting in the liaison between the regiment and the brigade.**

I represented the regiment. Every day at the briefing I suppose you would call the planning for the Balakpapan invasion by the 7th Division and the part that the regiment would play.

12:30 There were 3 battalions and 3 regiments and all the auxiliary stuff and so on and we were briefed on the Japanese situation and what fortifications they already had, underwater divers in there seeing what was what and so on and so forth and where the landing ought to be or oughtn't be and where the American warships and the Australians warships would be sitting off and bombarding for 2 days before we landed.

13:00 All the supply arrangements and right down to the almost business to what coloured hairbrush the troops would be carrying. That's silly to say that but it was so detailed. It was a wonderful experience. I will never forget it and you know we were talking to the intelligence officers from division and the fellows who had been over there spotting

13:30 in the aircraft and so on and so I waived the fleet farewell. There were 256 ships I think in the convoy that sailed out of Morotai but Morotai was not a good place.

They had already done, they had Tarakan, the landing there hadn't they. It was a smaller landing there.

It was the final one at Balakpapan, a smaller one so yes it was.

14:00 **So can you give me an idea of what the part that your unit played in where they came in the landing. I understand it was waves of different units and sections.**

There were. Yes there were. I wasn't there so I don't know but I know that they followed.

14:30 Our support, we supported the 17th Battalion of the 7th Division. They were our lot and I know that the 2/10th landed after the commandoes and so on and once they got a beachhead the guns came in. That was the plan as I recall being designed when I was in the briefing and so on.

15:00 As to the detail I'm not sure.

So then once you had been briefed, you were included in the briefing, then what did you do?

The briefing was every morning for the whole morning and then in the afternoon I would go back to the regimental lines and so on and then the battery commanders, the 3 battery commanders, the CO [Commanding Officer] occasionally, not always, the 2OC [Second Officer in Command], the intelligence officer

15:30 and we would all get together and go through it and bit by bit until we knew and we were, everyone was all the lead officers, I'll call them that, were in such a position that they knew the whole operation off by heart. It was their job to get a hold of the troop commanders and the sergeant majors and so on and so it filtered all the way down so everyone knew

16:00 exactly what landing craft they were on and knew what beach they were supposed to be put on and the plan where it was expected the gun might go but it wasn't known until. That was the plan but they had to wait until the got there to see whether that was available because the Japs may still be blowing everybody up and so on and so forth.

So what was their

16:30 **understanding the Japanese defence? The strength of the defence at that time?**

It was varied, quite varied. There was good defence in some parts but there were not many casualties. The bombardment was unbelievable I believe. The sea bombardment I mean. It went on for 48 hours. The Americans were up top, dropping stuff to. There was a very big softening up. It was a typical

American softening up actually.

What do you mean?

Because the Americans

17:00 loved to soften up first. A lot of American battle victories or skirmishes or what not had usually been preceded by very heavy bombing and naval bombardment. They didn't always win but sometimes they didn't do that they had heavy casualties. The casualties were not heavy in Balakpapan. I don't know what they were I've no idea.

17:30 We had 1 officer killed.

And if you'd gone if you hadn't had dermatitis.

I would have been there. I would have been in my role as assistant adjutant in communications in the headquarters of the regiment alongside a battery somewhere

18:00 I suppose.

Which would have had to be setup a fair way in?

I don't know which way I would have been. I've no idea but I can't remember it because I wasn't there. You've got to be there for these things. But there was still a few Japs on Morotai. They were pretty harmless but they used to come out of the scrub, out of the jungle every now and again and give themselves

18:30 up and it was a pretty docile sort of place.

So there were POWs [prisoners of war] coming into the camp while you were there?

No they had all been cleaned out of Morotai but if there were any left there. But I saw one of the most awful sights ever. I think they were Gurkhas. They were a British regiment up in the island somewhere in a POWs

19:00 camp and their legs were like this stand. There was nothing, there was nothing, they could hardly walk. I don't know what they were down to. 6 pounds or 4 but they were big broad backed from somewhere up there I don't know where it was and they were put straight into the Australian hospital and the sisters crying, the nurses just crying.

19:30 It was terrible.

So what caused your dermatitis?

I think it was a combination of the climate. It had to be the climate. As I say we thought Port Moresby was pretty awful but Morotai. Of course one is in a continually perspiring.

20:00 You are taking atebrin of course. Atebrin never did anybody any good I don't think but the yellow maybe saved you from malaria but you are washing, you couldn't wash in fresh water because it was saved for drinking because there was a shortage. All that rain but there wasn't the reservoirs to catch it. So you went into the sea, virtually into mud

20:30 and washed the best you can. I'm sure that had something to do with it. It was the speed with which is flushed. In fact it was called raging, chronic dermatitis so no wonder they got me out in a couple of days. What happened at Balakpapan I haven't got a clue. I wasn't there. That was the start of the

Were you anxious

21:00 **when you were over there. All this planning for the landing?**

I wasn't anxious. I wasn't anxious about it. I knew that we were going to have a stoush as the gunners used to say. I would have been anxious probably as the ships probably as the ships were coming into land or as I was about to jump in the water with everything I possessed on my back. One would have to be anxious

21:30 but I never saw a Japanese in anger. I fired at one. I never fought in anger with any Japanese. I saw some dead Japanese and a few things like that and I saw one or two walk out of the jungle at Morotai but no. So I mean I wasn't in an infantry platoon attacking a

22:00 forward position with the Japanese fighting you.

What about the preparation for the landing. I understand, I don't know, did your regiment go up to the [Atherton] Tablelands or ?

We were on the Tablelands for 9 months before we went to Morotai.

That's right. We already talked about that. We didn't talk very much about that. We bounced right over the Tablelands. Well just before we go there did they

22:30 **do any simulated like training rehearsals for the landing before they went?**

Not as such with the. We had training down at Mission Beach on landing from landing ships and landing barges. We went right through that all right as units and we also did an exercise down there

23:00 with a battalion so everybody went out and came in by sea on their particular vessels and so on and the infantry streamed off into the bushes of Mission Beach and the guns came. Yeah we had that but it was not simulated from the point of view that it was an exact beach if you know what I mean.

23:30 But we knew how to go about landing from landing craft and getting equipment ashore and getting yourself ashore and what you did. That went on when we were on the Tablelands yes. How it worked when they got there I'm not sure. I've no idea because I wasn't there and I read a bit about it in the history of the regiment donkey's years later.

24:00 **Okay. Well so just tell me how long were in Morotai for?**

5 weeks I would think. That would be about right. I had I'm sure I only had 4 days in hospital and they flew me out. We refuelled at Biak [Island] and then we overnighted at the most awful place in the world down on a big river

24:30 down there in southern New Guinea where the water was virtually, the surrounding earth and mud and so on was virtually, the water as well. The landing strip was a huge steel sheets all over it for to land and take off.

25:00 The most awful place in the world.

This is where, New Guinea?

Yes, Southern New Guinea, Moratai. Moratai that's right. So anyway.

So you spent 4 days in the hospital at Morotai is that right?

Yes in the 2/6th I think it was. I'm not sure

25:30 and then onto Townsville, Townsville to Brisbane where I was for a few weeks. Back to Melbourne. I didn't have to fly to Melbourne I went down by train. I had to do transit at Sydney overnight somewhere have a check up and then straight out to Heidelberg where I was for a few weeks in hospital.

How were they treating you?

26:00 There were certain ointments and things and not wearing very many clothes to irritate the thing and then penicillin and penicillin was pretty well in its infancy but it seemed to be doing it's thing and some tablets. What they were I've no idea. But it was very funny out in the skin ward at Heidelberg. They were all

26:30 there and the ward clerk would come and stand at the door and say 'Okay fellows drop your pants, out of bed, drop your pants, bend over' so we'd drop our pants bend over the bed and she'd come along with her 2 assistant nurses with this needle and she'd go like that with it and then screw on the thing and then inject us. That was our morning entertainment

27:00 and I can tell you the needles in those days weren't like the ones these days when you get a bit of blood drawn out of you. And then I got to a certain stage where I was allowed day leave and then I got to a stage where I was able to stay for the weekend at home and then I got completely discharged provided I kept reporting to my doctor

27:30 at home and then they sent me to a. They downgraded me from A1 or something to B2 never to serve in the tropics it was endorsed and then I was appointed to do something. I'm not quite sure what it was I never found out. The Victorian Lines of Communication, the VLOC was in that big building of about 14 storeys, it still stands

28:00 opposite the National Gallery, the Library, the Victorian State Library and that was brigade headquarters for static units around everywhere like garrison troops and so on and I was put into the artillery section there. Shuffled paper here and there. They had a mess so I had a lunch there everyday. Went into and slept at home

28:30 and I think the, well I know the brigadier in charge he was a very nice bloke he found nothing to do so one day he said 'When you come into tomorrow be prepared to go on an expedition.' I said 'Don't tell me the Japs have landed.' He said 'No we are going to inspect the fortifications down on Point Nepean.' They put fortifications in there for World

29:00 War I you know. They thought somebody was coming. So we went down and looked at the fortifications and then we went to the Portsea Hotel and have a very nice lunch and we went back and that was that day and another day he said 'There's been complaints. I don't believe it. There's been complaints about the fact that some of these 25 pounder shells for our guns are exploding in the barrel. Let's go out

29:30 and investigate this.' So we went out to the munition factory out at Naramar [?] and had a good look around there and found a pub somewhere and had a very nice lunch and came back again. Then there's

a third one. He said 'Of course we have overlooked something. Queenscliff. There is a Queenscliff garrison there.' That's still there that Queenscliff garrison as you know. We went down there and they looked after us in the mess and checked everything out and

30:00 (NOTE: camera malfunction) the piece of action I saw.

What

30:30 **fortifications are there at Port Nepean? What are they? What were they then?**

I think some of sort of there as it were. They were probably 14-inch naval guns or something like that that were put there in the First World War to protect the heads. In huge circular gun pits. Half the size of all this property or something, circular and the guns are on rails

31:00 and they move along and so on and well, when they used them they went off but they never used them in World War II. And they had similar fortifications in Queenscliff too.

