

Australians at War Film Archive

John McIntosh (Jack) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1579>

Tape 1

- 00:48 When we lived at Partington during the big Depression. We had a few cows and WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s.
- 01:00 Things were that bad that we had to sell them off. We would get 30 bob for a cow and calf and 2 bob each for the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. An half Chinaman, a bloke by the name of Harry Hassaman ripped us off. That was about the earliest, and going to the Stuart State School. I went there until I was 14 years of age. Prior to that we
- 01:30 used to have our lunch out the back and if we left our bags open then 50 or 60 goats used to come to the school every day. And if your bag was left open then you had no lunch. The goats had it. And then they'd go to the water trough, and there was a 4 gallon kerosene tin there. One would get their head caught in the tin and then there would be a scatter on for the kerosene tin and the school teacher would say,
- 02:00 "Righto go out and get the goat." And everybody would be out after the goat. They were the good old days at school.
- Where were you born Jack?**
- In Townsville.
- Have you been told much about the events surrounding that?**
- Nothing at all. Mum and Dad are deceased. The old Stuart school was a good school. We used to have a break up every year and a fete once a year.
- 02:30 And at the break up we wanted for nothing. Everything was donated by the farmers. So we wanted for nothing. And the night after the break up we had a big dance and then all the kids would hop in a do the cleaning up. It would be a working bee. We wanted for nothing. We had nothing. It was
- 03:00 very hard during the Depression. I left school at 14 but prior to that at 13 I was ploughing with two horses. I was 14 when I left school and I got a job working for an English couple at five bob a week. I would milk the cow, feed the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, chop the wood and clean the yard up.
- 03:30 **Before you go on Jack can I ask a bit more about the school. How many kids went there?**
- There would have been about 40 to 50.
- Do you remember what sort of subjects you did there?**
- Mainly...we had a bit of history, a bit of geography and things like that.
- What did you think of school?**
- I had no time for it. That was my opinion of it. My mind was sent on going to the bush and that's what I wanted to do.
- 04:00 **How did you get to school from home?**
- We used to live across the road. I used to walk. Some rode bush bikes and some walked. There was a family up there called the Ellis's. They used to come down on the rail motor, the milk motor they called it. They'd come on the rail motor of a morning and then they'd walk home of an afternoon. Twelve mile. Some time the farmers would pick them up and give them a ride.
- 04:30 But mainly they walked. Three boys and a girl.
- How many teachers were at that school?**

We had 3. A father and daughter and another bloke called Hight. Tiger Hight we used to call him and by gee he was a bloody tiger too. Many a slate he broke over my head. I was a dunce. I don't mind saying it.

05:00 I wasn't interested.

What was the punishment for kids who misbehaved at school?

He would give you a couple of cuts with the cane. If you had a chance you would pinch his cane but the more you pinched them they more he seemed to come up with and you'd get another one.

What was the actual school like? How many buildings did they have there?

There was one big building with 3 classrooms. Now it's a big school. I went up there one Anzac Day to do a speech for the kids

05:30 and it was like rabbit warrens, rooms everywhere. I reckoned it was a fire hazard. That's what I said to them.

Was there anything there when you went back that you recognised?

No not a thing. We had a windmill there and a well which was put in by the relief workers who they called the remittance men at that time. Dad was one who dug the well

06:00 and bricked it. The bricks were supplied by the Partington brickworks which was just up the road. They got the windmill donated and the tank donated and that was the water we had for the school.

Can you remember drawing water from there?

Yes. I remember drinking water from it. Good water too it was.

06:30 I think it worked out roughly to be about a pound a foot and it was 35 to 40 feet.

What about sports and other things that you did at school?

We'd do a bit of swimming. They'd take us when the creek was in flood. They'd take us over to Louis's hole over the back. We played cricket and sometimes they'd play football. But cricket was the main game.

07:00 A lot of funny things went on at that school.

Do you recall any?

There was one bloke in the class called Frank Hegarty, we called him Barky. And old Barky reckoned he was Houdini [escape artist], and he could get in and do anything. So one day we went to school and everybody took a bit of rope. We had bit weeping fig trees all around the school.

07:30 We got old Barky and they tied him to this tree. We had him tied up all right. And the bell went and we forgot about Barky and the teacher said, "Where's Hegarty?" Someone said, "He's tied to a tree out there." Well, everybody copped it then. We had to go and let Barky go. All the boys in the class copped it.

08:00 **Did you still call him Houdini after that?**

He got killed during the war. An American Negro ran over him poor bugger. We had a few cattle with the grandfather. One day he reckoned he was a buck jump rider, so we put him on a bullocker and nearly killed him. But he used to always come up for more.

Do you know what the split would have been between girls and boys when you went to school there?

More or less the same.

08:30 It would have been about the same. There was one family used to come from down near Alligator Creek. Their father was a champion buck jump rider. Black people they were. And the mother used to dress them all up in white with a little white straw hat on. Gee, they were black as the ace of spades and gee they always looked presentable. I ran into one of the boys a while ago

09:00 at the pub. But he's passed on now and I don't know where the rest of the family is.

How many Aboriginal kids went to the school?

Only about 8 or 10. But they came from respectable families. Their fathers were stockman and things like that. They worked for farmers and things like that. They weren't lazy buggers. They were all energetic sort of people.

How did they get on with the other kids?

No problem.

09:30 We were as happy as Larry together.

Where was the nearest other school?

Oonoomba.

How far away was that?

Five or six mile away.

And did you have interschool things with them?

Once they did have. Not much of it. Stuart was more or less on its own all the time. We never seem to mix much. The old headmaster,

10:00 he was an old man and his daughter never mixed much. The other one was too busy running around the place. We never had much to do with anyone else.

So all the people who were living in Stuart, what was their main occupations?

Mainly railway or meat works. The meat work season at that time used to only go for 6 weeks. My Dad was a shift workers out there

10:30 and he'd come home on a train at 8.30 in the morning and then there was one train a day went to the meat works. Then a shunt train would go out from any time from 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock. So the young fellas would have to go down to the railway and ask what time the train was due to go. He'd go down and back on the train and there was a room at the meat works where they would stay until they started working. On

11:00 Friday nights they used to have to work until 4 o'clock and then they would take their bikes out on the train and ride the bikes home in the morning. It was about 12 mile.

The shunt train that went out there did it transport anything else beside the men?

The wagons that took the men out used to be left out there and then they'd take coal out plus two wagons. They might

11:30 have to take freezer wagons out for meat and things like that. That's why they called it the shunt train.

Would the cattle be dropped off like that as well?

Yes they'd be dumped off. At that time train cattle had to be kept 24 hours before they could kill them. And road cattle, driven, could be kept for 12 hours because they were rested along the road.

12:00 So the train cattle had to be kept 24 hours for bruising.

Did you see much of your dad when he was working there?

Oh yes. I worked out there myself when I left school. It was a good place. They used to work a 44 hour week at that time. As kids sometime we'd go out on a Saturday, walk around the meat works for a while and then go down fishing at the creek.

12:30 Fishing was the biggest part of the day.

What sort of stuff would you catch?

Black bream, grunter...all good fish. At that time there were not too many motor boats. It was the motor boats that bugged the fishing. They frightened them all...too many motor boats. If you get into some of these creeks where the motor boats can't go then you'll get good fish.

What did you use for bait?

A bit

13:00 of liver or anything you could find. Cuts from the meatworks.

Can you tell us more about your dad?

A good hard worker. They had to work when it was the meat work season. They would have to go in once

13:30 a week and put this big card into the Labour Brew and get it stamped so they could get their relief money and all that you know. You never got it sent to you in the post like you do nowadays. You had to front up. If you didn't go and get your card stamped you wouldn't get paid.

Where did you have to go and do that?

Down on the Strand, the Queen's Hotel. The Labour Brew. You'd go by push bike.

14:00 **How long would that take him?**

Oh it might take him half an hour to ride in. Half an hour to ride home.

What was the road like?

Oh no roads. Just gravel. We had a horse and sulky. We'd take that if we had to get fowl feed or something. One of us would go with him and hold the horse while he went up there and come back. It was a pretty rough old world.

14:30 **Had your dad had any military service?**

No. I'm the only one. I left school and then I went working for Hunter. Then I worked out at Rocky Spring Station for the Davis'. I worked out there as a stockman for a while. There were four of us. John Hannan, my brother and a bloke called Frankie Wilcox

15:00 He used to stutter old Frankie. We used to call him Straight Away Jack. He was a funny bugger. Anyhow we had to go riding around on ponies or anything that would walk. We got a brain wave once to get some magpies and sell them to the Chinaman. So we made a fishing line up.

15:30 And a rope ladder. Health and Safety wouldn't want to have seen it. So we would throw a rock up over a limb of a tree and pull the ladder up. And old Straight Away was always the lucky one to win the ladder. He always won the ladder. And he would get these magpies...he was good. Up the rope he'd go, and this day it was a mopoke's nest, the night owl.

16:00 Out they come onto Straight Away on the ladder. And if you've ever seen a man ballroom dancing on a ladder. Well when he got down by gee he had the stutters bad that day.

So what would you do with the magpies?

We'd sell them to the Chinaman. Mum used to look after the business. We'd give them to Mum in a box and she'd barter with the Chinaman and get fruit.

16:30 So we split the fruit up amongst ourselves. That was a pretty good idea but we ran out of magpies in the finish. They couldn't breed quick enough for us.

And what did the Chinaman do with them?

He take them into his garden and he'd nip a portion of their wing off and put them in their garden eating all the insects.

17:00 He would have a dozen or so magpies following him around.

That's incredible...and how did the magpies react to the Chinaman...they must have been like pets?

Yes he had them as pets. You'd see him in his garden and he'd have all these magpies running behind him. It was funny to watch them.

Other blokes have told us about other sorts of

17:30 **bird nesting. Did you do that?**

No, that's all we used to chase, the Maggies. The Chinaman wanted them so we didn't worry about any of the others.

And what sort of fruit did he grow?

We'd get apples and things like that off him. He had a market garden and a fruit garden. He'd buy stuff of the COD [Cash On Delivery]. He'd have oranges

18:00 and bananas and things like that.

So he'd on-sell them on to other people? So where was his place?

Near where the...it was along Charters Towers Road...where that park is, a big park along there. That used to be all gardens through there.

What can you tell us about your business manager, your mum?

Oh she was a good mother. She

18:30 worked...no matter what the day or night, if anyone ever came home there was always a feed. She worked very hard. She died young. She could stand up to that old Chinaman. He couldn't put it over her.

Can you remember the sort of feeds she used to cook up for you?

She could cook anything. She was a good cook Mum. She could cook anything. We used to make our own butter

19:00 ...we had our own cows, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, pigs. We had anything. We could kill a goat

and have meat for a week. We could kill a big weaner. We lived pretty well but we never lived above our means. We couldn't. When we had the farm we grew a lot of our own vegies.

So what can you remember of the Depression years?

- 19:30 I can remember we lived opposite the school and on the creek...we've seen doctors and families camping under the railway bridge. Very smart people all out of work. Mum would take....especially if they were families. Out the back we had big buggy sheds.
- 20:00 She'd put the family in there until they got on their feet. Then when the big strike happened at Mount Isa, a full train came down, women kids dogs everything. The police collected them all up at the Stuart railway station and marched them off straight up to the gaol. When they got up to the gaol the superintendent told the
- 20:30 policemen to get them off the prison reserve because they hadn't been tried. So they marched them back down to the Stuart police station and a magistrate came out from town and some of them got 7 days and some were let go and some got 14 days. And the women and kids were down in the creek. Mum went out and brought them all up home and she had them all in the buggy shed. There were 7 families.
- 21:00 They'd say to Mum, we won't be here after tomorrow. Thanks for everything. His Nibs is coming out of gaol tomorrow morning. She got Christmas cards for years from a lot of those people. She looked after them.

So the blokes who were put into the gaol, that was just an accommodation thing was it?

They were vagrants. They charged them for vagrancy for riding the train without a ticket. They kidnapped the train at Mount Isa.

- 21:30 I think there were 200 of them, women and kids and blokes.

That must have been a pretty big thing for your mum to do because you guys weren't swimming in it?

We had all the vegies there. We were milking a couple of cows and so we got more cows in to milk. We'd get a big bucket full of milk and things like that. We'd give them eggs and sometimes a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK or something like that.

- 22:00 Mum was never one to see anyone go begging. And many a time she had to go begging herself. She'd never cry poor though. It was really good. We had a good family home. We had no wireless or TV or nothing. Mainly our main sport was a bit of fishing.

What would the family do at home after tea?

- 22:30 Sometimes we'd play cards. Sit around and talk or have a game of quoits or something. That's about all.

What can you tell me about the family home?

We had a nice home. It was only plain. But we wanted for nothing in it. At that

- 23:00 time you could go to a lot of sales. A bloke named Wakeford used to have a lot of second hand sales. If there was any furniture you were short of you could always buy it pretty cheap. He was an old battler too. We had a good family life.

How many bedrooms?

It was a four bedroom place. I had a brother and a sister and there was Mum and Dad's room, and a spare bedroom.

- 23:30 We had a nice home.

Was the loo out the back?

Yes that was out the back, and the bathroom.

Did the guys used to come and clean them out?

Yes every week.

What about Stuart the town itself. What did that consist of?

A pub and a shop.

- 24:00 It used to be called the Ayr Junction Hotel.

And what did the shop have in it?

A lot of stuff. He was a burglar. Claude Stapler was his name. I remember once he and Mum locked horns. He gave Mum an extra bill and she said, "Hey Claude I've paid this bill." And he said, "I was trying to make those who pay, pay for the ones who won't."

24:30 So Mum said, "Well that's the finish of you." And another bloke started off looking for business. He had a shop in town and was going to deliver. So Mum gave him a turn. But he was an old rip off, old Stapler.

And how often would you go into Townsville proper?

25:00 A train would go in...Mum used to go in once a week by train. She'd go in a do a bit of shopping and pay her bills. But other than that we never went near the joint.

Was that a big deal going into town?

Yes it used to be a big deal, yes. Christmas Eve night was the main night. The street used to be all closed off and we'd walk all down the main street.

25:30 We always went into town Christmas Eve night.

Can you remember ever going into town without mum and dad?

Only when I was old enough. No, we used to always go to town together.

When you tagged along as a kid, what would be the highlight of your day going into Townsville?

Looking at the shop windows. That's about all. The Saddlers shop used to be mine. I would go to the Saddlers shop and see what they had there.

26:00 **I imagine the Strand would have been a lot different?**

It was a goat track. Townsville wasn't much at all then. From say the Great Northern Hotel to the old railway station it was all Chinamen's dens all along there. The police would raid it now and again and there would be Chinamen flying all over the place.

26:30 **Before the war was there any sort of military base in Townsville at all?**

Kissing Point. That was the main one. That's all there was.

Did you see much of those blokes?

27:00 I used to see them...I'd go down there now and again to see what was going on? They'd go into town from camp. Where ever they went they would have to walk. They didn't have any trucks. But we would go and see it, and when the war started they had the 31st and the 26th Battalions. They were the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] ones.

27:30 They had cannons up on the side of the hill and it was worth looking at. I haven't been there for a long time.

When you went to school did they teach you anything about Australia's involvement in World War I?

Yes we used to get a bit of it. Our old headmaster was a World War I digger.

28:00 He used to tell us quite a bit about what went on. I remember one thing he used to tell us...it was his old theme song. He used to say that once they got a message, 'Send reinforcements, we're going to advance.' He said it had been changed that many times, the message, that by the time they got it, he said it was 'Send three and four pence, we're going to a dance.'

28:30 I don't know how many times he told us that. Good old Salvage. He used to tell us quite a bit that went on.

Apart from him, did you know any blokes in the area who had been in the war?

No I didn't. My uncle went over there but he got killed. I never knew him.

29:00 **Was there any Anzac Day things that you can remember seeing?**

Yes. We always had Anzac Day. That was one thing he was very, very strict on. And Remembrance Day. They were the two days of the year he was very, very strict with.

And that was always at the school was it?

Always at the school. We had the flag pole and we would put the flag up.

29:30 We put the flag at half mast. He was very, very strict.

Was that just a school concern or did the people from the town converge there as well?

Just the school. But now all the people go to the school. They get a speaker from the army to go there now.

You were saying your first job was when you were 14 years old.

30:00 **What did that involve?**

Milking the cows, chopping a bit of wood, raking the yard. Five bob a week.

Before you actually went out and got a job what sort of chores and things did your mum and dad make you do around the place?

I used to work in the garden, ploughing or chipping...chipping tomatoes and things like that.

30:30 Feed the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, feed the pigs.

Were there any jobs you had to do around the house?

Yes I had to do all around the garden and keep the yard clean. We had no motor mower at that time. I had to scythe it down...a reaping hook.

Did you get any pocket money for that?

No.

31:00 They had no pocket money to give us. It was very, very hard.

Can you remember Christmas and birthdays and that sort of thing?

We always had a good Christmas because we had our own pigs and ducks and roosters and that. We might have got a small present. Nothing much but you got something.

31:30 **Can you remember what sort of things you might have got?**

A shirt or something like that. A pair of sandals or a new hat. Hats were pretty cheap in those days, not like today.

What about at school, was there any sort of uniform?

No. No uniform.

But your mum still dressed you up to look smart?

Yes she would dress us up. Pretty slick. The best we could afford.

32:00 **Did you wear shoes?**

No. Our feet were like steel.

So after that first job you had working on the farm, what did you do from there?

I went to Rocky Springs cattle station. I was a stockman out there for a while.

How were conditions out there?

All right. A lot of bloody hermits they were. It was about a 44 hour week. They let you knock off at 11 o'clock on a Saturday

32:30 and you would ride home on horseback about 6 or 7 mile. Then you'd go out on Sunday night again to start work on Monday morning. You had to ride your own horses in and out. They wouldn't lend you their horses. But it was a good place to work.

What was a typical working day out there?

You would start about 6 o'clock. Six to six.

33:00 Fencing, yard buildings, repairing yards, mustering. There was always plenty to do. The days weren't long enough sometimes. They'd go to town once a week in the car and get rations. They had plenty of money but they were pretty tight.

What did you get paid out there?

Twenty five bob a week.

33:30 **And what did you do with that?**

I used to give it straight to Mum. She used to look after me for clothes and that.

And so it was twenty-five bob and your keep?

Yes.

And how did they look after you?

Well, it was pretty rough at times. There were five on the place so they'd buy five bananas.

34:00 An apple each. Pretty miserable. They had fruit trees all about the place and they didn't like to see you taking any of the fruit. So we would often pinch a bag of mandarins to bring home. We'd pinch them of a night time and hide them down the paddock and grab them on the way home. But they didn't like giving anything away.

How many other blokes?

34:30 Another bloke and myself, a mate of mine. He's about had it too now. He's 84. Frankie Barrett.

You must have met some interesting characters doing that sort of work?

Yes good people. It was a good life. A clean life. A lot of stock work.

35:00 **Can you remember any of the riggers?**

Oh yes. A good few of them. The Hannans, the Duncans...the Joyces. A lot of them. In the finish I used to deliver Joyce's bullocks to the meat works. The Hannans and myself, we'd bring them over.

Did they employ Aboriginal stockmen?

35:30 Yes they used to get them. They used to bring them over from Palm Island. The police would bring them over. Bluey Howard was the policeman at Stuart at the time. They had them up at Means, and Hogans had them, a couple of them. And they even had house women. If they played up they'd send them straight back to Palm Island. It was a crime to be sent back to Palm Island.

36:00 And they used to shudder if you mentioned going back to Palm Island. There were some good people amongst them. Some good workers. Honest. They had to be to be at Means or Hogans because they wouldn't stand no nonsense. They were tough men.

Did you have any sort of religious upbringing. Did your mum and dad go to church?

Yes we went to Sunday school, but I gave that away.

36:30 **So where did you go from doing that sort of work...that's what you wanted to do wasn't it?**

I went to the meat works. I worked in the preserving room out there for a while.

What did you do there?

Washing tins of beef and lacquering the tins and that, putting labels on them, bully beef. That was about 3 pounds a week.

37:00 That was good money. Then I finished with that when I was 16, and I was an apprentice carpenter with a bloke called Wally Whitehouse. He was a ripper. He was going broke...one time another bloke and I waited 6 weeks for our pay. It was a pound a week at the time but they couldn't afford to pay us.

37:30 They reprocessed his truck and anywhere you had to go for a job you had to carry your tools on your pushbike. So I gave that away and then I got into strife with the apprenticeship board and I went back stock working. At least I was getting my money instead of waiting 6 weeks for my pay.

38:00 It was only a quid a week so it was only 6 quid. You could buy a lot with 6 quid. You could get a pair of boots and a hat and a pair of strides and shirt for 6 quid. So I gave that away.

And you explained all that to the apprentice board?

Yes I did. But they wanted me to go somewhere else then. So I said no and I joined the army.

38:30 **Now just while I remember, you mentioned the tinning of bully beef, we've heard all the stories about bully beef, you were there at the plant what can you tell us about it?**

It was top meat. Tip top meat. It was what they called chop-chop. It was all trims from the skirts, chucks, and all that would go into it.

39:00 It went through a machine and it chopped it all up. It was cooked for so long and it went on a turntable and into the tins. Vacuum packed and everything. At the end of the season they got what they called light weights. They weren't up to the full weight.

39:30 You could get them for two bob a tin. At the end of the meat work season you would always buy a case of bully beef and when you went fishing you would take a can of bully beef with you. But now it's three dollars a tin.

So when you went fishing with your bully beef was it one for you and one for the fish?

No.

40:00 We always had a frying pan and we'd put it in a frying pan with a bit of onion and curry and it used to make a good meal out of it. I'm surprised by the number of people who used to put it in an ice box, we had no fridges, and have it for Sunday night with salad for tea. It was only pressed meat. It was good

meat. And then you'd get the 6 pound tin and the 4 pound tins. They were good. They were export stuff.

Tape 2

00:33 **So what did you think in your later years, when you were in the army and you're getting this bully beef?**

It used to be one tin between 3 men. I used to think to myself...we got one lot one time, 6 pound tins and it had 'Abo Beef' on it. It was shocking. It was damn terrible.

01:00 The good old Australian stuff, we never got much of that. We only got stuff from the south.

So the grade of bully beef was different to what you used to...

Yes different all together. Different to what we used to get at home there. It was good meat there.

So the tin was actually labelled 'Abo Beef'?

Yes, 'Abo Beef'.

What grade do you think that was?

I reckon it was damn rubbish.

01:30 It could have been camel or buffalo or anything in the damn thing. It was shocking. You couldn't even enjoy it.

Can you tell us that story you were telling off camera?

Oh yes. We got sick and tired of walking. We used to do a fair bit of fishing so we bought a push bike each. Mine, I paid five bob at a sale.

02:00 We decided we'd go fishing for 4 or 5 days at what we used to call Tickle Belly Bay. So we use to set off and leave home and we'd get to Hannan's where we'd pick Johnno up. We'd go down to Alligator Creek. We could swim there. We'd go from there down to Yellow Gin Creek, have a swim there and then from there to the

02:30 wireless station, right across the causeway. It was a fair leg. We'd ride across and get to the wireless station, and the people at the wireless station would always give us a cold drink. A drink of cordial. Anyway, they used to call us the young pioneers. We'd make sure all our water bottles were filled up and then we'd ride from there to

03:00 what we called Rocksmeer windmill which was another 4 or 5 mile through the bush. It was all dirt tracks. We'd get there and have a bit of a wash at the windmill and a bit of a break and we'd make sure all the water bottles were filled up. It was another 4 mile from there along the coast. There was an old hut there and that's where we'd stay. We'd go in the mangroves and get what we called periwinkles. They were like

03:30 an ice cream shell. You'd bust them and get this kernel out. That's what we used for bait. By gee we caught some good fish. We stayed there for 4 days and then we'd ride home again, but we were doing nothing more than fixing damn punctures.

What did you do to fix the puncture problem?

04:00 We cut an ordinary tyre and cut the wire out of the side of them and put them inside the tyre and then put the tube in. You had two tyres inside the tube. That stopped the bindi-eyes.

