

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Lawrence Date (Fingers) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1561>

### Tape 1

00:36 **We will just start with the brief explanation.**

My name is Lawrence Edward Date. I was born 20th March 1930 at Allerton Private Hospital in Marrickville Road, Dulwich Hill. The place is still there but it is a community hostel place now. My parents lived in Woodland Street, Marrickville at the time which is the eastern entrance to Enson Park

01:00 rugby league ground in Marrickville now, but at that time it was a tip. They moved from there to live with Dad's mother in England Avenue Marrickville because the day I was born he lost his job, it was in the Depression. We moved down to Australia Street, Camperdown and we were down there for a couple of years and on my brother's second birthday on the 11th July 1934 we

01:30 moved down to Woolford Street, Corrimal and I had two more brothers born down there. We all went to Corrimal School and a week before the war started we moved from one side of the street to the other. Mum thought it was a good deal and so did I because I finished up with a room of my own, only a little room but it was mine and we stayed there until twelve months after the war finished and we had to move to Sydney because an

02:00 ex-serviceman had bought the house but it wasn't big enough for us anyway. We moved to Sydney in Robert Street, Marrickville and my brother and sister still live there. My sister was born while we lived there and there is nearly twenty years difference between me and her and between me and her there is three brothers as well. I attended Corrimal School from 1935 until 1941 and

02:30 I left Corrimal School just as the Pacific war started. Then I started Wollongong Tech it was 15th February 1942 Singapore capitulated and the next day was my father's birthday, his 38th birthday and he went to Changi prison war camp on that particular day. He was lucky he stayed there, he never went out of the place anywhere. I did three years at Wollongong Tech

03:00 and I left in the school year 1944, couldn't get out of school quick enough. When I went to Corrimal School I liked it but when I went to Wollongong Tech, oh. I don't know I was out of my environment I suppose you would call it now but I knew everybody in the school but when I went to Wollongong Tech there was only about five or six blokes I knew from Corrimal in the same classes that I had.

03:30 I never settled down.

**Let is go into that more later. I'd just like to have a brief?**

When we moved to Sydney I worked at various jobs and potential motor mechanic at the Holden dealer at Woolloomooloo and I had a job as a storeman. I was a dispensary porter at Prince Alfred Hospital for something like seventeen months, the only job I had before I joined the army that

04:00 I got holidays at. I was a truck driver, assistant mechanic, I just could never settle down, always looking for something better or something different. I joined the army in 1950, done my recruit training at Ingleburn, went to the Corps of Signals school in Victoria and then I went to Woomera as a truck driver in a line construction unit. Volunteered to go to Korea and

04:30 never thinking they would let us go but they did. Back to School of Signals done a conversion course, went to Japan thinking we were going straight to the battalion which we didn't. There was eight of us in that group and I got sick almost as soon as I hit Japan. I got bronchitis and a minor surgical problem with haemorrhoids and I got

05:00 an ear infection and quite frankly I wasn't worth 2/-d. But I didn't think they would send me to Korea and I was dead set of frightened going over. I had no infantry training to speak of, just a couple of days here and a couple of days there and I went across to the signals platoon on the 1st platoon and it was like old home week because sixty percent of the platoon I had done in the Corps of Signals here in Australia and it made it very easy for me to settle in.

- 05:30 After six months with them I went to the 2nd Battalion and finished my twelve months while I was in the signals platoon in the 2nd Battalion and an uncle from my mother's side of the family joined us. He had been a commando during the war, Jack and I got on all right and if you seen him in action with me he kind of slipped down a bit. What you expected or heard of what he
- 06:00 done during the war, never stands up to what you think and what you see are never the same. Finished my twelve months in the battalion and went back to my parent Corps in Signals in Kure. I used to have a run around the camp first thing in the morning, the only unit in Japan that used to do it and it was coming on winter and coming out of steam heated barracks we would stand around
- 06:30 in a pair of khaki drill trousers and a jumper and we would stand out there sometimes for fifteen and twenty minutes and coming out of a steam heated barracks well my bronchitis flared up. Trotting around the camp I was dragging the chain, the last man in the queue and got short of breath and puffing and panting and finished up in a swimming pool. Fortunately there was a bloke behind me and he pulled me out of the pool. They sent me to hospital and the next thing I know I'm
- 07:00 on a stretcher and come back to Australia. I was medically downgraded to Class 2, fit for sedentary duties only. From there they sent me down to the School of Sigs and I hated the idea of going down there and I didn't know how long I was going to be there and I wanted to be an operator, keyboard operator and they didn't know how long the course was going to be. I didn't fancy spending six months
- 07:30 waiting for a course to start so I thought I would transfer to artillery and got knocked back. I was attached to an artillery unit and I spent twelve months here in Sydney and they sent me back down to Melbourne again as a driver, a driver, batman when the unit was going around putting in new signal centres, radio transmitter stations and receiver stations and things like that. I spent eighteen months with them on their paper and
- 08:00 the last six months I was in the Sigs unit and I done an operator's course in the School of Sigs and qualified as an operator keyboard. And as a prize at the end of the whole course qualified top keyboard and they closed it down after Christmas and we all finished up working at the 1956 Olympic Games. I don't know whether by good luck or good management I don't know. I finished up at the
- 08:30 two main nights over at the swimming pool when the Australian men took all the prizes and the next night the Australian women took the prizes and nearly come to physical fisty cuffs [fight] with the American coach team. He was going crook, he said "All those Australian bastards are winning everything". I said "Christ mate you can't win them all, you are doing all right over at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, leave us some" and he got a bit cranky about it and I had been having a few beers with the sailors around the place too
- 09:00 and old Bertie Beresford he said "Away you go, you are doing all right". One thing that gave me a lot of pleasure it was the first time an Australian soccer team had appeared in an Olympic Games and the captain of the team was a bloke that my father used to play cricket with before the war, Bobby Bignall. And he didn't remember me but I remember him and when I told him who I was he said "I remember your Dad" and
- 09:30 I had a couple of beers with him too after the soccer game was on. After that was over come home on leave and went back to Melbourne and was working with the Tape Relay Centre and oh it was like working in a bloody dungeon. It was an old war time fibro hut and in the summer time it was like an oven and in the winter time it was like a freezer. And just being a bit chesty I started to get a bit crook and I wanted to get out of the place and
- 10:00 I volunteered to go back to Korea and they wouldn't send me because I was Med Class 2 and they sent me back to Sydney for a medical board and they said "We will keep you in the army if you stop here in Sydney". Well that suited me. I was working at the Signals Centre here in Sydney and they decided they wanted to take my trade pay off me when I come up from there because I was in a job that called for an operator keyboard and cipher.
- 10:30 I was fully employed as a keyboard operator but I wasn't qualified as a cipher so they said, the paperwork said "He is not fully qualified for the job, he doesn't get the trade pay for it". I was still fully employed in my own job and the boss we had at the time, old Ted Farthing, a bit of an idiot in a lot of ways but a bloody good officer and he kept the trade pay for
- 11:00 me and he got me into cipher and I eventually qualified and thought "here comes two hooks and two stars". But they changed the pay system and I didn't get the two hooks. It was Grade Six money and it was virtually the same as a two star corporal but while I was doing this ciphering operators course I developed diabetes. And from then on I used to go and see the MO [Medical Officer] at Vic Barracks every so often
- 11:30 and they used to have to drag me down there almost and the Medical Officer was of the old school and he had a practice in Oxford Street, Paddington before the First World War and this is the late 1950's and his knowledge of diabetes hadn't improved over that time. I went to see him, showed a slight trace of sugar and he said "oh", which the specialist regarded as quite good, "oh I don't like that"
- 12:00 and in to Concord [Repatriation Hospital] and I couldn't get out of there under a month. From the month in 58 when they stabilised me I had three trips to hospital in '59 all because of this old doctor and then I had a hypo [hypoglycaemia attack] in 1960 and I didn't know what it was because nobody

had ever told me. They didn't send me to an endocrinologist they call them now, a diabetic specialist

- 12:30 but they never sent me to an outpatients department or anything like that. I just had to plug along on my own and had this hypo and after I come out of hospital they said "No you are medically unfit" and I was out.

**Let's start again at the beginning of your childhood, can you tell us about your early memories?**

I don't remember living in Woodland Street, but I remember living in England Avenue

- 13:00 where Dad's mother lived. She had a canary and I remember taking the chilli out of the canary's cage and biting it. I have never eaten chilli since. She had a mangle, and I don't know if you know a mangle is? It is a great big roller thing with a great big handle and that is what the women used to do in the laundry these days to rinse the sheets out before they hung them out on the line
- 13:30 and it used to help in ironing them too. My brother Bruce was born when we lived there and then we moved down to Australia Street, Camperdown. I can't remember much about the house but I know if I went out the back gate and half a dozen houses up the back lane I could get to my Auntie Flo's place. She lived half a dozen doors up the street and I remember hanging out the front fence with my brother Bruce and
- 14:00 it must have just been before we moved down to Corrimal and we saw this circus go down the street and my Dad wouldn't believe we had seen a bear. We seen the bear all right and then Mum pointed out the fact that there was a circus down in Camperdown Park. Also in Australia Street, Camperdown my Mum's mother, Grandma Hobbs she lived down, the number was 51 Australia Street and
- 14:30 Mum wouldn't let me go down there on my own because there was too much traffic around. I remember Grandma Hobbs lived there and I think she moved out there in 1965, something like that, possibly even later and then from there we moved down to 15 Wilfred Street, Corrimal
- 15:00 on 11th July 1934. That was my brother Bruce's second birthday. We moved down there, and there were lots of boys down there my age. The Coleman brothers, one of them Kevin I still keep in touch with, the Pall family across the street and there was just the two of them, Jimmy and Nola. And I had a whip
- 15:30 and Nola was the same age as Bruce and I took the whip to her. I would like to be able to do it now because she grew up to be a gorgeous looking woman. There was the Egans, there was only two girls in our half of Wilfred Street that went to Corrimal Public School, not at the time but later on.

**What games did you play as a young boy?**

I used to play soccer,

- 16:00 the kids stuff in the school but no organised team sports. This is in the Depression years and we had the bush at the foot of the escarpment there and it was South Bulli pit and Corrimal pit and my parents used to think nothing of the kids going up in the bush all day. We would take something to eat with us and there was plenty of fruit trees
- 16:30 in people's backyards and raid them and come out with a shirt full of green fruit or something like that. In the summer time we thought it was a hell of a long distance, it was about a mile and a half down to Corrimal beach and there was always people on the beach, it was quite safe. There was a lagoon there. Swimming in the lagoon wasn't real healthy like because the local butcher,
- 17:00 RE Sims and Son used to do their own slaughtering and all the refuse used to go into this Towrozzie Creek and the people were up in arms about it but I don't know anybody caught anything contagious out of it. I started school and in 5th class. I started in kindergarten and I remember a school teacher there Miss Crawshaw. When I thought of her later on she
- 17:30 was always reminiscent, she looked like Grace Kelly. She used to wear her hair, a real blonde and a bun at the back, just a darling. I remember the first, Miss Knight, my teacher in first class, my teacher in second class was she was real old, Miss Cram. She had hands on her like ironbark and the boys used to play up with her,
- 18:00 out the front and over her knees, up the leg of your knickers and she had a hand like ironbark and I felt it quite a few times. I thought she was old, and I have a book up there about Corrimal School and we thought she was old, she was old as she started teaching at Corrimal Public School in 1915 so she had been there over twenty years when I left there. And she was still teaching at Corrimal School when we moved to Sydney in 1946.
- 18:30 That would have been my youngest brother Barry would have been in her class at that time.

**Tell us about your parents, what work did your Dad do during the Depression?**

Dad by trade was an electroplater and polisher. I don't know whether there is such a trade exists these day but I was born in the Depression and those sort of things

- 19:00 all dried up. He had been working in the Egg Board as it was in Wattle Street, Ultimo and the day I was

born he lost his job. I don't know what he done to be quite honest. In late 1933 I think he only started coming home weekends and I was a little lad and I didn't know where my Dad had gone and he was working with his brother Arthur.

- 19:30 He used to deliver small goods for Barnes' Bacon, a small goods mob gone by the board from years and years ago and Dad was working with him down at Wollongong. And then he had a chance to get a house and we moved down to Corrimal there my Dad worked with his brother until he enlisted in 1940.
- 20:00 In that time they used to come up to Homebush Bay because there were slaughter yards and abattoirs and all sorts of small goods factories and that around there at that time. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and they used to deliver from, their first customer was at Sutherland and Sutherland was at the end of the line in those days the electric train line used to finish at Sutherland. They didn't open the one
- 20:30 to Cronulla until 1938, 39 or something like that and their first customer there was at Sutherland and I suppose something at Engadine in those times and there would be something at Heathcote. It wouldn't have been much and then they used to go down to Stanwell Park, Scarborough, Coledale, had a couple of customers at Austinmer, Thirroul, Bulli, Woonoona, Corrimal and
- 21:00 and Wollongong. He would leave home, he would be out of bed at three thirty in the morning and Uncle Arthur would pick him up at about a quarter past four and up to Sydney and pick up their load and Dad wouldn't get home until eight and nine o'clock at night and us being young infants more or less and we never got to see him until Saturdays because they never used to work Saturdays.
- 21:30 In the winter time he used to do gardening and things like that because everybody used to grow their own vegetables in those days and you don't see many people doing it today but he used to grow his own vegetables. And in the summer time he used to play cricket with Corrimal Cricket Club and in a publication a few years back, ten or twelve years the
- 22:00 Corrimal Cricket Club was a hundred years old and they were writing up the history of it and one fellow wrote in it that mentioned Dad. He got the local Corrimal Cricket Club into the State League which was being run at the time through his contacts through the small goods run, blokes working in shops and things like that and he got quite a few star cricketers, the blokes who were residents of Corrimal
- 22:30 and they couldn't get a game for one reason or other and he got into it and he didn't think much of Dad's cricket style but as an administrator he was one of the best he ever met.

#### **What do you remember of your Dad joining up and going to the Second World War?**

There was quite a few blokes around the place had joined the army and we asked him why he did and he wasn't,

- 23:00 I can't remember what he had to say about it. It was the King's birthday weekend in 1940 and he come home and he said to Mum "I have joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]" and Mum wasn't too happy about it. When I think about it now I can't understand why he done it because he was a married man with four young children and he really had no business but I suppose
- 23:30 it was the way things were going at the time and he thought it was the right thing to do. Personally I think he done it to get away from home for awhile. He would have been thirty six and the hours he was putting in at work he probably was missing out on a bit of social life and nobody had much in the way of social life in those days. The pubs used to close a 6 o'clock.
- 24:00 There was no such things as clubs, leagues clubs they were unheard of. He joined the AIF and away he went. We went to see him once when he done his recruit training out at the showground. In the cupboard behind you I have got a photo of Mum and us four boys going to see him. He went into the 8th Division,
- 24:30 1 Company, 8th Div ASC [Army Service Corps] was the flying transport unit. He went to Dubbo and done his corps training out there, not that he needed any teaching how to drive a truck. He had been driving a truck by that time for seven years and he come on final leave at Christmas 1940
- 25:00 and didn't know where he was going and said "Hooray" to us late January 1940 and he went to Malaya on the Queen Mary. He met a bloke on the Queen Mary by the name of Jack Hollis and he didn't know Jack Hollis from a bar of soap. Four years later I was working with Jack Hollis and Jack Hollis was a
- 25:30 greaser on the Queen Mary and he knew Dad and this bloke he got off the Queen Mary and he bought an ice run around Thirroul and I used to work with Jack Hollis on Saturdays. Dad wrote us very informative letters from Malaya describing the life and what have you and he sent us a,
- 26:00 he went to a lot of trouble, an album with four photos on that side and on the other side written in white ink, it was black paper describing what the photos were and all the rest of that. My brother and sister down at Marrickville still have it in their protection and the Malayan Consultant here in Sydney, Bruce took it to show them that some years ago and they offered him three or four thousand dollars for it
- 26:30 because they had no records of anything the Australian Army and things like that occurred in 1941 before the war started there. He wrote us heaps of letter about it describing the life, mainly to Bruce

and I because were the eldest and we hung onto those letters and we treasured them like gold. After

- 27:00 I had hold of them in my own little room down there in Corrimal and when we moved to Sydney they disappeared. I think Dad destroyed them. Don't ask me why, I haven't the faintest idea but they would have been a God send to show his grandkids but that is what happened.

**What do you remember about him coming back from the war?**

During the war, being a prisoner of war of the Japanese we

- 27:30 got, I am not too sure, whether it two or three letters and then we got the first one in 1944 he had been a prisoner of war for over two years then and there was a lady post person and she used to do or we would be almost on the end of a run and she would walk all the way up to our place
- 28:00 to give Mum the letter and Mum took us four boys and all the way down to Corrimal Station to tell her mate. It was a lousy bloody day and Mum was saying "Isn't it a lovely day?" I had to go up and ring Dad's mother because she was on the phone and she lived with her eldest son and they had the phone on and I rang him or rang
- 28:30 Grandma and he rang his brother Alf and let him know and let him tell the rest of them. The next letter we got was June or July 1945 and Mum was in hospital in Wollongong and she had a major operation and wasn't feeling too well and this letter arrived and
- 29:00 we were staying with our auntie, oh the woman wasn't our auntie but she was better to us than any of our aunties and then I used to go up every afternoon coming home from work pick up the mail. And I get this letter and I didn't bother to go to Auntie May's for tea, I jumped on the bus and into Wollongong hospital and took the letter up to her and Mum improved out of sight. When we found out the
- 29:30 he was alive, he was shown in the newspaper as a lieutenant colonel and the local coal manager of the South Bulli pit lived in the same street as us and "oh, lieutenant colonel" and he come down and he was as friendly as pie to us. This Cobb Jones he had lost a son as a bomber pilot in air crew in England,
- 30:00 that was Ivor and his other son Alan he was a fighter pilot up in the islands and then the adjustment come out in the paper a few days later that he wasn't a lieutenant colonel at all, he was a lance corporal and of course he went right down in the social scale, not that it worried us. Then he came home on the Duntroon and we went out to meet him at Ingleburn and he didn't know me. When he went away
- 30:30 I was still in short pants, still going to primary school and when he come home four and a half years later I am in long pants having a sly smoke on the side and I was wearing his suit. It was a good day.

**Can you remember what his letters said that he wrote from Changi?**

It was just nothing much they could say, it was just like an international telegram

- 31:00 "feeling well, best of luck" and all this, about a dozen words was all they were allowed to say but it was enough. His letters from Malaya to us boys describe life around and he was stationed in Malacca and they used to write how they
- 31:30 tapped rubber trees and what they used to do in rubber plantations and things like that, it was very, very interesting. I used to take the letters to school and read them out to the class, things like that today it is all show and tell sort of thing. One of the grandkids,
- 32:00 I can't remember what they call it now, I used to take these things and read them and the school teacher I had they thought they were good. When I think of it now, I don't know of any other kids who got letters like that from their father. When he come home, considering the rest of them he was in good nick because the time he spent in the prisoner of war camp,
- 32:30 initially they clean up after all the things been set on fire either by our people or the Japanese bombing and things like that. There is lot of little, I don't know if you've ever been to Singapore, there is lots of little islands round the place that had oil tanks around them and they were cleaning up around that and back to Changi and considering his age thirty eight at the time he was the third oldest
- 33:00 man in his unit so they put him in, because he was supply and transport they put him in charge of the canteen in the hospital and he stayed there. He got a couple of hidings from the Japanese earlier on but they wouldn't have picked on him that much because he wasn't much taller than the average Japanese. He was only about five foot six or five foot seven.
- 33:30 He had some real good mates and he lost a few of them up on the Burma Thailand railway, lost a few in Sanananda, but he said when he was a prisoner of war the Japanese weren't the main problem if you were in Changi all the time.
- 34:00 You used to get the odd hiding if you didn't bow sort of thing to them, if you weren't careful you would get a bit of trouble like that but he said our own officers were their worst enemies. They got the best of everything and at one stage, more than twice they went through them and some OR's [other ranks] had better looking clothes than the officers

34:30 so they confiscated them off the baggies and gave them to the officers.

**What about your memories during the war as a kid in Australia?**

It was great. I had a father in the AIF and in the particular street I lived in there was Jones' had two in the air force,

35:00 Dad was in the army, another little bloke down the corner, Johnny Best he was in the 2/30st Battalion in Malaya and Dad went over in the 22nd Brigade and Johnny Best went over in the 27th later on and the local bus owner, Harry Henson he had a son, Jim he went over later on but Jim was a Provo [military police]. Big strong fellow not a screw in the boob or anything like this,

35:30 a good bloke Jim and Jimmy Fischer was in the air force later on because he wasn't that much older than me. You used to make it, when blokes used to come home on leave the local residents used to make a fuss of them but if any serviceman's wife got into trouble nobody wanted to know us. Yes, you deserve all the best and all that sort of thing

36:00 but they wouldn't lift a bloody finger to help you. The local coal miner, Cobb Jones, he used to arrange for Mum, as the manager of a coal mine in a coal mining town he was a big wheel and he would arrange for Mum to get a load of coal every now and then and he wouldn't charge her for it, she would give the truck driver 4/-d. or 5/-d. to have a drink

36:30 which was no mean effort during the war because beer was a bit short but that was his problem. A painter lived across the street he had three men working for him and old Mr Williams he was a nice bloke but Mrs Williams, ooh.

**Did you get into trouble with her?**

Yes because we had a dog and Mum had given him away and he had found us again. It was rather funny the way he found us. One of the local churches had a

37:00 tea meeting and Mum was always into those sort of things and we didn't mind going for a sandwich and tea or cakes and that sort of thing. It was a bit different from having tea at home on a Saturday night and election day and Patches found us. He was black and white like a foxy but that was as close to a foxy that he got because he was one hell of a fight dog he would fight anything. Patches found us

37:30 at the tea meeting thing and the neighbours who lived two doors down the street from us, Egans, Alan played the piano and Donny the eldest one, Donny was a year or two older than me he played the violin and the dog is up the back and he is all over us like the measles and Johnny started to play the violin and that set the dog off, howl, oh God. A lot of dogs will howl at the sound of music and the Egans never ever forgive us and

38:00 they still thought it was a put up job. Going back to the Williams, we got this load of coal and Patches had found us and he wasn't going back to the bloke Mum had give him to, we heard the bloke say "Come out you black bastard" and Patches wouldn't move and it was too far under the house for the bloke to get under and we were quite happy to have him back. About 9 o'clock at night and we were all sitting up for some reason or other and Mum

38:30 used to put us to bed early and there is a hell of a scream and "What is that?" We could hear the dog snarling and we raced out and this woman sent her son over with a bucket and he had it full of coal, well he wasn't bringing it in. She wanted the dog put down because it bit her boy and all that and she was insistent on it. The local copper [policeman], he was a bloke by the name of Vince Wild, he was a smooth man and

39:00 very heavy in the boot. He said "Right oh Mrs Williams we will charge him but Mrs Date wants to charge your son with theft". "What do you mean?" "Well was your son bringing the bucket of coal into the yard?" "Oh we were out of coal" and he said "Well you don't steal it off a serviceman's wife surely?" Old Mrs Williams never forgive me for that. She tried to get her own back on me later.

39:30 She accused me of throwing a brick through a woman's window across the street. I threw the brick at her house and it bounced and hit the woman's next door. Mrs Fischer, it was the only window on that side of the house and my brick went through her window and Mum would never believe I threw the rock and she called Mrs Williams a liar. About fifteen or twenty years later I told Mum that she was right but she wouldn't have it. She had a daughter Judy and she finished up a real good looking sort

40:00 and I saw her in 1990 and I looked at her and I thought "Christ it is her bloody mother again, she is a dead ringer for her mother [looked just like her mother]"

## **Tape 2**

00:37 **What was it like in your household when you heard your Dad had been taken captive?**

Very depressing but it really upset Mum and us four boys as well. At the time we hadn't had, but a

couple of blokes we had known had been killed

01:00 in action in Malaya and I can't think of anybody who had been killed in the Middle East. Not off hand if I look up the history books they would probably tell me. A lot of sympathy from people but it was a devastating blow to my mother because she had never enjoyed the best of health and the fact the thing that

01:30 Dad could possibly be dead because he was listed as missing in action, believed prisoner of war and the last letter we had from him I think it was written about the middle of January. How they got the mail out at that time I don't know but I think it was around that time.

02:00 He had seen some Japanese aircraft and that is about all he said. He didn't say he had been bombed or anything like that. As it turned out later he had been but Dad wasn't the sort of bloke would write things like that to tell Mum. He was quiet and I had the same tendency when I used to write to Mum from Korea

02:30 say "Things are quiet, a bit noisy up the front but I am no-where near it" and nine times out of ten I wasn't.

**What fears did you have for your father?**

I honestly thought he was dead. I didn't think I would ever see him again. My youngest brother Barry it didn't mean a great deal to Barry because when Dad was taken

03:00 Barry was just a bit over four and he hadn't seen a great deal of his father anyway. Ronnie was just coming up to six, and Bruce and I we remembered more about Dad and we didn't think we would see him again. When we got the first letter we were just as excited as Mum was.

03:30 I remember when the war did finish I was getting a hair cut down at McKittens Barber Shop down in Corrimal and I raced home to tell Mum. We had a wireless [radio] but we never used to listen to it very often and my youngest brother Barry the school teacher told him.

04:00 What was her name? A Miss Sand, she said "Oh well Barry Date you might see your father after all". We were quite happy about the idea of him coming home but we didn't know but the letter we got in '44 was written in '42 and I can't remember when the '45 letter was written, probably '44. I don't remember dates and

04:30 Mum held onto them and Dad destroyed them I don't know why. Some of the stuff he brought home from Malaya with him he had all the home made scales and things like that they improvised to do his job in Malaya he brought them home and showed us all and it disappeared. What he done with them I have no idea.

05:00 More is the pity because it would be a veritable treasure house to his grandchildren, his great grandchildren even more so but that was the way it was.

**You said there wasn't a lot of support in the community for your mother, why?**

No. They'd say "I hope he is all right" and that sort of thing. During the war the Red Cross run a thing to

05:30 take up collections "this street helps support the prisoners of war" and there was two possible prisoners of war in our street, my father and Johnny Best in the 2/30th Battalion and in the next street there was Jim Henson. And "yeah, we will do that, we will support that" and who did they get to collect it? Who was the only one to collect it was Mum.

06:00 I reckon it was a bloody lousy thing to do, there was a woman had all the worries about her husband being a prisoner of war, dead or alive not known and they wouldn't even help her out there. The story was everybody in the street was in steady work and a lot of them were working down the steel works and making good money or even better money in the mines and I used to go round and collect the money for Mum sometimes

06:30 when she wasn't in the best of health. People were getting good money, at the time £5 or sometimes £6 a week and in the 40's that was big money. They say "I am sorry, I haven't got 2/-d., can I pay you next time?" You would go round next time "Oh no I paid last time" and that sort of thing. They'd say "How is your husband?" "Don't know, don't know". "Oh keep your chin up."

07:00 And there were things we couldn't do, Bruce and I couldn't do around the house because we were only kids and none of the trades people around the place would offer to give her a hand or anything like that. And a couple of blokes used to work afternoon shift in South Bulli pit they used to walk home up the street and this particular bloke was my best mate's father and

07:30 walk around and just as he drove past our place hurl a brick on the corrugated iron roof, not a brick, a hunk of stone out of the street. They thought that was funny but I didn't take too kindly to that. I didn't think it was much of a joke.

**We are often painted a picture that that time was one of extreme patriotism and everybody**

### **was pulling together?**

Only pulling for their bloody selves, oh

- 08:00 they would bung on a bit of a show for some bloke but it didn't matter where you go that is what politicians "I am all for the working man" but the only working man they are looking for is themselves and the politicians of that time were no different. The only person that was any ways helpful to Mum was the local bus proprietor, old Harry Hinson.
- 08:30 He had three buses and seven or eight drivers and he said "You all know the Date family, they don't pay" and he was the only one. The landlady, well I went to school with his son Jim, Jim was eleven days older than me. He was born on the 19th March and I was born on 30th come pay day this woman
- 09:00 had a poultry farm and making money hand over fist, come army pay day she would send one of the kids down, hand out, wanted the money straight away. At the time 1945 Mum was getting £11/4/-d a fortnight and out of that she had to keep herself and us four boys clothed and fed and Mum was paying £2/5/-d. a fortnight rent
- 09:30 and was making dough hand over fist and she was down for the money with hand out straight away. None of the other neighbours around the place seemed to care. Self interest I suppose but "it doesn't affect me so why should I worry about it.
- 10:00 Let some other silly bastard do it". That was the attitude, well that is what I thought anyway.

### **What sort of industrial trouble was there in that region at the time of World War II?**

The bloody coal miners going on strike over a drop of a hat. I don't know why they used to go on strike there, all

- 10:30 sorts of reasons. I know coal miners it is a dirty bloody job, hard job, unhealthy job. My mate's father he finished up with cirrhosis of the liver or dust on the lungs or dusted they used to call it but it was a good paying job. They would go on strike over any sort of thing. I know coal mining managers are not the easiest people in the bloody world
- 11:00 to work for but then some of the blokes they have got working for them are not the easiest people to reason with either. I remember one time, I remember as it was yesterday, it was Melbourne Cup Day and the day shift were all set to go into the pit but "no somebody has pinched my singlet", he couldn't find his singlet anywhere and
- 11:30 they had a day's strike and went home for the day. Went back to work the next morning, he picked up his bloody singlet and went straight to work.