When was that fort built in Queenscliff?

Also in the First World War. In fact it is

31:30 claimed that the either Queenscliff or Nepean fired the first shot of Australia in the First World War to stop a German ship going out or something. So that was rather a docile end to the war of VX69859 wasn't it?

A bit of a pub crawl actually.

32:00 He wasn't a bad brigadier at all.

So the munitions, you went out to check the shells were being manufactured properly.

That was what he said but whether that was right. It did have a, it did happen on a very rare occasion where a shell would be fired but before it got out of the barrel it exploded.

Did you ever experience that?

Never seen it, not to my knowledge none of our guns ever did.

32:30 **And if that were to happen what would happen to the gunners?**

It could kill some of them. They are right at the gun even though there is a protective screen in front. I had heard that it had happened but it certainly never happened in the 2/4th Regiment of that I'm sure.

There's been quite a few people who have commented on the age of the

33:00 **weapons that the Australian army troops were issued with. That they were old and that they weren't terribly well fixed up, repaired and in very good condition and consequently dangerous. What is your opinion on that?**

Well as far as artillery is concerned the only guns we had out here were the 18 pounders which were

33:30 used in World War I and they were taken away with the 2nd AIF to the Middle East and just left a few. We did some, we did the gun drill practice at Puckapunyal before I got out, we did some gun drill practice with saplings.

You shot saplings?

We didn't shoot saplings. But as far as, they were sort of tied together

34:00 and we would move them around.

Well that's a variation on the horse trough. We have heard someone we interviewed practiced with a horse trough.

So but the 2nd Regiment when I got there they had some guns and when I was with the 2nd Regiment before I was commissioned we were up at, up in Queensland and brand new

34:30 25 pounder guns came. Brand new and they made them down here to. So we had to calibrate them and make sure that when the setting on the gunlaying instrument tallied with the angle of shot and so on that it was right and it would land where it was expected to go

35:00 so that when the gun-layer turned it to lay 4,450 that the machine, the gun itself was going to go to 4,450 yards. If it was an angle of 245 degrees on his gun laying equipment that it would go 245 degrees from the gun, that the muzzle, from that gun placement

35:30 so for 2 weeks a few of us from the survey. This was with the 2nd Regiment we sat very hard actually. We had to, while our fellows were up there in the scrub somewhere we are at where the Surfers Paradise Hotel now is with the guns and there was nothing else and we sat up on the

36:00 top of Burleigh Heads in the sunshine measuring its triangulation. The guns were here at Surfers Paradise, we were here and there was a fixed range and angle shooting out to sea along the coast and we would measure the drop of the shell. And because, you see triangulation are you right? And these were known,

36:30 that was known on the gun and so on and anyway it all worked out so that the gun was perfectly fit to do exactly what was asked of it by the forward observation officer and set by the gun-layer who sat right there.

So you had a fixed point which was the target?

No we didn't have a target. We had 2 fixed points. We had the

37:00 Surfers Paradise Hotel that wasn't there. We had the point on Burleigh Heads and the distance between those were known. All right. They knew the angle they were going to shoot out to sea. That angle was known so the angle at Surfers Paradise was known so they were going to shoot in a fixed line out there and of course, the land was known

37:30 so all we had to do was get this bit here. And we used to get up at 10.00 in the morning. They brought our breakfast around. We were camped around the corner near the creek on the sand and then we would have our lunch and we would disappear at 4.00 and have a swim and at 5.00 we would go into Burleigh Heads and have a beer and have something to eat. It was terrible.

38:00 **Shocking.**

But the guns got calibrated.

I was going to say in between meals what devices were you using to calibrate because the guns were down on the beach and you were up on the heads there.

The angle of sight comes into it to. It's a trigonometry.

So walk us through how you actually did that.

Well if you get me

38:30 a book of logarithms and a thing and a whatnot.

A slide rule.

But it's all. We were operating fieldlights to do the measuring but it worked.

So then you would fire off live rounds.

These were live rounds and then they would fire off a check of course, absolutely. Then we took them

39:00 back to Cooroy and to the big artillery range out in the scrub there somewhere. Out past Noosa and actually did a proper shoot to prove that the calibration was 100%. As far as I know it was. So are we back.

No.

We are not back at the moment. Where do you want me?

39:30 **No. We are rewinding to just after New Guinea after your return from New Guinea and went to the Atherton Tablelands because we really haven't talked about that too much.**

Well as I said the regiment reformed after long leave. Reformed just north of Brisbane and then moved up to the Atherton Tablelands and the whole division moved up there.

40:00 It was on this big site. It was a very pleasant site actually on the Atherton Tablelands and that's where we were in think for 9 months. As I said we did do, we did do landing craft work with the infantry, we did live shoots with the infantry and then they had the huge big divisional thing and it was known that we had been given a job

40:30 but apart from that it was a pretty leisurely life there for everybody. There were swim parties to the lakes. Nobody was allowed down to Cairns or Townsville. Cairns at least not Townsville and they drank the regimental

41:00 beer occasionally when they could get it. I must tell you that when I boarded the ship, the General Anderson to go up to Morotai some fellow handed me a piece of paper and he said 'Are you 2/4th Regiment?' and I said 'Yes.' 'There's a bill of loading here for the 2/4th Regiment of 660 pounds of hops.' I said 'Well you know what you can do with your hops?' and I went on board

41:30 because they had been sent up by our former friendly member of the regiment from Tasmania to the brewery on the Tablelands. Well of course he didn't know that the brewery was going to close down and we were going.

Tape 6

00:30 Always of course the adjutant office was in a static position. It was in wartime too, in battle. But a messengers coming in from everywhere. There was the question of supplies and so on and so forth. That was the quartermaster general's job to be aware of what was going in the quartermaster,

01:00 in the quartermasters domain. We had to keep a tab on the officers who were, officers of the 2/4th Regiment but had been succonded to other units. We had one fellow who was succonded as an artillery spotter, an air spotter. We had fellows at brigade and so on and so forth.

01:30 There was a bit of coming and going. Regimental records were, had to be kept up to date. That was information that had to go to brigade and division. There was the health of the, when I say the records of the health of the troops and where they were and which hospitals they

02:00 were. When people were on leave, that was done on the battery but that was all collated in a report and as far as officers were concerned everything an officer did and every sort of movement he did. For instance, when I got malaria in Queensland and went to a field hospital that was recorded by

02:30 the adjutant's office that on such and such a date went to such and such a hospital with suspected malaria. When I came back you see all that's recorded. I got a printout of my, you can get it easily, I got a printout out of my record as a commissioned officer. You get on one of these

03:00 computers and I got that and it shows the movements I did in and out of the regiment. Not that I went to the picture theatres or anything like that but we used to have to keep all those things and interesting thing is that in this record of mine it's got that I went to the 2/19th Hospital and then later on there's an entry

03:30 saying 'such and such a hospital advised that arrived at such and such a hospital' so you are getting a double entry as it were but that's beside the point but there were the various

04:00 plans and proposed exercises all came through the adjutants office. The intelligence officer was there too but it all came through before the battery commander saw it sort of thing. So there was plenty to do. It was a bit more than being a glorified clerk. There was plenty of work to be done and the other thing that I had to do on the Tablelands was play bridge with the commanding officer.

04:30 oh well nothing else to do at night.

So how did you come to get that position? How did that occur?

I was appointed by the CO. I think I mentioned it earlier on today he was so taken with my command

05:00 post log I think he must have had me in mind because when we got back from leave there was a vacancy for an adjutant and I got it.

At Dumpu?

I'm sure it was. I think so. And then the survey officer and I, Ross Holsworth who came with me from the 2nd Regiment to the 2/4th and he was the forward observation officer

05:30 we shared a tent on the Tablelands and he being the survey officer he had a truck, he had a van and we used to scream all over the place from time to time and getting on towards Christmas 1945 we thought we'd better do something about it so we gradually built up a stock of grog in our tent and

06:00 very hard to get. There seemed to be ways and means of getting an bottle of gin or something like that so when it came to Christmas, New Years Eve actually it was quite a rort. A few senior officers bit the dust that night.

Literally.

Absolutely.

So how did you come

06:30 **to acquire this alcohol?**

There's such things as barter you know. Bartering and we also were well, we were great friends with the transport officer and he sometimes had to go in and get stuff and strange how bags of sugar disappeared from time to time from the master store and it ended up somewhere on the Tableland and probably ended up

07:00 in a grog shop somewhere. I don't know. We managed to get a hold of it. It wasn't that much but I mean it was all hard stuff. Terrible stuff to have in the heat like that. But we didn't drink it. We didn't drink it ourselves. Every night we didn't got back and have a drink or anything like that.

So were you issued with spirits?

Not issued but there was

07:30 limited spirits in the mess. Very limited and there was an occasion probably when maybe the battalion commander came over for dinner or something they would open it up or something like that. We didn't have beer every night either. There were supplies of beer that came south from the breweries even as far south as Cascade from Hobart that used to up there occasionally.

08:00 But it was not very often. So it was a fairly social occasion up on the Tablelands when we weren't working like mad training. I had to go down to Cairns on one occasion for something or other as assistant adjutant and

08:30 and the rains came and cut off the Tablelands completely for 4 days so I stayed down in the officers club down in Cairns for a nice little bonus. Rained. It was up to your knees. People walking around in short pants and terrible. At least there was some comfort. So really I it was

09:00 it was something I'm glad I experienced. It was 4 years with the instances all the way through of course. I'm glad I had it. When it was over it was over. In other words I've never been a 2/4th Association active participant like so many have and so many still do if they are still alive.