And you said there was another tyre that was available at the time?

Thorn proof. It may have been thorn proof but by gee it was hard to peddle.

04:30 I had a set but I got rid of them. One night, I'll never forget it. We never had any money to do anything so we made our own fun. And a circus came to town, called Sloggets. So we went down to see the circus. We got talking to them and looking at their horses

05:00 and everything. Anyhow this bloke said he wanted some snakes. So we said we would get him some carpet snakes. So away we go down the creek to the mangrove farm and straight away up the trees and knocking these carpet snakes down. We put them in bags and came back with them. We had about 10 snakes I suppose in the bags. He said, "No, they're too small."

05:30 He said, "Go let them down the creek there. They'll be right down there." Old Straight Away used to stutter and he said, "No bloody fear. We'll take them back to where we got them. He'll go down and get them after we've gone." So we take them back and then we come back and they had this donkey there, Tomato. He said he'd give a couple of quid to anyone who could ride him. We were pretty active little roosters.

06:00 So we scruffed this Tomato. I flew on to him and gave him a bit of rattling around. He couldn't do much. So we said righto and that night the circus was on and we headed up to the circus. And Tomato comes in and the four of us decided we were going to take the starch out of Tomato. Holy Jesus did she give us what for. We couldn't get near him.

06:30 So anyhow eventually they took to Tomato to one side and he said, "Well you put up a good performance but not as good as this afternoon when you had him down the creek." He must have been watching us down the creek riding him. Well everybody gave us a bit of a ...we tried to ride Tomato but he was too good for us.

07:00 A bit of fun. There was always something to do to have fun. But he was the main part of the party.

Kids these days...if you asked them to go and find a snake they wouldn't know what to do?

No. I've got a little grandson. He's 12 coming on 13. I don't know what's going to end up happening to him. They've got no initiative. They've got no get up and go in them. We used to walk for miles.

07:30 If we heard there was a pig anywhere, I bet you had it. We all had a couple of dogs each. I remember one time we went out. There were 4 of us and we had 8 dogs between us. We were running a bit short of tucker for the dogs so straight away we decided to catch a goat. There were goats everywhere. So we caught this goat and

08:00 brought it home to our place. I cut it up and was cooking it for the dogs. Dad came out and said, "What have you got there Frank?" Frankie Wilcox. He said, "We've got a wallaby." And Dad said, "I've never seen a wallaby with legs like that and hair on it."

08:30 So was it a feral goat?

Nobody owned them. You could buy a good big goat, dressed for two bob. Twenty cents. We wouldn't kill our own. We'd go and kill someone else's. They were pinching ours so we would pinch there's.

You were saying you used to walk for miles and miles?

Yes, walk for miles.

09:00 What was the best thing about growing up in the country?

There was more freedom. You could please yourself what you wanted to do. There was never a time...we never got into trouble with the police. In fact if the police wanted something they'd always come and ask us to give them a hand to do something. And we were always obliging. Not like today. We never destroyed anyone's property. We

09:30 could go anywhere. Nobody ever questioned us about it. They were always pleased to help us. They knew we wouldn't do any harm.

Do you think kids back then had a healthy fear of the police?

Yes a few of them did. Some got into strife. But we never had one bit of worry.

10:00 It was good clean living.

So when you thought about what you wanted to do for a living, what did you want to do?

Mainly stock work. Dad would say, "No you have to have a trade...an apprentice carpenter."

Did you have a choice of what apprenticeship you could do?

That was the only one that popped up.

10:30 So I had a smack at it.

Well not much. But I stuck to it. Mainly for Dad's sake. But every weekend I was gone into the bush. I'd come home Friday night and the horses would always be ready. I'd be gone.

Did any of your mates or you have a rifle?

I ended

11:00 up with a rifle. A 22. A German rifle. I shot a big roo one night. It came after me and I hit him over the head with it and broke the stock. So I tied it up with wire. I could still shoot a pig with it.

You said before when you bagged yourself that goat,

11:30 you cleaned it up and dressed it yourself?

Yes we did all that ourselves.

Where did you learn to do that?

Just by experience. Watching other people do it. Watching Dad and other blokes. We soon picked that up.

So you were still doing your apprenticeship when war broke out?

Yes.

Can you remember the day you heard that England was at war with Germany?

12:00 That was '39 when they went to war, and then the Japs came into it. I turned 18 in April and I went into the war when I turned 18.

Can you remember how you heard the news?

I used to get the paper. The paper used to be tuppence then. Someone would tell you something. Then

12:30 we had a bloke who was making little crystal wirelasses with ear phones. Mum ended up with one of them. We used to get a bit of news. We got a wireless given to us, a Stromberg Carlson. It was 5 pounds. A bloke gave it to us for looking after something for him. It was a big

13:00 cabinet job. So we used to sit down and watch the news every night. There was Tom and Gerry and Ginger Megs. It was a battery set.

So when the war first broke out, before Japan came into it, when it was the fighting in Europe, what did you think about the war then?

I didn't think that much of it. We knew the war was on. We saw a lot of the boys going away and a few of the boys from home went

13:30 away and they would run benefit dances for them and things like that. It was just more or less something that happened. Then it started to get serious and more serious, and it got to a stage that everyone took more interest in it then. More and more of the boys were going. You'd

14:00 hear of blokes getting killed and being prisoners of war, so everyone was getting very patriotic by then. When it first started nobody took much notice of it.

What was the feeling in the house. What did your mum and dad think?

Same more or less what I said. They got very patriotic towards the finish. Mum used to do a lot of stuff for the Comfort Fund.

14:30 They used to have stalls and we grew a lot of vegetables. Mum would always make sure there was a case of tomatoes and the lettuce and sweet potatoes all went to the Comfort Fund.

The patriotism that you speak about, is that patriotism for the mother country, for England or Australia?

More or less for Australia.

Was there still a lot of that...still hanging onto the apron strings?

Yes it was still hanging around.

15:00 Of course at that stage there were a good few Pommies living around Stuart. The mainly worked at the gaol and they had a big opinion of themselves. In fact I had an uncle, Lord George Thompson, and he had a big opinion of himself. I took the gas out of him. I lived with my grandfather because he was going blind, and this Thompson was

15:30 a big time office Johnny at the gaol and there was a prisoner who escaped, and he came down and demanded a horse so he could go and look for this prisoner. And just prior to that there was a sale over at a place called Users, it was a dairy farm, and I had bought a big saddle horse.

16:00 I nicknamed him Jack. I brought him home and he was a good old horse but he was cranky at time. Anyhow this night this Thompson came down and demanded a horse. I had no time for this Thompson, not a bit even though he was my uncle. I wished him in hell a lot of times. Anyhow I went down and got old Jack and it was misty rain and

16:30 he had a big black rain coat on and he got on old Jack and Jack ducked his head and got rid of him. He got up and abused me and away he went. So I took the bridle and saddle off Jack and let him go and went up to the house and my grandfather said, "Did Thompson get a horse?" And I said, "He couldn't ride it. It threw him." And he said, "What did you give him?" I said, "Old Jack, the one I bought from User's estate." He said, "He's a buck jumper. Is he all right." I said,

17:00 "Well he's gone up the road and he's still going." They weren't too popular, a lot of the Pommies around the place. They had a big opinion of themselves. If there was 3 or 4 of you in a pub drinking, he'd write out a cheque for a

17:30 pound or 30 bob, then he'd think for a while and he'd say to the publican, "Give me that cheque back."

And he'd write one out for a quid because he knew he didn't have enough money to beat the cheque. He was a proper grot. That's why I had no time for him. He was always big noting himself. He'd come down to the farm and take tomatoes and things like that, cabbages. He would never once come down and want to give a hand.

18:00 He was all take, take, take. Then my grandfather...they were living over at the gaol, something happened over there....my grandfather bought them a house up at Kimberley Street, 450 pound. They never paid the grandfather back. Just a bloody grot that's all he was. He got transferred to Brisbane, to Boggo Road gaol and he died down there. He had a heart attack and died.

18:30 **So what can you remember of your granddad?**

A good old bloke. A good old bloke old Granddad.

Was he English?

He was German the old fella. He was a hard worker. A big man and a hard worker. He had a farm and

19:00 he was very honest. A very honest man he was. He wanted a pound of flesh. Pound to pound. If you were down and out he'd look after you, but nobody wanted to bot on him because he would get square with them one way or the other. Him and I got on very, very well together. In fact when I was at the war they all reckoned

19:30 that I would inherit the old granddad's estate. But it got undermined. The uncles, Len...he was a policeman on Thursday Island and he came down to down, to Bowen, and got lime in one eye and lost the eye. But he was a shifty bugger too. I said to him one day when he and I had a run in, I said to him "Once a policeman never a bloody man."

20:00 He didn't like it either. He was a married to a woman and had two children. She couldn't cop him. She up and left him. She was a good woman old Rose. The old grandfather, he looked after me. In fact I've got a shot gun in there that he gave me when I was 16. I've had it 64 years. No one will ever get it.

20:30 **How did he make all his money?**

Hard work. He worked at the goal during the tough times. He grew vegetables. He always had a cow or two and sold the bullocks. I'll tell you what he did buy a lot during that early part. When the slump

21:00 came in Charters Towers he bought a lot of cheap houses. I suppose he had about 8 or 10 houses. He had them rented out for seven and six a week. I'd go around and collect the rent every week. Sometimes you'd get to a house. I would always go on the pony, get to the house and have a look. Sometimes the furniture would be gone and a week's rent.

21:30 **Did that happen a fair bit?**

Oh yes. A lot of fly-by-nighters. They might get behind the rent and then they might shift to Giru or in to town. Fly-by-nighters they used to call them.

And besides your grandfather were there other German descendants?

Yes a few Germans around and a lot of Italians. But they were all happy families. The only ones who used to

22:00 get into strife were the Pommies because they tried to be above us. The average person thought they were something. But the other people were all happy go lucky and helped one another. Exchange gear and one thing and another.

The mentioned the one family, the stockman, the Aboriginal with the kids who went to school

22:30 **were there any other Aboriginal families around the place?**

Yes there was another mob. The Andersons...and who were the others? The Scotts. They were a big family the Scotts. And the father you couldn't wish for a nicer bloke.

23:00 A real good old bloke he was. A hard worker. He had a big family and everybody looked up to him. He came from Normanton originally. Drove the night cart up in Normanton. He came down and got this little place and that's where he settled in down there until he died. A decent old bloke he was.

23:30 He had a job at the meat works and everybody thought the world of him. He'd go to the pub of an afternoon and at that time no black fella could go into the pub, but old Scott could go in with the rest of the boys and have a couple of beers. Especially pay night, Wednesday night was pay day at the meat works and they'd all go and have a couple of

24:00 drinks and home they'd go.

Where else did you see things like that...where black people had a different set of rules to the white people?

Well I never saw it much before. Around home there the blacks and the whites all mixed together. They were happy. We always seemed to be happy. Not like today.

24:30 **Changing the subject a bit, you and your mates, when was the first time you snuck a smoke?**

Oh about 14. We made a corn cob pipe. We thought this is no good, a burnt tongue.

25:00 And when we did start smoking you could buy Cooee cigarettes. You could get five for threepence or ten for sixpence. By gee after you smoked a packet of them you used to cooee too. Strong. You'd buy Talisman tobacco, a packet of papers and a box of matches for threepence. So I started smoking Talisman and they said it would send you blind.

25:30 Then I started smoking Havelock. Then they said that's no good to you and so I went onto Log Cabin. Smoked Log Cabin up to about 10 years ago. I would smoke a tin of tobacco a day. I said this is no good, it's costing too much money. I've give it the flick.

Did your mum and dad smoke at the time?

No. I was the only one. My brother still smokes.

26:00 I give it away. It was costing too much. When you're paying one and threepence a packet for it...that and a packet of papers, and then it got up to about 10 dollars....blowing money up in the air this.

Can you remember your first beer?

Yes. I remember one time I took some horses for a bloke up to what they called the syndicate up at Alligator Creek. It was four

26:30 draft horses and I took them up to him. It was just before Christmas and he said, "Are you going to have a drink for Christmas Day?" They made their own beer, honey beer, and Jesus was it ever dynamite. I can't remember opening the gates coming home. So I thought, 'hang that. I'll give that away'. Then I went into the army and I started having a few in the army.

27:00 But prior to that, no. Honey beer, I'll never forget that.

So you would have had your wireless when you heard about Pearl Harbour?

Yes.

What was the reaction to that news?

Everybody started to get a bit worried then. It was getting close to home. And then the yanks started arriving.

27:30 Then there were the air raid sirens and then there were the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] wardens. And around the houses you had to cover all your windows or paint them black or cover them like you've done there. You couldn't have any naked lights.

Can you remember what your dad had to do?

He was a RAP warden and he would go out every night checking.

28:00 Seeing there were no lights. The siren would go and we had slit trenches dug in the back yard. We would go down this slit trench and we had a medical kit in it. We had a pretty big one down the back yard. We had seats in it and we had it done up properly.

28:30 **Did you help make that one?**

Oh yes, my brother and I. We all helped one another. Helped Straight Away's family and they helped us. And when the war started properly, it had a pretty fair going, and the air raid sirens were bellowing out amongst the place, and we had the farm there...we had four big draft horses for ploughing. So old

29:00 Salvage said to the school committee ...Dad was on the school committee...us four were always in anything. We'd help with anything. So we're honorary school committee, so Dad said we had to get these slit trenches for the school dug. He took two horses and a plough and I took two horses and a plough and we ploughed the slit trenches for the kids at the school.

29:30 We were under the supervision of Salvage. They'd all go so far and turn and then they'd go so far. We'd plough them and other blokes would come behind and shovel it out. That made it easier and we made all the slit trenches for the school kids. That was my last job I did for the school before I went in the army.

How real did the threat feel at that time?

Oh it was getting a bit fair dinkum because

30:00 we would hear rumours that the Japs had been sighted down at Cape Cleveland, or Japs had been sighted at such and such a place. A lot of them were furrphies, but they had the Light Horse here at that

time. So the Light Horse used to go all around looking everywhere. It was fair dinkum and we were always on the lookout. Down near where AIMS [Australian Institute of Marine Science] are...you've been down there haven't you?

30:30 All those big lagoons there going down near AIMS, and down to Cape Karoo, at the start of the war when things were getting fair dinkum, they planted wild rice in those lagoons and it was growing wild. And they reckoned that if ever Townsville was invaded, they would have something to live on.

31:00 But nothing ever happened and the cattle and the geese didn't mind it. The geese got very fat. And I think if you went down to those places now you'd still find some wild rice. You tell people that and they won't believe you. They planted the wild rice down there.

Can you remember what your parents did for the blackouts in your house?

Mum painted all the windows.

31:30 No lights allowed outside at night time. No fire or anything. Everything was pretty well under the hammer.

And how soon was it you started to see Americans starting to pour into Townsville?

Well the yanks started coming in at about the end of '41. They started coming in and they were moving around all over the place. They were like damn green ants.

32:00 They started putting in temporary air strips going towards Charters Towers, Woodstock, down around Giru, and then the one across at Bowling [Garbutt] ...the big one there at Townsville for the fighters, for the Wirraways. She got pretty active then.

32:30 And going out towards the old meat works and around Stuart there, there were barb wire entanglements everywhere. You couldn't go out at night time. They got fair dinkum. A lot of the Australian troops like the 31st and the 26th Battalion, they were all on guard duties here and there, especially on the water fronts. Where Kissing Point is now, all out on the water front where

33:00 they thought they might come in there you know.

And did you ever go into town and see what was going on?

Very seldom. We kept out of the place. There were that many fights. Australian soldiers, civilians and bloody yanks, they were always fighting. Always a brawl on because the Yanks had plenty of money and the Australians had nothing.

33:30 They were winning the hearts of all the women and it would start a fight.

Did you have a girlfriend as a young bloke?

Yes a couple. Nothing very serious. It cost too much money. No, I had intension of going away.

Besides the Americans starting to build up in Townsville, did you see anything else, like the Australians...

34:00 Yeah there was a fair bit of Australian build up too. A lot of Australia was starting to build up and they had started conscription and things like that. A lot of troops. A hell of a lot of troops. The show grounds were taken over. The race course was taken over, and all the troops were taking over places. It was a real soldier town.

34:30 **Before war had started had you ever thought about joining the CMF?**

No never thought about it.

Do you know when it was when you finally made up your mind that that's what you wanted to do?

When conscription started, I turned 18 and I got notification that I had to go in for a medical. That's when I joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force].

35:00 I had my medical and everything.

What did you think of conscription?

I thought it was a good thing and I reckon they should do it now. That's my opinion. It should be in now. It would get rid of some the long hair on some of these buggers and see what's underneath them. You take all the boys who were conscripted, none of them ever got into any trouble. The mob who went in with me...there were 28 of us who went away.

35:30 I think about 4 of them never came home, but those who did, we never had any trouble. Not one bit. I think it's a good thing myself.

What did your mum and dad think?

They weren't happy about it but they couldn't do anything about it. Everyone else was going. I had to be in the fun.

36:00 **Had either of the other two services been an option for you?**

No not really. I thought the army was good enough. I didn't have enough brains to get into the air force and I don't like water so the navy was no good to me.

So where did you have to go for your medical?

It used to be in the back street....Eskers building.

36:30 You had to go up there for your medical and get your medical there, and then wait.

So had the army always had a recruiting centre there?

No it was put in during the war. You'd get in no trouble. In and out quick and lively. All A1.

37:00 **So what did they tell you would happen from there?**

You had to wait then for your call up. That didn't take too long. Back home and kept working. I kept working right up to the day I went.

And that was carpentry?

Yes as a carpenter and then I gave it away when I went away. I got into strife then with the apprenticeship board for not notifying them.

37:30 They couldn't do nothing. I was in the army then. That tricked them.

Was the meatworks a protected industry?

Yes the meatworks was.

Did you know any blokes there who were getting out of that to join up?

I didn't know anybody, but any of the soldier blokes...labour was pretty scarce at the meatworks. Any of the soldier blokes who had days off or were on leave,

38:00 they could go out on the train, go to the office at the meatworks and they'd give them a days work in the freezers or yard gang. And they'd pay them that afternoon then they'd go back the next day. So with 2 or 3 days leave they could get 2 or 3 days work. They were only on 6 bob a day. That's all the soldiers were on.

38:30 **So when it came time and you knew that any day now you'd be called up for the army, what sort of preparations did you make to leave?**

Well you had to get so many pairs of shorts and shirts and socks to go into the army with. Then when you got in there your civilian clothes were taken off you.

39:00 And they'd parcel them up and send them home, and then they'd issue you the army stuff. So I had to get my horses away into a paddock and a few cattle I had too. They had to go into paddocks for people to look after. I had a lot of friends.

So what was your attitude at that time? Were you excited?

Oh yes. I thought I had to be in it.

39:30 **Did you have a bit of a going away thing at home?**

Yes, a bit of a feed up and that. And when we went in on the train and went to the railway station and we were all standing around there and I got to know a lot of blokes who were going. A mail train left at 8 o'clock at night, and we went by the mail train down to Brisbane.

40:00 **You had to go into Townsville for that?**

Yes, we had to go into the main station.

Did your mum and dad go with you?

No. There was no way for them to get home. There was only 1 or 2 trains during the day and no trains at night time.

Tape 3

00:36 **What do you remember of Magnetic Island from when you were growing up?**

We went over there when we were young people. There were about 3 families of us who went over for a fortnight's school holidays. There wasn't much there. I remember we rented a hut

01:00 from a chap who used to be a butcher from South Townsville called Ben Scowan. The name of the hut was 'Lingalonga'. So we rented that. There wasn't much over there in them days. There wasn't much at all...pineapple farms. The only thing to do was walk around...there were tracks all over.

01:30 It was very laid back.

How did you get over there?

On the boat.

Was it like a ferry?

Yes the ferry. Halster's had two boats - the Mingala and the Malaya. They were the only ones. Two old wooden boats they were.

02:00 Then Taylor started taking people over. He had a boat called the Paluma. He used to start taking people over. Then when the war started the navy took the Paluma over for a supply ship.

At that time when you were going to Magnetic Island, who lived over there? Were there indigenous people?

I don't remember many there. Towards Pallarenda there was a place

02:30 there they called the Three Mile, just before you get to the bush children's home there. There were a hell of a lot of them there. Kanakas they used to call them. That was about the only mob who were around the place. There was no Happy Valley or anything like that. There were pensioners units out there. There was no such thing as indigenous people.

03:00 Where did the Kanakas work?

With the council and things like that. On the toilet trucks. They all worked. There were no loafers among them. Some of the women worked around the different hotels, housekeeping, washing and things like that. There were a lot of laundrettes and things like that. They used to work in the laundrettes.

Was it common to go over to Magnetic Island?

03:30 Well I never went over until 1942 and then I went over not so long ago. About 12 months ago.

You were talking earlier about the Italians that worked around you. What happened to them during the war?

A lot of them were interned. When we lived at Stuart...it was a crying shame.

04:00 A lot of them were good people and the mail train used to come down from Cairns and get to Townsville at 6 o'clock in the afternoon and then it would go on at 8 o'clock to Brisbane. On the train coming down from Cairns they'd have

04:30 a barred wagon on and it would be full of the internees. There would be Japs, Italians, Germans. Mainly Italians and Japs. The Japs were in town...there were a few laundries in town...Japanese laundries. They rounded them up and they'd get them to Stuart. The wagon used to come out on the train. One engine would bring it out and they used to unload them like mongrel dogs.

05:00 And their gear...the gaoler would go down with a dray and all their ports would go in the dray and they'd bring it up to the gaol. Then they'd march them up to the gaol and they may have them there for a day or two, and then there may be a train going south and so they'd march them over from the gaol to Partington siding where they would have a couple of

05:30 barred wagons and they'd send them to Brisbane. It was pitiful to see it. They reckon the Germans over there treated the prisoners of war over there pretty bad...Australia hasn't got much to talk about because they treated them poor devils...it was a disgrace, and yet they were good solid citizens.

06:00 And the same people are back working the cane farms now. It was a damn disgrace to see what went on. As young fellas we used to go down and watch them. See them load them up and unload them.

Women and children too?

No, mainly men. Only the men. It was awful.

Did you know any families who lived around you who got interned?

No.

06:30 It was mainly in town. There were a few Japs. I didn't know any of the Italians around here, but they

went through them. The police used to come along and round them up. Even some of the them were working at the old meat works and they got them from there too.

07:00 **Do you know what the general attitude to that was?**

A lot of the people, the genuine people reckoned it was uncalled for. They were such good solid citizens. They were working on their farms and everything. They were making a living for themselves and other people. They had people working for them and everything and this happened.

Do you reckon any of them went into hiding?

Not that I know of.

07:30 I do know after the war when they had a turn out about illegal immigrants, down at Alligator Creek I used to run a lot of brumbies down there. I was down there one morning right near where the Chinaman's gardens were and it was the first time I ever saw a Chinaman with a pigtail. A long pigtail down the back of his neck. And I was riding around this morning

08:00 it was just the break of daylight and there were some horses and I looked and there was this Chinaman going through the bananas. I saw this pigtail and I hadn't seen one before. So later on in the day I called in to this friend of ours, old Percy Hannan and I told him I had seen this Chinaman with a pigtail. So anyhow, about a week or so after

08:30 he said he had seen 3 of the buggers. We found out that they had raided the place not long after and they had got 8 of them. There was one Chinaman in the town who had a big service station and he was sneaking them in. He owned this big farm down there and he was using them down there. But they never knocked the pigtails off and if they had then nobody would have known.

09:00 So they rounded 8 of them up and they got him too eventually. He went to gaol. I call the gaol, the college.

John you were telling us earlier that your grandfather was German, was there any fear that he might be interned?

No, he had been here since he was a kid. From day dot. He was working at the prison. He was a warder there when they had no power there.

09:30 They used to take their own hurricane lamps. They had a cage that fitted over the hurricane lamp and it was polished up. That was what they used of a night time. No power. They never had an auxiliary plant or anything.