### **How did that lack of support make you feel?**

At the time I didn't think it was, I thought it was a pretty lousy bloody attitude but then you couldn't go and express opinions like that because we were living in a bloody coal mining town and we weren't locals. We were blow ins, we didn't move into the town until 1934.

### **12:00 How do you think captivity had changed your father when he came back home?**

I couldn't really say because we never used to see that much of him. He would leave home at 4 o'clock in the morning and getting home at 9 o'clock at night and only seeing him on Saturdays and Sundays. We had it was all imagination, we can only remember odd things about him. I know he was good with us boys, with Bruce and I

- 12:30 anyway and as I said before he used to grow all his own vegetables. And we used to love it when he used to dig up the yard to plant potatoes with his great big chunks of earth out with a spade and smashing them up great fun. We can only remember him doing that in 15 Wilford Street and when we moved across the road to 22 we were only there
- 13:00 maybe ten months and he joined the army. We would see him a bit more often when we moved across the street. In those days they used to pack butter in wooden boxes. He was a very handy man making toys and doing odd carpentry jobs and he was very adept at that.
- 13:30 My mate down the coast he was digging down under his house the other day, well the other year and he found one of these aeroplanes that Dad had made out of a butter box. Two wings and the wheels were made out of two half pennies he knocked a hole in the half pennies and used those.

### **14:00 Describe the circumstances now of why the family moved up to Sydney?**

Dad had an arrangement with the owner of the house if he survived the war he wanted to buy the house off him and Les Pall said yes right oh. In 1945 come around and we didn't know whether Dad was alive or not and he had an offer from a

- 14:30 another member of the armed forces. Christ, can't think of his name now. Armstrong, I think, yeah Armstrong, he wanted the house and he had been discharged from the army medically unfit and



- apparently he used to work at the local co-operative store and he had some money and he just got
- 15:00 married and he wanted to buy the house. Dad approved it but he couldn't get us out. He actually paid for the house but he wasn't ready to move in. Because when Dad come home they had twins in that time and he wanted us out right or wrong and at the time housing was impossible and they couldn't throw
- 15:30 Dad out because being an ex-serviceman with four children and they were reasonably well accommodated with in laws over in the next street and the Housing Commission was just in its infancy in those days. There was other people in more desperate circumstances and Dad had been promoted to sergeant while he was a prisoner of war but they
- 16:00 were only paid him as a lance corporal. His officers promotion stood while they were in captivity, ranks didn't they dropped back to their substantive rank. Dad's OC [officer commanding], a bloke by the name of Jeff Boreham who is dead now, he proved to the army that he had promoted Dad to the rank of corporal and it had been on record, Dad got back money for.
- 16:30 I think corporals used to get 5/-d. a day more than privates and 4/6d. a day more than lance corporals. He was backdated until January or February 1941 and that was big bickies [lots of money]. I don't know what Dad intended to do with it but he had to get out of the place in Corrimal and through a relative in Sydney, Mum's mother Lily,
- 17:00 she was working with somebody who had a three bedroom house in Marrickville and was moving to Melbourne. And an agreeable sum of money, subject to negotiation they would move and let us in on the payment of this amount of dough [money] that is where most of Dad's back money went.
- 17:30 We moved in and I found more bobby pins and razor blades in the room Bruce and I moved into, more bobby pins and razor blades and I can't understand why there was a bobby pin shortage during the war. There was two women lived in it and there were bobby pins two or three deep under the bed and under the lino [linoleum] and that and God knows what. Going back when the war finished and when he come home Mum had tried to buy
- 18:00 me a bike during the war because there was one thing I always wanted was a bike but Mum tried to buy one on time payment at Bennett and Woods the Speedwell dealers in Wollongong. And the bloke Mum went to see knew Dad quite well "Oh no your husband he is not in permanent employment, we can't let you have it". Dad come home and Mum said
- 18:30 "I want the boys to have a bike, I promised them a bike" and he said "I am not having it" and she said "Yes they are, I have promised them". He took us into Wollongong and he went to Bennett and Woods and they were all over Dad like the measles. I said Dad "No I don't want a Speedwell bike" and he said "Why?" And I told him the story and Baxter said "That is right, that is right." Dad said "You know what you can do with your Speedwell bike". I didn't want a Speedwell bike anyway, I wanted a Malvern Star so he went up the street and bought three. And I think Dad
- 19:00 begrudges, he would go along to buy for Bruce and I because we were the right full sized bike, a three quarter size of bike for Ronnie because Ronnie would be going on for eleven but Barry, no way. Barry was eight and he is not buying a bike for an eight year old, no way so poor old Barry he got the short end of the stick. He went in and bought, I went in with Dad when he ordered the three bikes and a
- 19:30 Saturday morning we go in and get them and I got a green Malvern Star bike, the top and Bruce got a blue one and a three quarter sized black bike for Ronnie. He wouldn't let Ronnie ride the bike home from Wollongong, there was too much traffic on the roads. I suppose for those days he was right. A neighbour's son Dave Allen he rode it home for him. And Ronnie got on the bike and first thing he gets his leg over
- 20:00 and what does he do? Gets his foot caught in the chain wheel and couldn't ride it for a month because the chain chewed his toes up. Ronnie later on, he used to do quite well road racing and track racing on push bikes. My youngest brother Barry used to do road work rather than track work and they used to do quite well at it.

**At what point did you move up to Sydney?**

8 Hour weekend 1946 and Bruce and I rode our bikes up.

- 20:30 Not all the way, we got a lift up to the top of Bulli Pass because our next door neighbour, Jack Finney, he had an egg business and he used to go two days a week over in Camden and Appin and around that way collecting eggs and he would go over empty and come back loaded. We put our bikes in the back of his truck and when he got to the Appin turnoff he said "Right oh, see you around fellows" and away we went. I think it was the longest ride Bruce ever made on a push bike.
- 21:00 When it was time, I had ridden my bike up to Sydney once before but Bruce hadn't. I had him lost he didn't know where he was until we got to Newtown Bridge. He said "I know where we are now" because he knew the Newtown Bridge was straight down to Australia Street down to where we used to live and that way. They had to draw us a diagram on how to get to Roberts
- 21:30 Street, Marrickville. I knew how to get to where my auntie lived in Juliet Street but didn't know how to

get to Robert Street but I could do it blindfolded backwards now.

**Were you still at school at this stage?**

No, no, I have left school at the end of 1944.

**What were you up to then?**

I didn't get my Intermediate Certificate. I wasn't interested in it. I couldn't get out of school quick enough. I wanted to earn some money.

- 22:00 When I first left school I got used to having money in my pocket, I got a job working on ice carts. School holidays or whatever days the 'iceo' delivered I used to get 4/-d. a day for a kid going to school in the 1940's that was good money, a lot of money. I used to do that
- 22:30 Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturdays and when I went working on the ice carts full time I used to get £2 a week and that was big dollars. The ice run started near the Headlands Hotel at Austinmer. There was no hotel at the time and we used to go from there to Clifton. It wasn't a real big run but it was hard,
- 23:00 up and down hills and what have you. I was there for four or five months and then the ice man said he wasn't going to cart four days a week, only three and my money come back to 30/-d. and I said "You said £2 a week" but he said "You are only working 3 days", "You said £2 a week, that's what I want" and he said "I am not paying it" so I said "shove your job". I went to work in a grocery shop, yeah grocery shop,
- 23:30 the first supermarket style fruit shop I had ever seen. They had two shops and another grocer shop and worked for another ice carter. I went to work for them just after Dad come home and I wasn't working when Dad come home. I had been crook with pleurisy or something or other and hadn't been working for awhile.
- 24:00 Jack Robinson, he had the hardest ice run I had ever worked on. He used to pick up a load of ice at Corrimal, go up Bulli Pass, a couple of stops, it was only a couple of hours along the main road from that way at that time and go as far as Waterfall. Waterfall is only twenty six miles from
- 24:30 Sydney, it's half way between Sydney and Wollongong and we had to go from Corrimal to start our ice run. Waterfall was comparatively simple and then to Helensburgh and down around Helensburgh station, oh Christ that was hard work and rough as guts. Down there, back to the town, down to Stanwell Tops,
- 25:00 there was a little village that they call Stanwell Tops. Some religious crowd in there, I can't think who they are and down to Otford and back down Bald Hill to Stanwell Park and Coalcliff and by that time it was four o'clock in the afternoon and we had started at four. It was a bloody long day and we only used to do that three days a week thank Christ.

**What was the ice for?**

You used to keep your butter and milk and you used to have an ice chest.

- 25:30 Most of them had a lid, you put the block of ice in there and it was a cooler to keep your meat fresh and that sort of thing. You sound like my youngest nephew. I tried to tell him what an ice box was at the Australiana Village out there at Wilberforce in the 70's. He said "What are you doing taking ice in there? You buy ice at the service station". "You didn't in those days mate", he couldn't understand an ice chest at all.

**What did**

**26:00 people pay for the ice?**

6d. or 9d. a block I think. The ice works at Corrimal had an old fashioned, they only used to split the ice in two. You have seen a chocolate wedge, something similar to that but much longer of course. 9d. a block and they changed it and you used to have to cut it in half with

- 26:30 with an ice pick and they got all modern and they put a saw in but instead of running it on a chain like the iceworks in Wollongong did they had to run it down a slope. Nobody ever lost a finger but the potential was there as you used to have to push it down and three real sharp saws and cutting solid ice the potential for losing fingers there but nobody ever did. People,
- 27:00 "no, that is not big enough" but it was better ice. I did that for awhile with Robo and he was getting out of the ice business so that job folded up so I went and worked for another bloke on the run I had started the previous year and we had a bit of a difference over money. He reckoned I had touched him for 5/-d. and I know bloody well I hadn't because I know what he had done with the 5/-d. He had
- 27:30 drunk it in the pub at Clifton but he wouldn't have that, so I said "You know what you can do with your job" but I didn't tell him that until he gave me what he owed me for the week's work. And that's when he chipped me about the 5/-d. and I said "You drank that mate", and he said "No, I didn't." I said "well I got my 2/-d, shove the job" and I went to work for Dairy Farmers in Wollongong as a mechanic's assistant. It was a good job.

- 28:00 I was in charge of the petrol stock there. The petrol was rationed in those days and every run got half a dozen trucks used to fill up a four gallon drum of petrol and four of a night time. Late in the afternoon we used to have to drain the petrol out of every tank and measure how much I got altogether or how much out of each truck but
- 28:30 there had always been a surplus but I never knew what happened to the surplus. It wasn't in the trucks, probably the manager's car or the mechanic he was in overall in charge of it. Two of his relatives had milk runs and they both run motor bikes. I knew a bloke had a car too and I made sure he got a gallon of petrol here and there too. I had an argument with the bloke, Arthur McGuire, he was a raving rat bag he was,
- 29:00 good mechanic but as a human being he is just crazy. I had a few words with him and I told him to shove it and I went working down Lysaughts down at Port Kembla making corrugated iron. It was a rather involved business that making corrugated iron. The original steels used to come from the Australian Iron and Steel, they were just down the road
- 29:30 a bit at Cringilla and they used to come in maybe forty foot lengths I suppose and they used to drag them off the rail truck and one bloke used to have to drag it onto a chain sort of thing and it was bloody hard work. I started off there and once they had gone through a couple of processes they used to
- 30:00 curl the edges of it and take it down to another part and they used to rip them apart and take them to another section and put the corrugations in it. It was hot, hard work but it was good money. I was doing, sixteen going on towards seventeen and I was getting £3/10/-d. a week. Lots of tradesmen in Sydney were only getting about £4 a week.
- 30:30 A motor mechanic, when we moved to Sydney and I went to work for the (UNCLEAR) dealers down Woolamooloo they were only paying their blokes £4/1/-d. a week and they were getting top dollar at the time so I reckon £3/10/-d. a week that was good but I was only getting 35/-d. I didn't like it at all and I never made it into the apprentice because I started off working in the shock absorber repair section. I used to
- 31:00 pull the shock absorbers to pieces and clean them all up and hand them over to the mechanics or technicians or whatever they call them and they would replace what parts are necessary. I went down to the spare parts tools downstairs and I would have like to have stayed there as I had a kind of a knack for restoring things and I always knew where to find the parts and what have you. I had a difference of opinion or
- 31:30 somebody told me to do something and I wouldn't do it because I didn't think it was my job and I was told to apologise and even to day if I think I am right I won't apologise to anybody. And they said "apologise or go" and being a Date, my father didn't call it stubbornness he called it tenacity of purpose, I just dug me toes in and wouldn't be in it.
- 32:00 That got me out of the motor trade for a while and I went to work for Australian Woolen Mills, Fowlers Pottery, Julian Hanfords making motor parts, valves and king pins and bushes and stuff like that.

### **What ambitions did you have for yourself at this point?**

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I would have liked to have been a motor mechanic but I developed a

- 32:30 weeping sort of dermatitis on my arm and I couldn't stand it having it in kerosene and stuff because you had to get your hands in kero to wash anything. I would have liked to have been a motor mechanic but I just couldn't handle it. I was quite prepared to plug along. I didn't have any ambitions of being the richest man in Corrimal, Wollongong or Sydney or anywhere else. If people left me alone I was quite happy to plug along. I worked for a
- 33:00 used truck mob down in Parramatta Road, Camperdown, the building is still there but it is a second hand kitchen, commercial kitchen place now and at that time I had joined the CMF [Citizens Militia Force] and this is the way I got my first drivers licence, I could drive. I learnt working on the ice carts and that and the local coppers
- 33:30 said "We know you kids are driving the trucks around the street, as long as you don't go on the main road or don't have an accident you are not doing anybody any harm", because we never used to drive very far. And I joined the CMF and most kids young kids those days ambition was to drive a Jeep. Well I learnt to drive a Jeep, it is just like driving a car except they were much more uncomfortable. I must have travelled a couple of hundred thousand miles in Jeeps all
- 34:00 the time I was in the regular army and what have you and I drove what I called a decent sized truck, a 66GMC and I loved them trucks.

### **What made you join the CMF?**

It had just started in the middle of 1948 and I was working at Prince Alfred Hospital at that time and a mate of mine, Billy Lewis he was going to join the

- 34:30 army and I said "My Dad wouldn't let me join the army", thinking regular and he said "No, part time at

the CMF" and I said "right oh". The local unit was in Addison Road, Marrickville, it was an artillery regiment, 5 Field Regiment and I joined that and they said what do you want to be and all them trucks and I said "I want to be a driver". I got an army licence for Jeeps, artillery tractors,

35:00 two tons and 2 and 66 BMCs. I still didn't have a civvie [civilian] job, there wasn't much point in my getting a civvie job or I couldn't get a civvie licence because I didn't know anyone that owned a car so I couldn't go for a test. I got this CMF licence and I went into town one day and I thought "I will give it a try". I walked into the, you used to have to go for a licence in,

35:30 down at Phillip Street in those days. I said to the bloke "Can I get a civilian licence on the strength of this?" And he looked at it and he said "oh yes". Tested my eye sight, "What is the speed limit?" I said "30 mph in a built up area" and I think it was 60 mph outside a built up area. "What is a built up area?" "An area with lights in it" and that was it I had a civilian licence.

36:00 That is the closest to a test I have ever been. As a matter of fact I still have my army licence up there, that's another thing I can put on the thing afterwards, my army licence.

#### **Why do you think your father was against you joining up permanently?**

He didn't have very pleasant memories of the army and a lot of people think the permanent forces are a waste of bloody time, I don't, I think they are a bloody necessity

36:30 because if you haven't got the regular army who is going to teach these cut lunch tomatoes, these weekend warriors, these CMF or whatever you would like to call them. You have got somebody to back up with all the paperwork that goes with it and some blokes doing it two hours a week and an occasional weekend and two weeks here you will never keep up with it and you have got to have a backbone of something to build on. He wouldn't, no way in

37:00 in the world.

#### **In what way do you think his military past inspired you?**

I always liked the idea of wearing a uniform of being an Australian soldier is a good thing. I still think it is. Mum found out she was expecting my sister in the middle of '49

37:30 and I thought "now here is my chance". Dad was thrilled at the idea of having another member of the family and I caught him at a weak moment and he said "Yes, right oh". He very reluctantly signed it but he did sign it. I never ever regretted it.

#### **What made you want to do it full time?**

38:00 The idea of driving an army truck four or five days a week, that sort of thing but it didn't turn out that way. That was the beauty of getting out of the CMF, you concentrated a couple of hours here, you don't see all the other things goes on outside of parade nights and that sort of thing. It suited my temperament I thought and I went out to Ingleburn and done my recruit training.

38:30 And I wanted to go to, the I had ideas of going into the Army Service Corps, covered transport in those days but I met a bloke Gordon Morell. He had been in the Occupation Force in the Signal Regiment in Japan and Gordon and I clicked the first day we met each other and we remained mates right up until the day he died. He said "Go to signals, come to signals

39:00 with me". I had a family friend in the Corps of Signals, Marshall Brown and I thought "Right I will do that" and went down to the School of Sigs and they decided they wanted to make an operator out of me and "When does the course start?" And they said "Not until after Christmas" and I thought "Oh Christ" and I couldn't imagine dixie bashing for four months or more and I said "How about sending me up to Transport Troop?" "Right oh" and

39:30 they sent me up to Transport Troop and I was quite happy but they didn't have any GMCs [General Motors Corporation] but I went one better, I was driving a Dodge bus and I thought that was big time because there is no loading or unloading it, it is just open the door and just get in get out, sort of thing. I come home on leave and went back and the Operators Course had started and I said "Have I got to move over to the other?" "No you are a driver now". I couldn't get on the

40:00 operators course and I was stuck down at the School of Sigs for another four months. They were building a new transport yard and instead of getting the engineers to bore the holes and that they had to dig them all by hand and put up a barbed wire fence and I got in trouble. I was getting jack of me doing nothing just another bloke down there all the time and tried to join the Provos [Military Police] but I couldn't find

40:30 who to see on the weekend and I was going in to get a day off and go in during the week I was then posted to the One Light Construction Squadron at Woomera and that suited me because when I joined the army I had ideas I would like to go to Woomera, I would like to go to Japan and I would like to go to Darwin. Well I got to Japan and I got to Woomera and I got two out of three which is not too bad.

41:00 Lots of blokes went in with ambitions to go places and never get anywhere.

## Tape 3

00:33 **So at this stage Laurie what did you know about Korea?**

I knew the battalion was over there. When I first got to the School of Signals, in the July we had no idea that Australia was going to send anybody to Korea. I was only down there a few weeks and an announcement was made they were going to send the 3rd Battalion there to Japan.

01:00 Everybody was "I want to go, want to go". Up until that stage it wasn't necessary for you to volunteer to go overseas and because most of the young fellows, I was only twenty at the time, it was a chance to see some active service. I think just about every bloke around the age of twenty and that all wanted to go, all wanted to go. Couldn't get away, they wouldn't let us and

01:30 then the government made it compulsory for you to serve overseas if and so required which upset a few blokes. There was still one or two wouldn't be in it. One bloke I knew from Queensland no way in the world "I am not going over, I joined the army to do this, that and something else". He did do it but he eventually had to go overseas.

**Did you feel lucky or unlucky**

02:00 **that you joined the army just at a point where they were going to?**

Well when I joined the army that I might be able to get the Occupation Force. As I say I met my mate Gordon and they were still sending blokes to Japan and I thought "Oh well we'll volunteer to go to BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Forces]" and half way through our recruit training they decided they are going to bring BCOF home. That shot that in the foot and he said "Well we'll go to Sigs" and

02:30 I didn't think I would ever get there. Finally I am going to Woomera. I was stuck at the personnel depot in Melbourne for the best part of a week, couldn't get a train go to from Melbourne to Adelaide and that was the time the 3rd Battalion fought that

03:00 action at Kapyong. There was a fellow on the draft who was with us from Melbourne to Adelaide, a bloke by the name of Norm Turley, and he had just come home from 3RAR [3rd Royal Australian Regiment] in Korea, he had been in the Occupation Force but he had left there before Kapyong and what he told us about Korea and I thought "not too keen about going there" because he had spent the first winter there

03:30 and hopelessly poorly equipped as far as cold gear and all that sort of thing was concerned. I went with him as far as Adelaide I thought "maybe I might get a chance later on". I went off up to Woomera and there were hassles there. We got to Adelaide on a Saturday morning and I thought I would be going up Monday probably. We were dead broke,

04:00 the three of us, the other bloke had a relative in Adelaide, and I thought "Christ, strangers in a strange town" and we didn't know where to go or anything like that. I found I had a £10 note stuck in the toe of my spare boots from a big pay increase we got in 1950 and we had a real good weekend in Adelaide on a tenner [on ten pounds]. Three blokes could, one bloke he was a bloke from Western Australia, Ronnie Raymond, he didn't drink so me and Jerry McDermott we had a real good weekend.

04:30 Come Monday we are set to get on the train and we got shanghaied. Some bloke from Ordnance Depot in Albury Wodonga area had died and they had sent him back to Adelaide for burial and they couldn't get four Ordnance blokes to carry the coffin in Adelaide, nobody liked the bloke and we got shanghaied onto it. Went to the military funeral and it was the first military funeral I had ever been to,

05:00 as a pall bearer anyway. Seen him on his way and the next morning we got the train and you get up as far as Port Pirie, there is four of us and we have got all our gear with us. At that time they used to stack an ordinary carriage on the end of, oh no, they used to run a regular sort of ordinary train. It was the first

05:30 or second week of the operation of these Bud diesel rail cars. They are quite common around the country now but they were first over there. There were four blokes with all our gear they wouldn't let us on the train with it. We said "We have got to go." They said "You can go but your gear stays". We said "How do we get it up there?" They were loading the tea and sugar supply train that goes backwards and forwards across the Nullabor

06:00 and "If you put it on that it will be up at the rail head at Pimba the next day". They were loading it and "Right, leave it there, you get on the train", fair enough. We got to Woomera and go to the rail head at Pimba and it met us in a 4 by 4 Chev and said to the driver said "Where is all your GMCs?" "They took them all off us, lack of spares". What I

06:30 knew about the unit up there they had all GMC's and I thought "gee I would be in paradise". They take us out to the unit and get us bedded down and what have you and the next morning they give me a Jeep and trailer because I had a driver's licence and go in to pick up the gear, "no, no gear for you". What had happened they had changed shifts at bloody Port Pirie and instead of putting it on the tea and sugar and we had stuff marked Adelaide and they sent

07:00 it to the lost property office down in Adelaide. It was three months before we got it. The gear I had was starting to get a bit porky by the end of that time. I had to buy another set of underwear and socks and that and I wasn't buying a complete outfit. Woomera I found the unit, One Light Construction Project Squadron was terrific. They were a hard working, hard drinking unit

07:30 a lot of drinkers there but I wouldn't say drunks, not all of them. They lived in tents, two men to a tent, one wardrobe between two blokes, it was all their own power supply and lights used to come on at half past six in the morning and go off at ten o'clock at night. The meals we used to get were colossal. We were on the extra big ration scale up there

08:00 and it was miles too big but that is what the book said and that is what you got.

**You had a bit of a run in with your Commanding Officer [CO] when you first went up there?**

Oh yeah, Maurie Bennett. There was a few blokes there that I knew and we were playing billiards and I was just potting the thing around. I was never a pool player of any

08:30 ability and I don't know whether I said something to him or what happened and I said "what has it got to bloody do with you?" He had a pair of blue shorts and a sloppy joe on and I didn't know who he was. Rough looking head, rough voice and I said "What has it got to do with you mate? Mind your own bloody business". He said "We will see about this later" and I said "Right oh, please yourself". The next morning I get up to interview the ASC and there he is in his uniform.

09:00 I thought "Oh shit I am in it now". He said "Do you know who I am now?" And I said "Yes I do now sir". He said "Somebody should have told you" and I said "But they didn't. I didn't know you from a bloody bar of soap". He said "You have heard of me, Major Bennett?" I said "Yes, but you didn't introduce yourself. I didn't know who you were". There was a hundred and twenty people split down the middle, sixty civilians, sixty army. Up there

09:30 it was the beginning of May and it was getting bloody cold up there and Maurie's idea was you are miles away from anybody wear what you can find is most comfortable. It didn't matter what it was, where it come from, if your were comfortable and you do your job that was it. That suited me too. Old Maurice Arnold Bennett a con man he was.

10:00 I met a bloke who knew him when I worked for SPT Transport in 1975, a bloke by the name of Tommy Wallace and he knew I had been in the army and he said "Who were you with?" And I said "Sigs" and he said "I knew an officer out at Canterbury Racecourse in the 40's" and he said "Christ he would take the pennies off a dead man's eyes to help his mob". I said "Yes my boss at Woomera was a bit like that" and

10:30 he said "What was his name?" I said "Maurie Bennett" and he was Tommy Wallace's CO too. Maurie Bennett his idea was he didn't mind blokes drinking, he used to make sure if you wanted to drink there was always plenty of liquor around, only beer, no overs. The idea was senior NCOs [non commissioned officers] and officers could drink spirits but the ORs couldn't and

11:00 he made sure there was plenty of beer there. Some of the things I seen Maurie Bennett do up there. He had a prefabricated masonite hut, just to say that was his office sort of thing and it blew down in the wind and of course masonite is fragile stuff and he said "right we had a" because I think it was

11:30 the last GMC we had up there. It had the sides and that taken off it, he said "Right oh Date, you get that get the GMC there" and got two blokes, can't remember who they were now, and a four wheel drive post hole borers, the American ones and they could also use them as a lift to lift up telegraph poles. He told us exactly where to go. We raced in, there is,

12:00 picked it up with the hoist, put it on the truck, tied it down and out we went. The next day I went past the same place and the Works and Housing people screaming about the hut that disappeared. I said "I don't know anything about that mate, don't know anything about that at all". The air force mob, the airfield construction mob were going to Cocos Island and they had completely

12:30 rejuvenated their water trailers, Jeep trailers and we couldn't get parts for ours and the air force could and we were getting right out in the scrub by this time and three of us were told one night "Take a Jeep and trailer with you, a water trailer, and go in, and borrow three from the air force. I go to pick up the one I had to tow and

13:00 and it was already painted in air force colours and that. I thought "fair enough" drop one, pick up one and take it back and they were all painted army colours the next day. I often wondered how the air force got on when they got to Cocos Island because they were going to build the air strip there, how they would get on when they find out three of their water trailers didn't work. It was the accepted thing up there.

**What sort of projects were you working on at Woomera?**

Building telephone lines.

13:30 The ones I was involved, there was only one I was involved in started from the other side of Lake Koolymilka and it was going out as far as Mount Eva. It was the first telephone lines they built up there using the sectionalized steel poles, somewhat similar to railway lines to look at but not as heavy but that

is what they look like. All the other lines they had built around the place were

- 14:00 built in sectionalized steel poles the army had in the war years. You would get half a dozen sections, belt them in and belt them in with a sledge hammer and a great bit of timber. At the time when they finished the line construction out as far as Mount Eva they were regarded as the best set of telephone lines built anywhere in the British Commonwealth,
- 14:30 for service purposes that is and they were good. There was a fellow up there by the name of Orb Riley and these cherry pickers you see running around now were common as dirt and Orb Riley built one himself up there. He had a sectionalized steel pole and an old 4 by 4 Chev truck and you would see these Optus cables being swung around the place in the area and he invented that. It is called the Riley Spinner.
- 15:00 It is the one's they use now are a lot different to what he made but he owned the patent and they still call them Riley's Spinners. He had it all organised and when I got there they were just getting ready for it. A lot of the lines were up in the tent on the top of the hill and they were dressing the cross arms, putting the insulators and what have you. When the work started I was driving a Jeep for the line crew
- 15:30 and they used to drag the poles off the back of a truck or I drove the crew and then they took me off the Jeep and put me on the three ton truck and I had poles on the back of my truck and the rest of the poles on the back of a semi trailer. The idea of me going out there, because semi trailers didn't have winches on them, the three tonners did and they were going through loose sand and that
- 16:00 we used to have to use the truck to tow the semi trailer through the sand if necessary and it was quite good. I was surprised how many poles you could lay down. We would drop them at the place and then another crew would follow us and put them up. The blokes would come along later on and put the cross arms on but I never actually seen them string any wire because I was in the advance party
- 16:30 out the front. I did that for a couple of months. We moved from the base camp about eight or ten mile out and it was too far to travel back and forth to the base camp so they set up a camp there and they used to call that No 1 Line Camp and I got the job of looking after the petrol and oil there. I found it was quite good, I really liked it. I went from the first one to the second one and the second one from the,
- 17:00 up a big rise overlooking a dry lake, Lake Parakylia, it was a real trick getting on the edge of it. The lake looked as solid as a rock and it was all sand around the edge of it and a loaded truck could get through there as easy as pie, a loaded civilian truck could get through there empty but an unloaded civilian truck would get stuck.
- 17:30 I saw this mud there and I thought "I would like to see how fast I could get the truck on it". I didn't get bogged but I had a lot of trouble getting out, and five or six months I left there I went out past there and I could still see my wheel marks where I nearly got bogged.

#### **How long were you at Woomera for?**

I got there on 1st May and left there in the middle of February 52.