09:30 It's a very live association. I've only marched twice and early on I went to 2 dawn services. There it was and it was finished but I'm so glad I did it. I don't know what I mean by that but I mean and a regimental or battalion association is of absolute

10:00 importance. It is essential because there are some many guys that have become so friendly with so many guys in their own regiment or battalion or whatever it is and they keep it up through the association and they are active and their wives get involved and their kids get involved and its more than that. They all get together for lunches

10:30 and reunions and so on and it's a very active executive of the association and they publish twice a year. They publish 'Barrage' which is the associations magazine and it's full of all sorts of interesting stuff and in the last probably about the last 15 years the regimental officers in Melbourne

11:00 have held a luncheon to which they had invited the widows of deceased regimental officers. We didn't have many killed. We had very few killed but who have died since the war and we pay for them and last year there were 3 officers and 15 widows. Hardly anyone left.

11:30 There are a few officers interstate but we were mainly a Victorian regiment.

Had you maintain contact?

Through that. I always go to that yes.

At some period during your services there were J B Ware does something that went on with your involvement with the exchange?

Yes. Melbourne Stock Exchange

12:00 yes. During 1942 Stanleyforth Ricketson started making noises by writing to me and I saw him on leave a couple of times saying 'We want you to become a member of the stock exchange in Melbourne and we want you to be a partner of J B Wares.' And you couldn't become a partner of a stock broking firm in those days unless you were a member of the stock exchange. So you had to be elected a member and you had to go through

12:30 all the formalities of being elected a member. So and he wrote, it's all in my book actually. He wrote reams of letters to me because there were objections. You see J B Ware & Sons came out of the Depression as a fairly strong firm, a highly reputable firm and the smaller brokers reckon they took all their business. Well that was a lot of nonsense anyway. The smaller brokers could never expand because

13:00 some of them didn't have brains in their head. Some of them were 80 years old and there was all this suspicion. Enmity, it grew to enmity. Anyway in 1943 a fellow called Rodney Eggleston who was wounded in the desert was put up for membership and it was very difficult indeed. And Wares had 6 partners and the few that weren't on active service that went into government departments during the war they were a little bit of a club

13:30 up there. They had nothing to do. They had no business because there were restrictions on everything and they were going to blackball Rod. You went up and 1 blackball in 5 and you are out so it got to the stage that Ricketson said to the committee 'Look I know what you object to. We've got 6 votes. Why don't you pass a rule, why don't the members pass a rule that in the

14:00 election of a member any one firm can only have 4 votes?' A terrible thing to do talk about restriction of trade and all the rest of it but mine was only worse than that and Rodney got in and there was nothing left for me. And another thing is when you are going up for membership you are taken around by a proposer physically and you met all the members in their offices and some of them remembered my grandfather Alfred Mellor who was with the Mt Lar mining company. Anyway it came,

14:30 that happened when I was on this long leave that we came back to in the beginning. So I came up for

membership and I got done or J B Ware & Sons got done because they were detailing their disrespect or dislike of J B Ware & Sons or their dislike of Ricketson. So under the rules I could stand again in 28 days so there was no way I was going to stand there and go back to the regiment and find out I didn't have a job at J B Ware & Sons. I probably would have

15:00 had a job I suppose but my ambitions had been absolutely dissipated. I couldn't believe it. Well I knew it was going to happen. Nobody told me but there was something wrong, I could feel it. Anyway so I had to get, I had to wait in Melbourne for 28 days and the regiment went back after about 2 weeks so I had to get leave from the regiment and then I had to get leave

15:30 from the brigadier at army headquarters to stay and he was pretty testy about the thing. He said 'You are more interested in making yourself a career instead of going there and fighting the Japs.' Which I thought was a bit overdone. He made his point I suppose. Anyway I didn't have to go around to members again and I went in on the understanding which was the understanding the morning after I was blackballed

16:00 that when I would resign from J B Ware & Sons, you were virtually still on the staff because they had to take you back anyway. I would never join the staff of J B Ware & Sons while I was a member or be a partner of JB Ware & Sons. That was the undertaking from the committee and I resigned from J B Ware & Sons and I was elected and here I was no job, 3

16:30 kids. John was born a bit later than that and so my proposer who was a very fine fellow he was not in the war. He had been in the First World War he arranged for a member firm to do whatever business there was. There wouldn't have been any but I set up my plate of Alfred B Mellor & Company and when the war as over in 1946 I started my business

17:00 and it was the best thing I ever did. It was the best thing that ever happened to me to be blackballed in that retrospect because I became my own person, I became my own broker, I became my own future. In 1949 I was elected to the committee of the stock exchange. I stayed there until 1972. In 1960 I was elected chairman of the stock exchange

17:30 and President of the Australian Associated Stock Exchanges and I was chairman of Melbourne for 6 years. President of the association for 4 years. My business prospered. It was pretty hard going for the first few years because you weren't allowed to advertise and I had to do all my own buying and selling on the market as well as looking

18:00 after the office and so on. Somebody else came and gave me a hand and we fixed all that off. 1955 I took nearly a year off and went overseas with my former wife to sort of forget the war and the drama out of my system. But there it was. It was an awful. Fancy being required to give such an undertaking that if such and such a

18:30 thing happened you would do something and it was your livelihood. It would never happen today. So my firm and Mayes merged in 1972 and both John and I were on the committee. You couldn't have 2 members of one firm on the committee well John was younger than I and I said 'Well I've been on it since 1949 the chairmanship

19:00 and done all that. You stay on and I'll resign from the committee.' And that was that.

So just in regards to be able to extend your leave. Were you as an officer given more flexibility then as far as that was concerned?

I don't know. I know there was a friend at court. Stanleyforth Ricketson only knew the General or something and told him the awful

19:30 circumstances and I know the Chairman of the stock exchange went to see the General so there would have been no way otherwise because Ricketson was a First World War man and he had a decoration he won in the Pan [?] Battle and he kept it up with everybody and they understood, fortunately the General understood what the problem was and that this

20:00 and I would say if the regiment had been overseas or engaged in activity there would be no way. They wouldn't have been on leave so it was a fortunate thing that I was able to have somebody that helped me.

And you couldn't leave it until after the war was finished?

I could have but I didn't want to leave it up in the air. I mean here it was and being blackballed from the stock

20:30 exchange was a huge disgrace. When I was chairman one other fellow got blackballed and he never stood again. Of course everybody knew it was not Mellor that was getting killed it was J B Ware & Sons instead. You should have heard the phone calls I got from brokers the next morning saying 'Look we are sorry about this.

21:00 It's a tragedy. For goodness sake leave Stan. Stan is just an individual. You are going.' A few years later the Chairman told me it wasn't a blackball in the ballot. So that was a big turning point in my life I can

tell you but and it did something else to it. It gave me some freedom of action because I had become highly involved with

21:30 Carey Grammar School. I was on the, when I came out of the war I was on the old grammarians council, the same year 1946 I became the old boys representative and I stayed on the school council until 1981 and in 1955 I became the Deputy President and 1972 I became

22:00 Chairman of the Board and for the last 15 years I have been the honourary archivist. Carey is so much in my blood as you can see.

Were other officers thinking about their careers post war during that time?

I can't speak for anything because I don't know.

But was it something that you discussed amongst yourselves?

Yes it was and no. Not to,

22:30 for instance Ross Holsworth had been in a bank and he said 'I don't want to.' We'd talked about it and he didn't want to go back to the bank. 'As a matter of fact' he said 'I might go and take up the system by which I can do a university course. I'm going to do pharmacy.' And when he came out he went and did his pharmacy at the cost of the government and you know there are others that did other things no doubt.

23:00 There were these features about that you could go to university and do law or go to the technical colleges, Swinburne as it was there.

Was that only available to officers?

Oh no, all troops. Oh yes all troops.

So how would you describe your relationship with the privates

23:30 **that you worked alongside?**

On guns?

Mmm.

Great relationship. We had very few. There were 1 or 2 from time to time, officers they knew where they stood with the troops. They knew they had a problem but I never had any problem.

24:00 Of course, I was never in a battery I was always in regimental headquarter except when we were in New Guinea we were in 7th Battery. Oh no, no, I always had a happy relationship any of them and they were good chaps. There's no doubt about it. When a regiment is being moulded in action as it was in Syria and in the desert come back and they are still all there and

24:30 there was a bit of a, there was quite a feeling from time to time. It didn't happen to me at all but I was a reinforcement officer with that regiment because there were in some areas, I don't know where it was, it didn't happen in the 2/4th 'Oh, you never went to the Middle East. You are not one of us.' Never any of that

25:00 but I know it happened, I know it has happened but probably more likely to be in an infantry battalion where there had to be more reinforcements anyway because of the tragedy of death in battle and so on. That never, that was never a concern.

There was never any insubordination from them?

25:30 No there was never any that I can recall. I don't recall a court-martial in the regiment. No one was kicked out that I know of.

Any AWOL [Absent Without Official Leave]?

26:00 There were a couple of, there were occasions of course when some of them would shoot through and had to get back to their families or whatever but they were dealt with when they came back. That didn't require a court-marshall. They might lose 4 weeks pay or whatever it was. I don't know. It was a strict rule. Well it had to be strict. The first thing you know when you go into the army and that's discipline.

26:30 Get out the station at Puckapunyal and there's some sergeant standing there and you sort of just look at them and smile and then they let go 'What's the matter with your hand sonny?' Salute, salute, salute Sir. That went the first couple of days up at Puckapunyal we got our injections whatever

27:00 they were. 3 or 4 oh no you don't go back and get yourself on your bum. 4 times around the oval.

4 times around the?

4 times around the oval. It's supposed to be good for you. It gets the injection working because of, there were those fellows who were flat on their face half way around the oval and you had to get used to

curry, curry sausages for breakfast.

27:30 Well that's okay. That's part of it. You know that.

So did you, you never had to discipline anyone?

No, no. With the rank of lieutenant I don't think you would do much disciplining. Well it was never for me to do as assistant adjutant anyway. That was out of my hands anyway. If

28:00 discipline was required in the batteries well it would either be the troop commander or it was really serious it would be the battery commander. He was a major and in charge of certain disciplines. Oh no, as I said I really had a pretty good war considering what a lot of people

28:30 went through. I wasn't wounded. Sure I got a skin disease which I still have treated which is nothing.

So did you have much to do with men who were out in the front lines and you know did really have to face up to life and death situations?