So was it only fairly recent immigrants that got interned?

10:00 Yes. They're the ones they got. They got some from down on the Burdekin and all down there. They rounded them up from everywhere. Nearly every night a wagon load of them would come through. They had no room at the gaol. They had them camped on mattresses in what they called the Circle...a big circle and they were camped out there.

10:30 They would load them up and walk them down. We used to watch them take them down. We would feel sorry for them. They would load them in these hot wagons with a guard at each end.

And did they take most of them to Brisbane or were some of them used on working parties?

No, all to Brisbane. No working parties. Took them all south.

11:00 **When you joined the AIF how old was your brother?**

Sixteen. He was lucky. He was in the meat works when they classed it as occupational. So he stayed there at the meat works. One job, that's all he had all his life. Since he was 14 until he retired. He was making sausages and small goods.

Do you know if he wanted to follow in your footsteps?

11:30 Oh my grandson was in the navy. My granddaughter was in the army and my daughter-in-law was in the army. I try to talk them out of it you know. When I went into it we were getting six shillings a day and then they got generous, they gave us a sixpence rise.

12:00 So I used to allot 5 shillings a day to my mother and I kept 1 and 6 a day. You couldn't go anywhere or spend anything because you never had the money to spend. But I used to allot her 6 bob a day.

So when you enlisted they stuck you on the train to Brisbane, what happened when you got there?

They unloaded us.

12:30 That was an eye opener. We were going in through the gates at the Exhibition and there were some blokes standing there saying, "You'll be sorry." You only had to look at them, their uniforms were only about a day old. Anyhow you get in there and they allot you 4 to a horse stall. That's where you slept.

And then you went and got your needles and your dental.

What were you sleeping on in the horse stalls?

What they call a palliasse.

13:00 It was like a big bag full of straw. That's what you slept on. Like a big mattress cover. Then you had your medical and dental and all your needles.

Do you remember how many needles you got?

We got 3 at the start. One or two were double buggers. They'd leave the needle in and put another charge in it.

13:30 We were there for 3 days.

Was that the first time you ever had a needle?

Yes. So we were there for 3 days and then on the train again. Where are we heading this time? Back to Townsville. I got sick and tired of eating sausages. That was all the refreshment rooms used to put on was sausages. We came back to Townsville and then out to Clevedon.

When they sent you back to Townsville, that was on a train again?

Yes.

14:00 **How long did that take?**

Two days. Then out to Clevedon, that was about half a day and we said, what are we doing out here, and they told us we were the second line of defence. Darwin was being bombed then. We had one rifle between 36 men and you had a gidgee stick or a broom handle.

What's a gidgee stick?

A lump of timber out of the bush.

14:30 That's what you had. We were the second line of defence. We used to do all our drill with the broom handle and they were all fighting over the rifle. I said bugger the rifle. I said I don't want the rifle. You have to clean that. You don't have to worry about the gidgee stick. So they gave us a couple of days to unload the train of stuff. And then on the train again.

15:00 Where were we off to this time? Nobody knew. We were in open wagons and we got down to Stuart and at Stuart the train could go north, south or west. So we got there and there was a big joint there for the soldiers. We were having a feed there and old Claude Stapler, the paper bloke. He had the paper shop there. He came along and I was talking to him and he said he would go over and

15:30 tell my mother and them that I was here. So my brother came down and saw me at the railway and he asked where we were going and none of us knew. But the kids down the line could tell us. We were going to Goondiwindi, way down on the border. So we got down to Goondiwindi, played there for a while, playing cowboys and Indians and then they sent us up to Warwick.

What do you mean by playing cowboys and Indians?

16:00 Playing night manoeuvres, bang, bang, bang chasing people. The wallabies were flying everywhere. Anyway we went back to Warwick then and we were there for about a week and then they said right on the train again, up to Canungra. We got to Canungra and they put us into training then.

16:30 Six weeks solid training. And it was on. Half rations. And everything you did you did at the double. We were there for 6 weeks.

What sort of things were they getting you to do at Canungra?

You would have to swim across a creek with a bamboo pole and go across on a flying fox or a bridge that was strung. Everything. They had you doing everything.

How did you find that?

It was good fun.

17:00 Fell in the creek a few times. Then we finished that and we were out on manoeuvres all night. After 6 weeks we finished that and then they put us on the train again and took us to Charters Towers.

Can we just go back to Canungra for a moment. How did most of the blokes find that? We've heard some stories about it being pretty intense?

It was tough going. Some of them couldn't handle it. They freaked out you know. It was too much for them.

17:30 **What happened to them?**

They had to do another course. They had to do a medical and do another course. If you played up you were in trouble then. You had to do another course. You had to be meek and mild.

Did many guys play up?

Yeah we played up.

What sort of things did they do?

Oh they might punch a corporal or something. They would get a bit cranky and they might give a corporal a lift under the ear.

18:00 So they would have to do another course and then they'd give them a bit of a hurry up then in the next course. What they would do, they would call a defaulter's parade. They might call you out and there would be a light up on the hill and they'd say, "See that light, go up there and bring that light back." They drive up in a jeep and put the light up there but you had to walk up.

Did you ever have to do that?

No, I never done it.

18:30 **You were saying you were on half rations?**

With half rations you would get a piece of bread and an egg for breakfast and a drink of tea. At dinner time you might get a little bit of meat and a bit of vegetables. Tea time the same way, a bit of stew. I tell you what, it was hard.

Did many of the blokes complain about it?

There was nothing you could do.

19:00 It was no good complaining. The only time I saw them all complain, it was in a morning...they got you out of bed at about half past five and you had to trot down about three quarters of a mile down to the river and everybody had to go for a swim. You could see the vapour coming off the river it was that cold. So they all bailed up and said, we're not going for a swim unless the corporals and sergeants go in too. So they bailed them up and they brought them back

19:30 and they couldn't charge everybody so the CO [Commanding Officer] said, "Right nobody goes for a swim. If you want to go for a swim go for a swim, if you don't want to you don't need to." So there was a victory there. When we left going up to Canungra, out on the train, they got down

20:00 along the railway line and there were big open wagons full of pineapples going down. Well we thought we wouldn't be seeing pineapples for a long time so we jumped out and were grabbing these pineapples. I said to my mate we're not keeping these, we'll eat them. Some were putting them in their pack for after. When they got to Canungra the railway complained so they searched everybody and those who had pineapples

20:30 had to pay for the whole lot. And you know a farmer, if he loses one egg he's lost a dozen. So the poor devils had to do an extra course and pay for the pineapples. She was a rough joint that Canungra. The first thing you see when you go into the camp is the cemetery. And they had some new headstones. So you think, what's going on here. You heard a lot about it. And

21:00 when you got in there and you found out...by Jesus. They made men of them anyhow.

Did you notice a big change in blokes after Canungra?

Oh yes. Big change. A lot of blokes got very surly and sour. A lot of blokes just carried on normal. It was an eye opener for me. This

21:30 half rations especially when you're used to a good meal.

Can you walk us through the camp. Tell us, when you first walked in you saw the cemetery?

You got in and you got to the orderly rooms and then the messes...the sergeants' mess and the officers' mess. Then you went down further and then you were allotted so many to a tent.

22:00 That's where the trouble started.

Why?

They started to deal you then. You couldn't just casually walk anywhere, you had to jog or double march. It was a bit rough. But we did it. Stuck to it and got through. We knew what we were in for. But a lot of them just couldn't hack it.

22:30 They would take you out for marches, day and night on the bitumen road. A lot of them got shin sore walking on the bitumen, but they wouldn't let you walk on the side of the road. You had to walk on the bitumen. Poor buggers, their shins used to blow up. It was hard going.

What was it like after

23:00 **having had a comfortable house where you lived with your family to going to sleep in a tent with a bunch of blokes?**

I didn't mind. A lot of them were young fellas the same as me. We all stuck together. They were easy to get along with, never any trouble.

23:30 If there was a trouble maker in the tent well you soon sorted him out.

How did you sort them out?

Give him a punch under the ear. The only thing about Goondiwindi was a mate of mine. I haven't seen him. He was down at Bowen and I couldn't find him. His name was Tommy Woods. You never volunteer for anything in the army. So one day they called for volunteers who could use a

24:00 scythe so I said to Woodsie, come on let's get out of these route marches. He said, "I can't use a scythe." I said, "I can." So anyhow, the officers across the river...it was a cattle station or a sheep station, and they had a couple of tennis courts and they wanted to play tennis and they had to get the long grass on the courts scythed off. Captain Noid was his name, he used to take us over in a jeep

24:30 in the morning and bring us back at night. We had to scythe the grass off the tennis courts so they could play tennis on the weekend. We were there for about 3 weeks doing the tennis courts and marking it. We were about a fortnight there and then we left again. We went up Warwick.

Was that better than doing route marches?

Oh yes. I got on pretty well with old Noid. He wasn't bad. An old Second World War digger he was. We had a few of them there. Stutter.

25:00 And Murray and Card. They were all old First World War diggers. Decent old blokes, but oh Jesus, Canungra, it was bad there. What happened at Canungra...I'm getting a bit ahead of myself now. When we went into Torokina during the war,

25:30 a bloke called Red Robbie, Brigadier Robertson, he was in charge of the army and he lost a lot of soldiers, and Robbie hated Canungra because he reckoned that a lot of the troops who were sent up from Canungra weren't properly trained. He

26:00 said that the people who were down there training them have never seen action. How would they know what's going on. So when they sacked Robbie up in New Guinea, they sent him down in charge of Canungra. Well that suited Robbie. That was right up his ticket. So he lined all the corporals and sergeants up

26:30 and he had a look at their pay books, and those who had never been over to New Guinea were on the next shipment out. And he kept all the returned men to train the soldiers. And he reckoned he got better results. But he got into trouble through a mistake. And the trouble he got in was a mistake from the Yanks. The Yanks reckoned this was there and it wasn't and Robbie and his men walked straight into a trap.

27:00 So he got into trouble over it. They called him a Bowler Hat. When you're kicked from one job to the other in the army. He sorted them out. Those blokes could have been anywhere. Some of them might have been from Duntroon and things like that. Never been out of the country. How can you train anybody if you don't know what's going on?

So when you finished your training at Canungra

27:30 **where did you go after that?**

Sellheim out from Charters Towers. We were there for a couple of weeks, ten days and then on to the train and down to the wharf. On to the Duntroon.

So had you been allocated to a battalion?

No we went up as general reinforcements.

28:00 On the boat, down the hold.

Did you get much notice before hand?

Oh no. No leave. And then all of a sudden, roll call, your name's sung out, pack your gear, train would come in and they would march you down to the railway.

28:30 **Where was the staging camp?**

Sellheim, near Charters Towers. Eleven mile this side of the Towers.

And what went on there?

It was a staging depot for troops going overseas. While you were doing you were doing a bit of training,

route marches and things like that. But what happened...

29:00 by the time you had finished all the tough training you had done at Canungra, and you got to Sellheim and then to New Guinea, you had lost it all. You were lazy. You had lost all they put into you. You were out of shape.

Tell us about the day you actually left?

Left Australia? I was a bit sorrowful.

29:30 Nobody there at the wharf, only provos [Provosts - Military Police] to see you didn't run away. But that was it. Had gone this far you might as well go the rest. Many a time I felt like shooting through but what would be the use of it. They would only round you up again.

So that day you were leaving Townsville, did you have any idea what you would be in for?

Nothing at all. None of us knew anything.

30:00 We didn't know what was ahead of us. I was 19 at that stage.

Were any of your mates from training on the same ship?

A couple of them yes. When we landed in Moresby we went off the boat and we went to a place called Murray Barracks in Moresby and they were all there waiting to see what was happening.

30:30 It was a GDD, general drafting depot. We were there and this chap came along who was a Major, Major Harold Jesser. He came along and he said he wanted some volunteers for the 1st Papuan Infantry Battalion. They had just formed it at that stage so we said,

31:00 I said to a couple of them, "We're here so we may as well be in this." We didn't know what else is ahead of us and I thought he didn't seem to be a bad class of joker. So anyhow we went to Jesser and had a talk to him. Six of us went all told. Anyhow he took us in a vehicle up to a place called Vesilogo which is up over the Erora Pass going towards Kokoda.

31:30 We went to a big staging camp there. They made us acting sergeant so we could eat in the sergeant mess. It was all New Guinean and Papuan native soldiers and we were each allotted to a section. It was a damn eye opener. I couldn't speak their lingo and they didn't know too much about mine.

32:00 Now I was a bit fortunate, the chap we spoke about before, Briar...he could speak Motu very fluently and he could speak a bit of English. He wanted me to teach him English and he would teach me Motu. So that how I learnt to speak Motu.

32:30 We did about 3 or 4 weeks training with them and then they started sending us out on missions and a platoon would go out to different battalions. Well, we took off then up to a place called Owers Corner.

Before we get on to too much more about the PIB [Papuan Infantry Battalion], what was it like on the Duntroon?

A bit rough. Nothing to do.

33:00 Sit around and watch the waves go by. There was nobody up on deck at night time. You weren't allowed up on deck. There were pickets up on each deck and we had to stay down in case of bombers or submarines. No lights, no nothing.

So you were sleeping down on the holds?

Yes down there.

33:30 **Were you on your palliasses then?**

No we had hammocks. I didn't like that.

Did many get seasick?

Yes, I was one. It was rough. A lot of it wasn't from the water, it was the stench of the boat. It wasn't clean properly and hygiene and that had a lot to do with it.

Would they let you up on deck when you were seasick?

34:00 No. The toilets were down stairs. Of a day time they would let you up on deck. As soon as it was daylight we would be up there. Up on the deck you'd get the fresh air. It was hot down the holds. Very hard, especially when you're use to a bit of freedom.

34:30 **How many blokes do you reckon were on the ship?**

A couple of thousand.

Were there any fights?

No there didn't seem to be any arguments. They were all too worried about which way they were going to go. I was pleased...we went into the Straits into Port Moresby and it was so good to see land, to get off that damn boat.

35:00 **Was there much concern on the way over about being intercepted by the Japanese?**

Well a few times...one night we were a bit worried. She did a lot of moving about, the boat. I thought to myself, I wonder why he's changing course so much. Anyhow we heard next day that they had had a submarine scare. That's why they kept changing courses all the time.

35:30 Other than that there wasn't any problem.

How long did it take?

Two days. A long two days. The old Duntroon.

What did you think when you first saw Port Moresby?

Thank god we're here, let's get off this water.

Was the landscape very different?

36:00 Yes. Good landscape. I enjoyed Port Moresby. A hot place but I enjoyed it.

What struck you most about it when the ship was coming in?

How the harbour was. How you come in between two reefs. It was good to see. I had a bit of time in Moresby after I settled down. I saw a fair bit.

36:30 **What time of year was that when you were arriving?**

1942.

What time of year?

About September.

So was it much hotter?

No about the same. You would get rain every day and plenty of it.

37:00 But it was a different kettle of fish when we got up to Vesilogo. To see what was going on with the natives and that. They were so loyal. A lot may have thought what a mob of rats, but when you got with them and you saw how loyal they were, it was a good thing they were on our side.

37:30 They were very good to us.

When you volunteered for the PIB did you realise you would be working with the natives?

Yes he said something about the natives. We never took much notice. But three of us stuck it out and the other three gave it away. They reckoned they couldn't handle it you know. They went back to Moresby and went somewhere else. We stuck it out and went right through.

38:00 It was hard at the start but I was used to the bush and I could talk to them because I had had a bit to do with the Australian native. But I found out they were very loyal, honest. It was an eye opener to me. I didn't know they existed.

38:30 **What did you first think when you got there?**

I thought what the hell have I got myself into here. But anyhow I didn't have any worries with it. I'm really pleased I did go there.

So when you went in as an acting sergeant, how many blokes were you in charge of?

I had a section of 16. Three sections to a platoon.

39:00 And each one had a platoon sergeant and then a platoon commander. The lieutenant was in charge of the platoon. Platoon sergeant and three section sergeants. After a while I became a sergeant, platoon sergeant. And then I got my commission up in Bougainville.

So the guys in your section

39:30 **were they all from the same area?**

No different areas. Some would be from Moresby, some from Daru, some from New Guinea, Wewak, anywhere. What I found out later on, if you had too many educated ones in your section you could have a bit of trouble because they thought they knew a bit too much. And when the

40:00 reinforcements would come up, I used to take the dumb buggers because you never had any trouble

with them. Especially the Daruans, the Tiwis. They were actually really good loyal servants. But I never had any trouble with any of my men. If I promised them anything then I made sure they got it.

40:30 A lot of them had troubles. They used to get into a lot of trouble some of them. I never had any trouble.

Tape 4

00:33 **Can you describe that first day to us, arriving at Vesilogo?**

It was a real eye opener. All you could see were natives walking around the place, and then we were taken over to a building which were our rooms, and in the rooms it was all set up, so much to an officer, and they were made out of thatched roofing, thatched walls,

01:00 thatched dirt floors. I tell you what, it was a bit rugged, but water proofed. But if they went up in smoke they used to burn pretty well with all the dried grass. They would make it out of the kunai grass.

01:30 So we went in there and then we had another medical and we were allotted to each platoon.

What did they do in all these medicals?

Just a check over. Check everywhere. Check if your needles were right and if you needed any more needles. What they gave us there that was extra was a cholera needle and it was a

02:00 needle in the tail of the spine. By gee it hurt. And then later on after that they got the tablet and you could get it in tablet form. By gee that cholera needle made you sit up and take notice. That was a good camp, that place. They had catering sergeants to do the cooking and that.

02:30 And native off-siders. We had beautiful meals. Everything was spot on. You couldn't complain about it.

What sort of meals were you getting?

We got fresh meals. Steak and eggs. Dinner time it was cold meat and salad and at night time it was meat and 3 vegies.

So a step up from the tins of bully beef?

03:00 Oh yes. A big step up. It was a big downer when you got onto bully beef again too. That's why I reckon we all had bad teeth. I lost all my top teeth. It was the acid out of the bully beef that was the cause of it. And the M&V, the meat and vegetables, and that. And the dehydrated vegies and meats. That's why it affected all our teeth.

03:30 **So what happened then after the medical?**

We went back to the men then, back down to the orderly room and we were allotted into different platoons and sections and we went from there. A man started training his own section under the observation of the officer to see how you went about it.

04:00 We must have been pretty well trained up. We knew what was going on. We knew what we had to do. There was no problem at all. I never had any problem.

So what happened on that first day when you were first introduced to your section?

I thought to myself why the hell am I here, what's going on here? But everything fell by the way side and came good. I was a bit worried at the start and then everything went real good.

04:30 No trouble.

How did they react to you on that first day?

Oh they were all right. Quite happy. Very happy and pleased. They always addressed you tappita or master, mainly tappita. The New Guinea blokes would say boss. The others would say tappita.

And what does

05:00 **that translate as?**

Master. The boss.

So how did they come to be there?

They were volunteers. A lot of the New Guineans were the ones that the Japs, especially from Manus Island, Bougainville and Rabaul and that...a lot were ones who the Japs had taken prisoners

05:30 to work as their cargo. And the Japs had got them around Milne Bay and Buna and Gona and they treated them badly and they cleared out and then they came to joint he PIB. And they could tell you a

lot of stories about what was going on. They could also tell you lots of times where the Japs were. Or where

- 06:00 they thought they were or where they used to be. They had observation posts and they sorted them out from there. We found out a lot of good things about that. We had one chap, Sergeant Bob Greave was his name and he was in Rabaul when the Japs took over Rabaul. And they got down onto V2 Islands
- 06:30 and they confiscated a boat that was in hiding which belonged to Burns Philips. A little trading boat. And they got on this boat with the assistance of some of the natives and they got them out into the China Straits and they came down and they came into Cairns. They got into Cairns. And when they got them in Cairns they were going to charge them as
- 07:00 deserters, but they were classed in Rabaul but the Japs got real bad and it was every man for himself. Well this Greaves came back and joined the PIB. He was with an Australian unit in Rabaul. He came back and was in the PIB. And he was standing there this day and a native called Ulliup
- 07:30 from Rabaul came over and he picked Greaves straight away. And he was one of the blokes who helped them get down to where the boat was and got them out of Rabaul. He could speak a bit of English, Ulliup, but he was a notorious rogue. God he used to get himself into trouble. Trouble used to just follow him.
- 08:00 Where ever he went he would get into trouble.

What sort of trouble?

He'd be pinching something or doing something he shouldn't do. He was a strong fella, a big strong lad. One bloke gave him pack drill one day with a case of ammunition. Put it down, pick it up, put it down. And the long it went the better he got. You couldn't break his heart.

- 08:30 He was just one who couldn't help but get into trouble.

So for them signing up for the PIB was that the same as...

Same as for us Australians. They could write their names and those who couldn't would use a finger print. This was the same as for the Australians. The medical was the same. The only thing different was...

- 09:00 they had shirts, they had a green shirt and a khaki lap lap and a green lap lap. That was the only things they had. No shoes, and a green beret.

Did they sign up for a certain amount of time?

No, just until the cease of hostilities, that's all. Then they discharged them.

- 09:30 Some of them cried like little babies when we discharged them because they didn't know what was in store for them. And their average life span...well they were well fed and well looked after. The average life span would be nothing once they got out. Their health would deteriorate very quickly.
- 10:00 I asked the VP50 [50th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific] about different blokes and they would say he 'died, finish.' What got them was what they call beri beri. From no vegetables, no fresh fruit. That's what happened with a few of our fellas.
- 10:30 In my platoon when I was platoon commander, I had one Victorian and three Queenslanders and myself. What we used to do was we would only have one meal a day. That was at night time. We might get some green pumpkin leaves, sweet potato stems, green paw paw. We'd
- 11:00 cut it all up and put it in a billy can with a tin of bully beef and we might put a tin of tomatoes in and that was a feed. That's what we used to have. We never got tropical sores or anything. A lot of them never had anything, and this Victorian he saw it the first day we cooked it and he said, "Bloody pig tucker."
- 11:30 Well then he started getting these sores and everything and he was the best scout of the lot when we would go out on patrols. We used to raid native gardens and we'd get the pumpkin stems. So we had no trouble. We would always
- 12:00 eat coconuts.

So the natives you were in charge of at Vesilogo had they had any training yet?

Yes. They had started to be trained. Rifle drill and some of them were good and some were useless. As soldiers they were good soldiers. One bloke there he would be the worst soldiers you could ever get, but on the rifle range he was a marksman.

- 12:30 Everything he shot, but as far as a soldier was concerned he wasn't worth two bob.

So what did you do with them on that first day?

We just talked to them and found out where they came from, their villages. We talked to them about different things and then we would gradually start working them up. More or less to get them to have confidence in you. Once they found out that you were all right, they we were all right.

13:00 But if you were down then you had had it.

So what sort of training did you do with them?

Mainly given them a few route marches. No good teaching them jungle warfare. They knew more than we did. So route marches and rifle drill. We took them on the range as much as we could. Shooting.

13:30 They loved that and they would try and beat one another. They would laugh if one bloke hit the target. They had the mind of a teenager. But they'd give one another whoopee if they missed the target or didn't get a good score.

14:00 It would be funny to listen to them at time they way they gee'd one another up.

How old were most of them?

Only young fellas. The fella I had as a batman was only 16. Curry, was a good lad. I found him...he had got away from the Japs. A Manus Island boy he was. I should have handed him into ANGAU [Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit], but I kept him.

14:30 He was such a clean little lad you know. And he followed me everywhere as my batman. When I would come home on leave after two years, the CO took him as his batman. He said that when I left he was going to grab him. He's the best. Gee he was a good lad. When he got old enough...well actually we forged

15:00 his papers so he would be old enough to stay with the PIB.

How did you first start learning the language?

I got Maraia, and he would start telling me a bit and I would tell him a bit of English. Then it was a bit more and a bit more. I got that good...I'm not skiting, but I got that good

15:30 I could get the routine orders from the orderly room, and stand out in front and read the whole lot out. That's how good I was with it.

How was it at first?