- 18:00 There was seven weeks out, I come home on leave for Christmas. That was one of the good things about going up there. You used to get an extra 5/6d a day remote area allowance and an extra half a day or a day a month recreation leave. After a certain time you got extra boots, overcoat, uniform.
- 18:30 The theory was you worked in your uniform but it didn't work out that way in practice. Unfortunately for me the only new thing I got was a pair of boots because they changed over from the old style service dress, the battle dress but the paperwork wasn't altered. "We can't issue you a battle dress because the thing says service dress". I never wore my battle dress up there but some blokes did
- 19:00 because there was a lack of working dress available because most of it was going to National Service as it was in those days. They got the pick of everything and we got what was left and being stuck up in Woomera we were farther behind than anybody. Some blokes had to wear their battle dress and that. I don't know whether they ever sorted the problem out but I didn't get anything out of it. I had been up there for awhile and the work on the lines slowed
- 19:30 down as we had rain and you couldn't move the trucks along through the sand and because it was all scrub we were in too and it was virtually impossible to move, so they sent me back to the base camp and we got a new officer up there. You should have seen this bloke, Lieutenant PJ O'Donnell commonly referred to as Stick.
- 20:00 He was a fat gutted Irishman. He thought he was the greatest thing since button up boots. He come up there all dressed up in his uniform and as I said before we dressed in what made us comfortable and I was just working in the Transport office at the time just helping a bloke with the paperwork and he said "Who are you?"
- 20:30 I knew who he was and I had a cap on and I threw him twenty one guns I said "I am Sig Date" and he said "You have got civilian trousers on, you have got an army green shirt on and an American flying jacket" and I said "Yes, it keeps me warm". "Oh no, no, this won't do, you have got to wear uniform". I said "If you can get me one, I will wear it". I told him the position about the lost uniforms and that

- 21:00 and his fat driver came in, Tubby Capper, a real actor, a real bloody cowboy really. I think he had been a cook but he put on that much weight through a glandular problem they wouldn't let him drive a Jeep because if he got in the driver's seat, well Jeeps had a tendency to lean one side and his got dangerous because if he gone round a corner sharp he would have turned it. So they let him drive the water truck and he was
- 21:30 a big man, solid bloke, nice enough bloke but he was weak in the kidney, couldn't lift anything so they let him drive the water truck. And he come in and had his glandular problem and he was putting weight on hand over fist and he was getting his uniforms made to measure and by the time he got the uniforms he had grown out of them. He used to get around in a, he had an army overcoat that fitted him and he had a slouch hat rolled like a cowboy, with a great eagle, a dead eagle
- 22:00 across the front of his water truck and he come in. We used to call our officers up there Skip. Nobody minded and Tubby Capper walked in and he looked at O'Donnell and said "How are you going Skip?" And O'Donnell nearly flattened him. He said "Are you talking to me?" He said "Yeah", he said "You are the boss here aren't you?" He said "Yes" and he said "You are Skip". He said "I am not the captain of one of Her Majesty' trawlers, I am Lieutenant JP O'Donnell
- 22:30 and you will stand to attention and call me sir". Tubby he said "Jesus Christ, what have we got here" and stormed out. Tubby couldn't get over it and I was cracking myself laughing that, but he had some crazy ideas this O'Donnell. When we moved from the camp on the edge of Lake Koolymilka back in, well we took over the air force camp when they moved out and
- 23:00 he had all his drivers doing PT [Physical Training] first thing in the morning using a rifle. And nobody up there had ever done that and he said "We will soon fix that". I was in the transport office and I said "What are you going to use as rifles sir?" He said "Get them out of the Q [Quartermasters] Store of course". I said "Do you know how many weapons we have got in this unit?" He said "There should be a rifle for every man to get it". I said "We have got one rifle with one bandoleer of ammunition, that is two hundred rounds,
- 23:30 and 38 calibre pistol for the pay sergeant with twelve rounds and that is the entire armament of the unit". He wouldn't believe it, but he didn't get anywhere with his PT. He had ideas of getting civilian drivers to do it too but he wouldn't get off the ground there, they wouldn't do it. Later on when I was out at Number 3 Line camp he was coming out to see us over something
- 24:00 and he left Number 2 Line camp and we had radio communication with this army 19 set and he said "He is on his way" and he left about 5 o'clock. And I said "Do you think he will get here?" And about 11 o'clock at night he hadn't arrived and "What has happened to him, who cares?" We let the base camp know that he was lost and they said "Go and look for him in the morning,
- 24:30 you won't find him at night" and we went out and we found him in the morning. He was about two miles from the camp and how he didn't see us I don't know because we had a roaring fire going and you could see it for miles but he was curled up like a mongrel dog under his Jeep in his overcoat. He was like that when we found him because that was a big joke. Later on when I was in Japan I was on twenty one days R and R [rest & recreation] in Kure. I couldn't afford to go to Tokyo
- 25:00 so I went to Kure instead. I was laying up in the canteen in lounge chairs and he has got all his dispatch riders there teaching them map reading. Little bloke from West Australian, Shorty Mook, was on the other side of mine and I said "Hey Shorty, when he gets around to this map reading business ask him if that is the way he found his way up the rocket range" and got back out of sight. And Shorty asked him and he looked around and said
- 25:30 "None of you blokes were at Woomera, what do you know what happened up there?" And Shorty said "We just thought it was out in the back blocks you would have to be able to read maps to find where you're going". He didn't know what to make of Shorty. I snuck off out of sight and he was that good this O'Donnell he stayed in the army about fifteen years but he never got above the rank of lieutenant. Being a Pommy [English] enlistee that is the rank he enlisted on and
- 26:00 he never got any higher and he never passed any course he done and when they sent him to Japan they put him in charge of the dispatch rider troop which is only ever controlled by a Sergeant, on odd occasions by a WO2 [warrant officer] runner but never a commissioned officer. The only thing they could trust him with because the Japs used to run the thing and they knew where to go. They had a sergeant there but
- 26:30 I don't know what he done but the corporals used to run it. All the corporals had been in the Occupation Forces, they'd been up there six or seven years and if they didn't know what they were doing then they never would. The same bloke, O'Donnell, he come back later on and he got lost down the Snowy Mountains and they had to send search parties out for him. The last I heard of him he was a school teacher out the back of Cloncurry, up that way somewhere and he used to bend over
- 27:00 backwards with young kids.

**When you were at Woomera did you see anything of the rocket testing going on?**

Twice. It was funny when they used to fire the big rockets out at Koolymilka and all work used to stop



out that way on test days. The first day all the blokes in the base camp we used to

27:30 sit up on top of the hill overlooking the edge of the lake. Two people used to stay in the base camp, one with a loaded rifle and one with a loaded revolver. Why I don't know, nobody ever told me that. The first one they fired it went up in the air and it was supposed to go that way but it went that way and it took them three weeks to find it. The next one went

28:00 straight up and straight down, bang. The only thing I seen up there. There were other parts of the range where my mate in artillery Noel Lampey used to work it was a radar tracking thing. They were firing little stuff out there all the time but I never ever got out there but I knew how to get there but I never ever got there.

**How were you informed that your service at Woomera was finished**

28:30 **and you were moving on?**

The army sends out posting orders. The Central Army Records sends them out and I was home on leave here in Sydney and I got down to Melbourne, the day I got to Melbourne, going back to Woomera was the day the King died, 19th February 1952. They were going to send me out to, there were big bush fires in Victoria at the time and

29:00 they were going to send me out there to fight bush fires and I seen the Lance Corporal of my unit, Dale McCulloch and he was going out there he said "Stuff this idea, are coming with us?" I said "No they are sending me on". I over to Personnel in Adelaide and the old sergeant there, real nice old fellow, no idea what his name was, he said "Sig Date what are you doing here?" I said "I am going back to my unit at Woomera" and why he said "You shouldn't be here".

29:30 He said "You should be in Sydney with the 1st Battalion." He said "You are going to Korea as a Regimental Sig". I said "That is news to me, beauty, I like that idea". He said "You are this far, we might as well just send you up, you have missed going to Korea with the battalion on the boat", so they went me up to Woomera to pick up the rest of my gear because I only had taken home on leave just what I needed and

30:00 I get up there and they are all set to put me back to work but the Adjutant Keith Travane said "We won't put you back to work Laurie", he used to call me by my first name, he said "I won't send you back to work, you have been travelling for a week, get all your washing and ironing done and we will choof you out of here on the Bristol Freighter", it is going from Woomera to Adelaide every day of the week except

30:30 Sundays, you didn't travel on Sundays. He said "We will fly you down instead of sending you back by train". Because it was a bloody drag going anywhere, from one unit to another was a bloody drag in those days. Often I used to wonder how the poor bastards in Townsville, his home was in Perth and he would have three weeks leave in Perth and three weeks travelling time to get over there and three weeks travelling time to get back which quite often used to happen.

31:00 This O'Donnell was going to send me to work and Travance said "No, no, nothing to do with him." He said "I will even get the Jeep so you can say hooray to your friends in the village" because I had quite a few mates in the artillery unit in there. I left there and it was quite good. I got down to Balcombe and I was the first one there to do the conversion course to bring you up to date because the infantry were using a few different sets that they didn't have in Australia. There was just the procedure

31:30 to go through but they didn't have actual equipment there and I had to wait there and I got into a bit of trouble while I was there. I went into Melbourne with a driver who had a Jeep who went into Melbourne a couple of days a week to pick up films and the bloke that was driving the Jeep I knew him from Marrickville and his birthday and my birthday were the same day so

32:00 we had a couple of beers in advance. When we get back to Balcombe well under the influence and they are waiting for me in my room and waiting to slap me in the jug. I said "What have I done?" I thought "Jesus, they can't be ripping me for drunk already they were waiting for me". I was suspected of thieving a lanyard off a bloke.

32:30 Anyhow it appeared one bloke had lost a Lanyard and mine was judged to be the one that he had lost and they locked me up in the pokey overnight and a friend flipped me a bottle of wine during the night to keep me company during the night and it had the obvious effect on my bowels and I had to use a fire bucket or take it away to the latrine during the night. The picket goes off in the morning and they left me there on my own and I was caught again and

33:00 I used the fire bucket. I fronted the CO over the theft business and the lanyard I had was about that much longer than all the rest of them and the CO said "oh" and tossed it out. They sent me out to the bush on an exercise for the rest of the week and I got back on the Friday afternoon and the RSM [regimental sergeant major] is pulling his hair out. Apparently that happened on the Monday night, Tuesday night they were complaining about a bit of a smell,

33:30 Wednesday night it was overpowering and Thursday night all the pickets slept out on the verandah on the front of picket hut. They left it there until Friday afternoon for me to come back to take it out. All you had to do was turn the fire hydrant on and wash it out and clean it up and fill it up with water which

should have been done in the first place and hung it up again and I got charged over that. Fronted the same CO again and he said "Date, you are always in trouble". He said "Why did you do that?" And I told him about being left

34:00 on my own and he said "Case dismissed, march him out. Corporal Ewen", gets the two corporals to escort him in and Ewen was bloody lucky to keep his two hooks for leaving me there. One of the escorts that looked after me, Snowy Lalor, three years later when I get into trouble under the influence or refusing to do a job in Melbourne, he was the orderly sergeant who put me in the lock up.

34:30 One bloke he was involved on both occasions. All the rest of the blokes turned up for the course, four or five of them from my unit. I had been hanging there around for a month or more waiting for them to turn up. I got through that course all right and had all my teeth out while I was there.

#### **Why did you have all your teeth out?**

35:00 I had poor teeth all my life. When I was up at Woomera I had all the back ones out, only left the front ones in so I could go home on leave. I thought "I can't go like this", so I got the rest of them out and away I went and finished the course. Knew I was going to Japan. Going to come home on leave and then we had to hang around the Personnel Depot for about a month trying to get on a draft or get on a plane

35:30 and I got to Japan all right. Either on the way up we stopped at Labuan in British North Borneo, what a horribly smelly palace and then we got to Hong Kong and Jesus, we got to the reinforcement camp at a place called Hiro in Japan, this is just over the side of the mountain from Kure city and there was a

36:00 pulp paper mill and Christ, you have no idea, it is hard to describe and it lays on you. "Oh gee, I'll never survive this and the blokes who had been there for awhile said "After three days you won't notice it" and they were right, after three days and you didn't notice it. They kitted us out and put us where we are going to sleep and we had the new, well it was to us the new Pommy forty four pattern webbing, it was a

36:30 lot easier to handle. They showed us all the anti social films, "If you play up this is what is likely to happen to you", pox pictures, "tThis is what you get if you go with all the Japanese business girls around the area". They used to show them in Ingleburn and all those places, it's part and parcel of the services, to show you what will happen if you don't practice safe sex sort of thing.

37:00 Then we went for a medical and then we had to go to the dentist and I said "Have I got to go?" And they said "Yes they have to look at your mouth" and I went (demonstrates) and I said "What do you think of that?" I got into a hell of a lot of trouble over that. I was dentally unfit. Another foul up in the administration services, they hadn't worried and I was hanging around Marrickville for about four or five weeks, I am not too sure and nobody thought to have a look at our teeth.

37:30 Quite a few of us on the draft had bad teeth. When we stopped at Cloncurry on the way up the Chief of the Australians General Staff, Sidney Rowell, he was on the plane with us and he was talking to us while they were handing around the aircraft while they were refuelling it and he thought my family were there to see me off. He said "Your mother didn't seem very happy" and I said "no".

38:00 He said "Didn't you like being in the army?" I said "She doesn't mind me being in the army but she is dead scared that I might get taken prisoner of war" and I told him the position with Dad and he said "I can understand that". He said "Where are your teeth?" because I was gummy and I said "I haven't got any" and he said "It's too late to do anything about you now you will have to get some new ones when you get to Japan". There was a hell of an uproar about that because I was the only one that went up there without a

38:30 tooth in my head and quite a few others had needed a lot of work done on their teeth.

#### **What about Hong Kong? What was that like on the way up there?**

I would cheerfully die for the Queen in Hong Kong. I had never been out of Sydney before, Melbourne and Adelaide and that but I had never been outside of Australia before and all those women around and all the rest of it and we made pigs of ourselves and anybody said he didn't is a liar. You would always strike the odd one that didn't but there was

39:00 not one of them on the draft I was on. They were still coming in from all over the place and the next morning we were getting ready to get on the plane.

#### **What sort of establishments were available? Where were the women?**

All over the bloody place. We had a few beers at the artillery unit just near the hotel I was staying at,

39:30 this is over on Kowloon and one of us, Bob Smith, had been to Hong Kong before. He had been in the navy just after the war and he said "We go to the Fleet Club", wherever that was, we never ever found it. There was six or seven of us, I forget now, and we get into rickshaw "the Fleet Club", "yes boys, yes boys," and Smithy is getting left behind so he puts the coolie in the back

40:00 and he starts pulling the rickshaw and we finished up "This is the place". I remember the name of the place and it was called the Hotel Jordan and it was a brothel. We all made use of the services while we were there. Rex Matthews and I went for a roam around the town, had a look around the town then. I

think it was about 4.30 or 5 o'clock in the morning and

40:30 when we got back to our hotel room and there was a of blokes still missing in action. They got us out of bed next morning to get us ready to go and Lieutenant General Sir Sidney Rowell said "You blokes wouldn't last five minutes if you were going to Korea now". One bloke said "Yes but I would die bloody happy".

## Tape 4

00:33 **Describe to me how you got from Australia to Japan?**

We left Mascot on a Qantas Skymaster, that is a Douglas DC4, Registration number is VHEBN Pacific Trader and it is also the plane I come home on. Loaded up all right and

01:00 I was stuck next to an officer, another signals officer, but he wasn't going to the battalion. He was going to another Sig Regiment in Kure and he asked me where I had been and I said "Woomera" and he said "You weren't on line maintenance?" And I said "No I was on line construction" and he said "Bennett's mob". They had a line maintenance crew and they used to look after a few civilian lines around the place. They were the guardsmen of the signals people up there and they used to wear uniforms or something resembling a uniform.

01:30 Got on the plane and left about midday I suppose and had a meal on the plane. We had to stop at I think it was Cloncurry. We were battling head winds on the way up and they took on extra fuel just in case and I had a conversation with General Rowell then and one bloke he was wearing a Navy Minesweeper ribbon and

02:00 Rowell said to him "In the navy were you?" And he said "Yes sir" and he said "Where did you fly?" And he said I was in the navy sir, not the air force". He said "Where did you serve?" And he said "Hong Kong". He just looked at him and he shook his head and he had a bar of four ribbons up. He just shook his head and walked away and never said any more, never heard any more about that at that time.

02:30 We get to Darwin and there was a few hours break there. Yeah, there was I think seven of us Sigs all going to the battalion and everybody going up there they'd say "Where are you going?" And they would say "The battalion". Even when I was there the battalion was 3RAR and as far as they were concerned that was the battalion.

03:00 I have my own opinion of that because 1 and 2 Battalions were the battalions and that was the unit you were going to. We get to Darwin and there was seven of us and we all had a shower there and right the first bloke out goes and buys seven bottles of beer. All right, I am first out and I go to the bar there "Seven bottles mate". He said "£2/9/-d". I said "What?" He says "yeah, 7/-d. a bottle".

03:30 I said "Give us three bottles and seven glasses" and the drunk amongst us, Bob Smith he come out and said "Only three bottles?" I said "I am not paying 7/-d. a bottle". I said "We wouldn't drink seven bottles of beer here Bob. 7/-d. a bottle, no way, no way" and even he agreed with that. So we drank our three bottles and got on the plane again, an overnight trip to Labuan in British North Borneo.

04:00 I think it is called Sabah now. S A B A H, I'm not sure about that. We stopped at Labuan and we had breakfast there and it was the first time I ever had a kipper. That is when I got hooked on cigarettes, the American cigarettes were a shilling a packet there and I smoked a few American cigarettes odd times during the war when I was a kid. I thought "I will buy a pack of those"

04:30 That was the end of me as far as smoking was concerned and we got on the plane after we had breakfast and it was only a couple degrees north of the equator and we were in winter uniform and I could see the pounds dripping off me, not that I had that many to spare then. We got on the plane and got to Hong Kong and I don't know where the officers went

05:00 but us blokes, other ranks we finished up in the same hotel near where the Star Ferry pulls in now. We had to go via the local police station as we had to hand our rifles and bayonet in. Don't know whether they were expecting riots but any people passing through there because I said I suppose because there was no secure storage for us in the hotels we were going to stay at.

05:30 The hotel showed us where our rooms were and I thought "oh well" and there was an army unit just down the road, a Pommy unit, and "we will go down there and have a few beers in there". Poms being the way they were with the local inhabitants we didn't like the way a few of them spoke to the Chinese bloke. He was doing his best we thought and

06:00 one word led to another and we got asked to leave not that worried us over much in these oriental cities. There is miles of beer around as you didn't have any trouble finding somewhere to have a drink. We got into the rickshaws and they took us to the delights of the Hotel Jordan. I don't know how long Rex and I stayed there and we wandered back to our hotel and

06:30 had a shower and had breakfast and out and got on the plane again. It was a reasonably rough trip from

Hong Kong to Iwakuni, that is the airport they used to use on the southern island of Honshu, the main island of Japan. And a couple of the other blokes on the plane going to different units in Japan and they said "Oh Christ we are going to have to stop at Okinawa" and

- 07:00 from what I read later it would be the worst place in the world for a serviceman to stop. I don't know, I never went there so I don't know what they were talking about. Nobody, even the British war correspondents reckoned it was the dreariest place on earth to stop. Fortunately we didn't have to stop there but we got to Japan and it was a beautiful cool day, not a
- 07:30 cloud in the sky, it was absolutely gorgeous. We had to stop in the plane for half an hour while the General inspected the guard of honour that the air force put on for him and then we were allowed off the plane. Took our kit bags through the inspections and they went through our gear to make sure we weren't bringing any contraband into the country. I don't know what they called contraband
- 08:00 but I didn't have any so I don't know what they were looking for. Because Lieutenant General Rowell was on the plane we didn't have to go up to Kure by train, we went first class. We went up on the Commander in Chief's ferry. One of the smaller sized ferries they used to have here on Sydney Harbour and it used to run over to Mosman and places like that they used to have a little one but it was a beautiful day trip over, one of the nicest ferry trips I ever
- 08:30 remember having. There were a couple of blokes there that had just come back and finished their time in Korea and coming home and all the ears listening to what they had to say. We couldn't see Kure and I said to one bloke, I think his name was Wally Brown and I said "Where in the bloody hell is Kure?" And he said "Up there" and I said "All I can bloody see is mountains" and he said "And that is all you are going to see too mate". I had no idea about Japan, I knew it was hilly but I didn't think it was,
- 09:00 the mountain behind Kure it was a bloody big one.

#### **What was the scenery like when you arrived?**

Beautiful, terraced paddy fields right up there because they don't let any land go to waste, anything that can grow something they grow, rice mainly and other vegetables and a fair few flowers are grown in some areas. Along a lot of the mountain ranges around the Inland Sea they have got pine trees on them and the scene

- 09:30 in summer time it is beautiful and the scene in winter time it is magnificent. Because up high they get snow on them, you don't get much snow down around the water on the Inland Sea but to see it in winter time it was gorgeous. When we got to Kure we catch the bus and I am looking for a bus like we had here but they were a home made bus that the army had, with these old 4 by 4 3 ton Chev
- 10:00 and they pull from the cab back pull it off and put a proper bus body on them and they worked quite well. They were going crook as they only had one bus. There was forty four of us and there is no way in the world they would get forty four fully equipped blokes in a three ton bus. We had to wait until another one come in and it was still a hell of a squeeze but they got us in. They took us over the, what do they call it now?
- 10:30 The Argamini hill, it was like that and we went past the local fire station and it was a T Model Ford the fire engine. Quite funny to see it, it wouldn't have been any good up there as most of the houses around the time were made of tissue paper, a lot of houses in Japan are made of tissue paper then. Out to Hiro and we get into this place
- 11:00 and the smell, oh it was vile. I thought I would never last, I would never live here. As I said before after three days you don't notice it. They give us sleeping bags and stretchers, two types of stretchers the Australian and American. The American ones were all right but the Australian ones were two strips of canvas and two runners
- 11:30 to go through and the four legs, little dowel on the end of them in the hole. How they expected to hold a man's weight I don't know but I didn't bother to put mine up. I just put the canvas on the deck and put the groundsheet over it and got in the sleeping bag. A couple of blokes tried but as soon as they sat on them they collapsed. They weren't expecting us,
- 12:00 it was an ad hoc sort of arrangement and we were sleeping on damp ashes just for the first night. After that they sorted us out a bit better and they give us sleeping and fed us because we got there after ordinary meal time. The meal was quite reasonable I thought at the time. The next day they issue you all the webbing and equipment
- 12:30 and what have you and all the photographs and all the different business you go through, where you can go and where you can't go and that took up the whole day. On Saturday morning they took us for a run around the traps. First of all we had a rifle inspection and the sergeant who inspected he said "You blokes aren't going out tonight, no leave for you blokes tonight."
- 13:00 He said "Your rifle is filthy" and I said "What do you expect? I only got the bloody thing on Tuesday morning just before I left Australia and stuck in a plane and that". I thought I had cleaned it reasonably well but not being an infantry type I didn't know what their idea of clean was compared to a signals clean. None of us got leave for the Saturday night but we all went out anyway.

13:30 There was ways in and out but we all made sure we were back in by midnight because bed check is at midnight and that went on all the time the Australian forces were in Japan. Had to be in the camp by midnight unless you had an overnight leave pass but you still weren't allowed out on the street or in sight between midnight and half past six in the morning or six o'clock if you had an overnight leave pass,

14:00 you still had to be back in the barracks by six thirty in the morning. You have to be seen, well nobody used to go further than half a mile away from the camp.

**What did you have in your kit bag when you left Australia?**

Extra shirts, all the stuff we were issued with, boots, shoes, socks, uniforms, a few personal items probably

14:30 fancy shower kit, toilet kit sort of thing, a camera possibly, just what you were issued with mainly.

**When you were in Japan did you have much to do with the locals?**

On a day to day basis, no. The only Japanese officially

15:00 you used to have anything to do with would be the girls who used to serve the meals in the mess in the reinforcement depot. You would go to your meal table and everybody would sit down and you used to sit down and it was easier for them to employ a lot of Japanese girls. It was good for local population too, and they would race out with these great big trays and stand there and you would pass the meals up, already on a plate, it was easier

15:30 We didn't worry about carting dixies or plates up to the mess, all we had to do was wash our knife, fork, and spoon and mug. The WO caterer was a bloke I knew at Woomera, Ivan King and I thought "This is like a Chinese laundry, all running around" and he said "I know but it works". The canteen was, a couple of Australians used to run that

16:00 but as for walking around the street the only people the majority of the blokes had to do with were the girls working in the beer halls or brothels. Arguing or bartering with females in the gift shops which were like these \$2 shops you see around the place now and there was heaps and heaps of them around the place.

**16:30 Did you buy anything from them?**

Yeah, yeah, quite a few things there. I brought mother home a tea set, a few things for my young sister, that was first up. That is all I sent home and for Christmas I bought it before I went across to Korea,

17:00 I bought my mother a Damascene music box, earrings and a necklace and the music box played the Anniversary Song. She only used to wear those out extra special. When Mum died my sister got them and they never seen

17:30 the light of day since. She has still got them but they are buried and just before I come home I bought Mum a 96 piece dinner set, not Noritake, but a pale green, Japanese scene with mountains and that and I only ever got four meals off that and my sister has got that too, and four meals is all it ever saw, four meals there.

18:00 Four meals apart from Christmases when Mum used to trot it out Christmas Day and I only ever got four meals off it.

**What were those occasions?**

I can't remember now. Must have been something special.

**What kind of training did you do in Hiro?**

Basically

18:30 the idea was when reinforcements came to the battalion in Korea it was assumed they would be qualified up to the DP1 set draft priority 1 standard and it was just the final toughening up. It was all right for the infantry blokes, they had been training for the majority of twelve months at least

19:00 to get to that stage but me and the other blokes I was talking about we had been at Woomera. One of them, Johnny Langley, he had been an operator down at Army Headquarters Signals Regiment and we hadn't done anything. Even when we did our recruit training we didn't do anything approaching anything like the training you have to do to be physically fit to perform in an infantry battalion. When I did my recruit training

19:30 I only ever done two route marches from Ingleburn to the last hill before you seen Campbelltown and once down to Ingleburn and back again. That is all the foot slogging I done there and that was over a period of five months. The first day we get up there on the Saturday morning they would take us for a quick trot around. The blokes who had been doing the training they said "oh gee this is tough" and I was nearly down on my hands and knees

- 20:00 and we weren't climbing any sort of hill at all in comparison to what was in Korea or Japan. They were going around the anti aircraft sites around Hiro and I thought "I will never see the distance". On the first week after we got over the weekend we went to a coastal training area at a place called Carwaduy [?]. It was only a bit of a hill really and we used to sit up on top of that overnight
- 20:30 and do training exercises during the day. Going down the hill and doing patrols around the area and just more or less just getting the physical condition. Just had three weeks leave and hang around a Personnel Depot for a month and it doesn't take long for you to lose your condition, and that went on for a week. I was catching up with it.
- 21:00 We go back to Hiro and they let us out for the Saturday night and all day Sunday, Monday, the third week we have been in Japan and we are going to the battle training school up at Harumi. The Australians were the only ones that marched up, the Pommys and the Canadians they used to send them up by road transport.
- 21:30 We had to march up because it was a thing up there when the occupation was on all the battalions used to spend so much time up at Harumi. It was a competition to see who could do it on foot fastest. One platoon of 3 RAR done it in five and a half hours they tell me, but I can't see that myself but
- 22:00 they held the, a retired Major General he is now, Dave Butler, he was part of it and he reckoned they done it in that time and it is all up hill. I thought "the others are keeping up with it, I will do my best". I didn't have to do it as they sent me to the dentist to get an impression taken and got through that all right, go back to the reinforcement depot. And they said "Right oh, you blokes you are going up on the
- 22:30 kit" because when they march them up there they didn't take everything with them, they just basic pouches, haversack, rifle and bayonet and that was it. In our little haversack on your back you have your towel, change of socks, toilet gear and anything else you wanted to put in it but your sleeping bag and all that they send it up by truck and that is how I went up. They put it on a
- 23:00 fifteen hundred weight Chev truck and they filled the truck with gear and four blokes had to go up with it too. One bloke he was lucky, he got the seat next to the driver and the other three balancing on the tail board hanging onto the canvas as best we could. I'll tell you it was a terrible hairy scary ride. We got there all right but a couple of times I thought "oh
- 23:30 somebody is going to lose somebody here" because of the bumps the roads were as rough as guts. We got up there and as a matter of fact we beat the marchers up. We settled down in the barracks. They had been telling us "You will be in barrack blocks up there" and I wasn't the only one imagined barrack blocks like they had in
- 24:00 Hiro and Kure and that concrete building and that with wooden floors and things like that. They were big barns, they had been stables for the Imperial Japanese Cavalry beforehand with concrete floors. Rough, rough and we didn't have stretchers, we had those little field spring stretchers about that high off the ground and these two plugs on either side. The joint,
- 24:30 they go that way but with lots of use you would lay on it and bang you were on the concrete anyway. It used to take us out to the miniature range and different places and ask you questions and map reading round and round the camp up and down hills and what have you. The following Monday I have got to go back down to the dentist again. They get me
- 25:00 down there and I missed the, from the battle school they used to send me down in an ambulance and you had to be at the main canteen in Kure House, you had to be there by twenty to three. That is about the only bus I ever seen run on time up until that time and I got there sixteen minutes to three, I had missed it. I had to be at the reinforcement unit at Hiro and told
- 25:30 them what happened and they said I wasn't the only one, it quite often used to happen. They said "We will bed you down here for the night and you can go up in the mail truck in the morning". I got this cough and I couldn't stop bloody coughing and I thought, "oh Jesus" so I went and dug their Corporal out of the RAP [regimental aid post] and he gave me Ephedrine I think it was and he said "That will
- 26:00 stop your coughing" and it didn't and I get back on the truck and go back up to Harumi and get up there in time for breakfast and brought it back doing anything and I was going all right. We had been to the miniature range and I was still coughing a fair bit and it was starting to worry me and I was coming out of the miniature range and we come to a bit of a slope
- 26:30 and the next thing I know I am down on the deck, I was out like a light. I spent a week in the camp's sick bay. The sick bay was a tent built up with a wooden floor and it was quite comfortable in pitch darkness, no light or anything in it and I had to stay in bed. Nothing, there nothing, you could see light in during the day and there was nothing to read. I just had to lay there and I think it was the worst week
- 27:00 I ever spent in my life. Anyway the doctor said "How do you feel?" I said "A lot better" and he said "Right back on full duties" and I started to run a bit of a temperature and the same thing happened again so they sent me down to the hospital in Kure and I was in hospital there for a month with bronchitis. Why the doctor in Harumi couldn't see I had bronchitis I don't know but I went down there and bronchitis and I was in hospital for a month.