No. No. No. I never did. I

29:00 didn't have to deal with them but a great friend of mine from school he became an army chaplain and he was with the 2/10th Battalion who we supported with the 7th Division and he was up in New Guinea in the Ramu at the same time and my friend Ross Holsworth was with a platoon commander and it was getting on to dusk and there was this Japanese position and Ross said to the

29:30 platoon commander 'Look why don't you leave it until the morning. It's almost dark. If you want me I'll put some shells down there. I'll call for fire. I know the range I'll call for fire.' 'No, we are going to attack.' They lost 3 men and I went up to see that. Where they'd been the next day

30:00 and lo and behold here was the Chaplin friend of mine. We were in the same football team together and I knew him very well and he told me this awful story and Ross was there to and he with 2 other fellows from the same battalion were up further in another position and they walked overnight following a Japanese signal wire

30:30 to bury them the next morning and one of them was a twin and I saw him. So even he and then later on he came down and he had a cup of coffee with me down at the gun positions and when I was going up on another occasion to see the damage that was down I was walking up the track

31:00 and there was always the Salvation Army with their copper going and their tea and biscuits and their coffee. They were always way up front and I'd stop to have a cup of coffee and who should come around the bend but the commander of the 7th Division General Vasey and he said 'What are you doing?' and I said 'I'm going up to see the damage our guns have done.' And he said 'I heard you had a bit of a show

31:30 up there blasting the place to bits and all that sort of thing'. Anyway about 3 or 4 weeks later he was killed. He and a few other brass hats were going back to Australia and they went into the Coral Sea. Plane just crashed. He was a lovely fellow and talking about that early in 1950

32:00 I wanted a person in my office probably from 10.00 in the morning to 3.00 in the afternoon to do certain work during that time of the day and I thought to myself well there would be a war widow who had a war son or a war daughter who were at school who might like something to do so I rang up Mrs Vasey, the widow of General Vasey and she said 'I've got the right person for you. She's up in Queensland.

32:30 I'll send her in when she comes down.' She came this girl called Connie Hopman. Her husband had been killed over in Europe somewhere. No known grave. Never found his body and they had a small son which he had never seen. So she came and filled the position and she was there for about 25 years and became a senior girl.

She moved to Melbourne?

Pardon?

So she moved to Melbourne?

No she was

33:00 visiting in Queensland. That's the reason I couldn't see her straight away. So that was a happy end and I think it must have been about 1954 she came to me and said 'Look at this.' And it was a telegram from Canberra and she said 'Isn't this wonderful?' and I said 'I'll read it.' Words to the effect 'You have been nominated and are now invited on behalf of the Commonwealth to represent Victorian widows whose husbands in the airforce have no known

33:30 grave and whose names will be unveiled at the big memorial at Runnymede on the Thames in England.' She would be away for a fortnight. She said 'I'm going with Mrs Vasey.' 'A fortnight, come on Connie you are going for a month.' And she said 'I want a fortnight's leave.' And I said 'You are not getting any leave at all. You are going away for a month on full pay.' And that's what she did.

34:00 She was such a good, she was a great lady. Never remarried. Her son did very well. He became a veterinary surgeon and had a family and so on. So these are some of the things that happen.

Well there's a bond there isn't there. A loyalty I guess. Did it, sort of bother you or was it something you

34:30 **thought about given that you went to areas like New Guinea and like Morotai and became very close, became very involved in that landing which was pretty horrific even though it was a successful landing just being distanced on the action like that. Was that something that concerned you?**

You mean

35:00 being in Morotai and no going to Balak?

Yeah, yeah.

I was disappointed. I was very disappointed. I'd been in the planning and it was going to happen and I was going to be part of it. I never expected I was going to be shot but you never do expect, well I suppose you do if it was a tough situation. But I never thought of it. The risk was always there and so on but I was looking forward to Balak [Balikpapan],

35:30 very much. But there was no way. No way at all. So there, things did go my way from time to time in the army. There is no question about that. Things just happened. Things happened and they went my way to get into artillery to start with. It went my way

36:00 to be posted to 2/4th Regiment which was probably at the time and in the Middle East the regiment of the 7th Division. They were highly recognised successful gunners.

Did all the training that you did, did you think when

36:30 **it all boils down that you were, you got to actually use the skills satisfactorily?**

Yes. Yes I do. Even when I was stuck as assistance adjutant in the office but I did have the knowledge of everything that had gone before. Maybe I didn't have to worry about who was laying gun no. 1 in B Troop or something like

37:00 that but I had layed a gun in practice but never in action. Oh yes, it was not wasted and its always. Very early it is interesting to me how quickly one responded to discipline in the army how you are required to do these things.

37:30 There was no alternative. You got what you got but you got punished if at Puckapunyal if your bed wasn't properly made in the morning and if your gear wasn't properly stacked on the end of your bed or whatever or something like that. That was the start of discipline and if you didn't like curried sausages for breakfast you went hungry. After you'd been running around the oval a few

38:00 times and done all sorts of physical exercise and push ups and so on the next morning you ate them. You probably ate 2 of them. There were those of course who never could accept discipline. There not that many but if you didn't have discipline the same in all sorts of things. We all have discipline. You're not supposed to run a red light

38:30 and whether you do it or not is another matter. But these are discipline and the first 2 or 3 weeks in Puckapunyal it was knocked into you. It really was. You got on latrine fatigue or kitchen fatigue all these sorts of things. 'Here you, here you.'

39:00 **Is that you knew you had been caught out?**

You were probably wanted by the corporal or the sergeant or something. No, it was a great, I enjoyed it thoroughly but you things at home were not as good as they could have been of course but anyway they managed.

39:30 My last son, my 4th son was born in 1945 the night before I came out of the army. They are all grown up and got their own kids and 3 great grandchildren so there you are.

Tape 7

00:30 **Okay this is pretty much in random order some of these points.**

Yes okay.

I'm just sort of wondering if you have any recollections of VE [Victory in Europe] Day and VJ [Victory over Japan] Day. Any celebrations day that may have taken place in town?

VJ Day I remember because I was here, I was here and I did go down to the city and you know because

it was just overwhelming.

01:00 I mean people kissing each other they'd never seen in their lives. Putting their arms around each other and the streets were just flooded with people and there were tears of course and laughter and it sort of everybody sort of gave it away. It finished, lets have fun as I recall it.

01:30 Well of course there were those who were more than glad it was over because they'd suffered so much in one way or another. They were glad it was over but their grief and their suffering had gone on for a long time.

02:00 Tens of thousands of Australians. That's all I remember about VJ Day.

So the march, the 7th Divi did early, that was early, that was April was it?

That was April 44 before we went back to the tablelands.

And you took part in that?

Yes. We were all assembled. They called us back from leave. They had our leave and instead of

02:30 sending us way back north they apparently decided to keep us, well they did decide. The Regiment were out at Watsonia barracks and we had a few days of marching and so on, practice, getting back into it. I was quite excited marching. It was a treat. Something different.

And there were big crowds?

Oh there was a huge crowd and because no one had marched before.

03:00 Not as a, if they had maybe as a unit and small groups but never as a division, the whole 7th Division and of course a few of us had seen a bit of action of course and they had been away for a long time. I think the 7th Division went away about 1941 I think they, 41 they sailed, very early 41

03:30 they sailed. As a matter of fact I saw them go out the heads. I was down at Sorrento at the time and this great ship. I could see it way out on the horizon, near Melbourne and it came down and it hove to around about where Mornington is for a while no doubt waiting for the tide and then on it came and it was the Mauritania. Completely covered in khaki. Lots of flags and sheets waving and so on

04:00 so then I went out down to Portsea and saw her off. She went straight down because she had a rendezvous with Mary and one or two of the others. They were way down, they had just come out of Hobart.

With the march you were in the 7th Division do you remember what the route was for that?

I well remember marching down Swanson Street so maybe we collected somewhere up there.

04:30 I don't think we got as far up as gardens by the Royal Park. We could have assembled up in the area like that I can't recall. The marching for 2 or 3 miles was nothing for us. It was nothing for those who didn't march. I would have thought so because I know we went on right down Swanson Street and I know the regiment when we broke off

05:00 we went on the otherside of the shrine near Domain Road before we disappeared back to Watsonia. I don't know how we got back. I've no idea. Trucks perhaps. Army trucks.

When you first went north to New Guinea what was the sense of the progress of the war? Did it feel like? You said when you got to Dumpu for example

05:30 **the Japanese were already in retreat there?**

In retreat.

Was there a changing sense that we had the upper hand then?

No question about it. No question of it. I don't think there was any question about it because the turning part of the war for Australia apart from the wonders of Kokoda was Coral Sea. If Coral Sea had been lost to the Japs it would have been a

06:00 very different story. They would have gone right down the east coast of Australia and but that was a wonderful victory Coral Sea. But that was pretty early. When I say pretty early, very the Japanese at one time were pretty well all over the place. The Americans you know they had taken Guadalcanal because they came here to refit from

06:30 Guadalcanal and but no, no there was definitely a feeling that they were not marching much further and they were being held back. In fact one of [General Douglas] MacArthur's strategies were to leap frog them and let the rot on some of these islands where they were. They didn't land, didn't assault, didn't land there. They just went on.

07:00 **Of course there are some of those that say that should have been done with Borneo or**

Bougainville. Do you have a particular take on that?

No I don't really not to stretch my point of view. No. Borneo.

07:30 Bougainville I'm not sure about at all but Borneo was really the last action of the Australians and it was a sure there were plenty of Japs there to be killed. It was the final battle for the Australians except digging out pockets here and there and it could have been left I think. Cleaned up later.

08:00 **Do you recall any talk at the time I mean obviously you were involved in the preparations for the landing there or was it just 'Let's do our job' or was there a sense of well?**

Oh no, no there was great excitement. Why were in the army? We were in the army to fight. That's why in the tablelands we were told at one stage 'Forget it boys, MacArthur's cancelled what you were going to do.'