Oh shocking. Tongue tying damn job, a lot of it gets that , you'd walk up to them and say, "Ouya marnda darka larka?"...What's your name? "Edu wa darka?" Where do you come from? "Oia dell?"

16:00 Are you married? No. Things like that. If you've got a big belly... "Oh bogga barga"...you've got a big gut on you. I laughed when I was working at the gaol. I worked there for 17 years before I retired and I had a mate there who was second in charge. Chris McCann. Old Chris was an Irishman, a gentleman. He rings me

16:30 up one day on the farm. I was on the farm. He rings me up and says, "Mac, come over here I need to see you." I said, "What's your trouble?" He said, "I've got a rooster in here from Rabaul." And the next thing I find out he's from Port Moresby. He said, "He don't want to talk English. Can you remember Motuan?" And I said, "Yes

17:00 I can remember a bit of it." So he said, "Go and have a talk to him." So I went in and saw this bloke, Abdul Ramu. He's a big shot here now with the Native Welfare. He got into strife at a soccer club. A bloke in a wheelchair...two blokes gave this little fella in a wheel chair a clip under the ear, so Abdul got into them and gave two of them a bashing.

17:30 He put them in hospital. Well they gave him in 6 months so they put him out with me. Well when he came out, the first thing I did was straight into him in Motuan you see. He didn't know what had hit him. And then after that he would say talk English. He

18:00 didn't like talking Motuan. But he was putting it over them inside. He was pulling the wool over their eyes. But now if he sees me he yells and sings out to me. He's a big time with the Native Affairs in town now. I see his two sons got married off not so long ago. A nice bloke old Abdul.

18:30 He used to be in the police force. He came down here and got into trouble.

So when did you first start doing patrols?

About less than a month after we got there. They sent us out up to Owers' Corner. We started to go up the Kokoda. We went up so far ... they were supposed to have seen a patrol out towards what they called Hombrum's Bluff, a Jap patrol. So they pulled us back and got us to chase after them.

19:00 So we had 3 weeks running around there and we couldn't find anything. They called us back then and they loaded us on a plane and took us over to Dobodura on the other side of the Owen Stanleys. Then we started coming back from that way then. We finished up there and they gave us a let up for a while

- and then we went into Lae. I got
- 19:30 crook with malaria. I wouldn't give in. I kept going and I went into Red Beach at Lae. We did a landing at Lae and after a while then they brought us back out and they put us on barges and they sent us to Finschhafen to Scarlet Beach. At the mouth of the Song River.
- 20:00 Through the night...we were in a convoy, our barges were supposed to be the second lot to go in... through the night the convoy got tangled up and we landed first. We were supposed to be a reconnaissance patrol. But we were like a SAS [Special Air Service] turnout. We were told to find out what we could, information, but try not to be seen
- 20:30 or fire a shot. Like a commando turnout. Well we landed at Finschhafen, a captain there, a Company Commander, Tony Lynchford, he was 21 years of age, a gentleman, he copped a burst from a machine gun. Fired across the chest. A medical orderly got done. The Japs had their machine guns set up between coconut logs and the only way
- 21:00 they could fire was out to sea. They couldn't swing them around. So we got behind them and threw some grenades into the pits where they were. We silenced them and the rest could come ashore then. Well then it looked like every man for himself. Nobody knew what was what. They were running everywhere see. So what they did then, they sent every officer up one to take over Lynchford's place.
- 21:30 That was how I became a platoon commander. Well then the Japs got on what they called North Hill. It was on the mouth of the Song River. The Japs got up there and they started playing some havoc and the navy got stuck into them and a few of the troops got behind them and wiped them out. Then they started to push on.
- 22:00 The rest of the troops were landing and they were pushing up the coast, up towards Dregerhafen Harbour at the Sattelberg Mountain. Well that's when they struck a lot of trouble. Sattelberg Mountain...it was too longer a line of communication and in between them the Japs were getting between them and ambushing them. They lost a lot. We got to Sattelberg Mountain eventually and
- 22:30 we went up the coast to a place called Sialum. That's where we got hemmed in up there. And everybody started to get stuck into them all over the place and they were pushing them back and pushing them back. They sent our platoon then to a place called Tulentufu which was...
- 23:00 you went to Sattelberg Mountain and turned off and went to a place called Wareo and out to a place called Uhevinend. And then over to this place called Tulentufu in the Mount Sarawaket ranges. It was a line between Lae and Madang and they reckoned a lot of Japs were escaping through that route. It was a missionary road. So we had to go in and cut that line.
- 23:30 When you go down to the Mongi River...it was good going down but you had to come up the other side. By the time you got up the other side it was nearly on dinner time and it used to cloud in just on dinner time. It was so high up and the fog and cloud would come in and you couldn't see a thing. Nothing. So we got to this mission. We stayed there and we went on patrols out from there. We were lucky. They had all gone. There
- 24:00 were no Japs around at all. But we got supplied by air. Everything was dropped from the air. In the mountains, the high country, they natives were always short of salt. For a tablespoon of salt you could get as many paw paws and bananas and whatever they had. Tomatoes. Whatever they had growing. And everybody
- 24:30 had something to sell you. Old ladies would come up with paw paws and something. For a tablespoon of salt. When we left there, they all came up and we had Christmas there together. So we split up again and some went further inland. I came back and had to go in towards Madang.
- 25:00 Foster and Cookie and myself. The rest were all cracked up. Anyway, we got chafed. It was that bad a chafe from the heat. No proper hygiene, baths and that sort of thing. We were all chafed in the crutch and everywhere. So I said....we had no medical. So I said to Foster, "We can't go on mate.
- 25:30 I've had a belly full. I can't walk." He said, "Neither can I." So we sat down the three of us and had a bit of a talk. I said, "Who's got that bottle of oil we used for the machine gun?" So we went and got this bottle of oil and we plastered our crutches with this gun oil. By gee I tell you what, Mobil's good for a lot of things and it's not bad for that either.
- 26:00 So we could travel then because we had been that dry from the heat and not being able to bath properly. Then we went on from there and we came back onto the coast again. We said we had better go back to headquarters for a few days spell. But in the meantime I got what they call Dobi's Itch. It was like a prickly heat.
- 26:30 It comes from about there right up round your crutch and up to your navel. It's just like a prickly heat. So I went to the medical bloke, Doctor Robie and he said I had Dobi's Itch. He told me to go and have a hot bath, we were at headquarters so they had showers and everything, and come back. So I went back and him and this Mick Bowen, he was supposed to be my mate.
- 27:00 They got this stuff which was called Woodfield's ointment. And they plastered me with this ointment.

Well they reckon that Cathy Freeman could run, well I ran that day. By gee did it burn. I had only one bash of it and by gee, did they ladle it on to me too. It burnt the daylight out of me. Woodfield's ointment. As a matter of fact I've got a bottle of it in there.

27:30 But she was hard going when you were in the mountains living out of half rations all the time. You'd get bully beef and beans and biscuits...that's about all you'd get. I'll never forget one morning...something I often sit and laugh about you know.

28:00 We had all been out on patrol and we had come back and this cookie, he was a real villain. He came from Northern River, he was a timber cutter. He had been to the Middle East and Tobruk and everything. We were going to have breakfast. Cookie said we had to have something to eat. So we had a big tin of baked beans that we got off the yanks. They were a pretty good standby those Yanks now and again. So he got this tin of

28:30 baked beans and he got this stuff...what we called canned heat. It was a tin about this round and it had methylated spirits and bees wax in it. You'd light it and put it under like a little stove. So there would be no flame or smoke. This day, we were just about ready to open this can of baked beans and an air siren goes. At that time they were doing a bit of dive bombing around the place. So Cookie forgot to open this tin of baked beans

29:00 and it was still on the fire. So we were all hiding around trees and looking up like this, and the next thing, bang. This tin of baked beans blows up. Well, there was our breakfast all over the trees. There was beans everywhere. Everybody jumped with the bang. Gee we laughed that day.

29:30 That was a good camp. Well I would never drink a bit of water unless...in fact I think I've still got the medical box in the shed. I would also carry a bottle of Condies crystals, and when I filled my water bottle I would drop one or two grains of Condies crystals in the water. And I've seen big men...big men,

30:00 with dysentery. And if you see a big man crook with dysentery, he's just useless. He can't go anywhere. He's just standing there. All the time with this Condies crystals...in fact I used to get my blokes to put it in their bottles. None of us ever every got dysentery. Well the treatment for the dysentery...what they used to give them was sulfurparadine.

30:30 It was a tablet about as big as a two dollar coin. Your first dose was 16. You had to take 16 of these, and then they'd break it down slowly and slowly. You had to clean yourself out. By gee it was shocking. I reckoned Condies crystals would do me. I wouldn't drink water with out it.

Where did you get the Condies crystals from?

The doctor. My mate McBurns.

31:00 He got it for me. They used to give it to you to wash your feet in to stop your feet getting sore. You could get as much as you wanted, bottles of it. You'd put water in a dish and put some Crystals in it and then put your feet in it. It stopped your feet getting sore. When you did a big route march down south. That's all they used to use. They would stand in these Condies crystals.

31:30 It would harden your feet up. That was an eye opener that place.

So when you first went out up near Owers' Corner, what had you heard about what was going on, on the Kokoda Track?

We used to get all the information about what was going on up the track. You'd see the wounded coming back and reinforcements going up.

32:00 We got a pretty fairway up and then they pulled us back when they reckoned they had sighted this patrol at Hombrum's Bluff which looks straight out over Port Moresby. A bloke by the name of McDonald had a big plantation there. He was married to a Papuan girl. They reckoned the Japs were seen over near there.

32:30 But we went right through it and we couldn't find any tracks or anything.

How far from the front line were you?

Oh we were a fair stretch. We would have got there the next day but they brought us back. Another platoon was ahead of us, the PIB, and they were going to go up and we were going to come back. So they brought us back because we were the closest.

33:00 **What were the conditions like going up there?**

Oh shocking. Mud up to here. Stink. The worst thing was the stinking mud. You would take one step forward and two back. Bad. I would like to go back and have a look at it again but they tell me not to go back, the way the natives are now. They're uncontrollable. I'd like to go back though and have a look.

33:30 **What was the track like?**

Shocking, just mud and slush. You couldn't go anywhere. You could only stick to the track that's all.

How wide was it?

Oh about four feet wide in some places. It was shocking in some places. Some places might have been a bit wider.

34:00 I was pleased I never went right over the top.

We've heard contention about whether it's called the Kokoda Track or the Kokoda Trail?

Well I reckon the Kokoda Track. That's my opinion because that's all it is. It's only a track. They call it the trail. But if you ask the natives

34:30 they'll still call it the track.

Can you just describe it for us? Was there thick vegetation?

Yes vegetation everywhere. You couldn't see through it some of it.

35:00 Well you've seen it all up around Mount Spec and up around there, that's nothing compared to what New Guinea is. You could walk right passed anybody. It's that thick. And when you get up to some places where the natives had cleared to grow some vegies, but other than that it was just jungle and mud.

What did you think when you got sent out

35:30 **on this track?**

I thought what are we in for here? We had heard that much about it, how it was, how the Japs were infiltrating through and one thing and another. Trying to get behind and that and nobody knew what was going on. But I'll tell you what...

36:00 at Finschhafen it would have been a good place to start a cement works. All the soil there is all coral and you could see some days, you'd be out on patrol and you'd come back and see where they had dug their trenches getting ready for the next assault. How they ever dug through some of that coral has got me beat. The Japs used to do it though to dig it down for a gun pin.

36:30 We struck a lot of places and that was when we used to booby trap them. They'd come in at night time, come up for new positions and we'd booby trap them.

How did you booby trap them?

Grenades and a bit of wire. We'd set it across their track. They'd hit the wire and the grenade would come out and bang. Blow them up.

37:00 We'd get a milk tin or a baked bean tin and tie it onto the side of a tree and put the grenade in. We'd take the pin out of the grenade and have a bit of signal wire across the track. They'd knock into it and out would come the grenade and bang. They had no chance of getting away.

37:30 **What did you notice about being with the Papuans when you were up on the track?**

They were quite happy. They were happy where ever they were. They never seemed to change.

Did they cope with it well?

Oh yes. No trouble at all. Always happy. There was a job to be done. They were quite happy.

38:00 **Did they seem to have a more natural inclination for getting along the track easier?**

Yes. They were pretty cunning. You would see them side stepping now and again. There might be a stone or something. But when they got into a bog they got into a bog.

Did you learn much from them going along?

Oh yes we learnt a fair bit.

38:30 I learnt a lot of bush craft off them. Especially out on a patrol where the ground was a bit solid and we'd be looking for foot tracks. They'd tell us, "Japan been here, not long, catch up with him soon." And sooner or later there would be a Jap around the place. We used to try to avoid a big mob of them.

39:00 That was our orders, not to get into trouble. When we were sent out on patrol, you might go out four or five days at a time behind the Japanese lines. But we were always very fortunately. We could always get a native from around that area and they would know something and they would show you the way through the scrub.

39:30 If we went out for four days then we'd have four bronze wing pigeons and one white pigeons. And every day you'd let a pigeon go at a map reference. He'd go back to pigeon hut palace. But you made sure that white pigeon never got away.

- 40:00 If it got away it meant you were finished. Stranded. So we made sure that white pigeon never got out. He was in a coop on his own and the bronze wings were in a coop on their own.
- So the white pigeon was a signal...**
- Yes, if you let him go you were finished.
- So the others would know not to come?**
- Yes. They'd know where you were roughly and they might send patrols out, but they'd know you were in big trouble.
- 40:30 **Who looked after the pigeons?**
- A native boy. He'd look after them. He was the pigeon boy and he'd look after the pigeons. At night time when you were out like that, you'd always try to camp on high ground. So if anything was around you had a chance.
- 41:00 You had the upper hand. And what you'd do ...when you'd stop, sometimes you couldn't sleep. You'd lay down but there would be a little cockroach going through the leaves of the tree and it used to sound like an elephant. You'd be that keyed up. Then you might lay down for a while and in the morning when you got up the natives would be in a full circle around you. They knew that if anything happened to you they had had it. And the native boy you might have as an escort, you made sure he never got away. None of them ever ran away.

Tape 5

- 00:35 **Do you think being a bush kid and that really helped you?**
- I think it did.
- In what way?**
- You get an idea of which way you're travelling all the time, north, south, west or east. We had no compasses to go by. All we had to rely on was natives at times.
- 01:00 **So in what way did being a bush kid and a stock man help you?**
- Well you get to know bush instincts and that. When you're travelling, if you're out in a bit of open country then you look for the stars and the sun rises and sunsets.
- 01:30 That was how I did it because we didn't have any compasses to go by, and then you'd get to a creek and you'd see which way the water was going...see which way the debris was going and things like that. That's what I reckon it was good for.
- How did you go for communications? You mentioned the pigeons before, was there any other form of communication?**
- What, with the natives?
- Getting information back to headquarters?**
- 02:00 No, sometimes we used to send a runner if we weren't far out. We would send a runner if we weren't far out but if we were far out we'd use the pigeons. And then when we got together with a platoon we had a 208 wireless and a signaller and he'd send any messages on a 208 wireless. At a certain time he would come on the air in the morning and a certain time in the afternoon.
- 02:30 Headquarters would get the message. But that was only in a certain range. They didn't have a big distance range. But when we went out then as a company we had number elevens transmitters. We had a battery charger. We would have to put the exhaust down in a hole and try and break the noise so nobody would know we had the motor there.
- 03:00 But headquarters was always in a safe area.
- How reliable was that radio communication?**
- Good. We could always get messages through.
- Did it help that you were up in the highlands for this?**
- Oh yes. Christmas '43 we were up at a place called Tulentufu and we got the message through that they were going to do the Christmas parcel drop for us.
- 03:30 We got the Christmas parcel and a turkey and a ham and things like that.
- How did they do that parcel drop?**

By parachute.

Out of a DC3?

DC3.

So did you have proper cleared areas like landing drops?

Yes we had the mission. We gave them the map reference of the mission. It had more or less blown down but there were a few huts there. It was a good sight because it was right on top of a plateau you know. You couldn't miss it.

04:00 But they had to come up the valley in the morning. They couldn't come up after half past 10. They would get fogged in so they had to come up early and get out. They had about an hour or two hours.

How good were those drops?

Good. They were good. They never missed too much.

04:30 If you didn't want it on a humpy then it would land on it. They were good.

Were they mostly done by Americans or Australians?

Australians. DC3's and sometimes you'd get the mail by little Piper Cub. He'd come up and just drop a bag of mail straight out.

05:00 **Would you have to mark the landing zone?**

No they just knew where to come.

And did you have to secure an area first?

Yes but there was no one around, and we used to make sure of that. We'd check it all out. Sometimes you'd put the marker out just for security.

What sort of interaction did you have with the

05:30 **ANGAU blokes?**

A lot. In fact I've got a mate down in Brisbane now. He was a district patrol officer. A bloke called Tom Leger. Him and his brother had a mine at Wau before the war. They were called Leger Brothers. They mined gold and tin and that up there. When they war started they went into what they called the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.

06:00 He was in that. Old Tom and I were very great mates. In fact I was only reading through a bit of correspondence the other day about him. A very tough man he was. A good man. I used to do all the patrols and if you were going through some areas, then I would always have two police boys with me. They'd

06:30 scout around and find where the locals were hiding from the Japs. Then they'd get them back into the village and I would take note of how many were there and get the word back to old Tom. So when he patrolled through he would know what he was looking for. A couple of times we found a couple of half Japanese in a village.

07:00 So when Tom did the other station and they knew that the white Australians were coming back, they had vanished. They never what happened to them. But old Tom would often say to me, they must have got rid of them, otherwise that village could have been classed as atrocities. A few villages were classed as atrocities and a few were gaoled and one thing and another for handing over the Australian pilots and the American pilots to the Japs.

07:30 Especially round Madang area when they were coming back from Rabaul and that. They got shot down and one thing and another.

How did you feel towards villages who had done stuff like that?

Well you had to be very, very careful with them. You never left any loop holes with them.

08:00 Especially if you were around where they were, you'd make sure there was a guard on, and you'd tell the boys to be careful. You were always looking...you'd get somebody who would dob someone in. You'd do a bit of quizzing and put the police boys onto them.

08:30 **So exactly what sort of interaction was there between you and the ANGAU?**

They supplied us with carriers. If we were going on a big trek into the mountains or somewhere, we would have to have carriers so they would supply us with the carriers. And if we got a boy, or anybody got a boy who was a bit uncontrollable, they'd take him to ANGAU and they'd get rid of him out of the PIB. And if they had a couple of good likely

09:00 lads then they would skip them over to the PIB. We were interchanging them all the time. In fact some of our officers left and went to ANGAU. And some ANGAU blokes transferred over to our joint. They might want a bit more excitement then they would come over to us.

Were you happy in the PIB?

Yes I was quite happy, just jogging along.

You didn't want to go to ANGAU?

No, no.

09:30 I was happy where I was. I knew what I was doing and I knew who I was with. Once you get changed round you don't know where you end up.

You said sometime back that one of the officer's said he wasn't very happy with the level of training that was coming out of Canungra, were you satisfied with the training you had?

Yes I was. I was satisfied. I got good training. As far as I was concerned. But this fellow I think had a bit of a red herring with them.

10:00 Red Robbie was a bit crooked on them. Why he was crooked was because a lot who were training the blokes in Canungra had never been in active service. That was his main big red herring. But I struck Red Robbie a few times. I reckon he was a fair enough bloke. He called a spade a spade and a shovel a shovel.

10:30 But he was just crooked on Canungra. That's my opinion.

And you spoke about all the extra bush craft that you learnt from the natives, did you almost hone a sixth sense in the jungle?

Yes, you get a feeling that there's something strange going on. You're always looking for marks on trees or broken limbs

11:00 or something like that and how long it had been broken. When you know there's no one else around the place but the saki suckers and that's when you start to get on the look out. Looking for tracks, looking to see if the leaves had been broken up when they've been moving around.

11:30 Before you landed in New Guinea what had you been told to expect from the Japanese soldiers?

We were told to be very careful. One thing we were told was if somebody sings out at night time, never answer. Never answer. Because they had a habit...they might be outside of your perimeter and you're not exactly sure where they are and they might sing out, "Hey Peter, how are you over there?" And you might say,

12:00 "I'm not doing too bad. The mozzies are a bit crook." And before you know where you are they've open fired. And then they got to a stage when that wasn't working, they had dogs. They would let these mongrel dogs go and they'd get in your perimeter. They'd see where we were and they'd start howling.

12:30 If you saw a dog you knocked him off. They were up to all the tricks under the sun. But we were one ahead of them all the time. They used to move a lot at night time, and one of my sergeants Les Cook, he was one jump ahead of them all the time. He would go out just on dark and peg a track.

13:00 He'd get a milk tin and tie it on a tree and put a grenade in with a trip wire. You'd be laying in the camp of a night time and you'd hear boom. Cookie would say, "There's one." And later on you'd hear boom. He might have four traps and four lots would go off. Next day you wouldn't find any bodies but you'd find where they had been knocked. They always got rid of their bodies.

13:30 Unless they were in a big hurry then they'd leave them behind. That's what he used to do, blow them up in the night time. They never moved during the day time. Buggers they were.

When you went to where they booby traps had gone off where there other visible signs that indeed someone had been there?

Oh yes. Blood and that around. Sometimes you might find a hat or a rifle. You'd always find something.

And would all those incidents have to be reported back to headquarters?

14:00 Yes we'd write a report. Such and such a time, date.

What was worse, day time or night time?

Night time. Day time you could see what was going on, night time you couldn't. Couldn't see a thing.

Never move at night?

Never move. Never move after dark. I did one night, stupid. That's the night I went out and retrieved a bloke. That's when I got my decoration.

14:30 **Can you tell us about that?**

Well a truck was coming through. There was a driver and a spare driver. They got ambushed. We could hear this...one driver got out and the other fellow got hit. We could hear him and I said to half a dozen native boys, come on we'll go down and get him. This captain was there and he told me not to go because it was dark. And I said

15:00 we're going. So we went down and I got in and got him and carried him back out. I got into a bit of trouble over it. But I got in touch with the CO and he came down and he sorted them all out. We had a good CO. If you were in the right you were right. If you were in the wrong look out. And he came up and he sorted this mob out.

15:30 They were going to go after me because I went out after dark. It was against the rules but I went out and got him and brought him back and we got an ambulance, a jeep with a stretcher up on top...one jeep out in front with the stretcher up on top with another jeep behind. We took him down about five mile to what you call Motupena Point, to the medical station. So I got into strife again.

16:00 I didn't care. It didn't worry me. I saved him anyhow.

Why did you get into trouble the second time?

Because they didn't want the jeeps to go. They wanted him to stay at this RAP. Well he had to get down to get proper medical treatment. He was shot through there. But anyhow I got that sorted out.

What was it that made you decide to go out that night to get that bloke?

Determination, that's all. You could hear him.

16:30 If we didn't get him the Japs would have. They ambushed the truck and they were off. If they had stayed around they would have got him too. Anyhow it was determination that made me do it.

Did you ever come across the driver?

No. Never struck anybody.

What about the bloke you rescued?

No, never struck him. He went on a hospital ship back to Australia.

17:00 They used to get them out onto hospital ships and get them out of the place. If you had a broken arm or broken finger you couldn't stay there. They'd get you out. Bones wouldn't set up there...so they reckoned.

So how long was it before you found out the upshot of doing that?

17:30 When I got out of the army, a mate of mine got a DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal] and he lived up the road. He came down and he told me. He said, "Have you seen the paper?" And it was in the paper. And that's how I found out. Then I got official notification from the army then. But we had a good CO. He always used to reckon I was mad.

18:00 He always reckon I would go where angels feared to fly.

So normally when you're out on a patrol, what time do you decide to harbour up for the night?

Getting towards dusk. Get up on high ground and settle down and just sit around. Be on the alert all the time. Nobody can see you. You might

18:30 be sitting up on a knoll and you'd hear them mooching around of a night time going on the track. We would always get away from the track. We wouldn't stay near the track in case they came off. You'd hear them getting along the track of a night time and then early in the morning you'd be out looking. We'd sneak down and see which way they had gone on the track, and we'd head another way. We would try to avoid them but they to see them if we could.