- 27:30 I got my teeth while I was there. The same dentist that I had been going to, he had been in the Engineers camp down at Point Cam and he had his dental set up down there and he also had a set up in the hospital and I told him I had been down at the camp down there and he said "Don't worry about that I got a half a set made down at the Engineers camp" and they gave me another set at the hospital in Kure.
- 28:00 They let me out of hospital and I went back to camp and the first night God they were torture. I took them out of my mouth. I couldn't find them in morning. I couldn't find them anywhere I thought there is sixty or seventy quids worth of teeth and I thought "What am I going to do?" And I found them inside the flaps of the tent rolled up and I stuck them inside that.
- 28:30 I finally got the teeth business sorted out and the medical examination and they found I had haemorrhoids and they had been giving me a bit of trouble in Woomera and if you go to Korea apparently it was quite a common occurrence over there and in Japan so I found out later.
- 29:00 They said "We had better do something about it" and they said "It will be painful". I said "If you say I have got to do it I will do it". They sent me to the hospital in Kure and before you have an op they have got to knock you out. I don't know what it is but it makes you easier to anaesthetize and
- 29:30 it also dries up your system. They gave me a needle and I'm laying there "hey, hey" and I said "When is it going to happen?" And they said "There were a couple of badly wounded guys in from Korea you will have to wait until after lunch". It is sunlight up there and it is very steamy. You get an Arctic winter in Japan because the winter in Japan is not as bad as Korea but you get a tropical summer, you get the two extremes.
- 30:00 It is as hot as hell and I am dying of thirst but they said "You have had the needle" and my mouth is dry as dust so they gave me a drink of water and he has got to have another needle, anyway I had the other needle. At 11 o'clock at night the nurse said "Have you passed water yet?", "No, no", she said "you must do, you must do", "I can't" and I am standing there sitting on the edge of the bed
- 30:30 with the old fellow in the hand and they are pouring water over it to make me pass water and I wouldn't have any luck at all. The other four blokes in the ward "bottle, bottle", it was having all the effect in the world on them but none on me. It worked out eventually and I was there oh, I had the operation and as the doctor said it was painful. About five or six days after the operation
- 31:00 "Has your bowels moved yet?" I said "No". "Are you on a low residue diet?" I was eating a lot of rabbit and I used to like rabbit and that was part of it and they said "Have you been taking your opening medicine?" I said "They didn't give me any" so they gave me a dose of cascara to go to the toilet. It was one of the most painful experiences I have had for a long time or since.
- 31:30 I nearly ripped the lid off the toilet but it worked and one of the after effects they sent me back to the reinforcement depot and your bowels are working all the time and I was supposed to be on light duties, no standing around and those places they don't take any notice of that "No, you are here you do this", and it is too much trouble for them.
- 32:00 I was in the odds and sods company by this time because the blokes going for medical boards and all sorts of things and won't go back to the battalion they put you in there. They are holding a parade. The OC [Officer Commanding] of the reinforcement depot Major Gurk was being decorated with his distinguished service medal he got awarded with at the Battle of Maryansang
- 32:30 and he was getting the DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and Paddy O'Connell was getting the military medal and somebody else. I got roped into the honour guard and I said to the company sergeant major "Do you think it is safe with my bowel problem I have got?" He knew about it. It was that bad I had to wear a sanitary napkin because it was coming just like that. He said "You are on it, you are the only blokes I have got".
- 33:00 The OC I think his name was Ridgeford an Australian and he goes up the front of us and said "Smart turn out soldier" and I thought "beauty." "What battalion are you with?" I said "I haven't been over yet sir". He is looking at the back of us and my bowels followed at the back of me and the company sergeant major reckoned until the day he died that I done it on purpose
- 33:30 and I got over that all right. I went swimming one day. I used to go in the pool in the Sig barracks in Kure because they had a chlorinated pool in there but this particular day we used to catch a tram out the front of the, I don't use the word tram too eloquently, it was only
- 34:00 a little butter box on wheels they used to fit about two hundred in it and it finished up at the beach and so I went in the water there. Three days later I had a bloody ear problem and I was running a hell of a high temperature and that and they were digging at it and digging at it and I was going to the hospital every day and they went in one day and the doc had a look at it and he said
- 34:30 "Come back and see us after lunch but bring your little pack with you". That's a Pommy expression for bring your toilet articles and that with you, "Bring your little pack with you and if it is no better then we will put you in hospital". I was in hospital for three weeks with that. The temperature or whatever it was broke and I woke up about 3 o'clock in the morning and I thought I had wet the bed, it was absolutely saturated and my ears got better after that.

- 35:00 I never had any more problems with them until twelve months later in Korea. That was okay and they sent me back to the reinforcement depot at Hiro 1RAHU [Royal Australian Hospital Unit] and they said "Right, we are going to send you up to Harumi for fit training". "Yeah, righto" and up I go and I get up there Monday morning, Monday was all right,
- 35:30 Tuesday was all right, Wednesday we went out to the, no Tuesday we went to the miniature range. I was as good as gold and I had even some success with the rifle over a short distance and Wednesday they went on the twenty miles route march just around the roads, there was no hills or that involved in it. It was the hottest day they had had in Japan that century up to
- 36:00 that time. I was going great guns and about 11 o'clock I start to conk out I couldn't keep up with the blokes because these blokes had been at it for donkeys ages [a long time]. I just couldn't keep up and I dropped out and I am doing my best to catch up and they are getting further and further away and it is signposted and I can't go wrong and I never thought of turning back and going back the way I come.
- 36:30 I kept on going and they sent a sergeant back to get me and he said "Have you been drinking a lot of water?" I said "no" but I have poured a lot over my bloody head because there is little wells all along the road up there, always nice and cool. I catch up and they had a two hour break for lunch. They had lunch and there was a couple of streams running down there fresh water because the whole platoon into their birthday suits [naked] and
- 37:00 soaking up the sunshine in the water cooling down and the ration truck is going back and muggins here thinks "they'll send me back to Harumi" and this old sergeant, Butch Mackenzie, Jesus he was a hard man. I reckon if you could have held his ankles together and used him as an axe he would have split hardwood with his head, rough, rough. He said "Righto Private Date,
- 37:30 you are a marker". I said "Aren't I going?" And he said "Oh no you dropped out on me once, you are not doing it again". He said "You are going to finish this today". I said "Right oh". "Quick march" and he said "Left, right, left" and he kept that up all bloody afternoon. I thought "I will kill this old bastard, I will". We get to a place called Hachimitsu, it is a rail head
- 38:00 for the battle school and there is a big lake there he said "Right oh we will prop here and have a swim" and we had to swim and got back out, good as gold, next day back on the rifle range again. On the Thursday we had to do another twenty miler. I done it the other day I think I can do it, across country, up hill and down dale, that sort of thing and I thought "I will do my best".
- 38:30 Two hours out and we stop for a break and I sat down and I couldn't get up. I couldn't move my legs at all. He said "I can't do anything with you now". He said "do you reckon you will come good?" I said "I bloody hope so". He said "Can you find your way back to Harumi?" I said "Yeah". "Right oh" and he took the rest of the platoon off. He said "When you get back there for Christ sake keep out of sight, don't let the company sergeant major see you".
- 39:00 I got back to camp and I spent the whole day and night keeping out of Mickey Newell's sight because I had known Mickey Newell as a corporal at Ingleburn and he and I didn't see eye to eye then. I didn't want to lock horns with him. The company come back on the Friday and they sent me back down to Hiro on the Friday afternoon and
- 39:30 the mob come back on the Monday and just hanging around there, doing a day, a couple of hours up the track, doing different exercises, climbing hills and practicing ambush patrols and that. Comes Thursday morning and I had to follow a warrant for the draft and my name is first on the list and all the blokes I had been up to Harumi the last time "Christ how did he get on it?
- 40:00 He hasn't done the course up there, that is a bit rough this" and they were going a bit crook about it and I got warranted for the draft and that was it. The last thing I had to do at that time because I had to go to the dentist again as they had a hell of a job fitting me with teeth up there. We got separated from the rest of the, oh
- 40:30 we were taken out of the tents we were living in and stuck in a barracks block, the whole, there was over eighty of us. It was when we left eighty three RARs and one officer and they put us up one side and he said "There is jerseys", all heavy there they used to call it. You see The Bill [British Police drama series], the coppers wearing those heavy looking jerseys,
- 41:00 just like them only they were khaki. Big time we are going. We would just sit around and wait until Sunday and we were going on the ship on Sunday morning and Friday we didn't do anything and Saturday they allowed us out for the day and said "Right be back by midnight because you are
- 41:30 going across on the boat tomorrow".

## Tape 5

- 00:32 **Larry, can you tell me about your trip from Japan to Korea?**



We got out there fully booted and spurred on the Sunday morning, piled into the trucks and away we go down to the ship. Poyang, Easang, there were three ships used to run across there. Poyang I remember for sure but I don't remember who the other two were. They were old Chinese

01:00 coastal vessels crewed by Chinese, skippered by Englishmen but the ship staff were run by Pommy engineers, movement control people. We get down to the ship, all clamber aboard and find ourselves somewhere to throw our gear. "Hang on, hang on, you blokes will have to get off." "Why?" "We have got the space

01:30 but they hadn't brought any rations for us", somebody had forgotten. What they had done the fellow in the orderly room, a bloke by the name of Jim McFadgen who I knew of the Corps of Signals before he transferred to the infantry and he also got a MID [Mentioned in Dispatches] at Maryansang, he just rang up and enquired about the number of berths. He forget to book us on because they didn't know about it, no food. Back we go to Hiro

02:00 and for the rest of the week running up and down, oh short spurts. Today we might do seven mile out, or six mile out or six mile back and the next day it might go up the big hill which was just outside the camp, drop out of sight and then come back again. I might add I found two more reasons to go to the dentist that week. They used to take dental healthy very seriously.

### **Why is that?**

I don't know, well

02:30 I got away with it put it that way because only you can tell if your teeth are hurting or not. He examined you and they say "No, they don't hurt" when you know they do. Come the following Thursday we are ready to roll and down to the boat and the officer in charge he looked just like Billy Bunter, that Pommy comic school boy

03:00 with pebble glasses built like a barrel. The first thing he said to the ship's staff "have you got food for us this time?" "Hey moppo we have got it all right", the Pommy staff sergeant said. We clamber on and the first thing they tell us "take your boots off". "Why?" Another thing they forgot to tell us on these wooden decked ships

03:30 they didn't like army boots scratching the deck we had to travel in just our socks. Nobody ever thought of taking sandshoes with them. It is a hard area you don't wear sandshoes in hard areas. We took them off and the Pommy bloke, the staff sergeant that wasn't the Royal Engineers, shocking set of teeth that was the first thing I noticed about him, he is reading the riot act to us and

04:00 a bloke from Katoomba, Bert Keen, I didn't know him very well, full as family about your father, "You know what you can do you Pommy bastard". "Who said that? Who said that?" And Bert has flaked, made the comment and flaked out, that drove that Pommy mad. He couldn't find him at all because they picked him up and propped Bert up and oh he never forgive us for that. An overnight trip to, it used to leave Kure Harbour

04:30 9.00 or 9.30 something like that, slow trip down to the head of the inland sea, beautiful trip. The trip from the head of the inland sea across to Pusan takes you overnight and coming back it takes you overnight to get there and an overnight trip up to Kure. It was an uneventful trip because everybody is up on deck after breakfast and looking "Where is it? Where is the place?"

05:00 And we go, oh the smell, you can smell it, it was over powering and we could smell Pusan before we could see the mountains behind it.

### **What was the smell?**

Human waste and all that sort of thing. The population of the city increased immensely. I don't know by how much but they live in all sorts of huts made out of ration boxes and

05:30 flattened out beer cans, you have seen the sort of thing in Vietnam and it is the same there. The infrastructure wouldn't stand it and we weren't used to those sorts of things. The sewerage system if it ever existed didn't work and as I said before they would catch the,

06:00 the honey cart over there is a big business and they collect all the refuse from the house and that and it all goes in the honey pots at the edge of the paddy fields and with the excess population it just blew it out of all proportion. We went out to the transit camp and nobody is allowed out of camp. Nobody took any notice of it and

06:30 bummed a ride into Pusan and had a look around places and there was nothing to see. It was a city, it hadn't felt, the war never got that far but it picked up all the damages it caused by excess people moving in and out of the place. It was a dump, no two ways about it. We went back to the camp and

07:00 I was with a fellow who had been in the Corps of Signals, Lenny Hayden, and he joined and went through a bit of an upset as he didn't want to stay in the Corps of Signals and got out and joined K Force. They found him in Japan later on, they held him in Japan for awhile while they decided what to do with him and they let him stay in the infantry. Two of us went across to Korea together and we

- 07:30 bumped into a bloke we both knew at recruit training back in Australia, a bloke by the name of Jack Crowley and he had access to beer. In Korea in the transit camps beer was never any problem. The Pommy's were running them and they always had beer to burn, miles and miles of it. When we get up to the battalion we had the money but we would get one bottle a day. The Pommy's didn't have the money and they had it all over the place.
- 08:00 **What kind of beer was it?**
- Japanese beer, Osari or Curin, Osari mostly, it was all right. It is funny Japanese beer you drink half a bottle of it and you stick it next to your bed over night and put a match stick over it and in the morning it is still perfectly okay to drink, it is chemical beer. You get hangovers from it if you drink enough of it but I found it was quite good.
- Can you describe for us**
- 08:30 **one of the huts made out of beer cans in Pusan?**
- Not a very big thing but what they do is they take the tops off the cans split them down the sides and flatten them out. There is God's unknown quantity of those, put up a frame and nail them to it and do a similar sort of thing with the roof. It would be a long slow job but apparently there was plenty of cans around, didn't have to be a beer can,
- 09:00 any sort of can would do as long as they could flatten them out and that is what they used. The further north you went the more you seen of them.
- Were there communities of these houses?**
- You would find a lot of them together but they weren't built that way. "Right oh we will put a hut there" and they would get six people together and they would all live there together. Mamasan, grandpa and Mum and Dad
- 09:30 and the kids. It was a rough way to live. They were surviving and that is all they were trying to do. They had forty years of Japanese occupation and things didn't improve that much when the Japanese left.
- 10:00 Old Sigmund Reed he wasn't the most benevolent of men. They reckon he would have made a good partner for Hitler in some ways. We didn't know that then but we do now. That overnight stay in Pusan and next day they put us in trucks and took us to the train and
- 10:30 had a train trip up to Seoul and it was nearly all daylight hours. Anybody who has ever gone on a troop train in Korea they know what a rough train ride it is. The toilets are made for Asians and they don't have pedestals like we do, it is
- 11:00 a long bath sort of thing with a kind of hood at the back. To this day I don't know which way you use them, I have no idea, and I'd get near them and lean up the thing at the back and that is what you had in the train. A lot of them there is floorboards missing in the train too so what you were doing was you could hit the train in front of you. You are sitting there and you can see the ballast on
- 11:30 the railway line underneath you. It didn't encourage you to want to stay there and read the paper or anything like that. When I went back to Korea for a visit in 1991 we went from Pusan to Seoul by bus and we stopped at a bus stop for something to eat and there is rows of toilets there and there is two distinct ones "pedestals", great big sign in English
- 12:00 "pedestals only". The Koreans or the Japanese wouldn't use them, they were brought up to use the other ones and that is what they used. On the train trip they were an American run, that sort of thing and there was a dining car on the train and you used to take it in turns, I am a bit hazy about this
- 12:30 but they used to bring the meal around to you and put it on a plate in front of you and it was quite all right.
- Can you remember what you ate?**
- There was always sauerkraut on it. I don't know why when the 3rd Battalion first went across to Korea they used to get gallons of sauerkraut, nobody liked it very much but if you are hungry enough you will eat it. That
- 13:00 took us all day. The carriage we were in was up front near the engine and a diesel loco was pulling it. It was nothing to get out of the carriage and get onto the loco and walk up the chassis of the thing and get in the front and I spent a fair bit of riding up front with the engineer, they called train drivers engineers and
- 13:30 he was quite pleased to have all these Australians talking to him. Talk about this and that and something else. He asked us how long did we do in Korea. We said "We do twelve months" and he said "We have got to do eighteen". And we said "Why's that?" And he said "In the American system if you are up the front up the sharp end twelve months and the further behind the line you get the longer you have got to do". It is fair in one way I suppose.

- 14:00 It makes it a bit more equitable as far as the blokes up the sharp end are concerned. That trip took all day and we got to Seoul station. Seoul from what I can gather was designed by Germans. The railway station, I thought it was a real nice looking place, a bit damaged by shell fire but not a great deal but it was still quite useable.
- 14:30 It was a lot like I have seen on television, that German railway stations of the era, it was quite a solid construction but you could see where bits had been blasted out of it. From there we were taken to, they used to call it FMA, Forward Maintenance Area in Seoul. We were in old double storey brick building and
- 15:00 it was rough because Seoul had been fought through two or three times and got a fair bit of hammering at different stages even though we were only there overnight we would doss on the deck. The NAAFI [Navy, Army and Air Force Institute], the British Forces were a version of the Australian Armed Forces Canteen Organisation
- 15:30 and they had no ambition and no interest. You can imagine what the F stands for? It was quite a good night, nobody tempted to go out, at least I wasn't but probably some blokes did I know because always girls hanging around the wire fence tempting you to come out and spend your money. I was never interested there and the next morning
- 16:00 breakfast. Breakfast at those FMAs are really something to see. The Poms have a liking for fried bread and fried beans and not nice baked beans. I don't know what sort of beans they were but they were bloody has beans as far as I was concerned, terrible bloody things. They love that fried bread. I used to too but not every day of the week.
- 16:30 We were hanging around there for awhile and then we were taken down to Seoul station and onto the train again up to the rail head to the division to a place called Tokchong, I'm not sure about that now where we were met by 5 Canadian GMCs. I thought "There is not enough transport there"
- 17:00 and the Canadian said to me "Sixteen blokes to a truck mate", or buddy, and he has got a couple of blokes being picked up by somebody else, he got us into the truck all right. I thought the roads in Japan were rough but if anybody had false teeth the fillings would have been shaken out of them, the road was that bloody rough. The Canadian could handle the truck all right
- 17:30 and we get to 1st Battalion A echelon and they dropped one bloke off at the 3rd Battalion B echelon just down the road a bit further because he was one bloke who was going back to the battalion, been in hospital or something, never spoke to the bloke. We get there and I still didn't know what to expect because before I had no training
- 18:00 to speak of. I had forgotten everything they had taught me down at the School of Signals, being a regimental Sig it had gone right out the window. They had set up little two man tents for us we were going to sleep overnight and we get handed a can of C rations, that was our meal because they weren't expecting us. We had been on the road for over a week and the battalion
- 18:30 they still didn't even expect us so they had this emergency ration. I was lucky I got chicken in mine. I was watching the blokes coming back with the battalion coming back from their meal. The bloke in the photo behind you with the shirty on, that is him, my mate Jack Slanto. I said "Jesus Jack, what are you doing here?" He said "The same as you" and I said "Gee home and hosed" and I said "Who else is here?"
- 19:00 And it turned out I knew half the platoon. I had known them at the School of Sigs quite a few of them at Woomera and different other places, even some from Recruit Training Company. I thought "I am not going to have any trouble at all" and I went up to see him and his mate Max Hugel that night and we went up to the Sig platoon was and I said "Where is Slackey?" And they said "He is out on the slops" and I said "Where?" "Wherever he can find any".
- 19:30 I said "Who has got all the beer?" They said "The Poms have got it all mate, we get one bottle and all the dough and they get all the beer and no dough". I will know better tomorrow and the next morning the whole draft were lined up there and the company sergeant major, Wally Everett said "right oh welcome to 1 RAR"
- 20:00 and gave us the usual rundown about what a good battalion and all that it is. He said "Now anybody in A Company?" And he allocated blokes to different companies and that. Before that started the company Commander Major Smith decided he would have a good look at us because we were scruffy as we had been travelling for a week with no access to anywhere where we could do any washing or anything and he read us the riot act.
- 20:30 Two men had twisted bootlaces and he hammered on about five or six minutes about twisted bootlaces. One bloke behind me said "God, what have we struck here?" And then he allocated us to different companies and that. I split with Lenny Hayden as he went to Don Company and I was going into the Signals Battalion. The battalion was coming out of the line
- 21:00 during the night and the Sig Platoon had moved and they were digging in and they were across the other side of the valley and I said "When do we go to the Signals Platoon?" They said "When the Signals officer calls for you". I said "Where do we live in the mean time?" He said "You are in a tent aren't

you?" I said "Yeah, two man pup tent", "Well that is where you stay". We stayed there for nearly a week like that.

- 21:30 I went over to the Platoon Commander, a bloke named Buck Rogers or R Bruce Rogers, don't ask me what the R stands for. Nobody I spoke to knows but we used to call him R Bruce Rogers, a big man, a beak on him like nobody's business and Christ could he eat. I said "When do you want us sir?" He said "When I am good and ready for you. What is your name?" I said "Private Date".
- 22:00 He said "When I am good and ready for you Date". I said "What do I do now?" He said "Go back to where you were". I was back in AS line and I started to feel like a country lavatory stuck out there. There was four of us and we were finding it a bit uncomfortable stuck there on our own. Nobody seemed to know us or want us and we finally got over to Bucket.
- 22:30 He said "Where are you from?" And the signals sergeant, a bloke by the name of Sergeant Maiden, I'd never met him before and he said to me "You are a mate of Brownies aren't you?" And I said "You mean Marshall Brown?" He said "No Bill Brown" and I said "Yes", Marshall Brown was known as Bill Brown. I said "Yes". He said "Where have you been before?" I said "at Woomera" and he said "What were you?" I said "A driver". "Oh great, we have just got a rebuilt Jeep allocated to us
- 23:00 and you are it." I said "I don't want to be a driver", he said "You are a driver Date and that is it". He said "Did you know anybody else in the platoon?" And I said "I have two of my best mates are in this platoon" and he said "Who is that?" And I said "Slack and Sheergold" and my number went plop. They were the two main drunks in the platoon. They were a problem, wherever they were they were both a problem but Jack
- 23:30 was a mate of mine and I always give him all sorts of sins, you do that for mates.

**What did you think of the enemy at this point?**

I never ever seen one. There was them and us, they were shooting at us so we shot back at them and that is what I went up there for. You never worry about what the other bloke is. His aim is to kill you and you have to kill him, do unto others before they do it unto you.

- 24:00 I never had any ambition to serve in a Rifle Company as a rifleman anyway. I didn't mind the idea of being a Company Sig but it never turned out that way for me but I spent most of my time in the signals platoon. I started off as a driver, actually I wasn't a driver as such, I was a dispatch rider.
- 24:30 The 3rd Battalion when they went to Korea originally had motor bikes, Harley Davidsons but I don't know how many they had. I think they had six but by the time they got to Kapyong they only had two. The other blokes had fallen off on icy roads and broken legs and what have you, so I was a Don R [dispatch rider]. Stranger in the country and I didn't know where anything was or anything and they said right "report to the..." each battalion has its own little
- 25:00 signals officer and I go round and the lance corporal was a bloke I knew at Ingleburn, Jack Dwyer. I said "Right Jack, what have you got for me?" He said "Take this to brigade headquarters and go down to B echelon". I said "Well where is A?" He said "Just follow the sign 66." I said "66 is here" and he said "Yes but if you go down this road here you will see a sign 66 and just follow it." And I said "What is the tact sign for brigade headquarters?"
- 25:30 He said "Don't you know?" I said "No, do you know?" "No" he said "but you go down to the..." I didn't have a clue because nobody told us about any about these tact signs or anything like that but I found out later 94 was brigade headquarters. After I got that cleaned up, that number is that, it was no trouble, it was a piece of cake but you don't know. I go down to brigade headquarters all right and come out
- 26:00 the first time I got in the Jeep I nearly killed myself the first time they drive on the wrong side of the road, they drive on the right and we drive on the left. The corporal that handed the vehicle over said "Look after it and for Christ sake keep on the correct side of the road". I said "What is that?" He said "They drive on the right hand side over here like the Americans do" and I drive out and nearly run into a lorry load of Yanks [Americans].
- 26:30 They screamed something at me and it took me awhile to get used to it, it is hard when you have been driving on the one side of the road for a long time and you have got to swap over to the other side, it is difficult but I got around it all right. I used to drive this Jeep quite often. One
- 27:00 of my duties was getting the battalions out of the line this time, except we had one company, B Company, sitting up the top of, I think it was holiday hill because the front of the hill was like that. There was no chance of the enemy attacking you up the hill and they overlooked the Sami - Chon Valley and across the valley was a place called the Hook which had nothing to do with us, the Americans were over there.
- 27:30 I get up the Jeep up as far as I can, and said to somebody said "Where is the Sig office?" "It is up there" and it is up a hill like that. Being bronchial I go up there and I thought "Jesus if I have to do this everyday I won't last. I better go and report sick". I get up the Sig office and the bloke in there I knew him, Kenny Single, and he said "What are you doing here?" I said "I am bringing up the so and so bloody (UNCLEAR)"

28:00 He said "You don't run up the hill or walk up. Use the phone down there, give it three rings and we will send the company runner down for you" so I never done that again.

**What were your daily duties like at this stage?**

I had to do a Don R run, I'd out of bed at, well breakfast was at 7 o'clock and if you wanted breakfast you made sure you were out. We used to have a parade at

28:30 I think 8 o'clock and when I joined them I was comfortable enough and I was out first and heat some water and I tore the lining out of the inside of a Pommy steel helmet because they were the ones we were using with old pattern and this was one of their newer pattern ones and set a fire underneath it, a fire in an

29:00 ammunition box and fill it up with sand and pour petrol in it and light it and keep on stirring it and the pockets of petrol used to flare up, desert fires they used to call them and hot water and have my shave and I just finished shaving and the boys yelled "Don't throw it out". "Why?" "I want a shave too". Shaving in cold water is no joke and it was starting to get a bit cool. Four or five blokes would have a shave in

29:30 that one little bit of water because everybody else looked a bit scruffy so you wouldn't look out of place but as long as you had a shave. The Platoon Commander used to inspect weapons and have a close look at your face, a bit of fuzz up there "What are you doing?" Not me, "I am growing a moustache sir". A lot of blokes used to grow moustaches in the winter time and go because the battalion was out of the line doing rest and

30:00 I had a job to do. I used to pass word around to the rifle companies, anything had to go, like I think the manning detail for the day or what the position of the man power of the battalion was, that used to have to go to brigade headquarters because it was a confidential document, you couldn't send it in clear over the radio

30:30 and they had no cipher facilities in the battalion. I used to take it up there and any other job the platoon commander needed. When I wasn't engaged in dispatch rider duties I run a line party out or repair a break in the telephone line or something like that. One job I had, the platoon commander had a navy friend. I don't know whether he was Royal Navy or Australian Navy but he was a naval officer

31:00 and he was a friend of Bucks and he had this bloke in the Signals Platoon, who's photo I've got on the table there, Daisy Ingram. He was one of these hunting, shooting, fishing men who was as happy as Larry doing that and Buck said "Ingram I want you to take this friend of mine out and show him some hunting, shooting and fishing and that sort of thing" and he said "right oh", real gravely voice on him

31:30 and he said to me "Can you get us some ammunition?" I said "Yeah, how much do you want?" He said "A fair bit" so I bought home three bandoleers. That is six hundred rounds. I said "not that much" and he said "go and get me a bloody box full of it". So I did, I brought him a whole case, two thousand rounds and after he had been out with this officer four or five times they were all gone. I don't know whether he shot anything with them but he was gun happy.

32:00 He was a crazy guy, he took this officer shooting and fishing and he was quite pleased with it, Buck said Daisy done a bloody good job. That is what they used to call this Clarey Ingram, everybody knew him as Daisy. He went to a pub in Orbest in Victoria and asked for Daisy Ingram they would look at you and wouldn't have a clue who he was but if you asked for Clarey Ingram they knew him, just

32:30 names you give people in a place, a perfect stranger somewhere else even though you are talking about the same bloke.

**Did you have a nickname?**

Yeah, Fingers.

**What did you get that for?**

I used to find things like I found a case of ammunition for Daisy. When I went down to the, when my Jeep broke down, my rebuilt Jeep, the transfer case cracked up and nobody could do it so I had to take it down to brigade workshops.

33:00 I was down there for a week or more and run foul of a Scottish lance corporal, power mad those Pommies with one hook, nothing like them. They come down eventually and fixed the Jeep and I was packing up ready to go and their orderly room was in a tent and it caught fire and a thing they shot out was their choofer which is a home made heater, any heater up there was called a choofer. And

33:30 out it comes and a proper regulated control on it and they shot them out and they are trying to put the fire out and I looked at it and I thought "Christ I need a heater when I get back". I had a blanket there and I picked the heater up and put it in the back of my Jeep and picked the control unit up and a fair bit of rubber hose they threw out with it and put it in the Jeep and covered it all over with my sleeping bag and whatever and took off. Because when I get back up to the battalion

34:00 everybody is pleased to see me because the other drivers were copping a bit extra work because I

wasn't there and that was one instance... I was the Don R and they decided I needed extra protection against the cold and they had a bodgey set of side curtains and doors made by local procurement in Japan

34:30 and they put those on my Jeep and the other blokes didn't get any, the other drivers didn't get any and I kept my eye open and if I saw an abandoned Jeep or an empty Jeep lying on the side of the road that had doors and side curtains, the proper ones on it I would stop and whip them off quick smart and put them into my own blokes. All our Jeeps finished up with side curtains and what have you.

35:00 I mentioned the beer problem before I come across one of the fellows in the Blackwatch, they ran their canteen set up at the A echelon and I used to go past there every day on our way to our B echelon and it was no trouble to call in and see him and talk to him for a while and pass some money for some goods and take them back to the battalion. "Where did you find them?" "Oh I found them" At that time there was a

35:30 cartoon in or comic strip sort of thing in the Sydney Truth and the race course characters and the bookies name was Short Odds, the bloke who run the book in the battalion, Geoff Fraser, that is what he got christened Short Odds and I used to find things and I was Fingers and there were other ones. I can't remember them all, oh Clarey Ingram he got called he got called Daisy.

### **Can you describe for**

36:00 **us the barracks that you lived in?**

Where about?

### **When you worked as a Don R?**

When I first got up there was a hole in the ground and you put a tent over the top of it. When we got in the line it was holes in the ground protected by sandbags over the top with poles or trees or whatever you could find over the top, sand bags on top of

36:30 those and waterproofing of whatever sort you could find, scrounge or get issued with and then more sandbags on top of those. When I got up there the battalion had been in the line for a fortnight and our platoon in 1 RAR seemed to be bigger than the Canadians we were replacing and there was no room for me. I was living in a hole in the ground, about that wide. You can't live

37:00 like that, I couldn't exist and three of the blokes, Dick Hawsley, Rick Newman and Alby Langley whose brother Johnny was in 3 Battalion, we decided we would build a hootchie of our own. We found a level piece of ground within the battalion area near where we used to have to park the Jeeps and the New Zealand artillery battery that was supporting us was directly

37:30 behind us, a mile behind us and they had moved. All their gun emplacements were all built up around dirt filled shell cases about that deep and there is all these and I said to Dick Hawsley we want to run around looking for sandbags I go past there four times a day and I

38:00 started on a deep trail and I come back with all these boxes full of dirt and all the rest of it and we had beaut walls. There was enough to make a hootchie almost as big as this room, this area and built a little fireplace in there and some of the boxes we put in there turned around different so we had a cupboard with a lid on it in the corner.

38:30 And we had enough timber, but timber for the roof was a bit of a problem but we got around that one way and the other and then malthoid was a bitumen type water proof, that was the problem. We couldn't find enough anywhere and I got promised a tent fly from the Regimental Quartermaster down at BS if I didn't have any luck but

39:00 Dick Hawsley managed to get a complete roll of this malthoid so we could put a double layer over the top and then we put sandbags and then I took the tent fly off a QMS [quartermaster stores] and completely water proof and it was hot, and it was excessively hot when we started burning pure petrol in the stove in the hootchie. We used to have to get out of there during the day

39:30 and go and do our normal duties but at night time it was quite cosy.

### **Was it cold outside?**

Oh yeah, it used to get down 25 to 30 degrees below zero. The gear and that we got was, it stopped you from freezing to death. If you were moving around you had to be a bit careful. When you stopped your feet sweat and when you stop moving the

40:00 sweat turns to ice. We managed all right, the choofer used to cause a bit of problem now and then when it run out of petrol. We weren't supposed to burn petrol, having forward Jeeps you had to fill them up on petrol, they won't run on low we used to do a hell of a lot of miles because the speedos [speedometers] didn't work naturally run and the speedos were US.

40:30 We didn't have any trouble and we used to keep that forty four gallon drum of petrol covered up so nobody could see it and that is what we used to burn pure petrol.

### **Were there fumes inside the hootchie?**

Not that I noticed, not that I can remember but it kept us nice and warm. Very handy, well it used to get that hot one of us used to have to run the juice for five minutes every hour

- 41:00 and I used to do mine. When I used to do my hour I used to do it from the Sig Centre and the other blokes used to do it from the hootchie and it used to keep going all night. It used to get so hot I used to sleep in my birthday suit but even with your underpants and string singlet on it was almost suffocating but I didn't mind that, I was as good as gold.

## **Tape 6**

### **00:33 Tell us about your trip down the bowling alley?**

It was a dead straight road, straight as a dye and it run between across the valley. It was, on one side was Hill 355 and it was the highest point in the divisional sector and facing north and it was the right hand

- 01:00 extremity of the Commonwealth Division area, the Hook was on the left and that was down the valley a bit and overlooking it was Hill 227 which was absolutely bare hill. It had been bombed, mortared, shelled and napalmed that often there wasn't a thing left on it and this bowling alley used to run right across the front of it. Our left hand side at 355 come down
- 01:30 towards the bowling alley and I had to go out to Daisy Ingram out there as a relief sig. He was attached to the anti tank platoon because their Sig had gone on leave. I didn't know. I had only just got over there and they said "You have got to take Ingram out to the anti tank platoon" and I said "Righto, where are they? How do I get there?"
- 02:00 I said "Daisy you know where they are, where do I go?" He said "Just get out on the road there and just go straight ahead". I go through the entrance and I see a sign on the side of the road and I didn't take much notice of it and it is wide open spaces and I said "Where are we?" And he said "We are on the bowling alley son". I said "Jesus it's a bit open" and he said "Yes we will be
- 02:30 all right, don't worry about it". We get down and turn off the track to where I had to take him and I got the jeep over at an angle of about 60 degrees and I thought "Christ, this is going to turn over" but fortunately I got out of it. The platoon sergeant come down and this platoon sergeant, Snowy Cullen, had been our signals platoon sergeant beforehand "oh Ingram, what are you doing here too Date?" I said "I just brought Daisy out here,
- 03:00 he is your new Sig". "Oh right oh, how did you get here?" I said "We come straight down the bowling alley, down the road" and he gave us a right old dressing down of about being under enemy fire and that and I said "Nobody fired at us, we were all right." He said "Well you had better get back, back to the battalion headquarters where you belong". I get out on the bowling alley and whoof and a couple more, one in front and one behind and I thought "Jesus, I am in the middle" and
- 03:30 I flattened that Jeep and Jesus it really took off. A bit of machine gun fire overhead, not much and I fly back and got through the cutting and got me out of sight and got back to the Sig Platoon and didn't say anything to anyone. The next thing our signals sergeant and the platoon commander said "Did you just drive up the bowling alley?" I said "Yes I did." "Who told you to go down there?" I said "Daisy, he said he knew
- 04:00 where to go and it seemed the right thing and I didn't know, nobody told me you couldn't drive down there". I got a right old rollicking over it, and I went down there a few times again but only at night time.

### **Was that the first time you had been under any fire?**

Yes. I never give it a thought. When I went down there at night time, the first time I went down there at night I had a corporal with me and we were both smoking and

- 04:30 it was a bright moonlight night and we turned off the track where we had to start and look for a break in the telephone line and there was a picket down there in a hole in the ground and he stopped us and give us the first half of the password. And we answered him right and he said "I could have shot you two galahs" and we said "Why?" He said "You are both smoking aren't you?" We said "yes" a lighted cigarette at night time you can see it for miles.
- 05:00 He give us a bit of a lecture and when we fixed the line it was all right. There was another night and we fixed the line and went back and nothing happened. The next time we went there we didn't smoke, went with the same bloke, Merv Cowan. He was a corporal and it was for the mortar section this time and
- 05:30 we still had to go along the same track and their sig was coming from the other direction and there was a break in the line we used to work from two ends until we found the break it was easier, not easier but quicker. We find the break and George Renick was his name, a Scotsman and he had a broad accent. He

was broad as Sydney Heads and we

- 06:00 found the break about the same time and fixed it up and had a bit of a mag and he said "Oh well back we go". Back we go to battalion headquarters and the line had been reported back in use and that was all right. One of the switchboard operators said "You blokes missed out on your Christmas present". I said "What do you mean?" They said "There was some Christmas cards left on the barbed wire for you".
- 06:30 Apparently there had been some Chinamen, there was some Christmas cards left on the wire around Christmas time, they used to leave Christmas cards there for people. I said "I didn't see any cards hanging there on the wire" and when Jock Renick was going back he found them and apparently we had been under enemy observation all the time, probably could have thrown a hand grenade or something at us but they didn't, they just left the Christmas cards.
- 07:00 **How did that make you feel?**
- Very loose in the bowels when I found out. I thought "oh Jesus we could have been dead" but it didn't happen. That was as close as I got to a Chinaman I think.
- What were your main duties at this point?**
- Still driving the Jeep, anybody that had to be carted anywhere I used to do it.
- 07:30 When we were up on the big hill we didn't use a Don R, their Company vehicles used to come down to battalion headquarters every day and they picked up the password or any messages. It made it a bit easier on me as I used to have to only go back to A and B echelon which made it quite simple. The first time, when I got up there, it was the first time I had ever seen snow
- 08:00 and driving in it is a lot different to driving on ordinary... The first snow I actually seen when I was down at brigade workshops. They hadn't started on my Jeep and everybody was laying in bed, there was no reason to get up and somebody went out to go to the toilet and actually you had a proper toilet down there for
- 08:30 big jobs and an area around the place what they call pissaphones. It was just a big funnel in a trough in the ground full of bricks and that and the water used to get absorbed. A bloke went out there and said "It is snowing" and I thought "gee I have got to see this" so I jumped out of bed in my long winter underpants, and a shirt and socks on and I raced out. I saw all this, I don't know whether you've ever seen snow, you see all this stuff just floating down, and it's
- 09:00 quiet and it is not white, it is a bluey grey looking colour and I thought "gee." It is banking up and up and the cold got to me feet. I didn't have warm feet for hours and hours after that. I was going to have to put them in an oven or something to warm them up as they were that cold. Driving around and when I got back up the line
- 09:30 it hadn't started to freeze but when I had to start driving with chains on I found it is very difficult and noisy. The chains never fitted a hundred percent. There was always a loose link on and you would hear the thump thump. You couldn't speed on it and if you were on ice it was quite dangerous. I lent my Jeep to a bloke one night to take some petrol up
- 10:00 to forward control. It was the main radio station of the battalion, a bloke by the name of Norm Oliver, Oli took it up and he was a good driver. He come back he said "Sorry about your Jeep Date". I said "What have you done? Have you smashed it up?" He said "No I was coming down getting up this forward patrol". You go round the back of this hill and come up at a real
- 10:30 curve and a real steep slope up to the last bit and he skidded on the ice and bang into a rock and the reason he skidded, he could have steered it out but I had carried out some maintenance the day before and screwed four bolts on the constant velocity joint and weakened them and the bump snapped them off. No steering
- 11:00 and that was the end of the Jeep driving in 1 RAR. The other three blokes in the hootchie had a lot of accidents in their Jeeps, one way or another. One bloke hit the wrecker, 660 CMG, he didn't hit it, he lent the Jeep to a lance corporal and he hit the wrecker.
- 11:30 One rolled his Jeep. I can't remember what happened to the fourth one but we were all out of action. They towed us down to brigade workshops which had moved from when I went there and a new driver, he had never driven in ice or snow or mud or anything and he had to come down a slope and up like that and through a rutted track onto a main road, not a main road as we know it but
- 12:00 the main road. It was all covered in ice and we said "For Christ sake when you get up on the road ease off otherwise you will finish up in the mine field on the other side" and that is what happened. He hit the gas pedal and into the mine field. Fortunately we didn't hit anything and he had to get towed out. We went back to the line and I can't remember what the other three done but I got whacked onto the
- 12:30 switchboard which is a mongrel of a job under some circumstances but at least it kept you in out of the cold. It was not long after that the 3rd Battalion was relieved. It was after Christmas. They relieved us on 29th December, they started relief on 29th December and we pulled out of the line on 30th.



13:00 No, that's right we moved out on 29th.

**What was Christmas Day like up on the?**

Quiet and it was a funny sort of day to me. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, it was beautiful and sunny and the whole earth was white and freezing bloody cold. It must have been about 11 o'clock in the morning and I couldn't see anybody around and I thought "gee I might be the only bloke left on the face of the

13:30 earth, look at all this beautiful snow and all the rest of it". It was a strange experience to me.

**Was there any special celebrations?**

No, we had, 3RAR had Christmas out of the line so they had a smack up meal and we had one of the worst meals I have ever seen in my life. It was a greasy looking, grey looking stew

14:00 with a partially fried egg in it. The white of the egg hadn't set properly and I said "I couldn't eat that". What we used to do there was four of us in this hootchie and we used to go up with two dixies and get the meals for four and I look at it and I said "No they would kill me if I took that back". I said "What was on?" And I told them so we had a great

14:30 bundle of C rations that I had souvenired, pilfered or given when I used to take, it was another thing I missed before. While I was still mobile our sig officer, Buck Rogers, he used to go round and see all the company sigs and check up on any problems they had before day break. I used to take him down the bowling alley while it was still dark and drop him

15:00 and back pedal and go right round the other side of the hill and come up to the top and I used to wait for him there. Whatever company happened to be in position there I would go in and talk to the company sigs and one particular company, Don Company, I knew two of the blokes extra well because they were both corps sigs and we would be magging and one thing and another and the subject of food always come up

15:30 and they were on one fresh and two C ration meals a day. It sounds all right but they were American rations and they eat very bland and tasteless after awhile and what most blokes used to do eat the chocolate and drink the coffee and eat the biscuits and smoke the cigarettes in them and the meals were just shot off to one side. I used to take anything they didn't want I would take them back with me.

**16:00 You had them for Christmas lunch?**

Yes. One particular time I got some, I used to take a sandbag with me and put the tins in them and Buck come down and he said "What have you got in that bag Date?" I said "C rations from the blokes in company sigs didn't want." He said "What have you got in there?" I said "Just C rations". He said "Give us a look" and he said "I like that, I like them too." He said "I will take those two."

16:30 I said "Hang on, they give them to me" and he said "I like my food" and I said "I know that" but anyhow he took them. Anything I got after that I made sure he didn't see them. There was two little glove box sort of things in the back of the Jeep that used to hold the wheel change well I put them in there so he couldn't see them and what he couldn't see he couldn't worry about. Going back to Buck, when

17:00 the CO they had when I got there, Colonel Hutchinson, he couldn't stand Buck's eating habits and if Rogers was in having his meal in the officers' mess and Hutchinson used to wait outside and send a message in "Captain Rogers I am waiting outside I would like my meal". If Hutchie was in there first Buck would have to wait outside. He had a gargantuan appetite.

17:30 Going back to the company sigs, just after he went over, the Canadian 1/1st Battalion, the Royal Canadian Regiment who got a hell of a thumping before we relieved them and their telephone cable system was shot to pieces. If a line went out when they were under fire they didn't worry about going to repair it, they just run another one, and it was a hell of a bloody mess.

18:00 And Captain Rogers come this night here, he laid a snake system, so many lines that way and it worked and become the standard for the entire division afterwards. It took awhile as they had to bring corps sigs in from Japan and the div sign regiment to put it all in because the blokes in the signal platoon just weren't equipped to do it. Slowly but surely they got them all connected

18:30 and this particular day Buck is up having a look at Don Company. They are up on top of the hill and there is one black cable left and he said "All that old black cable is not being used now?" And I said "As far as I know it is all finished" and he said "Alright, I will cut that". So he cut it off and he had been misinformed. It was the last one to come off but they hadn't reconnected

19:00 the new stuff and the company commander happened to be talking to the commanding officer when he cut it off and the company commander was a bloke by the name of Major David Carlo Thompson, a real blue gel but a hell of a good soldier, a terrific bloke. He had been my company commander in recruit training and he come out and company sigs said "Oh Captain Rogers just cut the cable sir" and he come flying out and Buck's helmet

19:30 beat him down the top of the track, down to the Jeep end and he said "Get out of here you big hook

nosed bastard, if I see you round here again I will shoot you". Buck was very careful when he heard Major Carol Thompson was around.

**What feelings of homesickness did you have especially at times like Christmas?**

Not much. I had made a recording through the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] on tape a week or so before Christmas

20:00 and it was broadcast here in Sydney on Christmas Day. Dad and all the family heard it and most of the neighbours in the street that knew me all came over to hear it and had a good wet Christmas morning.

**What about contact by post?**

We used to get mail. It used to come to Japan on Tuesdays and Thursdays and we would get the mail

20:30 Thursday and Sunday and we used to get the mail delivered in Korea on Friday and Monday. The mail was good. The letters, parcels and newspapers and things like that were a bit slow. Although Dad used to send me a thirteen ounce bottle of rum in the winter time and you used to always get

21:00 it on Friday night and he used to send it up and pull out the stuffing out of half a loaf of bread and put a rum bottle in and stuff it all up and sew it all up in calico. I never ever lost one or never ever got one broken. I'll tell you what inside half an hour of me getting them three blokes "Can a man get a drink around here?" Maxi Sheergold and

21:30 Cobber Kiley and I can't think who the other bloke was now, somebody I knew from Ingleburn. They would probably see, they knew I used to get it every week. They would see mail delivered to wherever I was in battalion headquarters. They would think "the mail is in, Date has got a bottle of rum", and down they'd come. I would always have the bottle of rum would not last that bloody long, three scroungers and four blokes and

22:00 a thirteen ounce bottle of rum doesn't go very far. One bloke I worked with on the switchboard there, George Urquhart, he'd been a 9th Division man, Rat of Tobruk and that sort of thing and he and I saved our issue rum in an aluminium water bottle and we drank it.

**I wanted to ask you when you were working on the switchboard what sort of traffic was going through it?**

22:30 Just the rifle companies ringing and wanting to talk and they could get back to us and if they wanted to go to A or B echelon we used to just plug them through. We used to get a lot of incoming calls from brigade and things like that. It used to be quite funny at times, one night there my mate Dick Horsley was on the switchboard and the quartermaster Captain McDermott rang up

23:00 and he wanted to talk to the CO. Well the CO was on the phone and Dick kept on, he rang two or three times and Dick told him the CO is still engaged and he said "You are having me on" he said, "Do you know who this is?" And Dick said "no" and he said "I am Captain Henry McDermott, I am the Quartermaster" and Dick said "That is too bloody bad for you, you are not talking to him". He said "Do you know who this is? And McDermott says "No"

23:30 and Dick says "Thank Christ for that" and he went and got somebody to relieve him on the switchboard. McDermott he was a CMF man from before the war unlike most quartermasters very unhappy type of people.

**Did you ever hear any secret conversations or anything?**

No, there wasn't much happening around the battalion that somebody in the sig platoon didn't know about.

24:00 You hear the odd conversation, two officers, one who had just had five days R and R in Tokyo expressing his enjoyment of Japanese culture or something like that. They were no better than the Diggers. When I went there I had two lots of five days leave, one in Kure and one in Tokyo and

24:30 the Company Commander from A Company was on this particular five day draft of mine and when we hit Tokyo he said to disappear to get a beer, a shave and clean clothes and all that sort of thing. When you went on your five days they used to supply you with an Australian uniform straight out of the Q store, used but clean and

25:00 we are waiting for this major and they used to leave dead on time and we were getting a bit toey about him and he finally turned up in a taxi with two Japanese girls hanging all over him. Gee didn't they pay out on him on the way back. I don't know what happened to him. He come back to Australia later on and I saw his death notice in the paper a couple of years back but I don't know where he went, nobody knew where he come from,

25:30 he was an infantry officer but not a member of the Royal Australian Regiment.

**After you were relieved by 3 RAR where did you go then?**

To a reserve area, back around it was, around A echelon sort or thing, at the battalion headquarters

rifle Company they had reserve areas all over the place. We come out

- 26:00 during the day and I didn't bother settling into a hootchie [makeshift tent]. I knew who I was going to be sharing a hootchie with or two of them were inclined to go around drinking a fair bit and one of them used to drink a horrible lot and he used to be very slow and the more he drank the worse he became and you couldn't understand him and I didn't fancy sharing a hootchie with him just over one night because the next day I went back to Japan to do a regimental
- 26:30 sig course or an infantry sig course up at the battle school. While I was there doing that they pulled all the division out of the line and took on an area called Camp Casey and that was the first time since the Commonwealth Division had been formed that all the infantry division was out of the line, they had been in for
- 27:00 July '51 until February '53. They weren't all in the line at the same time because in our brigade we had four battalions. The Canadians and the Pommys only had three and we had two in and two out. What usually happened one Australian battalion relieved the other one. They went down to Camp Casey while I was in Japan and they had five days leave in Kure
- 27:30 and went back to the battalion because we heard about them coming out of the line and we thought "oh gee, that's good." They lived in, it was an American camp all fitted with squad tents and stretchers and proper space heaters and it was like living in paradise in comparison to what it is like in the line. I was only back with the battalion for a couple of days and they said
- 28:00 "You haven't had your five days R and R yet". I said "Yes I have". He said "Where did you have it?" I said "In Kure when I finished". "No you are entitled to five days from here". He said "You haven't had five days from here", he said "You are going to Tokyo". "Fair enough", I took the extra five days. You don't look a gift horse in the mouth when they are giving you five days off. I was a bit strapped financially.
- 28:30 I spent up big on my five days R and R in Kure but it was interesting. I had a look at the Imperial Palace and went for a couple of bus tours around the place but you couldn't tell you what I seen now. All the blokes I went on leave with I didn't know any of them because they were all from the rifles companies and that. I was fortunate in the fact that the signal regiment had a little detachment
- 29:00 in Tokyo and I knew three or four of the blokes in that. Instead of wandering around Tokyo and just looking and one thing and another I went to the canteen with the blokes I knew, your own family sort of thing. The Canadians had a club in Tokyo, I can't remember what they called it, the Commonwealth Club? Some name like that
- 29:30 and you get two or three free beers in there and a free bus trip in and out and a free trip on the train. I can't remember paying for a train trip while I was in Tokyo, go in and wander around and have a look. I couldn't afford to go looking at anything else. It was all right it was a change.

### **What was your impression of the Japanese given your father's**

#### **30:00 POW [prisoner of war] captivity?**

I went up there prepared to hate them, that sort of thing doesn't last long. You see them at home and they are entirely different to what you expected and I have no doubt they would change again. Right peaceful but I will say this for the Japanese, they were the most honest people I have ever run across. You could leave your money laying around and they wouldn't touch it. They'd tell you you left it behind but they wouldn't take it but

- 30:30 any other Orientals and our own people included, if you didn't take it they would quick smart. The camp place in Tokyo was a place called Evisu and a great big swimming pool in the back of it. It used to be a testing place for midget submarines they tell me. Blokes used to go there
- 31:00 on their five days R and R, they would throw their kit on a bed and they were all inner spring mattresses up their too. It was the first time I had ever seen an inner spring mattress and they would throw their gear on there and disappear for five days and they would leave stuff hanging in their packs or whatever and nothing was ever taken. I found it a bit odd that way.

### **What about the other nationalities in the Commonwealth**

#### **31:30 Brigade and the Americans?**

Never had much to do with the Americans. We were a British Commonwealth Division and most of the stuff was, some blokes used to, the blokes with BS that went further back, they used to have something to do with them. My mate Newey used to have quite a lot to do with them. The Yanks I never had much to do with them at all only on the train trip up from Pusan

- 32:00 and the aircrew on the Globemaster when we went from Seoul and Tokyo and back again. They are funny the Americans. When were up in this Globemaster aircraft we could wander around and have a look at anything you liked. You could go up and sit up and watch them in the flight deck, they had a lounge there and four or five places to sit there and you could sit there and watch them all the way. As soon as they were in their approach pattern you had to go back and belt yourself

32:30 up in the seat you were allocated downstairs. I use the word seat advisably as they were nylon straps and an aluminium tube sort of thing like you see inside a Hercules aircraft, that sort of thing. Going to Tokyo there was some rough weather and the plane

33:00 lost power in a couple of engines and she goes straight down and there were blokes sick all over the place. The load master, the American, he was a sick as two dogs and the crew never let up on him and they rastered him all the way to Tokyo. Even as we got off the plane "Did you have a good trip mate?"

33:30 Are you still feeling a bit sick?"

**What about your R and R before that in Kure, what did you get up to there?**

Should not be mentioned in mixed company. I used to go and see mates in the Sig Regiment there and take a reasonable amount of horizontal activity.

**Was there a VD [venereal disease] problem?**

Yes. I believe,

34:00 a bloke who became a good friend later on he was in the records department here in Japan for a long time and before the Korean War started they had just about stopped the VD problem in Kure, Hiro but when they started bringing blokes up from Australia it got out of all proportion because blokes were stopping in Manila and Hong Kong

34:30 and playing the field there and it become quite a problem. Once I remember reading in the paper in one of the Sunday Sydney papers the Mayor of Hiroshima prefect, which takes in Kure and Hiro he was complaining or it was published in the paper, this Mayor was complaining bitterly about the British Commonwealth troops around Kure and Hiro harassing the Japanese girls,

35:00 putting the hard word on them all the time and that caused a great amount of hilarity up there because if you tried to walk up the main street of Kure you couldn't move two paces "You come along my house boy four hundred within a short time, one thousand yen all night". If you wanted to go right up the main street of Kure unsolicited the only way you could do it was to catch the bus.

35:30 You could not do it otherwise, it was impossible. During daylight hours it wasn't too bad but as soon as it got dark they used to come out of the cracks and I'd say a good sixty percent of the girls on the game. If you were there at 4.30 in the afternoon you would see them walking home from school in their sailor suit uniforms and I would swear that on a stack of bibles because I know two

36:00 blokes who married them. They met them on the game and love does funny things to people. The Japanese can deny it all they like but it was a fact of life.

**What was the price again sorry?**

A short time, four hundred yen, all nighter a thousand yen.

**How much was that in Australian money?**

Four hundred yen was about ten bob and one thousand yen was about twenty four shillings.

36:30 If you got the same sort of thing in Tokyo it cost you five thousand yen for an all nighter in Tokyo. I don't know about the price for a short time, I never heard anybody mention it. It was an easy way out. It would have been extremely difficult to do it from the reinforcement depot and I know this happened. A lot of blokes

37:00 stationed in Kure permanently they would get themselves a Japanese girl and they would live together twelve thousand yen a month, twelve pounds Sterling. Everything is at home, she used to provide the bed and bedding and the accommodation and do all the cooking, oh it was terrific.

37:30 The two months I was stationed there after I left the battalion I did that. It was a lot easier, a lot less wear and tear. Quite a few blokes entered into arrangements like that and finished up marrying the girls and bringing them back. There was more blokes that went up there later on married Japanese girls than the blokes who were up there for a long time did. I don't know why that happened but I just know it

38:00 did. We had two blokes should have went up on the same draft as me but went up ahead of me they married Japanese and funny thing some of the Japanese girls I wouldn't call them oil paintings but you wouldn't call them bags either, it is like everywhere else, different facial features but any of them that produced girls were real eye openers.

38:30 A little bloke I knew, Phil, Burkey used to have to wear glasses that thick he couldn't see the blade on the foresight of his rifle, he was that short and he only had the one girl and she was beautiful. How old would she be now, middle 40's, possibly a little older I suppose and another bloke, Bluey Gardiner his wife they had two boys and a girl

39:00 and they all of them the kids are education conscious. The mother has done that to them and they all done well at whatever they done. One bloke I knew, Jack, he was a truck driver in the Occupation forces

and he was as thick as two planks and they only had the one boy but he finished up, he put him into the air force through the Air Apprentices School

39:30 and top cadet of the course he done.

**Why do you think there was so much prostitution around?**

You go anywhere in the orient it is there by the bloody mile, it is a way of life.

**Were the Japanese people around there poor from after the war?**

The war had been over six and a half years when I got up there. Kure city copped a hell of a thumping because it is a major

40:00 Japanese naval port and the whole of the country was hard done by and it is the same everywhere if there are lots of foreign soldiers around with lots of money, the same thing happened here in Sydney with the Yanks here during the war and during the Vietnam War half of the girls up in the Cross should have been out of kindergarten, out of primary school but this is a fact of life. It did come a cause for

40:30 the medical people. Andrew Refshauge, the Education Minister in NSW State Parliament his father was the Director of Medical Services in the Occupation Force. I think Refshauge might have been born up there, I don't know about that but I know he was up there.