08:30 What are we here for? Not sit around the tablelands and have horse races and make beer. No, no there's a, when you are in these fighting units you are there because you enlisted to fight. Whether you knew what was going to happen to you or not that was it and the morale of the regiment went like that, upwards

09:00 as soon as we knew we were going to Moratai to go on. I mean the fellows were ecstatic. Oh yes. Not that you want to fight all the time. You can't anyway but it's a real thing in a fighting unit.

Because you do, you train for so long for

09:30 **a purpose.**

That's right and some of the, some of the Middle East boys, the rats of the desert, they'd had some pretty rough stuff but they didn't do a great deal when they came back. They were given the north coast of New Guinea and they of course the 8th were annihilated but the 6th and the,

10:00 the 8th were annihilated but the 6th didn't go to New Guinea to any great extent. So it was the 7th that went to New Guinea and did that bit there and it was the 6th that went up around the top around the coast. I don't know where the 6th got to actually I'm not sure what happened to them. But you see they were Middle East, they were Middle East units and they'd been baptised to fighting certainly not in the jungle

10:30 but they had been baptised and they had a taste. They wanted it again. That's my view.

I'm wondering also if we can get a slightly more detailed description of your experiences with the dermatitis and so forth. You were with the 2/5th AGH [Australian General Hospital] I believe when.

I'm not sure whether it was the 5th or the 6th but it was one of those. It was a AGH

11:00 which was part of the 7th Division. Australian nurses and doctors. All under canvas up there. Not very good conditions and the muck of the place and rain and that sort of thing and there was a full sense of need to

11:30 I know doctors and nurses are there to get you right if they can. But there was a full sense of need as far as I was concerned to get me out because of this wog, this dermatitis. Probably if I'd have this around the legs and around the arms or something like that they might have said 'Oh well, we'll see what we can do up here.' But because of the climate and because of the conditions and the

12:00 state in which it had so rapidly developed they were 'Right oh, off you go.'

So what was the immediate treatment for what you had?

Well it was penicillin and some sort of ointments. I've no idea what they were and of course, the real treatment was getting back to, out of the tropics sure and

12:30 getting into, sleeping in a bed and being able to, had to be careful having showers in my case but being able to have people treating you and the knowledge that you were no longer going to have this thing accentuated to a danger point. I mean there was one poor fellow in the hospital out at Heidelberg he was in a special room and he was in

13:00 the bath naked and he was in oil. He had nothing. His skin had broken down. He died of course pretty quickly but you can't be. It's a thing that you can't let go and it's chronic. Not let go up there. It's good nursing, good food, good care and all the rest of it and

13:30 there's a psychological thing to when you come home from the tropics.

So how did they get you out of (UNCLEAR –Kwontanal)?

They flew me out on a RAAF, a RAAF DC3. It was set up as a hospital plane. It was pretty primitive inside but all the troop carriers were pretty primitive inside. No real seats you see. You sat in webbing

14:00 and so on but the provision there for a couple of guys who were stretcher cases and they had special fittings into the fuselage of the plane and we went from Morotai down to Biak which is only a tiny little island and there is an airfield on Biak and they refuelled there. It was hot there. We sat underneath the, there wasn't anywhere to sit other than

14:30 under the plane. We refuelled and we then went on as far as Merauke south of New Guinea because it was pretty hot and we stayed there overnight and we flew to Townsville and I stayed there for a while and then on to Brisbane.

And there would have been nurses or medical orderlies on the plane?

On the plane there were medical orderlies, yes.

Male or female?

Male,

15:00 male, yes on the plane. I didn't see. There were not many male medical orderlies in the hospital as far as I could gather. There were a few males out here at Heidelberg but not many at all.

And just wondering because we have heard of romances blossoming between nurses who are far afield

15:30 **and their patients. Did you see anything?**

I saw one blossoming in the 7th or 6th hospital or whatever it was. He was an officer in our regiment. A great fellow in the regiment and anyway this nurse was there and he seemed to visit fairly frequently before he left for a Balakpapan and I knew her vaguely because I knew she had been at school with my sister

16:00 so anyway they got married and lived very, very happily ever after. He unfortunately lost his eyesight and is pretty deaf. I think the guns might have deafened him a bit. He became quite a well known lawyer in Melbourne.

In either New Guinea or Moratai did you have much to do with the

16:30 **local population?**

No, no. There were the New Guinea natives that did help around the place but we know what they were like helping the troops up on Kokoda and so on. Wonderful people but no I didn't. Moratai. They didn't have them at all.

17:00 Well we didn't have any particular reason to.

And the artillery was known if I wasn't mistaken as the 5-mile snipers or something like that?

The drop shorts.

Is that what the infantry called you? You told us how you went on that, there was that bombarded this Japanese?

This particular battery they were called upon to clear it

17:30 so it could be attacked and decommissioned as far as the Japanese were concerned. It was called Green Sniper Pimple being an identification mark and they fired rounds from these guns about every minute or every 2 minutes all night long.

18:00 I've no idea how much ammunition they used. It had to be carted up from Melbourne anyway and then I went up to see the damage and I met a fellow up there and chatted to him and they had knocked it around. There were no trees standing. The earth had been carved up, the fox holes or the caves which, the underground

18:30 inhabitation of the Japanese was all blocked in and I was well aware of the myriads of blow flies coming in and out of the ground. You knew what was under there.

So there had been quite a few Japanese killed there?

So they didn't have to take it and occupy it. So that was successful.

19:00 But I was talking I think about ranging, ranging guns by an OP [observation post] officer. There was one fellow who got the MC [Military Cross] and he patented a new way. You had to bracket. You knew your range and you put a shot beyond your beyond your target, put a shot behind your target and creep, creep, creep, creep until you found

19:30 your target. But he didn't do it that way. He used to go up with the leading infantry, I'm talking about New Guinea and he'd give himself somewhere by a fallen log or somewhere and he always had one gun doing this and he would use the gun to go far beyond his target and drop it 25 yards at a time until it came right down and his target

might have been between me and the street and he'd lie there and say 'Give it 4 rounds of gunfire' and he got an MC for that. Pretty brave that sort of stuff. The Japs are sort of staring at him all the time. Not for long. It was a wonderful instrument

of support 25 pounder gun. It was really was. It was one of the most accurate weapons of that gunform.

Another thing we haven't really talked about is staying in touch with family and this sort of thing. I mean even if you are not in New Guinea a lot of the time you are in Queensland

or NSW. Were you able to correspond?

Oh yes. There was never any hold up on mail. Not the things we were involved in or at camp or anywhere like that. Never any hold up at all and when we were at down at the Nambour putting the guns together we used to go and have,

a few of us used to go down and have a steak in the town and try and ring home. It was pretty impossible. You'd probably wait 2 or 3 hours to wait until you got through to your wife and you didn't always do it by any means and you'd go back to camp. There was plenty of. It was very difficult. There were so many priorities. For instance an uncle of mine was on the wool

procurement council of the war and if he wanted to talk to anybody at all he would just give his code on the telephone and he would be put right through. A civilian might wait on for 2 or 3 days or something like that. Something I give credit to they were terribly uncomfortable but the Queensland railways. The way they were able to

cope with the huge body of men and equipment. Only narrow gauge stuff to. They got you there all right. It might have been pretty slow but I don't recall of hearing of any breakdowns apart from the logistics of the thing.

Did officers sleep up in the luggage racks as well?

I don't know whether they did or they didn't. I don't think they would have pulled rank on the train. They might have a compartment to themselves but I don't recall.

So your, during the war your wife had, you had 3 children and there was.

We had Michael the boy before I went away and about 15 months later she had these twins which was pretty unexpected I might add

and then about, just before the war ended my fourth son arrived John.

So where were you stationed when the twins were born?

Actually I was at the Holsworthy officers school and I had a telegram from the head of J B Ware & Sons. He had twin sons actually years before that. He lost one and it was addressed to me at Holsworthy

'Congratulations on the arrival of the twin bombardiers.' So that was a nice touch.

But the twins, it was a surprise that you had twins?

It was quite a surprise. It was known towards the end of the confinement at that point then and it turned out that my wife had, there were twins in her family and it come through that way. So there they are. They are all alive and thriving and doing their own

thing.

So how long was it before you were able to get down and see the twins?

I was at Holsworthy. I got a weeks leave from Holsworthy that's right I did because I produced the telegram and a letter from my wife so I went down, so I went down and saw the wee things when they were only a week or two old

which was great.

Were officers subject to the same sort of censorship rules as the ordinary ranks when it came to letters and calls and that sort of thing?

It very often depended on where you were and what you were doing and who you were with. I mean I've seen letters connected with the Carey archives

that are from officers and there is a different name on the bottom and others where they put their own name on it. I can't recall. I've got a feeling as I say it depended on circumstances I think.

I don't recall whether I had mine signed or I didn't have mine signed.

But we hear about you know certain words being cut out and locations and that type of thing.

Oh yeah. As I say in the Carey archives that came to the former headmaster they were chopped out or

they were blacked out.

I assume once you are commissioned you are expected to do the right thing and.

You would be in trouble if you are giving away

26:30 secrets. I don't know how many were opened for inspection. Be careful the enemy listens was the motto I think. Don't talk in trains and trams.

Was that the official army line or a general?

That was the general line.

27:00 That was the general line in civil street and civvy street as well.

Can you tell us a little bit about your discharge or your demobilisation? Was it called something else when you were commissioned?

Discharge.

Discharge?

Yeah well I when it came, when I was due

27:30 for discharge I was notified that I was due for discharge and I reported out to Royal Park to the barracks out there and they signed me out. They gave me my discharge papers, whatever my deferred pay was I don't know it might have been 4 or 5 pounds or something because most of my pay anyway was diverted back to family

28:00 and took my paybook from me and closed that one down and that was about it. You handed in your army kit, gear and they gave you a suit and I think a couple of shirts, some underclothes, socks and allowed to pick yourself a pair of shoes

28:30 and a felt hat and I think that was about it and you were on your way. Thank you very much. Later on I received a Certificate of Service from the day I entered to the day I was discharged, not where I was but the number of days in the army and the number of days in Australia

29:00 and the number of days overseas. They were all set out. Not quite illuminated but it was quite well presented. Everybody got that no matter who they were.

So up until that time can you tell us about the pub crawl, the ammunitions factory in Queenscliff, the long lunches and

Recreation. Rest and recreation.

Other than that you were based,

29:30 **what, you were based in Victoria Barracks?**

No based in, the army had the whole of this building. I think it used to belong to the Manchester Unity people or something. It's still standing. It's right opposite the library in Swanson street. It's about 14 storeys high. The army had that and it was called the Headquarters of Vic LOC, Victorian Lines of Communication and various brigades were staffed,

30:00 staff people of various brigades were all stationed in there and so on and so forth and that's where I went and carted papers around. Didn't really have much to do. None of us did. I think we were just waiting for the discharge papers to come through.

So sorry when was your discharge actually?

Early December from memory 1945.

30:30 **So you must have been eager at that stage to?**

Oh well there was no point. Anything I was doing was silly. I was living at home anyway towards the later part of the, when I was working at Pacella South I used to get the train to Northbourne every day. Only thing you got was a nice lunch in the office and a beer at 5.00. It wasn't much of a war was it.

Do you remember hearing the news of the

31:00 **dropping of the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki?**

Yes I do remember hearing it but I can't remember where I was. Not at home. I was in Melbourne. I might have even been on day visit, on a day visit to Heidelberg Hospital. I know I wasn't in the hospital. I know I wasn't in the hospital

31:30 because I went I went to town to for the few days later when they surrendered. I don't know what I thought. I can't remember what I thought. I don't know that I was giving much attention to it. I think,

32:00 I don't think anyone really believed what it really meant. You wouldn't. I saw photographs coming through. Yeah, that was a sort of point to mark in the history of the world wasn't it.

32:30 I can't remember that one.

What you say is right because who knew, no one knew what an atomic bomb was.

No that's right.

I mean what did you make of that? You're told so many thousands of people are killed but it must be hard to fathom that.

That's right.

So

33:00 **once you've been discharged. I'll just make sure that I haven't missed anything here. Oh look, I think I've. There was one question. You sort of went to the war as a married man. Do you think it was tougher for men with families than those young chaps you were talking about, the fresh faced 19, 20-year-olds.**

Oh yes. It was. I'm sure it was. I know

33:30 it was for myself anyway. Sure. I think it was tougher for them because you recognised it was going to pretty tough for them. You know, particular those fellows, people with families. Dad wasn't coming home at night.

34:00 Hopefully he would come home eventually but he didn't work any long hours. Yeah.

Did you see that get to some people?

I did. It did. I'm sure it did. I don't think it got to the men so much because they were occupied. They were having new experiences and new games

34:30 and it never got to me and I didn't. You didn't see me going into the corner and moping or anything like that. Naturally you wrote letters to them and if you were lucky you might get a phone call and if you were really very, very lucky you might get leave or something. H no, I was ware of their troubles and tribulations.

35:00 When I did it it was necessary to do it. I might never have done it if there hadn't had been a Japanese Pearl Harbour or a Japanese war I don't know. I wouldn't like to contemplate on that one.

So do you feel, you talk about the phoney war in the first 2 years or so in Europe and North Africa.

35:30 **Do you feel that was really Australia's concern or was it England's war or was it?**

There was no war around here. There wasn't much war over there except the Germans were doing this and the Italians were doing that but we were not touched. We were touched, the families that were touched by war because their men were going away to the Middle East but

36:00 some of them didn't go away until 1941, 1940. Few went in 1940 anyway from Australia. They weren't casualties coming back and everything seemed to come back the same. Sure there were proclamations of protecting industries and

36:30 administrative things like that for the nation of course but there were no rations to speak of and no butter allowance or tea allowance or anything like that and even when they did come it didn't compare to what poor old Britain had to go through. My wife went through the war in England, Ann and they had an awful time as far as food except the school kids.

37:00 They all got a bottle of milk every lunchtime they had to have a bottle of milk and they had to have certain meats and so on and her mother used to give her her butter ration and things like that. None of that, not even when full rations came to Australia.

Had you maintained any friendships with people you had known from your time in London, 35, 36?

No I haven't.

37:30 I did and he's dead and that was he, he was one of the joint managers. A fellow called Noel Miller who became a stockbroker with Wares and then went to Potters. I was quite a friend of his. Good chap but no, none of the London people at all. I didn't keep in contact with them whatsoever. I just didn't.

38:00 **So after you were discharged how readily did you get back into civvy street? How easy was that transition was that?**

It didn't take very long. I had to learn survival and I just started my own business. I wasn't allowed to advertise that I was a stockbroker. I couldn't write to people. The chairman of the day gave me

permission to submit a letter to him where I could say

38:30 I was now a stockbroker but most of them knew it any way because most of them were members of the family so I was allowed to write to the trustee companies and I was allowed to write to the treasurer in Canberra because the treasurer in Canberra used returned soldiers to buy and sell their bonds, their loans but apart from that one had to just gradually build it up and through

39:00 word of mouth and contacts. People got to know who you were and so forth. So the first 2 or 3 years were, I was right into. I had to be right into because I had to put my best foot forward as it were and I had great help from my proposer. In fact I had a room in his office for 3 or 4 years which was a great help.

39:30 He was very helpful to me. No, it didn't. I'll tell you why it took longer for the families to adjust not the kids so much because they were still pretty young. It took a long time for me to adjust and it took an awful long time for my wife to adjust because the fellow who walked out of the door in December 1941 and went into the army was not the fellow who came back in

40:00 December 1945. He had changed and so had she for that matter and we had a bit readjustment to do. It worked for a while but we got passed that. But no, and then another thing I had because I went in 1946 straight away I became involved with the school

40:30 so that was a great interest.

So how do you think you had changed during those 4 years?

I became very impatient. I probably didn't understand that there were 4 little children in the house that made things very different. I was a good father I know that but,

41:00 and as it had been the war was a great burden and I have to say it, it became a burden for discussion for almost the rest of her life. She has never let up on that one. 'Okay you went away to the war and you did this and whatever you did but I had a rough time.'

41:30 Well she did have a rough time. We all had rough times but you have to go beyond rough times. I'm not being unkind I'm being factual and anyway so it went, we had a number of friends we made and Northbourne started to develop and houses were going up. We had friends and we used to have a few parties in each others places and of course the new mothers had kids and

Tape 8

00:30 I started as a broker with a firm I used to have to do, if I had orders to buy and sell for clients I used to have to go the stock exchange and do it. There was no other way of doing it. Only members were allowed in the trading room at that stage and also on the ground there was a rostrum, a high rostrum and

01:00 semicircular chairs with desks and tiered back a bit you see and sat where you were allotted and each stock was called in turn by somebody on the rostrum and as soon as it was called it was open for trading by anyone who had business in that stock. There was another guy, the caller, he would pick up the fact that that broker and that broker

01:30 was selling shares at 20 shillings and this broker was trying to buy shares at 20 shillings and he'd marry them verbally. It would be recorded in a book. That was known as, it was checked before you left, it was auditor. It was known as the call system of trading. Later on in the 1960s, early 1960s we abolished all that and we put up boards and all the stocks were listed on the board

02:00 and we had people marking, people marking the prices, chalk marking the prices on the board as they changed and the sale price. If you wanted to deal in BHP [BHP Billiton, natural resource and mining company] you would go to that board for BHP and you would call out BHP and they would say BHP what do you want to do and you buy and sell and the price would be changed or whatever, the prices would be there. You would write out your dockets and they would go into the stock exchange system but it was never checked at all. The next day when your contract

02:30 notes were exchanged so that was the system which was virtually the system forever from 1800s and it worked. There was no problem, it worked but it came to stage in the late 50s where it came difficult for some brokers to go down and do their buying and selling and we authorised, what was called

03:00 an authorised clerk senior to be authorised to deal on behalf of their member firm. That assisted in the expansion of the whole thing.

So up until that time as a stock broker you had to be on the floor?

He had be there personally himself or he had to get a broker who was regularly there to do it for him for a fee or for nothing or whatever. So it had to be a member deal

03:30 One member or one firm member, because you were dealing for your firm anyway. So that was they system.

How many members would there have been?

There were 129 members when I joined, memberships when I joined and in 1945 it was getting busier and busier. We let it out to 160 and created the extra seats. 'Seats' is a

04:00 word because it comes from way back in the early days in London where the brokers early brokers used to meet in coffee houses around the city and they'd go in there and they'd transact their business in the same seat in the coffee house and 'seat' became a recognised name and we would sitting in seats in this call room system.

04:30 The seats but the physical seat never belonged to anybody but the membership was called a seat so I bought a seat on the stock exchange. I didn't buy a chair or anything like that I bought a membership and I bought them from a retiring broker or a deceased broker and the prices varied depending and they were approved or not by the committee as to whether that was a fair price, private negotiation,

05:00 away from the exchange, not through the committee but they did have to approve and they, I paid 1000 pound for my seat in 1944. In the 60s they shot up to over 30,000 pounds but that was no good to me. If I didn't have a seat I was out of business. The seat was a

05:30 colloquialism I suppose you could call it. So everybody bought a seat on the stock exchange. You had to have a minimum amount of capital and that was determined by the committee and you had to own the capital. Of course if you borrowed money that wasn't capital that was a debt and then that would depend to a great extent to the size of the firm and the number of partners and so on

06:00 as to what sort of capital was required. There was a strange thing. The stock exchange never required in those days, never required to know one's financial position once you became a member. They knew it then but every year there was an audit but the financial position was never, ever disclosed to the chairman or the committee in any way but there were various questions asked which

06:30 when I became chairman because I thought they were such a lot of nonsense. They had to be certified by a chartered accountant and so on and they were absolutely useless from the point of view of how it was trading and what it's assets were and so on and so forth so when I became chairman, I'm getting away a bit from your point.

That's okay.

But when I became chairman I formed a

07:00 committee of accountants and brokers to try and get them to disclose this but not to disclose it to me at all. Because all these reports, the annual report all came into the chairman and he had to determine whether everything was all right. He didn't know if it was all right because it was an audit report. It was a joke. It would have been, it could have been a tragedy so anyway

07:30 this committee started on it and they decided on certain things and so on and so forth and it went to the Committee of the Australian Associated Stock Exchanges and they tore it up so these funny little audit things kept going but I fought for something better and we did get it. We got it at the end of the thing, after I left the Chair actually and no of course it is dynamite. There is the Exchange Commission and

08:00 all the various authorities and so on and now they almost know if they've got 2 shillings under the bed. But that was one thing that did concern me but that is a little bit of background on it and in 1961 we scrubbed the call system and did this post board system and then in 1964 I was overseas and I went

08:30 right through the United States and England and I was away for 3 months and I worked for myself, seeing people for myself and spending time at the stock exchange looking at different methods of dealing and new methods of recording and transacting sales electronically so when we built the new building in, it was open in 1968 we made provision

09:00 for electronic boards but we never put them in because in the meantime they had switched into, started to embrace computer trading. There is no stock exchange where you go and trade now. You sit in your office and you push buttons. It's all on the screens and you know exactly what's up for sale and what the buyers want

09:30 and you meet them in your office behind a gadget. That was well after my time.

So it sounds like it went from, it sounds like it started as an almost a clubby sort of?

It was very clubby there was no question about it. It was very clubby in that respect. After all you had to be admitted as a member and you had to go one of those gentleman club ballots

10:00 where the white ball and the black balls existed and I will say that before I left the chair we changed the rules of election and the members voted that the committee would elect and they trusted the committee that the person who was coming in was a suitable in knowledge because you had to have an apprenticeship. If you were a chartered accountant

10:30 or something of that bill you had to have 4 years experience. In my date a lot of date 2 years were cut off if you were one of these professional characters but you still had to do 2 years in a broker's office from that point of view. There was also the question of personal standards and there were referees of course and also

11:00 full disclosure of assets and liabilities so the committee was armed with the whole lot and members were advised a month before it was dealt with by the committee that a person's name was up and named of such and such an address. An applicant for membership so it was devolved by the committee. It was a far better way of doing it. I think the ballot box was in the archive of the stock exchange somewhere.

11:30 **So when did that system ?**

1966 just before I left the chair.

That must have been gratifying that it almost cost you your career.

It was. We had some successes and I was involved in the changing of the share transfer procedures and whereby the past you had the seller had to sign his transfer with his share certificate

12:00 and the buyer had to sign it and then it came to the broker and then it went to the company. Well we changed all that whereby neither the broker nor the seller had to sign anything. The broker guaranteed his client as being that person who came in about 1965. That led to the rapid dealing with transfer of shares these days. You only have a 3 day settlement now go to have your money up and pay it in

12:30 3 days and the professional brokers have share registries that look after all the back offers and so on and so forth. But I enjoyed myself in those days.

So those innovations that you were talking about in the 50s and 60s. Was that sort of born out of necessity with what you were seeing or was it more an international change?

No it was born out of necessity to because we had gone through fortunately we changed

13:00 to the post trading early in 1961. 1961 for 2 or 3 years after was the huge uranium boom and the nickel boom and the turnovers were immense. They would have been there all day and all night in the call room system dealing with it so it was opportune but the trading, the turnovers were increasing and increasing. Fortunately this was just

13:30 done and even then, even then the settlements got months behind. Trading and of course, trading between Melbourne and London in particular. The London institution are remarkable people. They are all like a whole lot of sheep. They are all slotted in to do the same sort of thing. They never talk to each other about what they are doing and when there's a boom on they all go and if its an Australian boom they are all into it buying and buying for their, the brokers buying for their institutions

14:00 and there was a huge London business in those days. Money coming out to western mining's and Broken Hill and all these new companies some of which are some of the best companies in the world but they all started in a speculative manner and whatever and in 1964 I used to go to London every year until

14:30 about 1974. Sometimes I used to go twice a year to go and see various brokers and bankers and institutions and so on and still being on the committee of the exchange and having been the chairman I would do a lot of, would be entertained a lot by various people and I had full access to arrangements and the methods

15:00 of the London stock exchange and their plans and so on so that was very fascinating and I met a lot of wonderful people. There was something very funny. The British Government as a post war measure if you were entertaining an overseas person for the purpose of promoting trade the cost of the lunch was deductible so as soon as it was known

15:30 that I was in London I would get all these various brokers ringing me up saying 'I've got you for lunch this day. I've got you for lunch that day.' And then they would invite some of their institutional clients along to so it was all a very happy sort of arrangement but I loved it, I loved it. America was great too. I had a lot of fun in America. Met a lot of wonderful American people. Then in 1965 we decided the Melbourne exchange,

16:00 1964 we decided we should have a symposium, a big symposium not just a day seminar. So we had a 4-day symposium called 'Investment in Australia' and it was organised by the stock exchange and our public relations people. We invited 4 leading financial people from overseas, leading financial journalist from London, a merchant banker from

16:30 German, the Chairman, the President of the New York Stock Exchange from New York and the Ambassador and General from Japan, for Japan. It was a high powered thing and we had various people talking on various subjects including 'Should brokers become Directors' and things like that. It was an open forum

17:00 and all the papers had been prepared beforehand and on the morning of that particular those sessions the press got them so they had them to work on them and after the discussion after the paper the 2

people who had the paper and the 2 people who criticised the paper had a press conference and the press cover we got was unbelievable. Anyway I'm quite sure out of that I got my

17:30 CBE [Commander of the Order of the British Empire] because that was in February 1965 and it attracted a lot of attention and I know it attracted Henry Bothers attention. In fact he opened the thing for us and the right about, am I digressing too much away from the mark?

No, not at all, this is interesting.

Well it must have been in April 1966 the last year of the chair

18:00 the governor's secretary from Government House in Melbourne rang up and said 'I was wondering if you could come over I want to talk to you about something.' So in due course I went over and this was the days of Sir Ryan (UNCLEAR – Dela). A lovely person. A great governor and he said 'Do you know what you are here for?' and I said 'Oh yes, you want me to arrange for his excellency to see the stock exchange operating.' And he said 'Well, that's not a bad thought. Will you accept

18:30 a royal honour' without naming it and I said 'Of course I would accept the royal honour.' He said 'It's a good one and it's the CBE. We are telling you know, we are asking everybody these days because up until a few years ago it was never known by the recipient until it was read in the paper and there was one gentlemen who was knighted and he didn't want to be knighted and he hot footed it back to Government House and it had to go right through the

19:00 system and it had to land on the Queen's desk and she was very upset about it for cancelling something that she had not easily given such an award. So now they ask it.' So that's an interesting little thing and it was announced on the Queen's birthday and I happened to have arrived in New York that day and I went to lunch at one of the banks and my host said to me 'Congratulations!'

19:30 It was a Monday you see and it had been awarded on the weekend and he said 'I know, it's in the overseas addition of the Times newspaper from London and I got it this morning and there are all the honours.' So in due course you attended Government House. It's a beautiful thing. We just saw it today. 'For services

20:00 to the stock exchange in Melbourne' was the citation.

So you think it would be through Bolty himself that that was?

I don't know but Bolty was more than delighted that Melbourne had put this thing on in Victoria and it was international and Bolty was a great promoted of Victoria and Victorian industry and commerce and trade. He used to have trade

20:30 delegations all over the world. I can only, I have no idea who nominated you. I don't anything about that. I will never know nor should I know and I have nominated and seconded a few people since then. They wouldn't have a clue that I may have been involved. I think that is the proper way to go about it.

So what was, you were talking about Victorian commerce and industry. What was the deal with Sydney and Melbourne? Was there a

21:00 **sort of rivalry there with the stock exchange?**

There was rivalry there and in fact, are you still going?

Yes.

There used to be meetings of the Australian Associated Stock Exchanges in all states and that only used to be an annual affair. Occasionally the chairman might say, the exchanger would say hello to each other and so on but we were all autonomous and then, I became president

21:30 when I was elected Chairman of Melbourne because the head of the principal office of the, in fact the only office of the combined body which is a loose association is always in either Sydney and Melbourne and exchanged every 4 years and it happened to be the Chairman of Melbourne when it was Melbourne's turn he was president of the thing and when it was Sydney it was his turn and I

22:00 went to a chairman's conference at least an interstate conference in 1957 when I was first delegated and I was amazed. Here were these fellows they would gather together and they were sort of, little bit of lobbying here and there and all palsy whalsy and they always had a jolly good dinner and anyway the Chairman

22:30 of Melbourne at the time, an old codger he was. We had agreed at the conference table, everybody agreed at the conference table we would do something To do something it all had to go back to everyone's membership and they all had to agree to this as well who were all brokers you see and we got back to the hotel and we were having a drink before dinner and my chairman said to me 'Well of course we agreed there but we won't do it.' And that was even before we left Sydney

23:00 and this concerned me so I introduced chairman's conferences once a quarter. Chairman of the stock exchange and we used to go around in turn to each exchange which was a good idea. It was a bit of a

PR [Public Relations] thing for each exchange to know that this was on and so on and we would and the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of each exchange would come as well.

23:30 I insisted that they have their meeting to deal with our agenda before we met so that they were well aware. The agendas to the chairman they had them 2 or 3 weeks to study so that everyone was prepared and we started to get somewhere. We started to get somewhere. In the end after a special committee was formed on company borrowing's because a couple of companies went bung like the Reid Murrays and so on in 1962

24:00 we set up a special committee which set down rules relating to government, to company borrowing's from the public and so on. In the end became law, adopted into the Australian Company Law and so on but then there was a stage there when something went wrong and Brisbane got out of hand.

24:30 They wanted to change the brokerage rates which were all standard and so on and they went at it their own way and did it this way and it was intolerable. You couldn't do that. They were fixed rates anyway so I went up to Sydney and saw the vice president of Sydney and we talked about it and I went up to Brisbane and I took the chairman of Brisbane, we had a long talk and I took him to lunch and I told him that he was not going to do it and he said 'But I've done it' and I said 'Well you are not going to do it

25:00 because the chairman's are going to tell you are not going to do it.' And he said 'Well I am autonomous' and I said 'Well okay. I'm just telling you you are not going to be doing it.' He broke into tears. I've never seen a man like it. He went to pieces. It was all bluff. Nice experience that you have. That was interesting.

I'm just going to go back a little bit.

25:30 **I'm really fascinated I mean the stock exchange perse is fascinating and particularly you were in London 1935, 36. Was the way it was set up any different from what you were?**

Completely different.

Was it?

Completely different. They had what they call posts. In other words we'll call it a rotunda if you like with telephone communications and there were brokers who dealt with the public and there were jobbers. The jobbers never dealt with the public. They

26:00 dealt with the brokers and the jobbers were obliged to make a market in the stock. Say it might be Royal Dutch Shell. Well that jobber he was at the post where Royal Dutch Shell was traded. He was the jobber. He had a book in Royal Dutch Shell 'He's on hand' or 'He's oversold' as he was allowed to tell the broker. The brokers were never allowed to over sell

26:30 not in London anyway. Anyhow the broker had a buying order in Dutch Shell and that would go to the jobber and he would supply them and so 'Okay, client was satisfied.' So the jobber was the middleman in the market and he would make a turn. He might say Royal Dutch Shell was I don't know, 60 pounds 15. He would sell them at 60,15 but he'd probably be buying at 58 or something like that. That was his turn

27:00 but he was the principal all the time. The broker was never a principal with his client. So that's how they did it in London. Quite different.

And back in when you were talking about the call room system.

Yes.

Is it possible for you to, you sort of described the set up there with the, I was wondering if you could describe the sort of activity that was going on and the atmosphere and the.

It was very rapid. There was the chairman,

27:30 usually the chairman, originally of the exchange used to in there every morning and we would put a committee man in there as the authority and he would adjudicate. He had a junior and there was this fellow called the caller and he would call BHP and there would be a roar and

28:00 everybody dealing BHP and he would pick out very clever, very brilliant. He would pick out, say there was a roar and BHP was 5 pounds, buyers yelling 5 pounds and sellers selling 4 pounds 90 or something like that and it was mixture of all voices. It was a busy stock. I used BHP for all my business and it was a busy stock and he would pick out a seller and a buyer when it hit 5 pounds say

28:30 and he would marry them. Ware to Potter, 5 pounds, Ware to Potter and then the trading would keep going on and then next stock and they would run through the whole list twice a day.

And what involved, you are buying, selling on the floor. Are you there constantly or communicating prices and sales and purchases to the officers or anything like that?

You can't. You couldn't do it

29:00 in the early days. You couldn't do it. The market was closed until the quote sheets came out, until it

finished and then the prices came out on the quotation sheets which went all around the city and so on. So it was not possible. It was closed to the public. It was closed to broker's offices.

But open for how long

29:30 **on a given day?**

Until the list was full, until the list was completed. Until A, stock A, stock Z all the sales were back again and out you go.

And typically how long would the day be? How long would you go?

Depending on the business. I would say probably in the 50s when I started it started about 10 in the morning and finished about 11.00, 11.15

30:00 but in the very early days of the uranium boom before we went to post trading sometimes they were going to 1.30 in the morning call. But post trading was open at 10 and closed at 4.00 because it was there at any time. You could be dealing in BHP. It was never called,

30:30 it was never checked on the post. It was never the chalkies only put the sale price and maybe the alteration to the market after the sale price. So that was a great help.

So during that time whether it be 1 hours, 3 hours there was no communication in or out from the exchange.

Notes could come in from the offices by this list or whatever. Stupid.

31:00 So I enjoyed my 6 years making it more a public market as it was. We built a new building in those years to, that was great that was. The ANZ bank built brand new offices, city offices in every state and they wanted the general manager wanted to do something in Melbourne and that's how we got

31:30 together and founded a company, pulled the old building down and put the new up which they very gratuitously said you can call stock exchange house even though our bank's in it and that was very modern.

That's interesting. Look I think we've only got a couple of minutes left, 10 minutes so do you want to tell us about your involvement with the neurology interests.

As I mentioned to you very early in the piece I had this party where the gifts were given

32:00 to the kids at Urella the crippled children's hospital and the scouts and the crippled children who came on the camps with us. Then my mother she had a stroke in 1949, a very serious one she was ill for 5 years and it got worse as it went on. She changed personality, she very ill and of course a stroke is no better example than a neurological disorder

32:30 and then in 1967 after I had been chairman one of the neurologist who I knew very well. In fact he was the son of a minister who told me my mother had died and he was aware that my mother had been ill and he was a neurologist and he was a good up and coming one and he said 'Would you be the secretary of a new foundation called the Australian Neurological Association?' so I said 'Yes.' I became the, they changed it to the Brain

33:00 Foundation after a while and I became a member of the board and I was the only secretary for 25 years. After, that was, I just fell for it. I knew, I remembered these little kids with deformed legs and odd shapes and not being able to speak properly and all neurological things, all things wrong with the brain at the Uralla Hospital.

33:30 My mother's state which was a frightful existence for my father and my sisters so I leapt at it and I enjoyed it thoroughly and after about ten years which was about 1987 there was a thing called the Van Cleef Foundation which was formed, was capitaled by a man whose wife was saved by a neurologist, a neurosurgeon. He gave a lot of money,

34:00 quite a deal of money and there were 5 trustees and he dropped out and we administered this fund. We gave grants for various neurological causes and so on and the main purpose was eventually to set up a chair and you know from about 1980 to 1995 no university in Melbourne wanted a chair in neuroscience, no hospital wanted to be involved with a chair in neuroscience.

34:30 In the meantime, the assets were growing and the investments were growing. It's wasn't a huge fortune but they were until we found suddenly Monash, the Monash Dean took the bit between his teeth so to cut a long story short we established a chair at Monash, a teaching hospital at the Alfred and we gave him $5m. That was fun. That was enjoyable.

35:00 So that was my involvement with neurology.

How long were you involved with that?

I was 25 years with the Brain Foundation and about 15 years with the Van Cleef Foundation. So that was that. Now I come back to this. I could not have done that, I'm sure I couldn't have if I had been a partner in J B Ware & Sons because it was another

35:30 plus that came out of this blackballing that I became my own person that I could regulate what I did which was non-business which was ex-murial activities you might like to call them. I wouldn't have been able to do that but I was able to do that because I had a business. I had a partner and 2 very wonderful senior people there that could run. That was another thing.

36:00 The same thing for Carey Grammar School. I was on the council there from 1946 to 51, 1955 to 81. I was vice chairman of the council from 51, I was president from 72 to 81 and property officer during their 20 year expansion. I never left Carey. I was the old boys representative all those years and now I'm the

36:30 honourary archivist for 3 years and we have professional archivist. Ann was a professional archivist. She has a BA, a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Archives and she worked there for 6 years with me. She decided she didn't have enough time and we now have another fully professional archivist and it's wonderful and it's a great archive.

And another archive now is your book

37:00 **which you've written the.**

Sorry?

You have also written a book.

I had a very good friend. In fact I left my wife for this very good friend long before I met Ann and we travelled a lot between 1964 and 1970. When I went overseas every time she always came with me. She was a great, a lovely person and so on and on one occasion we were in Los Angeles and it was foggy outside

37:30 and we were sort of stuck in the hotel and she said 'Why don't you write your family history? Why don't you write a book? Why don't you write a book about yourself?' So I got a few bits together and it wasn't until 1990 that Ann said 'Come on what about this book?' So we got stuck right into it and she typed the whole thing on a machine and put it in bound form and then it went to an editor, went to not an editor

38:00 a wonderful person and she found all the mistakes and so on and it all came back and Ann typed it up again and we got it, and there's the final form as it emerged. So that was a lovely activity. It nearly drove Ann mad I think. I think she must have had a lot of 5,000 commas or something. It was great.

You were saying earlier off camera you said your son Michael had said how come you'd never talked about the war

38:30 **and you said now we've got it in the book you can read that. But why do you think it was that so many men who came back from war service didn't talk?**

I thought probably, I think one reason was they didn't expect the people at home would know what they were talking about that they could possibly imagine some of the things they had been through. This would be to a lesser or greater degree depending on what you were I think. I know some of the airmen

39:00 and they never talk about their dogfights or anything like that. In fact they can talk about the pleasant things and when they went to Cairo and when they weren't doing much in the Middle East how they went to Jerusalem and they had to here there and everywhere and so on before they were flying and things like that and of course, there were those who were in the prison camps in Japan and the Japanese

39:30 prison camps on the Burma road and so and the atrocities they saw and they, the shocking treatment of the Japanese and bayoneting and all that sort of stuff. Many of those would never talk. I'm sure they would never talk or they haven't talked. But I think a lot of it was well there it was

40:00 I was involved and it was done. I probably don't very much of what went on at home anyway. They don't know what went on with me now where can we met. Where can find something to talk about during those years. I mean that's a sort of theory of it but it is fact, it is a fact that a lot of men have never talked about it to an extent anyway. They might talk about the happy things.

40:30 **How do you think that experienced shaped Australia? Post-war what impact did that have on us as a people do you thing as you see it?**

On who?

On our society. I know it's a big question but did you see changes take place that were a result of that experience.

I don't know whether that particular aspect of not talking about it had anything to do with it

41:00 but of course the society changed completely and Melbourne, Victoria or eastern Australia in particular was concerned. When things start to get moving in 1947, 48 and the 50s and into the 60s the development of the world, the development of Australia was absolutely incredible. And then of course we started to get the migrants and the migrants brought some nice cultures with them

41:30 and so on and Australia became a different place and I'm sure the war, the fact there was a war caused

all those things. I mean 2 or 3 million British migrants like Ann and her family they came out from England. They wanted to come to Australia and bring a new life and it was, it was a revolution that became a social revolution because of all the different.

INTERVIEW ENDS