19:00 To see what was going on. Many a time we would see them in the creek swimming and that and they were sitting ducks but we weren't allowed to get them because we were too far away from communication. But they were a mongrel breed.

So did your opinion of the Japanese change once you got there and started...

19:30 My opinion of the Japanese is worse than it ever was. A lot go crook on me for it but a I say a leopard never changes his spots. Especially when your mate's knocked and you go out next day to get him and you find the calves of his legs are gone and the cheeks of his buttocks are gone. Well they're not taking them for souvenirs are they? We knocked one, one day and he had that much of an arm

20:00 of a baby. He had a baby in a dixie. With rice and taro. The natives went mad that day. And I never stopped them. Whatever they did towards the Japs I never said boo. I let them go. If they wanted to do something with a cane knife, I would let them do what they liked. They're cannibals, that's all they are. Bloody cannibals.

- 20:30 I could tell a lot of people what we saw and things like that but they won't believe you. They call you a bloody liar. But I've got it in black and white, the atrocities that they did.
- 21:00 One village we came to they had a woman staked out and she had a baby and they put the bayonet in opened her up and the baby was laying there beside her. They're animals....but animals don't do that. We saw a lot of things. A lot of things were reported.
- 21:30 Everything I saw I would always report and I kept a copy and sent a copy in. That was the worst part, trying to do your reports because half the time you had no shelter. You would be sitting underneath a banana leaf trying to write a report out.
- 22:00 Torokina, we went from Finschhafen we went up the north coast to Saidor, Bogadjim and all through there and right up the coast to Madang. When we went up to Saidor, we went up on the Vendetta the destroyer, and at Astrolabe Harbour, on the Vendetta, we went into Bogadjim and we got on the barges to the shore and we had to go up to Amele Mission up into the mountains, across all the ranges and come back into the back of Madang.
- 22:30 Others went up the coast. It was rough country in through there.
- 23:00 **And what was your objective in going around?**
- What, going up through the mountains? To cut their supply line. We were ducking in. Some had to come up from Bogadjim and head into the hills and go around. To get to Madang, we went around to cut them off. We were at the back of Madang the day the troops came into Madang.
- 23:30 We were all assembled there and we followed up the coast to Alexishafen, up into Hollandia, then came back to Madang. Some of them went over to Kar Kar Island. We all got assembled up again and got on a liberty ship and went back to Milne Bay and then back to Port Moresby. It was over two years since I had leave.
- 24:00 I was seven stone five. We got back to Moresby and they said I was going on leave. I thought this will be a good holiday after two and a half years. Thirty five days they gave us. We went down to Murray Barracks and we got on a plane
- 24:30 at 3 o'clock in the morning and landed at Townsville at half past seven and they put us on a truck and we went out to Julago. It was a Sunday morning. We went out to Julago staging camp. They said they weren't doing any paper work today, here's a leave pass, you can go home for the day. So I got into a jeep and they brought me back home and the next morning I got up and went on the meatworks train and went out to
- 25:00 Julago and got all my uniforms and everything and leave passes and I had thirty five days. But I was lost at sea because all my mates were away. I was like a fish out of water. Nobody home. Nobody I knew around the place. So I waited for a couple of days, roaming around with nothing to do, so I went out and got one of my old
- 25:30 horses and went riding around the bush again and doing a bit of bush work. I came home and after 35 days I went back to Julago again and back to New Guinea. Back to Moresby. I said, "What's going on?" And they said we were going to Bougainville. I thought
- 26:00 this was going to be handy, so we got everything organised. The troops were all equipped up and we went on the liberty ship to Torokina. We were in Bougainville then for a fair while. I got my commission in Bougainville.
- 26:30 We were there and the cease of hostilities came through. We had an old padre, Padre Parry. A decent old bloke he was. He used to be a fitter and turner. He joined the church. He said, don't trust them. The hostilities might be off but don't trust them. So we didn't trust them either.
- 27:00 We still kept our guards up. But eventually they got them all. They surrendered and we put them in compounds at Torokina. And they had us looking after them there. They said they were going to take over the Ferris Islands down in the British Solomons. They were taking them down there. Anyhow I took over the Pioneer Platoon.
- 27:30 They wanted someone to do a camp and I thought well this is one way to get away from this parade ground rubbish. I hated parade ground. So I said I would take my mob as the Pioneer Platoon. They said righto. So we went down to the Ferris Islands, down by barge. Anyhow we started a camp and the used to send around a mob of Japs
- 28:00 every morning to work in the camp. To clean up and one thing and another. A hundred used to come around. So we had a fair camp getting ready for the rest of the battalion. So I said to Cookie and Foster one morning, "I'm buggedger if I know, some of these Japs that are coming here are wringing wet." From where they had to come to where our camp was
- 28:30 they had started building a bridge out of coconut logs. Four lots of logs across but with no mesh or anything. We had no intention of finishing off the bridge. We didn't want to use it. So what I found out

after, these two blokes Leo and Al, two brothers in my platoon. One was a sergeant and one was a corporal. They used to go over to bring them over. They'd get behind them and they'd chase them along like sheep. When they hit the bridge,

29:00 Al would hit the bridge and he would start walking along and if they were in his road he'd push them in the bloody creek and that's how I found out that they were getting wet. We went down and sat down and watched them. We saw him push about four in the creek. That's how we found out. They'd just get in his road and he'd shove them off. They'd run like hell to get down to us so they wouldn't get pushed in the damn creek.

29:30 That was the day...a couple of days after that, one fell out of a coconut tree, and they just rolled him up in a few leaves and took him away that night and buried him.

This was the Japanese?

Yes the Japs. This bloke had gone up the coconut and fell. They used to go green after a while. They were really green.

30:00 Like they had gangrene in them or something. We were there for a long time. You would have to go around the island and see that everything was in order. The barge. We gradually moved them all up on boats,

30:30 hospital ships, back to Japan. And then when we left that we went down over to Rabaul where they had the big compounds there. Thousands and thousands. And they had us guarding them. We were up on Kookaburra Plateau. We were up there guarding them. Then the boats would come in and they'd say so many were to go. We'd load them up and away they'd go. They were supposed to be hospital ships but I think they were tramp ships.

31:00 We used to go and have a look at the boats. They would say they would take 400 and we'd put 500 on. We wanted to get rid of them. When they started to surrender. They were coming in and we had to search them. We never searched them, the native boys would.

31:30 Well this day there was this colonel bloke there and our CO was standing there and a few others. And this colonel bloke wanted to be searched by an equivalent of his own rank. That's how smart he was. I said to my boss, "This rooster here wants to be searched by the equivalent of his own rank and you're the only one here."

32:00 He said, "Where's Leo and Al, the sergeant and the corporal?" So the next thing he got searched all right. They up ended him and cleaned him out.

You mentioned the Japanese being pushed off the bridge, before that...like if you were in the jungle and you were capturing Japanese

32:30 **soldiers, would they automatically have a fear of the natives?**

Yes. We often used to get a prisoner. Sometimes we would get a prisoner. If you got them...don't go near them. Leave them to the natives. They'd truss him up and we'd put either a sock or a field dressing in his mouth and tie him up so he couldn't sing out. And if he looked like slowing up the natives would wave a cane knife

33:00 in front of him. He'd speed up again. He wouldn't know if he was going to get his head chopped off or not. When you would get him back and you would get word to the authorities that you had a prisoner, they'd send an American Japanese interpreter out and three big provos would take him away. But they were more trouble than what they were worth.

33:30 One lot up there on the north coast, the Japs up there were pretty bad, pretty weak. And the natives used to grab them and they had a compound with them locked in. And every now and again they'd bring two down, two prisoners. "What do you want?" We want some bully beef and some rice. So they'd give them a bag of rice

34:00 and a couple of cases of bully beef and then a couple of days later there would be another two come down until they eventually found out that they had a paddock full of them...prisoners. They had them locked up and then when they ran out of Japs they had to work to get their tucker then.

Do you think the fear the Japanese had of the natives, do you think that was out of fear of recriminations of what they had done

34:30 **or just a natural fear?**

I think it was just natural fear. They had done that much atrocities to the natives and they thought the natives were going to retaliate back against them. That was a lot of trouble. I think it was fear. They feared the natives. I know when we went on a compound

35:00 inspection, they'd jump to attention. A native would only have to point his finger at him and he'd straighten up. They would frighten them.

You mentioned after witnessing some of those horrible things about just letting the blokes have their own way. Was that ever a worry...that you might lose control of the fellas?

No, no. You always had control. When you said enough's enough.

35:30 **Was there often...amongst the natives, if you won one particular bloke over would you then get everyone else?**

There was that in it. Your corporal and sergeant were the main ones. My Sergeant Al and Corporal Leo, they had control of everybody. If you wanted anything you just told them. No trouble. I never had any trouble. If I wanted the natives to know anything I just told them. Tell them we were moving on or going back or going ahead.

36:00 They'd organise everything. Good men they were.

Also previously you mentioned you would occasionally come across the old missions, were there still any stuff up in the mountains and that?

We found a bit of stuff at Sattelberg. Found a bit of stuff there. A canteen of crockery. a bit of lap lap material.

36:30 Clothing remnants and that. A single barrel shot gun, a Winchester, a lever action shot gun. I carried it with me plus two boxes of cartridges. I carried that with me all the time, and when I came back to Australia I got it signed over to my Batman.

37:00 I went to the authorities and got it signed over to him so he could have it.

Did you find the shotgun was a good weapon to have?

Especially at night time. If you were a bit frightened and there were some bushes around, you'd put a charge of shot in. You weren't suppose to do it but a lot of things were done that weren't suppose to be.

And all the rest of the blokes, they all had 303's did they?

37:30 Yes 303's, Owen guns. We used to have a revolver. A 38 revolver. I had a 38 and a 45. I picked an American pilot up when they were going into Guadalcanal and he had stayed out too late, couldn't get back and he was in this jungle and we picked him up and he thought he was behind the Japanese lines,

38:00 but he was just out of it. So we got him the next day. He told the boys where his parachute and rifle was and they went and got that. And when we got him back he gave me his 45. A beautiful revolver it was. When the war finished in Rabaul, we were all getting ready to come back home and one bloke said to me, "I'll give you 20 quid for your revolver."

38:30 I said, "Which one?" He said, "The 45. I'll get good money for that." I said, "You're too late. I threw it in the Rabaul Harbour." And I did. I knew what they wanted it for because I had been told by another bloke. So I just threw it straight in the Rabaul Harbour.

Do you think there was a lot of that at the end of the war?

Yes. A lot of it. A lot of it went on.

39:00 At Torokina, they used to load the big barges up. They might put a 10 wheeler truck on with a jeep on that. And then they'd pack all welders and generators and all that around in it, and they'd send the barge out just over the reef and blow her up. It was all leased end stuff. We

39:30 had this Padre Parry. He was going to stay up there after the war and Bill Brown, he was what they called a LOB. Left out of battle. And Old Bill was in charge of that. If anyone was out for a spell they'd go to this camp that Bill hand. A decent old bloke he was. So Padre Parry said to him, "Hey Brownie, see if you can get me a jeep off the Yanks." And Brownie said, "For a bottle of whisky I can get you one."

40:00 So padre used to get his ration of grog the same as we used to, so he gives Brownie this bottle of whisky. So Cookie and Foster and I came through and we've been out for a couple of days and we said to Brownie, "Have you got anything to drink?" He said, "Yes I've got a bottle of whisky here but it's for Padre Parry." We said, "Oh that will do us."

40:30 So we drank the bottle of whisky. Anyhow a couple of days after we had gone, Parry came to Brownie and asked how he was going with the jeep. Brownie said, no and the Padre told him to give him the bottle of whisky back. He said, "I can't, Macca, and Cookie and Foster drank it."

Tape 6

00:37 **When you were out with the Papuans, apparently you might have a story for us about someone called Sonny?**

Yes. It was from Nang. He was a little fella and a corporal. He wanted to get married.

01:00 So we ended up supplying him with some wheatmeal, some rice and some bully beef to pay for his bride. He had to give that to the in-laws. Whenever we went somewhere she would follow us for days. Every time you would see her in the morning she would be near the camp

01:30 and the boys would give her their rations and everything. I don't know what ever happened to them. He came back to Rabaul and then he was discharged. It was army rations to pay for his bride.

Did you get to go to the wedding?

No. He was a good soldier too old Sonny. It was funny things that happened with a lot of them.

02:00 He was the only one I had to support to get married. A lot of good country up around Madang. Very fertile country. When he came and asked me about getting married I thought gee how the hell am I going to do this.

02:30 And he told me what he wanted. I thought well there's plenty of stuff in the Q [Quartermaster's] store, otherwise we'd have to carry it. Once there we went to a place outside Madang and all the men had cleared out. They were frightened because the Australians were coming. It appeared they did a lot of atrocities and they had the breeze up.

03:00 Through the gins we found out a bit, so when going from one village to another that's as far as the carriers would go. We would get our carriers from village to village when ANGAU weren't supplying them. So if you got...for argument sake, if you were going from here to Hermit Park, that's as far as they would go. If they got to the other side then there would be tribal fights see. So when we got to this village there were no blokes

03:30 and we had to get to this other village that night. We thought how are we going to get there. So we hummed and harred for a while. The police boy said there were plenty of Marys here. So we got this mob of Marys and made them carry all the gear. They were the best carriers we ever had. They just jogged along and when we got there we paid them. We gave them a stick of tobacco and they were quite happy. I used to get The North Queensland Register sent up to me

04:00 every week. Mum used to send it up to me. It was about that thick and I used to keep it. And in some of the outlying villages you would give it to the villagers and they'd roll their smokes up with the paper. You'd see an old gin with a cigarette about this long with it stuck behind her ear and through the lobe of the ear. She'd have this cigarette and she'd be smoking away. She would have betel nut hanging off one end where she had been chewing betel nut.

04:30 Torrid sights.

Did you ever taste any of that?

No way. You wouldn't catch me with any of that rubbish. I dare say if you went back into that country you would still find a lot of atrocities happening. A lot would be dead now, but there would still be some of it.

05:00 It would be marvellous. You'd be walking along and it would be raining cats and dogs and you'd be getting wet as shags, and the next thing you'd see this coon come along and he'd have an army hat on. I don't know where it used to carry it but he would have an army hat on his head because they didn't like their hair getting wet. They have this hat.

05:30 My mob, if the Australian soldiers got a bit careless and left an Owen gun around, my mob would thief them. Oh they were thieves, and especially the Owen guns. They like to fire it. A Q store bloke came out one day and he said he wanted to count how many rifles and Owen guns we had.

06:00 I thought oh Jesus, this is going to be comical. We had more Owen guns than we should have and he said, "Where did you get all these?" And I said people were getting a bit careless and leaving them lying around. They would pinch them.

Were there any repercussions?

No, nothing at all. He would just laugh it off and take the numbers off them, that's all. George Smith, he was a Permanent army man. He was paying for the stuff himself. You'd ask him for a new shirt

06:30 and he'd...he was a miserable bugger. So we used to go and thief everything off him. We'd be ready to go away and we'd set a trap. George would go somewhere and we'd go in and get new gear. We used to be the most well dressed soldiers on the island. We'd have it and be gone. We'd pinch a caddy of tobacco

07:00 so we could trade with the natives. There would be heaps of sticks of tobacco like a rope dipped in sump oil. We'd pinch that and pinch a drum of salt off him. That's what they always wanted, salt. But he was a miserable bugger. He wasn't spending any money. I said to him one day, "Are you paying for this?"

07:30 He was pretty tight about it. He didn't like giving you much. When the war finished, they came along with a point system. If you were married you got so many points, so many points for years of service.

08:00 There was this bloke, Bob Curtis. And old Curtis wanted to get home but he had hardly any points because he had only just come up to New Guinea. We were trying to sell him points. "We'll sell you some points Doc." He used to get into us. He was a good doctor though.

08:30 Every doctor we had was a good doctor.

How were the natives about being treated by doctors?

No trouble. We had good native medical orderlies. They were trained under Robbie and Burnsie and they were mighty. Good stretcher bearers. When the war finished they started this

09:00 rehabilitation. Well if you have ever seen such a waste of money! They'd learn you how to sit at a table, how to set a table, how to use knives and forks. Gee, talk about...which side to serve from. Oh it used to drive us mad. Everybody had a go.

09:30 No matter what you were you had to have a go. The padre used to run it. Mick would say we'll shorten it down, I'll sort the padre up. He'd say to the padre, "What price is the grog in town?" The padre would go off at him. They were the things we used to do to annoy him. When we were at Torokina,

10:00 no Rabaul. We had to garden the 2/58th AGH [Australian General Hospital], the nurses quarters and this Mick Murnie. He came from Mount Garner actually. I've never heard of him since. I've been up in that country a lot and I've tried to find him. He used to tantalise all the nurses. They would go out to different battalions for an official night out.

10:30 They were all good girls. I would walk around the camp all the time to see everything was OK. Security on the gate and around different parts. Anyhow Mick said he would stir the nurses up. They had holes in the fences everywhere, like possums and wallabies getting into a corn paddock. So he went around and tied the holes up in the fence and he said to me that there would be some fun tonight.

11:00 So anyhow later on that night he had to go up to the gate because the guard had a couple of these nurses rounded up. So he goes up and lets them in and takes their number. Real official he is. He came down and said he had four of them. So then morning comes and the phone rings. They want to talk to me.

11:30 "Can you do something for us, we got hooked last night." If the matron gets to hear of it we'll all be in trouble. I said, "He's here with the charge sheets now but wait until later on and I'll try and talk him out of it." So later on I rang them up and told them I had torn the charge sheets up.

12:00 Then the nurses had this rehabilitation too. They had to learn to cook. They would give them so much ingredients to make paddy cakes or something. So we always had to sample them. So Murnie would get them and taste them and say it wasn't as good as so and so, and

12:30 he would have the bloody nurses fighting. He'd have them all stirred up. Then he'd walk away laughing. He would just get them mad. The nurses in the finish would come down and play cards with us, crib and penny poker. We all ended up a real happy family the lot of us, but oh he used to drive them mad. Just tantalising people. A lot of funny things went on then.

13:00 We were sleeping on hard floors and we were doing in pretty tough and one of the sisters said to us why don't we go into that ward, there were four or five beds in it. Why don't you take them back to your camp. So we had hospital beds in our camp. The CO came down one day and asked where we got them. We just told him we scrounged them.

13:30 Was that the first time you slept in a bed while you were away?

That was the first time yes. What you'd do is one month at the hospital and one month at the base ordnance and one at headquarters. We would change around all the time. The blokes at base ordnance they had the option of going and getting meat or something like that, and if we

14:00 wanted to put on a barbecue for the nurses then the bloke at base ordnance would give you a hand. And when you were base ordnance you would have to help them out. By gee...they must have had some fun working their books out.

Were there many romances that when on with the nurses?

Yes a few. We respected them.

14:30 They'd come to our camp and we'd have a few bottles of beer with them. There was never any nonsense or anything. We respected them that much. They were doing such a good job. The only ones I had no time for were the Yank WACs [Women's Army Corps]. I had no time for them. We used to often have formal dinners at the formal nights

15:00 with the nurses at the Mess. We used to have some real good nights.

Tell me more about the Yanks and why you didn't like them?

I had no time for them. They were grubs. A lot of things I couldn't mention.

Was that just because of their general attitude?

Yes and their hygiene and the way they went on.

15:30 **How was their hygiene?**

Well pretty slap happy. They got more stuff than anybody else could get and all they were doing was drinking and playing up all the time. It was shocking. I had no time for them. In fact we barred them from our camp. We wouldn't have them in our camp. A lot of places had them but we wouldn't have them.

16:00 We'd go over and get the Australian nurses, there might be three or four jeeps which would go over, and everyone who took a jeep over would be armed. A bit of nonsense went on with a couple of the nurses. A bloke who had them wasn't armed and from then on everybody had to be armed. If you went near the nurses quarters you had to be armed. And anybody was caught in there he got to wear another green.

16:30 We caught a couple at different times, tom catting around there. We got a couple of them and handed them over to the provos. Australian soldiers and Yanks perching on the nurses.

What nonsense went on that you were just talking about?

Well they would get in and try and get into the girls' rooms and things like that. Someone would do them in and we'd grab them and we'd ring the provos and hand them over.

17:00 **Just back to the Yanks for a second, we're hearing stories that their Negroes were kept very separate, how did the Yanks that you came across react to the Papuans?**

The natives or the whites?

The white Americans?

Well we never let them have much to do with them.

17:30 The American Negro we had a fair bit to do with them, especially for transport and one thing and another. And the Yankee Negro used to reckon that the Australian did all the fighting, the white Yank did all the skiting and the American nigger did

18:00 all the hard work. That was damn right too. I had no time for the yanks. I still haven't got any time for them.

Did you ever clash with them?

A couple of dust ups. Tongue war you know.

18:30 **About what sort of stuff?**

Just arguments. They'd start coming around the camp wanting to buy souvenirs from the natives. We'd just chase them. If we got any souvenirs we would give them to the nurses. Pens and watches and things like that. Some weren't worth two bob but they were souvenirs.

19:00 The yanks would want everything for nothing. They'd try and beat you down all the time so we'd just chase them out of camp. It was out of bounds to them and we would have nothing to do with them.

What differences did you find between the different groups of Papuans?

19:30 Well, the Papuans...you get up towards the border, up towards Wareo and you got the Karimos they would be very hot headed. The Daruan was very docile and quiet. Hanuabada which is in Port Moresby, they're a bit

20:00 on the uppish side. They're a real chocolaty colour. You got Keri, they were the same again, a chocolaty colour. Milne Bay were very chocolaty. When you got up further they got blacker. If you got over to Bougainville they were black. Blacker than black.

20:30 Manus Islands were a bit chocolaty. They were a bit fiery but not as fiery as the Bougainvillians. They're fiery. And the Sepik, they're bad. Head hunters. Going on all and all, you knew what tribes would fire up. It was nothing to see about 400 or 500 having a fight.

21:00 And they'd all be mates after. But it was funny, up near where we were in Vesilogo above our camp was a police constabulary, and the police boys and the Papuan Infantry Battalion boys hated one another. The police boys, they were the AIF, and the PIB were the chocos [chocolate soldiers - militia].

21:30 Well they would have some fights. Every time they met there would be a brawl. Oh Jesus. I used to hate them going anywhere near one another. If there was anything on you would have to try and keep them apart. They'd fight. If you got two police boys with you in the bush, away from the training ground, there would be harmony together. They'd be good mates. But by Jesus, get them together as a mob... they'd fight.

22:00 The best thing to get them fighting was to give them a soccer ball. They'd fight over a soccer. There would be 25 a side, sometimes 30. And they'd all kicking at the ball and then all of a sudden there would be a fight. We would always make sure Saturday afternoon

22:30 when we were all back at Vesilogo, it would be soccer. We'd let them have a game of soccer. We'd split them up, so many a side and watch them. If you watched them there would be no fights. But if you weren't watching them there'd be some fights.

Sounds like they could be pretty cheeky when they decided to be?

Oh yes. They could get cheeky.

23:00 **Were you ever the brunt of that?**

No. I never had any trouble with them. But yes they would get pretty cheeky. Way back in the Saddleback mountain there, we recruited a good few. We picked them up and brought them in and when they first saw the big trucks they were running off the road frightened. But after a few days they were hitch hiking. They used to change their tactics.

23:30 Very frightened at the start with all the machinery and that you know. I've seen a couple of officers get knocked. I've seen Black Sam Lucas...I've seen him get done with the back of a shovel. There was a fight on and Black Sam went in. He wasn't too popular with the natives and

24:00 he always smoked a pipe and was always going to do this and that. This day there was a fight on and he said he would sort it out. He went into this hut and one of the black boys hit him across the forehead with a short handle shovel. They knocked him out and we had to get the stretcher bearers and hump him up to the RAP. There was nothing ever done about it. It was kept quiet.