**Were there any men invalided out of the army because of disease in this case?**

I have no idea. I should imagine there would have been because a lot of them tended to neglect themselves. One unit I know of in Japan blokes used to come in there from Australia "right you blokes you know what you are not supposed to do and we know that you are going to do it anyway, you are going, a percentage of you will get

41:30 jacked up are pretty high. If you get jacked up the first time get on the RAP report, get it in your records from then on if you get caught again" they used to hand out a card, "This bloke is a venerealologist". Half of our blokes in Kure were going to him.

## Tape 7

00:32 **Did the prostitutes speak much English?**

No. Very little, "How much?" and "Come on my house, how much and you speak" and that is about the sum total of it but some of them picked up a bit later on but you wouldn't call them English speakers by any stretch of the imagination. No more than we were Japanese speakers

01:00 because I can count to six in Japanese and I know what a few words mean like ihoa gasayi musket, that is giddy, combaya, konichiway that is good afternoon and good evening. I can't remember which one was which. Conduri eska, how much, tucki, too bloody much. There is no swearing in Japanese. The closest you can get to swearing in Japanese is a word pinocchio.

01:30 Don't ask me what it means to them but as far as they are concerned it is a swear word and the RSM in the signals regiment when I was in Japan that is what he was called because you are a horrible little bastard.

**When the men went and used the prostitutes was that often the first time some of them had ever had sex?**

I wouldn't think so, I wouldn't think so.

02:00 You will always strike the odd one but I wouldn't think that was a very common occurrence, rather rare.

**What were you taught about practising safe sex?**

Use a condom or a French letter as it used to be called. It was funny there was a pie and coffee store

02:30 that is what we referred to the PAC stands for prophylactic aid centre. I don't know whether you watched Paul Hogan in Anzacs taking one of the blokes for a birthday present and the PAC was a blue light. The blue light means help anywhere but in the army sense a blue light is a prophylactic aid centre.

03:00 In the Anzacs they reckon it is an officer's brothel which is dead set wrong but nine people out of ten wouldn't recognise it but any bloke with service experience would. Wouldn't pass the word along. Most common advice was "If you are going up the street and you are going to stay out all night put your name in the book so if you do get a load

03:30 and you get caught." "Did you use the prophylactic aid centre?" "Yeah", you used to only had to put your number not your name, your number and your unit and they look it up and say "yeah, he used it,

bad luck it will be no charge". Or you would get seven days medical CB, like confined to barracks, no going out in the street or drinking or things like that but you wouldn't get

04:00 any disciplinary action taken against you but if you hadn't got your name in the book you got disciplinary action against you for not taking the proper precautions.

**What kind of?**

It was a messy bloody thing. You used to wash yourself and two tubes of ointment all over yourself and inside the old fellow and it was a messy bloody business. They used to provide

04:30 prophylactics too but they were in there but if you went to the brothel up the street they had, I guarantee they had the Australian or the medical people around there providing all the brothels in Kure because they all had Crown brand. I don't know where they come from but it was the ones in most common use.

**Did you use them?**

Yes, sometimes.

05:00 On a girl on the street yes but if I was staying out all night there was a definite brothel area in Kure and you used to have to walk right up the main street, oh, the secondary street and go across a street, I can't remember the name of the street now and that was a licensed area up there and you were fairly safe up there. There was

05:30 I don't know of anybody that got won love's lottery up there.

**That is what it was called?**

Yes. There used to be a lady lived next door here and she was a nurse down in Concord Hospital in 1947 and 1948 when they were bringing all the blokes home from BCOF and I said "oh yes" and she said "There was lots of young men from up there used to come home with a Japanese flu".

06:00 That is what they used to call it.

**What did the brothels look like?**

Nothing like you see on television. Once you got past the main drag and that they are just like the inside of a Japanese house. It was funny in the summer time we were permitted to wear shorts and that up there and the Japanese don't have beds,

06:30 they tatami mat which is a cane mat on the floor and you get down on your hands and knees and you do it often enough you finish up with a rash on your elbows and it was commonly referred to as tatami rash. One commanding officer up there and the first time he had been outside of Australia or in Japan anyway and he said he asked

07:00 one officer "Why have all these men got these funny rashes on their knees and elbows?" He wasn't very amused when he was told what the cause of it was.

**How old do you think the women were working there?**

They were all fairly young I would reckon. The more alcoholic haze you got into the younger they looked. Sometimes you would think you were

07:30 hopping into the cot with Shirley Yamaguchi and you would wake up the next morning and you're in there with Bela Lugosi's [horror actor] daughter.

**Did you ever develop a relationship with any of them?**

A couple there I didn't mind seeing, the one I lived with, Christ what was her name? I can't remember what her name was now

08:00 No, I could never ever have married one because I suppose you call me a racist but Japanese women have Japanese children and blokes that did have children while they were up there the Japanese didn't like them and the Australians didn't like them. When they got back to Australia there was a lot of ill feeling towards them and anybody that

08:30 stayed in the service, particularly in signals, in the communications side of things and particularly in the cipher side of things if they married a Japanese girl they were out of the cipher, they were married to a foreign national. They got the short end of the stick for a bloody long time. Let up on them eventually but I know a couple of blokes, one bloke particularly

09:00 he was only a keyboard and Morse operator and a terrific bloke, a colossal operator but he got stuck down the school of signals as an instructor for, oh Jesus, he was there in '54 and he was still there in 1960. And a couple of technicians, Brian Stevens, Jim Mercenie, they got stuck down there for a long time too. It is funny the three of them got commissions later on.

- 09:30 Brian Stevens, he wound up a major and Jiggering Jim Mercenie he finished up a half colonel. Eric was a captain. He didn't keep his commission very long. He didn't like the way the job turned out for him so he just resigned and let it go at that. This Eric Belcher he was
- 10:00 was going to get out of the army and then he joined up again and he had been in the army a hell of a long time when he got out and he joined up again with the rank of sergeant and they sent him down to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea that was running in those days. He made real friends with a Warrant Officer Charles Lester Cleary and Eric told him he was married to a Japanese and
- 10:30 Charlie wouldn't have a bar of him because Charlie had been a corporal in my father's unit. He wouldn't have a bar of him even later on. I used to see Butch Cleary I used to see him fairly often and he used to say "Still see that Belcher bloke?" "Yes." "Good man gone to waste, married to a Nip [Nipponese - Japanese]". Butch went to Japan himself. He went to Japan just after
- 11:00 I come home but by this time he was out of transport and he was in engineers. He went up there for two years and he let them know who was boss though. He was based in Unisia and he was that used to the Japanese doing without being told and they more or less run their own race but they didn't do that with Butch. He went up there and he said "I was a WO1 and I made sure they bloody well knew about it".
- 11:30 **When the prostitutes had children to?**
- Anyone who had children up there were definitely it was an arranged thing because abortions only used to cost you a quid. A Japanese, it was perfectly legit, the Japanese instituted it, they brought it in although the place had a population explosion for a long time
- 12:00 they were flat out feeding themselves and the easiest way out of the problems make it easy to get rid of it, which they did and they still do. That is why the Chinese have their business with children, you can have one and you don't lose anything and you have two and you lose the lot sort of thing. I don't know how the Chinese system works but it seems to be effective because they have got to stop them
- 12:30 breeding like flies. Eventually the world won't be able to feed them all. They are bringing thousands and thousands of people out here and we won't be able to afford to feed them. We are having trouble now giving ourselves drinking water. It has not reached plague proportions yet but if we keep on... Look at these great blocks of home units they are building, there was one house with four people in it and now
- 13:00 they have put it up and there is sixty people in there and they have all got to be provided with water and that.
- Did anybody ever visit Hiroshima?**
- Yes that was only eighteen miles from Kure. It was a couple of hour trip in the bus.
- What was it like?**
- Well in the way of being rebuilt, they were just putting the foundations and stuff down but it was you could still see it had been bombed.
- 13:30 There were buildings going up all over the place.
- Did many people live there?**
- Oh yeah, it was quite a big port. It was the main port of embarkation for Japanese troops down the Pacific.
- You mentioned before that you had an uncle who came to Korea?**
- Yes, he was an uncle by marriage. He married my mother's younger sister.
- 14:00 He had been a Queenslander and he was in the 2/5th Independent Company and that was Commando and that was a double edged black diamond they used to wear. They used to wear British Army battle dress and a beret and we thought Jack was the greatest thing. He was a real live commando and he did get a very nasty wound in that part of his leg.
- 14:30 I think the 2/5th Independent Company had a great big large operation somewhere in New Guinea. I'm not too sure now. I think Wau or Salamoia, I don't know but we thought he was a great thing. He went down in our estimation because he married my auntie and he was only
- 15:00 five years older than me I think, if that and I know he wasn't that much older than me and he done time for desertion twice and he got married and Iris was expecting a baby, so Jack said "Bugger the army, Iris needs me more" and he deserted again and they never ever caught up with him but he was a very worried boy for a long time that they would chase him up and catch him
- 15:30 and put him in the boob. When Dad came home I would have been fifteen and a half and Jack would have been twenty I suppose and he gets introduced to Dad and the first thing he said to Dad "You are part of the Australian Army, the only Australian Division that ever surrendered in the field." And Jack and Dad

- 16:00 never had a word to say to each other ever again after that. "Why did you do it?" And Dad said "Because I was there and I was ordered to do it". Then he turned around and joined K Force along with one of his brothers and another brother that was already in, Roy. Roy went to, he come up with 1 RAR around Christmas time
- 16:30 and Jack and his other brother Tommy came up with the 2nd Battalion. Jack and Tommy were both in, well the three of them were in rifle companies. Jack and Tommy were in A and Roy was in B and I still thought Jack had a lot going for him, an experienced infantryman but he made sure he got out of rifle company before they went into the line. He got a transfer to the Sig Platoon.
- 17:00 I never saw much of him in the Sig Platoon. He was a driver and when we went into the line the first time I was on what they call forward control, it was a control station for the battalion radio net and I didn't get to see him very often because we worked shift work and we lived there and they lived somewhere else and we never used to run into each other.
- 17:30 When we went down on the Hook which was the last position the battalion was in he used to take the batteries out to the radio stations and the radio positions around the line and he got there and back like a rocket. He was and he used to fight like mad to get one of the younger blokes to go out there
- 18:00 but I don't know whether you call him a coward or what but he didn't like the idea of being up the front. It kind of set him down in my eyes a bit.

**Did you ever think about being injured or killed?**

I thought about it sometimes and wondered what it was like and hoped to Christ I never experienced it and I didn't.

**Was there any particular wound that**

**18:30 frightened you?**

Shot around here. A bloke he went up in the same plane as me, Watson from Western Australia, and he got wounded in the stomach there and pretty badly well it was bad enough they whipped him straight out of Korea over to Japan. I went up to see somebody and he was in the ward where I was visiting this bloke

- 19:00 and I said and I asked him how he was going and he said "I have got a shocking bloody wound" and I said "Where did you get hurt?" And he said "Down there". I said "Is it all right?" And he said "I don't know, I am in that much pain". He said "go and ask somebody please to see if it is all right". I knew the nursing sister in charge of the ward at the time or in the ward and she was down in Prince Alfred Hospital when I worked there, Sister Nicholson and I said "Watson, how is he?" She said

- 19:30 "His love tackle is all right tell him not to worry about it". So I went back and told Jock and he said "That was good". He was badly wounded enough they sent him home. I hear of him occasionally, he is still getting around over in the west. His gear must have been all right because somebody told me he had five kids so his worry was justified I suppose.

**Those times when Diggers did get VD**

**20:00 what was the punishment?**

You had to report sick and that and you would get sent over to the infectious diseases ward and your blood test taken and that and you get so many thousand or million units of penicillin and then straight back to work. It was just like

- 20:30 a common cold but if you got it back here in Australia you were in the infectious diseases ward and you would be in there for a month. You can develop a strain which is a drip just like you get from gonorrhoea. It is almost as painful but it is not infectious and I got that and it was only through climbing up these bloody great hills or you can get it pulling big loads.
- 21:00 I got it again when I was working pushing a heavy trolley. Here in Australia they treat it as an infection. I know one bloke he got it playing football and they put him in the Jack Shack in Victoria. It was run by for the services by the air force at Laverton and he rang his wife and told her
- 21:30 where he was and he told her where he was and she said "I will come out and see you" and he said "come out at the weekend." And she mentioned to one of his mates and he said "oh yes he is in the Jack Shack". The poor bugger nearly got divorced over it because it is an infectious thing and he had a lot of trouble convincing her that it wasn't infected. You get, if you got your name in the
- 22:00 pie and coffee stall you would get the treatment and have the medical CB and no alcohol. I think you get seven days confined to barracks and if you hadn't have any disciplinary action you would get fined a nominal amount. Overseas it was just an occupational
- 22:30 hazard but I suppose it is really because the same thing can happen here. I did run across a young bloke when I worked at the Drug Houses and I said "Are you jacked up?" And he said "No, no." I said "When you go to the toilet it is like passing stones with razor blades?" And he said "Yes" and I said "You ain't got no strain buddy, you got the real mc coy" and he wouldn't believe it and he said "How could I get



that?"

23:00 I said "You don't know?" Well he found out.

**When you got that did the infection clear up quickly, did you feel sick for long?**

You don't feel sick at all. It is just when you are passing urine it is painful and then it clears up and you might get repercussions later on if you get multiple infections, you could have bad things occur later on.

23:30 Using male toilets, public toilet there used to be a great big enamel signs in there about what could happen if you get this and get that and what could happen to you later on and what could happen to your partner if you infect her too. It didn't seem to worry anybody at the time. I don't know of anybody that had it while we were away that has had any

24:00 problems now. I know a few blokes that should have but everybody has problems nowadays but whether it was caused by that I don't know.

**The time you spent in hospital earlier in the war for your ear infection and other things, what were the hospitals like? Can you describe one for me?**

24:30 Just like a big old Victorian style. Ever been to Prince Alfred? Well you wouldn't have been, well years ago it was x number of beds up and down both sides of the wall and ablutions out the back and the treatment rooms up the front. It was just a big barn. It was a Japanese hospital and I think it was built, it might have even been repaired

25:00 as a result of the occupation being there so long but it was quite a big hospital. They were all two storied buildings but the one that used to do the operations and all the surgical work they had a lift in that. The others didn't, they had two floors and you are up and down stairs. They were all right, no fancy treatment

25:30 and all that hanging around the place. If you wanted real fancy treatment, drip feeds and all those sort of things you would have to go and be in the surgical ward for one of those sort of things. I suppose they were equipped with the best that was available at the time. No where near on the scale of the Americans. If an Australian finished up in an American hospital it was a financial disaster. The cost to run

26:00 a patient in a British Commonwealth hospital was only about a fifth of the price of an American hospital. A quid a day in the British Commonwealth hospital you were looking fifteen, maybe twenty quid a day because medicines were always the high price things for the Americans and too many Australians in an American ward in Tokyo because

26:30 initially a lot of the wounded were flown out of Korea to American hospitals in Tokyo and that and it used to cause enormous financial problems I believe. Touch wood I never had any cause to go to an American hospital.

**Were the nurses Australian?**

Not all of them.

27:00 Initially when the war in Korea started the Australians were running the hospital because we were the biggest Commonwealth people in Kure. It was all Australian, the Pommys had gone. They left in 1947 and the Kiwis had gone. There was never any Canadians there. They weren't interested in the occupation force even though they had a brigade captain in Hong Kong on Christmas Day in 1941 but

27:30 the Poms took it over and it was run, all the Commonwealth Hospitals were run on similar lines. The Pommys took it over and one ward in the surgical building was run by Canadians, one was run by Poms and we run the other one. The Australian one was the best one to be in because

28:00 you used to get a bottle of beer with your lunch, only a stubby or what passes for a stubby these days and that was a good thing There was another problem I run across there. There was an Australian orderly there and I see him giving these blokes these little bottles of beer and I said, "Don't I get one?" And he said "No you haven't been to Korea. It is only for blokes who have been to Korea". That is fair enough I suppose and

28:30 I was a bit naïve about things. There was one nurse there or two of them, one was a corporal and had a bit of dark blood in her somewhere or other and a real good sport and other red headed one and they came back to me and said "Did you enjoy your bottle of beer for lunch?" I said "I didn't get a bottle of beer" "You should do, you're in an Australian ward" and I said "No, that is only for blokes who have served in Korea".

29:00 They said "The bastard, he is doing it again" and it was a thing he was doing for himself. There would be three or four blokes and he would keep their beer and drink it himself. I don't know what they said to him but we never seen him again. I believe they sent him straight home because he had been in the occupation force for a fair while. Some of those blokes in the occupation force had some real nice rackets working for themselves.

## **Were those rackets frowned**

29:30 **upon?**

Oh yeah. Some of the black market activities they were colossal. When our force up there was at its height you weren't allowed to take a bag up the street. A bag, you were selling something and the stuff some blokes used to get sent up from Australia like wool and saccharin tablets.

30:00 One particular racket I knew of you, have seen cans of Carnation Milk? Well the Japanese were short of all those sorts of things so they used to get a can of Carnation Milk if you were in a workshops unit, wrap the can up properly so it wouldn't leave any chuck marks on the thing and spin it like mad and it would thicken up. Sell it to the Japanese as condensed milk. It was a well known thing,

30:30 a truck load of sugar disappeared and the truck and the sugar has never been seen since. To this day nobody knows where it went. Somebody must have known. The blokes working in the canteen stores there if they got caught selling anything on the black market, it doesn't matter what it was, they were out of the canteen service. Two or three I know finished up in the Sig Regiment and one of them, Kevin Sanders, he

31:00 married a Japanese girl and could read, write and speak Japanese and when he come out of the army and for a long time he had a big time job at Canberra connected with trade or something with Japan. I don't know exactly what he does but he done right well out of it. He just finished up in that sort of job because he was selling stuff that he bought himself and he got caught flogging it up the street

31:30 and they frowned on the black market and that was it.

## **What other items were prized that you could sell on the black market?**

When the blokes first went there in 1946 they would get a pound for a cake of soap because the pound was worth forty eight yen then but a cake of soap and forty eight yen, you would get a lot for that in those days, razor blades and all sorts of things. Woollen things

32:00 were very particularly prized and even when I went up there Australian made shoes you would have to order them and get them sent up for you and there were a few blokes that made a few quid out of it.

## **What about cigarettes?**

Yes, American cigarettes you could sell English cigarettes in sealed tins but they wouldn't buy Australian cigarettes.

32:30 They were Australian cigarettes were in cardboard packets with a bit of a cellophane wrap around them and the trip up through the tropics and let's face it some of them were getting pretty ancient. Oh they were terrible and the Japanese wouldn't smoke them and in Japan we used to get fifty of those a week free. In Korea we used to get a sealed tin of fifty. Australian cigarettes in Japan were known as bush fires

33:00 but you used to push the inner of the packet up and on the back of it was "Prevent bush fires, extinguish your butt" and that is what they were known as, bush fires. There were Japanese cigarettes available, Shinsi and they were, you had to be hard up for a smoke to smoke them but sometimes blokes used to do. A couple of draws on those and you would be barking like a dog for a week,

33:30 terrible.

## **Did you ever eat Japanese food?**

Occasionally in a restaurant down at Hiroshima, a lot of rice and vegetables in it and seaweed. My Japanese lady friend used to cook some stuff but I had a mate worked in the ration store in the Sig Regiment and Des used to look after me,

34:00 always plenty of meat.

## **In Hiroshima did you see people who had been affected by the bomb?**

A few with bad burns and that. One poor bugger he was a cook in the Sig Regiment and he had a horribly burnt face. I don't know that it was caused by radiation, I have no idea but he was nick named Hiroshima.

34:30 One particular day, I become real friends with him later on, Jack Connors, he had a downer on this bloke and we used to search their Japanese house girls and search their baskets going out but nobody used to worry about it much but this one particular bloke every time Jack was the guard corporal he used to push him up to the wall and search him like mad. One night he caught him with something and

35:00 I can't remember what it was but he gave him a terrible thumping and of course they sacked him. I was a bit frightened of eating Japanese food. I am not a great lover of Chinese food even today. I don't mind a bit of it now and then but not very often. They seem to cook things differently and as for eating Korean food, no way.

35:30 **What was the Korean food that you tried?**

Not while I was up there on active service but when I went back to visit in '90/91 there some of the stuff was all right but they have no idea how to cook meat. They just slightly colour it on both sides and one time they served us up steak and a bloke, Bob Parker, he said if he had a gun he would have shot it again because it was bleeding that much.

36:00 I noticed this in Japan too if you get bread they cut the crusts off it, don't ask me why. Maybe that is why they have straight hair, I don't know. That is one of their habits. When I went back on the trip in '91, where were we, the day after Anzac [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] Day we stopped at a Japanese

36:30 hotel or club or something or other and they had a barbecue and we had a couple of blokes that worked on cattle stations on the trip with us and I still don't know what it was and I was very wary about eating it but when they cooked it, it didn't taste too bad but I haven't got a clue in the world what it was, not a faintest idea.

**Why was there a lot of meat that you could get hold of in Japan?**

They used to send lots of meat up there and

37:00 we were always, the Australians were always well looked after in the food department. A lot of blokes were married to Japanese girls and must have been there a fair while they never used to bother they used to go and eat Japanese style. There is always short cuts you can take "he won't need that, I will keep that", that sort of thing. It goes on all over the place and still does.

37:30 **Tell us about your mates?**

What would you like to know about them?

**Did you have a particular group of close friends or one good mate?**

No, no, no. I am not a very good mixer. I had two mates here in Australia,

38:00 Gordon Morell and Ron Gooley. Gordon and I were going to Korea but they sent me and they thought better of him as a clerk and they sent him down to recruit training battalion at Kapooka. I was in Korea and he said he was coming up and I thought "he is going to be our new signals sergeant in the 2RAR" but they only sent him as far as the Sig Regiment in Kure and he stayed there. There was one

38:30 sergeant in the cipher troop there, Marshall Brown. I have known Brownie since I was eleven or twelve and he was a friend of the family but I didn't make what I call any real close friends. When I came back to Australia and I was over at George's Heights as a switchboard operator over there one little bloke on the switchboard with me, Rex, I had seen him in Japan but never ever spoke to him

39:00 and we finished up as thick as thieves and I still go down to Wagga to see him occasionally. Ron Gooley, we were mates for a long time but we got separated and we never seemed to keep in touch and he had six or seven kids. I did go up to see him up at Toowoomba one time and I think I have only seen him once or twice since. Another bloke, a Scotsman,

39:30 I met on the basic operators course I don't see him at all but we talk to each other at least once a month because he lives in England and there is not much chance of me ever seeing him again. I like to keep in touch, that is him in the photos in the frame. I didn't make many friends wherever I worked

40:00 except in the last when I worked in Unilever in their warehouse, a Pommy, Harry Hanaway and Buckets Wilson. I become real friends with those but Harry is dead and so is Buckets. It was his wife that give me the tapestry behind me there of the

40:30 of the Flying Scotsman fast loco. I met Hughie from a mutual friend. He knew her when he was a kid and I knew her in the army and she came up and stopped with us at Marrickville and she introduced me to Hughie and we are real good mates and I think everybody should have a mate like Hughie.

41:00 He has a bit of Aborigine in him somewhere but I wouldn't call him a boong [a dark skinned person] by any stretch of the imagination. He is what a white man should be like I think and he is a terrific bloke.

**Were there many Aborigines in the army?**

No, not many. They are not very amenable to discipline. I knew one, two, three,

41:30 about half a dozen. We had two in the Sig Platoon at 1RAR, Gordon Wilson and Alfie Hughes. Gordon was a nice quiet bloke and Alfred was a horrible little drunk.

00:34 **Let's get back on the story line now. You had our two R and Rs and you went back to Camp Casey, where did you go from there?**

The 2nd Battalion had arrived by this time and they come up shortly after I arrived back from the second lot. We were a bit standoffish with them because we were experienced soldiers and

01:00 I was led to believe that when the signals platoon of the 2nd Battalion got on the New Australia in Sydney they had a platoon sergeant, no signals sergeant, two or three corporals, a fist full of lance corporals and about six blokes and the strength of a signals platoon is one officer and fifty six ORs. When they got off the boat in Pusan they were up to full strength.

01:30 The blokes were rejects from rifle companies. They were good blokes but they didn't fit in with the rifle companies so they shot them off into the signal platoon. When they come up to Korea and they couldn't do a bloody thing and we had to teach them and they were getting exactly the same money as us. The commanding officer or our platoon commander, all us ex 1 RAR blokes he put us all in for a second star and

02:00 the commanding officer said "No I want all the non tradesmen money to go to the blokes in the rifle company". Our platoon commander he tried hard for us and he kept on putting it in for us but it was rejected, "Submit later". By the time I was with the battalion for six months and by the time I left there nobody had got a second star and only one bloke had been made up to corporal because

02:30 he was the electrician and he was running the battery charging operation and that was the only extra money we got other than what we had when we went there. We had to train them and they didn't have a clue in the world about sig office procedures. Oh that was the word I was trying to think of before, the parade state that was about the strength of the battalion. That had to be sent in code as it was a confidential document.

03:00 I was in the battalion sig office at that time and the corporal come over and he says "You are going on a forward patrol, we reckon we can run this better than you" and I said "Right oh". I had to show this Lance Corporal McBride or something his name was and I said "With that what are you going to do with that?" And he said "Confidential, oh that has got to be coded". He said "Put it around to the intelligence section around the corner".

03:30 I said "How would they get rid of it?" He didn't know and I said "You bloody galah that goes up to brigade headquarters. They have cipher operators up there". Some of their radio operators were quite good.

04:00 One bloke I can remember distinctly, Sid Mills, a little bald headed bloke, he was a good operator and Gordon Manning and Ken Constable they were all right but the rest of the radio operators in the battalion they were bloody hopeless and we had to take them right back to day one and teach them and the blokes out in the rifle company they were getting one hook, two hooks, two stars and three stars and if we hadn't have been there to train them I don't know how they would have got on.

04:30 One particular instance the company sig with Charlie Company, well you get them on the sixty two set which is a high frequency set, we can get them all right on that but on the VHF [Very High Frequency] 31 set you couldn't get a peep out of him. We could hear everybody else as clear as a bell but we couldn't get a word out of this bloke. The platoon commander said "Private Date you had better get down and see what is going on there". I went down there and

05:00 the VHF set are a line of sight thing and with an aerial straight up, a horizontal aerial is of no use to them and that is what he had. I said "Christ who told you how to do that?" And he said "The officer, a sig at Kapyong" and he was and I said "No bloody wonder the coms got shot to pieces. It won't work, you are a bloody idiot" so I chopped his aerial out and put the vertical aerial in

05:30 and it come up straight away. I go back to my own job and the sig officer got hold of me and he says "what did you tell that bloke?" I said "I told him he was a bloody idiot". He said "His company commander didn't like that at all". I said "I can't help it if he has got an idiot working for him, that is his lookout isn't it?" There were lots of cases like that. The bloke in charge of the line section, I think he was only a lance corporal

06:00 and he had it with a bloke, he had been with us in 1 Battalion, Sandy Mullen, him and this Bert Shavier had both worked for the PMG [Postmaster General] in Brisbane. When Sandy left to rejoin the army, he had been in the AIF, this Bert Shavier had been the billy boy in his line crew and he comes up there and he is running the line section and it sent Sandy Mullens into hysterics as he'd say "We do this and we do that" "But you can't do this". "Oh righto,

06:30 you do it" and the same Shavier got a mention in dispatches for keeping line communications up to scratch while we were down the Hook and we all got a bit hot under the collar about that because a line went out and we had a sig officer on the switchboard ring 1 hootchie. If the line went out and I would have to go out or whoever was on duty in the sig officer would have to go over and wake this Shavier up and tell him the line was out and he

07:00 would say "Send private so and so" and he got a mention in dispatches. He never got out of bed.

### **What was a billy boy?**

It was the bloke who used to light the fire to boil the billy when they stopped for morning tea and lunch. This is the early 50's and they didn't have all these chew and spew places around the place where you could get a cup of coffee and you used to have to make it yourself. They worked well out of Brisbane too.

### **07:30 When did you move back up towards the front line?**

From Camp Casey we went up about the middle of April, we went up and in the reserve area, I think it was called Reserve Area 6. It was behind a Korean statue or something in front of us and we took over from the

08:00 French battalion that was there. I think they were a battalion of the Foreign Legion and we relieved them and they were a snobbish bunch of bastards, they wouldn't talk to us or anything. "We are French". They got a hell of a hiding when they first got to Korea in 1950 and all those poor buggers they went to Indo China and very, very few of them survived because

08:30 the Viet Cong carved them to pieces in '54. From there we went, after we got settled in we got a signals sergeant while we were there and he come in and I knew him, by sight to say g'day to. And he come up and he said "I want you blokes, I want forward control booming in like Big Ben" and I said "Yes she will be right Fergie, we will look after that" and one of the blokes with me had known him in BCOF and he said

09:00 "He is an idiot" and it turned out he was too.

### **What do you mean when you say forward control?**

We control all the radio sets forward of battalion headquarters, it was just a common name. Every radio network was the command net was called forward control.

### **What sort of radio equipment made up that net?**

09:30 On the high frequency sets we were using 62 sets. It was a light weight high frequency set, a British set, and it done the job, it was light weight but it was supposed to be man portable. The set was but the poor bloke with the battery had to lug a 12 volt battery around with him.

10:00 To hand carry a battery like that, it is nothing like that it is hardly what you call a portable. On the VHF sets it was a dry battery pack we used to use two sets, a 31 set and an SCR 300 which the 31 set was English and the SCR 300 was American. They were exactly the same set and the only difference was in the British set

10:30 you could work 88 sets in the same area because they had the channel frequencies noted in the lid and you could use it on the 300s too but if you didn't know which channel you were you were in a bit of trouble.

### **What sort of range did these sets have?**

On voice the 62 set

11:00 eight or nine miles without any trouble. You would get some problems with mountain ranges and things like that. The VHF sets, a couple of mile as long as you had a clear line of sight. The 88 sets all they were good for a mile, possibly two miles but they were VHF as well. The main problem with the 88 sets was they used to fit in two basic pouches, one was the radio

11:30 and the other the battery and the aerial. I guarantee we lost more 88 set aerials in Korea than the army had ever had before or since.

### **Why?**

They were just a very fragile thing and if you throw yourself on the ground you lost your aerial. You can't always find it feeling around at night time and that is when they used to use them. It had a distinctly better set than the

12:00 commonly called walkie talkie They were an SCR 536 and they only had one channel on them, with the 88 they had four. You could swap from one channel to another whenever you liked provided you told the other bloke you were changing

### **Was this equipment adequate in your opinion?**

It was considerably better than what the battalion,

12:30 3 RAR had when they first went to Korea. When they first went to Korea they were using 122 sets which I had only ever seen. I never had I had put a couple on the air but I can't remember how you go about it now and 19 sets which were a set out of armoured fighting vehicles and you could talk right up to people in a tank and you could talk to the gunner

13:00 and the radio operator or the loader. They had a communication facility on it but God they were heavy and it took two men all the time to lift it and plus another bloke to pick up the battery and they were definitely a vehicle mounted thing. 3RAR they had to go over with them and they had a lot of really good Morse operators with 3 RAR first off and which they were a God send to them.

13:30 Communications would break down at night and if you couldn't take Morse you were out of touch with things. Later on when that time at Kapyong they got rid of all these SCR536 and they were using high frequency stuff but they hadn't had enough training on them and that is why a lot of coms broke down because the operators just didn't know how to work it.

14:00 **What sort of effort went into charging the batteries?**

It was the worst job in the sig platoon charging batteries. The equipment we were using to charge batteries it was called a chore horse, a little two stroke Briggs and Stratton engine and you had to work out how to line them up and you hook them up in series, series parallel

14:30 or it was a complicated way of doing it. People and this always happened, didn't matter where you are, a battery gets down so far and it starts to not perform properly and people won't change them when it gets to the so far and they keep on flogging and flogging it and it goes flat and then you have got all that extra bloody

15:00 time wasted to get them back up to full capacity again. It was one of the reasons we had this trouble with Sergeant Shaw, the signals sergeant he come over. We had scored a couple of 12 volt batteries to run the light.

**How long would it take to charge a battery up with your chore horse engine?**

15:30 I couldn't say because I never actually done it. In 1 RAR they had Oli Oliver, Doc Donohue and the other bloke, Bluey Richards and they liked fiddling around with little engines and so on and they were doing a good job so we let them do it. When 2 RAR come up Buck Rogers sent me and Alan

16:00 Newby down to the Div Sig Regiment to learn about battery chargers and when we got down there was a Pommy second lieutenant running it and he started talking about these Onan charging engines that the British Army was using and we'd say "What are they? What do they look like?" He said "Haven't you got one?" and we told him what we were using and he was horrified. He said "God you can't operate with those things" and we said "Well we have been doing it, the battalion has been doing it for a couple of years and

16:30 it has been bloody hard". Neither Newby and I were interested in being a battery charger so we didn't pay much attention to the course and we went out working with the Kiwi linesmen, rather than the sigs and then we went back to the battalion and Buck asked us how we got on and I said "I failed sir". He said "you didn't try hard enough" and I said "I wasn't interested" and he said "Oh right oh" and just let it go at that. With 2 RAR they had, there was another bloke,

17:00 Bert Francis him and this Smith and Bluey Richards they looked after it and I was quite happy to see them do it and they were happy so don't disturb sleeping dogs, let them go and they done quite a good job on it but we could never get one of these decent battery chargers. We did get hold of one at one time from the American Marine Unit and they were going back to America

17:30 and the Yanks when they change units everything that the relieved unit they just walk out and leave it. They don't take anything home with them only their own personal weapons. They said "You can have it if you want it" so we took it back and the CO we had at 1 RAR at the time said "we are not authorised to carry it, take it back". He made us take back a bloody fifteen hundred weight Dodge cable laying vehicle.

18:00 "It is not our strength, we can't lay it out" and he was going to try and make us take back all the American gear we got. Jackets and sleeping bags and stuff like that he knew about it but we kept it out of sight. Some COs will let you go out of your way to do and others "no, not on the book, you can't have it".

**How did you come by all this personal American gear?**

They were all going home and they

18:30 didn't want it and the Americans the way I seen them always miles of bloody gear and the sleeping bags they had just been issued with them but they were going home and they didn't need them "We won't need them we are on the troop ship and away we go home" . The arctic sleeping bags they were terrific. You could sleep quite warm in them on ice.

19:00 They were that good but the only draw back with them was there was a zipper and you used to get into the sleeping bag and pull the zipper right up here and if a Chinese got amongst you it was a bit hard getting out of it.

**Why did you need to use American gear?**

We were issued with British gear but the American stuff was much better to our eyes, good down sleeping bags was better than the ones we were issued with. The ones we were issued with were

- 19:30 English sleeping bags and they were taken for the average sized Pom. I wasn't as big then as I am now but they were just too bloody tight. I don't know how the blokes up in the rifle companies got on they wouldn't be able to get in and out of the bloody things because they had to sleep fully clothed and all the rest of it and I just don't know how they got on. I had it and so I kept it and I used it.
- 20:00 After the winter had finished I sent it home to a particular friend I had in Australia who had been in the Scout movement for years and years and I sent it back to him and I said "Why don't you try this one and see how you like it?" The Canadians winter gear their sleeping bags were quite good. They were nylon and light as a feather. Beaut and warm they were and
- 20:30 I had one of those too.

### **What happened when you moved down to the Hook area?**

The battalion that was in position when we got there was the Kings Regiment. They had relieved the Duke of Wellingtons for a week or so because the Duke of Wellingtons had got far hiding, the Chinese belted them because it was getting towards the

- 21:00 cease fire and all these communists they will spend thousands of lives just to make a point. To have a win just before they stop and they give the Duke of Wellingtons a hell of a caning and I knew a few of the blokes in the Duke of Wellingtons regiment and the position had been blasted to pieces. Trenches that were normally four or five feet deep were almost down to knee level
- 21:30 and they put the Kings Regiment in there to relieve because they were in 29 Brigade along with the Blackwatch and they started to build it up slowly and they sent the 2nd Battalion down there because they were the newest battalion there but they had the better battalion in experience as a whole. The 3 RAR they were
- 22:00 replaced done by one so you would never have a whole platoon that had been together for any length of time as a whole. We went down there and it was the rainy season too and these sandbag humpies and that they had been there for a couple of years and what with the freezing in the winter time
- 22:30 and the subsidence of the soil and all the rest the disintegration of the sandbags over a period of two years they were in a sorry bloody state. Even more so on the Hook itself and our blokes had to turn round and rebuild the lot. We had a lot of help from our pioneer platoon and engineers and they went up but all the digging and that had to be all done by
- 23:00 hand because the Hook was a very low area and it was the key to the gateway to Seoul, that was the tradition of the Asian route to the north to the south. It was flat open country all the way down there. We went down there we had to rebuild the cable network, try and make our own living accommodation habitable and as I say
- 23:30 they were in a bad state and the hootchie and a little bloke from the sig office, I had come back from my twenty one days R and R by this time and there was a new crew in the sig office, me and Peter Allen and Gordon Manning and I can't think of the other bloke and the hootchie we got it was on the side and it was sloping down and you could see it was gradually falling down. It was only the second
- 24:00 night we were there and I heard it start to creek and groan and I said to Peter "Come on mate, we're out of this" and he said "It is all right" and I said "This bloody thing is going to go" and he said "It is all right, it is all right". I said "You stay here, I am out". A few others had collapsed around the place and the blokes had built sandbag walls up about that high and put a pup tent over so you could get two blokes in there with a reasonable amount of comfort and I get into one with a bloke by the name of Johnny Cock, which is
- 24:30 a good combination with a bloke by the name of Date. I am in there and the next day we had a look and Peter Allen got out and I actually pulled him out when I went up to get the rest of my gear and the hootchie is half way down the hill. A few Koreans got hold of it and they filled up some sandbags and they were quite happy with it but there was no way they were going to get me back in it. It was the rainy season
- 25:00 everything was leaking and God only knows what and Shorty, well the battalion sig office it was dripping all over the place. On the bench or the table it was an area of about that big and that was the only dry part in the place. We had to take copies of any message in that little bit. Couldn't get any canvas to cover the roof, couldn't get any anywhere.
- 25:30 My Uncle Jack he was driving a Jeep and he had to go down to B echelon and I said to Jack "Keep your eye open I am going to try and knock off a tent while we are down there" because he had a trailer on the Jeep too. When we get down there, there is not a bloody soul around anywhere and I thought "Christ where is everybody?" I look in all the tents and no one, so I said "Shopping day Jack".
- 26:00 We got new everything, new shirts and trousers socks, boots, a new hat each because both of our hats were pretty battered and I found a big tarpaulin too and I said "We will take the bloody lot". We did a load and went back to the battalion and we put our personal gear away and I got the tarpaulin out and put it over the sig office and we were dry at last.

- 26:30 The sig officer come in and he said "Where have you been?" And I said "Down to B echelon with my Uncle. "Did you see anybody around there?" And I said "No there wasn't a bloody soul". He said "What did you do when you were down there?" And I said "Jack done what he had to do and delivered the battery, left it next to the radio set, there was no sig there.". "Did you do anything else?" and I said "Yes I got myself some new trousers and shirts and socks and boots".
- 27:00 "And anything else?" I said "it is not leaking here now sir, there is no water coming in". He said "Where did you get the tarpaulin?" "It fell off the back of the truck down near B echelon". He said "You are dry here, don't worry about it". I found he didn't know where B echelon had gone either and apparently the Chinese had fired an extra big shell and it got as far as B echelon

- 27:30 or maybe three or four mile behind the front line and it was a dud but landed near somebody and they all took off, so you make hay while the sun shines and Jack and I did.

#### **Were you under enemy observation?**

No, not where we worked but a road into the place was and there was

- 28:00 camouflaged netting and signs on both side "No speeding, the enemy can see your dust". A little bit, I don't know I heard a few shells go over there but I never seen any hit the road and blokes were always very careful going, the camouflage bit was only about half a mile I think. The main thing they hated seeing coming down there was the Centurion tanks because they kick up a lot of bloody dust anyhow.
- 28:30 The Poms didn't like moving too slow but they just had to. The boss said "It raises the dust, and that's what I want to see, the less dust the less trouble we have".

#### **What did you see of the battle of the Hook?**

Nothing, I heard lots of it. Well we even copped some shell fire at battalion

- 29:00 headquarters. There was plenty of stuff going out. The actual fighting itself? Nothing. We were under shell fire, not very often but a few come close to battalion headquarters. One went close to the command post and hit amongst the
- 29:30 commanding officer and all the rest and that caused a bit of consternation. One even shook a couple of sandbags out of the entrance to the sig office. I thought they were getting a bit too close so I took that a bit personally. That is about all.

#### **What about the traffic over the communications net?**

It was mostly done by landline, by telephone and they had a direct line from the Hook to

- 30:00 to the command post through the switchboard and we had the commander of the divisional artillery there too. The line went straight through when the shutter dropped and you used to ring the phone where the artillery bloke was and the switchboard operator used to say "Leave it alone, leave it alone, there is a bloke at the other end looking after it". Our platoon sergeant decided he would learn how to operate the switchboard and of course the shutter drops and he answered it
- 30:30 instead of pulling his plug out and forgetting about it he pulled the other plug out. It raised merry bloody hell and here he was, he was a sergeant and he didn't even know a little thing like that. At the end there the rest of the brigade commander, Brigadier Wilton, figured there were two thousand to three thousand dead Chinamen laid out in front that they hadn't picked up because
- 31:00 all these Orientals and that or Asiatics they don't like leaving their dead behind. They will pick them up and cart them away. There was a hell of a lot of artillery in support of the Hook. 72 guns of the field artillery, there was a lot of American heavy artillery, 155 mm and some 240 that were available and there was a medium regiment there of 5.5, all firing on the one little

- 31:30 area. It churned it up something terrible. Everybody was glad when it finished but it was an exciting couple of days. The actual close up stuff or the closest I would have got to I was going out on a line job would be
- 32:00 about a hundred yards behind the reserve company. We used to work repairs from both ends and I wasn't actually doing the line but I was the guard more or less and two blokes working on the line always went out in groups of three. One kept his eye open just in case the wrong fellow came down the road looking at you.

#### **How did you repair the lines?**

- 32:30 You find the two breaks or the break, trim it up and put, tie a reef knot on both sides that gives you one line, tie a reef knot in it and get the bare ends and straighten them with the side of your finger so you get the copper strand in it, cut all or most of the
- 33:00 steel strands out of it because there was one copper and eight strands of steel in it if I remember rightly and then you would wind the copper one around it to bind it nice and tight on both sides and then cover it with insulating tape and then nine times out of ten you have a water proof connection. It was easier



with the Australian and English cable used. I forget what they call it,

33:30 Don cable, it was cotton covered and it was more copper strands in it and it was different coloured cotton covers on it. The American stuff was all like that, all black. Trying to find a broken one with fifteen or twenty of these cables laying around it was a bit difficult. Their idea, the Canadians had one, the copper one on 355 and

34:00 "Don't worry about trying to repair it, run another one, you can clean it up later". That is the only way you can do it. With the repairs we used to do, we used to do combat joints and you tie them together and tighten it up and smother it in insulating tape. Some blokes you would see even put condoms over them and then put the insulating tape, a little bit of extra protection.

34:30 Then go back when it gets more readily visible and make a proper workmanlike job out of it. It wasn't according to the book but it worked. Let us face it under those circumstances it wasn't as if it was you were laying a telephone line for the Postmaster General's Department or anything like that. Do it the best you can as quick as you can.

#### **What would cause the breaks in the line?**

Shell fire, vehicles running over the cable.

35:00 Quite often blokes cutting the length out of the cable to make a bloody clothes line to hang their washing on. Don't laugh it used to happen quite often. When we were up on 355 with 1 Battalion I was with a Corporal Tommy Rye and he lived down at Beauty Point down the South Coast and we just finished laying a line

35:30 and we were walking back to where we left the Jeep and there is a great hunk missing out of it. I said "Christ, we just laid that" and we looked around and there is this bloke he had cut this great chunk out of it and strung it between two trees. Tommy said "What the bloody hell do you think your doing?" He said "I have got to hang my washing on something". They got into fitsy cuffs over it.

36:00 And the bloke who done the job was on a charge. I don't know what his own company commander done to him but old Buck had quite a few words to say about it and that sort of thing stopped for awhile but when we got over to 2 Battalion people don't take note of history have got to learn the lesson again and that happened quite often there. When we were down there

36:30 there was that much black cable around you wouldn't have known which one was which anyway.

#### **When a line had been cut by say a mortar or something like that how would you find the break?**

We had test points and they were all identified with AP on this one going along the next one would be PA. I just can't remember how they went

37:00 but it was a system that worked quite well. You would go to test and it worked back to battalion headquarters there and keep going and if it didn't work at the next one we knew the break was between there and there and you would get out and run your hand along it, which wasn't always easy but it worked.

37:30 One time I went out on a job with 1 RAR back to the Indian Field Ambulance and we found the job all right and fixed the join and picked up a bone off a human being that long. I don't know if it was Korean or whatever we went to the Indians and had a cup of tea. It was good going down there because they always had a hot cup of tea available twenty four hours a day. We took this bone back and we give it to our signals sergeant and we said "Here you are Dick,

38:00 a Chinaman sent this for you", oh he fainted.

#### **What was the duty you hated the most?**

The all night shift from midnight until dawn and it a terrible bloody time. Pickets, nobody liked pickets or guard duties.

38:30 I didn't do many of those on 1 RAR but when we went up on the 355 we were the last British division that way and we had to patrol this road that went round to the Korean unit next to us. There was no where were you could shelter and we would just walk up and down this road for an hour but the temperatures were getting down to 25 below some times and we would find it a bit hard and the CO says "No Chinaman is going to come around that way

39:00 so we will pull it off" and we never done it. With 2 RAR when we first went into the line we had two blokes on picket with a Bren pit looking down onto the bowling alley and I think I done two shifts on that and then they stopped it and I never ever done another picket with 2 RAR. Somebody must have been doing it around battalion headquarters but

39:30 the sigs weren't. I didn't complain about that neither did the rest of the battalion.

#### **What weapons did you carry?**

Lots of Owen guns. I think in the sig platoon every second bloke had an Owen gun. Our CO, Colonel Argon, he had a funny idea "All drivers should carry Owen guns" so every driver in the battalion had an Owen gun yet blokes in the rifle companies were getting out

- 40:00 with 303 rifles fighting against automatic weapons. The CO of Don Company, Major Thomas, he was a Middle East man and he said "Oh rifle and bayonet was good enough for me in the Middle East". He changed his mind and he soon made, I think in the rifle companies two blokes had
- 40:30 Owen guns but when you are up close quarter fighting you don't have time to be firing single shots. You let them have a burst and get it over and done with. If you hit him good luck but if you miss him you are in trouble. That particular Major Thomas he had four pickets
- 41:00 around his hootchie and I never seen that many pickets around another company commanders hootchie but he was running the show not me.

## Tape 9

- 00:32 **Laurie tell us about the end of the war?**

They were still hammering the living daylights out of the Hook area and we were told the cease fire was coming into effect and it was signed at 11 o'clock in the morning and it would come into, the ceasefire would occur

- 01:00 at 10 o'clock that night so everything stopped. Uncle Jack and I were both off duty and we went out in the American Marine position that was next to us and they had copped a bit of a hiding too. There were mountains of C rations around, boxes the size of shoe cartons and they were just shot there. Jack and I thought they have all got cigarettes in them so we spent

- 01:30 a good five or six hours just sitting there opening these C rations and taking the packets of American cigarettes out of them and I finished up with enough loose packets of cigarettes there to last me three months. I was smoking two or three packs a day.

### **How many in a pack?**

A pack of twenty, Lucky Strikes, Camels, Phillip Morris. Phillip Morris were called Call 4's as they used to have a commercial on television "call for" and a hand would come out, Phillip Morris.

- 02:00 We got a lot of American rations with us too, C rations. Later on that day I went around to that same position again with two other blokes and we had to walk the next time and we picked up a fair few cigarettes and what have you and while we were there, there were about eight or nine American dead taken past us that had been buried
- 02:30 in the hootchies and what have you and we decided to get out of that and started hoofing it back and we got a ride in a tank. You would never get me in another one again.

### **What was it like?**

Noisy, you have no idea and hot and there was a diesel engine Sherman and I thought "how do people exist in them let alone fight in them?" The Sherman tanks were the, the

- 03:00 Germans used to call the Tommy Cookers or Ronsons, because you hit them with a shell and they go up in smoke, on fire. I thought "no I couldn't cop that". It destroyed any interest I had in joining the Armoured Regiment. Not that I thought that much of it but I thought it would be all right to ride around but after riding that, no way.
- 03:30 I did see what happened once and I don't know how it happened but the Chinese got a phosphorous mortar inside a Centurion tank and phosphorous when it hits your skin it puts a great hole in it. This phosphorous went in there and spread all around and burnt the poor Pommys to bloody pieces. They come and towed the tank out and they wouldn't use it as a fighting vehicle again. They used it for spares
- 04:00 even took the turret off it and used it as a recovery vehicle but wouldn't use it as a fighting machine again and I saw what happened to them and I thought "I would rather take my chances on the ground, you get blown to pieces rather than burnt like that". The cease fire come into effect and we got a little parade there and they told us "righto, it is over, you are all going home eventually alive.
- 04:30 We will be here for a couple of days and they will move us back to a peace area". Instead of taking two days we were there for the best part of a week waiting for transport. There was just no transport about. I don't know where it all went. We waited and we went back a couple of mile and camped at some place overnight and then we went back to what I call the peace area. It did have a name later on but that come after I left there and
- 05:00 we were living in marquee or squad tents and I thought "This is all right". We all had stretchers we had

souvenired at one place or another and I was unlucky with tents. If you give me a brand new tent, this was a new tent I was in and it leaked right above where I was sleeping. Every tent I had in Korea it leaked, sometimes it was just through the seams in the bloody thing but it leaked.

- 05:30 We had, as I say we had these proper beds. I only had two or three weeks to go to finish my twelve months and I was working in the sig office and I happened to overhear a conversation and at the time I was thinking of signing on for an extra eight months and save some more money and I overheard this conversation "As from next Monday everybody is settled in now,
- 06:00 we are going back to Day One, Week One of recruit training" and I said "Pig's, I am not having that again." I put the word on the boss "I have only got a couple of weeks to go how about letting me run the battalion sig office?" He said "Can you do it?" I said "Of course I can" and he said "Right oh you are on". I have still got three days to go and he brings a three star corporal in and he says "I want you to show this bloke what to do".
- 06:30 I said "Doesn't he know?" He said "No" and I knew he had three stars which was a, a three star corporal is better paid than a sergeant. The stars only went as far as corporals and sergeants and they were all on the same money. I said "No, no, I can't tell him sir" and he said "But he doesn't know" and I said "But he is getting three star corporals money and if he can't do the job he shouldn't be getting the money".
- 07:00 I said "I can't instruct corporals what to do, he should be showing me". "Right oh corporal, go back to where you were" and I don't know what he was going to do but he didn't replace me and another little bloke who had been in 1 Battalion with me he took the job on and then I left. The day I left I run foul of an officer who I run into quite often
- 07:30 back in Australia. He used to wear black gaiters and I had a 37 pattern belt which I shouldn't have had but I did and I had that blacked and I thought "I am getting out of this black mob" so I scrubbed them white and this officer was going to make me blacken them again. He said "You will blacken them again and leave tomorrow" and I said "You can't do that sir". "Why can't I?"
- 08:00 I said "My twelve months is up tomorrow and I will be on my way out of this place by tonight". He couldn't hold me back there. It was a funny thing black with 2 RAR. In 1952 they got a new set of drums from England and it happened to be the day that King George VI died and they were all painted black so they left them black with all the regimental badges and all the rest of it on it but they left them black.
- 08:30 Some of them blackened their gaiters at training at Pucka [Puckapunyal] for Korea some had black gaiters, some had scrubbed gaiters and some had just scruffy looking ones and the CO decided "we will make it uniform, everybody blackens them". And it turned out quite good. Coupled with the fact that the call sign on the telephone network was, the brigade name was Newcastle
- 09:00 and the colour name was Newcastle black and they stayed with black and even when they came back to Australia and they started wearing Aus pattern gaiters they always had black gaiters. It is just one of those things that kept going on. They used to wear black lanyards.

### **Where did you go next?**

I went to the Corps of Signals. I went to a Britcom Base Signals in Kure.

- 09:30 When I got there they asked me what I wanted to be and I said "I would like to be an operator" and they only used teletype operators up there and I told the officer that I had been in charge of the battalion sig officer and he said "It doesn't mean a thing, it is not the same here". Cranky bastard, he was right it didn't but I got to like it, it was entirely foreign to me. I never seen inside a signals centre and that and I had seen
- 10:00 teletype work once. I got interested in it and I was only the way they were working on the, they used to call it the routing table to decide which route a specific message would go and they would put it all on this table and operating instructions on it and I found it real interesting. I only lasted a couple of months and they sent me back to Australia medically downgraded. I was going to Victoria to do
- 10:30 the operators course and they didn't know how long I was going to be there. I said "No, no, I am not hanging around here for four or five months. I want out of here." I thought, "If I can get to a unit as a driver and work on somebody to start to let me learn the job on the job and then they could send me down to the school to do the proper theory side of it". That did happen eventually
- 11:00 in 1956, two years wasted really. I was over at the Artillery Unit over at George's Heights, not as a gunner but attached to a signal troop. Each artillery unit had a signal troop attached to it. Back to brigade headquarters and the Divisional Artillery Command it was all operated by the Corps of Signals. I was over there at George's Heights
- 11:30 for twelve or fourteen months I suppose and spent a lot of time on the switchboard. I started off as a Don R over there, the Don R route had been instituted by the 1st Battalion to train their Don Rs before they went to Korea in 1952 and all the units they used to visit just as a training thing they thought it was a good idea
- 12:00 so they kept it on. But the Signals Unit that was responsible for issuing it they didn't have a vacancy for

a dispatch rider so 1 Field Regiment Sig Troop blokes used to do it. 6 Squadron blokes used to do it. The bloke that was doing it when I got there, Bob Hindmarsh, I had known him at Ingleburn and at Balcombe and we done our recruit training together. He said "This is the way we go" and I said "Christ we can

- 12:30 chop about forty mile off of this". "Oh no, this is right." I said "No", because we weren't getting back to Victoria Barracks until four thirty, a quarter to five of an afternoon which made a bloody long day of it. When I got over to George's Heights I had to turn round because I was living at home and it is no good to me. I done it my way and nobody was complaining and everybody was quite happy because I was getting to Vic Barracks a bit after three
- 13:00 and getting rid of all today's traffic today and they were quite happy with that. The National Service Brigade, 2 National Service Brigade Headquarters the chief clerk there wanted me to deliver a case to somebody at Vic Barracks and a parcel to somewhere else and "I can't do that". He said "Yes you will" and I said "No I won't". I said "I can take messages or letters but parcels and packages, nothing doing". He said "You will". I said "I
- 13:30 won't". He said "Right oh you stay here until the time". I said "I am not waiting for anybody." I said "I have got your signals" and I took off.

### **How did you readjust to civilian life?**

I had another six years to go before I got out. When I got out of the army I never really adjusted to it. Being in the army, well when I lived in camp it was like living in a family home. There were always blokes around with common

- 14:00 interests, used to drink together in the canteen and that but when you got out into civvie street [civilian life] when you knocked off at the end of the day you were like the country dunny, you were out on your own. I used to go home, that was all right but there was no affinity with the people that I worked with. I found it very hard to settle down. I met a few blokes I become reasonably good friends with. One bloke in particular when he left the drug company he
- 14:30 introduced me to a couple of blokes who were garbos who used to drink in a pub at Dulwich Hill. I used to buy medicine through the drug houses associated companies for a hell of a lot less than I used to pay if I went to the doctor for it. And that's how I got introduced to the garbos and I met some bloody good mates amongst them. Some wild blokes amongst them.
- 15:00 One bloke he was the hooker for Newtown when they won the competition in 1943 and he was punch drunk, there is no two ways about that but I liked Jimmy, he was a bloody good bloke. He used to come up with funny names for people. And Sprawl, great lump on his hand and funny looking feet, Fergie Chapman. I still see Fergie occasionally. I wish I had a share in the lottery ticket. He won the Opera House lottery once.
- 15:30 I had some success with some of the ladies there, a lot of women worked in the place and some success there but I got the sack from there for swearing. I admit it, I made the comment but I don't think that was the real reason they got rid of me. I was a bit of a burr under their saddle as far as the superannuation was
- 16:00 concerned. We had policies with MLC Insurance I think it was and the Pommy mob, Slater Walker took it over and they wanted us to sign over to their Salter Walker pension plan and I don't understand those things. I still don't but it seemed fishy to me. I didn't like the idea so I refused to sign along with a few others and they kept at me and at me and I said "no, no, no".
- 16:30 I weakened in the long run and we got some legal advice from so called solicitors and I signed it and I got done all right and I got the sack and I lost about two thousand dollars. All I got back was about four percent and DHO they used to match it for dollar to dollar but signing it over to Slater Walker you only got four percent interest if you stayed to the finish
- 17:00 on the lot so they sack you in the meantime you only got four percent on your money. DHO money disappeared. I went to another drug company, Wholesale Drug, only lasted there four days. I just couldn't cop the pace. I was spending half the day out on the toilet. It was that quiet. The Drug House of Australia it was go, go all day and you get used to it and you find it a bit hard to stop dead.
- 17:30 I only lasted a couple of days there and got a job at another drug company over at Rosebery. I stayed there two and a half years I suppose, going on for three. I was getting for a storeman in the pharmaceutical game I was getting good money there because I completely reorganised their over the sales counter section, the way the stock was put on the shelves for the people and the bulk store. There was a
- 18:00 simplicity itself as long as they could read they knew. I put everything in alphabetical order and it worked well and then they had a change of management. They still wanted me to do the same job but the margin I had over the assemblers they didn't want to pay that, the assemblers got some money and my margin got whittled away and whittled away and I said "No either I get my margin back". One bloke said he would get it for me and another bloke said "No, he can't have it" and I said
- 18:30 "Up you Jack shove your job" and I left.

### **Why did you leave the army?**

I got discharged medically unfit. I had diabetes as I mentioned previously and they didn't send me to a diabetic clinic or anything like that and they stabilised me and said "Back to work". The old bloke who was a medical officer

- 19:00 at Victoria Barracks he had a medical practice in Oxford Street, Paddington before the First World War. Well they didn't know anything about diabetes back then just that it was a wasting disease or complaint and his knowledge of treatment for it hadn't improved any. I went to see him and I showed a little bit of sugar "I better put you in hospital" and it was always a month and the straw that broke the camel's, or helped it. I wanted to go and do an advanced operators
- 19:30 course down to the school of sigs and I wanted to go down in the daylight time because there was no such thing as disposable syringes and that in those days and you had to boil your syringe and sterilize your needles every day. I wanted permission to travel on the daylight train as the normal train was overnight. I go down to see him and that is all I wanted and he tested me for sugar and "you're showing a bit of sugar" and "Christ not again", into hospital.
- 20:00 I get out there and the doctor he was the bloke that stabilized me and he said "What are you doing here?" And I told him "What is the old fool doing?" I said "Can I go back to camp now?" He said "No we will keep you overnight and let you go tomorrow". They didn't, they kept me there three days so it was too late. I couldn't get on the daylight train and go to Melbourne, it was too late so they let me fly down. I done two more courses that year and I flew down the three times. Every time I went to see that doctor I was in the Concord.
- 20:30 It didn't matter what it was, whether it was absolutely normal, into Concord and I had a hypoglycaemia attack and I'd never had one and I didn't know what was happening to me and I went unconscious. They put me into hospital and the medical people decided I was spending too much time in hospital, out. The day I was notified I was getting out I found I had been posted to the signal regiment that was stationed at Dundas.
- 21:00 I was posted out there as a corporal into a sergeant's vacancy. I thought "Christ, everything is coming my way at last". And that bastard, Refshauge's father sent me the letter to say that "he is medically unfit, he is out". I went to civvie street and I never really settled down after it for a long time.

### **Did you feel like your time in Korea that you were following an Anzac tradition?**

- 21:30 In a way I suppose so, yeah. Our people have always performed a lot better than other people around us. I think we are there world's best, if not the best there is not too many in front of us. I was an Australian soldier serving in a foreign country and I liked the idea. I would never be ashamed of wearing an Australian uniform, never.
- 22:00 Some of the people wearing it I wouldn't say the same thing about it, but it is like everything else you get good and bad wherever you go.

### **When you were at the Hook did you ever hear about spies coming over from North Korea?**

There is no way in the world they would get over. Firstly there was a bit of line crossing went on but there was no civilians allowed.

- 22:30 From Brigade workshops they were about four miles behind the line in our area and there was no civilians in there except the Korean Service Corps labourer that were attached to different units. Women and children, no, miles and miles away so any strange civilian if there was any but I never seen one that I know of, well
- 23:00 he was suspicious and the Koreans used to grab him. I don't know of any that got caught but I believe it did go on but not in my experience.

### **What did you find the hardest about settling into civvie life?**

Loneliness, there was nobody around that I knew.

### **Did you stay in touch with your mates from Korea?**

A few, yes.

- 23:30 Well not from Korea, my mate Des Riley and Gordon Morell and George Robo I kept in touch with those three. George is the only one left now and he is the one in England and I speak to him once a month at least. Des died from a botched operation. They took out a diseased gall bladder and didn't get the lot and they left a
- 24:00 a little bit in and while he was in the hospital he rolled over and knocked all the drip feeds and that out of him instead of replacing them they just stuck them back in. He went three years and then everything just backfired on him and he was like that for a week or more in hospital and I went down to see him.
- 24:30 I like to think that he recognised me but he held onto my hand. I went down in Easter '78 I suppose and he died about a week later. My other mate Gordon he was always at me after I got sent home from

Japan and he said "Go to the doctor and look after yourself". I said "Oh Christ Gordon you keep on going and

25:00 they get you on a bit of a string and they keep on pulling you" and as you get older you will find that too. He got out of the army and he went to work for the army as a civilian and he was there long enough to get long service leave out of it and he decided he was big on tracing his family tree and he traced it as far as he could here in Australia and went back to find

25:30 the original one that come out here as a convict and he went back over there and he traced them as far back as he could and he was quite happy. He decided to spend the rest of his leave looking around Europe and that and he got to Spain and he got, I don't know what happened to him, Joyce never told me but he was in hospital for six weeks before they would send him back to Australia. When he got back to Australia they found he was rotten with cancer

26:00 and they operated on him and like most cancer people once they operate on them the cancer goes bloody hog wild and they had him on chemotherapy and he lasted about six months and he had a beautiful mop of hair, that bloke in the picture there and after the chemo he only had a fringe around there like. I saw a photo of him but I wasn't financially able to get up to see him. I used to talk to him every Saturday afternoon and

26:30 I am glad I didn't see him because he had a large head on a body that was shot to pieces.

**Did you find after being in Korea that your relationship with your father grew closer?**

Yes. We were the only two of the Date family that have seen active service. The rest of them hadn't and none of them have since. One of his brothers got called up during the war but

27:00 he only served around Sydney and he got out and he had a farm down Burraborang Valley and he got out of that business and he was doing all right at it and they decided to build Warragamba Dam and away went the farm but he done all right out of that. One of his brothers tried to join up but he had seven kids

27:30 and they said "Christ, it will cost us too much, get back to what you are doing". He owned a trouser factory and I was very unhappy when Uncle Alf retired as I haven't had a decent pair of trousers since. I used to get them made to measure.

**Did your Dad ever talk about Changi with you?**

Not a great deal, no, just funny things that happened, different blokes that he knew that I had met later on and

28:00 what he used to do. One incident he run foul of a Captain Duffy when he was in charge of the hospital canteen in Changi, what little they used to have to sell there, a bit of tobacco or the odd banana or something like that and this,

28:30 Duffy come around and being a captain and he said "I will have two of those bananas" and Dad said "You can't sir, this is the OR's canteen, you've got your own officers' mess" and he said "I will have those two", and he said "No you bloody won't" and one word led to another and Dad's boss come in and took Duffy to one side and away he went. Duffy the name rung a bell and a few years later

29:00 I was working at the sig office at Victoria Barracks and we had just put in a new tape relay centre and they said "Show Lieutenant Colonel Duffy around". He won a Military Cross at Gemas in 1941, big fat slob toothbrush moustache and queer as a two pound note he was, that is why they turfed him out of the National Service Battalion at Pucka.

29:30 Our Chief Signal Officer, old Roy Lyons, he said to me "Sig Date, show Colonel Duffy what happens here" and he said "Date, Date". He said "Was your father in the 8th Division?" And I said "Yes sir, he was the sergeant in charge of the Hospital Canteen in Changi in the hospital". "Yes, yes" and he never said another word. I didn't even show him what Lawrence wanted me to show him.

30:00 He remembered Dad.

**Are there any other stories from Korea that you haven't told us today that you would like to?**

I did think of a couple there a while ago but they have gone right out of my mind. When I was going back to the battalion after my twenty one days

30:30 at Kure, R and R, was supposed to mean rest and recuperation, routing or raving or I and I, intoxication and intercourse. Whichever way you looked at it well, it went on. I went to play bingo one night and I won a watch and there was a

31:00 hundred pound prize and it was for OR's only and there was a little Pommy second lieutenant and he wouldn't have been old enough to shave, only a weedy little kid and he won the game and he went up to collect the prize and somebody said "He is an officer, he can't have it". It developed into an all in brawl. I was involved in it and I didn't like the

31:30 officer being there but he won it fair dinkum. He wasn't told he couldn't go in and I reckon. One bit of

strife over that just verbal fisty cuffs with the Provos around the place. I got on the plane, oh when I left the sig barracks I got on the work boats used to take their courier down to the air force place at Iwakuni and this Paddy Fitzpatrick, he was a drinker and a half that bloke,

- 32:00 straight up and down like six o'clock. I reckon he could get ten gallons in him and you wouldn't know he had a drink. I was sitting on the back of the work boat and talking to him and we get down to Iwakuni and he had to wait for the next day to hand the bags and that over to the captain of the aircraft and I said "I will have a drink with you Paddy" and, Christ was I sick the next day.
- 32:30 I had a grandfather of a hangover. We get into the plane and instead of going to Seoul first, we went to Pusan first and it was five Canadian Provos going over and they were going to the Canadian Detention Barracks in Seoul and we were all feeling a bit seedy and these blokes were sick and we were all saying "Die you bastards, die, go on bring it up" paying out on them all the way over.
- 33:00 They were sick all over themselves and you look like that too. When we got off the plane they were feeling a bit better and one of them said "I will remember you, you will come to the detention centre." I said "No, not me mate, no way in the bloody world". That was that. I go back to the battalion and when the blue finished in the last couple of weeks I was there
- 33:30 a bloke used to be caught in the out of bounds area the Provos used to catch them and send reports back to the battalion and then 2 RAR, a mob of old blokes I used to go and open and I would read them and "I know him, out of sight, don't know him, bad luck for him, he is all right" and the Provos started complaining about the number of reports that were being acted on and they reckoned somebody was short changing them and
- 34:00 the Regimental Sergeant Major, Peter Steer, about six foot five and about that wide, had a voice like two fog horns and the worst example of swearing I ever heard of a senior NCO in my life. He would leave a lot of wharfies for dead and he demanded these Provo reports and I wouldn't give them to him. He threatened to charge me and I said "Do that". My platoon Commander come in and wanted to know what was going on and
- 34:30 he expressed his opinion and I told him what I had done and he backed me. He said "That is right" and the next thing I know the bloke is going to the other boob in Seoul and I got nominated as an escort for him. I couldn't understand that as we had RPs [Regimental Police] and guards and things and my Platoon Commander he could see what was going to happen so he
- 35:00 sent me down to Seoul just as an object lesson and I march in with the poor bloody prisoner. I don't know who he was now and this Provo I had been giving a hard time he saw me and "Ah" and I said "Don't get too happy mate, I just brought this poor bastard down, you are not getting your hands on me". He was very disappointed but after I seen what they done there in Seoul, the way they treated them they were a bunch of bloody animals.
- 35:30 They had a head sergeant there, probably a warrant officer he had the whole boob detachment there in Korea had a very, very, bad name, I know one bloke sat on a hand grenade rather than go back there a third time. He had already been there twice and he said he would kill himself rather than go back a third time and he did just that. This top sergeant or whatever he was
- 36:00 he was seen on the troop ship before it pulled into Vancouver, he was never seen get off the boat, his gear was never collected and he was never seen or heard of since. General opinion was that somebody decided it was time he went swimming and just threw him overboard out to sea. From what I heard of him he got off light.
- 36:30 The Platoon Commander a few days before I left there he said "you were in that night shooting competition I run before you went into the line weren't you?" I said "Yeah, I was". He said "Did I ever give you the case of beer for the winners?" I said "No". He hadn't but "No" and he said "I had better give it to you then". I said "Yes". He said "Where are you going to drink it?"
- 37:00 I said "With the rest of the crew". He said "There was six of you" and I said "That's right" and he said "Are they still here?" I said "Yes". There was only two of us, oh three of us and I got the case of beer and we made a good mess of ourselves, eight bottles of beer each, because they used to come in wooden cases, two dozen to a case. That was another thing I used to make a few bob on when I was Don R with 1 RAR. I could
- 37:30 get beer at the right price from the Blackwatch A echelon, one and six a bottle and I would get two bob for it anywhere but get it back to the battalion and get rid of it, just. They would see me come in and the blokes would come out with their two quid in their hands and "there it is, cart it away yourself".

**If you had a message for Australians about serving their country**

- 38:00 **to Australians in the future watching this what would you say?**

If you get the opportunity do so because you will meet a bloody good bunch of blokes and you will meet some mongrels and bastards amongst them but you will meet a good mob of mates but later on you will be proud to know that you served with them. I know that is banging the drum a bit but that is the way I feel.

**How do you feel when you watch war films today, I can see that you like them?**

- 38:30 Very amusing the things you see happen, it just couldn't happen like that. I have one over there on DVD, We Were Soldiers, the one with Mel Gibson. It is a good movie but the Americans they always got to win and they don't and they always got to kill about ten times more of the enemy than they lose themselves.
- 39:00 I could pick faults with uniforms and things like that. It used to annoy my second wife. She used to say particularly watching The Sullivans "He shouldn't wear that, that wasn't an issue during the war". And The Anzacs, the bloke who played Barrington wearing an officer's cap and he was only a corporal and that used to drive Dot up the wall. As entertainment, well I wouldn't say entertainment but I have always liked history and
- 39:30 things of historical significance I will watch them any old day. I am proud to say that I served the army and my country, proud to have wore my uniform and if I could I would do it again but at my age it is not likely to happen. I don't like the way they get treated these days,
- 40:00 pay wise and things like and it doesn't matter what the colour of your politics is they say nothing is too good for our men and that is what they are prepared to give us, nothing. I retired on, I got a pension, it was the superannuation scheme from the army and I had to pay tax on it even though I got discharged medically unfit.
- 40:30 I paid tax on it and when I was getting it and when I put my taxation return at the end of the year it put me in a higher tax bracket so I had to pay extra bloody tax on it. Disability pension, if I went to get something through Social Security I think they call it now my Disability Pension that is income and they don't regard it as compensation, two different Government Departments take exactly opposite views about
- 41:00 the one amount of money. This is quite common right throughout. I think on the whole ex-servicemen get a pretty lousy bloody deal, particularly when you look at what politicians pay themselves and all the perks they get afterwards and the ex-servicemen don't get a great number of perks. They get a piddly discount on their phone bills, in New South Wales we don't do too badly. If you are on a hundred percent pension
- 41:30 you get free bus, train and ferry travel. You don't have to pay for pink slips I think.

**But you would do it all again?**

Yes. It is amazing the number of blokes in the Second AIF that joined the regular army later, particular the blokes who joined up in K Force, that is the force they had particularly for Korea.

- 42:00 It is quite amazing the number of blokes that turned up.

## **Tape 10**

- 00:32 **Laurie, how do you feel about the image of the Korean War veterans in the public's eye?**

Nothing. They couldn't give two stuffs about us, we are definitely the forgotten crew. The Vietnam blokes scream about they are forgotten but Christ they got bloody welcome home parades and all sorts of bloody things.

- 01:00 Even if you watch the organisation of the Anzac Day March here in Sydney on fiftieth anniversary on the start of the Korean War and the end of the Korean War we thought we were honestly entitled to lead the march for the year. You could lead the post Second World War blokes and that is as far as they would go with us. They wouldn't allow us. We wanted the whole national reunion
- 01:30 for Korean veterans here in Sydney last year and we couldn't get a word out of RSL [Returned & Services League] Headquarters. No, they wouldn't wear that at all and that is why the national thing was held in Queensland. They would and did put on a good day. The Anzac Day March itself was a bit of a cock up. The previous night apparently somebody had a word with the musical director we got no bands which I thought it was bloody terrible, a block of two thousand men
- 02:00 without a band in front of them. The only time we had a band was when we went past the saluting base. Brisbane City Council on the night preceding Anzac Day they put on a civic reception for us in the Brisbane City Hall and it was terrific, it was marvellous and it was amazing the number of people I met there that I hadn't seen for years. A lot of people I had heard of from different places and I thought were dead from and I thought it was a really good night but Sydney here we got nothing,
- 02:30 not a bloody thing. You ask a lot of young people these days and they haven't a clue in the world where Korea was let alone what it meant to the country fifty four years ago. My niece knows, my nephews know but their children don't. I tried to talk to Terry, the second youngest nephew,
- 03:00 his daughter is very interested in her great grandfather being a prisoner of war, didn't know anything about the Korean War or anything and couldn't care less and the two over in West Australia they are



West Australians. Two of my nephews they were,

- 03:30 Kev was in the navy and the army he got out of the navy which he was allowed to do but he joined the army and deserted that and his brother he deserted as well which was an extreme disappointment to both their grandfather and myself. When I moved here there was a woman lived down the front there fronting Boggabri Road
- 04:00 and the first time I went with Phil in the bus I just asked what the pension rate was down to the bus down to Wentworthville and they said "a \$1.20". I got in and paid my \$1.20 and I pulled my pass out and I said to the fellow "Is this pass any good on these buses?" He said "Yes mate I will give you your money back" and I got a ride for free.
- 04:30 This Irene something or other she said "My husband didn't get, that he doesn't get anything like that". She said "You weren't in the war". I said "I know I wasn't but I was in the war in Korea" "Oh well why do you get that?" He didn't get anything". I said "Well where did he go?" "Oh, he went out to Mt Isa. He was a driver mechanic with an ambulance convoy". She said "He didn't get that." I said "What disability did he get?" "None, not now, he is dead".
- 05:00 He wasn't medically unfit and I said "Well why the hell should he get anything? He was well when he come out of it" and I said "He didn't go outside of Australia, never heard a shot fired in anger." I said "Why should he get any bloody thing?" I was very unpopular there for awhile. I done something that met with her approval and when she left here I was maybe not number one boy but I wasn't on the bottom of the list by a long shot.
- 05:30 **The fact that you had so much illness during your period of service how does that make you feel?**
- Unlucky I suppose. There is no guarantee I wouldn't have got it if I hadn't of been in the army. You pay your money and take your chances sort of thing. This Korea business with the four medals as mentioned
- 06:00 on the discharge certificate there, the active service medal covered service from the start of hostilities in 1950 to the end of hostilities 17th July 1953. The active service medal, Korea medal, the United Nations medal, if you served there for thirty days after
- 06:30 the end of the hostilities you got the Australian Service Medal as well. After the end of July 1954 the United Nations cancelled their medal as well and that entitled the blokes that served there after that time to the Australian Service Medal only, which incidentally has been on issue for about the last six or eight years.
- 07:00 Now there is a group of them they have got the Australian Service Medal after that belated medal award was made a few years back and they got absolutely nothing. Now they want the Active Service Medal and the Return from Active Service badge and we had a meeting yesterday and this motion was put forward to us that
- 07:30 we support this submission and no way in the world I wouldn't have it, it is bloody silly. Somebody trying to grab something they are not entitled to. They weren't up there when the shooting was on and if you weren't up there at the time, you don't get it and it is that bloody simple but they seem to think they are entitled to it and there were some very hostile words said there too but they lost anyway.
- 08:00 This originated from a group in Wollongong and the crowd I was meeting with Ernie yesterday they were holding a meeting in Wollongong RSL in August and I am going to go to that because there is sure somebody to get up and ask the question "Why can't we have it?" It would rest with the government whether they get it or not but I think they are flogging a dead horse trying to get it.
- 08:30 They weren't there at the time and it makes a mockery of the blokes that were there, not myself so much, but blokes that were there when they were doing it bloody hard and come there four years later and expect to get exactly the same thing, and if you weren't there you are not entitled to it and I reckon they have cheek to even try.

**How do you think your services as a professional soldier differed from the services of the National Servicemen of the time?**

- 09:00 There was no comparison. What the National Servicemen did of that particular era was equivalent of recruit training and that is all, with a little bit of training applicable to whatever type of unit they were going to and that was it. They were even mollycoddled as far as recruit training was concerned.
- 09:30 A fair few National Servicemen did go over to the regular army but there were a few and very bloody few that done their National Service in, well it started in 1951 and they done their three months national service with the regular army and went to Korea and you would look far and hard to find the bloke that would wear the National Service medal and then the Active Service medal and the Korean Medal, the United Nations medal.
- 10:00 There were a few, there wouldn't be that many, five I suppose. The National Service they brought in later I think that was a much fairer idea. I still get a bit cranky on Anzac Day when we always seemed to be subject to a hell of a lot of stoppages when we form up and where we march and get to Martin Place

and it really gets under my nose to see all

- 10:30 these bloody National Servicemen who never went out of Sydney, they take precedence in the bloody Anzac Day march and that stinks as far as I am concerned. The blokes who went to Vietnam, fair enough but I think if they went to serve in Vietnam they should be serving with the unit they served in, not in a mob that never went any bloody where.

**Tell us about your return to Korea in later years?**

- 11:00 We went, we left Sydney and we went to Hong Kong and that is where I met Ernie Holden and he thought I had come from Epping but I put him right there and I come from Marrickville and we got on all right. Had an overnight in Hong Kong and the next day we got on a
- 11:30 a Japanese airline. I can't remember who owned the airline but Ernie he flies model aeroplanes as you probably know and Ernie said to me walking up and down he said "Do you think they would let me go and have a look at the flight deck?" I said "I'm buggered if I know Ernie, you can ask, they can only say yes or no". He was gone for a while and he come back and said "How would you like to
- 12:00 have a look?" And I said "I would love it". We get up there and he introduces me to the pilot. They were all Australians I think, well two of them were and there were two spare seats in there and Ernie being the smallest of the two had one and we are getting towards the airport, Fukuoka, and I say to the bloke "I suppose we will have to go and get in our seats now?" And the bloke says "No,
- 12:30 sit down and buckle yourselves in there and you can go right in". It was terrific, like sitting in the box seat of the aircraft and landed and taxied in and when they switched off the engine they said "Right you can get out now". I come home and told me brother as Bruce was a trainee in the air force for awhile and had his own aeroplane for awhile he said "Christ, I would give my eye bloody teeth for a thing like that and there you are you mongrel
- 13:00 you get it handed to you on a bloody plate" joking like and it upset him a bit. My youngest brother Barry he has always been an aeroplane fanatic he said "I would have liked to have seen that".

**Did you see any former girlfriends in Hong Kong or Japan?**

No I wasn't interested in girls when I went to Japan in '91.

**How did it make you feel to go back to those areas?**

Happy to think I lived long enough to see it.

- 13:30 Hong Kong was different to what I expected. Well I only stayed there overnight on the way up and I didn't see too much of it. The British Army Camp we went to is gone but the Star Ferry runs across to where it used to be and the hotel we stayed at there was a hotel there but whether it was the same one or not I don't know but I quite enjoyed it there. We went to,
- 14:00 we flew to Fukuoka. The first time I was there I shared a room with a little sailor, Donny Campbell from Melbourne and I was a bit worried about what I was going to eat being a diabetic in the hotel we stayed at. It was a nice place, steak was seventy five dollars
- 14:30 American and I thought "Jesus." Steak and an egg cup the size of that jar there full of vegetables and a rice pudding of some sort but the seventy five dollars was worth the effort of watching the bloke cook the steak next to your table. He was a real maestro at it. The next day we went to Hiroshima
- 15:00 and we got out the bus at Hiroshima, I am getting a bit confused here, yeah, changed trains at Hiroshima and went on up to Kure and I was fairly excited about it to see what the place was like. We went by bus and I remember going past Kure station and the bus driver pulled up and
- 15:30 the Japanese tour guide says "Well now you are on the 'Hondoray' - the main street of Kure" and we looked around and I thought "Bullshit, this ain't the Hondoray", everything had changed completely. What had been a lot of ramshackle shops and whatever was all two storied buildings and the street had been widened. It was three lanes both sides of the streets and proper houses on both sides of the street and I thought "No, no, you're having us on"
- 16:00 and I looked to my right and I could see Kure House which was the main canteen in the Kure area and they still had the name Kure House up in English but it had a coat of paint and I seen that and I said "We are right where we are now". We were supposed to have a couple of hours to walk around Kure but we didn't get it and I got real crook there. The tour guide forgot to arrange lunch for me as I have
- 16:30 to eat at regular intervals and he forgot all about lunch and instead of having a look at Kure they took us up to what was headquarters BCFK, that is British Commonwealth Forces Korea, and they showed us around that and it hadn't change any from the few times I had been up there. We had a look through a Japanese navy frigate and that was a real eye opener and they didn't hesitate, anything
- 17:00 we could have a look at and had a look at all the submarines. There were about seven or eight submarines there. I ate a couple of muffin type things out of the canteen there and we got back down to Hiroshima and we drove past a hotel and it was a dingy looking place by this time,

- 17:30 Hiroshima Besoo, well that was the knock shop for officers in my time up there and I had spent a weekend there on my twenty one days R and R. They had a retired Major General sitting in front of me, Jim Hughes, and I tapped him on the shoulder and I said "Jim remember that place there?" And he said "Yes I remember that the Besoo". He said "What do you know about it?" I said "I spent some nice times in there too". His wife said "What is so funny, what is so funny?"
- 18:00 He said "That was a real good club to go to in there, there was a lot of entertainment in the place". I felt that crook when I was there if they could have arranged a flight for me to come home I would have got on it. I had to eat something and I went down and the food in Japanese restaurants is like milk bar, cafes that sort of thing. They
- 18:30 have a plastic display of the meal in the shop window so I had something there and something rice and I managed to get it down and went back and went to bed and the next day I didn't feel too bad. The next day we went up by bus up to Harumi and Christ hasn't that place changed. What was barren hills
- 19:00 was all grown with tea tree ferns or scrub pine like along the Centenary Way going around towards Homebush in there. It was all covered in that but in our time up there it was as bare as anything. It was pounded by tank fires, mortars and all sorts of things for years. This Major General Hughes he had told his wife
- 19:30 about the toilets up there. As I said before they used to come and collect it in pans and take it away for fertilizer and it was nothing to be sitting on the toilet there and a little old lady would say "toodie marsa boysan", as much to say "just a minute while I change the pan" and she wanted to see this right or wrong. To get to the toilets you had to walk through what were the Australian Barracks up there and
- 20:00 they still had the concrete walkway up the middle but it had been built up on the side floors and whatever so they could stick their tatami rolls and futons down on the wooden floor. I said to Hughes "I don't like the look of this. I am afraid your wife is going to be disappointed". She got out and opened the toilet and she said "You lied to me Jim, they have a proper system here". He said "Well it wasn't when I was here in 1951. She said "Look at it, seeing is
- 20:30 believing". He said "But it wasn't like that then" and she said "That is what I am seeing". I said "He is right Mrs Hughes, it did happen in those days" and I told her about me falling into the pit down the drove running away from the RPs. She settled down a bit then and they showed us around the different firing ranges which was just a large sort of fish pond and it was a great big lake now
- 21:00 and they showed some of the equipment they were using. It was '91 and it was a hundred percent better than anything the Australian Army had at the time. They had a little signals van there with a teletype in it and I get in there and the bloke said "Yes, go for your life" and I started to punch away a bit and I made a couple of mistakes and started to get in the swing of things and he said "Ah" and I said "What is the matter?" He said "No gloves" and
- 21:30 if you ever notice, I noticed it particularly there that Japanese driving cars, buses or trucks or anything always wear these real thin silk gloves and I couldn't understand why and it stops you, you just generate oil out of your hand and it stains the keys and things like that. After he pointed that out to me I noticed the blokes driving the big dump trucks they use for the garbage trucks in Korea and here he was
- 22:00 driving this great big dump truck with about eighteen ton of garbage he has a pair of white gloves on.

#### **Did you go over to Korea from there?**

Yes we had four days in Japan and I think eight days in Korea and a few days in Hong Kong. I took particular attention when we flew from Iwakuni, no it was Fukuoka, that's right, Fukuoka

- 22:30 to Pusan and I had a look at everybody and as they opened the plane and got out they were smelling and I said "It doesn't smell the same does it?" I said "It smells funny but nowhere near as bad as it was in '50 to '53". I saw more containers,
- 23:00 those forty foot containers there that day than I had in my life. They were everywhere stacked five or six high, hundreds of them.

#### **How did it make you feel to see how prosperous countries like Japan and Korea had become in the meantime?**

It was hard to say but I was pleased I was able to get back and see it and I said "Look at it now compared to what it was like then". I was pleasantly surprised and

- 23:30 I thought if only we had been in a similar position but their attitude towards work and things like that different in those places.

#### **Did you feel that they had profited from the Australians serving there whereas we hadn't?**

They had benefited from the war yes, well the Korean War helped put Japanese industry back on its feet because they had that many things they needed

- 24:00 replacing and rebuilt and all that sort of thing and they had the Japanese industry going and the Vietnam War helped do the same thing for the Koreans because the Koreans put a whole division, at least a whole division into Vietnam, forty thousand men and the Viet Cong didn't like them one little bit. They captured a couple of Koreans early and they give them a rough treatment and so the Koreans decided if that is the way
- 24:30 they want to play they got a couple of Viet Cong and skinned them alive and left them there and they never had any trouble after that.

**Would you like to go back to Korea again some time?**

Yes, I would I would like to go and see their armed forces. I believe it is something spectacular and I would like to go back and see the onset of winter again. Medically it is out of the question because I couldn't

- 25:00 live on the food again I don't think. All the travelling you get this long distance traveller thing, you get vein troubles and I had trouble with that before and there is a lot of riding around in buses and sitting down and long socks were only coming up to there on me and I had trouble walking for months and months after.

**How important to you are**

- 25:30 **the reunions with your Association?**

Very important. I like to go to them although quite often I am disappointed because lots of blokes I am looking for are either dead or don't turn up. I was in two platoons of sixty men a piece and they are from all over the country and a hell of a lot of them have fallen off the perch now, they are just not around. They are that crook they can't

- 26:00 make it. When I went to Melbourne last year I saw Billy Roberts, who I've got a photo of there somewhere and I was going to go and see Johnny Daymond but Johnny Daymond is about half your size again and only about up to there on me and he is stuck in a motorised wheel chair and he just can't move, he can't get around. I said "I will come out and see you" and

- 26:30 out of my memory it was a few years since I had seen him. He seemed healthy enough, he was getting around he said he weighed about twenty two stone now and "I can't walk". He is just "I sound all right" and he said "Remember me as I was not as I am". He lives way out of Melbourne at Coolah Downs and I have trouble finding my way around in strange cities so I took him at his word and I didn't go out and see him but I have rung him a couple of times since and

- 27:00 I let him know who I saw and what we done and what have you.

**Alright Laurie I think we'll probably leave it at that then.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**