

Australians at War Film Archive

Roy Inches (Slim) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 12th March 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1563>

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

The embargoed portions are
noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:40 **So Roy can you just give me a summary of your life.**

Yes, Nicole [interviewer]. I was born in Carlton, Victoria on 18th November 1922. I came to Dalby

01:00 at an early age, aged about three months with my mother and settled with Dalby with the rest of the family, and I went to school in Dalby, grew up there, met my present wife there and was married there and also enlisted in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] in Dalby and returned there after World

01:30 War II. After World War II I went back to my job as a shop assistant for a short time and then I entered the Railway Department in 1947, approximately 18 months after I was discharged, and I was married in

02:00 1948 and from there we travelled most of western Queensland on various appointments and I spent 35 years in the railway and a portion of that service, about 30 years of it was in Brisbane where I was on the relieving staff, and then I obtained a permanent appointment at Brunswick Street Station in the valley

02:30 and I was there for 10 years and I went from there to Rocklea and at age 60 I retired from the railway and I lived in Brisbane for some time after that, then eventually came back to Toowoomba.

Terrific. That's great. We'll just stop for a minute Roy, there's someone at the door. Now going back to the beginning again. What was it like

03:00 **growing up in Dalby?**

Well, Dalby at that time was a town of about 3,000. Now it's a town of about 10,000, but in those days everyone knew everybody else and if a stranger came to town it wasn't very long before you knew him. It's different these days but in those days it was a case of knowing everybody there and

03:30 I didn't get to know my wife until after the war but I knew just about everybody in Dalby before the war and I enlisted from there and I really enjoyed life. But life in Dalby in those days were in the Depression years and they were really tough years. Not many people really know about the Depression years,

04:00 but when you get into my age group you remember them and Dalby was a town, it was compassionate. Friends were, the local butcher would always sling a bit extra meat or something like that but mostly it was a tough time. Even going to school. Perhaps there were more children

04:30 going to school without footwear than there would be with footwear, so things didn't start to improve in Dalby until just shortly before the war, before World War II and then they smarted up and ever since Dalby has been a go-ahead town.

Why did you move to Dalby?

Well, my parents in the early

- 05:00 days in Melbourne split up and were eventually divorced and my mother went to her family in Dalby so that was the reason I came up and we settled in Dalby and I never left, I really never left until I enlisted and then after enlistment I went back for a couple of years and then after joining the railway well that became more travelling and
- 05:30 I've never been permanently settled in Dalby since. It required a lot of thought to move and join a department that you knew was going to cause a lot of travel, but my wife, after we were married, she was very cooperative and she didn't mind the moves and packing and so forth. It
- 06:00 was quite an experience and we met a lot of people.

Do you remember the move from Melbourne to Dalby?

No, no. I was only about three months then.

And who did you live with in Dalby?

My grandmother. She was still, she was a long resident of Dalby and I moved, we moved in there with her and that's where we stayed.

What did your mum do to make ends meet?

- 06:30 She was a dressmaker and I remember her making a complete frock in those days for 12 and 6 in the old money which was probably good money in those days but these days its not that much.

Do you remember what the frock looked like?

It was the average ladies frock. It wouldn't be

- 07:00 anything really flash or upmarket but it was the usual frock that would be worn by the average women of the day.

What sort of mum, what was your mum like? Her personality?

She was quite good. She handled things very well actually and she really

- 07:30 she looked after me. My grandmother was a great backstop though and I don't think without my grandmother that we would have survived because she was an old timer from way back and she looked after us pretty well. She lived to a great old age of about 88 when she died and she was really an old pioneer originating
- 08:00 in Leyburn out from Toowoomba and then she and her parents went to Goondiwindi and she spent a lot of time in Goondi [Goondiwindi] and then married and the strange thing about that was her name was Smith before she was married and she married a Smith. I had a look at a family tree examining that once, but only once, because once

- 08:30 you got to the Smiths, you are in a lot of trouble.

What about your grandfather, when did he...?

He was there. He died when he was about 65 actually. He was a shearer. Good fellow. Bill Smith. Couldn't get any more common name than that.

Did you know him?

Oh yes.

He was there when he moved from Melbourne?

Yes. I was about seven when he died but I still remember him though

- 09:00 and he was a good fellow.

And what was school like in Dalby?

Dalby was, it's totally different to what school is today. The teachers had complete control. There was no backslapping any teachers or any cheek and doing what you were told and into the bargain getting a slash of the cane every now and again if you stepped out of line and that was all

- 09:30 par for the course in those days and in looking back it wasn't a bad way either because there was no such thing as butting the school teacher or hitting them or even abusing them or getting out of line at all. You would simply be chucked out of the school and the principal, the headmasters of the state schools were pretty authoritarian and
- 10:00 what they said was law and the discipline was pretty good. You didn't like it then, but when you look back on it after the, in adult years you thought well that was the right thing to do, that was the right way to go and now of course they can't do it. They can't touch a child now without looking at assault charges so consequently it's not as

10:30 really pleasant job for a school teacher these days. It was different then.

What did you like about school?

Meeting the different children. We all got on well. We had football teams and cricket teams and it was quite good. We got to know each other and some of those people I still know today. There are a lot gone of course, a lot have

11:00 passed on but some of those people that I went to school with still exist in Dalby today and they haven't changed much. Look a bit older like me.

Who were your best mates?

In Dalby I had a fellow named George Hammond. He's since passed on, but George was my best friend in Dalby. I had other good friends there to but this fellow,

11:30 he was a particularly good friend of mine and everyone in Dalby knew George Hammond and everyone liked him. He was a good fellow.

And what did you guys do together as kids?

Went to dances mainly. Dances, the Saturday night hops were the things in those days and it was a different style of dancing even.

Can you describe a Saturday night hop?

Yes. Two shillings in the old money

12:00 to get in, admission charge, 2 shillings and very often if they charged 2 and 6 in the old money there was a supper as well. Sandwiches and tea and they had a usually a really good bandstand and it's what they call "old time" now. Waltzes, foxtrots, gypsy taps, dances like that. They were really good

12:30 and a lot of dances in those days were held in the country too and it wasn't uncommon to for a cream carrier to hire his truck out for the night and you'd pay about 2 shillings in the old money to go out to a country dance and that was on every Saturday night so you know, there was a lot of fun created and

13:00 dances were good. People got to know each other. In fact I met my wife at a dance and there were more like there who met their future wives at dances and so forth. It was quite pleasant. All that seemed to alter with the war because most of the men were away. Dances continued but not to the same extent and after the war

13:30 the type of dancing changed. They became bistros or all that sort of thing and it was different.

What had you heard of war at that point?

Only what I read in the newspapers really. It was of course the European broke out in September 1939 and for the first few months as you may have read

14:00 in history books that life went on as usual and even in England but then 1940 and '41, '41 particularly, things livened up over there and of course when it looked like the Germans and the Italians had the upper hand the Japs [Japanese] then entered the war by an attack on Pearl Harbor.

14:30 They thought they were on the winning end but they made a mistake.

Do you remember where you were the day the war broke out?

Yes I was home in Dalby. Are you talking about the European war when war was declared against Germany? Yes I was home just well, heard I was 17 then and thought, "Oh well. It'll probably be over by the time

15:00 hooked up in it." It wasn't.

How did you hear about it?

On the radio. We had radio at this time. They were old, old electronic gadgets you know. Static everywhere. If there was a storm on you heard nothing not like now. But the news

15:30 services were very good and particularly after the war started they improved out of sight. The ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] reached everywhere and you had commercial stations and they broadcast the news and what was happening overseas well almost, as soon as they received the news and there was a lot of cable work done at that time. Technology had advanced but not to the same

16:00 extent as today but it was at least becoming fast and news travelled fast.

So where were you, where were you at the time and who were you with when you heard about the war on the radio?

I was just at home you know, at our home and listening to the radio when there was an interruption to the service and they broadcast England had declared war on Germany that the time for the ultimatum

had

16:30 expired and consequently they were at war and the prime minister of the time also broadcast after this that as a result of this we were also at war. That was the late Sir Robert Menzies. He was the prime minister at the time.

And was you mum with you?

Yes.

What were you saying to each other about it?

We hardly discussed it. It was inevitable,

17:00 the way the Germans were piece by piece taking little countries and Hitler was at his peak and it was obvious he wasn't going to stop where he was and of course when he invaded Poland it was the end of the thing. No more tolerance. He had to be stopped and stopped him they did.

17:30 Things went on in that vein. Mostly we were concerned with what was happening in Europe. The Americans weren't in the war but they were supplying materials under the Lend Lease Agreement and also supplying ships, like destroyers and things like that under the Lend Lease and they were

18:00 on our side technically and morally, but they didn't enter the war until the Japanese launched the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Before we move into the war can you tell me a bit more about the town of Dalby at that time? Can you describe first of all the street in Dalby, the main street?

Well the main street in Dalby, Cunningham Street was pretty well as it is

18:30 today only there are more shops and the shops have been modernised. There were two movie theatres in the street. One was constructed, constructed of galvanised iron. The other was of more modern brick and plaster. They have both been demolished since and they went, they met their demise

19:00 when drive-in theatres became the order of the day, but going to the pictures on a Saturday night and through the week, but mainly Friday and Saturday was the in thing. Going to the pictures and of course after the pictures, that's when you went to the dance after that. Saturday night was the night.

Who would you take to the pictures?

A girlfriend if you had one or go on your own

19:30 with your mates, if you didn't and then you'd wander off to the dance. There was everything was different. There was no sort of danger. You wouldn't be afraid of being mugged on the way home. If you just went home after the dance. If you happened to meet somebody and walked a girl home well that was it. You weren't frightened of

20:00 people jumping out of the dark at you like things happen today. They, you know you're not even a male on his own or a couple of males aren't safe walking home at night particularly going to ATM [Automatic Teller Machine] machines and things like that. Things are different. Security is different but it wasn't like that in those days. For instance, the house we had. I've often told this story. We lived in Loam Street

20:30 and I don't think we had a key to the front door. It was never locked and when my grandmother or my mother went out shopping and there was no one home the door was just pulled and of course, when you went home everything was still there. No you've got to lock it up. You have bars on your windows and you have alarms and that sort of thing. But it wasn't like that in those days.

21:00 Things have changed.

Describe your house.

It was a wooden three bedroom home. No bathroom in those days they didn't construct bathrooms. We had to bathe in a big tub really. It was a wooden stove. Mother pots irons. You put the irons on the stove to get home. No electric

21:30 irons until later. Electricity. Yes, we did get it eventually but most of the time we were without electricity and had ordinary lamps, kerosene lamps. Water was eventually they got water in Dalby and it was connected to the various houses. The water wasn't much good. It was very

22:00 acidity I suppose you'd call it. It wasn't much good for plants but now they've got other supplies and the water is okay. But in those days you couldn't drink it or ever use it on your plants but home was an ordinary timber homes. Most homes in Dalby in those days were timber. In fact I think they're mostly timber now because of the black soil you have to be careful building in brick

22:30 because they crack. But I think there are systems out now where you can build in brick into black soil but if you go for a drive around Dalby now you'll find mostly they are timber homes.

Was it unusual to have a house with two women and yourself? Was it a different family

makeup to other families?

Oh no.

23:00 Mostly they were a family unit though. Husband and wife and the children. It went along in that form. It was mainly the family set up and except for those that had lost their families or their families had grown up and left and there were only the two at home and then if one of them had passed

23:30 on then it left much the same as it is today with one person carrying on.

Did you ever see your father again?

No. He died. I didn't see him.

And what were some of the movies you remember going to?

Well mainly they were Jimmy Cagney movies and

24:00 Snozzle [Jimmy] Durante, Spencer Tracey, Clark Gable. They were the stars in those days and of course, when you look back at them now the acting was pretty corny compared with the acting today. But it was the, we didn't recognise that as being corny in those days. We thought

24:30 it was very well done.

Who was your favourite?

I think Spencer Tracey. He was a good actor and if you seen a...of course I was a follower of cowboy and Indian movies and there were plenty of them because I think they were cheap to make and they were so, the story line was so improbable but you accepted it.

25:00 It was entertainment. Tom Minks and all those people that fired and their guns never ran out of ammunition and their hats never fell off and things like that. It was entertainment.

And how different do you think dating was back then to what it is now?

Well it was different. For instance, when I first started to date my wife I turned up in a suit. Well I was in the

25:30 air force first and I was in uniform all the time, but in civilian days you wouldn't go around without a tie on and your shirt tucked in and a nice pair of clean trousers or something like that. If you went out you had the ruler passed over you first.

What does that mean?

They would see that you were respectfully dressed.

26:00 There was no way in the world you would get away with going in a t-shirt or something like that. That's what I mean. It was a different era and a different standard. It wasn't too bad either. It kept you up to the mark.

You paid for the movies for the girls?

Oh yes, yeah. That was an always, that was always on. You never asked them to pay. I don't know what it's like

26:30 now.

What was your first job in Dalby?

My first job was at the post office when I left school. It was a temporary job as a PMG messenger. It was the Post Master General's Department in those days and you wore armbands around your arm and you delivered telegrams. The telegram system was in then. When that cut out I, Penny's

27:00 a chain store opened a branch in Dalby. That was in 1937 and I got a job there and I was in the grocery department there for two years until I enlisted in the RAAF.

What did you do at Penny's sorry?

Just worked in the groceries. Making up orders, serving on the counter, weighing up spuds

27:30 and what goes with being a grocery.

Did it help having that wage, that extra wage coming in?

Oh yes because my wage then was 17 and 6 in the old money for the first year and 1 pound for the two year which as you know would be equivalent to \$1.75 and \$2 a week. But that was par for the course.

28:00 The basic, what they used to refer to then as the basic wage was about 4 pound a week which is equivalent to \$8 but you could buy things much cheaper. Things now you get out in the workplace \$500

per week but it cost you \$100 to go for your grocery

28:30 order and not get much, it costs you \$100 doesn't it. It was sort of as wages went up so did prices until you see what happened today and no one thinks twice about paying \$500 for a suit. My first suit was from a firm called Wolfe & Son. They made

29:00 suits in Brisbane and their special was a suit and an extra pair of trousers for 3 pound so they were, it was prices were comparable with wages.

When did you start getting interested in enlisting?

1941 actually.

29:30 Really before the Japs came in, but by the time I had fixed up some, my own private affairs and seen that my mother and grandmother were in proper circumstances and could survive, the Japs had entered the war so I speeded up my application and I actually, enlisted, was accepted on

30:00 30th March, 1942.

Why did you want to join?

Well I thought the, and rightly so the Japs were a threat and they actually swept everything before them when they entered the war it was almost a knockout blow for the Americans at Pearly Harbour. They sank the Arizona plus a lot more other

30:30 shipping there. They actually you know, they didn't knock American out but they woke him up of course and he was a big groggy after Pearl Harbor and the Japanese were able to come down as far as Malaya. They sunk a battleship and a cruiser. The Prince of Wales and the Repulse, had no trouble and came around the opposite way to Singapore and overrun it.

31:00 After they came down the Malayan Peninsula, they hopped across. There was nothing stopping them and actually they were in New Guinea so they weren't far away and they were a threat to Australia and most people of my age did enlist. Only those in reserved occupations that didn't because the Japanese did pose a real threat and fortunately,

31:30 they didn't get any further.

When war first broke out were there people disappearing from Dalby? Men?

Disappearing?

I mean going off to join.

Oh yes. Right from the word go.

Can you describe some of the people that left and what happened in town?

Yes. Right from the word go there were men in various occupations.

32:00 Road workers, builders, from all occupations they enlisted in what was then called the 2nd AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. The 6th Division of course was the first one served and then came the 7th, 8th and 9th Division. They all had their portion of country people in them and there were a lot of Dalby people in the 9th Division. Also in the 8th Division that was captured over in Singapore.

32:30 A lot of POWs [Prisoners Of War] and they were roughly a broad spectrum of the community that went. But Dalby acquitted itself very well with volunteers and then in during this time too there was a call up of national, the militia as they called it them.

33:00 They went into the 25th Battalion in Toowoomba and some went into the 21st Battalion and they went to Milne Bay and they acquitted themselves very well at Milne Bay and so they were actually militia troops there. They were, also AIF troops there but I think the 61st Battalion and the 25th they met the Japs at Milne Bay

33:30 and they defeated them.

What sort of news were you hearing about the guys that had gone in those early years?

Only in newspaper. You see the journalists that were recruited were war correspondents and the government seemed to sanction plenty of those. They wanted the real story told and there were people like that photographer

34:00 Damian Perrin and journalists. I just don't recall their names now but they were really pretty brave people. They were in the front line with the troops and they did get the stories home and the stories, the articles that you read in the newspapers were all from accredited war correspondents that was all factual

34:30 news.

Did you hear of men dieing from the families?

There were of course a lot of casualties. Some from POWs, from POWs died. There was one man from Dalby that died on the Sandakan Death March. A chap named Aussie Bregore, he died on that, but

35:00 there were a lot of casualties. I just don't recall names in detail now but yes, there were a lot of people from Dalby. There were a lot survived and there were a lot wounded and there were a lot taken prisoner so they did provide a very, shall I say, a big

35:30 percentage you know. What their quota would be they would have out done it. They would have provided more. People were anxious to go.

How did it affect you as a young man hearing about other young Dalby men that were dying?

Well you sorry to hear it you know. It was, you'd say, "I can't believe it." There were people I had gone to school

36:00 with and they were now dead. You couldn't believe it. They were 19 or 20 years of age. And if you look through a war cemetery at any time. I went through the war cemetery at Adelaide River, south of Darwin and to see all the head stones there, 'Flying officer so and so, aged 21 years'. 'Private so and so,

36:30 aged 20 years'. They were all young men who you know had a life ahead of them and they had given it up because most of the air crews in Darwin were all in the 20s. Even the COs [Commanding Officers], a CO that we will get onto later, Wing Commander Reid, now Sir Charles Reid, he was 26

37:00 and the was the CO of 31st Squadron and we used to refer to him as 'the old man' at 26 years of age. He's still alive, and I think he's 80 something now.

So how did that affect your decision to join the war hearing that sort of thing?

Well it didn't. I had made my mind to enlist so that was cut and dried. The age for

37:30 enlisting without your parent's consent was 21 in those days but my mother consented when I told her I wanted to and she signed the paper and I was enlisted.

How did she react?

She more or less thought it was my duty as well. She didn't like it. It was inevitable. Everybody was in the same boat pretty well.

You said earlier on that

38:00 **when war first broke out life sort of went on as normal. When did the war really get serious for you?**

Well I think not until the Japs entered the war. Pearl Harbor was the big awakener. As Yamamoto, the Jap we will talk about later, the commander and chief and the architect of

38:30 Pearl Harbor said he wasn't sure what they'd dealt a blow to the Americans to knock them out or whether they had awakened a sleeping giant because he was educated in Harvard in America and he knew the Americans. But of course he was a Japanese and he did his duty as he was directed to do

39:00 it. But yes, Pearl Harbor was the great awakener.

So when did you enlist and what were the specifics of that day?

Well I had done the medical on a recruiting train that had come to Dalby around about the October before Pearl Harbor and it was just a case of

39:30 writing to the recruiting centre and telling them that you would proceed with the application and they accepted me as a pilot telephonist trainee but I had to wait and they called me up then on the, to report on the 30th March. But I waited a couple of months.

Why did you want to become part of the RAAF?

It was just

40:00 a question of choice. The army, yes a great service and the navy too but the air force was the newest and I knew there was going to be rapid, rapid progress in the technology of aircraft and communications and so forth so I thought I would make myself part of that if they would accept me

40:30 which they did.

So what happened then?

Well on 30th March I went to Brisbane and was sworn in. Left on that day for training at Ballarat. We went by train. We arrived at Ballarat about two days later I think and I thought when I got on the platform at Ballarat,

- 41:00 I don't know if you have ever been there one of the coldest places in Australia and it was so cold, it was the 2nd April I think and I thought I would never stand this. Coming from Brisbane and being hot and going to Ballarat and it was absolutely freezing, and I thought, "I'll never get through this. I'll die of cold. Freeze to death here." And
- 41:30 I was there seven months doing this course in the coldest winter they had had in 30 years.
- Before we go on I think we might change the tape.**

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Can you tell me about the trip down to Ballarat and what were you expecting?**
- Well really we were all rookies and there were 19 of us and we didn't know what to expect. It was a pretty ordinary ride in the train, too. It wasn't any first class deluxe accommodation. It was just an ordinary seat in the, that was the best they could offer
- 01:00 so no one growled. We got down to Ballarat and when we got out of the, they were all in the same boat. All these fellows were from Brisbane or country areas and they were horrified at the weather. They were really shocked. So placed in the bus then and taken out to Ballarat RAAF station. It was a wireless, air gunners school
- 01:30 and they had 1,000 air gunners and 1,000 trainee wireless operators.
- Before you go through that story what were you talking about on the train from Brisbane? Can you remember what sort of things were?**
- Just when we did our course which we knew would to be pretty lengthy because none of us knew anything about Morse code and we had to learn this
- 02:00 and we were just wondering where we'd be sent, that's all, and hoping before we got sent to New Guinea we would get a bit of spell around near home you know. I for one had never left home. This was my first trip away from home and to skip a little bit, I never got back for two years. Two years was my
- 02:30 first leave after I left to go to Ballarat that day and I said to my mother and grandmother, "Well, look, I'll be in Ballarat but I'll get a weekend. I'll be home probably next weekend." That was two years later.
- How did you feel saying goodbye?**
- You know I was a kid. I felt it. I felt it and because these two women had been
- 03:00 my life and I was then thrust into a whole new life and environment. New people. I had to eventually go down to Ballarat where they were going to bark at me, look into my face to see that I'd shaved and at that age I was only shaving once a week. But
- 03:30 we discussed all that sort of thing on the way down. A couple of them had girlfriends. I didn't. I was completely free and Brisbane interstate station there were a lot of tears, you know, with girlfriends. There were none of them married but they had obviously been with their girlfriends for a long time and they were going to miss them and vice versa.
- What**
- 04:00 **was Brisbane like for a bloke from Dalby? What did you think of it?**
- Awesome. I don't think, no I hadn't been there and of course I'd seen plenty of it later. It turned into a war time city. Americans on every corner and Australian army.
- 04:30 Really it wasn't a bad town just the same. Plenty of fights if you wanted them. Getting back to the dances. A lot of dances for the servicemen.
- How long were you in Brisbane?**
- Not for very long. It was after I came back to Darwin so we are going to skip some of it to come back to Brisbane.
- Okay. Well we'll come back to Brisbane later. So you were only in Brisbane for a short period**
- 05:00 **before you went to Ballarat?**
- Only a day.
- Right.**
- And then. Do you want to go on from Ballarat?
- Lets go to Ballarat and what were your first impressions of rookie camp and?**

Well when we drove in the door there was a line up of old hands we called them. People who had been in a month or two before us and all in one voice they were singing out, "You'll be sorry."

- 05:30 That wasn't real good for the morale. It was strange how we adapted to it though. Then we were taken to the store and issued with uniforms and footwear and all that sort of thing and a great coat. We had to wear a great coat in Ballarat because it was so cold and also mittens and the discipline there was very severe.

Can you explain that a little

- 06:00 **bit?**

Yeah. Smoking for instance. You see everyone smoked in those days including myself and if you were smoking on any of the main roads. They had what they call service police. They are the equivalent air force, they call them. I think they have a name for them now, another name, RAAF Police or something but they were the Service Police in those days and

- 06:30 they were the equivalent of the Military Police, the provos, and they manned the guard, patrolled the areas where we worked and also they had them stationed at the main gates and things like that and all the roads there amongst the huts or dormitories were bitumen and if you smoked on a

- 07:00 bitumen road you got booked, immediately and you got one or two nights in the cookhouse as extra duties. Peeling potatoes and onions. Not a half a pound a bag. So it was pretty severe and not only that but there was a hut inspection everyday and your blankets had to be rolled

- 07:30 and in order and your sandshoes, your runners had to be placed in a certain way and everything had to be just right and they went along and examined every bed and they would look at the next bed and you were say an inch of two out, "Okay, you get booked for that and a couple of nights down there." And walking along with your hands in your pockets, that was an offence.

- 08:00 They weren't offences that they charged you with or anything like that they just dished out extra duties to you and let you know who was boss. That was the thing. It was severe discipline. You had to be on your guard all the time. They were so bad that there was one fellow, a service policemen there and they christened him the 'Airmen's Friend' he was so bad

- 08:30 and of course, they were hated. They didn't have any friends.

Do you remember getting disciplined?

Oh yeah.

Yeah. What sort of things were you getting marked up for?

Just that. Smoking on the road, having my blankets out of line once, and I was going out, we had weekend leave and I was going to Melbourne for the weekend

- 09:00 and just passing out the gate I had my hand in my pocket and I got nabbed right there and then and sent back, leave cancelled and spent the whole weekend in the cookhouse. They didn't have any mercy on you, but that was the type of discipline they dished out. Of course it was no different after.

Describe a day in the life of that rookie training.

Well a day.

- 09:30 From memory I think it was 6.30 that you arose. You'd have to get down to the showers, have a shower put on your working clothes which mainly were combination overalls and a beret.

Would you all shower together?

Oh no when we say together there was all separate rows you know. Oh now, you'd go down when you were ready to go but it

- 10:00 all had to be done in a certain time so you might be waiting for someone to get out of the shower for you to go in but you had your shower, came back and got dressed. Went down and had your breakfast and that would take you until about 7.30; 8 was parade. You were on parade at 8 and then the

- 10:30 OC or the drill instructor he'd go along the line and he'd have a look that your hair was cut and that you'd shaved and that your uniform was clean even your workers. That everything was clean and so forth and after that was over. Of course if there was anything wrong there you got also

- 11:00 some extra duties handed out. But if everything was okay there well classed started around about 9, I would say, and there used to be nine periods in a day. Four of those periods, five of those were on Morse and four of them were taken up with two PT [Physical Training] sessions and two drill sessions

- 11:30 and the drill instructors they would handle the drill part of it and the PT they were, they were instructors of another type. You know they were usually men that had followed this profession and they

kept you in good nick. We used to run about four4 mile a day over into the back country and over

12:00 up over fences and all that sort of thing but it kept you in good nick. And the Morse sessions, they would last about half an hour. They were split into classes. You started off with zero to six words per minute. We are talking words per minute here. Zero to six, then they would go six to eight,

12:30 eight to 10 I think it was, 10 to 13, 13 to 16, 16 to 20 and we pass out at 22 words per minute and that had to be. To pass out, to pass from one class to another you had to get three consecutive tests correct without any errors at all and three of them

13:00 would be in plain language and three in code, code and numbers and you had to get these six tests right. Three of them. Three sets of six right consecutively and then you passed onto the next speed. When you passed out at 22 words per minute you then, the student then went into what was called a procedural.

13:30 There was a lot in air force procedure. The routing of messages and where they had to go and call signs and that took up almost a month and after that was over you passed out of your course and you were posted to a unit and in my case I was posted to 31 Squadron which at that time was forming in Wagga Wagga.

14:00 **Can we go back to some of the Morse you were learning. Can you describe Morse code and how you learnt it?**

Well you learnt in what they called signing. For instance de da, that's 'A'. It was like being in a prep school, de da 'A', de da 'A' and it sort of made an imprint on your brain. People who knew something about music found it easier to learn Morse

14:30 and I've seen some people who didn't complete this course who were top notch academics. It was a funny sort of thing. It's not like shorthand. I learnt shorthand at school and 12 months after I left school I couldn't write a word of shorthand because I didn't keep it up but I can do Morse now like it was only yesterday that I did this course.

Can you recite the alphabet for us?

De da 'A',

15:00 da de de de 'B', da de da de 'C', da de de 'D', de "E", de de da de 'F', da da de 'G', de de de de 'H', de de 'I', de da da da 'J', da de da 'K', de da de de 'L', da da 'M', da de 'N', da da da 'O', de da da de 'P', da da de da

15:30 'Q', de da de 'R', de de de 'S', da 'T', de de da 'U', de de de da 'V', de da da 'W', da de de da 'X', da de da da 'Y', da da de de 'Z'.

Some of those sound the same to me.

They do. You've got to get used to them. They were all different.

How would you learn? Describe the classroom learning that stuff.

16:00 Well there was an instructor at the top and he had earphones and you were sitting at a desk and you had set of earphones and he would be sending, he had a key up on the desk elevated in front of the class. Just like a school master and he would be sending and you had to write down what he was sending and then he would go around the class and see what you had and if you repeated it was correct okay

16:30 and if not, more practice.

What did you, what did you find difficult about learning Morse?

I didn't really find it difficult. I had to concentrate on it but I seemed to, they allowed you about a, I think from memory about a month in each class. If you didn't handle it in a month well I think that was it they made you a signals clerk.

17:00 But I seemed to have got through it a month and I didn't have any trouble with it really but when you got out it's just like you go out into the world now. Say you are a nurse and you do the nursing course at the university and you learn until you go out amongst the hospitals and so forth. Well it's the same with a wireless operator. You've learnt all your Morse, you've learnt your procedure

17:30 you've learnt all about it and then you go out in the real world and then you learn. That's how it was because then you have real operators on the end of the line not an instructor. In some cases they were women, WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force], and in other cases there were bad operators that slurred their words you know. It really

18:00 taught you how to handle Morse and but it was an interesting game and the more you did of it of course the faster you got and we had some really good operators and when you got a good operator on the other end you handled a lot of traffic. Now when 31 Squadron moved to Darwin and

- 18:30 the traffic at that time in 1942 going to Darwin was immense. It was mind boggling the number of signals, and I think 31 Squadron had 10 or 12 operators and North Western Area Headquarters would have had three, four times that many and running in 3 x 8 hour shifts so wireless traffic was immense and of course there was all the
- 19:00 work to do up there with the aircraft as well.
- Before we go up there, we'll stay at the rookie camp a little bit longer. Can you describe some of your friends at the camp?**
- Yes. Some of them, the one in the picture I'll show you in a minute he's still meets me in Sydney each year. He's from Western Australia, from Perth. We were all about the same age
- 19:30 and we made some good friends. A lot of them have gone now. You know they have passed on. They were really. In the wireless operator field, I'm being sort of overzealous or over-egotistical or whatever but they had a particularly good class of person in it.
- 20:00 A lot of them were straight from school. I knew one chap that was with us he was a young fellow who finished at Geelong Grammar and the next thing he's in the air force and the next thing he's in Ballarat, so you know, they were really good, nice people. You had a good class of man that you or boy or youth that you mixed with and they were, you know you could really back them
- 20:30 in a thing and they stuck to their mates. They were real good friends.
- How did you become mates with this guy in the photo?**
- He came from Western Australia but he came into the same course that I did around about the same time but he came from Western Australia. I think he slept very close to me. We had dormitories with 28 in the dormitory and we became pally there and of course he got posted to
- 21:00 31 Squadron as well and we went to Darwin and Coomalie Creek together.
- What was he like? What was his personality?**
- Very good. I don't know how to describe him. He was a very placid bloke you know never got upset and he would do anything for his mates. There was a lot of camaraderie. The camaraderie was really good. We'd go out together.
- 21:30 Perhaps seven or eight of us. We'd go to Adelaide for Ballarat and have a weekend and we'd go to dances in Ballarat and then go to Melbourne and do all the sightseeing. Mostly you went with somebody from your unit and you stayed with them and they proved to be very good friends
- 22:00 and he's, well he was 18. I was 19 at that time and now I'm 81 and he's 80. So it's lasted a long time, hasn't it?
- How long did it take for you to get rid of the home sickness?**
- Well I don't know if you ever did. It was always in the back of your mind
- 22:30 and at that time too the Japs were very close. Knocking at the doors of Port Moresby. Midway hadn't, the Coral Sea Battle hadn't taken place. After that it became easier and after Milne Bay and after the Kokoda Trail it became easier and not so worrying, but at one stage it looked as though you could be faced with a landing
- 23:00 of the Japs so it was a bit worrying as well. So I don't think it ever left really and when the mail came in you always raced for a letter and if you didn't get one you were disappointed.
- Did your mum write quite a bit?**
- Oh yes.
- What sort of things was she telling you about Dalby?**
- She used to pick out parts of the local newspaper and just pin them
- 23:30 to the letter you know. Local goings on. yes we got a lot of news that way.
- Can you do a description of your camp? If you were walking through the camp what would I see?**
- At Ballarat or Darwin?
- At Ballarat.**
- Well you'd walk in the front gates and there was a guard house on your left and there would be security guards there plus air force
- 24:00 Service Police. You'd walk down the road there would be an administration building where the commanding officer would be. You wouldn't run immediately into that you'd veer off a bit and the

administration building. The had a name for that but I won't tell what that was.

Go on you can tell us that sort of thing.

'Bullshit Castle'.

24:30 That's what they used to call it because they reckon it all came from there. You aren't going to air that are?

It's part of the record. It's great to have that as part of the record.

Oh is it?

So after the Bullshit Castle where do you go from there?

Well you go down there was a heap of dormitories - 28 men to those. The wireless air gunner section and the wireless operator section.

25:00 They were all housed in separate dormitories but there would be about 2,000 airmen on the property, on the station. You pass through those and come to the aerodrome itself. The airfield. It was a pretty big place and they had training aircraft there and there would be a lot of aircraft

25:30 that would be in the air all the time training. They were sent out to train air operators, mainly air gunners in the air part of their course because they also had to do gunnery. We didn't have to do the gunnery but they did and they used to have to go to Sale or other places to do the gunnery but they did the wireless part of it at Ballarat.

26:00 The CO at Ballarat was a Wing Commander Fairburn of the Fairburn family and had red hair. I still remember that and quite a nice old bloke in one of these peacetime jobs. I mean one of these non combatant jobs but carrying out his job. He was quite good. 'Woolly' Fairburn they called him.

26:30 The Fairburns were a well known family and I think they called the airfield, the airport at Canberra Fairburn don't they. So that's what you'd find at Ballarat and that would be the station there. I went down there two years ago and had a look at it and half the buildings are gone. It's used as a, I think

27:00 for small aircraft now and I don't think it's the major airport. They may use it for commercial aircraft there but it's still there and of course, the air force, the hierarchy of the air force have another strategy now and they have another airfield quite

27:30 north. You see people were Melbourne minded and all that in those days but when you come to think of it Laverton and Point Cook and places like that wouldn't have been much good to them would they. They need more Tindells and Amberley and places like that to combat any threat and I think our, I'm not talking up a war or anything like that but mainly our threat would come from the north if there is one

28:00 and if it were to eventuate so they have a different strategy these days. They have sold off a lot of those. Point Cook, Laverton. Ballarat I don't know about but it's closed as an airfield but as a RAAF station. Down in South Australia they have been sold off. They are talking about selling off Richmond which is one of the biggest in Australia let alone NSW [New South Wales].

28:30 It's a very big place Richmond and they are talking about selling that but whether they have or not I don't know. But it would be valuable real estate. It would be quite a prize for the government to have as an asset to sell.

You were an only child what was difficult about adjusting to that barracks environment?

29:00 I didn't find it difficult because I wasn't used to anything else. If I had had brothers and sisters it might have been different you know, a different ball game altogether but adjusting to a barrack life and a military life was no different because I didn't know anything about any other sort of life bar being on my own at home.

29:30 All my friends were at school. They were school friends and I didn't have any people that lived next door to me.

What was good about dormitory life?

I think the mischief we got up to and oh well, the yarns that were told and the fact of getting to know all these fellows. We'd go out one night and come home and find your bed

30:00 tied up to the ceiling and things like that but it was good fun.

What were some of the mischief you got up to as groups?

Well giving the SPs [Service Police] a bit of a run for their money. Seeing them far enough off to give them to the valley and whistle them into the valley and then off. There was so much

30:30 space between you that they never caught you and just as well.

Would you race back and tell the other guys?

They were mostly in it.

Describe Melbourne in that time.

Well Melbourne was full of servicemen and also full of Americans. Myer [department store] have a

31:00 what they called the Dugout. It was in Swanston Street and it was an entertainment area for servicemen of all kinds. American, Australian and the staff of Myer, both male and female, used to staff this Dugout. You would get meals. They would put a dance on and all the Myer girls used to

31:30 be there to dance with you. That was quite a favourite spot but there were also other places to...Air force, they were very good to servicemen Melbourne. They had a reputation of being a very conservative city but as far as servicemen were concerned they opened their doors and they really, they had places little

32:00 huts in the city if you just hopped off a train. Take our case from Ballarat. You'd go along there and you'd stay what invitations were available today and they'd give you cards to go to different places, different houses out in the various suburbs and different parties that were on and you were invited to. It was really good and the Melbourne people were really fantastic.

32:30 They were really good.

What sort of, what was the dances environment like? Can you describe a dance?

Yes. Well apart from going to the Dugout we used to go to the Melbourne Town Hall too. It was similar to up here. They danced a little bit differently. Different steps would be sort of got to know those and they were quite enjoyable. Good dances and very good

33:00 bands there too. Big bands you know that used to play at these dances and mainly they were. I'm just trying to think of the name of one of the bands because they came to the coast later and they played at that Playroom down on the coast. Do you know it? I just forget

33:30 his name now. I can't think of it but he had a very good band.

What were the American soldiers like?

A pain. Yeah, they were all right but we didn't get on real well. I think there were 30,000 of them up near Ballarat. Plenty of fights because they pinched our girls. That was the real trouble

34:00 and we didn't like it.

So you are protecting your territory?

Yeah but of course a lot of the territory didn't want to be protected either.

Did you know of any specific cases where you were involved in a brawl with the American soldiers/

No. I knew they took place but I wasn't involved in any.

What were they like? What was painful

34:30 **about them?**

Well, they had too much money for a start. Their pay was about four or five times more than ours and they splashed their money about. They had nylon stockings that they used to give the girls and that sort of thing and they, they actually out did us and we were on you know poor sorts of pay compared with

35:00 them and they were well dressed. They were well educated too and they when you look back on it, it was only because of them that we survived but of course when you get a lot of servicemen together they pick and choose don't they but they didn't like the Yanks [Americans] but overseas where we were actually with the Yanks in active service conditions well it was a different story.

35:30 This is the home environment and when you are on leave and things like that you dodged them and didn't like them.

Was there alcohol at the dances?

No, not in the dances but you went to the pub if you wanted alcohol. There wasn't any alcohol served. As a matter of fact in Queensland I think there was a law against it

36:00 serving alcohol in dances. They didn't license any bars or anything like that in those days. Its all changed now I know but in those days no. You went outside the hall to the pub or you bought a couple of bottles with you, bottles of beer or whatever and you hid them outside the dance hall and you went out when you wanted a blow [cigarette] or a drink and had a drink that way.

36:30 But it had to be a special occasion like a military ball or something like that where the probably the

army or the military gave permission for alcohol to be served but in the ordinary run of events no, there wasn't alcohol in the dance halls.

Did any of your mates have girlfriends in Melbourne?

No. They didn't.

37:00 They went out with a few different ones but no serious ones. No.

So what happened after Ballarat?

Right we finished out course and passed out and waited a few days for a posting and I was posted to 31 Squadron at Wagga Wagga,

37:30 so was Hory my friend in the photo plus other people in the course too, and we went up to Wagga Wagga and joined 31 Squadron which was almost then on the point of leaving to go to Darwin. Wing Commander Rose DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] was in charge of 31 on a temporary basis and

38:00 Squadron Leader Reid came and took over from him and shortly afterwards we departed for the Darwin area. Coomalie Creek was our eventual destination but the ground crews went by train to a place called Terowie in South Australia. We waited there for about a week and we joined another, the old Ghan

38:30 and we went as far as Alice Springs on that and at Alice Springs we went by motor lorry for four days with staging camps all along and we went a couple of hundred miles a day and you see the tracks and the roads were not as good as they were today. We did that trip and eventually got to a place called Larrimah up in the Northern Territory

39:00 and then onto cattle trucks which had the sides cut out of them and we boarded these cattle trucks and we went and trained at Batchelor. Now that line was going at that time right to Darwin. They have since rebuilt it right from Alice Springs as you know recently but at that time there was a rail line from Larrimah

39:30 taking in Birdum and right through to Darwin. After the war it was pulled up and then rebuilt just a few months ago. So we went to a place called Batchelor and we detrained at Batchelor and the strip at Coomalie Creek hadn't been completed. It had some work still to be done on it so as soon as we got to Batchelor, the

40:00 aircraft, the Beaufighters with crews came to Batchelor as well and they carried out familiarisation courses and things like that, a bit of air protection and generally made themselves useful until Coomalie Creek was finished we went over to, we then shifted over the Coomalie Creek and the

40:30 Squadron built their own tents and huts and dug our own slit trenches. We had to have slit trenches there and the Japs actually found us three weeks after we got there and they paid Coomalie Creek quite a bit of attention because they didn't like the Beaufighters. They wanted to get rid of them.

Tape 3

00:30 **Roy I just wanted to ask you why were you attracted to the wireless telegraph operator job?**

Well that's an easy one because in that temporary job that I had in the post office delivering telegrams I became fascinated with Morse because as you know Morse code was

01:00 the norm for the transmission of telegrams we received and transmission of telegrams in the post office since early days and whilst it was a sounder that they used there and in the services it was a buzzer nevertheless it was the same code and I became interested in this and I really used to listen to the telegraphists

01:30 in the post office and I was fascinated by it so I really liked that type of. I thought I'd really like that sort of environment and I thought if I can learn this properly I might be able to make some contribution in the air force.

**Was there a moment during the war when you decided there was a time for you to sign up?
Was there a specific moment**

02:00 **that you felt that?**

Oh yes after the Pearl Harbor attack yes. It became obvious then. It became an urgent matter which it did for most in my age group because the Japs, I repeat, were a real threat and they were a real threat and they had it all their way so early in the piece and it wasn't until mid 1943

02:30 that we were able to start rolling the Japs back. We were getting air superiority and in the early part the Japs had air superiority. They had good pilots. They had experience in China. They were well disciplined crews

03:00 and they were a formidable enemy so things weren't good as you know the first 18 months of the Japanese war.

Had you known anybody in Dalby who was involved in the First World War?

Oh yes. My wife's father was a World War I digger and also I had relatives that had been involved in World War I.

03:30 **Had they told you anything about their experiences?**

Not very much. World War I diggers were, kept their cards close to their chest on a lot of occasions because World War I in Gallipoli and France, just from what I read in the history books was a bloody affair. It was

04:00 compounded by incompetent officers and incompetent generals and things like that. The casualty lists and those killed in action was horrendous. World War I was really a very sad affair. Lots of people went to I know and they acquitted themselves

04:30 very well but there were a lot of mistakes made.

Was your decision to sign up for the war, how had that been affected by the First World War?

No it didn't affect it at all. It was a different ball game. We had to rely on our officers also but I think they were better trained. They knew more of the

05:00 situation. You see First World War the Germans had the upper hand for such a long time that when the, the slit trenches, the trench warfare, not slit trenches, the trench warfare in France it was just a case of orders coming to

05:30 fix bayonets and go over the top and the slaughter it was, it was horrendous and I think a lot of this, not for me to say because I wasn't there and I'm not an authority of it. But it just appears from what you read in history that a lot of this could have been avoided.

What were your expectations of the air force when you signed up?

Well I thought they were newest service,

06:00 the younger service and I thought with the advance in aircraft and electronic technology that there would be bigger and better planes and eventually we would overcome the disadvantage that we were at that time with the Japs.

Did you have any expectations of how you would actually spend your time?

I didn't know really

06:30 much about it. You had to take what was coming and I knew when I was accepted as a wireless operator that my field would be Morse, Morse code and that all my work would be along those lines which it was and some work very interesting.

So going back to that train journey on the Ghan

07:00 **can you tell me a little bit more about that journey?**

Yes, the Ghan it was at that time of course when they had the small engines and with any type of rise at all such as a bank as they used to call it they would sometimes get right to the top and have to reverse again and have another go. It was really 18th century stuff not 20th century.

07:30 **Can you describe the conditions on the train?**

Yeah very they were cramped. There wasn't much room and all the meals were mostly cold, meat and vegetables out of tins but it was the best that could have been done under the circumstances at that particular time. They, we had cooks there but they weren't able to cook,

08:00 we had to get most of our stuff out of tins but everyone accepted that. We accepted that. On the staging camps when we got to Alice Springs. We stayed a night or two in Alice Springs they were proper staging camps and there were cooks and proper meals and we got fed fairly well down there and each night that we stopped on the way to Larrimah,

08:30 we also were fed very well.

When in the war did you make this journey? Exactly when was this journey?

The journey on the old Ghan was when they shifted 31 Squadron to Darwin.

But whereabouts in the war, at what stage?

We are in October '42, so

09:00 we are up, Darwin was bombed initially. There were P40s in Darwin which were Kitty Hawks. We were taking the first modern planes to Darwin which we Beaufighters. The Japs still had air superiority. They still came and went as far as the North Western Area was concerned. They bombed from Darwin right down to Katherine.

09:30 They came and went. They were attacked by Kitty Hawks. Darwin was defended by Kitty Hawks and we weren't at that stage, we didn't at that stage have the upper hand.

What is your recollection of your thoughts when you heard about Darwin?

Well, I thought they'd make a landing there. I thought eventually

10:00 this was a forerunner which in most cases an aerial bombardment proceeds a landing. It was such a heavy bombardment. It was such a very vicious attack on Darwin with so many aircraft and led by the same man that did the attack on Pearl Harbor I thought, "Well they are not

10:30 doing this for nothing." When they get far enough and their communication, their lines of communication are settled in and they have full control of those there will be a landing in the Northern Territory.

So as you are heading up on that train what were your expectations of what you would see up there in the north?

Well I thought I would see all desert. I was amazed

11:00 at what really was there. It was just like Australian scrub. Gum trees, ironbarks all that sort of thing. A lot of red soil and anthills and things like that but no, it wasn't jungle. I was expecting more or less jungle. It didn't happen.

In what way were, what were you thinking in regards to what your role would be, how important your

11:30 **role would be?**

I thought it would be important. We were taking up modern aircraft. The Beaufighters were twin engine low attack aircraft with six machine guns and a 4 x 20mm cannon, 6 303 machine guns on the wings and 4 x 20mm cannon. They were low attack planes and we expected them to

12:00 inflict severe damage on the Japanese installations that they did and we thought it would make a difference and it did.

Can you tell what happened when you finally finished that train journey?

Yes when we finished the train journey we went to a staging camp at Alice Springs. We were there I think only for a night it may have been two. It's a long time ago

12:30 I just can't remember. It may have been one or two nights and we then went into what I think were at that time 3 tonne army trucks with high sides and we did, it took four days to get to Larrimah and we'd stage like every night and the change in water of course caused some havoc at various times.

13:00 It was a convoy of course, would have to stop and you'd see fellows flying off the sides each side into the bush. Yes, it had its problems.

What was the mood of the men?

Oh quite good. Yeah, they were quite happy. Yeah. They were happy. A lot of them wanted to go to New Guinea in case. I felt that too. I'd rather be going to New Guinea

13:30 rather than Darwin but as it turned out we seen a fair amount of activity in Darwin.

Why did you want to go to New Guinea?

Because we felt all the action was there. The Japs were there in thousands. There were still battles going on there and Ward's Strip was the, but Ward's Strip at Moresby was the big

14:00 RAAF base there. Of course it was the Americans as well but there was already a squadron of Beaufighters in New Guinea. 30 Squadron, which under the command of Black Jack Walker, their participation on the Battle of the Bismarck Sea was a deciding point up there. That was a big contribution

14:30 to the war effort. Those fellows destroyed a lot of ships. They attacked that convoy. You've probably read about the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. A lot of Japanese ships and troops coming down and they were halted in their ships by, mainly by the air and mainly by 30 Squadron.

Can you describe the,

15:00 **maybe we should stop there. Can you tell me about arriving in Coomalie Creek?**

Yes after the strip was completed we moved from Batchelor which is about, I think about 10 miles in the old measurements across to Coomalie Creek which is north of Adelaide River. The strip had been completed there and the aircraft

15:30 moved over and when we arrived at Coomalie Creek of course there was nothing there. Only the barest of essential buildings. A mess hut was being erected, a camp hospital, a chapel, they were all erected in time but the airmen and crews had to erect their own tents.

16:00 It was all tent living there and erect their own slit trenches. That took a couple of days and then everyone became settled in there was a signals office built and then we immediately got down to work. That was early November when we went over there or getting on towards

16:30 mid-November.

Can you tell me about your work there?

Yes. We were employed in the signals office doing what they call point to point traffic. That's, each message is known as a signal and we used to receive and send signals to North Western Area and other stations. We had

17:00 WT [Wireless Telegraph] watches and the wireless telegraphist would accept all that, would man all these watches and also once the aircraft became operational and went out on to strikes well they maintained radio silence. Strict wireless silence all the way and

17:30 also on the way home. The only time they would break it was if something was wrong and they wanted to contact Coomalie Creek for some reason to let them know what was doing and also they would shift on to VHF [Very High Frequency], very high frequency and contact the tower at Coomalie Creek where the duty pilot was on duty because if there was some damage to aircraft

18:00 like undercarriages or something like that that had been shot away or damaged in some fashion while they were on a strike well there had to be special procedures carried out and this the duty pilot arranged all these sort of things.

Can you describe the aircraft to me?

Yes the Beaufighter was

18:30 a twin-engine Bristol Beaufighter they called it. It was manufactured in Bristol in England and was normally, originally built to be a night fighter in England. They equipped it with night fighting equipment and it was used in England but it also

19:00 it developed from the Beaufort. It was a fighter version of the original Beaufort bomber and in England they developed this aircraft and they thought it would develop into a strategic low level attack plane and suitable for Australian conditions so the Bristol people made this Beaufighter

19:30 and they exported them of course to Australia and they were sent first to 30 Squadron and 31 Squadron. They were the first two squadrons to be equipped with them. They were a twin-engined, two-crew plane. They had Hercules engines, 2 x 1300 horse power Hercules engines and there was

20:00 strange aura about the Beaufighter was they usually travelled when they were out in Australia at low level particularly when they got close to target because their main targets from Coomalie Creek were Timor and also the islands north of Australia. The Aru Islands, Tanimbar and places all around the area there and

20:30 one of their strategies was to catch the enemy by surprise and this they did by keeping low and appearing over the hill tops really and descending straight down on the enemy often when they were refuelling aircraft or on parade or doing other things and would catch them

21:00 entirely by surprise. They would inflict very severe damage on and catch aircraft on the ground often preventing raids from taking place in Darwin because they would catch the aircraft on the ground in Darwin.

Are you able to tell us about any specific operations that you recall?

Well the first operation of course was a sad one. That was on the 17th November 1942

21:30 when the first six aircraft went from Coomalie Creek and went to Timor and they were engaged in strafing two sites over there when Squadron Leader Reilly and his navigator banked during this operation

22:00 and the wing hit the sea and they were, went into the sea and their bodies were never recovered. So on the first operation was the loss of one aircraft and two very competent airmen.

Did you know those men?

I didn't know them personally because it was just when we got up there.

What was the mood in Coomalie Creek when that happened?

Very sombre because these men

22:30 were known to a lot of people and it was like, even as far as I was concerned. I didn't know the men but the mood was one of complete sorrow and because we had never seen any action before and this was the first casualty and it was a fatal one and it really struck everybody whether you knew these men or not. It was our first loss

23:00 and it struck home, so it was a very sad affair.

In what way did it affect your attitude to the war?

Well, I don't think it affected the attitude. It might have made people more determined to inflict some punishment on the enemy if you put it that way. Some retribution but

23:30 as you go along in the war casualties are part of the daily thing. You must expect these things in a war but Reilly, his wife was pregnant at the time with, as we now know

24:00 with a boy who was born and he was christened Doug also, Doug Reilly and he entered the air force on a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and finished up an air marshal and he just retired two or three years ago and lives in Canberra and his mother, she lives in,

24:30 that's Doug Reilly's wife, she lives in Canberra also. She's still alive. She's affectionately known by 31 Squadron as 'Mim' and she attends all the reunions and she's very elegant lady I would say, and she's very welcome any time she comes to stay at 31 Squadron.

Who was responsible from 31 Squadron to let

25:00 **Mim know about what happened?**

Well it would have been the CO at the time. He was then Squadron Leader Charles Reid. I think I've mentioned before he is now Sir Charles Reid, DFC, AFC [Air Force Cross].

Did he address the Squadron after that event?

Not the general squadron but he would have had something to say with the

25:30 air crews. He would have discussed it with them that it doesn't become general knowledge what he said with them but I dare say he would have had something to say you know.

What sort of coping mechanisms have for dealing with casualties?

Well I can't speak for the aircrews but I do know from what I've been told and heard that

26:00 the, when a casualty occurs particularly a fatal, a loss that they think very strongly about it. It affects them.

What about yourselves?

We are always sorry to see a casualty and wonder how it happened and why it happened and we always like to get full details of it.

Did you have any special coping mechanisms to deal with it? Did you use humour to cope with things or?

26:30 No I wouldn't say that. I think the chaplain played a bit part in this sort of thing. He would have discussed, particularly with the crews, the air crews because to look at from their point of view that one of their mates that they had gone out with probably the day before and today he's not with them. It would be a jolt. They were all young men and they would have felt it.

27:00 But they have also got to cope with it and cope with it they did but it would have been hard. When they go out on a strike the crews get up in the morning and they don't say very much because they are nervy from what they have told me and they feel a bit nervy about it but once the action starts and they are in to do

27:30 the job then all that leaves them and they are into the action and they get it over and done with.

Can you describe the relationship between the wireless telegraphists and the crews?

Oh yes there was a mutual respect I would say between the two because the crews would rely on the Coomalie Creek telegraphist for

28:00 information and assistance when something was wrong and they the crews were the air crews were a separate body though. They knew a few, I knew a few of them but they weren't mixed up with the ground crew. They were in a section on their own and mostly they kept to themselves.

Can you tell me about

28:30 **the relationships in the squadron? How were they formed? How were friendships made?**

Well mainly through working with each other. There are some people in the squadron that I never ever got to know because I didn't have anything to do with them and I dare say that would be the same with aircrews. There would be a lot that they would come to be in contact with like the crews that worked on their planes. Aircraft mechanics, engineers,

29:00 armourers things like that. They would become, there would be a personal thing there but as for other musterings they probably wouldn't get to know them. The same with wireless telegraphists we were a section on our own and we didn't get to know even a lot of mechanics and things like that because there are quite a number and you didn't get to know them. I think as far as

29:30 I was concerned I got to know more after the war than when the war was on with the Squadron because you all had your duties to perform. You went about your duties, you went home and you had your chores to do. You had to do your own washing and things like that so there wasn't a great social, there was no social life actually but there were pictures

30:00 and the odd two-up game and things like that that you became involved in but it was a different social outlook altogether.

Can you explain to me in some detail exactly what your duties were in Coomalie Creek?

With 31 Squadron? Well I manned a shift there in the signals office and we used to work an eight-hour shift

30:30 and mainly it was the transmission and receipt of signals to Northwestern Area and to other signal stations. Some high frequency direction finding stations and generally maintaining a communication network

31:00 and free of any obstacles. Ready for use by any section of the squadron and having it on a war time footing as we were in the war time where we had to have our section in tip top order and that was the case.

Can you describe to me

31:30 **the sort of mood of each day? Was there constant or moments of tension or?**

No there wasn't constant or moments of. Going home was always a, how long will we be here and items of that nature was always the topic of conversation and the rumour mill always ran at 100-per cent strength.

32:00 **What sort of rumours did you hear?**

Well one typical one was 50 bags of mail at Birdum, the station has been reduced to a six months maximum and the WAAAFs are on the way up.

What did you think when you heard that rumour?

Well we knew that it was not correct.

Were there others?

Oh yes there was,

32:30 you know there was rumours like, mainly where we were going and we were only here for so long and we'd be moving to another station. Rumours got about and someone only had to start one and they spread like wildfire.

How did that affect the men?

They took it with a grain of salt. A lot of them you could see through that they weren't right,

33:00 others you laughed it off.

Can you tell me about any other operations with 31 Squadron that were significant?

Well 31 Squadron had a very distinguished record in damaging the inflicting damage on the Japanese particularly in Timor and on

33:30 the islands north of Australia and there were some losses and there was also liaison with the navy and providing top cover for some ships. One in particular was the Armidale. They provided top cover for that for a long time but the ship was eventually sunk by the Japanese. There was a lot of when we talk about

34:00 about the interception of Japanese messages we can give you more examples of how 31 Squadron were called on them to inflict some damage as a result of intercepted messages.

Were you with the 31 Squadron when they went to Timor?

They never went to Timor. They only operated out of Darwin and across from Drysdale Mission

34:30 over in the west and from Mullumbimby in the Arnhem Land I think they called it. But they never went to Timor.

So what was the most significant moments for you?

Timor was occupied at the time so.

What were the most significant moments for you with 31 Squadron?

I think the first raid on Coomalie Creek by the Japanese.

35:00 It was only three weeks after we got there.

Can you tell me about that?

Yes it was a moonlight night and of course we knew or surmised that the Japanese weren't very happy with the Beaufighters and they would be out to get them if they could so at this particular time they came over and

35:30 one of their favourite bombing times was on moonlight nights and the strips used to stand out pretty, well very, they stood out prominently was the word I was looking for and this particular night or morning there were a number of Japanese bombers came across and they bombed

36:00 they were after the airstrip actually. They landed a couple there but the Japanese go in for pattern bombing and they release all their bombs as once. Some of them hit the strip, others but they did minimal damage. They never destroyed any aircraft. Not on that occasion and then went back but it was enough to wake us up to the fact that they knew where we were so that woke everyone

36:30 up to that fact.

Can you tell me a little bit more about that in some detail? How did you deal with the situation?

Well a lot of people affected. I know one fellow he said he didn't, it affected his appetite. He didn't eat for a day and as for myself well I was I think it worried me a bit

37:00 you know. I thought, "Oh well we might in for a real baptism here of Japanese activity," but it didn't happen that way. We had different other raids and strafing attack but it wasn't constant. They went all over the area. Actually 64 times. There were 64 raids on Darwin and the [Northern] Territory which when

37:30 you mention to some people today they raise their eyes in surprise but there were. They even stretched as far as Darwin down to Katherine. I think they dropped a couple down there but the big raids were on Darwin itself, Coomalie Creek and some very big raids on a field called Fenton, Fenton Field which was occupied by an American group with

38:00 B24 Liberators. They were also inflicting heavy damage on the enemy so they were the target and the Japanese paid them a lot of daytime raids to, Fenton.

I'd like to know a little bit more about that first raid when you were there three weeks after you arrived. What was the atmosphere like

38:30 **that day before those raids?**

Well no one expected it. It was just a matter of going to work, doing your job and everything but we had warnings of course. They sounded a yellow alert first because this was all done, which I will touch on later by our radar stations. We had radar stations all along and in Darwin and in the north coast of the

39:00 Northern Territory and of course they picked up the bombers coming in and relayed it to fighter sector headquarters and the warnings went out and of course, we had warning of the raid. We were in our trenches when they came over and it was just another thing that happened. It doesn't last very long you know. Only a matter of minutes but the preparation of when the yellow goes it might be 20 minutes

39:30 and when they sound a red one, a red alarm well you know that they are very handy and that it won't be long so in this occasion they sounded the red and we were in our slit trenches and of course experiencing bombs coming down. It's not a real good experience. With the Japanese bomb you could hear the whistle, not a whistle

40:00 but a shoosh as they left the aircraft and when they hit the ground, particularly with pattern bombing you don't exactly know where they are but if you can hear them you know they are not going to hit you but they, you just don't know how close they are and you keep your head down.

Can you tell me what you were doing when you heard that alarm?

Yes sleeping. It was at night about

40:30 two in the morning and when we heard that we hopped out of our bunks and got our tin hats on and

waited for the red alarm which we got.

All right we'll stop there because

Tape 4

00:32 **Just going back to that night can you described exactly what happened when you were awoken by that siren?**

Well if one or two didn't wake immediately you rushed over and wakened them because there was always 4 in a tent and you just informed that the yellow alarm had gone

01:00 and you'd better get ready and this happened on this occasion. We just sat there with. We were issued with a tin helmet, tin hat as they used to call them and we would have that handy and when the red alarm went we hopped into the trench and kept down below the level of the slit trench because you could hear the aircraft and you didn't know whether

01:30 they were in the immediate vicinity or down on the strip.

Where were the trenches in relation to where you were sleeping?

Right outside. Walk out that door, walk out the door of the tent and into the slit trench.

So can you tell me what you were going through your mind and what it felt like?

Well yes, when the red alarm went

02:00 and we had to occupy the slit trenches we just hoped that the bombs wouldn't land in our vicinity and we just kept down in a crouched position until it was over.

How long were you sitting or crouching in the trench?

Oh it might be quarter of an hour. Yeah, it could be quarter of an hour because you'd wait in case there were more.

02:30 There was another flight of planes and then you'd wait actually until the all clear went. They'd sound an all clear to.

What went through your mind during that quarter of an hour?

Well I hope there's no more. What damage may have been done? How close were they? Have we lost any aircraft? And I must get down to see what's been

03:00 done like in daylight in the morning.

At those moments did you have any belief systems that came into play?

No I don't think so.

Were you religious?

No. No although I did go to church occasionally. I went to mass occasionally but you couldn't call me religious no.

What was

03:30 **the sound like? What could you hear?**

Well the aircraft and it's a fairly, when there's 20 aircraft together of medium bombers they create quite a noise. They'd be about 16,000 ft and there was quite a noise but with the Japanese aircraft you could hear the bomb bays open. I don't know how that came about but you

04:00 could hear them open and as soon as the bombs left the plane you could hear this. I know in movies I've heard bombs drop and there was a whistle but these didn't whistle. It was like a swoosh, a big rush of air, and you'd hear them and not long after that you'd hear them land and fairly large explosions.

What sort of impact did hearing that swoosh sound have on you?

04:30 Well hoped that it wasn't going to be too close. You knew they'd dropped their bombs and hoped they weren't going to land on you. So that's about all the, that's all the time you'd have. It wouldn't be very long. Only a matter of seconds and bang they were there.

And can you describe the bombs they were dropping?

Yes 500 pounds,

05:00 250 pounds. I don't recall a 1000 pound bomb being dropped there. Mostly 500 pound bombs. The daisy

cutters were about 250.

Can you tell me about those?

About the daisy cutters? Yeah, they were a officially they were known as an antipersonnel bomb. The colloquial description was

05:30 daisy cutter because they were known to cut through a tree you know. All this junk that they had inside like razor blades and bits of steels, bolts, nails all that sort of thing. With an explosion and them showering out like that they have been known to cut right through a tree. Not

06:00 a big trunk but through a 18 inch circumference, no diameter I suppose it's be, 18 inch diameter tree, cut right through it so they would inflict very severe injuries in anybody caught near the explosion of a daisy cutter.

What was it

06:30 **like to see those bombs being dropped?**

Well you couldn't see them actually you could only hear them.

You never saw a daisy cutter actually exploding or?

No. No.

So on that occasion of that first air raid at what point did you decide it was all safe to leave?

When the all clear was given.

Can you tell me about that? Can you tell me about the all clear?

Yeah well

07:00 we go back there to fighter sector headquarters where they, I was up there to so I can tell you something about that to later. The fighter sector was outside Darwin where the Berrimah Jail, handy to where that is today. It was hidden in the bushes but that's another story and I'll tell you all about that. But when the aircraft was out. Their course was plotted in and out

07:30 and when they were on the way out we were knew they were away the word would come from fighter sector headquarters that they were gone so then they'd send the all clear.

What could you see when you emerged from the trenches?

At that time of day you couldn't see anything. It was usually two or three in the morning.

What about the next day?

Well it depended how close you were.

08:00 You see the strip was about a mile from the camp and they were really aiming except for a strafing raid where they strafed the camp on the 2 March 1943 they were aiming for the strip all the time and to get. You see there were inserts down on the strip. The aircraft weren't kept on the strip itself.

08:30 Like there were lessons learnt about that early in the piece so there what they called inserts away from the strip and the Beaufighter would be taxied away and put in an insert. They were all around the strip but not close proximity but they would be around. So they were aiming for the strip to damage and hoping they'd get planes on the strip

09:00 but except on one strafing raid that I know of they didn't accomplish anything there.

Can you tell me about that strafing raid?

It was 2 March, 1943. I well remember it. It was the first fine day after the wet season and the wet season up there is pretty severe. It was on this occasion to and there was no Japanese activity

09:30 from December through to March because they were held up by the weather. Our planes weren't held up but they didn't come over for some reason but on the first fine day. It was a beautiful day on 2 March, 1943, they sent, I believe that they were Zeros, Mitsubishi Zeros

10:00 and I believe that they followed in a flight of Beaufighters and they happened to, well the only way I can describe it is deceive our radar because the Beaufighters were expected in and they came in and the Zeros followed them in so we got the yellow and the red alarm almost simultaneously and

10:30 three Zeros skimmed over the camp firing and looking for targets but strange to say with all those men there they never accomplished anything. There was a couple of their cannon fire went through the rooves of tents but no one was injured but they did do some damage down at the strip. There was one airmen

11:00 towing a Beaufighter on the strip and I think it had just been serviced and the Zero zoomed along

behind him and burnt it up. He was only, he got hit a bit of shrapnel in the neck but that was all it was but there were three people injured that day and only minor injuries and they all recovered yet the Japs they did destroy a couple of aircraft that day, that they caught on the strip

11:30 and there were Spitfighters there and they knocked two or three of them down on the way out. It might have been more.

Where were you and what were you doing in that raid?

I was in the rec hut. I was writing a letter actually and there was another chap beside me and the yellow went straight away and I said to this chap, "This is a fine day,

12:00 I don't think I'll waste any time here. Get back to the hut," and he said, "I'll continue on here." He was very, very brave and I said, "Well I'm not staying," and off I went, and just at that time the red alarm sounded and he passed me, that same bloke. He was a better runner than I was, he passed me. So

12:30 I got back to the tent and the other three blokes were still asleep. They hadn't heard it so I woke them up and got in the trench. It only lasted a matter of minutes. Not even minutes you know. Three minutes would have seen the whole thing out but they were low enough to bank and you'd see the red spot on them. They were so low. Tree top height.

What was that

13:00 **like?**

It was a bit unnerving yeah. A bit unnerving. That reminds me of the story of a fellow we had over at Northwestern Area. His name was Thompson and he was a real wag and he was telling someone about where he was and during this raid and the signal officer said, "Where were you Thompson? I didn't see you

13:30 anywhere." And he said, "I was here all the time Sir. I never moved but my bowels did." We thought that was quite humorous.

Could you understand that sentiment?

Yes. Yes, fully.

That strafing raid in what way did it was different from the bombing raids?

14:00 Well it was so, it looked to be so personal. They would right there and you could see them. You could even see the pilot they were so low and they were out to destroy everything they could but they just weren't good enough shots but they were successful down on the strip.

You could even see the pilot so you were?

14:30 **So tell me exactly what you could see.**

Him at the controls. Only for a fleeting second you know. But you did see him.

What was your impression of the Japanese?

Well I didn't like them of course. At that time of course we didn't know what they'd done at Changi either so they were treated, when there were some Japanese casualties over Darwin they were very buried there

15:00 with full military honours. They were treated like any other enemy as though they played by the rules of engagement, but as we found out later after the war, Changi for instance and the Burma-Thailand Railway they didn't play by the rules of engagement so things might have been different had we known at that time but we didn't like them that's for sure.

15:30 **Sorry, I am just blown away by these stories.**

Sure.

Going back to Coomalie Creek and 31 Squadron, did you personally participate in any particularly interesting operations?

Not as a member of 31. I only did my wireless operator duties there but when I left there still at Coomalie Creek and went to the interception unit

16:00 I did, I was aware of and took part in the transmission of very ultra secret material at times.

Before we go there you moved first. Can you tell me about leaving 31 Squadron and where you went?

I left 31 Squadron when they appeared to wanted some of our operators

16:30 to go to this 51 Wireless Section and they sent well I was one that went to Northwestern Area Headquarters that had a large signal office and I didn't know at the time but there was myself and five

others that they did a very severe and thorough security check on because what we were going into was what they termed

17:00 later ultra secret so they didn't want, they wanted to know all about us and even our political affiliations if any and we were only 19 or 20 but anyway we over to Northwestern Area Headquarters and I suppose I was there for five or six months. I didn't know then but they carried out a check and it was a very extensive one. Well I

17:30 didn't find this out until I went home on leave but the police it was and I'm not sure whether it was the Federal Police or the local police, they went to where I'd worked, they went to my school and my home and of course my mother and grandmother thought you know that I must have got into some trouble because they went about it in a strange sort of way. They just said, "We want to know all about Roy,"

18:00 and they didn't tell them it was a security check and of course Mum wrote to me in haste and said, "Are you in some sort of trouble or something?" "No, not that I know of." Anyway, to make a long story short they did.

You don't need to make this story short. Give me all the details.

Well they went to my school and interviewed the headmaster and they asked him, he told me afterwards,

18:30 they asked him such questions as whether I did what I was told, bad boy or a good boy, and also, you know, whether I had any political affiliations. I wasn't a communist for instance. That's what they were after. He told me after he said, "No, I don't think he knows what a communist is. I wouldn't have any worries there." Anyway he gave me a good report and

19:00 the people where I worked they did the same and of course, they came home as well and asked whether I had been in any trouble and the local police put in their say that I had never been in trouble. So anyway the first thing I knew about this was a fellow on a watch in Northwestern Area he said to me after he finished his shift this day he said,

19:30 "A, I don't know what's going on but I just took a signal from air board saying that you were had been vetted for security and you could now be sent to 51 Wireless Section." And I said, "51 Wireless Section. What's this? I don't want to go there. I want to go back to 31 Squadron." And anyway, within two days I was gone and over to

20:00 51.

Why didn't you want to leave?

Well I'd got to know these fellows you know and I was going to an army - 51 WU [Wireless Unit] was an AIF unit. I didn't know anybody there. There were another five RAAF fellows with me that were going and we were going into this strange situation and we didn't know what it was. We soon did when we were over there.

20:30 **Do you know why you were selected?**

No. I couldn't even tell you to this day but obviously we had to be a reasonably good telegraphist. I'd have to say that. If you were a plodder or not so good I don't think we would have gone apart from that I would say no, I don't know really.

So tell me how soon you learnt about what you were doing

21:00 **and what did you learn?**

The first day. We went over to 51 WT [Wireless Telegraphy], 51 wireless section as it was known and it was situated also at Coomalie Creek and not far from the strip from the 31 Squadron strip so I was still more or less at home and we were paraded to a Major Bellard who was the senior intelligence officer at this unit

21:30 and he was a very fine gentlemen too and he said to us, "You don't know anything about this unit so you are here amongst us now and we don't intend keeping anything from you so you are going to share in what we know and it will save you asking questions. The only thing is you sign this document

22:00 and you don't ever discuss it ever anywhere because there's a very heavy penalty attached to this." And there was. I've tried since the war to retrieve that document and can't get it. It's must be probably in the archives somewhere but I got all my personal papers from the RAAF and it wasn't amongst them. Anyway

22:30 go back to this story Major Jeffery Bellard was his name and he was a pioneer of intelligence. This unit had been in Crete and Greece, the Middle East and were pioneers and they had converted their, their operators had learnt Kana code. That was the Japanese code and they were competent interceptors and he said, "He'll find out what's

23:00 here. We don't intend to keep anything from you. I'll take you in next door." And he took us in next door and there was a map on the wall. A huge map and in it were little flags and it was of the southwest

Pacific area and it had all the Japanese units named. That's how much there knew. They even knew where these units were and what unit they were so it was very

- 23:30 very, very ultra secret and nobody knew about this. I found out later. I've to fill you in regarding. It was known as a field unit. The headquarters of this. It began with MacArthur when he escaped from Corregidor and came over to Melbourne. He wanted his own intelligence unit. He had
- 24:00 interceptor units in Bataan and when he came to Australia he wanted to set up his own intelligence unit. He was getting his intelligence from American and this didn't suit him so he brought with him a Major General Aitken, who was his chief signals officer, and he brought a General Willoughby who was high ranking intelligence officer
- 24:30 and they put together. They wanted this unit for decoding and deciphering Japanese messages. They had had some success up to this but they wanted to coordinate the lot. They wanted to go further so they wanted some name that wouldn't attract any attention so they called it Central Bureau and it was set up in Melbourne in the first instance
- 25:00 and comprised 50 per cent American, 25 per cent RAAF, 25 per cent army and they got to work with deciphering those codes they had and they had Japanese codes but they also had very highly qualified personnel. Crypt analysts and linguists. They had Kana code
- 25:30 operators for the interception. They had all sorts of people from high ranking academic positions and they worked on these codes and they were successful. Some codes were captured. The Japanese were careless with their codes. Careless with their wireless silence. They chatted and they gave away things you wouldn't dream of. So anyway, after a while in mid-1942 MacArthur
- 26:00 moved his headquarters to Brisbane and he also moved Central Bureau to Brisbane and they took up at 51 Henry Street at Ascot in an old home there. A double-storeyed home which became the nerve centre for intercepted wireless messages
- 26:30 for the major part of the war and the other units that fed Central Bureau with all their. 51 wireless unit for instance did low grade ciphers. They would do those themselves. High grade ciphers were sent to Central Bureau and they were deciphered there. One in particular that I will tell you about is of course Yamamoto.
- 27:00 But first of all I'll tell you that when we got to this unit. We found out that the main reason we went over to 51 WT was that they were training at a very fast rate RAAF Kana code [Japanese equivalent of Morse Code] operators and they had two units coming up to the Territory, No 2 wireless unit and No 3 wireless unit, and they sent the six people including myself to 51
- 27:30 WT to learn what went on there then go over to these other two units and we'd have all the procedural knowledge that they would require and that's precisely what happened. In the meantime we were at 51 Wireless Section and we did learn quite a bit there.

Can you me what your reaction was

- 28:00 **that day when you went in and were addressed by Major Bellard?**

I was stunned really. Yes. For a start I didn't know that they had reached the stage of such intelligence gathering. I was stunned to know that they knew so much about the Japanese. I was also stunned to know that they were monitoring so many Japanese

- 28:30 watches and they were getting so much information. It came as a complete surprise but it was a pleasant surprise because I knew then why at times when the swung the monitors onto our stations and they caught someone chatting some severe discipline was dished out you know. They really gave away a lot of stuff. If you want a couple of examples I will

- 29:00 **Absolutely.**

Before we get onto the Yamamoto story the Japanese had a network in the Singapore I think may have been the controlling station and on the first of the month he would call up all the stations in his network and he'd change all the call stations for the following month but he'd call them up and say, "Your call sign for the next month is this."

- 29:30 And our interceptors were just waiting there and laughing and another thing they used to come at a couple of them would have a conversation. Let's say it was, "It's raining here this morning. It's crook. It looks like it's going to rain all day," and bingo. They had a free weather report that went to our operations section and they sometimes,

- 30:00 well they had the choice of cancelling strikes in that area or proceeding with them because they knew what the weather was doing. Another occasion I learnt all this from the Kana operators. I've to impress on you that I wasn't a Kana operator and I was there to encipher this stuff that I was getting and send it to RAAF command and other stations

- 30:30 and also if they got a strange call sign they relayed it to HF, high frequency direction finding stations and they would, one at Broome, one at Groote Eylandt and one in Darwin itself and they would get a fixed bearing of where this station was you see. That's was my job there as well as the enciphering and so forth and
- 31:00 the other example I was going to give you was that I told you the stations. Oh yes they sent a, on one particular occasion they sent a code, a coded message from this one Japanese station to another and the operator then said, "We haven't got that code yet.
- 31:30 We've only got the old code so you'd better send it in the old code." So this was a new code so he turned around then and sent it in the old code so that gave our fellows the new code as well you see. They compared them and broke it and then we had both codes then. So there were things like that.

What was the reaction to that sort of thing happening?

It's par for the course at that time. They were getting so much of it.

- 32:00 It was all passed onto the air officer commanding Northwestern Area and also Central Bureau who in turn would have passed it onto the Americans and it went around. It was all valuable intelligence.

What did you and your fellow army men think about the Japanese and when you knew this sort of thing was happening?

We couldn't

- 32:30 come to grips with the fact that they were so stupid really because it was an act of stupidity. They were either so careless and they didn't think we were, our fellows were monitoring or they thought. I don't know what they thought actually. Just let it go, they won't get it. They were wrong. Another one of the
- 33:00 very big pluses from 51 Wireless Section was that towards mid-'43s the air power sort of shifted in favour of the Australians and Americans and they had to withdraw their aircraft from Timor and the islands north of Australia and take them back to Borneo and also
- 33:30 when they wanted to stage a raid on Darwin or Port Moresby they would bring down the aircraft a couple of days beforehand and they would bring them from what was then Saigon and all the way down the crews on these aircrafts used to chat and when they stayed over the operators and intelligence officers knew where they were. They knew when they would arrive
- 34:00 and where they would arrive and Major Bellard on a lot of occasions would go to the AOC [Air Officer Commanding] of Northwestern Area and inform him of all this. In fact any time this information became available it went directly to North Western Area Headquarters. Major Bellard handled that part of it and it also went to Central Bureau and that caused, as I said previously
- 34:30 the damage that 31 Squadron was doing well they would send the Beaufighters over. When they knew they had landed they knew it was for a raid the next day or if it was in the middle of the day when they landed over went the Beaufighters and caught them on the ground and destroyed them and it was a very big thing so through this interception
- 35:00 the Japanese gave up a lot. They really, they just chatted and chatted and gave away this information so that's some of the examples. The other very important was and I think it was one of the highlights of 51 WT and the Americans was the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto. Did you want
- 35:30 to hear about that?

Absolutely. Let's hear it now. Just one moment actually. Maybe we will just stop there for a second. Just going back to Major Bellard, can you tell me your impression of him?

Yes. A very competent and intelligent man. Competent. I'd say enjoyed 100 per cent competency.

- 36:00 There was no airs or graces. He was a quiet, a person that you could converse with and he was a likeable fellow and he wrote a book after the war on ultra secret service which I have and he lived in Melbourne today. He must be nearly 90 or well into his 80s but
- 36:30 he was, he started off as a private and of course he went to the Middle East and eventually worked his way up the ladder and he finished back as a senior intelligence officer. I think he may have been, he went to Central Bureau after. I think what happened when he went to 2 and 3 Units, they were there to take over.
- 37:00 No 2 WU was there to take over interception of the air force, Japanese air force signals and No 3 WU was there to take over the army. So that virtually cut the 51 out of a job so I think it went back south and the work was then done by these two wireless units so Major Bellard finished up somewhere in the south I'm not sure where.

- 37:30 **What were your thoughts as a young man when you suddenly realised that your role in the war was changing so dramatically?**

I strange to say I knew it was very important but I, I observed all the rules. I never spoke to anyone

about it and even they told us when we go to the pictures or see any of our old mates

38:00 you never, ever mention any of this stuff. I carried that out to the letter. I didn't break any of those rules but I accustomed to it and it was just a matter of course really.

What was your first reaction though? Your gut reaction though to being in that situation?

Well I thought how did I come to be mixed up in this you know and I was amazed really and then I got to like it.

38:30 I got to like what I was doing and I knew it was making some contribution too you know so I wasn't just a matter of talking about the weather or anything like that. We were into real stuff here. This was real intelligence.

To what extent was it exciting for you?

Well when you know

39:00 that they'd traced say the movement of aircraft down and the next thing you'd hear that the aircraft were destroyed. That was a sense of relief and also you know that well I in some small way I might have had some dealing with that. That was the reaction at that time.

Could you talk with the other young men that had gone across with you to the 51?

39:30 Oh yes you were allowed to talk amongst yourselves.

So what did you then discuss?

Well we discussed the various days work and what was obtained and what wasn't and.

Do you remember what the mood was among you when you all realised what you were going to be involved with?

No, we were, it was a sort of sense of

40:00 relief that you were involved in something important and you realised that it was an important phase of the war that you'd entered and that you were going to take part in some part of it that was going to be worth while yeah.

Was there any sort of celebration?

No. No celebrations no except two bottles of beer a week we used to get and we'd have those

40:30 but there was never those celebrations, no.

Okay we'll stop there.

Tape 5

00:30 **Just back track a little bit. Can you tell us a little bit about HQ [headquarters] and how you came to be there.**

Yes well that was when they took the, I was transferred over there prior and awaiting this security briefing and I was at Northwestern Area Headquarters all that time and working in the signals office.

Can you describe that building

01:00 **because it was in a hospital wasn't it?**

No this was a fighter sector headquarters. There are two different things here. 31 Squadron I have mentioned before.

We might just clear that up. So just describe the fighter control unit for us.

Well the fighter control unit was stationed up at Darwin itself, outside Darwin at a place called Berrimah. There was a

01:30 hospital there at the time and it would be in close proximity to where they've since built the Berrimah gaol. It was a secret turnout to because what fighter sector control comprised of. There were radar stations situated around the northern coast of Darwin and the Northern Territory.

02:00 Even over to Groote Eylandt and down to Darby and Broome and places like that and they were there, they were radar stations and they were there for the prime use of detecting incoming enemy aircraft and reporting to fighter sector headquarters. Now at fighter sector headquarters, that's

- 02:30 where I was stationed and I had a board up beside me and there were a number of other people there of course. It was like a big, you will probably have seen some of this in a movie if you watch these things in a movie. It's like a big billiard table and they have like cues to move different objects about and it's all done out
- 03:00 in a map and of course what happens is a report from a radar station comes, "Enemy aircraft at such and such," and they give the position. I write it down on my board and the plotters take it off what I have written up and put it on the map and put a little token there where it is. The controllers then,
- 03:30 they're sort of looking down on the whole thing and they are looking at where the enemy aircraft are coming and just what course they are on and they are also getting height, angle such and such they used to say, they might be 16,000 ft or 20,000 ft and when they got to within fighter range, they would have our fighters on alert, they would be on stand by
- 04:00 there and they'd, they'd get them to, there's a word for it, scramble or some word like that and they would get out aircraft in the air when they were close enough and of course their positions would come up on the screens to and the controllers
- 04:30 would direct our fighters onto the incoming enemy aircraft. They would either put them above it and behind them and come in that way or they would meet them head on. They would be in complete control but they would be seeing where the enemy aircraft were going and what course they were on and what height they were at and they would direct our fighters to meet them and that's the way they brought them together. How our fighters intercepted
- 05:00 them and the ensuing dog fights would occur. So they were pretty important. They were manned 24 hours a day and they kept a strict watch those radar stations which were also operating 24 hours a day and any aircraft that appeared on their
- 05:30 screen that was reported in. Sometimes they were friendly aircraft but everything had to be reported and of course, a large formation would inevitably be enemy aircraft and they would be reported in and our fighters directed onto them. Night time there was never any interception. It only ever occurred on one occasion and
- 06:00 at night time the bombers used to come and go as they pleased. There were no night time interception. There was only ack-ack [anti-aircraft artillery]. They gave them a bit of curry [trouble] with that but if they got up high enough they could dodge that too. But on one occasion that was in November 1942 77 Squadron was stationed there in Darwin. They were Kitty Hawks. No night fighter equipment and the CO was a fellow named Chriswell,
- 06:30 Squadron Leader Chriswell. Still alive and living in Canberra and he was only a young man at the time. He took up this lone Kitty Hawk and he got just a glimpse of bomber flashing across in the path of the moon and got a look and gave it a burst and connected and shot it down. He had a victory. A Japanese Billy bomber and there were 10 people on board.
- 07:00 They had people with notebooks and one thing or another. They must have been a rookie class brought over for a bit of a look you know but they didn't get home but apart from that there was no interception at night only ack-ack. There was no night fighter equipped.

So what would a shift on that in that station, what would you do in the shift?

Fighter sector headquarters?

- 07:30 Well you would be on watch all the time. If there was nothing doing then you just had your earphones on. You were tuned to that radar station's frequency and you just waited.

You were tuned to one radar station?

Yes.

And if they were, if they reported to hear you what would you hear?

They would give you the position. So many or an estimate or what they were.

All in Morse.

All in Morse yeah.

- 08:00 I would follow that by writing it up on a blackboard which was imbedded into the wall and then the plotter would take their guide off that and the controllers up above would be looking down on the whole scene. They were working it all out from there.

What could go wrong in a place like that?

Well I suppose

- 08:30 you could take down the wrong details. That could happen but most unlikely because people in there if you could read Morse, you could read Morse, you can, it's like reading English so a thing like that happening was highly unlikely. I suppose another thing the plotters could make a mistake, the controller

could make a mistake but as I say highly unlikely

09:00 and I've never known it to happen I've got to say that.

There was, just taking your right back and you may not have any opinion about this at all but talking to someone who was in Darwin when the raids happened, the very first raids happened they weren't given any notice of raids.

No.

Do you know what was going on then in signallers area?

Yes there was supposedly. Of course it was all second hand.

09:30 They were unprepared as far as radar was concerned. I don't think they had much radar up there and they mustn't have radar because from the people I spoke to the first thing they heard, they looked up and said, "We're getting more aircraft," or something like that. They thought they were ours and they weren't as they found out. But it was

10:00 an awakener and it caused a lot of pandemonium in Darwin. A lot of it was never made public but people actually panicked.

Did it step up the operations like the signalling areas?

That improved almost immediately. They had to get radar stations active. They had to

10:30 get their communications in order as quickly as possible. They had to get fighter aircraft there as quickly as possible because right up until 1943 the Japanese had control of it. They came and went as they pleased. You see, even the Americans which defended Darwin in the first instance, they weren't supposed to be there. They were on the way somewhere else

11:00 and just happened to be on the spot there and they made the raid and went up and intercepted them and they did a very good job with their Kitty Hawks. Of course Spitfires, as you know, arrived there later. They were after us and they also did well. But they didn't have the range. You've got to hand it to the Japanese

11:30 in this respect. The Zero was their top-class single engine fighter now it would fly from Timor to Darwin escorting their bombers. They would have the Billy tank on. They would drop the Billy tank over Darwin and do what ever fighting there was to be done there. Escort their bombers home if they were

12:00 on escort duties and they'd fly all that on a single engine. We didn't have one single engine aircraft that did that distance. It was 540 miles in the old measurement from Darwin to Timor and they flew over and back single engine. A Beaufighter had twin engines and they flew over and back but there wasn't much left in the tank when they got back

12:30 either. It was really a might feat. That's why in the early part of the war the Japs had command. The Zero was a very good attack fighter but as the aircraft improved later with the Americans they out did them later and I think the Zero more or less

13:00 didn't improve. They called them Zigs the improved model but I think they kept up with the progress that the Yanks made.

Do you know the history of the Zero?

Except that they were made by Mitsubishi. You might remember that when you are driving a car around, and they were their

13:30 top-line fighter and escort aircraft. They were used in China. They were used in previous wars by the Japanese. They were manned by seasoned pilots, good pilots but they weren't heavily armed. They were made for speed and manoeuvrability but they weren't terribly

14:00 manoeuvrable. They Americans learnt to out manoeuvre them in the finish but of course they got better aircraft too, so but also their Betty Bombers. They were called Bettys by the Australians and Americans. They were a medium bomber used by the Japanese and they were a very good medium bomber to. Their aircraft

14:30 until 1943 were good and their pilots were good. In the end they ran out of pilots and their good aircraft so the tide turned.

What would you do in between shifts at the HQ?

At the fighter sector?

Yeah.

Well there wasn't much to do. You went back to we were camped in a hospital which had been

15:00 attacked and wrecked by the Japanese. Had big red crosses everywhere but didn't make any difference.

They bombed it and strafed in it and did everything to it but there were still beds in there so that's where we camped. But we just went back there and stayed. There was nothing much. There wasn't any entertainment in Darwin. There was nothing there at all.

Can you describe the hospital and how you slept in there?

It was a normal country hospital. Sort of brick, plaster

15:30 place. A lot of it was gone of course. It was blown off and you could see where the bullet holes had gone through the roof, what roof was left and also the side walls and everything. It was very badly damaged but at that time you grabbed anything to make a camp in. It was just a case of

16:00 putting up with it and making do with what was available.

So how did you deal with the boredom?

Well just we used to go and visit. We'd go and visit. While we were up there we used to go back to Coomalie Creek. It was like hitchhiking was the order of the day there. Everybody pulled up. No one went past you. You know you just

16:30 hitched a ride and they took you wherever they were going. You hopped off when you wanted to go back you hitched back again. Not like it is today when no one stops but everyone stopped them.

How far was it from Darwin to Coomalie Creek?

About 50 mile in the old system. All along there between Darwin and Coomalie Creek were airstrips to. There was Strauss and Livingstone

17:00 and Hughes field just outside Darwin. They were all manned by Kitty Hawks and Spitfires later on.

And what would you do when you went back to Coomalie Creek?

Just go back and talk. There was nothing much to do. Boredom was a problem so you were looking forward to the pictures at the picture show

17:30 and things like that. That was great, and you were looking forward to the Tivoli Girls, too.

Can you describe that experience?

Well yes everyone knew they were coming and there was a theatre down there. It wasn't far from Coomalie Creek and I think there was one at Adelaide River. They came up and they were very

18:00 entertaining. They brought good comedians up to and dancers and all that and they would dress appropriately in sort of next to nothing to give the boys a bit of a look. They were good. They took everything with a grain of salt. There was whistles everywhere

18:30 but they had some good security guards. I think they needed them.

How many blokes would have been at a concert like that?

That attended the concert? Probably 3 or 4,000. They could come from everywhere. No admission charge or anything like that.

Were there many women around up there at that time?

No. There were American nurses.

19:00 They weren't up very far. They were probably back at Katherine. There were Australian nurses during the time I was there. They were up as far as Coomalie Creek Australian nurses but there were no such things as WAAAFs or AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] or anyone like that. Not

19:30 until well and truly the, it had ceased to become an active service area which was, the last enemy attack on Darwin was in November 1943. After that there was no more so that's when they classed, the government classed the Northern Territory as having qualified service which entitles you to a service pension. If you served in that area between

20:00 the first raid in 1942, 19 February 1942 and the 11 November 1943. If you were there outside those dates then too bad. It was all over.

Can you go back a little bit to Coomalie Creek and describe, another walk through that we did with Ballarat. Can you walk through and tell us what was there?

Oh yes, well,

20:30 it was situated a mile, approximately a mile from the camping area and that was for a good reason. If you had the camp and probably 500 men camped near the strip which was being constantly attacked then you were going to have a lot of casualties. Well the camping area was approximately 1 mile from the strip and that was to your right.

- 21:00 You turned to your left to go up to the camping area and you first of all come to a sleeping huts, tents really. The tents, the messes, there was an officers' mess, a sergeants' mess and an airman's' mess. There was a chapel and a field hospital and then it was all, there was Red Cross or
- 21:30 Australian Comforts Fund recreation hut. It was really a tent but it was set aside for personnel to write their letters and things and there was a piano there also and they used to. There was on good pianist with 31 Squadron and his name was Bluey Sparks and he used to entertain the boys at a night
- 22:00 and you really appreciated a good pianist. He was very good. So Coomalie Creek was really a very happy place.

What sort of songs would he sing?

Well, songs of that time, you know.

Do you remember any?

Just the ordinary songs. Danny Boy and all those sort of songs back in that era. Then he used to compose a few of his own.

- 22:30 He composed one, After the War is Over, and it never ever got anywhere but it did with the boys.

Do you remember that one?

I don't remember the tune but I remember, I remember the name of the song.

Can you describe some of your mates at Coomalie Creek in that Squadron?

Yes the people I was with. One fellow was

- 23:00 Hory Barry from Western Australia. He worked for the print union in peacetime and then he after the war he went to work for the Australian Workers Union and was a court advocate. The man on the left-hand side, the right-hand side of me in that photograph was a chap named Bill Collis. Now both of those slept next to me in the tent,
- 23:30 in the hut. He was a solicitor and he finished as a solicitor with a leading practice in Martin Place in Sydney. There was another fellow that I was very friendly with. He finished in a top job in Telstra up amongst the
- 24:00 hierarchy.

What sort of personalities were they?

They were good, happy go lucky blokes. No grouches amongst them. No cynics or picking fault with everyone. They took everything as it came you know. They were quite good. There were some funny blokes and always had a joke and

- 24:30 some of the older blokes were never sober. They liked the grog and.

Was grog easy to come by?

No. No. When we went to Darwin we never got anything. I wasn't a drinker even but I learnt to drink up there. Two bottles a week. For the first nine months there was nothing. There was no beer ration and after nine months we

- 25:00 got two bottles a week and that it was still two bottles a week when we went to the islands later. That was all they allowed. I suppose they didn't want a lot of grog artists. Had to keep your wits about you so it was, they were all good company and there is
- 25:30 such a lot of died since you know. A lot of fellows who died in the 60s and early 70s and others are still alive. You don't know how it goes do you? Luck of the draw.

Can you describe for me your area where you worked at Coomalie Creek?

At the squadron? Yes, it was

- 26:00 like a long office and it had Morse code keys about every. I'd sit here and there'd be another man there and we had earphones and you also had a wireless, a receiving set for WT [Wireless Transmission]. You had some land lines that you worked over land. That wasn't a buzzer that was a sounder. What they called a sounder but most was on the
- 26:30 buzzer system and that was like broadcasts from Morse from various stations and you maintained a watch with Townsville, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and as they got messages well they sent them to you and you received them.

So you'd tune into the appropriate frequencies?

Yes and you stayed on it until if atmospherics

- 27:00 became intolerable well you changed to another frequency and that was a simple job. You just changed to another frequency and you usually carried on from there and that went with time. Sometimes and storms and things like that. They all, they were all interfering. They'd interfere with you and sometimes earlier in the morning one frequency was better than the other one and so then
- 27:30 you just had to change a frequency and go onto another one. We used to work it out that easy. Sometimes the atmospherics were so bad you could barely hear the signal and sometimes you had to get him to repeat you know. Repeat it a number of times.

How did your job change then going from Coomalie Creek the first time to Darwin?

Well it didn't

- 28:00 actually change. It was still receiving Morse but there wasn't such a distance there and the signals were more readable to. That was at fighter sector headquarters. It was quite pleasant working although it was very hot. You didn't wear a shirt or anything like that. Just shorts and I think they insisted on you
- 28:30 wearing longs at one stage on account of the mosquitos but usually shorts.

Did the weather affect the men?

Affect?

The men?

Yes there were a couple of occasions of going troppo yeah. I don't know what they was. I think that was a self inflicted wound.

Can you explain that incident?

Well they become crazy. You know they I've only seen a couple

- 29:00 of cases of it. It's really what you'd call post traumatic stress disorder. That's only a, that's a fancy word for it and they used to call it going troppo there. Well some people used to go troppo but I only seen it on a couple of occasions. You'd rarely see it. People didn't know what they were doing.

Can you tell us one of those?

Well there was

- 29:30 one incident there where a fellow went troppo [crazy] at Coomalie Creek and shot a few people. Shot one dead to I think. He was charged before the civilian court even though he was in the air force. He was tried at Alice Springs and I think on account of his medical condition he was, he got five years gaol but
- 30:00 normally it was a life sentence. Murder.

Were you there on the day that it happened?

I was there but not there if you know what I mean. I was there at the camp.

So what did he do?

I think he armed himself with a 303 and went around pot-shooting people. I think he was after the Sergeant Cook, mainly. I don't know who he got in the finish but it wasn't real.

- 30:30 **Yeah so actually I'm not really ready. Before we do that can you just describe the 51 layout. How that looked as an office?**

The actual operations room. Well, the intelligence officer Major Ballard, he had his own office. There was a map room

- 31:00 and then there was an operating room where the Kana code operators sat and then there was another building where the cryptologist and crypt analysts and things like that, they all worked. It wasn't a very big establishment but very compact and
- 31:30 the intelligence part was in the charge of Major Ballard as I said and the actual unit was commanded by a Captain Dodd and it was unit in itself and this intelligence part was a very prime part of it. So they the
- 32:00 Kana operators were all experienced. They'd been, some of them had been in the Middle East with Major Ballard. Had been in Crete and Greece and were very competent in Japanese and they were. I don't think there was anything else I could say about them except the fact that all the personnel were there.

What would they do? Would they receive

- 32:30 **paper that they would then decipher or how did their job work?**

There's was all code to and they would copy it onto paper and they would even make comments and

that on it. What the conditions and that were like and they'd part the times and I can show you a copy of one of those in Ballard's book which would explain it more

33:00 explicitly to you what it was like there.

So tell us the story about the information about the admiral?

51 WT and the American interception station at Hawaii they were on constant watches all the time, 24 hours and

33:30 just as a profile. Admiral Yamamoto was the commander and chief of the South Pacific. He was also the architect of Pearl Harbor and he was a very big fish. On 14th April, 1943, he or his staff sent a signal to Bougainville that he was going to undertake a tour of the bases over in Bougainville

34:00 and around that area and that he would arrive on the 14, no, 18th April. The 18th of April he would arrive and with him would be his chief of staff, another admiral, and it didn't mention the escort, but there were six Zigs to escort him as it turned out

34:30 and this would be carried out on the 18th April, 1943. So this message was intercepted by 51 Wireless Section, sent to Central Bureau who deciphered it, passed it on to the Americans. The Americans had already deciphered it. Had already got it from, it could only be at the same time but they

35:00 acted on their information at Hawaii. So they had four days to make preparations of what they were going to do. He was such a senior officer even in the Japanese navy that they had to go higher. Admiral Nimitz, the commander of the US fleet in the Pacific had to refer it

35:30 even above him so he sent it to Mr Frank Knox, who was the Secretary of State for the US at the same time, to get approval to take Yamamoto out and tell them of the itinerary and what was about to occur and had to get approval. Knox in turn took it to the President Roosevelt

36:00 who immediately and without any compunction whatsoever gave approval for the - A lot of people who have referred to as an assassination, but it wasn't. It was an act of war. They shot him down in combat. So the word went back to Nimitz so he allotted the job to a Squadron of P38s

36:30 which are twin engine fighter stationed at Henderson Field at Guadalcanal and they had to work out how and when they were going to do this. The 18th was the crux, the day and Yamamoto's team sent a follow up signal saying that he was a stickler for punctuality

37:00 and everything had to be on time. Well this had, the suited the Americans to because they wanted everything to be on time because they had to leave Guadalcanal 30 minutes before Yamamoto left Rabaul so that meant they never had too much, they had belly tanks to. They never had too much juice up their sleeves so they sent 18

37:30 P38s and just outside Bougainville where he was to land they intercepted him and two of the aircraft crashed right through the intercepting Zigs and shot his wing off and he crashed into the jungle and was killed. His chief of staff was also shot down into the sea but he survived. Indeed he survived

38:00 the war and according to history there were three of the escorting fighters were shot down as well. All but two of the P38s returned to Guadalcanal. The, how they did it was never released until after the war because they didn't want to the Japanese to know they had their code. So that was the story of Yamamoto.

And what was the reaction at 51

38:30 **when he was shot down?**

I didn't really. I wasn't there at that time. I was over with 2 Wireless Unit so I don't know how they reacted to it but no doubt they would have been very happy. But the signal which they had intercepted was deciphered in Brisbane at.

So can you explain that process of how they would get the signal and where it would have been

39:00 **coming from?**

The signal would have been from the main Japanese wireless station in Rabaul transmitting that signal to Bougainville to the receiving station in Bougainville and the interceptors copied it,

39:30 intercepted the signal and they had the code so they broke it. They deciphered it and found look what we've got. Here's the itinerary that is not taking place for another four days so they had you know a really bird's eye view.

How do they intercept the signal?

By listening to that frequency. That's how reception is done.

40:00 You tune into the frequency and you listen and copy everything that comes. So they copied that signal.

It was sent to central bureau. It was a high grade cipher. Central bureau deciphered it and found out what it was. All interceptions done that. You copied the signal. You were just like listening to two people talking and you are copying down what they say

40:30 in conversation.

But they are talking in code.

Oh yes, so it has to be cracked or deciphered if they have the code and there were, they had a lot of codes and the Japs didn't know what codes they did possess. They weren't aware of it.

We're going to stop there because.

Tape 6

00:31 **I just wanted to go back when you first saw Darwin after the air raids there. Can you describe the devastation?**

It was a complete shambles. We got up to Darwin a couple of weeks after we arrived at Batchelor more or less on a sight seeing turnout to see what the town was like and it had been severely damaged. Every building in the place had been

01:00 either bombed with parts of it missing or there were bullet holes through it and it was a complete mess and there wasn't one sound building in the place that I could see so it really was a complete devastation.

To what extent did that differ from your expectations?

Well it didn't really. We thought there would be a mess because it was a very severe

01:30 raid and I think over 200 aircraft took place in it, bombers alone. They don't attack a place without leaving a big mess and of course, they attacked the aerodrome, the RAAF drome. They attacked the oil installations, the town itself and it was completely. The post office, as you know, was obliterated with one direct hit and the entire post office staff was

02:00 killed. They are buried at Adelaide River War Cemetery actually.

A lot of people we have spoken to have spoken about the sort of secrecy regarding what happened in Darwin. How much information did you have at the time?

We didn't have very much either. The government of the day didn't release the information. In fact the first report that was published said something like 11 people

02:30 had been killed and then later on 200 but even today I don't think the accurate number has been finalised but there were a lot of people killed there. When they were building the new casino there they dug up remains on the beach so I really don't know.

So given the limited information you had about what was happening at Darwin at the time when you arrived what was your reaction?

03:00 When we arrived we were mainly concerned with digging in our own, frequenting Batchelor where we had to stay and then moving across to Coomalie Creek. Really Darwin itself wasn't of great interest. It was from a sightseer's point of view but apart from that we had to get our own

03:30 act together.

But when you saw that devastation how did that affect you?

I was amazed. I felt very deeply that, about something like this could happen on Australian soil by an enemy and I thought to myself well this is just the forerunner of what could and likely to happen. So

04:00 it gave me a lot of food for thought but I couldn't stay dwelling on it because we had our own job to do.

One thing I wanted to ask you earlier that I didn't when you had to sign that document for secrecy when you were signed up for 51 you said there was a severe penalty, what was that?

Life imprisonment.

And what was your reaction when you read that at the time?

04:30 Well I didn't pay much attention. I thought we'll its never going to happen and I've got to sign this so I signed it. I've tried to get the, you see they put a 30-year blanket, black out from all that information from there and people are only able to talk about it in 1976

05:00 and then they formed this Centre of Bureau Association and different other people and Jeff Bellard was able to write his book and I tried to retrieve the document, but as I said, they couldn't, they wouldn't, nobody knew where it was. That was the excuse. They didn't know of it and so forth

05:30 but it's got to be somewhere.

Are there any particular secret operations that you were involved in that we were really top-level intelligence that you can tell us about?

Not really. It was the stuff that was disclosed after the event that I knew about. I didn't know of any pending operation

06:00 that was of a secret nature. I learnt of the things after they happened and why they happened and who got the credit for unearthing the intelligence and things like that. But I was never privy to something that was going to happen.

You spoke earlier about the Japanese doing some silly things how

06:30 **was the Allied Forces intelligence different from theirs?**

Well I don't think they committed the same mistakes as what the Japanese did. They were more conscious of what could happen by chatting, breaking wireless silence and things of this nature than obviously the Japanese

07:00 thought of the consequences. Allied intelligence as far as I knew and this mind you is the only part of intelligence that I was privy to it was seemed to be fool proof. Nobody talked about it. It was done in the utmost confines of the unit.

07:30 There was a unit to elaborate a little bit longer on it. There was a unit in Townsville, No 1 Wireless Unit and I am told that they, the personnel there even took their leave together. If they had a day out at Magnetic Island or something like that they went together. It wasn't quite so stringent at Coomalie Creek but nevertheless it was,

08:00 rules were rules and they didn't like anything. They wouldn't have tolerated it. They would have, a person that committed an offence by revealing anything that happened there would have been dealt with severely.

Were you aware of anyone that did that?

No I wasn't. The only thing I was aware of was occasionally they

08:30 turned the monitors onto their own stations and there were a couple of minor breaches of just a small 'hello' or some small, some words like that. I think the perpetrators did even suffer some severe discipline on account of that.

You spoke earlier when you joined the war the Japanese were still

09:00 **really superior. How much do you think the work you were involved in was important in turning things around?**

I think it was very important. I think it was crucial. The code breaking and the obtaining of information in advance, able to send attacks over onto airfields that would destroy the aircraft before they took off on bombing

09:30 raids on Darwin or Moresby. Very crucial and it had to have some bearing on the war effort.

At what moment did things start turning around?

Well I would say. As far as intelligence was concerned early 1943. 1942 they got a fair bit of it. 1943 they started to really get on top of all the

10:00 codes.

Was there a particular event that changed things?

Not that I know of.

What about the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto. How important was that of winning the war?

I think that was crucial too. Yamamoto was a top-line general, admiral. He was chief of, commander in chief in the Pacific Area

10:30 and he was the architect of Pearl Harbor. He was educated in America. He knew the Americans. He was a top-line Japanese officer. They couldn't replace him and I don't think his replacement ever measured up to what Yamamoto was. It was crucial, yes.

Do you remember well the event and what you heard at the time?

Not really,

11:00 no. There was very scant information. It was just the bare message that Admiral Yamamoto. The Japanese released the information that he had been killed in the Pacific. There was nothing released from our side because they didn't want the Japanese to know that they had their code.

And what was the reaction among the men when you heard that he had been killed?

Just

11:30 matter of fact, you know, matter of fact.

It wasn't viewed as a significant event at that time?

It was viewed as a significant event but not everyone knew that 51 had been involved in it. You see, it was cracked in, Major Bellard would have known and quite a few there like his aids probably but the real news of that deciphering would have been at Central Bureau at

12:00 Ascot.

Can you describe your relationship with Major Bellard?

Well we didn't have very much to do with him. He was the el supremo but he met us on the first time over there, explained everything to us. Told us what we could and couldn't do and apart from that we didn't see that much of him really.

12:30 We had a RAAF Liaison officer there. A Flight Lieutenant George Rivaly. He was our go-between. He brought in the information for us and we passed on anything we had with him and he was also a charming gentlemen, George Rivaly and he was our immediate contact. We didn't contact Jeffrey Bellard much at all.

What sort of

13:00 **relationship was there between the men and the liaison officer?**

Good relationship. Yes, very good.

How did it work?

Between the army and George? He was the go-between more or less, if 51 WT Major Bellard had something to convey of an administrative nature

13:30 to the air force then it would be done through Flight Lieutenant Rivaly. Things of an operation nature such as top line intercepts well Major Bellard would deal with those personally with the AOC of North Western Area because they were the most immediate things to deal.

In what way did you find the army different from the air force?

14:00 In that unit I didn't find them different at all. They were quite good blokes. They mixed in well, they treated us like we were one of them. No complaints at all.

So the army blokes and the air force blokes got on very well together?

Yes. Yes they were quite affable blokes

14:30 and I don't think there was, I never noticed any animosity between the two because we were there for a purpose and when we fulfilled that purpose we left.

I'd like to know a little bit more about the actual machinery, the equipment you used, the interception machines. Can you tell us more about?

Well as I told you before I was not an intercept operation. I didn't know the Kana code. My position there was

15:00 skirting around the edges of it and deciphering the stuff that came, sending signals to DF [Direction Finder], HF [High Frequency], DF stations to get bearings, enciphering and deciphering messages but as for actual interception I didn't take part in that at all. The intercept operators were properly trained Kana code operators

15:30 of which I had not been trained.

Can you tell me about enciphering and deciphering?

Well enciphering is planning to put a message into cipher. Such things as, a sort of difference between cipher and code to...Code is we looked on it with dealing in letters and in cipher we dealt with numbers.

16:00 You had a book to go by that was the key to it and each little sign meant something else in the cipher and coding.

Can you give me an example of the sorts of messages you received and sent?

Well yes we'd get a request

16:30 from the operations room to send to a DF station in code what they required. They'd want a position so we'd send that message and the high frequency direction finder at that station would signal us back with the required information

17:00 so they'd do that in three places, Groote Eylandt, Broome and Darwin and then by getting it from three places you would get a fixed bearing on them and then the intercept operators would know where the station was, the location of it.

What did you know about those places outside of Australia that you were sending and receiving messages from?

17:30 Not a great deal. It was all done by signal. You mean what we knew about Groote Eylandt and so forth?

What did you know of these places?

We knew they were HF, DF stations. We knew what they were for. We knew that people were properly trained at the station there and they relayed whatever information

18:00 we required.

What about did you know, or what did you know was happening with Australian troops in New Guinea and the South Pacific?

No, we didn't have. It may have been known to the inner circle of intelligence officers there but they were concerned mainly what was happening the Japanese troops not with, see our movement of

18:30 Australian and American troops was to counteract the movements of the enemy troops so they wouldn't really I think be bothered with, not that they wouldn't be bothered but they wouldn't be privy to what was happening with our troops because the information we received through intercept messages what the Japanese were doing was transmitted to General MacArthur's command and the people

19:00 there would dissect what was happening and they'd take proper countermeasures.

What was the opinion among the men of generals like MacArthur?

We never knew much about him of course but there were various rumours about what he was like and of course rumours about things you don't take too much notice of, but we did know he was a very good general.

What rumours were there?

19:30 He had a nickname called 'Dugout Doug' and he used to dive for a dugout in air raids and all, but who didn't? That may have been right or may not have been right.

What about Blamey? Did you hear much about him?

He wasn't well like. He wasn't well liked.

Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Not really. I just knew that he wasn't a

20:00 pin-up boy of the army.

Do you know why?

No not really.

Well what was discussed about the men that you knew about him?

Well he was an ex-police in Victoria. He didn't visit the troops where we were at all, I don't think, you know.

20:30 I think it was a general dissatisfaction with the way he conducted himself. I don't think, he must have been a good soldier for them, the government to keep him in that position.

But what did the young army men say? What were they saying about him?

I couldn't answer that question, no.

You don't remember any discussions about him or what he was doing?

No. You see the army wasn't my forte really.

21:00 There was only that one stretch in 51 Wireless Section, but as for the general run of the army, I didn't know too much about that.

So what happened, where did you go from 51 Wireless Section?

Well I went from No 2 Wireless Unit which had come up from the south and we and the other five people that went over to 51 WT we then went

21:30 and completed our assignment which we were asked to do which was to take our experience into 2 Wireless Unit and more or less in our own terms show them the ropes and they were to take over the interception of the air force, Japanese air force signals and this we did and in February

22:00 1944, I'd completed my time up there and I came south.

Can you tell me a little bit more about that unit?

2 WU?

Yeah.

Yes it was the same as 51 Wireless. It intercepted Japanese air traffic and that in itself it was all sent to Central Bureau and RAAF Command and

22:30 it was there for that express purpose.

Can you tell us exactly what you were doing on a day to day basis?

I manned the point to point watches and also took turns at going to the transmitters which were about a couple of miles from the station, from the operating room and for any change of frequency we would change the frequency on the transmitters for the operators

23:00 that were transmitting.

Can you describe that sort of, that whole set-up if you like of the transmitters and the office and what was where and how it operated?

Well it was an ordinary signals office with keys and they had intercept sets. Most operators had two sets. One for, they were receiving and one for transmitting. They were listening to the Japanese transmitting and then

23:30 listening to his reply, to the stations received. So they were coding a two-way conversation. Then the information that was obtained there was passed on to our section which we then enciphered and sent to RAAF command and I think eventually to Central Bureau and of course a lot

24:00 of it went direct to MacArthur's headquarters because he was very interested in this stuff. It was a great help to him.

Can you tell me more about his involvement in that?

No, you didn't know that much. All you knew was he was on the ball and he relied heavily on the information he was being supplied from intercept units. So heavily involved was

24:30 he that in the invasion of Leyte, the first landing in the Philippines he took a RAAF wireless unit with him. They said there were no Australians went to the Philippines, well, the wireless unit went and it was disguised as an airfield construction squadron and he set up the intercept station there, so he did take an Australian contingent that was an

25:00 intercept station. He was very reliant, he relied heavily on intercepted messages right from his days in the Philippines. He knew the value of it and he never stopped knowing the value and sort of continuing with the development of this type of intelligence.

How sophisticated was the Allied

25:30 **intelligence?**

It was very sophisticated yes. They didn't let out too many secrets. Nobody received, you know they weren't gas bags. They played their cards very closely to their chests.

Some people have told us that with Morse code you can actually identify who was sending the message. You could actually learn. Was that the case with?

Yes after a lot of,

26:00 a lot of, I won't say practice, but continually working with the continued, the same operator you would know when he left and another operator came on.

How could you tell?

The way he transmitted his messages. The way he dispatched his letters, sent his letters and things. A bit difficult to describe

26:30 but some people they roll them and others are sharp and things like that and you know when a particular operator, you wouldn't know his name, but you would know when a particular operator was there, "Oh that's that bloke that runs all his words together," or something like that. I mean there's all these sort of things together that you pick out and you notice particular familiarities, particular little

27:00 oddities that a particular operator does.

What type of oddities?

Just as I said, sharp letters, rolling his words together, not leaving enough space between words. Some people were, they had a bad habit of that and they didn't seem to be able to break themselves out of it, and when a particular fellow came on you got used to him and you knew

27:30 that bloke was back on the job. You wouldn't know who it was. Then you would get another fellow who sent beautiful Morse. There's degree of sending Morse you know. You can either get sloppy senders, bad signals or you can get perfect stuff, copy book, and there were all types and you got to know them.

Is there any way you can explain that to us. The difference between sloppy and beautiful?

28:00 Not unless you knew Morse because Morse is a signal as you know. 'A', de da, a properly sent, properly formed signal would be de da, someone in a hurry would send deda and others with de daaa and you pick out these oddities

28:30 and of course there were the really good operators. It was like sitting down and listening to music. You've seen and heard of people sitting down and listening to Morse code and talking and making a conversation. It becomes as easy as that.

Is that what it's like for you?

Yes I was of that character. I'd carry on, not for a deep conversation

29:00 that you had to do a lot of thinking about but if someone spoke to me I could answer them and tell them something and still receive a Morse message.

In what way did Japanese Morse vary from Australian Morse code if you like?

Well it was different code. It was Kana code. It had a lot more symbols in it. They had good operators and sloppy operators there to from what the

29:30 Kana code operators told me. There were some good operators, there were some sloppy operators. In that photo that copy of a message you will see that the Kana operator commented on the Japanese sender on the quality of his Morse or Kana.

When you left the 51 and went to 2, were there any particularly

30:00 **significant operations that you can recall?**

No it was more or less regular copy book stuff. You know you just carried out your duties. You didn't seem to get as much information in 2 Unit as you did in 51 Wireless. They didn't spread the word around much. Perhaps different COs,

30:30 different ideas about everything. The Kana operators themselves would know what was going on but when you were on other jobs you didn't know as much as they did you know and probably they were very well instructed in keeping stuff to themselves.

How important was mateship in your time?

Oh good. It was very important. If you didn't have any mates up there, well,

31:00 it would be a very lonely place and that was the same when a person was posted south. You were usually posted to a unit where you didn't know anybody. It was different to the army and I suppose to the navy although I don't know much about the navy but I assume with the navy you get posted to a ship and you are with them most of the time. In the army, you went to a battalion, company, you mostly did your war service with them.

31:30 With the air force you went from unit to unit. When you did a certain tropical tour you were posted south and then you were posted to another unit entirely different type of work, but it was you know, it was variable, and of course, different type of work and I suppose interesting.

So with moving around like that how did that affect your ability to make friendships?

32:00 I think it strengthened it really. When you went to a new unit you looked for a friendly face and you endeavoured to talk to make a friend of him and usually it worked out that way. Other times you would go to a unit and strike a fellow this happened with the air force that you had done your training with and he'd been to other various units and finally you caught up again.

32:30 So things like that happened to.

And did you have any particular friends then? Were the friendships special to you?

Oh yes I always regarded someone that was a good friend as special yeah because you never knew in an active service situation when you had to rely on him and he might have to rely on you. So yes, I think friendships were very important.

33:00 What would happen after an air raid?

Well mostly they took place in the middle of the night you see and early hours of the morning so everybody just went back to bed to be honest. You would have a look around in the morning to see what damage had been done and have a yarn to your mates, "Where were you?" and so forth. So

33:30 they usually you know. It was the topic of a conversation and you'd hear remarks, "I'll be off my tucker for a day or two." But in a few hours they were back to normal.

What would the mood be like?

It wouldn't be any different. You see everybody had their job to do. The aircraft mechanics and engineers they were up the strip and they had

34:00 aircraft to service. The armourers had guns to arm and the mechanics had to overhaul engines, so you didn't have much time to sort of be remorseful, so life went on as usual.

And what about time to worry?

We didn't make time to worry.

34:30 It might be worrying when you are involved in say a severe strafing which only happened once at Coomalie Creek that I can remember that it might upset you for a while you know because you knew you only to be over there and you were dead but you were here so you are alive. But apart from that I'd

35:00 say that Coomalie Creek had it's fair share of Japanese attention.

Did you have any relationships with people who went away to war and didn't come back?

Oh yes, from Dalby, but not people that I associated with once I enlisted. The people who I associated with who survived the war. A lot died very shortly afterwards

35:30 but there were none killed in my presence. The people that were killed that I knew were school friends of mine who enlisted in the army and air crew that went overseas to England and were shot down. There were quite a lot of those yeah. People I went to school with. People

36:00 that joined the army were killed in New Guinea. There were a lot of people killed in New Guinea. A lot of young fellows, but unfortunately that's war.

How did you find out about people dieing?

Oh well usually in a letter from home you would find that so-and-so appeared in the, you see casualty lists were published, killed in action, wounded in action, missing in action.

36:30 They were all published in the newspapers. That's how you. It was the norm in those days that the minister of religion, of whatever religion you belonged to, they would come around and break the news about your son or your brother or your husband had been killed in action.

Do you know what your mother was thinking

37:00 while you were at war? Did she tell you?

No not really. She was worried naturally but you know. She knew that there was nothing much she could do about it. She was well acquainted with the positions.

What did you know of what she was doing when you were away?

Only what she told me in her letters and what my grandmother told me. They ran a pretty tight ship at home, you know,

37:30 and there wasn't a lot of money. There wasn't thing like the dole, there was the dole before the war but that was for single men who didn't have a job. I don't think widows or people or I don't think family allowances existed. I know my grandmother was on an old age pension and she got 1 pound 19 a fortnight.

38:00 That's less than \$4 in today's money but things were cheap. You went and got a shilling roast, a pound of beef steak for 4 pence and sirloin steak for 9 pence and things like that. Things were comparatively you know in sort of unison with the supply of money but at the same time they weren't easy times.

You spoke earlier about

38:30 the man who went troppo. He went after the cook?

Yeah.

Why was that?

No one knew really. I think it could have been anybody but he may have had a hidden you know a hidden hate for the cook. Some little thing that had boiled up against him. He also didn't like the adjutant because he put him, the adjutant

39:00 was hiding behind a gum tree. A big thick gum tree, and he put five .303 bullets into that and never got him, so he mustn't have had any like for him either.

Did you know that man who?

No I didn't.

So it wasn't because the food was so bad?

Oh no. No the food wasn't bad actually. It wasn't first class either I might add but you could get along on

39:30 it. There was such horrible things as dehydrated potato. Ever heard of it? No. You get powdered potato now and it's nice white stuff but this was a dirty grey stuff and it tasted horrible well that was the sort of potato you got there and your eggs was egg powder and egg powder was very bad too. I wouldn't serve

40:00 that up at Lennon's [Hotel] or any of those places.

How did you cope with the meals?

Well you ate it or went hungry. But on the whole you know not too bad. I never thought I'd eat rice and prunes, prunes and rice again because they were a regular part of the diet. Regular but

40:30 I did. I think rice and prunes now is quite nice but at that time I didn't.

We'll stop there.

Tape 7

00:31 **So tell us about leaving Darwin and where you went to after that.**

Well after leaving 2 Wireless Unit. That was my last unit up there I came back for 44 days leave. I hadn't had any leave up until that date. After the expiration of the 44 days I reported back and I was sent to Lowood which at that time was an operational base unit

01:00 and I was there for a time and then sent over to Sandy Cape to the radar station. The radar station. There had been some talk of Japanese submarines and things like that about the place and we kept a 24-hour watch there and we were in communication with Brisbane and Bundaberg actually

01:30 and we were there for. I had a stint on an air/sea rescue launch for a short time as a wireless operator on there. The original air/sea rescue launch was burnt and the wireless operator was injured and while he was in hospital I relieved him and they brought up this new boat from Rathmines, the 032, and I did a

02:00 stint on it and went back to Fraser Island and then we by that time the war had shifted. The Philippines were over. The war had moved north and we were knocking at the doors of Okinawa and places like that so they sent us back to Richmond to regroup, replenish, re-equip

02:30 I should say, and they changed our name and gave us a different sort of radar. They gave us what they called a ground intercept radar, and we were GCI radar, ground control intercept, and back to, we moved back to Strathpine and we were there just waiting to get a ship to

03:00 Morotai and this occurred and we embarked at Brisbane and got on this American, they have a name for them. Liberty ships. The Morgan Robertson. It was an old tub. We should have got paid to get on it you know. It took 16 days, I think it was, to get to Morotai

03:30 and we only had an escort from Biak to Morotai. All the other time was on our own. So we went to Morotai and we were there for about a couple of days. This was in April 1945. Now we knew that there was some event going to come off and that we were involved in it but we didn't know where or when.

04:00 So...

How did you know that there was going to be something?

Well everything was packed up and it was labelled 'OBO1' that was a code name and this stuff wasn't

unpacked. It was still packed so we knew there was something going on and we would be part of it. So sure enough we were told then that we were going to Tarakan so on at the end of April we

- 04:30 went about an LCI [Landing Craft Infantry], that's short for Landing Craft Infantry and we went to retake Tarakan which was an oilfield on an island northeast Borneo and there were 80 ships in the convoy and we went out. I think it took about four days
- 05:00 to get to Tarakan and when we got there we were there a little early on May 1st, '45, and this convoy did a giant u-turn and came back and the assault on the beach started. I have heard reports where there wasn't any resistance but there was, there was heavy resistance. The 26th Brigade, 9th Division carried out the
- 05:30 landing. There was a 2/13th Engineers were there a week beforehand cutting barbed wire entanglements and looking for land mines and all that sort of thing and the Japs had packed the jetty with explosives from the beach right out to the sea. It was heavily packed
- 06:00 with explosives so these engineers had to delouse all that. So on May 1st we arrived there in due course. We were supposed to be off four hours after the original landing. We didn't get off at that time because there was very severe resistance from the Japanese and we didn't get off for probably 16-18 hours. We eventually got off
- 06:30 and we had to get our radar station operational which we did and but there was no enemy air activity. All the air activity was on the part of the Americans and Australians. They'd, at this stage I think their air force had had it. They were up around as I said before Okinawa and close to home
- 07:00 They had the kamikaze pilots operating and in the tarmac at Tarakan I only seen one air raid and that was a lone Japanese plane. Only one and it was at night and I think it might have been just scouring out to see what it could see and that was as far as the air was concerned. The Australians and Americans had plenty of air activity. They played
- 07:30 plenty of attention to it. They, it was the first place I seen napalm dropped. Napalm as you know is a jellied petrol and it was used extensively in Vietnam, but it was dropped on Tarakan too, and it's a devastating weapon. The Japanese were eventually defeated there but there were over 500 Australians killed there
- 08:00 including Diver Derek. He was a VC [Victoria Cross] winner. He was killed on Tarakan. The died there. There weren't any air force casualties amongst the people that I knew but the army suffered severe casualties. They were taking the airstrip for instance they suffered severe, very severe casualties and the army did for one Brigade they did a terrific job but
- 08:30 they paid a high price for it. But that went by and it was still more or less smouldering at the beginning of August and of course, the two atomic weapons that were used put an end to everything on August 15th and we just had to cool our heels then. I never left there until the Kanimbla came to pick us up
- 09:00 in about mid-December or even a little later than that. Came into Sydney and end of the war.

I think you think you are going to get away with that.

Oh no.

I think we should go back. Can you describe what you did on your leave? You hadn't had a break in a couple of years or something had you?

Yes.

What did you do in that 42 days?

- 09:30 That's where I met my wife at a dance so I spent quite a bit of time chasing her and getting to know her family and mine. I didn't have to get to know mine, but get to know them again, I could say. But we, we put in time. There were a lot of people coming home on leave at the time and I met people from New Guinea that I went to school with. We'd had a really good time. I
- 10:00 put in the 40-odd days pretty - I didn't miss a beat after that.

What was it like to be back home?

It was great, yeah. It was great. I knew I would be going again, which I did, but I didn't mind as long as they gave me a few months and actually I had nearly 12 months. I did have 12 months so I did really well. People were only staying at home for six months and then going

- 10:30 again. I was there for nearly 12, so I thought I had a good trot and out on, which is now a top tourist spot, on Fraser Island. It was at Sandy Cape, of course it wasn't developed in those days, but what a great place to be.

Where did you have to 12 months, sorry?

Well, from the time I took up after my leave and went to Lowood and then to Sandy Cape on Fraser

Island,

11:00 back to Richmond in Sydney, back to Strathpine and then onto the boat. Twelve months.

Twelve months before you went to Tarakan.

Yep.

So how did you meet your wife? Can you tell us that love story?

Yes well it wasn't long after I retired home, returned home and I went to a dance out at a place called Kaimkillenbun out from Dalby.

11:30 Went out with another friend of mine, a chap and I met her at the dance and had a couple dances with her and asked to walk her home which she allowed and then took off from there.

What was attractive to you about her?

She was on 16. That was one thing. I was 21. She was nearly 17

12:00 and she was, she had a nice personality, I thought. She was easy to get along with. I got on well with her and I thought that she was the right sort of type. Thought I'd found something special and I thought, "I'll hang to this if I can," which I have.

What did you do in those few days after that? What sort

12:30 **of stuff did you do together?**

We went to dances, picnics and things like that and she was on the exchange. She was a telephone girl you know on the telephone exchange and we went to various outings and so forth and then of course I went away again and I thought, "This will be it. Some other bloke's going to

13:00 probably walk in here." But no, she never took up with anyone. She was there when I came back.

What did you say when you parted? Did you ask her to wait?

Well, I don't think I did because I thought she would, you know...But I did make a commitment to her. I said, "If you are here, I'll, you know, do the right thing." So she was still there,

13:30 so I married then. I have to tell you that we did strike a religious problem. Her parents, I was a Catholic and she was Anglican and that caused some trouble and we had to wait until she was 21 before I could marry her, which I did eight days after she was 21. So,

14:00 you know, it worked out all right. Her parents were fine afterwards but they just couldn't bring themselves to give consent before she was 21. So everything went all right then. They passed away now many years and they were all right. There was no animosity, but those things cropped up in those days.

Was it hard when you went back on leave? Was it hard to adjust to civilian life?

Not really,

14:30 no. I took it with a grain of salt, you know. Another job. It wasn't as easy as that but I could adjust. I was a little bit, I you know, it wasn't really settled. It was a bit unsettled. I didn't want to stay in my job and things like that

15:00 but after I entered the railway I stayed there and settled in.

What happened in Lowood? Is that the first place you went to after leave? Can you describe Lowood, the Lowood job?

Yes it was a straight out wireless operator's job. They had an operational base unit there. They had the old Avro Anson planes and they had them there as a training station and things like that,

15:30 and I think it was put there as a standby aerodrome and we, I just sent and received messages there. That was all. Signals. I wasn't there very long and then I went over to where it was more involved at Fraser Island.

Yeah, what was the Fraser Island job?

Well, it was radar you see. It was a radar station there, and we had to maintain schedules with the mainland every quarter of an hour and

16:00 we, all our traffic was in and out messages, so it was straightforward.

Fraser would have been really remote at that point.

Yes, it was, yes. Good fishing there. Still is, and over on the other side the wreck of the Maheno. That was there even in those days.

16:30 So we enjoyed ourselves there.

Can you describe the station, the radar station?

Well, it was the normal radar station, was up on a hill and it had a revolving antennae and it would take in all signals. Like a boat or an aircraft or anything like that. We reported all these things to

17:00 Brisbane, they used to go to then, and they would be identified then as either ours or...We never struck any enemy stuff there. I believe they had been along there, had even landed on Fraser Island and got water and things like that there - subs - but we didn't strike any sign of them.

If you saw something come up on the radar how did you know it wasn't enemy?

Well, we wouldn't.

17:30 They had to identify them in Brisbane. They'd know what was in the area. Particularly the aircraft, but they would also identify ships as well because every ship had to give a plan like an aircraft with a flight plan. The ships had to give a plan as well where they were going and so forth.

And how many people to the station?

There were only

18:00 25, about that, yeah. We had cooks, we had wireless operators that manned a 24-hour shift. We had one officer as commanding officer and we had radar mechanics and radar operators. They did the radar work, we did the communications.

18:30 **All men?**

Yes. No females at that stage.

How do you think men in that era dealt with not being able to have sex?

Well, it made them I suppose a bit anxious to get home I suppose and things like that, or get over on leave to Bundaberg.

19:00 Things were no different in those days than they are today. People wanted to get over and...

Relieve the tension?

That's a great way of putting it. I was trying to look for words, but yes.

Really that must have been a problem for some men?

Oh yes.

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

19:30 So it was...a bit of lovemaking went on.

What happened after Fraser?

That's when we went to Richmond to re-equip and re-equip with all this new material and up to Strathpine then, from Strathpine to the Morgan

20:00 Robertson and then to Morotai.

When did you have the stint in Brisbane?

On the air-sea rescue.

That was in Brisbane?

No that was in Bundaberg, actually.

I think earlier on today we were talking about when you, you jumped on a train and went to Melbourne and you said later on I will talk about when I was in Brisbane.

Well that was only at the end of the war.

20:30 **That was right at the end.**

You know when I came back from discharge. We came back off the Kanimbla.

We'll go there later. What was the air sea rescue job like?

It was good although during the time I was on it we didn't rescue anybody because no one fell into the drink [water], but there was a service flying training school at Bundaberg. They trained pilots

21:00 and at Maryborough there was a wireless air gunners school, so they were all, they were both in aircraft. There was a lot of flying done and some did have some forced landings and they were picked up but not at the time I was on the air sea rescue but that was what they were primarily for and as well as that they supplied the radar station at Sandy Cove

21:30 with supplies so they had general job to do.

So what messages were you sending and receiving?

Well they were all. If we, if the radar station had anything on their screens well they would give it to us and we would send it to us and we would send it to Brisbane you see. They were the sort of messages as well as administrative messages.

In the air sea rescue?

22:00 Oh air sea rescue?

Yeah.

No we only had to maintain a schedule every 15 minutes with the headquarters in Brisbane. We just had to maintain a schedule like give our call signs and they'd acknowledge it and let us go. That was the main job out there. We didn't go out at night.

22:30 We were only there during the day. It gets quite rough out there to.

Yeah, describe the ship that you were on.

It was newly constructed at Rathmines, and it was called, it didn't have a name too, O3-2, O32. It was a 60ft torpedo recovery launch and it had two forward

23:00 motors on it and it was a real luxury. It was really nice.

What was luxurious about it?

Well the woodwork, the sleeping quarters. Everything was all new and modern and even the wireless operators cabin was great. You know it was all new equipment and

23:30 we'd do our spot of fishing while we were out on the sea. There was only a crew of four on it. The skipper was a warrant officer, there was a fitter, a seamen and a wireless operator. So four.

What did the fitter do?

He maintained the engines. He maintained the engines.

So that was the vessel that was

24:00 **the rescue vessel?**

Yes.

Yeah right. Okay.

They had much smaller one than that called the Angler and I could tell this story, that it was tied up at the Bundaberg wharf this particular night and the operator, who was the only one on board, he heard a dripping noise in the engine so went down to investigate and

24:30 he lit a match to see what was doing. I don't have to tell you what the consequences were, so anyway, there was a comedy of errors because he was severely injured and went to hospital. At the Bundaberg wharf at that time. I don't know if it still exists, there were rail lines down there and engines used to come down and they shunted onto the wharf and so forth.

25:00 Well this vessel, the Angler, was tied up there and the fire brigade came down there and was playing its hoses onto the Angler and along came an engine and of course you know what happened. Ran over the hoses and bang. So they cut the Angler adrift and it went out to the middle of the Burnett River

25:30 and burnt down to the waterline. That was the reason the other vessel came up from Rathmines. So that was the end of the Angler. It belonged to Arnotts biscuit people and it was commandeered by the air force immediately on the outbreak of war so they didn't get their vessel back again.

Did you miss

26:00 **the intelligence stuff that you had been doing while you were air sea rescue and radar?**

In a way I did, yes. It was pretty routine the other jobs. Whereas the other jobs in 51, mainly in 51 was

so interesting you know but these other jobs had to be done do you know. They had to have someone doing them and

26:30 well we just fitted into the slot really.

How did you find out what was the next move?

You didn't find out. You just reported back and there was a signal there waiting for you that you were posted to such and such a unit. They never wrote and asked you if you wanted to go. You were just posted to a certain unit and you went. There was no excuses. Out to Lowood and then

27:00 another signal later sent me out to Sandy Cove. That was the story there.

Can you describe the trip to Morotai?

Morotai yes. That was on this United States Liberty ship. They were one of the few, you may have read about them. Henry Kaiser, a

27:30 ship construction mogul in the United States, decided that during the war he would build all these ships which were badly needed and they were known as Liberty ships and he built hundreds of them and the Morgan Robertson was one of them. I don't know how secure they were, how sound they were or anything but anyway they got us to Morotai and they were mainly freighters.

28:00 Carrying munitions and that sort of thing. We boarded at Hamilton and we left, we didn't have an escort. The roughest part of the trip was outside Caloundra. It was very rough there and we had jungle green uniforms on and the faces of the fellows there was as green as the uniforms. They were racing to the deck anyway it settled down after

28:30 and we were 16 days before we got there. We got to Biak which is on the north of New Guinea and we picked up a Corvette or something which gave us an escort to Morotai. Morotai is immediately north of the Halmahera and the Americans had a perimeter there, 8 x 4 in

29:00 miles and they actual island was about 40 miles but this is all they wanted this 8 x 4 perimeter and it was used as a jump off point for Balikpapan and Tarakan and Labuan, the Borneo landings and it was also used as a base for air strikes for the 5th Air Force. American and the

29:30 the United States 13th Air Force they were there and there was a division of American Negroes maintained the perimeter and one of the humorous things about that there was a picture show there and the monkeys used to set off the booby traps and of course everybody thought the Japs were going to invade the picture theatre and people went

30:00 everywhere. There were a lot of monkeys and things like that on Morotai the same as there were on Tarakan where there were a lot of Orang-utans but there was different sorts of islands you know.

What did you do on the ship? How many men were on that ship and what did you do for those 16 days from Australia?

Played cards. Yeah, played cards and we

30:30 were just below deck but we would come up on deck a lot because it was so hot. So we would come up on deck but most of the time were playing cards and things like. The feature of that was you couldn't shower properly because you only had salt water, and you know what that is like having a shower with salt water, so I just don't recall

31:00 how they got over. I think they showered with salt water the whole trip and we didn't get fresh water until we landed in Morotai, but it's terrible to shower in, you know, salt water. It's sticky and you don't feel clean at all.

Were they men doing all sorts of things or were they mostly with your unit?

No

31:30 there were various other people. There were some army there as a matter of fact to going up. There was our unit, there was one but we were only one unit. I think there was nearly 1,000 people there and it was stifling down there in the holes of a night and they used to erect. They did erect these kitchens

32:00 on the deck to cook the tucker but it was mostly tinned stuff. But we survived that and we got fairly decent food in Morotai.

Did you get a sense, did you have a sense that you were moving closer to the action?

Oh yes and of course we had no idea that those atomic bombs were going to interrupt and we were all packed up ready

32:30 to do another landing when they dropped so we wouldn't have stayed on Tarakan. We were ready to go somewhere else. We still don't know where that was but the rumour mill had it that there were going to retake Singapore and Malay and some of those parts which adds up.

Even before the bombs did it feel like it was starting to take a different direction the war?

Yes.

33:00 Yes. I think everyone felt like you know another 12 months would see it out because don't forget the Germans had ceased in May and May '45, wasn't it, or something. Yeah, and Russia had entered the war and they declared war on Japan so

33:30 they couldn't hold out and Russia was a formidable enemy for them, so it was just a matter of time, but at that time they were going to fight to the death, but once those atomic weapons were unleashed on them they had different thoughts.

How long were you at Morotai and what was, what was the place you ended up at like?

34:00 I was on Morotai for, I'd say, a fortnight. We were just waiting for the signal to go and whenever they organised this convoy to Tarakan. We were in a fairly reasonable sized camp and they had plenty of entertainment there as jungles go. Pictures and

34:30 all that sort of thing. It was just like any other isolated place I suppose.

So did 1,000 people get off that boat and into that camp?

Yes. Not into the one camp but you know, there were different units. They all went to their own camp. We had a camp of our own. We were part of another fighter sector, 114 Mobile

35:00 Fighter Control Unit. That was our control unit which in turn was part of the 1st Tactical Air Force.

So what was their role in the war at the time?

They were the overall, I suppose I can refer to them, they were the overall command of the RAAF in the war. The 1st Tactical Air Force they called themselves, and that's where

35:30 all the major decisions were made. I suppose some of them were made by MacArthur but when it came to the local level, that's where they were made.

A significant high ranking group of men?

Oh yes. I think the commanding officer was an air vice marshal. I can't think of his name now, but he was a well known person

36:00 and there were high, high ranking. Actually, 31 Squadron was there, too. 31, I had left them at that stage of course. 31 and 30 Squadron was there and 22 Squadron. 22 Squadron were Bostons and they had them lined up at Morotai and they were on the airfield and the Japs came over and knocked them all out so they re-equipped

36:30 them with Beaufighters but that was getting towards the end of it.

Was it good, was there a sort of reunion for you with the 31 guys?

I didn't strike them again. They were there, but they didn't, only a detachment came to Morotai because the strip was no good - at Tarakan at least. They were at Morotai but at Tarakan they had to put that steel matting down

37:00 and it rose and dropped with the tide and it was very precarious. Very dangerous so the squadron itself didn't move there. I don't think any squadron did. They only used it as an emergency and yet the battalion that took it in paid very dearly for that airstrip.

What was already at Tarakan

37:30 **before you got there?**

Oil fields, so I think that might have been the primary objective. To capture these oil fields and deny the Japs the source of the oil.

So was there a whole operation being organised to go in there and take over?

Yes. Oh yes. After we landed and the fighting actually ceased or even before the fighting actually ceased there

38:00 was an organisation called the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, NICA they called it. They came in and took charge. You see it's part of Indonesia. What is now Indonesia. It was the Dutch East Indies then at that time. Netherlands East Indies - NEI. The NICA came

38:30 in as the civil administrators and they actually took charge of the place, and this is what the local population couldn't understand because they didn't like the Dutch either so they couldn't understand that the Australians had gone in and taken the place back from the Japs and then handed it over to the Dutch and they didn't like it.

39:00 So it was inevitable there was going to be trouble there.

And that was after the war, basically?

There was a rumble there while we were there actually. A bit of disquiet and they disrailed a few tanks up there and quietened them. They didn't have to fire anything but they could there was a bit of unrest. The actual confrontation didn't start until Saharto took

39:30 power and it was a year or two after the war because they had no intention of knuckling down under the Dutch again.

So what was the strategy behind moving into Tarakan? What was the point of it?

Really that's what a lot of people are asking today. Why did that happen? With the lives lost,

40:00 what did we gain? MacArthur was already at Okinawa and he had been, he was up above Iwo Jima and all those places, past all these places, and that's what couldn't be understood. Was it a sort of consolation prize to give the Australians something to do? That question is still being asked today.

Did it feel that at the time?

No.

40:30 Not at the time, but it's still be asked when you look at the whole strategy of the Pacific War. They suddenly, they are going north and suddenly they shoot all the Australians over in an opposite direction and where thousands and thousands of Japs had been bypassed and their lines of communication had been cut. They were

41:00 useless. They couldn't do anything. Why look at them? But of course that is a subject for discussion now. It wasn't even talked about in those days.

Tape 8

00:32 **Roy can you tell me a little bit more about arriving at Tarakan? The lead up to it and preparations that were made and so forth.**

Well, the preparations were made on Morotai of course, and extensive preparations were made because it was the first operation in Borneo and we had to

01:00 pack a lot of our gear, we had to get everything ready. We had to have our firearms as well in good working order. We did not know what we were going to encounter over in Tarakan so there was an advance party and a rear party and an initial invasion force. I was with the initial

01:30 advance party and we went on an LCI. There were 80 ships - that included all the supply vessels. I think Shropshire was a naval vessel involved in it. Various other Corvettes provided submarine protection and things like that

02:00 and it took, from memory, about four days, and when we arrived there we were too early through some miscalculation or making sure we were there on time, so the convoy did a giant u-turn of 80 ships and went out and came back around on time.

All 80 ships turned around.

They didn't turn around. They did a u-turn,

02:30 you know, they sort of went around in a great big circle.

What did you know about what was happening at that time?

We didn't know except that we knew we were turning around. When they got back they were right on time and the initial commandoes and the infantry from the 9th Division, the 26th Brigade

03:00 landed and they encountered, there were pillboxes there and they encountered fairly fierce opposition.

Before we get into that, I just want to ask you a little - go back. I really want to get as much detail as I can from this. With the preparations on Morotai as a wireless telegraphist, what experience had you had with guns?

Just how to keep them cleaned and how to fire them. They were only sort of an emergency tool.

03:30 We were a technical unit, but we still, we had done our training with small arms and we had to know how to use them and we did know because we used to have some practice on the range occasionally, but we weren't a fighting unit if you understand but we did know how to protect yourselves.

You weren't a fighting unit but you were going into a battle?

Yes, that's right.

04:00 **So what was happening? What was going on in your mind about that?**

Well just hoping that we were sufficiently trained and that our armaments are sufficient to train ourselves with because we weren't expected to go into the frontline but we had to be in a position to protect ourselves – and we were. All the people were. All the people were.

04:30 We were all armed and we did but we weren't called on to protect ourselves. We didn't strike anything.

Can you tell us about the type of briefings you had regarding the operation?

Well back on Morotai we were told, before we left that we were going to Tarakan. They weren't sure what sort of resistance would be put up

05:00 against us. They weren't sure that the Japanese hadn't poisoned the water so they had to take our water with us. We had to take our own water which they brought in 4 gallon drums. We were only allowed one water can a day you know so consequently for the next fortnight or three weeks we didn't have a shower or wash or anything. The clothes were just stuck to us more

05:30 or less and until they were sure that the water supply there on Tarakan was right because they did, they must have had some intelligence that they were going to poison the water, but it didn't happen so we were told to expect fierce resistance which the 9th Divvy [Division] did. They did get fierce resistance.

Who addressed you on Morotai?

06:00 Our own local commanders. We didn't get an address from Brigadier Whitehead or anything like that. He looked after his own army battalions you see. He had a brigade.

So what was the mood like on Morotai?

It was fine. A lot of casualties, but we didn't have immediate access to army so we didn't really know how they were feeling,

06:30 but we were quite all right as the air force.

So that journey to Morotai to Tarakan. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Well it was pretty uneventful. We just were on an LCI. We did the normal things that you did. Play a bit of hoopla or whatever they call it on the ship, play cards and

07:00 generally amuse yourself but apart from that no we just enjoyed the four days and of course, when it was on and you were standing out in the, in the bay and watching aircraft come in and drop bombs, it's really a sight because it's just like a movie. It's just out there. You are looking at the real action, you know,

07:30 and then other planes coming in strafing and things and you're saying, "I'm lucky I'm not under those." So the air force itself did a really good job. They came from Lumpha and Morotai.

Can you tell me more about that landing at Tarakan and tell me more about these 80 ships and what you saw?

08:00 **Imagine you are trying to describe exactly what you could see and hear at that time.**

The convoy moved in you thought, "Goodness me, I'm here in this convoy of 80 ships," we were told there was 80, I didn't have a chance at counting them, "and we are off to an invasion. We are going to take back Tarakan. What are you

08:30 going to come up against?" You have to think that. It passes through your mind, and it's all the topic of conversation of course, and as it looked as though they were striking some trouble on the beach, we thought again, "Well, we are going to get more when we get out there than what we bargained for," but it didn't turn out that way. The army and the commandoes, naval commandoes,

09:00 the American SeaBees [US Navy construction battalion] were there. They got them back well and truly off the beach.

Can you describe the scene for me of these 80 ships arriving at Tarakan and what you could see?

Well it's a very big bay I suppose you'd call it. They stood off well out to sea and then they alighted into smaller boats

09:30 then to go in. But the army of course were first cab off the rank. They, I think they used to some LCIs that went right up to the beach, dropped the front of them and then they rolled off there. I didn't see too much of that. We were well back and it was a scene like out of a movie.

10:00 When you look back on it now you wished you could have grasped more of it. But generally it was, I notice the sharp shooter who was out hours before we got off and it what looked to be a boat coming

out towards it but it was only a floating branch but they thought it was a little suicide canoe

10:30 and they dropped their guns and blew it out of the water. They were very observant and they protected the landing forces very well and they were shelling the interior of Tarakan to. You know the forces that were opposing the 26th Brigade.

Can you tell me more about arriving there

11:00 **and then doing this big U-turn? We'll just fix that up actually.**

Well the 80 ships they all stayed in formation where they were supposed to and we arrived in the dark you see but you couldn't see a great deal but we were told they were doing this

11:30 might U-turn and they came when they were supposed to and that's when the action actually started.

What did you think about doing this mighty U-turn?

When we were told about it we thought how fantastic it must have been you know. Arriving there early for a start we thought you know why didn't they slow down or something but there must have been reasons for it you know.

So when you say they arrived early

12:00 **how did they know they were early?**

Well they must have had a set time. Dawn for instance it may have been a dawn operation and they may have miscalculated at the time that it was going to be light. You see I'm only surmising this. I'm not saying this would be but it is one explanation.

So what was happening on your vessel at that time?

We were just taking it as an event.

12:30 We really didn't know that we were turning at that time.

Okay so what happened after that? Can you tell me exactly what happened in detail on what you could see and heard?

Well there was nothing much we could do until we got off. We, when we were waiting we just had to wait. It was a case of waiting on the LCI until we

13:00 got orders to move into a smaller boat and we went to shore on the boat and we got out. Until that time arrived we just waited on the LCI doing nothing practically. Just making sure that we had all our gear in order.

Before you got off what could you see?

You could see all the smoke. The oil tanks burning.

13:30 **That's what I want you to tell me about. Tell me from word go how did it, how did things progress?**

Well the oil tanks actually were burning when we got there because they had been attacked from the air probably the day before even but they were also severely attacked the morning we arrived. There was a great activity from the Australian air force and also from

14:00 the Americans. They attacked it and they also sprayed the place for mosquitoes to clean all those up. We were sent there expecting big doses of malaria or anything like that. they actually went over that island and saturated it with spraying it and it must have killed every mosquito on the island because I don't think I seen one.

14:30 There was continuous attacks by the air force, both air force and that's as I say where I saw some napalm dropped and you knew it was napalm because it came up in the black smoke.

Was that while you were on the LCI?

No we were off by that time.

So can you tell me about that?

About the napalm? Well we were off and we were making our

15:00 way to. First of all we had to wait a couple of days before we could move to where we were going to be stationed because they hadn't beat the Japs back far enough so we stayed in a place that was normally occupied by the local population and I think it was Beaufighters too that were dropping some napalm.

15:30 You'd see them go over and drop their bombs because you could see the black smoke come up. It was very black and they tried to drop it and into you know where there were areas where there were a lot of Japs because it ran like, well like jellied petrol would run. It was a very devastating weapon really.

16:00 **What did you know about napalm at the time?**

Nothing except that it was jellied napalm and it was extensively used of course later in Vietnam but I don't know if it was used after Tarakan but it certainly was used there and

Did you

I went and had a look later after the napalm had been drop and it absolutely

16:30 burnt everything all over the ground you know. It was like you as if you had gone over methodically with a flame thrower. It really burnt everything.

What were your thoughts about that?

Just that what a devastating weapon. I hope the Japs don't have it but they would of if they had the aircraft they would of. It was a

17:00 nasty weapon but it was I suppose within the rules of war so it was used.

Can you tell me, lets go back to when you when you actually when you all got off your vessel. What happened? What did you do?

We only got as far as the buildings that were on a matter of 50 yards off the beach. We had to stay there because the area

17:30 where we were going hadn't been secured. We were there for a couple of days really.

Can you describe the mood among the men at that time?

Just I wouldn't say there were nervous just taking things as they happened. Other than that I couldn't, I couldn't comment one way or the other. They didn't seem to be,

18:00 in fact I'm sure they weren't upset. Well this is how it's happened and this is how it is.

That whole scene of those 80 ships landing at Tarakan that must have been quite impressive for you given this was your first time out of, I guess it was your first time out of Australia.

Yes.

What your overall impression of what was happening?

Well of course it was awesome you know

18:30 I thought I was never to see a thing like that and to be actually present at it and seeing this it was in a way, you know, mind boggling, and it was something that I thought I would never ever forget because they were all in formation. Everybody, I've got to make it clear and you probably understand this, too.

19:00 That at the landing it just wasn't willy nilly boats and rowing into the shore. It was done methodically. The army first row and they all get in, and whoever was to go second for them to line up and also go in, so it was done in a very military like fashion and it was never at a stage where everyone was at stage willy nilly hopping off

19:30 the boats and rowing into shore. It didn't happen like that.

So it must have been quite an administratively, quite a feat?

Yes. The, it would have been all worked out by Brigadier Whitehead and his staff beforehand. They would have known exactly what they were doing and

20:00 it all worked to plan because he was the ultimate victor. He defeated the Japanese on there on Tarakan and instead of our people being prisoners, they captured quite a number of Japanese who were prisoners of war.

How many Japanese were on Tarakan at the time that you landed?

It's hard to say. I couldn't put a figure on it but

20:30 it wasn't in the thousands, but I wouldn't have surprised me if there wasn't 2 or 3,000 there. I believe there were some North Koreans amongst them too and they were the big 6-footers. There were plenty there to put up a good fight, I can tell you.

When you saw these bombs being dropped particularly the napalm, did you have any thoughts

21:00 **for the Japanese people?**

For their soldiers? Not really. I would now, I'd say, because it's really cruel. Then it was war and as we found out later, they did committed acts much more cruel than what dropping napalm was. I, you know, I think it's sad, war as a whole,

- 21:30 that young people of any nation to kill themselves and kill one another. I'm not a pacifist by any means and I took part in the Second World War, but you do when you look back on everything. You seem to say how silly it was, you know, but in the case of the Japanese it was a case of defending your country. It had to be done.
- 22:00 **Did you have any of those thoughts that you just expressed them about being silly and sort of the inhumanity of it? Did you have any of those sort of thoughts then?**
- No. No. You think about these things when you get older. You don't think that you are there under a false premise. Never have I ever thought there. I'm still, I might admit anti-Japanese. I don't like them for what
- 22:30 they did and I only think, and I think anybody will have these thoughts that war as a whole is a great thing to be avoided. Young people and civilians the way they have been killed. Terrorists the way they act in the world today. It's not good
- 23:00 and that war with the Japanese. We had a very just cause and if ever there was a just cause it was a just cause against the Japs. We acquitted ourselves. I just make the observation that war as a whole is the one thing to be avoided if possible.
- Just going back to Tarakan now when you arrived I think you said only 50 yards from the beach you stopped**
- 23:30 **and stayed there. What happened from there?**
- Well we just stopped. There was nothing to be done. I think it was further out than 50...did I say 50?
- I might be wrong. I might have.**
- I might have said 50. We didn't stop there you see we were out there for about 12 or 18 hours before we got off and we would be out further than 50 yards but
- 24:00 it was just a matter of waiting. It was a waiting game. The battalions went in and did all the rough work to knock all the Japs back and secure the forward not only for our units but for other units as well and it was just a case of waiting out there until this job had been accomplished.
- 24:30 **What was sort of mood among the non combatant troops knowing that there were others out there fighting?**
- Well you couldn't refer to them as non-combatants actually. They were all combatant troops but you would describe them as non-front line troops.
- Okay so what was the mood among the troops who weren't in the front line?**
- 25:00 Well one as far as the air force was concerned just a matter of thinking about it all and just hoping we got sufficient room in there eventually to go in and do our job. The quicker we got in and do it the quicker we thought we would get out again.
- What information did you have about what was happening while you were waiting there?**
- Never got any. That was
- 25:30 the bad situation. We weren't told anything. We weren't told. Probably the, you know the senior officers would have been told but it wasn't relayed onto the ordinary ranks.
- How did that affect you?**
- It didn't matter. It didn't matter. We didn't know they knew
- 26:00 and I don't know to this day what they knew. You see you act under orders there. If they say, "Stay put. You're not getting off for another five or six hours," and then you don't hear from them again. That's your last order. You abide by that and if they say, "Well, we'll be in touch again. You might be off in an hour or so," then you are
- 26:30 on your best behaviour to expecting an order at any time to disembark and go in. But for army its, they know they are in the early, the commandoes, the SeaBees, the naval commandoes, they were all in early and they were doing a fantastic job. The other non-front line troops
- 27:00 they just had to wait until there was sufficient territory was grabbed and secured.
- Could you hear what was going on?**
- You could hear all the firing yeah. You could even hear the Jap machine guns.
- Could you tell me what that was like?**
- It was like, they used to call them Woodpeckers. A Jap machine gun was - seemed to be slower than ours. Ours were very fast. The Japanese machine gun was

27:30 just as they named him. It was known as a woodpecker and very, you could distinguish a woodpecker from any other gun. So there was no, if you heard a woodpecker you knew there were Japs in the vicinity.

How often did you hear them?

We heard them quite frequently even when we went into our secured area and

28:00 put our gear up we had to maintain our own guard and we had to look after ourselves, more or less. We didn't have an army protecting us. We had to look after ourselves. We had guard duty to perform as well as your other duties and you went out and that was to protect the installations, the camp

28:30 and you did those in shifts and you were wide awake because the Japs had a bad habit as we called it of sneaking down in amongst bridges and throwing hand grenades into tents and things like that. We didn't experience it but it did happen there.

How much of a concern was that among your troops?

29:00 It was a concern. When you went out on guard duty, you didn't muck about. You were very particular and very enthusiastic in doing your job because there was no dozing off or anything like that. If you were caught asleep or anything like that it would have been a court martial because it was very dangerous. There were lots of incidents where Japs came down ridges and rolled hand grenades

29:30 into tents. You know and killed plenty of people so it was being down and that's what we were on guard against. You did your own duties during the day. There was no 48 hour weeks or 44 hour weeks. You did your eight hour shift and perhaps it would run into might be every third day you would get a shift as a guard as well as your own shift so you had to maintain this

30:00 for safety purposes.

What methods did you use to sort of psycho yourself up for that situation?

Well do this job properly or you mightn't be here, and that's precisely how it was because the Japs were a very brilliant jungle fighter and they could infiltrate it and you wouldn't hear them or

30:30 they would do the you know without you knowing. As I said, not that our unit experienced it, but it did happen in other places, in other units where they got right down, right outside the tent and decided to throw a hand grenade in and then beat it and get away. So you had to be on your p & qs [behave properly].

How well were you able to sleep?

31:00 Oh yes, we slept. You got used to this sort of life you know. It was it was an active service life. You were at war. You might get killed but if you were tired enough you went to sleep all right.

So tell me what happened from there while you were waiting? What were you doing while you were waiting?

31:30 We were at this local place. We were doing nothing really. When I say nothing I carried a few local population people that were dead and helped bury them you know.

Tell me about that.

They were killed in the initial strike. We don't whether the Japs killed them or we did but they were just lying there dead, so we'd have to

32:00 assist with burying them. If they were seriously wounded carry them off to a hospital on a stretcher.

Was that your first experience with being close to death?

Ah, yes.

And you were 21, 22?

I was 21 then.

How did you deal with that?

It was a shock. Of course in

32:30 Darwin we dealt with it too, but not at first hand. People were killed but here, you seen the bodies. Seen dead bodies and that wasn't nice. That all past when we moved up to our own unit, our own secured area and we had

33:00 to maintain our own security there I was telling you about. We had to go out and maintain our own guard and so forth.

What sort of ceremonies were held for those people who had died?

Well these were native people, locals so the burials that I assisted with there was no ceremony. Whether there was any Muslim or other

33:30 sort of ceremonies I didn't, I never ever found out.

How much contact did you have with the local indigenous people?

A lot of contact.

Can you tell me about that?

Yes. There were a lot of Indians there. A lot of Indians and they were also they were the normal Indonesian people today. Javanese and that type of people, but Indians and Chinese.

34:00 A lot of Chinese and they were very friendly. We were invited into their homes, the Chinese in particularly. The Indians would buy anything off you that you wanted to sell and some of the Chinese actually. They would give you 10 times the value of a cigarette, you know. Cigarettes were worth about \$1 a carton if you bought

34:30 them from the American canteens. Nothing to get \$10 for them if you wanted to sell them and everything was this way and sugar it was an absolute luxury. Sugar and cigarettes they were the two main items.

Did you have much sugar to sell?

We didn't sell it actually. We gave a lot of it

35:00 away to them. Other people did sell sugar if they were had come, if they happened to find a bag that fell off the back of a truck, yes, they sold it. They'd get big money for it but cigarettes...I sold a few cigarettes because I was giving up smoking then and I thought, "Well I'll make a quid out of these if I can."

35:30 So they were so long without cigarettes and they were used to these terrible Japanese cigarettes that they would offer anything for them and without, you know, you weren't even exploiting them because they wanted these things and, "Here's the price," so that was the case.

How did those people greet you?

There were very friendly towards us, very friendly,

36:00 very friendly and they could not get over the fact that we had taken Tarakan back from the Japs and now we were handing it over to the Dutch. The way they calculated it, it was the Japs were 1 per cent, the Dutch were 2 per cent and the Australians were 100 per cent and they

36:30 couldn't understand why we would take the island and then hand it over to the Dutch. Of course the Dutch didn't maintain it for that long after either. Only a couple of years after the war.

What did you say to them about that?

We try and explain it to them that it wasn't ours to hold and so forth, but it still didn't register. If you take a thing, it's yours.

37:00 Can you recall the day the Japanese capitulated?

Yes. I was listening to the news as a matter of fact and well there were two sections. There were two days. First of all there was the news of the bomb being dropped, and then the one on Hiroshima, the second one, or Nagasaki, and then

37:30 within hours the Japanese - there was a conference at Potsdam. The Russians and the British and the Americans held this conference at Potsdam prior to the release of the war and it was known as the Potsdam Agreement because the conference was held at Potsdam. Russia, Stalin represented them,

38:00 Churchill and I think Truman would have been the man there and they worked out this common ground for the surrender of Japan and the surrender was unconditional surrender. There was to be no bargaining or anything like that. So after the second bomb was dropped the Japanese broadcast on our frequency

38:30 that they accepted the terms of the Potsdam Agreement provided that the, how did they word it? Provided that the, which amounted to the powers of the emperor weren't disturbed and the emperor was left how it was. So

39:00 the Allies did accept that and they left the emperor in place and after that there came the scurry. The Japanese planes were painted white with United Nations crosses on them and they came to various parts to surrender and the number of troops up there frightened us when we saw how many were up there. Like at Morotai they held this, just this

39:30 a perimeter and underneath was the Halmahera and there was over 200 troops there you know. So you wondered why they let Morotai exist with all those troops there, but their lines of communication must

have been disorganised and extended too far and they couldn't do anything about it. So there were surrenders everywhere and the big surrender was in Tokyo Bay in September,

40:00 I think it was the 2nd of September from memory. In September on the Missouri, they had all the top Japs there surrendering, but around the Southwest Pacific, they had all the local commanders. They all surrendered.

I want to ask you more about that but I think we're at the end of the tape.

Tape 9

00:31 **Can you describe what the camp was like at Tarakan and how you set it up?**

It was very similar to the camp we set up at 31 Squadron. It was comprised of tents and timber makeshift timber and thatched stuff for the kitchen

01:00 and the cookhouse. Mainly tents though and it was there was some violent storms there on Tarakan and everything had to be tied down pretty securely and I remember sleeping one night and the whole of the tent disappeared and it was propped up on a stick and tied down and everything and everything just went

01:30 and there I was in the moonlight. It was a sort of semi cyclone. It was you know quiet. The storms up there were bad. So they were in Darwin too. They were very bad.

Did you have to build the campsite?

Not the site itself but the facilities were there. Like the

02:00 construction groups put water and things like that in but we had to build our own tents and put them up and maintain them.

So can you describe the construction of one of your tents there?

Well we would scrounge around to get a wooden floor if possible and if we get pieces of timber. You see Tarakan as a place was a,

02:30 the did have a lot of buildings on it and a lot were destroyed with air raids and there was a lot of timber on it. We'd build a floor first and then we'd then erect the tent and we would try and get it off the ground. About 2ft off the ground and stand it on a pole that we would bury and then tie it down and then have a side around

03:00 the tent which we could you know on hot days take the sides down and let the air come in. And we made some good jobs on the tents. There was a particularly good one that I was in with a couple of fellows that got blown away, so to get separate accommodation they went to a tent and I went to another one. We parted company but they apparently we never had it secured enough

03:30 and they were, you made them as homely as possible and you had little cupboards built. If you were a handyman at all or you knew someone who could build one you built a little cupboard and you were able to put all your stuff in. The art was to keep things tidy

04:00 in the tropics because shoes would mould. Things would mould very easy so you kept them aired and things like that. But on the whole it was quite okay.

Did you have a photo of Julia?

Yes I did have one there. I had one with me there.

Put it up in the tent?

It was in my wallet actually. In my wallet

04:30 and yes, I remember that.

What was your job at Tarakan?

It was in the radar station on the point to point, you know the radar would get a you know a blip or whatever and they would relay it to me, they would send it to me and

05:00 then we would dispatch this to fighter sector headquarters and the same thing used to take place that took place in Darwin actually. But as I said there was very little air activity in Tarakan and I often wondered if we were there just filling in time because the enemy activity was nil but we were sent there thinking

05:30 that it was going to be on.

Were you hearing what was happening with the front line men?

Oh yes we knew it was happening with them because we knew there was such a lot killed there. You know there was more Australians killed in Tarakan then the whole of Australians killed in Vietnam and the campaign lasted about six weeks.

06:00 And where were they in relation to you?

Well they were all over the island but there was a strategic advance made where the Japanese kept moving back and the battalions kept chasing them and they were, they were defeating them and of course, I don't think there was much left when they dropped the bombs actually. I think

06:30 they were well and truly defeated then. But what happened when they were defeated they surrendered.

On the island?

Yes.

Did you hear about that?

Oh I seen them there. The people. The POWs I seen them and they were treated quite correctly because Australia was a signatory to the Geneva Convention. Japan wasn't.

07:00 So, there were Japanese POWs there. We didn't see any of the actual surrenders by the big lots of Japanese. You see they took place on Morotai, they took place at Surabi and places like that and up at various other places in the Pacific where the surrenders took place but not at Tarakan. Only the local

07:30 few that hadn't been defeated in the campaign.

Describe the POW set up? How did you see that?

The POW set-up at Tarakan? Well they were in working parties. They just put them in the working parties. They were treated correctly of course but they were behind a barricade. There wasn't too many at Tarakan and guarded by the military police.

08:00 There wasn't very many and there wasn't a whole heap like there was at Morotai.

Was there any celebrations on Tarakan when that victory was won?

Oh yes, a couple of bottles of beer busted and a few guns fired in the air but no great big huge celebration but the

08:30 point of contention then was. That happened on August 15. We got away from there in December so it was a really boring time until then when there was nothing doing. The Japs had surrendered. There was no activity at all and we were just putting in time.

What did you do?

Well when we had to

09:00 dig a latrine, for instance - you know, an ordinary three or four man job, they sent a sergeant and about 20 men to do it and fill in time that way.

Did people start to become edgy?

Well they became, yeah, they wanted to get home yes, they were edgy and I was among them. I didn't see

09:30 why we had to stay there, but of course there was the fact of room on the ships. There were so many to go home. I'll tell you a story about the Kanimbla when we did get home but for the, for having to stay there and nothing doing that was probably I can write that down as the worst time of my service

10:00 because there was nothing to do. When we did eventually get home you see the 26th Brigade of the 9th Division which had completed this campaign were all young men. They had been to the Middle East they had been everywhere and the army and the air force to were discharging on a point

10:30 system but mainly the army was doing this and if you were married you got 200 points to start, if you were single you got so many points for each year of service. You might do six years of service and have 70 points. It was really heartbreaking. Now what happened at Tarakan was that the army gave these

11:00 lads telegrams to send home. It was in the middle of December, "We will be home for Christmas," and okay, they sent these telegrams home and their parents or relatives or wives and everything. There were no wives because none of them were married, they accepted these as being great. They would have them home for Christmas. So the Kanimbla comes to take us home

11:30 and we weren't involved in this. There were 400 air force that were going and they got on without incident and so did the 26th Brigade. They went on to the Kanimbla. Settled in lovely. Halfway across between the Kanimbla and Morotai the OC of the ship in charge of troops called them all up and said he

had just received a signal

- 12:00 they were to get off at Morotai and let Corp troops on at Morotai who were married men and had more troops than them. That created a real big tizzy [fuss] and when we arrived at Tarakan the troops wouldn't get off and they refused and we were there for two or three days and eventually the captain,
- 12:30 the master of the Kanimbla came up and said if they didn't get off, he would take it out to sea and they would come under naval discipline and that would involve a gaol term. So they thought about this and they decided to get off, these poor fellows, and they got off and they were taken around Morotai to this side of the island and they let these corps troops from this side of the island so they wouldn't clash.
- 13:00 So I believe, I don't know how true it is, but I believe that a lot of these young fellows never got home for months after because they jacked up on the Kanimbla, and these married men. Of course it was the method the army was discharging them and it wasn't these fellows' fault either. They had the requirements and
- 13:30 they were gone and went home. We didn't get home for Christmas though. The delay, we arrived in Sydney on Christmas Eve and that meant I got back to Sandgate and I had Christmas in Sandgate on Christmas Eve. I would have been home for Christmas otherwise. That was the story of the 26th Brigade single men jacking up. They had a just cause,
- 14:00 too, but they other men of course had the points and they were allowed on and that was the end of story.

What was their CO saying to convince them to get off?

Well they not only had their CO, they had the all the red braid [senior officials] in the world from Morotai to address them. They just told them to get lost they were really at the end. You know they told them where to go

- 14:30 but they gave it us as a bad job and the master of Kanimbla had to come in and resurrect the situation and when he mentioned gaol terms and the like they gave up.

What were you guys doing at the time?

Not being fed. It affected everybody. They wouldn't open the messes to the chaps that wouldn't get off and of course we were the same. Eventually they gave us a

- 15:00 feed but it was pretty hairy there at the time because we didn't know where this was going to finish.

Was anyone from your end of it trying to convince these guys to give it up?

No it was purely an army matter. I wouldn't have liked to try and convince them. I would not. They eventually got off.

- 15:30 **Tell us about going back to Dalby after that period?**

Well, oh yes, I got went back to Dalby. I got back to Dalby I think on Boxing Day, Boxing Day and I was pleased to get back there. My family was pleased that I had got home. I was a bit unsettled. I didn't go back to my job for a while

- 16:00 and then I decided to go back and...

What did you do?

I was a shop assistant in Penny's and they had to keep my job for me you see and of course, I went back and didn't hit it off with the manager. I told him that I was moving, but not in real polite terms, and I had a spell for a while

- 16:30 and eventually I went back to the post office for a while and then an exam came up in the railway for porters so I sat for that exam and I got appointed there.

Why do you think you were so unsettled?

I think it was the constant moving around and the different,

- 17:00 you know the different episodes when I was away and taken part in and I think most people, most ex-servicemen at that time were unsettled but I got over it.

We've heard people say that you know at the end of, when they heard about the end of the war in some ways they were sad because they had a job that they loved doing. Did you feel that?

In a way I did. They wrote to me afterwards and

- 17:30 offered me to go back and I was corporal at the time and they asked me to go back and take up my present, that position again as a corporal and they said that there would be immediate promotion for me after six months. Well, I wasn't married at that time and I didn't want to go at that time. Had I been married, I think I would have accepted

18:00 because I liked it. I had a good time there.

Did you miss it?

Yes, I did miss it. I missed the different people I worked with. Some of them I've never seen again. Others I have been in contact with and it's lasted all this time, but I wanted to get married and so forth and I had to wait a bit longer than I thought it would, so

18:30 when it eventually happened, I was in the railway, so I stayed there.

How had Dalby changed?

It hadn't changed a great deal. It got a spurt on after the war. It hadn't changed much during the town at all. It was still a sleepy old town there and not much doing but after the war it, it became

19:00 second only to Wollongong in progression as a town and now it has a population of over 10,000, and of course, it is heavily involved in cotton. Then it was purely a grain town. If it as good seasons then Dalby prospered, if it was bad seasons than accordingly Dalby suffered as well but now it has cotton

19:30 it seems to have reached an 'even stephens' [it seems to have evened out] situation so its doing quite well.

Do you think the war changed your personality at all or changed you in any way?

I think it made me more mature because I was a bit of a larrikin when I was younger. I read my report when I went before a selection committee before I went into the

20:00 air force and that same headmaster who gave me the good report also said that I was a likeable lad but he felt that the discipline would do me good. So...

And did it?

I think it had something to do with it yes. Yeah, I really do. You do as you are told in there particularly in a war-time situation.

20:30 You don't question who gave you an order so it did have an effect I reckon. That's my opinion anyway.

Did you dream about it after the war?

No. No. It was like turning over another page. So I was quite happy about being discharged at the time but had my marital affairs

21:00 been settled at that time I would have gone back. I may have stayed in there. One never knows. I know why they offered me the job back because of my knowledge of interception and things like that and I would have been an asset because it progressed that sort of league. As I said,

21:30 they have large staffs now and every country is doing it, so it's not a novelty any more.

Do you think in hindsight the bombs were a bad decision?

In one way I thought it was an act, an inhumane act. In another consideration, I thought, well,

22:00 not only it caused a lot of deaths, but it also saved a lot and it ended the war on the spot. If the Americans and Allies had to invade Japan, it would have been a real blood bath. They would have fought right to the death for the emperor and it would have been really a

22:30 bad situation. I have no doubt that the Americans and the Australians and the British plus of course help from the Russia later helped defeat Japan, but lives it would have cost. So when you look at the situation of the two bombs, yes, there were a couple of hundred thousand killed at Hiroshima, but afterall, when you look at what it saved, probably was worth

23:00 it.

What sort of stories were you hearing post-war of POW experiences?

We were getting the horror stories because Changi had just been opened up and the POWs were back and all these horrible stories. Japanese were being arrested and tried for war crimes. The Burma, the Burma/Thailand Railway was fresh in everyone's mind.

23:30 So many killed in that, in the erection and construction of that railway that the Japanese weren't the flavour of the month after that. And they were so brutal, and the sad part about it is the Japanese students aren't being told about all this. It is not even in their text books, so they don't know about these things that happened.

24:00 I don't know if they have altered in or if anything has gone in but there was nothing in you know, years ago.

Have you ever talked to any about their experience as a POW?

Oh yes I know a few POWs. They were bad situations. They really. Yes, I've spoken to a few of them.

What sort of things have they told you about?

About

24:30 the brutality that existed. The Japanese had no time for a prisoner of war. They were under the impression that you fight to the death and a prisoner was some lesser

25:00 creature you know so they were treated really brutally and they weren't a signatory to the Geneva Convention so they didn't abide by it and some of the acts that, you know if they, certain people on the Burma-Thailand Railway, if they didn't work hard enough they were belted around the scones with rifle butts and they were.

25:30 There was supposed to be one death for every sleeper laid down. I don't know if that's entirely correct, but I am prepared to believe it, and there was a lot of POWs taken to Japan and they were made to make bullets to be fired on our blokes. So but they were treated a bit better than the Changi people were and what

26:00 the people who worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway were. So yes being a prisoner of war of the Japanese wasn't a top-class occupation.

Do you attend Anzac Day?

Yes, every year.

Why do you think it's important?

Well I'm of the opinion that should never be allowed to disappear.

26:30 The First World War and the Dardanelles and the landing at Gallipoli was a horror situation. Thousands killed there. It's our national day and I think it should be preserved and World War II should be commemorated on the same day on Anzac Day. It should never, ever be watered down in any respect and

27:00 it should be observed as a day of commemoration.

What sort of things do you think about on Anzac Day?

Oh I think of the people we left behind actually, particularly with 31 Squadron. There were 61 of air crews that were lost and they were all trained men or only young men - 21, 22

27:30 years of age. They had a life ahead of them that were lost. I think of the POWs. The number that were killed over there and the infantry people and the other army units that were lost, killed. The navy that lost so many men. The ships that were sunk and gone down all hands on deck. You know a lot of

28:00 there were a lot killed. A lot should be remembered and I don't think that the day should be let slide. It should be commemorated for ever more.

Have you had a happy post-war life?

Yes.

Can you give a little summary of what happened post-war?

Well getting married was a big plus. Having our family of six and educating them.

28:30 Travelling around from city to city and town to town. Meeting a lot more people. That was all good. Joining the various associations that I'm in like the RAAF Association, the Beaufighter Association. That is all good stuff. I makes me happy and proud to be a member of it.

It was only, it was only a

29:00 **three or four-year experience and yet you all connect quite regularly. Why is it so important?**

Well, those four years, you know, they were definitely, they were, could I just say as bookmarks. They were definite happenings. There was four years out of our lives that we took part in

29:30 some things that went down in history and I think they should be remembered. We should remember them. For a long time after the war I didn't remember them. You know in my first early life in the railways I didn't go to Anzac Day. I never thought of it really or preserving you know memories of 31 Squadron.

30:00 I didn't worry about that until later years and suddenly they became very important. And I should have thought about them all the time. All post-war, so that's how I feel about it.

Have you got any final comment about your war experience that you want to put on record?

- 30:30 No, I just like to record the fact that I enjoyed my service in the RAAF. I met some very fine people in there. Some have remained friends up to this very day or might have passed on but I never regret having joined the RAAF. I think I made the right decision in joining the RAAF. As I said earlier it was a
- 31:00 junior service, it was the newest service and I thought, "Well, I might be able to contribute something here." And I felt that I did and I'm an admirer of the RAAF and I think it will go onto better things. Bigger and better things, and I'm proud to have been a member of it and I'm proud to have served during World War II
- 31:30 as a member of the RAAF.

Thank you, Roy.

INTERVIEW ENDS