This Black Sam that went in...

24:30 He was an Australian soldier. Lieutenant, but they called him Black Sam. He should have been a black fella. He was going to stop them fight and he got hit with a shovel.

Were there any other times you can think of?

Oh I've seen a couple get done at different times for being stupid. I would never go near a fight. I would let them fight. Then go in and get casualties.

25:00 Then look for the trouble. And nine times out of ten the trouble maker was one of the casualties. Then in Moresby, after the Kokoda Trail,

25:30 they had a big mob of horses there, thoroughbreds and that. Anyhow they were shooting them and burying them with bulldozers. Anyhow I said to the CO one day, "What about going and seeing about some of these horses for some recreation?" He said, "What's going on?" And I told him so him and Cookie and I went down

26:00 and we saw them and they said, "How many do you want?" So we ended up with about 20 of these horses. He picked out some good'ens. We had saddles and we had shoeing gear and we had anvils and all the gear. So we brought these horses up and we got the native boys to look after them. Some of the nurses used to come up and go for a ride on the weekend with Cookie and Rickie Barker and them. They'd go

26:30 for a ride towards Owers' Corner. Barkie and Cookie used to shoe them and look after them. Well when we were leaving to go over to Bougainville, this plantation bloke over the road said he would get all the horses because we wouldn't be able to take them with us. We were told about it so we went up to the mission up the road

27:00 a Church of England, and we asked them if they wanted these horses. So they came down and took all the horses. We had inherited a donkey by then. He came in. He must have been one that had got away from somewhere. So we had 20 horses and a donkey. A few of the old mares were in foul to him and then the whole lot went up to the mission.

27:30 The bloke had that Tokuaka plantation, a bloke called Sefton was his name. He was a bit of a grot. He didn't like doing anything to help you. He would take anything but he didn't like helping you.

Was he the guy who wanted the horses?

Yes.

Did you find out what his reaction was?

No I never went back up there. When we went to Bougainville, we went to Ferris Island, over to Rabaul and back to Australia.

28:00 It was a good place that Ferris Island. You could always get a feed of fish, crayfish. The natives would come and borrow your torch and they would go out of a night time and get fish. We wanted for nothing down there.

When you were telling us stories before about helping that young guy get married and always making sure if possible that the guys had their game of soccer,

28:30 **you guys obviously treated them very well, can you remember things that they did for you?**

No. Just in the course of the day. I always made sure they had their soccer. It would get rid of the steam out of them. They used to sit around playing a card game called Lucky. You would be very lucky if you ever won. I would watch them at different times

29:00 and how they ever played it has me beat. If you let them play cards and congregate too much, that's when you'd have trouble. Playing sport was the thing. That's why my mob, I always had them walking. Route marching all the time, keeping them occupied.

Did you ever play soccer with them?

No. I would go on the sidelines and clap. I would never know if I was clapping the right side or the wrong side.

29:30 If they saw you had interest in it they would be quite happy. So long as you had some interest. But I tell you what, they could walk, they could travel. A good stretch of road. They would just get a pace up.

30:00 And the gins were nearly as good as them too. At Rabaul, that was a pretty little place. I would liked to have seen it before the war. It would have been a pretty little place. The horses that they had there in Rabaul for the race meeting,

30:30 were the horses that the Japs had brought over. They had brought them from the different islands like Java and that. There were polo horses, thoroughbreds, jumpers, everything. And they were the ones they used for race meetings.

Tell us about the race meetings?

That was the funniest thing of the lot. They had the jockeys out of the ranks, they had to be a certain weight. And they had a Steward of the Course. They had everything.

31:00 It was run the same as our race meetings.

This was when the war had...

Yes the war had finished. Anyhow it was out of bounds except for the trainers and that. Well my mob said we were going to the races. We had all the nurses there too so we didn't want any trouble. So we were the security and we saw everything that

31:30 went on. We had a real good time. But a lot of the horses after the races, some of them went to some of the missions and some of them they put them through the knackery and fed the natives. Some of them that's all they were good for. But it was a real eye opener that race meeting, but everybody had a good time.

32:00 It was a dry camp, no grog allowed. There was plenty of soft drink and things like that, but no grog.

What about betting?

Oh yes. You could bet as much as you liked. Bet what you wanted. There was a five bob tote. It was real good. Everybody had a good time.

Was that an unofficial thing?

No, official. They wrote down to Townsville

32:30 and they got the colours for the jockeys. They came up from the Townsville turf club. Old Talbot Heatley sent them all up and then they sent them back. Oh yes, it was official.

Who were the jockeys?

Oh I don't know who they were. Some of the blokes in the ranks reckoned they were jockeys.

Were they Australians though?

Yes Australians. Yes, Australian boys. They had right weight and everything.

33:00 It was a good day that day, and all day.

You were telling us when you came home on leave and you were here for a bit and then you went bush, did you notice that your own bush skills had improved?

Oh no they were about the same.

33:30 But you did learn a lot off those natives up there. They could show you the marks in the tracks and what they thought had been around.

How did they tell how old the tracks were?

I don't know how they used to tell. They would say, "He not long." And it wouldn't be long before you'd find somebody.

34:00 **Did you find you had a different appreciation for the Australian bush after being over there?**

I reckon the Australian bush is more open than up there. You can't see a thing up there in some of that country. And getting through places. You had to be very careful not to break any limbs or anything because you didn't know who might be following you. You had to try and worm your way through the best way you could.

34:30 If you came to a creek you had to be very careful before you went across it. You'd watch it for a while to make sure there was no one on the other side or any movement around before you went across. A lot of things you had to observe.

35:00 When we went over to Ferris Island, they brought down two Nauruans from Nauru. Anyhow we had to take them over and identify them for some war atrocities. There was about 6 of us who went over with them. We had all these Japs lined up and these two Nauruans were walking along and all of a sudden... they were big men, and he

35:30 hit this Jap fair in the mouth. We grabbed him. We told him to cut this caper out. He said, "If he had killed your wife and daughter wouldn't you do that to him?" We got him away and walked him out nice and quietly and a couple went back and grabbed the Jap and we found out afterwards that he would have knocked a few more down if we hadn't stopped him.

36:00 The Japs were in Nauru and killed his wife and daughter plus a lot of other Nauruans also. From what we could gather, they used to put them in a dingy and get them to row ashore. And they would have the place booby trapped and they would be blown up. Devils. They would try and test out their defence. They had some queer ideas them Japs.

36:30 **So they would booby trap the area ...**

And get the Nauruans to drive the boat in. They had some weird ideas.

What did that do to you hearing and seeing the things that you saw?

Well it gave me...I thought to myself, if that had been me I would have done more than that to him. I would have given him a good flogging.

37:00 We flogged a few of them, especially them Formosan. The Japs had Formosans and Koreans there. When you clean a camp out...no, before you clean a camp out, the Australian ration for the Japs was one tin of bully beef and one packet of biscuits between ten men, and they had to subsidise it

37:30 by growing vegies, pumpkins and sweet potatoes, paw paws. Well these Formosans wouldn't grow a thing. They used to sneak out when the Japs were ready with their stuff. They'd chase the Japs and pinch their gear. We used to have to send somebody out with the rations. Well when you cleaned a camp out, these Formosans would come through the camp then

38:00 and unbeknown to you they'd get in and they'd thieve anything that was left. Like there might be big slabs of dried fish and things like that. There might be some rice and so they'd pinch everything they could. We used to get in and catch them and line them up and make them run the gauntlet. We'd give them a bit of a tickle up with a lump of cane. We gave them a few touch ups. We used

38:30 to try and get rid of them as much as we could. Some would say they were needed for working parties but they were more trouble than they were worth. They only wanted to get rid of the Japs as quick as they could. But the Formosan and Koreans were damn trouble all the time. We were pleased when the last of them went away.

How did you go communicating with the Japs?

We had interpreters.

39:00 We had to watch the interpreters too at times. But they were all pretty good. The police boys use to keep their eye on them. They were frightened of the police boys. They were a mean looking mob those police boys. Real mean looking. You wouldn't want to run into them in a dark alley.

39:30 **Were there any times when the Japs were coming in to surrender when they ever tried to...**

No. Never tried it. When they came to us, the few we got, we went through them quick and lively. We sorted them out. The natives got into them.

40:00 They were frightened of the natives. They didn't know what was going to happen next. I caught an alligator down in Ferris Island. We had a toilet for the natives

40:30 out of 44 gallon drums out over the sea. Anyhow, the natives one day said...they called it puk puk. They said, "Puk puk here boss. He's swimming about." So I got a mullet about that big and put him on a big

hook and got some signal wire and three strand twisted it. I tied it to a coconut log and dropped it out in the bay. In the morning there was a hell of a commotion going on. This 'gator had tried to chase the mullet and got tangled up in the cord. The cord was around his neck and he was in a hell of a mess. We pulled him into the shore. About and 8 footer he was. We got him to the shore and one bloke got an Oregon tent pole about that big and shoved it down his neck and he went chop and chopped it off. Then somebody got an axe and they chopped him across the tail. They crippled him and then they got him out and then they killed him. And we said to the Japs that they could have him. The Japs took him up the road and chopped him up. We'll you've never smelt anything so stinking as what an alligator is.

Tape 7

00:32 **You were telling us about the alligator being cut up?**

Yes, the CO was up near the front, up near the CO's hut and he was yelling, "Tell the bloody natives to get rid of this bloody alligator." So we had to go down and bury all the rest of it. It would have stunk him out of house and home. It was the only alligator I ever saw up in the islands.

01:00 **Was that a surprise?**

Yes it was a surprise because of some of the places we used to go, it was a wonder we didn't see more of them.

You might be able to clarify something for me, one of the blokes we spoke to reckons that back then there were alligators and crocs in Australia, both fresh water and salt water. Which way was it?

The salt water has the short snubbed nose and the fresh water has a long beaky nose.

Which one was the croc and which one the alligator?

01:30 The croc is the salty and the other one is the 'gator. The fresh water 'gator.

Do you know why they changed that?

I wouldn't have a clue. They're all 'gators as far as I'm concerned.

What other animals did you see up there?

The Bird of Paradise; The Cuss Cuss; plenty of possums; pigeons. A lot of good pigeons

02:00 and plenty of them. That would be it mainly.

Did you ever get to eat any of them?

Yes a few pigeons at times. But the Bird of Paradise, I never touched them. The had too greater a bloom on them. But some of the natives had them and you could get them off the natives.

02:30 **Did you ever see any of the locally brewed jungle juice?**

Oh yes. A couple of our blokes were making it. The bloke Bird and Tom Lucas. Cookie was in it. They used to get ripe paw paws and they'd get pearl barley from the hospital.

03:00 Then they'd get potatoes, as many ripe paw paws they could get in there. They'd put cobs of corn in it. They'd distil it for so long and every day they'd stir it and then they'd drain it off. Then they'd put it through two copper boilers. One sitting up on top of the other like that with a bung in one, and

03:30 they had a 44 gallon drum with a worm down in through a drum of water. And then they'd put one of these primus stoves underneath the copper and they'd get it going and the moisture would come out of the coppers, down the coil in the drum and come out the other end. And the first part would come out and they'd be saying it was a bit watery. Then the better stuff would start coming out. But

04:00 they wasted nothing. It still went in the bottle. The rest would come out and you could put it over your hand and set fire to it. They used to get sugar and brown it and they'd put that in and they used to sell it to the American Negroes for 10 pound a bottle. Moonshine.

04:30 I had a go at it one day with a bit of soft drink. Holy Jesus, it would take your bloody head off. We had a big flood...where they had the still was up in a bit of a gully. We had a big flood this day about dinner time. All this water came down and washed the still away and there was the still going down the creek. Well that was worse than losing your best friend.

05:00 But they got her back into action again. Lik Lik Red, he was tangled up in it too. There were about four of them in it. Moonshine. A good few were making it in the finish. But our mob at Torokina, they were making the home brew. They were getting the sugar and one thing and another and making it. They nearly killed themselves with the stuff they were putting in it. I wouldn't have nothing to do with it.

Did it taste like kero?

05:30 It had a taste of its own. Bloody terrible.

Some of the blokes said that occasionally they might get a beer ration. Did you?

We used to get...when we were out of action we used to get two bottles a week. When we were in action our two bottles of beer which was quoted for us, it was kept at LOB and when you came out of action you got it all.

06:00 You might have ten bottles or a dozen or something. I used to get my spirit issue as an officer. You never got any rum. You got wine, Pimms, gin and brandy. I never used to drink much, only a couple of bottles of wine. But I used to make sure that the sergeants got what I didn't want.

06:30 We could get it so cheap, one and threepence for a bottle of beer. A big bottle. One day I gave a bloke a bottle of brandy, a bloke called Blackburn. He was our intelligence officer. A bloke came up to me and said, "Hey Mac what's up with Brownie? He's walking around and he doesn't know where he's going. He's got his strides on back to front."

07:00 I thought he must have had the bottle of brandy. So we had to go and get him out the road. Oh he was in a bad way. They looked like putting him into hospital and one stage. He had the proper DTs [delirium tremens - alcoholic tremors]. So I said, no more. I'll give no more.

Did you often see blokes go troppo?

I saw a couple go. I saw a bloke talk himself into it. A bloke called Bill McGladry. He talked himself into it.

07:30 He went real funny he did old Bill.

What do you mean when you say he talked himself into it?

He kept on saying he was going to go off the deep end, get back to Australia, get out of here. I'm going to put an act on, and he put an act on all right. And it did get him back to Australia. He was in a bad way. Poor fool.

08:00 Were the PIB blokes subject to normal military law? If they wanted to go home...

Leg it? Yeah, we never used to worry. Later on the police boys might pick them up later on. We had a good canteen. We had an extra good canteen in Moresby. The CO was the boss and everybody who was

08:30 out of action...say a bottle of soft drink was one and six, you paid one and eightpence. Everything was tuppence dearer. But the blokes in action never paid for anything. They got their cigarettes sent to them, their tobacco, razor blades, chewing gum. All that, natives and all. Not class distinction.

09:00 Some of them were whingeing about it, those who didn't smoke and things like that. But when you came out of action and they went in then you did the same thing. And at certain times, a couple of times a year...the ordinary native was getting ten bob a month and then it went up to twelve and six. I think fifteen bob was a sergeant.

09:30 So twice a year they could buy stuff to send home to their village. They could buy a carton of mixed stuff to send home to their village. They might get a couple of tins of tinned fruit and bully beef and chocolates and lollies and biscuits. It would be put in this carton and labelled up and the canteen fund would pay for it. And we were the only mob who ran a canteen without a big profit. It went back into the men.

10:00 The CO saw to that.

And would the stuff definitely get back to the villages?

Oh yes. Always, my oath. It would be loaded on the truck and say there was a boat that was going to Daru. He'd know what time the boat was going and so the truck would be there to load it on. He would always send a truck down with it. He was an honest man.

10:30 Did you ever see any Aboriginal soldiers?

Yes, we had one. We had one with us, a bloke called Alf Stanley. And old Alf was a champion old fella. He had a wife and a paddock full of kids. He was with us but he couldn't keep up.

11:00 His feet were crook, and he ended up B Class. I came home on leave, the first time I came home, and I was going up the pub for a walk to see if I knew anybody up there, and where the RTO [Rail Transport Officer] office was and this big kitchen at the Stuart railway station...I was walking along the railway line and this bloke was singing out to me. I looked and it was old Alf.

11:30 I hadn't seen him for two years. So we got talking and I said to him "What are you doing?" And he said, "It's finished. The trains are gone and there will be nothing until tonight." I said, "Do you want to go for a beer?" He said, "I've got no money." So I had money and we went over to the pub for a couple of beers

and he was there right up to when the RTO was finished and I don't know what happened to him. I've never seen him since. He's gone now. Dead and gone. But

12:00 he had a good job there. He was the only one I knew of.

Do you think growing up in Stuart and mixing with Aboriginal kids, did that help?

Yes it does. You know...you get an idea of how they're thinking.

Did you know whether the other blokes who were in the PIB, the Aussie's, did they tend to be bush fellas?

12:30 No. A lot of them came from Melbourne. In fact some of them who came up from Melbourne, they thought the North Queenslanders were all black. They did. They thought we were all black. One bloke asked me where I came from and I told him, Townsville. He said I couldn't come from there because they were all black. I told him there were a lot of whites there too but he wouldn't believe it.

13:00 **We've heard stories about other natives, not PIB blokes, but some having a bounty on the Japanese's heads?**

No. The only ones I saw were the ones who had them locked up and they used to bring down a couple now and again. They'd get a bit of royalty.

And you were also talking about how careful and how slow you had to move through the jungle.

13:30 **I mean you see these images and movies of blokes hacking their way through with machetes.**
Bull dust. You just went nice and quiet. If you wanted to go 500 yards sometimes, it might take you half a day. You had to go that careful.

Can you tell us about Wait-a-while vines?

Oh yes. The stinging nettle and the Lawyer. The Lawyer was the worst of the lot. You could get tangled up in that easy.

14:00 The stinging nettle and the wild tobacco bush. You got all that. Bracken fern. It would all sting you, the whole lot of it. But the stinging nettle was bad. The only thing for stinging nettle or even the hot bird's eye chilli...we used to get the little tubes of Tongala milk.

14:30 You always carried a tube of that with you and if you got stung by stinging nettle, then you'd rub that on and it stopped the air. Even the bird's eye chillies. Even condensed milk or any sort of milk. We used Tongala because it was laying around the place everywhere. So you always carried a tube of that with you. You put it on and it stops the air from getting in it.

Were there any native remedies for things like that?

Oh yes.

15:00 They had a lot of remedies themselves but I never saw them. One day we were looking at a big mob of fish in a creek and they went and got some vine and they cut it up into strips like that and they threw it on top of the water. It's stops the oxygen and the fish all came to the top and they used their spears and we had a feed of fish. So that's the only thing I did see them use.

15:30 **Did you ever do any grenade fishing?**

Oh yes. I'll never forget, one day at Scarlet Beach. We used to drop a bit of TNT [explosive] in. One day we were sitting there and there was a big mob of trevally and they were too far out to throw the net at. So we scrounged an old

16:00 wooden boat from somewhere and we got this boat and Foster and two natives got in it. They ran a big line of that FID [Fuse Instantaneous Detonation] fuse in. It's instantaneous. A TNT [explosive] slab on the end and a det [detonator]. So we're on the bank. We're watching with the field glasses and we see this big school of trevally coming down. Right, they lit her. Well, bang. They nearly blew the centre board out the boat.

16:30 Anyhow, we had trevally anywhere. They dived in and were grabbing them and there were sharks moving in. We missed a lot but we got a hell of a lot. So we took them up to the 2nd AGH Hospital because we had too much. Boy we got some fish that day, and we would have got a lot more only for the sharks.

17:00 **You mentioned the Dakotas before. Did you see any other aircraft up there?**

No, only the Japs. Oh the New Zealand one. The Corsairs. But no never saw any others than Japs.

Did they fly in a support role for you guys at all?

17:30 Yes the Corsairs, yes they were good. When we got a map reference of where we thought the Nip was,

they'd come in and they'd strafe Christ out of it. The navy would slip a few charges into it. They were good. By gee you had to be careful with them. If you were in the wrong place at the wrong time you might get it too.

18:00 **You got to New Guinea basically as a fresh faced infantryman and you were in charge of all these men. Did they give you any extra training to help you deal with that?**

No. Well this is getting back to my school days. As I say I had no education. Anything I've learnt or done I've learnt myself. And when it came to me becoming a commissioned officer

18:30 I had to fill in what they called A22's. I would fill these A22's in and give them back to the CO and he sent them away recommending me to become an officer. Word came back that my education standard was not up to scratch because I only went to 7th grade in the state school. That's what I put but I had left half way

19:00 through 7th grade. So the CO said he wanted blokes who could do the job and that's how I came to get my commission. The only one who can take my commission off me is the Queen. I got it in the field.

So you went from a private to sergeant...

And a sergeant to an officer.

19:30 **No warrant officer in the middle, just straight up?**

Yes straight up.

When you first went up to sergeant did any of the blokes you went over there with give you any trouble?

No. Some of them were sergeants or acting sergeants. I went up to a confirmed rank as a sergeant and then up to a Lieutenant. When we were at Torokina. This is some of the funny things you do.

20:00 Cookie was a Lieut, Foster was a Lieut...no he was a sergeant, and there were another couple of lieuts, and they had what they called a kusa hut. This was for the officers. You could go in and play a game of pool or ping pong, have a game of darts. And you could get a big jug of gin and pure lemon juice for six bob. So we decided we'd

20:30 take a few of these sergeants to the officers club this night. Three of them we were going to take. Anyhow we dressed them up as lieuts. Well the old CO was running the old matron from the hospital and we didn't know this. So we were in the club having a whale of a time. You get a bit of a feed there with drinks. So we were drinking

21:00 this gin and pure lemon juice. Anyhow who should come in but the old CO and the matron. "Jesus Christ, they promote them bloody quick in the PIB don't they." And he knew we were buggers to fight. If anyone stirred us up we'd get going. And he said, "Behave yourselves and no fighting." And he said no more. The next

21:30 day we thought we were going to be in trouble and he sat us down and laughed. At least you took the boys down he said. No trouble.

So being commissioned, did that change you at all?

No. Not one bit. I'm still the same.

Did it change the role that you had?

22:00 No, I wouldn't say so. At times I would be called upon to do more than I used to do. I might be orderly officer or something like that. But it was no different from being camp sergeant or something like that. You had to make a lot more decisions but it never worried me much. But I was one...I never stayed around

22:30 the camp. If there was a job...I would all get the drum that there was a job coming up, especially if the company was together. I'd get the drum that there was a job coming up to go so and so and I would be first in. I'd say put me down for that. They'd say but you've only been here a week, have a spell. And I'd say put me down for that job and I'd get away. I'd grab my men and be gone. I wasn't hanging around that orderly room.

23:00 **So what sort of time are you looking at from being back and going out bush?**

You might have a couple of weeks, sometimes 3 weeks. It all depended on what jobs were coming up. They might want us to do patrols and that. We might be there a week, and if it was any more than a week I was looking for something to do. I hated hanging around that camp.

So even if there were still hostilities on, you'd still rather in the jungle?

23:30 Oh yes. I'd sooner be back out there. And my men were the same way. They hated being around the camp. That's where you have trouble.

You told us you were often sent out to do reconnaissance and you were explicitly told to avoid the Japanese. Now that couldn't always be possible could it?

No. Sometimes you couldn't avoid it but you had to be very careful about what you took on. If we

24:00 were cornered it would generally be the last day. The boys might be looking for some blood. But not in the early part of the piece. The last day you might fall foul.

The order to fire would always have to come from you?

Oh no, we'd sit up and see what was going on and if the sergeant was up front he would let fly and the rest would let fly then.

24:30 I was always third scout and we had two scouts out in front. Sometimes I'd go second scout. Al might go up in front, or Leo and I'd be second scout. You weren't supposed to, you were supposed to be back. You were supposed to have two or three scouts out in front of you.

You would be an obvious target if you were being observed?

Oh yes you'd be a sitting duck. We went out one time...we had a mob of

25:00 Yanks...we were attached to the yanks, and anyhow...when we would take a fighting patrol out, we had everything that opened and shuts. But when we would take a reconnaissance patrol out, it would be like tin pan alley getting along the track. They'd have billy cans hanging and cups and one thing and another.

25:30 They couldn't keep quiet. So a couple of times I said, we're going to get blown up here. So I said to Cookie, "I'm going up second scout. We won't go far." I said to Al, "You go first scout and I'll go second scout. When we get up the road here a few bends up, you give everybody the drum to go to ground, Japs." So he

26:00 gave me the drum and I sent word back. Well, they turned it off. We just walked back quietly and came up behind them and they were off for their lives. Anyhow when we got back to camp I reported on a rough map and well in they came and they nearly blew every tree down around the place. Well after that I said no more. I'm not going out any more with them. They make too much noise. They would get you killed.

26:30 The billy cans and their dixies hanging from the belts. We used to just go through...we wouldn't talk. The only things we'd do was use hand signals, but not with them.

You told us what you thought of the Americans back at base, what did you think of them as a fighting soldier?

Their gear's good.

27:00 The wrong people were wearing it. That's my opinion. They might have been all right in aeroplanes but my Jesus, I don't know. Not much good on the ground.

How were the Papuans when it came to the sort of thing you did at Finschhafen and that where it's a different type of fighting?

No it was much the same.

27:30 The only difference up there was the natives. But they all seemed to get along all right together. They were happy. That was the main thing, keep them happy.

But things like when it's a set landing with all your support and groups and that, was that different to when you were in a small patrol in the jungle?

No, no different.

28:00 They all knew what they had to do. They were all skilled up. The main thing to do was undo your webbing belt. If you went in the water, get rid of it or else you'll drown. Some of the Yanks at Finschhafen they dropped us in too deeper water. That was half the trouble. When the Japs opened fire, instead of retaliating they were in too deeper water.

28:30 That's why a lot of our trouble came in.

Could your boys swim?

Oh yes, better than fish. They could all swim.

And what about footwear for your blokes?

They never wore boots. Now you see them all dressed up with boots and gaiters and all that on. They don't like boots.

29:00 **Can you describe to me from top to toe what you were wearing?**

A beret. We had two basic pouches, a pack, and another basic pouch on each side of your pack for magazines. You had your webbing belt and your gaiters. Long trousers, long sleeve shirt. That's all you had.

29:30 **And what would you have in your pack?**

Half a towel and a ground sheet. Some emergency rations. That's about it. We never carried much. It was wet all the time. If you had a towel you cut it in half.

30:00 It was wet and you couldn't dry yourself with it anyhow. Your ground sheet, well that's all you put over you and a couple of banana leaves. I would put two forked sticks in the ground and a stick across and a few banana leaves. That's when you're out in camp but not when you're out in the bush sneaking around the country. You just camped where you were.

30:30 **So at night time would you be in all around the fence?**

One of the boys used to be on guard all the time. We used to take our turn. You would never mooch around but you always knew what was going on. But you never got up and walked about because some of them were trigger happy and a bit keyed up.

31:00 But we used to put the wire out. We would get the 25 pounder shell cases and take the part out and put a stick across with some wire and hang the other down like the tongue of a bell. If anyone hit the wire, she'd dingle. It used to ring because it was all brass see. That would let you know if anyone was around.

31:30 **And then you'd have stand down?**

Yeah stand to, stand to every night and early morning. If they didn't attack at night then they'd attack from 3 o'clock in the morning. That's why it was a bit hard for me. When I came home I was used to 3 o'clock, and I'd be up at 3 o'clock in the morning.

How long has that lasted?

For years.

32:00 I'm up early in the morning. I still get up early. I'll be up early tomorrow morning, at half past four I'll be going bush. It's hard to settle, I'll tell you that.

How did you sleep during the war in New Guinea?

The only chance you had to have a sleep was sometime in the day time. You might have an hour or so kip

32:30 in the day time if everything was quiet. Ok it's your turn to have a kip. That's the way we'd do it. Everybody would have a bit of a sleep. Someone would keep guard all the time. But when you were in a quiet area you were pretty right.

Did you find that in the middle of the day it was just too hot to move?

Too hot to move. We used to always get going early in the morning when we were doing a patrol,

33:00 or after dinner late in the evening if we wanted to check something on the track. We'd just go out and sit there and check it. Then we'd get out and get back home. Always in camp well before dark. When it's raining it clouds in very early, so you had to make sure you got home. There's nothing worse than having wet clothes day and night.

33:30 **You must have got caught out plenty of times?**

Oh we got caught lots of times. Socks would be down the bottom of your shoes. Terrible. It's got me beat that a lot more didn't die of poor hygiene because we had nothing. Never had a damn thing, and as far as

34:00 disease was concerned, they would give you penicillin. They had plenty of penicillin. They would pump that into you like it was going out of fashion. But a lot of blokes wouldn't have it. I had a bit of it, it didn't worry me. They didn't have much in the way of medicine for jungle warfare. When Doctor Curtis came

34:30 he had had 3 years of research in Java. He knew a bit and he started to pick things up a bit. But you would get typhus and things like that. And tinea, not too many knew much about tinea.

Can you remember the first time you ever saw a Jap soldier?

Lae was the first time and

35:00 plenty after that. A measly little rut he was too.

Was that the first time you fired a shot in anger?

Yes. There were a few around then, but that was the first time and then everything got a bit lively.

- Sometimes I could be firing and you wouldn't know who you were hitting.
- 35:30 You wouldn't know if you hit him or someone else had hit him. Everybody would be firing at the same target.
- Did you find going into a combat area...up until the first time you fired that first shot in anger, do you find that your nerves change?**
- Yes. You start thinking to yourself, well it's either him or me. Then you think, he's some mother's son and so am I. It's the survival of the fittest. That's the way I looked at it.
- 36:00 You either get him or he's going to get you. One of the two. We're both there for the same reason. Then again he didn't know what he was there for and we didn't know what we were there for. Both fighting the same war.
- Does the first soldier that you have to shoot...does that in your own mind stand out above others?**
- 36:30 Oh no. Everybody's more or less on the same footing. They're all after blood. That's the main thing.
- When you first come to terms with the fact that you could be killed at any minute, how do you approach each day?**
- Well another day's a bonus.
- 37:00 That's what we used to say. Another day's a bonus. If you were splitting up and going somewhere, you'd say, best of luck. That's all you'd say. Best of luck.
- Do you find you change from being an optimist to a pessimist?**
- Well sometimes you had to be an optimist.
- 37:30 Sometimes it was lucky we got through. You think the Lord was on your side.
- You mentioned religion early, about going to Sunday school but not being too interested, did your attitude to things like that change on the battle field?**
- No I don't think so. But I did say when the war finished...I said to Padre Parry, "I'm going to lead the church parade...the battalion church parade." And I lead the whole battalion down to the church service, and I got a kick out of that. He used to reckon I was a damn heathen and he would abuse me a fair bit, but I led the church parade. That's one thing I did do.
- 38:00
- 38:30 **Why did you feel that was necessary?**
- I wanted to have a shot at him because he reckoned I was a bloody heathen. I told him I would lead the church parade which I did do.
- Did you have any good luck charms or superstitions or anything like that?**
- 39:00 Nothing.
- Did any of the Papuans?**
- No, not that I know of. A few of the boys there would read the Rosary and that, but I never worried.
- What, some of the guys had come out of the mission had they?**
- Yes. Some of the Australian soldiers too. But I never carried anything.
- 39:30 I had no identification.
- No dog tags?**
- Yes I had the dog tags. Nothing else. We never even had our pay books. They were all back at headquarters and we got a letter once from the pay corp wanting to know how were we getting on for money. We hadn't drawn any money for 18 months. So we just referred the letter to the CO.
- 40:00 He told them there were no soft drink or ice cream stores where they are. We were getting all our stuff from the canteen and we didn't need any money.
- You must have had a nice little build up when you got home?**
- Yes a few quid. But it didn't last long.

00:32 **Jack you were telling us before about when you would on a couple of times go out attached to the Americans, did you go out attached to any other Aussie units?**

Never at all. Only the Yanks. We had a couple of Canadians come there once. But they only came for observation, that's all. They were only there for a couple of days and then away they went. They were all right. They weren't

01:00 so much into the glamour as the yanks were. The Yanks had a fashion of their own you know. As far as I was concerned, and not only me, a lot of others too.

The times that you did have to make contact with the enemy, what was the general directive or attitude about taking prisoners?

Well, they

01:30 used to say to us if we could get prisoners from an area, get one if you could. Well if we could get a prisoner we'd get one, but if we couldn't we didn't bother. Sometimes we'd get one no trouble at all. There might be a lone ranger walking along a track on his own, then we'd get him. Other than that they were too much trouble because you had to get through the jungle with them and they'd be playing up. They were more trouble than what they were worth half the time.

02:00 Some of the other blokes used to go looking for them all the time, but we didn't. They were too much trouble.

What sort of trouble would they give you?

They would want to stop and lay down and you'd have to get them up and things like that. Real trouble makers they were. We used to shove a pair of socks in their mouth or something so they couldn't sing out much. Then they'd start to lay down on you. Damn trouble.

02:30 **How did you get them up again when they laid down?**

The natives used to get them up and sometimes if they went down, they stayed down. Damn them. We didn't worry about them. We got a couple at different times.

03:00 It's all right if it's easy going but when you're in bad jungle and that, or close to home. But it was your own neck you had to look after. Getting through the scrub, they'd be playing up and knocking leaves off trees and that could give you away. They could follow you. You had to be very careful on that.

03:30 **If the Papuans had a Japanese who was giving trouble, and they had to get rid of them, would they shoot them or what?**

Quiet. Sometimes they'd shoot them, sometimes a bush knife. We would just leave them in their hands.

Did you bury them?

No we would just leave them where they were.

The prisoners you got or the dead Japanese you came across,

04:00 **did you go through their uniforms?**

Yes we used to search them. The natives would search them, and then we'd hand them over to the American Japanese interpreters and they'd take them back down to headquarters.

Did you come across anything of particular interest?

No I never found anything. Once I got a map of the area off one bloke who was knocked over. We

04:30 got his map, and that was about the only thing. Oh, and a Japanese sword. I brought that home. But other than that...oh you could get watches and pens and counterfeit money. They had notes there for the invasion when they got to Australia. Things like that. I had a heap of them but I've given them to different people.

05:00 I've given them to school kids around home.

We've seen a couple of those notes but just for people who don't know about them can you explain what they were?

Well they looked like...some of them looked like the five dollar note today. Some of them looked like the ten dollar note. The writing all over it. Crook paper. But they wouldn't last long.

05:30 They would just disintegrate on you. They wouldn't keep. I've got none of them now but what I did have my daughters got. She's got the box of tricks with everything in.

What were those notes for?

The invasion, when the Japs came to Australia. We got one bloke one day, one prisoner, and he said, "How far am I off Sydney?"

06:00 Cookie said, "You're a damn long way." That was the bloke we got trying to cut down a coconut tree with a bayonet. The only thing he had on was a pair of white underpants. We could hear this chip chip chip. We thought, what's that. So I went for a walk and there's this Jap trying to cut down this coconut tree with the bayonet. So we brought him back to the camp and Cookie said, "We'll have some fun with this fella."

06:30 We sent a message through that we had a prisoner. He got the grenade and took the firing pin out of it and gave it to him. Well he had this grenade and he pulled it and up she goes and he's down on his knees. We had the det. He could be still yelling for all we know. We had some fun with them.

07:00 He wanted to blow himself up. He couldn't because there was nothing in it to go.

If you generally came across stragglers like that or lone Japs and made contact with them and it was obvious they were outnumbered, what were they like? Were they belligerent?

No, they weren't too bad. If any of them played up you would give them a bit of a tickle up. They were all right.

07:30 When they had them in the big compounds you had to be very careful because you didn't know who was who. You would never go in a compound alone and never let any of your men go in alone either. Always go in well armed. I used to always carry a revolver and a lump of cane about that long. If they played up I would get them a touch up with the cane.

Were there any incidents?

08:00 No. Never any incidents but there was always a chance there could have been. Especially if the place was a bit dirty and you started to get into them and tell them to clean it up. You'd have your interpreter with you and you'd get him on to them. He'd liven them up. But we never had much trouble with them but you never trusted them just the same. You always had to be watching them all the time.

08:30 Twenty four hours a day you were watching them because you didn't know what was going to happen next. Even if they were behind barbed wire, you didn't trust them. I didn't anyhow. You didn't know what was in their mind. They still more or less hated Australia. They had that idea ...they'd said...when they would say to you at times, "Oh Australia number one.

09:00 Japan number ten." You'd think to yourself, you should reverse it around. Japan was number one and Australia number ten.

09:30 **The atrocities you were describing earlier against the natives, did you ever come across any atrocities against the Aussies?**

Yes. Once. He was a mate of mine. They took the calves of his legs and two cheeks of his buttocks. That was the only one I came across. I saw a native baby's arm in a dixie.

10:00 That was the only two I seen. But they tried to tell you not to go on about it, but it's in some of the books there. I've read about the other atrocities and it went on all right. They were cannibals.

I can't imagine what it must do to you to see one of your mates like that?

I still go cold.

10:30 There's Japs living over the road and I hate the Japanese. She can't be blamed but they're still the breed. You hear a lot about what happened in the POW [Prisoner of War] camps. A lot say it was nonsense. But

11:00 everything that they say went on in those camps I reckon I would agree with them.

On a different note, the PIBs, were they getting the same sort of rations?

At times but

11:30 they didn't like the Australian rations. They loved rice, salmon, bully beef and beans. They would boil the rice and they'd boil the bully beef up and then they'd give them a big ladle of bully beef stew and a big ladle of rice. Or a ladle full of baked beans and a ladle full of rice.

12:00 And wheatmeal. They would always have wheatmeal. But no, they didn't like Australian rations, meat or anything like that. They wanted rice and salmon. They used to give them the salmon mainly at tea time. Fish and rice. When we were with the yanks we used to get all the yank tucker. We had to turn around and try and supplement other stuff for it.

12:30 To keep them happy. They didn't like the rubbish the yanks were dishing out. Even their cigarettes and tobacco were no good. Bull Durham tobacco and Philip Morris cigarettes. They didn't like smoking them either.

You were talking earlier about when you had people standing guard

13:00 **and you'd have stand to at 3 o'clock in the morning. It might sound like a silly question but**

how did you make sure you woke up on time? Surely you didn't have alarm clocks?

You had your instinct. The guard bloke might come along and just wake you up. Give you a kick in the foot. You'd get up and get the rest of them up.

13:30 And we got issued with pocket watches and you would give them a pocket watch. They would get everybody up and you'd sit around. You couldn't do nothing. You'd just sit around and wait. If they were going to move they would move by 3 o'clock. That's when they would start to move. They would keep you on your toes.

14:00 What sort of sensation was that, waking up knowing that as soon as you woke up...

You couldn't have a wash, couldn't clean your teeth, personal hygiene was bad. But you just had to wait until such time that everything quietened down. Anyway you had no toothbrush, no shaving gear. I lost all that.

14:30 You just had to wait until you had a chance to get a new toothbrush and some toothpaste was sent to you from the canteen. You'd send a note and they'd send it out to you. Send a message.

When you did get those sorts of supplies did you have toothpaste?

Yes we could get toothpaste. You might get it with a hole in it or something. It all depended how damaged it was when it got there. It might be

15:00 half a tube or something like that. But if you got a soap you could use that to clean your teeth. Better than nothing. But personal hygiene was very bad.

Did you find alternatives for that sort of thing, like something to chew to make your mouth feel fresher?

15:30 Oh a bit of coconut. That used to clean it up a bit and make you feel a bit fresher. Or you could find a lemon if the Japs never got all the trees. You could suck a lemon. But other than that you just had to paddle along.

16:00 There was nothing nicer than a good hot bath. I can tell you that from one who knows. You didn't like going into some of the rivers to have a swim because if you went in you'd walk out wringing wet and your socks would be in the toes of your boots.

Many leeches?

Oh yes plenty of them.

16:30 In the Mount Sarawaket Ranges there were a terrible lot of leeches. You'd see them when you were walking through some places. They'd be hanging on your gaiters. You'd have to knock them off with a stick. Some places there were none but some places there were a lot. As I said it's got me beat that there weren't more taken by 'gators up there. I only saw the one and that's the one we caught.

17:00 But there must have been others there. There had to be because there were the big sago swamps which would have been an ideal home for them. The natives were saying they were in the swamps, but we didn't see anything. The might have got sick and tired of eating Japs.

17:30 What about snakes or spiders?

You'd see a few big carpets. I never saw any spiders. At odd times you might see a wild pig, but very seldom.

Did you ever catch any wild pigs?

The natives caught them at times. The locals used to trap and catch them. But we never bothered about them. We had enough to worry about but worry about pigs.

18:00 Can you describe your Batman. What was his specific duties?

He looked after my clothes, washed them. Kept my clothes clean when we were at headquarters. He polished my shoes and my Sam Brown belt. But other than that he did nothing. He would sit around all day.

18:30 So he didn't go with you?

Yes, when I was in the bush he came with me. Always, all the time. At one of the missions I found what they called a hot iron. It had a big funnel up the front.

19:00 You'd put coconut husks in it and get a heat up and he used to iron my clothes with that. I was often sorry I never bought that home as a souvenir. But I left it up there. I left a lot of things behind.

What souvenirs did you bring home?

A Japanese

- 19:30 sword. Money and stuff like that. I sold the sword and got rid of it. That day Cookie and I got that canteen of cutlery, we got it and gave it to the CO. It had a Japanese navy anchor on it. He was going to stay up there after the war. We didn't want it between the two of us. If we had broke it up to get half each...so
- 20:00 we gave it to him. He had lost everything from the Japs when he used to be up there before the war. See he lost everything. So I gave it to him. When I was back in Townsville after the war, I was standing in Flinders Street there one day and damn me if he don't come along...the CO and his wife. That was a day.
- 20:30 I don't remember half of it, but I remember the early part of it. We had a turn out. I said, "Where are you going?" And he said, "I'm going to Stanthorpe to buy an apple orchard." He went to Stanthorpe but the poor devil never lasted long after that. He got very sick and passed away. A good bloke. Just like a father he was. He would never go crook.
- 21:00 But if he wanted to tell you something he would chastise you in an old fatherly way. His wife wrote and told me he had passed away and gee I was sorry.

What did you think of Blamey?

He was an ignorant old shit. Him and old Olga. He came up there

- 21:30 and inspected us in Moresby. We were all waiting there when we were ready to go to Bougainville. He drove through the ranks in his jeep and never said goodbye, kiss my foot or anything. He went up the officers mess and got into the grog up there. We were standing out there for about an hour and a half waiting for him in the middle of the sun. A couple of blokes were passing out. They had to have injections and everything.
- 22:00 Anyhow he never said boo to a goose. Just drove through to the ranks and went up to the officers mess and got into the grog. We went up after but we would have nothing to do with him. We wouldn't go near him. I didn't like him. I never had much to do with the big noise. I always kept away from them.

What did you think of being sent to Bougainville?

- 22:30 It was all right. No problem. You get to a stage where it's just a day's work. Like any routine. Like you get up in the morning and go to work. Same thing. When we were going from Bougainville to Rabaul, a mate of mine's brother, he was on the boat
- 23:00 and he worked in the mess and he got us some beer. The CO McInerney used to cut our hair. The CO wanted a hair cut and he came looking for us and we were in there drinking grog. He said, "Where did you ferret this out, you're the best ferrets around the place." So he got into the beer too. He loved a beer too.
- 23:30 So he forgot about his hair cut until the next day. When we were leaving Rabaul to come back to Sydney on the Ormiston they said no alcohol around on board. And McInerney knew a bloke who was on the boat who used to be in the Middle East with him.
- 24:00 He said it would be right and he got it on for us. He put it on ice and we had cold beers every night. Other than that we never used to worry about it. But on occasions like that we'd have a few and we'd get together.
- 24:30 Then when we got to Sydney they were all yelling out, "Come and have a look at the coat hanger." We didn't worry about the coat hanger, I wanted to get home. So we got to Sydney and they took us out to Marrickville and loaded us on the train the next night and sent us to Brisbane.
- 25:00 It was cold as charity. If you ever went on those trains in those days, they used to give you like a brick full of spirits of salts or something, rolled up in a blanket. It used to move under your feet and keep your feet warm. It was a foot warmer they used to call them. Then we got to Brisbane and that was a sad state of affairs there.
- 25:30 I had a carton...a full box of cigars for an old chap at home. Some bugger went through my swag and pinched it. I had it all done up with sticky tape and everything to keep the moisture out of it and everything, and they swiped the lot. We went into town one day and came back and they had ratted all through our gear.
- 26:00 It was someone in our camp that had done it. If I could have got hold of him. But out at Moorooka when we went out to Redbank, one of the old sergeants we knew was out there. But they just treated you like mongrel dogs. You went in there as a soldier...you'd go through and they were trying to sell you war bonds and do this and take something else and sign here...
- 26:30 you didn't know what you were signing, and when you got to the other end you were a civilian. They just kicked you out like a mongrel dog. Didn't want nothing to do with you. We were held up for 6 weeks and they went crook at us at Moorooka because we were still in the camp. We were discharged, we were civilians, we shouldn't be here. Well didn't that put the cat in among the pigeons.
- 27:00 It wasn't long after that we got on the train and got out of the place.

Just before we get too much into the coming home experiences, who were the Green Shadows?

The PIB boys and us. The PIB boys. They were the Green Shadows. They had a green lap lap and green shirt.

27:30 They wouldn't even leave a shadow. They'd sneak around. When we went with the 9th Div in Lae, we said to them to be careful because they were being watched. One bloke said, "Why?" And I said, "Look there..." There was one almost sitting right beside him. That's how they more or less got their names, the Green Shadows.

Were they proud of that name?

Oh yes.

28:00 We are too. We had a symbol on the bottom end of a 44 gallon drum...it was the PIB symbol, and every camp we went too it went with us. We would nail it onto a tree in front of the camp. Anyhow when we came back I forgot about it, but the symbol's in the Green Shadow book. When

28:30 I came back my daughter was going through the museum and damn me if it's not in the museum. She's got the photos of it. She sent it up. You can still see the nail holes around it. Somebody must have grabbed it and given it to the museum. The Green Shadows.

Were there many casualties?

Yes.

29:00 A good few.

Papuans and Aussie blokes?

Yes, a few whites. Mainly...the majority natives. By gee they were good getting through the scrub. You couldn't see nothing move.

29:30 **When you were out with them, they'd be naturally camouflaged because of the colour of their skin. Did you have any extra way of camouflaging?**

No. Sometimes we might put a couple of bushes in your shirt or something. But mainly not. Just run the risk. Not like these soldiers today. They're rubbing war paint on them. We had none of that caper.

30:00 **Did you notice them observing any special occasions, birthdays or ...**

They mainly went for Good Fridays. Easter. That was their day. Their day was more or less Easter. But other than that they never seemed to worry too much.

30:30 But if we got a chance we would always make sure they got a good Christmas. We'd buy pigs or anything for them. We might get 3 or 4 pigs and let them go their own way with it. Do it the way they wanted, a hungi [ground oven] or something.

What sort of things would they do?

They'd kill it themselves and put it in a pit in the ground with banana leaves, pumpkin and things like that. They'd have a real sing sing. It would go day and night. They used to be good to

31:00 listen too. Some of them had good voices. They could sing.

Did they teach you any of the songs?

No I never worried about it. But they'd be singing away, some of them in their village talk. It used to be really good to listen to them.

31:30 But it was a good thing they were on our side and not against us. They saved the day for the Australians. They saw a lot of things and done a lot of things, and Christ, if they'd been on the other side...

You seem to have a pretty natural affinity with those guys,

32:00 **did all the officers get along with them?**

Yes they all got along with them. The CO used to say if you can't get along with them and you're not happy you can go. That's what he used to say. He wanted a happy camp and we all wanted a happy camp too. We didn't want any trouble at all. But one thing about him, every time you were in action

32:30 he would visit every section. Him and his batman. Sometimes he would have another bloke with him. He'd come and make sure he visited every one of the men and ask them any complaints, any problems. He would put in a day with you and sit down and talk and then away he'd go. But not like some of them. You'd never see some of them.

33:00 But he was a different boss all together.

How often would that happen that you'd get to see him?

Well every chance...it would all depend on where you were. If he got a chance he would come to you or send word that something had held him up and he couldn't get there. He'd ring you up when we had the wireless. He'd send a message to you about what was going on.

33:30 Do you want anything or something to that effect....something from the canteen or anything like that. Anything to more or less boost you up a bit. More or less to say you're not forgotten because he was always worried about his men all the time. And everybody worried about him at times too.

Was he much older than you?

Yes. A fair bit older.

34:00 He would have been in his 40s because he had a plantation up there in Buna before the war and the Japs chased him out and he lost everything. He was in the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. He was with Tommy Leger and all those boys. They were smart men those Leger boys.

34:30 Old Kennedy was from up there. He was from Tully. He was a gold miner up there. He was with us for a while. He got crook.

Tell us about the day you found out that the war was over?

Well everybody was jumping for joy. We had a big wireless set up. They had a big wireless setup and they

35:00 had it in a bit of a room there and you could hear them all rejoicing in Sydney. We were still a bit doubtful which way it was going. They were dropping pamphlets and that. I've got one out there. And we weren't sure if the Japs could read English or read Pidgin or read their own. So we were still a bit worried whether they would come in. Well eventually they did surrender and

35:30 once they did surrender, it was a different kettle of fish. Everybody really got up in the air then and we had our beer...all our beer ration was back at Torokina. We got back to Motupena Point and they told us that our beer ration was back at Torokina and that there were 3 trucks there if any of you want to go down and get it. You can take the trucks and go down and get the beer.

36:00 Some of them had a dozen bottles or 20 bottles and the officers had their spirit issue. So we took the trucks and went down and we brought all the beer back. A lot of them thought they were going to get discharged the next day and when it came to buying a dozen bottles of beer, they said, no we're going to get discharged. Well they found out then that they wouldn't be going straight away.

36:30 We were going other places. So we bought all their beer and we dug a hole in the ground and we had it lined with coconut palms and we had ice blokes in the ground and we had the beer in there. We used to sit out of an afternoon and have a bottle of beer each, and then they started to come and wanted to buy their beer back when they found out they weren't going away. So we gave it back to them. Everyone

37:00 was a happy family. But they never gave us any extra...no extra rations or anything like that. But everybody was pleased the damn thing was over. And when they started discharging them they heard the boats were going and they were going as quick as they could.

37:30 **When you found out that you weren't going to be discharged straight away when the war finished, did that surprise you?**

It didn't worry me. I knew it was over. And I said to a few others, as far as I'm concerned, I've got points and I would rather see a married man go. I've been here this long now and a bit longer won't matter to me. I never bothered.

38:00 But when the time came I was happy to take my turn and go.

How long was it from when the war ended to when the PIBs all got discharged?

A couple of months. We took them back to Moresby and discharged them in Moresby. They had to get barges and boats to take them to their different villages. We had to get rid of everything in the camp and sort everything out.

38:30 When we left we left a bloke in charge and he lost all our records. We've got no records. The PIB blokes have got no records. This bloke lost them all. We're eventually getting a few of them together again. Different blokes knowing some things and that. But this bloke lost a lot of the records. But we weren't much worried about it anyhow.

Did the PIBs all get discharged at the same time or was it discharged?

39:00 No we all more or less went on the point system. Those who wanted to go earlier could have gone. There were six of us in the last lap and we stayed there until the camp was finished. Then we went down and got on the Ormiston.

What about the Papuans?

39:30 They were all gone. There were only us 6 left to get rid of all the stuff back to GDD [General Details Depot] and base ordnance and things like that. We got rid of all that and handed the jeeps back in, what trucks we had. We got to a stage when we were in Torokina, we never used to fix a vehicle. There were that many in this big paddock.

40:00 If one was crook and wanted something done to it, we'd just put it in and take another one out. The war was over. We never fixed anything.

Were the Papuans on any sort of point system?

No, they just went. As you filled the boats...But some cried like babies because they were leaving you.

40:30 There was a tear or two shed amongst some of the white's too. We had been with them for that long. Curry, him and I, we used to eat a tin of bully beef between us and a packet of dog biscuits. We'd cut it in half. He'd have half and I'd have half. And some of the others were the same way too. You were with them all the time. You really become like them in the finish.

Tape 9

00:32 **Did it surprise you that the Japanese surrendered so easily once those pamphlets had been dropped?**

It did surprise me, in fact it's a good thing that they did surrender when they did because we had had a hellish and big wet and everything was bogged down. There were a big mob of Japanese congregating

01:00 down on the coast. Now we were more or less a bit inland. Now we didn't know that. But when we found out when the war finished and they had got them, their intention had been to cut our supply line. So it was a good thing that the war did finish because the big wet would have bogged everything down. Nobody could go anywhere.

01:30 **What were those monsoonal rains like?**

It would come down in bucket fulls. That's what got me awhile back when they said in the paper that New Guinea was having a drought. During the time I was up there, there was no drought. Some days you wouldn't see sunshine. More rain.

So what would you do on days like that?

You would have to keep your wits about you. Sometimes you'd patrol. All depends. If it was too bad and you couldn't cross

02:00 any of the creek...you'd just stay put and you were just stuck where you were. But sometimes you could get out, but it was...you couldn't go anywhere. Up in Bougainville it was shocking...mud and slush you know. You'd see a jeep trying to pull 4 or 5 trailers through a bog, blokes pushing.

02:30 **How did you go with the mossies up there?**

There were a few around. You had your mosquito repellent. You always made sure you had your Atebrin tablet...the little yellow pill. That was the main thing you made sure you took.

I've read a stories...tell me if you saw any of this, about some of the natives painting a line down the middle of their faces

03:00 **because of their belief that it would stop bullets from hitting them. Did you ever hear of that?**

No I never heard any of that.

It must have been pretty tempting when you were in charge of looking after the Japanese prisoners of war to have a go at them. Did you ever see any of that?

No.

Or were you tempted yourself?

I gave a couple of them a touch up at different times.

03:30 You never saw any real trouble with them. Blokes getting into them and giving them a real hiding. When the war finished...an hour after the war finished we were told they were friendly aliens. We said well what's going to happen if any of them come along now? Do we blow them away? No! They're friendly aliens.

04:00 So we had to abide by the Geneva Convention.

Do you know of any situations where there were serious contacts after?

No I never heard of any.

And at the end of the day, at the end of your service were you glad you went with the PIB?

Yes I was. Very proud of it.

04:30 When I went to Twin Town and I saw all the old folk it made me feel more proud. And VP 50 [Victory in the Pacific 50th anniversary] made me better again.

Can you tell us about that?

What VP 50? My mate came up to Brisbane. He had lost his wife previous to that. He came up to have two weeks with us. Well we never missed a trick. We were everywhere. We were with Ray Martin...all the New Guinea people. My daughter was there.

05:00 We had a ball...a real ball. It should happen again.

Can you tell us about the surprise you got?

I got a big surprise, especially when I saw some of the boys, especially down in Twin Town. My old sergeant coming up to me with the New Guinea paper. He said, "I knew you'd be here so I brought you the Moresby paper."

05:30 I had two lumps in my throat as big as coconuts. I couldn't talk. I was dumbfounded. Anyway after a while we all sat down and had a good talk. And what's happened since we left and what's going on up there. It was quite an eye opener to hear what they had to say. Well he was to come down for VP50. We got word on a Sunday night

06:00 after VP50 that he wasn't allowed to come because he had TB [tuberculosis]...we got word of this from his daughter in Adelaide. And then we got word that he had passed away on VP50. That knocked the gas out of us a bit.

06:30 His daughter got tangled up in an aeroplane crisis. She could get to one place and couldn't get to another place to get over to Moresby for his funeral. She had a bit of havoc. She got to Cairns and she ended up in Darwin somewhere and then she got across to Moresby.

Did you ever consider going back?

I would have liked to have gone back.

07:00 But now, they tell me no. I would have liked to have gone back a few years ago. When all my other mates were alive we were talking about it. They tell me now no. I can't go back. Even these New Guineans who are living down the road here. They say no, the Rascals are too bad. Too much trouble now. No, no don't go back. I would have liked to have gone and gone through some of the cemeteries.

Can you still speak any Motuan?

Yes a bit of it.

Can you give us a bit?

I'll ask you what's your name? oia mella darna darka . Where's your village? anowardarka Where do you come from? Oi headal. Headalass, means, no you're not married. To count...Ta, roo-a, toy, anee, eema

08:00 That's five. I still know a little bit of it.

And what about Pidgin?

I can talk Pidgin...Where you come from? What name place? Throw away leg...you say that to them when you want them to get going.

What was easiest to learn?

Pidgin. That's the easiest.

Can you tell us that funny little story you told us before about what a saw is called?

Brotho blonga kis,...pushem me go, pullem me come. Savlime kie kie eemie, means eat wood. What dame im, Brother for axe.

09:00 When you came home from being away for two years, did you come home to see your mum and dad?

Yes, when I came home I went straight to Mum and Dad's.

How was that?

Oh a bit emotional. Bit emotional. It was very hard to settle. You couldn't keep a job because you were

so

09:30 uneasy. You might have 3 jobs a week. And all the time I've been working since 14 years of age, I've never been sacked from a job. Never had the sack, and I would always go back to where I worked. But it was very hard to try and settle down. You were more or less a drifter. It wasn't only me. There were a lot the same as me.

10:00 **What about that time...when you came back during the war on leave. At the end of that leave was it hard to go back?**

It was a bit hard but there was nobody at home. No mates, they'd all gone. They were in the army. So you just went back. That was it. On the boat and away I went.

Did your

10:30 **Mum cook up a nice big feed for you?**

Mum always made sure I had a good feed. That's one thing she always did.

I guess at least on that leave you came home by aircraft. A pity you couldn't get back to New Guinea the same way.

Yes. She used to send me a cake every week. I used to get a cake every week.

You got a cake every week?

11:00 Every week. Sometimes you might get two in a fortnight. But she always made sure I had a cake every week.

Did you get mail?

Yes mail. You might wait awhile to get it but you always got it. It was a big day when the mail came through. Sit down and have a bit of a read. Sometimes you couldn't write back. You had no gear to write with.

11:30 You'd get the Salvation Army Red Shield, and they'd write the letter for you and send it for you. You would tell them what you wanted and they'd write it for you.

How often did you see the Salvos?

They were with you all the time. We would get a hot cup of coffee off them. Some juice. They were good. That's why I always give to the Salvos.

12:00 **Did you get stuff from the Comfort Fund and Red Cross?**

Yes we used to get a bit of stuff, yes.

Useful stuff?

Yes useful. Christmas parcels. We got a Christmas parcel at Christmas. A lot exploit them but that's one thing I don't do.

12:30 **So when you went out on a recce, surveillance and all that sort of stuff, what sort of information exactly would you try and gather?**

Try and get an idea how many there were, what position, try and see if they had any heavy artillery and that. And then you'd get a good map reference to where they were.

13:00 Then you'd get back and send the message to the air force and they'd go in and strafe them and bomb them.

I couldn't imagine the maps being terribly great...

Oh they were...the maps, some of them were a bit out. You had the rivers and they'd give you the ... roughly so many yards to so and so.

13:30 **Did the gravity of the situation you were in ever become too much when you realised how far away you were for any sort of help?**

Sometimes it did. Sometimes it would worry you a bit. You always looked which was the way to go back. That was always in your mind. If anything happened, which was to go. And when you were ready to go you made sure you had that native boy with you.

14:00 He was the man who knew the way. He would stick with you. You never had to go about it in a forceful way.

Do any of the contacts that you had with the Japanese do any of them stand out in your mind?

A couple of times when we struck a few of them in the creek having a swim. We gave them a rattle up in the water.

14:30 Nothing much. It was all just in a day. You'd see them and you'd get into them if you were allowed to get into them. You always picked out your best targets. But it was...at times we were told not to get into contact if we could help it.

So it would be a hit and run?

A hit and run job, yes.

15:00 Get for your life.

Would you then have to go back at a later stage and assess what you had done?

Yes you might go back but you would never find the bodies. They would always get rid of them. Sometimes you would find them and sometimes you wouldn't. But they were always on the move. They were real gipsies, moving all the time.

15:30 **Can you tell us any more about the fighting you did at Red Beach?**

Well there wasn't much to do there. We weren't there that long. We went in and had a bit of a squirmish there and had a few patrols and then went on up to Finschhafen.

So of everything you did in New Guinea what was the toughest time you had there?

Finschhafen. That was the toughest.

16:00 That was real tough that one. We didn't know what was what there for a while. Then we had mount, Sattelberg mountain, and that to contend with. And the north coast. We were up along the north coast when the two barges came down loaded with Japs. We got the message through and they all got ready at the beach head and

16:30 when the Japs came there they opened the gang plank of the barges and we were into them and sorted them all out. That was a bad raid. They were going to try and get the artillery but they missed out. So if it wasn't for our mob picking seeing them in the barges coming down the coast and getting the message out then they would have got in. But they had no chance once our mob got the message. We were waiting for them.

17:00 We threw everything and anything at them. They cleaned them all out. There were a couple of hundred of them. The barges were there for a fair while before they dragged them out to sea and got rid of them. You see them marching along...you see some of them getting along the track there. Some would be carrying everything and some would

17:30 be carrying nothing. You'd watch them. We had a position there out the back of Finschhafen. We would go up the hill and sit and watch them as they were getting along the track. We had binoculars and watch them. Then we'd get them to a certain point and you'd message through and the air force would go over and give them a tickle up.

18:00 **Were you ever concerned that the Japanese might intercept your pigeon [communications]?**

One time we thought they were tapping our line. We had a signal line and we thought they were tapping it. We patrolled it and found out they weren't.

What was it made you think that maybe they were?

Well we were getting a lot of static on it.

18:30 Funny noises and somebody thought they might be tapping in on the line because we had been tapping in on theirs. So we put a safety pin through the wire. That's why we had an interpreter with us and he'd be getting information. But we had nothing on ours. It was just a bad connection and we sorted it all out eventually. Signal wires were a hazard. Some would get chopped in half.

19:00 That's when we got onto the 208's again. We were getting better results.

You were saying how difficult it was to settle down once you got home after the war?

Yes it was hard.

Do you know why?

More or less war neurosis I think. We just couldn't settle.

It didn't have a name then. When you first got back...

Bomb happy.

19:30 **Did you suspect that straight away when you got back?**

I had an idea that's what it was. You couldn't keep a job, or I didn't want to keep a job. I was moving all the time. A real gipsy. Moving from job to job. And you'd go out west and come back again. Moving

around all the time.

Was it that things weren't as exciting as things were in the war for you?

20:00 I don't know. It was loneliness. I was like the Lone Ranger and I think that was a lot of my trouble.

And that's why you liked being in the PIB?

Yes.

Any of the time you were looking for work, were you looking for something that would give you that?

20:30 No I didn't worry what it was so long as it was a good job, then I'd say, hang this and I would go away... on the road somewhere with a mob of bullocks. And be happy again in the bush, then come home again and settle down. But it was pretty hard I can tell you that, to settle down and get back into civilian life.

Did you have dreams when you got back home?

No. I started

21:00 boozing a bit. And I steadied up on that and gave that the flick. I was smoking heavy. But other than that, that what I reckon it was, war neurosis. Bomb happy.

Did you eventually get help for that?

Yeah, I did.

How long before you did?

A good few years before I would

21:30 consent to it. Now I'm on a tablet and I'm right now. I always make sure I have a tablet before I go to bed.

Were you offered CRTS [Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme] when you got home?

I was offered nothing. We were offered nothing. We got deferred pay and gratuities. You had to buy a house before you could get your gratuity. You got your

22:00 deferred pay which was a couple hundred dollars. We never got much. You could get a suit of clothes from Wolfe Tailors in Brisbane or tools of trade to help you along.

22:30 That was to the value of ten pound. I took the ten pound and bought a new saddle. Some of them would go and get the suit. If you saw one walking down the street, and another one, they would have just got out of the army.

So where did you eventually find your feet work wise?

When I

23:00 went with a contractor called Walton. I was foreman for him for a while then I left and I went to the cement works. I helped build all the new cement works up. I was with Hornybrooks at that time working for the cement company. I went from there over to the cement works then. A bloke called Christenson was the foreman, manager.

23:30 So I went with Chris and I was there for a good few years. Then he went and they got a pommy bloke called Davis Graham. And he said to the engineer, "Some of these blokes have been here too long." We had been there for nearly 9 years. He said, "We'll have to pay them superannuation.

24:00 We had better start thinking of getting rid of them." So a letter would come in your pay envelope terminating your services on such a such a date. So I bailed out. They reckoned on had a job, that my job was all right. I wasn't going to cop that nonsense. Then I went fencing contracting. I was doing a bit of that.

24:30 Then I got a job at the Main Road as a bridge foreman. I finished that then I went to the copper refineries and I worked there for a while until I said hang this and I gave it away. Then I worked at the goal. I knew the superintendent during pre war times. He gave me a job and told me to go to the doctor.

25:00 I started as a prisoner officer there and I was there for 17 years. I retired when I was 60.

Do what sort of work there?

I was on the farm with all the livestock. That was a good job. I would go to the Tablelands, buying cattle up on the Tablelands, buying horses, breeding horses for all the prisons.

25:30 I used to break them in out here and send them down to different prisons. It was a good job.

Were you able to speak about your experiences to anybody?

No. Sometimes I would talk a little bit. I started to write a book but that's as far as it got. I more or less kept it all to myself.

26:00 That's what I think was a lot of my trouble. But I didn't worry about talking about it to anybody. They weren't interested anyhow.

Where did your other Aussie PIB blokes end up when they came back home?

I had one mate here, the poor bugger died not so long ago. He wasn't in the PIB, he was NGIB [New Guinea Infantry Battalion]. Bob Lord. He was a mate of mine. He died not so long ago.

26:30 But the rest were all from Brisbane and the only time they came up was VP50. Hank Dawson and Billy Allen and Mick Burnis. But other than that I've seen none of them.

So did you keep any sort of contact with them at all?

I used to write to old Mick until he died. I would write to Hank. He's had it now. I don't write to anybody now.

27:00 **After the war did you march in Anzac Day?**

Yes, I would march in Anzac Days up here.

And who's banner would you march under?

I used to just roll along with anybody. But at VP50 we marched under the PIB manner. Mick bought it up with him.

That must stand above all the others for you?

Yes.

27:30 It was a good night that.

Did that feel like the first home coming you had had?

Yes it was more or less. We had nothing and were given nothing. Nobody told you nothing. The RSL [Returned and Services League]...I was a member of the RSL for a fair while, but they were a bit cliquey and I

28:00 gave it away. Then I joined it again after a while. I'm in it now. I'm in it all the time now. But I filled in a paper to get my 50 years medal from them.

28:30 A mate of mine filled it in for me and put it in. And he died and I said to them, "What about my medal. I must be entitled to a 50 year medal?" They said they had no paper work on me. I said I had put it in and they said to fill in another one. I said, "Fill it in yourself." I didn't bother about it. I told them I only fill in things once not twice.

29:00 If I'm not good enough to get it the first time, I'm not good enough the second time. So I don't bother about it any more. Someone said since, why don't I have a go at getting it. Damn them. I'm not worried about it.

So how do you think you've been treated by the government since you got home?

Well when we first came home we were battling. But now they seem to be handing out a few things to us.

29:30 But when we first came home we weren't even recognised. And the mob from Vietnam were just as bad. They weren't recognised either. And we were definitely not recognised.

Would you say that the stuff that the Vietnam blokes went through and that the battle they had to take on to get recognised has helped you blokes?

30:00 I think it has. I would say it has. See the Vietnam blokes were unlucky. They didn't know who they were fighting. We did. And I reckon they copped it pretty savage. They were in the dark all the way. I think what benefits they've received and the battle they've put on has helped the Second World War digger. That's my opinion, because other than that we would end up with nothing.

30:30 I'm on a 100% disability pension and I'm on a war pension. And I think what I'm getting is enough. It keeps me going. I don't want for nothing. I've got my own little truck out there. If I want to go anywhere

31:00 I can hop in it and go. But I tell you what, it was a battle at the start. A big battle because nobody knew anything, nobody told us anything. The doctors would give you a box of pills and he didn't know what they were for half the time.

31:30 Now, well we're in front.

So what are your thoughts on Anzac Day?

I think Anzac Day should be to keep up the tradition. Keep the young ones going to. Anzac Day is Anzac Day as far as I'm concerned. I don't go in it or march now but I always fly my flag and I stick by Anzac Day.

32:00 I used to always go to the dawn service but don't go anywhere now.

On that day of Remembrance Day for you, what do you actually think about?

Well I think it's a great thing. It's a great thing. It's recognition for everything that has gone on as far as the service people are concerned.

32:30 One time they used to say that hotels weren't allowed to open until after...but now they open at dinner time and you've got sport in the afternoon now, and a lot of that charitable stuff goes to different organisations which is a good thing. I'm all for it.

33:00 **Some people think having a rugby union game between Australia and New Zealand on Anzac Day is...**

Well New Zealand were in the war too weren't they. I'm all for it myself.

What are your thoughts on the recognition that the Papuans who were with you, what they received from Australia?

They got nothing. I said to a few of them at the VP50, I asked them if they were on a war pension or anything.

33:30 They got nothing. Someone got the papers and didn't know what was what and they were getting no recognition. None whatsoever until VP50. They had no money, cab vouchers but nothing else. They booked them into South Bank. They were there but they had nothing. They said there were getting no entitlements at all.

34:00 And Racal - R - Murray, he sat there with Ray Martin and he said all he wanted was a water tank and a generator, so he could get a bit of light and a tank to catch a bit of water in. He was getting nothing either. So somebody had a bit of fun up there.

34:30 They straight out said, "We're getting nothing." So that was a bit shock to me. I thought at least someone would be getting them something. If we had known that...as Mick said to me, "If we had known that we would have been stuck into this mob." We would have done too. Mick was a fire fighter. He would have hopped into them quick and lively.

35:00 Can't do nothing now, it's too late.

So at the end of the day do you reckon it was all worth it?

I think so. The experience. That's about all, the experience. A good experience. We paid dearly for it but it was worth it.

Some blokes look back and feel that the war years were years that they lost?

Well I used to think that too, but I don't think that now.

35:30 What would he have been doing otherwise. What I mean to say is you lost the best part of your life. From 18 to 22, is the best part of your life, but we didn't worry much about it. I had my 21st birthday in action.

36:00 If I had been home, God knows where I would have been. I might not have lived to have had my 21st birthday at home. But that's where the best part of your life is, those four years, 18 to 22.

What positive effects did being in the army and being in the war have on the rest of your life?

I wouldn't say it altered me that much. The thing that's worried me a fair bit is my health.

36:30 Bomb happy or war neurosis or whatever you'd like to call it. That was a bit hard to put up with. But other than that I think everything's been ok. I've had no worries.

Do you think it's had more of a negative effect than positive effect?

I dunno. It didn't worry me at all. Some

37:00 took it really to heart. It didn't worry me. At that stage my home was under my hat. I pleased myself.

So what helped you the most with your PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder], the war neurosis?

My wife was the main one. She got into

37:30 a couple of different doctors and one thing and another and got into Veteran Affairs. She got different things and got literature and got into different doctors. The doctor we're under now is the man for war veterans. Ian Fraser. And he was a man who pushed it all along. He's the bloke we can thank for it.

38:00 As far as any of the others are concerned, some didn't know nothing and didn't want to know nothing. But he's a man who worries about Veterans.

What do you have to say to young Australian kids who might see this in the future?

Well, I'm this way. I would like to see compulsory training. This is my opinion.

38:30 Not so much just for the men, but women and all because some of the girls are as big a scallywags as some of the boys. I reckon myself that compulsory training would give them some initiative and make them want to do a bit of work, get them off the street. They're just roaming like wild animals, not worrying about working and they're getting everything

39:00 handed to them. Put them in the army and do a bit of work with them. It didn't do us any harm. We had the land army and we had the Olds and Bolds and Rugged and Bugged. One legged fellas and one eyed blokes. They were all doing a bit of work during the war, B class blokes. They were quite happy.

39:30 I'd like to compulsory training myself. Not for war but to get them off the streets and more motivated. Give them something to think about. Or more camps. A couple of weeks of camp. They wouldn't be wasting any money because what they're spending now, they could use it for something.

Is there any

40:00 **last words you'd like to give the Archive?**

No, I'm very very pleased that it's gone on. And I appreciate everything you have done. And I hope a lot more take interest in it like I have. Once the history goes you'll never hear it again. That's my opinion and I thank you very very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS