Australians at War Film Archive

Alexander Bewley (Allan) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 I was born in Gordon, New South Wales on the 8th June 1925. My early childhood was at Gordon for four years.

01:00 Then my mother and father moved to Wentworth Falls and we bought a small cottage in Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls. I attended the Wentworth Falls Primary School; the school in those days was just plain three rooms, and two classes per room, three teachers and the headmaster. I have very, very fond memories

01:30 of the old primary school at Wentworth Falls, it still stands there. We had sports. But God forbid nowadays, maybe the boys of nowadays would laugh, for boys dancing around the maypole, I think it was the 22nd May or some such date.

02:00 We had a lot of fun at school. From Wentworth Falls School I went to Katoomba High School for a couple of years. During this period, from the time I was about ten years of age. I had a number of jobs, I was always looking for pocket money, because money was tight during the Depression. Initially I used to deliver papers in the morning, stand on the side of an old 1928 Chevrolet car

02:30 and throw papers over the fences. After school in the afternoon I'd come back on my bicycle with a bag and I'd get the Sun and the Mirror. Then I'd deliver the Sun and Mirror to a number of people,

03:00 through the little town of Wentworth Falls and that was quite vast. Each night I would ride about eight or ten kilometres. I'd go to the hotels and sell papers at the dining tables, that's the Scraggs Hotel, which is the Grand Hotel, which still stands in all its glory now. Then the Wentworth Falls Golf Club, and they had a dining room, a really up class dining room with black tie, dinner jacket

03:30 at night. The same with the Chalet, down off Falls Road, it was real up class again, dining room and you'd dress for dinner. That's one job that I had. Another job was watering gardens for people who had a lot of holiday homes up there, they'd be away for a fortnight or three weeks or so, they'd pay me a shilling or a couple of shillings a week to move the ground or hose a few of their plants for them.

04:00 When I was about fourteen or fifteen I worked in the exchange at – this was night shift. I use to go on at ten o'clock at night and go through til seven thirty in the morning. Saving grace was naturally they had a pull down bed there and I could sleep, but you would turn on an enormous alarm, it was nine or ten inches across,

04:30 the size of a hammer that you would find on a clock in New York. The thing was, the switchboard in front of you had one hundred holes and each hole had a number 1–100 and there is a little black card over the top of each of the numbers. If someone would ring with their phone, the old phone on the wall.

05:00 As soon as that rang this little window would fall down and I'd see that it was number 66, and I'd say, "Number please," and they'd say, "Mrs Brown." You'd think, "Mrs Brown 17 connecting," and plug in from 66 and the other cord into 17, ring the handle rigorously, listen for a moment until a contact was made and then I'd wait for the ring off tone and pull the plugs out again.

05:30 This used to go on until about ten thirty, eleven o'clock at night and then the emergency calls would come through for doctors, ambulances, etc. You had to be on the ball to get the connections. Sometimes you would ring and ring and ring and the emergency calls weren't answering, however, it all panned out. That was an enjoyable job and I had that for a couple of years.

06:00 I think I used to get about fifteen shillings a week, which was about in our money now, about $1.50 per week. I did six nights a week. That was another job that I had. I suppose my interests during this time, besides school,

06:30 I'll qualify that, maybe not interest when I'd mentioned school, were walking, going around the areas where my father was working and also the local rifle range. I used to do shooting and a couple of guys

took me under their wing and taught me to shoot at the local range. That's what I was doing at my early

07:00 childhood and Wentworth Falls. Before I go on and say when I went and joined the army, let me say that some of the memories that I have during the 1930s, some of the books that I read for instance were The Great Aces of the First World War, thrilling stories of a dozen of the great aces. The greatest of them all was Baron von Richthofen, who was the

07:30 midnight of Germany, allegedly an Australian shot him down after his eighty-first victory. As strange as it might have seen I used to like reading Dracula, Bram Stoker. Riders of the Purple Stage, which was a western book. There were lots of books in the school library that I used to take out. Of course Dracula wasn't one of them.

08:00 I enjoyed reading. Something about my family? I have seven sisters and a brother and during the early years we moved to Wentworth Falls as I said in 1929. There was no handsome dole or anything in those days, so my father had to go looking for work, he didn't have a permanent job. I remember one incident in about 1932,

08:30 when an enormously heavy snow storm and we lived in Falls Road, Wentworth Falls, and there were a lot of big pine trees growing opposite and at about three o'clock in the morning, and it woke me and I am a pretty solid sleeper, you know, crash, bang. The snow falling on the pine trees and as the weight built up the limbs were being smashed down. The very next morning, after that snowstorm my father had a job.

09:00 A one-day job up a Leura about four miles up the road to work in the goods yards at the railway station unloading produce for a guy at Leura. So, he is up at six, he walked through a couple of feet of snow, for four miles up to Leura and there was this guy who said, "I don't think the truck will go through the mud and snow, come back tomorrow," then my father had to walk back another four miles for nothing.

09:30 The next morning we went up again and worked all day, so for two days work he got ten shillings, which was about one dollar, one day wasted and one day's work for a dollar. Then another job he got was helping build Bells Line of Road, which was the subsidiary road to the Great Western Highway. Around about 1934-35 they were still trying to put it together, a few stones on the muddy road here and there.

10:00 He applied to get a job there, and at the time the Blue Mountain City Council was known as Blue Mountain Shire, and it was based at Lawson. He walked down to Lawson, asked for a job with the town clerk, the town clerk said, "Oh no, sorry, sorry, no work," my father turned around and started to walk out the door and suddenly he turned around and said, "I'm a rate payer here, my wife and I recently bought a house at Wentworth Falls,"

10:30 and with that the town clerk said, "Well, perhaps we can give you a couple of weeks' work out on Bells Line of Road." That's how he got his job and he was there for about four months. While living out there, they lived in a tent, and he had to take all his food for five days, which was bread, peanut butter and something that would keep. There was no fresh meat etc. unless they might knock over a rabbit or two. One of the difficulties

11:00 were they were breaking granite with a stone axe, the granite chips would fly up and cut their legs, hands, cut their faces. What they did to protect their legs was they would get old newspapers, and bind newspapers around as leggings and that protected their legs. They couldn't afford gloves in those days and their hands and faces suffered something awful. He put up with that job

11:30 for about three or four months. Then he fell on his feet because he was offered a job as the park ranger at the Wentworth Falls Reserve. Nowadays Wentworth Fall Reserve belongs to National Parks and Wildlife. If you go there, on most days you will see four or five people walking around the tracks doing bits and pieces here and there. My father was the lone person

12:00 looking at the Falls Reserve, from the end of Falls Road, building shelter sheds there, building a workshop there out of stone, bush stone. Looking after the tracks going from Wentworth Fall, going around to the Valley of Waters, there were two tracks. A medium track of about six hundred feet down, it goes round the escarpment, and another track near the bottom.

12:30 Occasionally, he would need to move soil from one place or another to repair the roads after the heavy rains, etc. This strong, strong man would put a wheel barrow on the back of his back and take it down six hundred stairs, to the first landing, patch this road up there and tracks and then he would probably go down

13:00 and do the lower. At the other end of Wentworth Falls, he would have to get the wheelbarrow up about thirteen or fourteen hundred feet. He looked after that from 1935 to 1940. It was a good job, but it was only paying about four pounds five a week, which was eight or nine dollars a week. This was sort of a basic wage in those days, and families had to

13:30 exist on it. Talking about families, this is interesting in comparison to the lives that we live nowadays. The butcher came five times a week, he came on Monday, and delivered what you had ordered the previous Friday, then through five times a week. Horse and cart, the meat wrapped up in newspapers, the white paper

14:00 on the centre. The baker called daily, six days a week, the milkman called twice a day, six days a week, I don't think he came on Sundays, because from memory we used to have put out an extra billy can on Saturday for the milk. Then the green grocer came about once a week. The grocer came and picked up orders one day and delivered a couple of days later. The iceman, he used to come around

14:30 and deliver big blocks of ice. I suppose they were about two feet long by about one foot deep and a foot across. This ice was put into the icebox, it was a box that had a draw at the front with shelves in it, such as a refrigerator has now days. Then an open box on top, which was

15:00 seal lined, and you wrapped your ice in a piece of sackings very quickly and put it in there, close the lid down and it would keep your milk and meat for a good twenty four to forty eight four hours maybe, but certainly not longer. That was another delivery. Occasionally the haberdashery man would come along and mother would go out and buy some cotton from him or needles, maybe a towel if she could afford it and things like that.

15:30 It was interesting. Now of course the postman. The postman came every day, six days a week and you could post mail that was cleared at nine o'clock in the morning, six o'clock at night at the post office and if you missed the six o'clock mail at night there was a post box on top of the railway station and you could post your letter on the top of the railway station and that was collected in a bag and thrown on

16:00 the Mudgee mail, or a train going to Sydney. We didn't have such things as email now, in those days naturally. We did have a telegraph service, which was done in Morse code. Each post office would have a little box there with the Morse code cappers in it and whenever you went to the post office you would hear tap, tap, tap and suddenly the postmaster who

16:30 was serving you might turn around and say, "Excuse me, that's for me," his call sign would come up and to sit down and write out the message on the telegram form. If you had a telephone on, they would phone the message through to you, and deliver the actual telegram the next morning. If you didn't have the telephone on, they had a telegram boy and he used to jump on his bicycle and deliver it, two miles, three miles away to you.

17:00 Of course those telegraph boys, we would hear fantastic stories of them becoming postmaster generals, etc, forty, fifty years down the line. It was a career, although you started at a low level. Those were about the main events that I recall at Wentworth Falls. School days when we moved to Katoomba, sports days that we used to have up at Lithgow, on the Lithgow oval. You would go up by train

17:30 and in those days naturally the trains were puffing billies engines, and kids as kids would be with their white shirts and khaki shorts, they would lean out the window, because all the windows open and of course massive black cinders of dust would come back. When you got home, when poor mother would starch you up and make you look the thing to go to sport,

18:00 would see a blackened shirt, decreased trousers, dirty socks etc, that was kids our days, we did that. Everybody had fuel stoves, so wood was a problem, you couldn't afford to buy it so you had to chop your own wood. So my father would get wood and chop it up every night when he got home at half past five. We kids used to take buckets

18:30 over the railway line, and scrounge along the railway line, picking up little pieces of coal here and there. The train would go by, an old goods train and they would look out, and shovel out a load of coal for you. We were like a bunch of scavengers and take the coal home because the coal lasted much longer than wood, particularly for the inside fire, we had it great. Life went on

19:00 and my father joined the air force in 1940. He eventually became a flight sergeant. He served in the Caribbean Islands in the Pacific, which is north of New Guinea. At the time he was an aerodrome defence guard sergeant and they were guarding the

19:30 77th Fighter Squadron, which was on the ground, at night time, to make sure that nobody went near the planes. He served eighteen months-two years overseas. He was discharged in I think November 1945. After he joined the air force, I was mad keen, I always liked the army and I used to listen to the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] News, about Mussolini, invading

20:00 Abyssinia and I'd love to go and help the Abyssinians, etc. Then the Spanish Civil War came and you had the British and the Americans fighting on the one side and the Russians and Germans fighting on the other side. I used to read about these two wars. Finally, on the 3rd September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and a day later

20:30 England declared war on Germany and the same time Australia declared war on Germany. That got on the way and we recruited the 6th, 7th & 9th Divisions and I think the first of our divisions went to the Middle East. I think about 1940, early 1940, and they trained in Egypt and they fought in Syria,

21:00 where Sir Roden Cutler, the late Sir Roden Cutler, and a lieutenant at the time he won his VC [Victoria Cross] for gallantry. We had about three divisions overseas and they fought very gallantry at El Alamein. The air force had a very large contingency in the UK. They joined the Commonwealth [Empire] Air Training Scheme, I think it was called,

21:30 and they were sent to Canada and they trained as pilots or as air gunners and they were sent to

England and formed either fully Australian squadrons with Australian names or they joined the British squadrons as extras for the crews. So we had a lot of airmen in England at the time. Then of course on the 7th December 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbour and that brought the war

22:00 much, much closer to home because at the same time they bombed Pearl Harbour they invaded Northern Malaya and they very rapidly started to move in the Peninsula towards Singapore. We had repositioned at that stage the 8th Australian Division there and they fought very gallantly down the west coast of Malaya and at the time the British

22:30 had two warships there, but a carrier was supposed to accompany them but the aircraft carrier was pulled off in Ceylon for another duty and I think the HMS Prince of Wales and the HMS Renown, two battleships were in Singapore and when the Japanese invasion fleet started to move down the east coast, these two great warships

23:00 went up the coast, but before firing shot in anger they were torpedoed by masses and masses of Japanese torpedo planes as the army and navy, which were based in Thailand at the time. We lost two very great ships, due to the full hardiness of not providing air cover for them. Because now days you would be beheaded if you sent a ship into an area without air cover.

23:30 **I was wondering if we could continue the story of your story, with terms of your enlistment into the service?**

I just covered the Japanese on the 7th December, I enlisted on the 2nd February 1942, which was three months later and so we were just coming to that great momentous time in my life.

24:00 At this stage I was sixteen and a half and I was very keen to get into. My first choice was to get into the air force. So down to the air force recruitment office I went and they looked at me and said, “Does your mother know that you are here, son?” and with that I walked out. A couple of days later I thought I would try the army, “Everybody tells me that the army will take anyone.” So down to the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] recruiting office,

24:30 “But I do look fairly young,” the same thing happened there and I thought, “God, it will be eighteen months before I could get into this war, and it would be over.” Then something struck me, when you turned eighteen years of age you had to go to the post office and get registration papers to register as eighteen. So you would be called up into the militia, and no birth certificates needed, so you just say that you’d turned eighteen. So off to the post office I went and signed the papers and I put

25:00 eighteen and this was in December and I got a letter back in the January to say that I was called up and that I have to report to the Katoomba Drill Hall at such and such a date at nine o’clock in the morning for a medical examination, and I think I was about eight and a half stone at the time, pretty skinny. I was afraid that they’d say that I was not physically fit or something. The doctor looked me up and down and put a stethoscope on my chest and he said,

25:30 “Yes, oh, pee in the bottle,” so I peed in the bottle in a dark corner and came back and then a couple of minutes later he said, “You’re fit, you’re in, out.” Then I waited anxiously for the postman to come, the postman came with the brown envelope and they were calling me up in to the militia and I had to report to Lancer Barracks in Parramatta at a certain time in the morning. I went down by train and then to Lancer Barracks

26:00 and there were sixty-eight of us there, I think. We all lined up and we were sworn in. You know, God, King and Country, and we all agreed that yes, we’d fight to the death for God, King and Country. We were given an army number, and my first army number was N346321. So I felt

26:30 pretty proud about that, I was in the army with a number. So up to the showground we went by train, and Maitland Showground was a training area and nothing was built there. My first night, dossed down in a pigsty, and we all did, horse stalls or pigsties. We were given a palliasse, which is a hessian bag, ten feet long,

27:00 three feet wide, six or eight inches deep and we had to go get bails of straw and fill it up, your palliasse with straw which was your mattress, no pillow, we used our kit bag as a pillow. Then we went to the quartermaster store to get our uniforms, etc. You have heard the famous stories when they hold the back of your trousers, “They fit,” hold the back of your shirt, “Yes,” “Well, perfect fit, son,”

27:30 and you would get a hat that falls down over your ears, “Put a bit of paper in it son, it will be all right.” We went through the quartermaster store and got our issue that we were required to get, including undies, woolly long johns and singlets. I think there was probably some cotton underwear as well.

28:00 Then day two, we started our training, the training consisted of marching naturally, turning right, turning left. Marching at quick time, marching at slow time. After about four or five days of that we could do as we were told, left turn, right turn, and we were doing it in precision order. The great day came when we went to the quartermaster’s store and they gave us a rifle.

28:30 There I was, I was a real soldier now because I had a rifle and a bayonet. So for the next four or fives days we did nothing else but go back onto the field and did rifle drill, salute arms, present arms, etc. At the end of about the fourteenth day or so we were taken down to the rifle range. I am a left-hander, commonly called a ‘kacky hander’.

29:00 So down in the mound I went and put the rifle up to the left shoulder, the sergeant came along and tapped me and said, “Put it on the other shoulder, son.” “I’m sorry I’m left handed.” He shook like that and I said, “I think I can.” “All right, go ahead.” “Mind the kick,” it was this great .303 and it really has to be embedded into your shoulder because it kicks like a horse, but I had fired at the Wentworth Falls rifle range and it was really embedded in there.

29:30 After getting a lot of practice at Wentworth Falls, the adjutant, who was a known sea graduate at the time, young guy of about twenty two, who everybody feared him because he was the regular soldier. He used to wander around smartly dressed with a swagger stick hitting the side of his leg, and he stood behind me and my scores were coming up. “Where did you learn to shoot, son?” “I did a bit of shooting at the rifle range at home, sir,” “Oh, well done,” and away he went.

30:00 The next day, I think, after the rifle range there were a couple of recruiters coming around, for either you could go to an anti tank regiment or go to transport, I wanted to go to transport. They said, “Any of you people can drive a truck, take one step forward?” so I stepped out, but the only thing that I’d ever done

30:30 was steer the grocer’s truck down a slight slope, I used to watch changing gears, etc. So they put us one at a time in an old Chevrolet, on the Maitland Showground, circuit, “Start it up,” I knew how to do that, clashing of gears, and shunt, shunt, shunt, the old truck started to move around and finally it went right around the circuit.

31:00 I got out and said, “I don’t think I made it,” jumped out and they said, “You’re right son, over there.” That was virtually my driver’s test to say that I could drive for the army. Well, I didn’t get a licence then. I went to a transport section, and the transport section was in 22nd Field Ambulance and they have an AFC [Australian Flying Corps] section driving ambulance and trucks there and I went to that section of the 22nd Field.

31:30 We were based at a place called Tomago, just outside of Newcastle. It is famous for its Hexham greys. Hexham greys are a mosquito as large as, well mosquito bombers which I’m sure the Mosquito Bomber was named after the Hexham greys. We slept in bell tents, with feet to the centre of the pole. It was miserably uncomfortable, no mosquito nets and the mosquitoes hounding you all night.

32:00 On about the tenth day there, one in our group committed suicide. Being a medical unit, the medical officers could see that it wasn’t a healthy spot to be and in their wisdom they moved, and we moved to a place called West Wallsend, an old coal mine there, a few houses and buildings. We had a hillside and we pitched our tents, six to a tent, and fourteen by twelve tents

32:30 floorboards in them. We still had our straw palliasse. There we stayed for about the next nine months, driving either trucks or ambulances and I was allotted to a quartermaster store and I drove a spanking brand new Chevrolet utility truck, and it’s number was 76401, never been forgotten.

33:00 Beautiful, brand new, I loved this. Then the transport officer came along and said, “Get some paint from the store, that’s got to be camouflaged and spread it on.” So I went down to the store and got three colours of paint and meticulously painted lines here and there. The sergeant major came across said, “That’s no good son, that’ll stand out,” so he got handfuls of sand and went (hand gestures) all over my beautiful

33:30 new shiny truck, which was repainted with the latest colours, which was covered, in the gritty sand. That was a story unto itself. We stayed in West Falls End with 22nd Field Ambulance and we set up what was known as an advanced dressing station there, and 22nd Field Ambulance was a part of the Newcastle covering force. The Newcastle covering force was a

34:00 ring around Newcastle of all arms and units. I suppose to prevent the Japanese from venturing inland, had they dare invade the unattended coast. We stayed there for about nine months. There was one incident that happened, around about the time of my seventeenth birthday. That the Japanese

34:30 came in and shelled Newcastle, a couple of days previously they had gone into Sydney Harbour with a mini sub and sunk the HMAS Kuttabul. Then the mother ship apparently went up the coast and fired shells at Newcastle. One shell had hit an apartment block and blew the front veranda off, and all the other shells ended up in the coal dump at BHP [Broken Hill Proprietary]. I don’t know what they were aiming for.

35:00 Of course, the inevitable story goes, “Where were the Fort Scratchley guns?” And they are great six inch guns lined around Newcastle defending Newcastle, and not one of them, to the best of my knowledge, was fired that night. The story goes that the duty officer couldn’t find the keys to the ammunition store, true or false, I don’t know, but I don’t think that the big guns fired that night, at the Japanese submarine. From

35:30 West Wallsend, 22nd Field Ambulance disbanded, at that stage and the transport section of the 22nd Field Ambulance, which I was in, formed a unit called 66th Motor Ambulance Company and we moved up to Queensland to a place called Biggenden. Biggenden was the headquarters of the 3rd Armoured Division.

36:00 There were lots of units there, and again the mythical story of the Brisbane Line, nobody will admit that such a thing happened. But, ok, you had an armoured division, about seventy/eighty miles out of Brisbane and you had all the other auxiliary troops in a great circle around Brisbane. They might have been just there to play football, I don't know. They were the Brisbane Line that the government today wouldn't admit, that they are going

36:30 to move down from Townsville, Cairns and defend Queensland from Brisbane down. We had Biggenden 66th AMC and we did our normal duties, and ambulances going around to regimental aid posts and multiply enough to, the regimental medical officer did the rounds in the morning and he would be accepting people from colds

37:00 and influenza, etc, who had to go to the advanced dressing stations for treatment. So we used to pick these guys up and take them to the advanced dressing station. Pick up dental patients from units and take them to the dental section, wait for them and then take them back to the units. We were at Biggenden, from Biggenden we went to Murgon, again in the same area, from Murgon

37:30 we went to Keyroy, same unit, then to Kilcoy and in Kilcoy we set up again an advanced dressing station and looked after our local troops. While at Kilcoy, the famous 'Battle of Brisbane' took place. I had been in Brisbane two days previously. Brisbane was absolutely flooded with American soldiers,

38:00 very, very smartly dressed, and that was one of the problems. Very good quality serge uniforms in an off green, collars and ties, and they really looked the part, in comparison to our drab old khakis that we had. The other thing was that the Americans had a lot of money. The pay, at this stage, I was getting five shillings a day, which the government couldn't afford, so

38:30 they took one and eight pence a day and called it a deferred pay, which would be paid, at the end of the war. We had three and four pence. Three and four pence a day to live on and of course this paid for the odd packet of cigarettes, maybe on pay night, and pay night was only once a fortnight, go up to the local pub and have a good meal of fish and chips

39:00 or something, or steak and eggs at the local restaurant. But we survived on three and four pence a day. Coming back to the Battle of Brisbane we heard a couple of days later that a lot of Australian soldiers got into fisticuffs with the Americans because the Americans wouldn't allow them into their post exchange dance hall. The post exchange

39:30 is a canteen, what we call a canteen, and the Australian soldiers were allowed into the canteen part, they were given a ticket and you could buy one cartoon of cigarettes for a dollar, that's ten packet of cigarettes, camel whatever was going at the time. But you weren't allowed into the dance hall area, and of course all the Australian girls were on the dance floor and having a wonderful time. Naturally the Australian soldiers coming back from the Middle East

40:00 were quite chuffed about this, somehow or other it started fist brawls in town and an American fired a shotgun or something and I think either an Australian soldiers were either killed or wounded. It was quickly overcome with lots of MPs [Military Police] and the local police coming and then certain restrictions were put on about

40:30 leave going into Brisbane. I don't know very much about it but it has been well recorded in the papers at the time. Certainly in more recent times they talk about the Battle of Brisbane, in the local papers. From Kilcoy, we finally got our marching orders to say that we were going to go to New Guinea. We boarded goods trains, all our ambulances, and our three-ton truck

41:00 and our tents and equipment all on goods trains and I think it took about six or seven days from Brisbane to get to Cairns. The train would stop twice a day at railway stations where wiles cookers, which is a mobile kitchen would be set up and there would be people there to feed you

41:30 and you had to take your own sealed dixies along and they would put something in it, whatever it might have been and fresh bread, there was always fresh bread and that was the wonders of the Australian Army, we were never without fresh bread.

Tape 2

00:30 **Allen, you were just telling us that you just got your marching orders?**

We were on the train with all of our trucks, equipment and ambulances and going to Townsville, and as I said we stopped a couple of times a day on a five or six-day trip and we were fed twice a day

01:00 and finally arrived in Townsville, and went to a camp called Oonoonba, from memory it's about five or eight miles south of Townsville, and it was a staging camp and a lot of troops there. Virtually nothing to do, you could paint stones around your tent white to make it look like a home and line the paths with white stones

01:30 up to the ordinary room etc, really no work of value. Until we were told that we were being employed down at the docks in Townsville, sorting out military equipment on forwarding to New Guinea. The reason they required the troops to do this, that the dockers [dockside workers], communist-inspired, communist-

02:00 led, as I understood refused to load ships for New Guinea. We had troops really fighting in the depths of New Guinea up near Finschhafen at the time. We were sent down to the docks every day and we always seemed to end up in the mail bag shed and we had to sort out mail bags and retag them for certain ships,

02:30 there might have been two or three different ships going and we had to put their names on the mailbags. It wasn't a hard task but the bags weighed about forty-six pounds each, and move them around. We did this for about four or five weeks. At night time there was always two up schools around. I was never a two up school artist because I never seemed to have any luck when I lost my first shillings. I never went back for a second try.

03:00 However, I love poker, I used to play poker in the back of an ambulance until two or three o'clock in the morning. You wouldn't win a fortune or lose a fortune, you might win four or five shillings or lose four or five shillings, it gave us something to do. There we stayed as I said for several weeks and we got our final orders to move again to Cairns, which was a disembarkation port, and so we loaded all of our vehicles

03:30 and equipment and things on the trains and up to Cairns we went. Then finally we board a ship I think it was the HMAS Kanimbla, and on the Kanimbla we sailed to Buna and all the way up we had escorts so, we always had navy escorts because Japanese submarines were prevalent around the coast from 1942,

04:00 1943 and 1944, however we never sighted anything. We used to get duties on board the ship, as lookouts with a pair of binoculars and put you around certain spots on the ship and continue to scan the ocean. We would change about every hour or two hours until you got too tired, but we never saw anything. Finally to Una and we unload on to barges and landed on the beaches of Una

04:30 and went inland a little way to a coconut grove where we set up a camp. Again, it was very regimental, at this stage we got American tents, which was about sixteen by eighteen, and big square American tent. We built up on little pylons about two feet high,

05:00 a framework to put these tents on top off. The floor of the tent was actually ark mesh and this was to keep you off the ground and keep the scorpions and things away from you. At this stage we also had camp stretchers, but no mattresses. We had the camp stretchers and blankets. We used to sleep six or eight people to one of these tents

05:30 raised off the ground. Of course we had mosquito nets. About half past five every night, it became dusk and everybody had to go to their tent and pull their mosquito nets down and tuck them right around their beds. At that stage you would normally have a parade and the duty NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] would make sure your sleeves are rolled down and your trousers were pulled down and you had leggings

06:00 or gators on and then you squirted yourself with anti mosquito lotion, which was oil, which used to sting like hell if it got into a cut or something. You had to rub it around your brow, neck, and wrists and under your gaiters. Because malaria was probably the most greatest casualty causer in New Guinea than anything else. Certainly, far, far greater than battle casualties

06:30 and in lots of cases quite fatal and in particular if it turned into serial malaria. Mosquito precautions were strictly enforced in every unit. The unit turned up the odd malaria cases, the soldier wasn't slapped over the wrists, the OC [Officer Commanding] of the unit would have been slapped over the wrists because we weren't enforcing, but he couldn't have enforced the mosquito prevention.

07:00 On top of that we used to have to take a tablet every night, which was called Atebrin tablet. A little yellow tablet and after taking them for about three or four weeks your skin actually turned a yellowish hue, not noticeable amongst us in the unit, but when you went home on leave people would say, "Yellow jaundice, yellow jaundice!" It was the Atebrin, and after if you didn't take

07:30 it for two or three weeks at home your skin would return to normal. Our job at Una again we were based adjacent to a Australian General Hospital and picking up people who were sick from the regimental aide post, dental areas, taking them to the AGH [Australian General Hospital] and also from the AGH we would pick up patients and take them out to the airfield and put them onto aircraft

08:00 and they were then back loaded into Port Moresby where they were probably looked at again by a medical team then forwarding to an aid base hospital. They would eventually end up with concord or a bigger hospital for long-term patients or badly wounded people. Buna, we landed there, I think early October

08:30 and the first air battle I saw or heard was 26th to 27th October and the sky was quite clear and all you could see were vapour trails way up about eighteen or twenty five thousand feet up. You'd hear the birth of a canon or a machine gun go off. The first airplane that I ever saw come down in flames was a twin tail Lightning

09:00 but whether the pilot was injured, but I don't know as I actually didn't see that one come down. That was the last of the big air battles in New Guinea in October, over Buna and after that the Japanese air power retreated further west down to Wewak and then to New Island. The big attraction for the Japanese at Buna was Wau Airfield. Wau Airfield was MacArthur's most forward

09:30 airfield at the time and took large numbers of aircraft. They had twenty-eight airstrips, there and two thousand four hundred aircraft on the ground. You might say, that's ridiculous, not so. But if you look at the military history records at the time it would be in the archives and I'm not very far wrong. They had every type of aircraft there. They had the Liberators, Boeing,

10:00 Flying Fortress, Lockheed Lightning Fighters, Kittyhawk Fighters, Vulcan engine style bombers they had A20 Boston Haddock Light bombers, ex Mitchell Light bombers and there was just a vast array of them. They would start taking off at about four o'clock in the morning and you would hear the last ones coming back at about ten o'clock at night. The Japanese

10:30 used to come over to Buna virtually every night and you could set your watch to them. It's one o'clock in the morning, a lone Japanese plane would come over and dozens and dozens of searchlights would be on him and a multitude of anti aircraft guns and they were 3.7 inch guns would burst out and you would hear the crack of the guns often some distance around. But the greatest danger to us

11:00 was living in peaceful surrounds, next door to a general hospital the raining down of shrapnel from the burst anti aircraft gun shells. So as soon as the Lone Star Charlie, which was a Japanese bomber, as soon as he came the searchlight, would come on everybody would slip into the trenches because it was really quite dangerous

11:30 standing about in the open. Not from the few bombs that the Japanese had dropped but the shrapnel coming down from the anti aircraft guns. Another funny incident, I tell again myself and we were in the mess hut one night and we were playing poker one night at about ten o'clock, a pig came up, very, very close and snort, snort, snort. A couple of the guys said, "Go get your gun, Allen," and I had an American M1,

12:00 eight shot automatic, illegally. I went and got this and you couldn't see where the pig was but you could hear where he was, so I fired three quick shots 'bang, bang, bang' and there was no sound of the pig being hit or squealed, so I must of missed. So back to the poker game, but two minutes later the air raid sirens went and the

12:30 notification that there is an air raid on was a Bookers gun, which was a forty metre gun, which would fire three shots into the air and everybody would then ring their sirens or turn their sirens on and it would indicate that there was an air raid in progress. Fortunately nobody traced where those three shots came from on that particular night. At Buna we didn't have any malaria casualties there. We ate

13:00 the ordinary food, the sort of food that you got in New Guinea at the time. Herrings and tomato sauce for breakfast. Meat and vegetables maybe for lunch. Dehydrated potato, which was boiled up and turned into some sort of potato, dehydrated onions, dehydrated carrots. Breakfast time you would have dehydrated eggs and also

13:30 tinned bacon and of course the main meal was always bully beef. Wherever Australians went they always had bully beef. It was quite palatable if you had tomato sauce, you would mix it with potato, etc. That was what we mainly lived on, because there was no fresh vegetables. Occasionally a refrigeration ship might come ashore and unload meat

14:00 into the supply depot. They had only a limited refrigeration and had to get the meat out to the units as quick as possible. You'd be called forward to go and get your meat ration, this afternoon instead of your normal rations tomorrow morning. They'd bring meat into the camp and the cook would have to cook it for that night, or at the very latest gave it to us for lunch the next day. We had no refrigeration in the camp

14:30 bar our own made Coolgardie safe. The safe was just a square box, with hessian bags over it, and a can of water on top with these fine holes in top, which would drip out, and the bag was saturated and the water would drop down to the bottom and would keep things cool, not iced cold by any means.

15:00 So occasionally we had fresh meat. As I mentioned very much earlier, that the Australian Army never lack fresh bread. Wherever we went we had bakeries and so you got fresh bread, and the other saving grace, nice fresh bread and big blocks of cheese about ten or fifteen pound blocks of cheese, which was only probably made about two or three days previously. It was a

15:30 good meal, bread and cheese, bread and cheese to fill up on. An amusing incident when we first went into this camp at Buna, we had to dig a well to get water, that's for showering. We had chlorinated water come in and we had our own little water trailer and it would hold about two hundred litres, and that was drinking water, we needed water for showering, so we dug a well about fourteen feet deep and

16:00 put a box side on it and a gantry over the top with a rope and kerosene can bucket and dropped it down and pull up your water and put it into your shower bucket, turn on the shower and have a shower. Now, at the same time that we were digging the well for water, another group about fifteen to twenty feet

away or thirty feet away were digging a deep trench latrine.

16:30 The sandy soil there, the water from our well for bathing would certainly penetrate over to the deep trench latrine and I should image the same would happen the other way, maybe we had nice chlorinated water to drink in but it wasn't chlorinated to shower in, god knows what sort of germs we were sprinkling over ourselves.

17:00 That was Buna and I left Buna with a detachment, and we went up to a place called Finschhafen, it's a German name because you're well aware the western part of New Guinea was colonised and I think our first action in the First World War was to fight the Germans, they surrendered, they didn't fight, I'm sure

17:30 because they were mainly all missionaries. Fight the Germans in that area so there were quite a lot of places up along the New Guinea coast take German names and Finschhafen was one. I went up there on a detachment, with about five ambulances, the sergeant and a dozen other guys and we then ventured far and wide to the units round about and did the same old thing, picking up casualties and bringing them in and back to the bases hospital, a much smaller

18:00 one there in Finschhafen, probably a casualty clearance station I would presume. At Finschhafen the Japanese were still active in the air and occasionally at night time two or three bombers would come over and drop bombs on the airfield about three miles away from where we were based in a little camp called Launch Jetty. I was terribly interested after one of these bombing raids on night

18:30 and I walked down to the airfield and in a coconut grove, one of these bombs landed and someone told me "It was two hundred and fifty kilo," because I think the Japanese might of used kilos, "About a five hundred pound bomb and that must of penetrated and hit the ground thirty feet before it went off, just sandy gloomy soil and it caused an enormous crater and the coconut palms were strewed around,

19:00 twenty-five yards all around and this massive big hole down there, and it started to fill with water." One bomb that I did see the effects of. From Finschhafen we move on and this time 1944 the Americans were pulling out of Bougainville, the Australians were taking over the American perimeter and so

19:30 our little group was ear marked to go over in the first wave of Australians to go to Bougainville and we landed at Torokina and our main camp was still back at Buna and they were still packing up to get ready to join us in several weeks time. But we were billeted with the Americans, the American Engineer Regiment and this was absolutely wonderful, their quarters, they had properly built mess huts and

20:00 mosquito proofed and they had a coke machine and an ice cream machine and the meals were tinned turkey and all the best food. Probably six weeks later one might call it "Mushy," because it didn't have the substance of the Australian meal, but we relished it for the first two or three weeks. We didn't like their bread very much because the Americans have sweet bread,

20:30 whereas we have normal Australian bread that you eat every day, with a bit of salt in it. So we stayed there for several weeks and the rest of the unit caught up with us and we built a very, very comfortable camp at Torokina. Torokina is one of the beaches within Emperor Augusta Bay, beautiful clear water and Bougainville didn't have malaria, so you weren't plagued with malaria precautions, etc. You could go down to the beach at night time

21:00 and swim at night and it was a very pleasant life. The Japanese at this time were probably about eight to ten miles away and their heavy artillery would bomb our lines, which again were eight, or nine miles away and our heavy artillery would return. So at night we had quite a lot of noise going on while these heavier artillery pieces firing. If the Japs fired

21:30 one shell we'd fire one shell, and if the Japs fired two we'd fire two and so it went on. At Torokina there are a couple of airstrips and one of the airstrips was where the famed Japanese Admiral Yamashita, was shot down. Yamashita had his headquarters and we are talking about 1943, and I'm going back now about eighteen months.

22:00 Yamashita had his headquarters at Rabaul, and he was going to visit his units at Bougainville and the Americans had broken the purple code, which was the Japanese naval code and they got the exact details of what time he was taking off, the route he was taking and the time of arrival in Bougainville. We were a thousand miles away probably, hard to say,

22:30 let's say six hundred to one thousand miles away. None of our fighters from our bases there could reach Bougainville and return so they fitted up Lockheed Lightnings with all the Australian pieces off and put new belly tanks on and the long short of this is about eight of these fighters came in and rendezvoused at exactly the right time with Yamashita and shot him down and killed him

23:00 over Torokina Bay. It was a dreadful loss to the Japanese but a great victory to us to be able to do that. The next phase of my life at in the army at Bougainville was going to a place called Motupena Point, which was about two hundred and fifty miles down south. Australian battles were taking place down south and there were battles taking place

23:30 up at a place called the Numa Numa Trail, the east of the island but nowhere near the ferocity of the fighting down at Buna. The casual clearing station was set up at Motupena Point, a casualty clearing

station I will tell you, you are probably aware that a casualty, bang, he's hit in the front line at an entry point

24:00 and a company stretcher bearers, his own guy and take him to a regimental aid post, which is the battalion medical centre, one per battalion, with one medical officer. There, the medical officer quickly looks at him and if he's in pain he would probably inject morphine, and if he's bleeding he would try and stop the internal bleeding, and try to stop the initial shock. But he can't stay there, they have to get him to an advanced dressing station,

24:30 of an ambulance, another couple of miles behind lines. Normally an advanced dressing station was out of mortal range, probably on a couple of thousand yards. The jeep ambulances in the battalion take them to the advanced dressing stations and then at the advanced dressing station they had more medical doctors, orderlies and the main thing was to resuscitate

25:00 them, stop shock, stop their bleeding if any and get them back as quick as possible to the CCS [Casualty Clearing Station]. Here for the first time a wounded soldier would see an Australian nurse. In all her glory, with a red cape and a white scarf, etc. There they could get surgical treatment

25:30 to relieve the wounds, take bullets out, life threatening things. The patients might stay there for seven or eight days depending on the severity of their wound. They would maybe just have an arm wound and it healed up quickly, then they would be sent back to their units, and they would be able to fight another day. Those who were badly wounded,

26:00 after they remained at the CCS for about eight days, fit enough to move again we would pick them up in our ambulances, because we were based at Motupena Point, and on the way back to the Australian General Hospital at Torokina. This was probably a trip of about ten to fourteen miles

26:30 over rugged sort of tracks. Depending on the casualty you had to ride the bumps in the tracks, if they weren't too badly wounded, the medical officer, ok, a fast trip, you might do ten or fifteen miles an hour back. If there were badly wounded particularly back injuries, it might take about four or five hours, at two miles an hour to get the casualty in

27:00 those days. Occasionally you could get an evacuation going by launch. A launch would come in and there could be four or five stretches, could be put on a launch and taken back to a launch at Torokina. From there, pickup again with our ambulances and taken again to the AGH. That's the life cycle of a casualty from being hit

27:30 right. We formed a path of this chain, from the advanced dressing station up behind the infantry lines down to the causality clearing station down to the AGH. A lot of work around the AGH would be moving a patient from a ward who needed an operation, to be taken to operating theatre, wait for him there if it's not to take too long, then take him back to the ward, maybe get the physiotherapy

28:00 people, pick them up into the ward, and take them to the physiotherapy tent. Pick up dental people and take them, so we were based in and around the general hospital. We always had a detachment there. We had a detachment at the CCS and we were also operating up the Numa Numa Trail out to

28:30 where the war was taking place. Our job on Bougainville was, we had some time off, it wasn't all that strenuous, for us, but we would get a day off occasionally. On my days off I befriended a New Zealand air force pilot, a Flight Sergeant Hannaford. He had invited me to go on one of the missions with them.

29:00 Eyes would light up, he loved that. Had to be up and at the airfield by four o'clock in the morning, so out I went. They had Ventura bombers, which was a Hudson bomber, it was called Ventura because it was slightly modified, it had a gun tarot up the top with two guns in and it had a gun tarot in the front of the nose with two guns in and it had a belly gun tarot with two guns in. This particular mission

29:30 that I heard wasn't very exciting, it was to go to strafe the Japanese gardens down south of the island. The Japanese had no food, no means of re-supply, they had to conserve their rice supplies, which they had to grow what vegetables they could and live on native foods. Where they put in plantation gardens

30:00 this is where they were harassed and this particular Ventura bombers would go over, not continuously but they would go over and strafe anybody who was in the gardens. May God forbid they weren't Japanese, they were natives I would think. We went off on this mission and down over the gardens and fired these guns and people scattered everywhere and I didn't see anybody fall down.

30:30 That was quite exciting, and I thought that was wonderful. Several years later when I got home, I read a book by Lord Russell, the Lord Chief Justice of England and he wrote a book called The Nights of the Pascito and he gives an insight to an ally aircraft that was shot down in New Britain and the pilot was captured and he was executed immediately and they took his heart

31:00 out and it was served up to the officers' mess that night. That's a true story, that's in Lord Russell's book. Occasionally after that, when I was thinking of this I could have ended up on someone else's mess table, after being shot down. Then the war came to an end on Bougainville and as you are well aware the

31:30 Americans were pushing closer and closer in a fierce fight going on there. At that stage in June it was

expected that after the invasion of Japan, and it was intended to invade Japan in November with thirteen inventory divisions in Kyushu and on the 16th February another

32:00 sixteen divisions into Honshu and they expected the war would go for another year under those circumstances, and that was before the Japanese surrendered, they had no air power. They expected probably one million causalities had that taken place. They were suffering at this stage, just before the end of the war, there was something like seven thousand causalities

32:30 a month, that was the allies all told. Of course then the atomic bomb went off in the Nevada Desert and then they had to make a decision whether to drop this awesome weapon or not. If you look at the scenario about the casualties that we could expect over the next eighteen months, were dreadful and this

33:00 was one quick way of maybe ending the war. The decision was made by the President of the United States to just drop the bomb. Hiroshima was dropped the bomb on the 6th August 1945 and Nagasaki three days later on the 9th August 1945 and six days after the Nagasaki bombing the Japanese surrendered. Unconditional surrender. One of their conditions of the surrender

33:30 was twofold that the Japanese emperor would state categorically that he was not a God but an ordinary person and the Americans stated categorically the emperor should be tried for war crimes, that's how it came about. There the war ended while I was on Bougainville, and I saw the first Japanese prisoners, march in, and actually

34:00 I saw some Japanese prisoners at one of the little hospitals on Torokina, and these were, undoubtedly had been captured several weeks before, and they had been put into this hospital and they were running around, quite free, they had brooms and rakes and sweeping around the wards and sweeping little gardens here and there, unsupervised completely, about eight of them. That was something

34:30 that was stuck in my mind. A week after the war had ended and the Japanese commanders got together to get their troops together, they started to march them, they started to march them into Torokina, they were a pretty sorry sight. They were bedraggled, they were starved, they had no footwear, not true, they had some footwear but the footwear was pretty

35:00 dreadful. They look a very sorry sight. But these were the vicious fighters from a fortnight before who were killing our healthy Australian soldiers. The war ended and then the big problem came for me "Hey, Allen, what are you going to do, the war has ended, you've got no job, you've got no trade, what are you going to do?" "Stay in the army, stay in the army.

35:30 I'm going to stay in the army," and it wasn't easy in the army. At that stage Australia had three decisions really to debate. The first one was that they had five hundred thousand troops that had to be demobilised, that included fifty five RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] squadrons and about forty thousand sailors, that priority one, I suppose,

36:00 to get these people home. Priority two, was to retain sufficient people for an army to defend Australia, if it needed defending you couldn't just discharge everybody. The decision had to be made as to what size the Australian Army is going to be now that the war has ended. The third decision that they had to make was whether they would put troops into Japan,

36:30 occupation force, this is sorted out weeks and months before, but those were the three decisions that the Australian government had to make when the war ended and they had to make them quickly. From the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] point of view it was absolutely necessary to put a sizable number of troops into Japan, so they could seat their bums around the peace table and to have their say. If we had nobody in Japan

37:00 people would soon forget, that yes, we fought in New Guinea, yes we fought anywhere, but having fifteen thousand troops sitting on Japanese soil, as part of the occupation force. Naturally the Australian government went for the peace corps and recruiting started immediately for entry into BCOF.

Tape 3

00:30 **When we left off you were about to head to Japan?**

The war ended in Bougainville on the 15th August and I was looking for a future, I desperately wanted to join the army, but there was no army to join. Then I heard they were recruiting for the British Commonwealth Occupation Force down at the base area, so I went down there as fast as I could and

01:00 I was interviewed by a Captain Brian McNiven. He was commanding 253 Supply Depot Platoon and he said, "I've only got one position left, and they're all filled," and I said, "What was that?" and he said, "Temporary corporal driver," that's what it says on the establishment. He said, "Ok, you can have that."

01:30 Of course that was the turning point for the next twenty-five years of my career. If he had of said, "Out," then, God only knows where I would have ended up. With that, I moved out of our camp at Torokina,

and went to a new campsite the 253 Supply Depot. From the dull webbing that we

02:00 used to have, khaki webbing and everything had to be blanketed white. Where you refrain from having any brass shining anywhere on your webbing, you suddenly applied Brasso to it and you made the sun shine out of its eyes. This is what we did for three or four weeks. We got to know each other and then we finally got on board a ship and we

02:30 went to Morotai, I think about November and we went to a camp in Morotai and then we stayed. It was a life of reasonable ease. There were lovely islands in the Halmaheras, and they had crystal clear water and plenty of fish. We used to organise a small boat and we would go across to one of the small islands

03:00 and spend two or three days at the islands. Under canvas and take your own rations over, and have bully beef barbeque I suppose. We just used to laze around and do nothing. Then back to your unit again and you would have a few chores, cleaning up around the area, cleaning vehicles, etc. Then, a Japanese war crime trial started in Morotai

03:30 and they issued passes to anybody who wanted to go, as a member to watch the procedures. I got a pass and went to a ten o'clock session or twelve o'clock session or something. From memory a Japanese major was on some heinous crime, I can't really remember, I don't think it was terrible dreadful,

04:00 like killing or beheading etc, or it would have stuck in my mind, probably cruelty or starvation or something. It was bad if the end result was you died from starvation. I sat in on that and saw something new, and Christmas came and still no shipping available to take us to Japan, the troops were getting very agitated. See, we only arrived in November, because the other troops from the islands

04:30 particularly the infantry units, they had volunteered and were ear marked to go to Japan, two months previously, at least. They were doing nothing other than drilling around and drilling around. At Christmas time the Minister for Defence came up, a fellow by the name of Frank Ford and old Frank Ford and his Bombay bloomers, and his khaki

05:00 shirt, a dress say several hundred, I would think, at the theatre on Bougainville and the theatre was literally on a rising hill so you could sit down and they'd screen the stage which was at the bottom of the hill. The Minister stood up on the stage there and started to talk, even then, the youth that I was I felt sorry for the poor man,

05:30 he was booed and shouted down. He was only trying to do his job. He couldn't bring ships out by just clicking his fingers. They belonged to the Americans and the Americans would give us shipping when they were ready to do so after their own needs were filled. That is an episode that was stuck in my mind, and I gave it a write up in one of my books.

06:00 On one of these trips in early January, for one of the islands for swimming and overnight stays, coming back I sat in the back of a three-ton truck to go back to camp. The driver came and slammed the tailboard up and unfortunately one of my toes was underneath the tailboard and squashed the top of it. So I had to go to the 2/9th Australian General Hospital. They amputated a little bit of the top toe,

06:30 and I hurt my back at the same time, when I fell out of the truck. I was sitting on a pile of tents or something and when this happened I fell back. One of my main concerns was my toes because I wanted to get to Japan and we knew that we were going within three or four weeks. They treated my toe with antibiotics etc, and they just gave me painkillers for my back.

07:00 That injury was never recorded on my records. It's played up with me over the last thirty-five years, maybe more of that later. My OC came around to see me to say, "Look, we're going in about three days time, are you fit enough to go?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "I'll go and see the doctor," and he came back and said, the doctor said, "Oh, providing you go to the regimental aid post on board the ship everyday to get your toe dressed."

07:30 That's how I hobbled on board, the Taos Victory it was called, an American Liberty ship and set sail for Japan. American troop ships had bunks, think about five high down the holes, you only have about eighteen inches to squeeze into and that's where you slept, and five high and lots and lots of people crammed into

08:00 the various holes and also the American ships only had two meals a day. They had sort of spam and corn for breakfast and maybe spam or something else for dinner at night. There was enough food but it was very, very poor quality indeed. There never seemed to be quite enough, if you went back for backup, there wouldn't be any there. However, north of the

08:30 Philippines we ran into a typhoon and you could see the bow of the ship go right up above your eyes, and then bang, down it would go into the ocean and a great splash would come over the ship. Lots and lots of people got sick and I don't know why I didn't, but I didn't. When I turned up for meals there was a stack of food, so I never went hungry during the three or four days of the typhoon. We ploughed on

09:00 and finally we moved into the Japanese Inland Sea, and just cruising up the Inland Sea, I think only about four or five knots I would say. Swarms of Japanese fishing boats, little fishing boats came alongside and this was the first time that we'd seen them, live Japanese out of uniform, they were fishing for a living. They came up and

09:30 they had learnt the word very quickly, “Cigarette, lolly,” the men used to throw them some cigarettes over to them, lollies over. Even the freezing cold water, if a packet of cigarettes went into the water and it was floating, they would dive in and get it. It was snowing at the time and these people had padded jackets on and just for the want of a cigarette or a packet of lollies they did that. Finally the next morning

10:00 we moved into Kure Harbour and saw the destruction that had taken place in Kure. For the record, Kure was a forbidden naval base, no outsiders, no foreigners had been to Kure for years, years and years because it was a big naval shipbuilding yard. One of the big docks there, probably the biggest dock in the world, built the Yamanoto [Yamato]

10:30 which was eighty two thousand tons and it had eighteen-inch guns, which was two inches bigger than any battle gun that we had. This was enormous with a crew of about six thousand people. It was launched about a year before the war, to protect the waters in and around Japan. It had been in the big sea battles around the Philippines,

11:00 they ventured out and headed down towards where the battles were taking place. The Americans probably would have had an exaggeration, fifty, ninety aircraft carriers, each with thirty or forty planes on and this ship was just surrounded by torpedo bombers and dive bombers, and without firing its big guns in anger it was sunk, with all on board. Because the anti-aircraft guns fired

11:30 and I wonder how many American aircraft were lost through that. The pride of the Japanese navy went to the bottom. It only had oil for one trip at any rate. The sailors knew that when they left home they would return back. Back to Kure, our first visions of it after embarking the next morning we got on backs of trucks and went through the streets of Kure and down to a,

12:00 what we call the RAASC [Royal Australian Army Service Corps] Area, AASC in those days, Australian Army Service Corps area, behind Kure railway station and it was a bombed out factory and we stayed there for three or four days. Accommodation, well accommodation just wasn’t there. You had one of these camp stretchers, had some blankets and that was about it.

12:30 There were no kitchens as such, we had the old wilds cooker, churning steam out like a steam engine and cooking food. The cooks did it the best that they could under the circumstances. From the islands where we lived in relative comfort, and the supply system worked well, we got fed, it may not have been a la carte like in a hotel or somewhere,

13:00 but everyone was quite happy as far as I know with the food. If someone was to listen to this might say, “The man doesn’t know what he was talking about,” there is an argument in it but we were always well fed, in comparison. In Kure the food was mediocre. Of course it was snowing and we didn’t have cold weather clothing, we had our normal

13:30 woollen uniforms, buttoned up at the neck and we had an army overcoat but that was about it. Probably we might have had woollen long johns and singlets, I forget now. We were always fairly cold and at night time it was quite freezing in the bare barrack room with just floors, and the windows blown out, etc. They had a potbelly stove in the centre and you would feed it wood

14:00 and there was no shortage of people stoking the stove throughout the night to keep it red hot to keep the warmth in. Fortunately we were there for about four days and we had other things to do, like going to Iwakuni which was to set up a Supply Depot down there. After doing that we had to go and sort out equipment etc, at another camp and the camp was called Kaitaichi, which was about four miles away from Hiroshima

14:30 and so we went there, the barracks were not better, the windows were blown out and the kitchens, and there was no hot water for showers. So we stayed there for about a fortnight, three weeks and packed up and we went down to Iwakuni. Iwakuni was a British Commonwealth air force base, it was the headquarters and they had a RAF [Royal Air Force], air vice marshal they’re called,

15:00 Marshal Boucher, and he was the youngest air vice marshal in the RAF. The fighter cover for detailed operations, so being so young everybody behind his back would call him ‘Boy Boucher’. The barracks there were a little bit better, they were ex barracks for the Japanese air force, but still no hot water for showers, other than

15:30 they had big, a third of the size of a good size swimming pool, and they had three of these in a hanger, deep down in about four feet of water, and they were steaming hot. You could go in these after getting under a row of showers, twenty-five showers along the wall, having your shower with cold water and then plunging into this hot water.

16:00 It was heaven after the cold shower. Eventually we only stayed at the airbase for about three months and had to setup our supply depots and supply food and petroleum items to the air force, other than aviation gas, which the air force looked after themselves. Then we moved out because the air force wanted the accommodation for themselves. At that stage they had

16:30 an Australian 77th Squadron there, I think and they had an RAF squadron there and they had an Indian squadron there and a New Zealand squadron there, so there were quite a lot of airplanes on Iwakuni

airfield. We moved out to a rayon factory about three miles away, it had been bombed out. But the big warehouses were quite ok, the roofs were patched up by the Japanese labour and for accommodation, we had the managing

17:00 director's house, a big mansion of a place. It housed all us troops, a place for sergeants, a place for the one officer. A kitchen, which coked, we were very well off. So we setup there and supplied the air force and we used to get fresh bread in daily from Kure and we'd distribute it to the air force units.

17:30 It might be worth saying at this stage that the Japanese had some good beer according to our starved tastes after being in the islands for so long. They had Asahi beer and a Nippon beer. You could buy a bottle of the Asahi beer or Nippon beer for two yen, and at that stage there was forty-eight yen to the Australian pounds, so there was twenty-four bottles of beer to the Australian pound. Although it was strictly

18:00 forbidden, a packet of cigarettes, which cost us six pence, you could sell to the Japanese for twenty yen. That one packet of six pence cigarettes equalled a beer and this seemed like a good trade. The brewery was in town and our guys were just greedy and they kept going to the brewery and loading up a three-ton truck, and finally an air force officer came across to see us, an amenities officer.

18:30 We had warning he was coming and we had all this beer, probably three hundred and fifty crates in the big hangers, or sheds that we had there. We heard he was coming over to do an inspection but his reasons were to see how much beer we had. We got all the Japanese labourers and storemen that we had, carried beer on their shoulders down behind the coal dump about fifty yards down, and stacked all our beer not all, we left about fifty cases in there, in behind the coal dump. So when this wing commander

19:00 looked at us and said, "How many people have you got on strength?" I said, "Fifty five." He said, "Well, you've got too much beer for fifty five people, so you will have to sell the air force twenty or thirty cases," so we sold them thirty cases and bought back our other three hundred and put in there. There were no drunken orgies, people used to drink a lot of beer at night time. We had fights within the unit and they used to just settle down,

19:30 we'd have talks and drink a lot of beer, which was done for years. So that was Iwakuni. Also while I was there I had a cyst and I had to go to the RAF hospital to get this cyst lanced off. They were short of patients and they would have put a slash in the system, put a bandage on, "Home James home," but being short of patients they put me to bed and I stayed for four days.

20:00 It happened to be over the 9th June and that was my birthday. So one of the nursing sisters, Sister Jane Seymour said, "We can't have you in bed on your birthday. I'll get a jeep and I will take you down to Iwakuni," west Iwakuni where a magnificent old bridge, about one thousand years old called the Kintaikyo Bridge. It had no steel spikes or nails in it and it was all put together by wooden pegs. It was

20:30 about five arches, like so, and it was a favourite stop with all the troopers and airmen. There was a Japanese photographer there and would take a photo. So Jane Seymour took me there and I got a birthday photo taken on my twenty first birthday, which I have in volume one of my book. Then we went back to a hotel and had Japanese rice cake or something and a cup of tea and then she took

21:00 me back to the hospital, and back to bed and I was discharged the next day. A very pleasant, one day out with a charming sister and my wound had completely heeled so back to work I went. Another incident at Iwakuni was, the air force had probably about one thousand forty four gallon drums of fuel and

21:30 they caught on fire for one reason or another, and they were stacked too close together or whatever, anyway they started to burn and as they burnt on the bottom the top drums were becoming very, very heated and expanding into a gas and when they exploded a great flame went up into the air and the drums were thrown up thirty, forty feet into the air, each weighing two hundred pounds or more. The air force

22:00 brought over their one or two fire engines, that they had on base at the moment because they were just starting up and then about half way through the fire in the afternoon the local Japanese fire brigade came. They had no fuel and their firemen were pushing the fire engine, and they had pushed it about two miles. When they got there they just had these

22:30 pumps, don't know what good they did, but I will always remember these poor Japanese firemen pushing, after the fire had been going for an hour or more. So that's another funny incident. After Iwakuni, we stayed there for about eight or nine months and an Indian supply depot took over, with Indian crew, because the British Commonwealth Occupation Force as you know, consisted of

23:00 Australian troops, Indian troops and New Zealand. So part of the Indian troops was with the supply depot. We went up to a place called Kobe. At Kobe there is a small headquarters there, and Kobe was one of the major sea ports in Japan and it was savagely bombed, naturally for its military importance,

23:30 so the docks were pretty well ruined. The people again, and do you remember the Japanese people lived in paper flimsy houses, the walls were just rice paper, there were sliding doors like that and just paper.

When the fire bombers came over their houses were just destroyed, by the thousands. The Americans sent B29s over

24:00 on fire bombing raids and some of the fire bombing raids would kill a lot more people in one night than Hiroshima and Nagasaki put together. You hear about Nagasaki and Hiroshima, because one bomb did the damage. They sent two hundred B29s over, and dropped one hundred thousand incendiary bombs and the damage and the enormous fire storms everywhere

24:30 and the people couldn't get out and they were burnt to death. The numbers killed in the firestorms were far, far greater than Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While at Kobe, there was a beautiful city, a few miles north called Osaka and it had not been bombed because there was nothing of importance apparently to bomb there. It was an age-old city and beautiful buildings, Osaka castle

25:00 you know that stood in all its glory. We used to go up there and do a bit of shopping, and come into shops. In the first couple of years there was nothing in the Japanese shops, there was no new merchandise at all. It was all second hand merchandise, sold by people, their heirlooms of their forbears, etc., sold to get some money to buy some food to exist.

25:30 Osaka was one of those places that had big markets for second hand goods of really good value. Being twenty one years of age I had no idea what valued pictures was, or anything else was but I noticed that some of the older and wiser people, such as my future father-in-law, Captain Heggie use to go down to these markets and buy up

26:00 lots of good and valuable things. I never got into that market, so I never made any money. Then from Kobe, we kept moving around still 253 Supply Depot Platoon, we went to Etajima, which was a couple of miles away from Kure. Stigma was the headquarters of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, and on Etajima

26:30 the major unit there was the Australian General Hospital. So we supplied the headquarters and the hospital, probably about maybe two thousand troops with their needs as far as food went. Remember that the food that we were distributing, grocer lines, tin stuff and things that you would buy of the grocer's shelf, all came from Australian. The meat came from Australia,

27:00 and fazed through the butchery platoon at Kure, either carcass meat and locked up into or beef bone out, we used to call it, beef bone out in cases of fifty pounds. The meat would come over frozen to us, because now we had refrigeration, we were on top of the world. The food certainly improved

27:30 enormously from 1946 to the time I'm looking at now is probably about early 1948. We ate fairly well, then towards the end of 1948 the Australian dependants started to come up here, now back tracking slightly, the occupation force that went to Japan,

28:00 came from the island, the AIF people, and their contract ended virtually on the 30th June 1947, that's when the AIF was officially disbanded. They were either out, or they could join the interim army and remain in, the majority of them opted for out. In June 1947 we got an influx of

28:30 new people coming in from Australia and they took over from the old wartime timers and so the families started to arrive towards the end of 1947, early 1948. They moved into beautifully constructed western styled houses, specially built for them, new roads were put in, new sewers put in, new water mains were put in, the electricity put in and they were three bedroom houses, they were very nice buildings indeed.

29:00 One family, one house. So with the families coming in they also had to be fed, and they couldn't buy it from the Japanese market so our supply depot had to feed them and to do this we had a pro forma list which showed all the items, you know through flour, tinned foods, condensed milk, going all through the grocery line. Probably one hundred and fifty lines

29:30 and there was a little box beside each one and the dependent would tick what they wanted in each one. We had a list of each dependent in each house so they were rationed, so our Japanese ration clerks, would say, "Five in that house – one sixty fourth of ounce of pepper, that's five sixty fourths of an ounce of pepper, sugar, coffee, etc."

30:00 We used to supply groceries once a week and then we would supply fresh bread daily, except Sunday. Then we would supply fresh meat, I think three times a week, because all these houses had refrigeration so there was no problem. Of course this was not for nought, the grateful government, sent the families over there, we were accommodating them, I'm not sure if there was a big cost or no cost at all. But they had to pay for their rations

30:30 so we would send them an account, once a week, showing them what they bought and the head of the family would take the account to the cash office and either pay cash or get his pay book debited with the amount of the rations that his family had for the week. That was an extra chore that we had to do fairly quickly. The dependents were very happy. The

31:00 problem with fresh things, with fresh vegetables and this is really before the real quick freeze as we know it today came into being. We had a BCOF farm organised, with some guys who knew all about farming, and lots of Japanese labours, I think the farm was called 'Halamura', and so they used to grow

tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce and things down there.

31:30 It had to be cultivated by our people because buying Japanese fresh vegetables, etc. They used night soil for their fertiliser and they had beautiful vegetables, undoubtedly you would hesitate at whether it was ok, but we were forbidden to buy off them. The farm used to supply virtually enough

32:00 for the families, particularly with kids, they got first choice on some and the rest supplemented the food that was left from our supply depots. They did try sending up from Australia, potatoes, onions and pumpkin. Deck cargo on ships, but it took about three weeks to come up and when I was out in another unit in Kure later on,

32:30 we used to get all these potatoes, bags and bags of potatoes off the ship and they would smell, smell, and smell. So they had to be tipped out across a table, with a wire mesh table, and the Japanese labourers would pick out the potatoes, and we had to wash the good ones out at the end of the line. You got new potatoes, which were then re-bagged

33:00 and sent out immediately, because they wouldn't last too long after being washed. The onions were a complete washout, we thought the onions should but it wasn't worth continuing with the onions and nor was it worth continuing with the potatoes. But the good old Queensland Blue pumpkin lasted the voyage and we were still smiling when it landed at our supply depot in Kure. That was about all we got in the way of fresh veggies from

33:30 Australia. But fruit survived ok. There were refrigerated ships coming over and whereas you couldn't refrigerate vegetables, but you could cool fruit as we do nowadays, box of apples, go to the cooler. There was a lot of fresh Australian fruit, fairly continuous in the supply Depots. They would go down to the units

34:00 with apples and pears, they were ok because they used to put green pears on at that end and they would come off just about ripe at this end. That's how we got the food, we produced vegetables ourselves, we got fresh carcass meat from Australia, we got fresh beef boned meat in cases from Australia and naturally all the grocery items came from Australia.

34:30 So there I stayed on Etajima, and then Etajima then closed down because the BCOF Headquarters were going to move to Kure. During this period India and Pakistan got their independence and so in June round about 1947, it might have been 1948, they got their independence

35:00 and all the Indians and Pakistanis packed up, we've got to go home. One funny incident about this was there was an Indian captain at the headquarters along the corridor, and he use to pass a certain officer, and I won't name him because he's family is still about, past this certain officer of major rank, he wouldn't salute,

35:30 and this bloke turned around and said, "Captain, don't you salute your superiors?" When the independence came this lowly Indian captain donned a red cap, with full colonel pips and do you know what happened walking along the corridor the Australian major walked and didn't salute, so the Indian colonel turned around and said, "Don't you salute your superiors?" that was a story that went around, true or false

36:00 I don't know. It probably was true because these people are normally promoted two ranks up, if they were regulars. They went back, and that was the last that we saw them in Japan. From Etajima, 253 Supply Depot virtually reduced its establishment somewhat in Tokyo, to do a very small supply job in Tokyo at

36:30 a camp called Ebisu Camp, three or four miles out of Tokyo. I was taken out of 253 Supply Depot Platoon, at this stage I was a staff sergeant, I'd been promoted corporal sergeant, staff sergeant over 1947, I think. I went to Kure as the chief clerk of 41 Advanced Supply Depot. The difference between a

37:00 253 Supply Depot Platoon and the advanced supply depot – the advanced supply depot was providing for eight platoons, it was the major storage depot for foodstuffs coming in from Australia. As chief clerk there, we had to account for everything coming in naturally, ships would come in and there was a lot of pilferage from the ships. It was only two miles from the ship

37:30 to the depot, and yet when the trucks would arrive at the depot there would be this, this and this some stuff missing. The MPs and others kept grateful watch down there and couldn't actually pin it down for quite a number of weeks. Now with the Japanese labours unloading particularly when sugar cane they would button up their bottom shirt and tighten their belts and pour the sugar down

38:00 their chest and then they became bloated, over nourished Japanese labourers with big fat bellies right around. Anything else that you could break open and put down there was being stolen. Of course on one occasion a whole truck load of sugar went missing, dockets appeared to be right, this IB, that this, the investigation

38:30 branch got onto it and pinned one driver down to putting this on the black market. I don't know the result of that but after about two or three months and this was going on now for a couple of years. I just happened to be there when this thieving started to take on a new theme, and increased instead of

decreasing. But it all comes out originally when we reconciled the ships from the manifest,

39:00 the manifest that we now had in the supply depot it worked out to the last case. There I was in 41 ASD [Advanced Supply Depot], and during that stage, in 41 ASD, we had the BCOF Field Baking Platoon, BCOF Cold Storage Platoon, the BCOF Butchery Platoon,

39:30 nearly all under the same roof. As a staff sergeant, when they were short up at the butchery or the bakery I used to stand there as sort of the officer-in-charge. I got quite a lot of experience in handling, making sausages, for instance, cutting up meat, I physically didn't do it but I used to watch and supervise.

40:00 You had to be very careful if you weighed in a carcass at one hundred and fifty pounds, a leg of beef, it was one hundred and fifty pounds or maybe a bit less and put it down at the butchery platoon and turned out sausages, you had to get a percentage of sausages, after weighing the bones and the fat. That was interesting there was always a fight, to get a couple pounds of a steak and put it into your pocket. Cold storage platoon, this was an

40:30 and ex-Japanese building, and it had cold stores the same as we have got in Australia today, these were stacked with carcass beef, lamb carcasses, mutton carcass, butter in cool rooms, etc. Once a month we used to have to check exactly how much we had, to make sure nothing was going missing.

41:00 We'd have an empty cold storage room and the full one. We'd get the Japanese labourers, with aprons on and cool weather clothing, to go in and they'd lift the carcasses out and they came in the corridor and put them on the scales. We'd weight them – fifty-three pounds for a carcass, twenty-eight pounds for a carcass, etc. When we emptied that room, and we would put it in that room, everything was added

41:30 and there would certainly be a discrepancy through dehydration. In the new room you would write down ten thousand pounds of lamb, to nine thousand six hundred pounds of lamb, because of four hundred pound of dehydration. The same was with beef. That was an ongoing thing and we had lots and lots of Japanese labourers.

Tape 4

00:30 **You were talking about the cold storage?**

The cold storage platoon and how we use to account for the storerooms of meat etc that we had. The storeroom of butter that was fairly easy because you used to go around and we had spaces around and you'd go around and count the cases and that was it. One fine day, the cases had to be moved and it was hollow, which was outside

01:00 layers, it was like a brick wall with a great big hole in the centre. What had happened? The back of the cold storage was on to a street near the harbour, little or never used at night time, no houses down there it was just down to the local wharf. The Japanese had been up in the roof, and it was only about fifty meters away from our guardhouse and had removed a pane out of the roof, or a plank,

01:30 then lifted the butter out and we lost probably two or three hundred cases of butter. We had been checking them for months and months and months. There it was, another way. Talking about the Japanese, you might just mention on Japanese and violence against the occupation force. I was there for six years and I never heard of a case of violence

02:00 against a member of the occupation force by the Japanese. That is violence directed against the occupational force. Down at the local taverns, sure, there were fights between the Japanese and the Australian soldiers, too much to drink, fighting over local bar girls or something. You wouldn't call that violence against the Japanese, it was just a petty crime. There I was for six years and I'd never heard

02:30 of any violence against the occupational force. The reason for this is as I said earlier, that when the surrendered terms were negotiated with Japan, well dictated with Japan not negotiated. It was stated that the emperor would say he was no longer god-emperor, and there was a statement saying that, "No violence would be taken against the occupational force."

03:00 This he did, over the radio shortly after the surrender took place. The Japanese still, with their emperor, he still was an emperor-god to them, but he said he wasn't, obeyed him. Firstly, if he was in hiding somewhere, like maybe the same, "Kill all the Americans or Australians," fine, he would have had thousands of Japanese doing exactly that, but

03:30 he receded and the Japanese were very obedient people when they did that. You could go on and on and on and talk about the atrocities on the islands, etc., but that goes down the tier of the officers' structure, we'll leave that, as I don't know very much about that only what I've read, I can't give you a first hand account.

I was going to say, was there any resentment from the occupational forces towards the

Japanese?

04:00 Initially when we went in there was a non-fraternisation program where we weren't even allowed to talk to the Japanese, but this was so stupid because we started to employ them for our supply depots, trained transport etc, we employed them as clerks, tally clerks. In those days abacus experts,

04:30 which were the same as a computer today, just as fast. I remember a competition-taking place in 1948 in Tokyo against the early model calculator, electronic calculator, and the Japanese experts on abacus. There was a series of four programs and the abacus won, that was all the American technology built up through the war years and they weren't as fast,

05:00 electronic it wasn't the fastest. But now of course you could do that in a fraction of a second. We employed clerks who could use the abacus and they did all our calculations for us and the non-fraternisation was really a joke. Because again, you were allowed out at night and you would go down to the local taverns, unless something unforeseen had taken place there, the MPs would come along and put a notice

05:30 on the door, 'Out of bounds for all ranks', so that tavern is off bounds. The Japanese proprietors had to make sure all they were selling was just drink. I just wanted to make that point about violence, I don't know how my colleagues saw it, but that was from my viewpoint. Still down in Kure area and from Kure

06:00 I was the staff sergeant at the time and I was sent down to Australia, to Puckapunyal to do a warrant officer's course and I hadn't had leave for a couple of years, so I took the opportunity while I was down at Puckapunyal, when I finished to get leave. I did a warrant officer's course down there and there were sixteen people in the course and for some unknown reason and I don't know why, I came top of the course and

06:30 after the course I went home to Wentworth Falls and I had a month's leave and then I went back to Japan. A funny incident, I went back to Japan in a Qantas airplane, which was a converted, I think it was a Lancastrian bomber, they took the inners out of it and put seating in, with a safety belt. You sat face to face, that there,

07:00 how you and I are seating here now. We took of from Sydney and we had a stop at Manila overnight because the plane just couldn't reach Japan as they do now days. So we were booked in at the Manila Hotel and I went down and like all the passengers, and we got our number for the room, I went up to room 48, and opened the door and there was this smashing looking

07:30 nursing sister in there. I said, "Oh," and she said, "I think there is some mistake, don't you?" I couldn't say more, I just said, "Yes sister." She was commissioned and I was a staff sergeant. So that was sorted out. Then we went down to dinner and for dinner they had quail, there were about five quails on the plate

08:00 and I was hungry, because it wasn't like the days of travelling business class or something like that on an airline today, we weren't continuously fed the best of food or the best of wine. There, I doubt whether we got a biscuit. I was hungry when I got to the table, and these five miserable little quails, there was no meat on them, and they were all bone. I have never eaten quail yet, I have seen them at restaurants, top part of the restaurant meals

08:30 but I wouldn't touch them with a forty-foot pole. So that was an experience there. The next morning we took off and landed at Iwakuni Island and I was back in Japan again. When I got back, my colonel, Colonel Fairclough called me into the office and said, "I've just promoted you to warrant office class 1." I said, "Oh, thank you very much sir." He said, "You did well on your course." I said, "I got a pass, sir." He said,

09:00 "The paper I've got in front of me says you did better than that." He appeared very abrupt guy, but he was a very nice guy. He was the commander of the Royal Australian Army Corps and for about three or four years in Japan. He wrote a book about the RAASC in Japan, a book called Equal to the Task, by Fairclough. So every member of the corps in those days bought the book, I've still got a copy

09:30 and I still refer to it, extensively when I was writing about Japan in volume 1 of my book. I was WO1 [Warrant Officer First Class] and he said, "I will put you in charge of the field baking platoon," because they hadn't had an OC for about eighteen months. Just temporaries, just coming in and out, and he said, "I want this done, I want this done," down to the field baking platoon I went. Then I learnt something about making bread, and turning out about eight

10:00 thousand loaves a day I would say. We had two shifts, they were mainly Japanese bakers, I had a staff sergeant Australian baker and bakers and the other dozen would have been either Japanese bakers or Japanese trainees or Japanese workers, I would know. The bakehouse in the wintertime was freezing cold. We had

10:30 three wood fired ovens which had to be fired up, with wood about three foot long, and they'd be fired up about six o'clock in the evening and got the oven to the right temperature. Of course the bakehouse was freezing cold, and as you know when you are making bread it has got to be kept warm, or room temperature, so we used to get

11:00 forty four gallon drums and have them cut in half and make braziers out of them, and have two big fires in the centre of the bakehouse and the three mixing machines there turning around the dough, each mixing machine took about a bag of flour. Then you put the additives into it, then it had to be put on a table and as you know bakers roll their bread out and roll it and cut it and weigh it and slam it into a greased tin

11:30 and then it goes into the oven and out it comes. So I learnt a little bit about making bread. Mainly about making sure the bread was always on time, we never had problems. If an oven went out we just had to start earlier and do three shifts instead of two shifts. So that was good experience. From there they need someone up at Tokyo to

12:00 command for want of a better word, command 253 Supply Depot Platoon. Because now my old unit that had been gutted of personnel and a lot of the Japanese were working in it. It also had a detachment of a bakery, and detachment of a butchery, detachment of cold storage and also the supply depot platoon. I had four detachments there and I had to feed the locals in

12:30 Ebisu camp, about four miles out of Tokyo. Also had to feed the British Embassy. The British Embassy didn't have an ambassador, it had a controller in there and it was Lady Gascoigne, so he must have been sir or something like that, I forget now.

13:00 Lady Gascoigne used to ring up and would want certain cuts of meat etc, and I was told, "Give them what they want," so she got it. It came Christmas time and I got an invitation to the embassy to a farewell Christmas party or whatever it might be. I went there, the first time I had mixed with such high society, but I was still a warrant officer.

13:30 I had a wonderful time and I was eating little bits and pieces here and there. When I left she gave me two bottles of embassy scotch whisky, this was especially brewed scotch for embassies, the British embassy throughout the world. It didn't last long, I shared it with my mates, ever so hostile, where I used to drink of an evening. I took these two bottles and put them on the bar and away they went. Another incident, quite

14:00 interesting, is that the bakery was at the supply depot with its three detachments was backing on to a Japanese house, the Japanese house had a family of about eight in it. When we did beef bone out etc, from the carcasses we used to throw things away and throw all the fat away and the Japanese were still pretty poor even for food two or three years later.

14:30 So through my interpreter I lent over the fence and I said to the old man there "Would you like the bones from the meat that we cut off them?" and he said, "Yes, yes, yes and what about the fat?" They boiled it down and they got soup out of the bones I suppose, and the fat they got lard. It was no good to us and I wasn't committing any misdemeanour by misappropriating any army rations.

15:00 Then in the bakehouse, as you know after the bread is made and it is all rolled out and put on the tables, the tables are wooden tables and you scrape and scrape all the bits and pieces off and put it in the bin. I said to the guys "Don't throw it away, put a drop of water with it and roll it up in your hand and throw it in the oven," which was still hot "And when it comes out throw it over the fence to the kids over there." They did this, and they used to get some bread too from the scraps.

15:30 Christmas came, an interpreter came to me and said to me, "Oh, the man next door wants you to go over for Christmas lunch," but we had a fantastic lunch organised at the sergeants' mess. I didn't want to offend the old guy so I said, "Ok, I would be very happy to go over." So I went over and they had all sorts of nice food, which they'd brought in. But he also brought in a bottle of Vickers gin,

16:00 with no additives and he brought himself half a dozen Asahi beer, not just for him, the gin without additives was for me. Then in Japanese style you would fill a glass and say, "Kampai!", which is 'down the hatch!', and he was down the hatch with his beer quite easily. I was down the hatch with my full glasses of gin and two hours later the bottle was nearly

16:30 gone and so was I. I managed to eat a little bit without disgracing myself, I fell over the fence and went to bed and woke up the next morning. That was their hospitality for giving them our discards. That's an incident that took place there, I will always remember and I've written up. From Tokyo I

17:00 went back to Kure again, to the 41 Supply Depot. I was in charge of administration down there. The major at the time was Major Alan Blake, who later became Colonel Alan Blake. So I was a factotum and used to be fitted into various spots where I was required. That's where I got experience at the cold storage platoon, bakery platoon, and I was at the bakery platoon

17:30 for several months, the butchery platoon was making sausages etc. That was my time in Kure. Then during this period, a year before the Korean War suddenly broke out and so all BCOF personnel were asked if they would volunteer for the Korean War, and everybody stepped forward but of course they couldn't take everybody, I stepped forward

18:00 but what would they want a warrant officer for with only a platoon transport, the sergeant's job and I got left behind as a lot of others did. We always said, why the Korean War broke out, because we were running BCOF down, just before it broke down and selling of a lot of surplus food in cases from the 41 Supply Depot, the sellers there, we had damage ones of rum,

18:30 the stone bottles and each had a gallon of over proof rum in it. Only one person had the key to that cellar and we used to check it very regularly. You count the damaged ones, there were two damaged ones, it was all there, no problem. The Royal Navy then took an interest in the Korean War and started to send ships into Kure Harbour and they were entitled to run, I don't think

19:00 our navy were, so we sent it down and they came back and they were furious, they said to us, "It was diluted, there was that much rum in it and the rest was water." About two or three months before that the Koreans, North Koreans had one hundred and fifty bottles, damaged ones of rum amongst the supplies they brought. We always maintained that the war always started because they were so furious because when they opened the rum

19:30 it only contained 10% rum and 90% water. True or false, I wouldn't know. The Korean War went on and it was still going on and when the time came when the last of the BCOF troops. True BCOF troops were being sent home to Australia and a lot of newcomers from Australia, who were recruited for the British, force Korea took over our place

20:00 at 41 ASD, a Canadian unit took over 41 ASD, a part of the Korean force. Eventually the date came and on the 10th February 1952. I said goodbye to Japan and boarded the troop ship HMT Devonshire and a fortnight later I disembarked in Sydney. That ended, that was three years on the islands and six years in Japan.

20:30 We landed in Sydney on the Devonshire and disembarked, there were no victory parades for us through the streets of Sydney and I immediately went on about six or eight weeks leave and I went back to Wentworth Falls, and I had my leave up there with the family. Then came back to the army and then had been posted to

21:00 Headquarters RAASC troops in Annerley, Queensland, which is the RAASC CMF [Citizens' Military Force] component of RAASC forces in and around Brisbane. I went there as a warrant officer trainer and had to drop a rank here, because I was only a temporary warrant officer, so I dropped a rank to warrant officer

21:30 class 2 and it might have been noted that during my promotion steps I had never been a warrant officer class 2 before I jumped from staff sergeant to warrant officer class 1. Now I reverted to the lowly WO2 [Warrant Officer Second Class] stage and so I worked with Annerley and this is very interesting troops and how we used to go out on a lot of exercises. One thing of interest is that we used to go down to a place called

22:00 Logan Village, for a weekend camp and we would end up for a meal on Sunday night at the Logan Village local pub before we went back to Brisbane. As you know, Logan Village is now a city. When I was there in 1952/53, there was one pub there and a couple of schools. At this stage I was offered

22:30 to submit an application for a commission. I couldn't get a commission in Japan, and that was why I was promoted to WO1. Because at that stage the officer training unit in Victoria was just about to start up and the age limit to go to OCS [Officer Cadet School] was 27, when I was in Japan and they said I fitted within that category – I would have to go to OCS. However, when I got back to Australia

23:00 the age limit had dropped to 24, so I couldn't go to OCS because I was too old. But you could get a commission another way by being recommended by your CO or the general officer commanding. I was recommended and I went before a promotion board. Major General Secombe was the president of the board. I passed and a few weeks later I was down at the school of infantry

23:30 and was bashing the square for six weeks again. Teaching me to be a regimental soldier once again. After six weeks there I went across to the school of tactics and administration, I did eight weeks there and finally I graduated there into the Australian staff corps as a lieutenant. Sixty-eight started out in that course and seventeen passed.

24:00 The calamity there was sixty-eight went into the school of infantry, but there were only forty-eight individual rooms available, at the school of tactics and administration. Twenty people had to be culled at the school of infantry, they might have been border line and they could have gone on. So we went to the school of tactics and administration in 1948. I was commissioned there. In actual fact, the

24:30 school of tactics and administration during our course became the wing of the Royal Military College. Because the defence act under the Australian Military Regulations stated that you couldn't be promoted to commissioned rank in staff corps unless you were a graduate of RMC [Royal Military College]. So they had to make the school of tactics and administration a wing of RMC and they had an RMC instructor sitting there for the eight weeks.

25:00 That's how I graduated into the staff corps. Technically I'm a Duntroon graduate, but the real Duntroon graduates look at scamps like me and shake their head a little, I think. However, it never affected my career one way or another. From there I was posted to Tasmania, Devonport Tasmania where I spent four years, again with the CMF unit,

25:30 44 Company RAASC, and you know just training and seeing soldiers do tactics and driving disciplines. Eventually, after a couple of years I took over another company as well, the 47 Company at Burnie, so I was running a total of two CMF companies and something like about eight platoons in various outlining

places around the north coast of

26:00 Tasmania. I stayed there for four years and finally I was then posted to Puckapunyal, as the senior instructor in the air dispatch wing, which hadn't yet started up down there and so I was promoted to captain on my arrival at Puckapunyal. I might add, whilst in Tasmania I did two courses and I did a parachute course, which entails you

26:30 to doing six day time jumps and two night time jumps at the parachute school at Williamstown and then I went back and did a commando type course, and it was called the 1st AHQ [Air Headquarters] Amphibious Raids Course. There were a lot of interesting things that happened on that course about raiding Sydney, etc. At the RAASC centre at Puckapunyal I took over the air dispatch wing. We had to start from scratch with writing

27:00 lessons, writing exercises etc. I was there for two years and I sat for promotional exams for major there and passed those and I was then offered an appointment to go to the British Army in Singapore for two years, or possibly go to Staff College the following year. The Staff College

27:30 selections hadn't been made at that stage. My CO, Colonel Birch said, "I'm pretty sure if you apply for Staff College you will be accepted," but talking it over with my wife we thought that "Singapore would be nice for a change," and away we went to Singapore. One of the main things that I missed out on in Devonport was that I was married. I'd forgotten to back track. I was married while I was in Devonport,

28:00 and my OC came up to Sydney when we were married at the Presbyterian Church in Ashfield, we had a reception at the Amory at Ashfield and that was on the 24th September 1954, and that was half way through my tour in Tasmania. The young lady I married was the daughter of my OC at 253 Supply Depot Platoon and I met her in Iwakuni several years before.

28:30 He didn't object so all went well. Back to Puckapunyal. I did a two-year stint there and taught people how to throw things out of airplanes and then to Singapore and I was attached to 6th Company RASC, Royal Army Service Corps, the British Army as their operations' officer, I was there for two years in Singapore, at Nicer camp.

29:00 At that stage we were clearing docks of supplies. Sixty-six three-ton trucks driven by British soldiers, and we had thirty-three trucks driven by the Malay uniform soldiers, a part of the British Army, Malay army didn't exist in those days at that stage. We had ninety-nine vehicles

29:30 there and another half dozen or so for administrative purposes. We used to clear the docks down at Singapore Harbour, take stores up to Kuala Lumpur and take stores up to the Thai boarder where fighting was still going on and it was a very pleasant time. We had a nice home, a bungalow type home and we had

30:00 two servants cum aides, amahs, as they were called, one was a cook amah, and one was a house/school amah, and we had a gardener three days a week, and the gardener also used to look after my car, polish my car. That was a pretty happy time down there. About six months before I was due to come home, my OC Major Arthur Parker, came into my office

30:30 and had big smiles all over his face and I said, "What's the matter sir?" he said, "Look, look read this," it read "Major Parker is posted as DAAQMG [Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General] Bahamas," so I said, "Are you going?" he said, "Don't be bloody stupid, of course I'm going." So away he went to the Bahamas and I was the senior captain and I became the OC of the 6th Transport Company

31:00 for the next six months. When it was disbanded in Singapore and it was reformed in the UK and went across to the British Army in the Rhine, as 6th Company RAASC. It was disbanded in Singapore because we had a lot of platoon and Malay soldiers and a lot of our soldiers were national servicemen who were finishing their time and it seemed easier rather than transferring a unit to the UK, disband in Singapore and reform it in the UK, which happened. Lorraine and I,

31:30 and our three children, one was born in Singapore hospital, a military hospital. I boarded the Italian ship the Flamina, and I sailed from Singapore down to Western Australia through Victoria and up to Sydney and disembarked in Sydney. So, that was the next episode that finished. When I finished my leave there,

32:00 I was informed by army headquarters that I had been posted to the USA for several months to learn something about heavy dropping, this is dropping supplies from a Hercules aircraft from one ton up to about sixteen tons, it had never been done in Australia before. I was sent to America to learn all about this. When I came back and was posted to RAAF Richmond, to an army attachment down there, it was called

32:30 "Air movements training and development unit, army component." I had the army component of twenty-three people, well it built up to twenty-three, when I was there, there were three people and when I left there was twenty-three. Five RAAF and when I left there were twenty-three RAAF, around about both the same. This was because of the introduction at that stage of the Caribou aircraft, which could do the dropping, the introduction of the Iroquois

33:00 helicopter which was being deployed to Vietnam and we had to check all the loads, being slung under

the Iroquois. Our unit down there was very, very busy for about four years. After four years there I was then posted to Headquarters 1 Army Air Supply Organisation, which has about three hundred people strong and we used to have about five or six platoons and a couple of companies.

33:30 This was the organisation that would supply the army from the air, lines of communication got cut off from underneath them and we could still fly over top and either land supplies or air drop supplies to them. The sole reason for the Army Air Supply Organisation. It was about two-thirds CMF, and there were some very fine CMF officers in the unit. One of them, Colonel John Hill, and he's still about

34:00 and I lunch with him every three or four months and John Hill was I think a major at the time and was in charge of one of the air supply control sections. So that was a happy time. After the air supply organisation, I was then posted to probably the best appointment that I had in the army, probably not the most exciting but certainly the most satisfying. And that was the senior administrative officer to the

34:30 Officer Training Unit at Scheyville, outside Windsor. The officers' training unit at Scheyville was full, so I had to cater for national service potential officers who were picked up in the birthday ballot and there are about ten thousand a year I think came in the birthday ballot. And Scheyville was formed around as an officer training unit. We'd take four intakes of a hundred a year,

35:00 that would be four hundred potential officers would be training in one year. The Scheyville had Colonel Ian Geddes, who was a wonderful officer, I doubt whether too many officers in the army could have done the most tremendous task as he did in such a short time. It took time to get the unit together and get recruits in. The senior instructor was a guy by the name of Lieutenant LG Clarke,

35:30 who was an ex SAS officer [Special Air Service]. Then we would go down to the recruit training battalions and interview people who volunteered to become officers. The interview process took place over two or three days, I didn't do the interviews myself, other officers went down.

36:00 You were actually getting at the end of the pipeline when they strolled into OTU [Operational Training Unit], the top two and a half per cent of the intellect of Australian youth. These were far, far better than any of the other officer producing organisations, such as RMC [Royal Military College] and OCS [Officer Cadet School], that's in my opinion. There might be high eyebrow rage

36:30 but I am sure that my colleagues at the officer training unit at Scheyville agree with me. In six months we turned out a competent, infantry platoon commander and other organisations would take a year or two years to do that. You were very, very ruthless, you got the best material possible but yet 30% of them failed. The pace was so great, early in the morning

37:00 late at night, we never let up and one mistake and you're out. These young guys had to go to Vietnam and command thirty infantry soldiers on the ground in battle, so you couldn't have "I think he would be ok, we'll give him a chance," because if you give him the chance, you are chancing the lives of a number of soldiers under his command. So only the very best went to Vietnam

37:30 from Scheyville. I had reports back and I heard, I did two years there, I had reports back from commanding officers who I knew very well, who commanded the battalions over there and they thought ever so highly of the graduates from the officer training unit, because they were trained so intelligent, they were so gung ho for the job.

38:00 They weren't, no I want say weren't, now I'm comparing them to the American platoons. The American platoons were very, very good at the job but they didn't have the sort training that we had. So there it was, a couple of years at Scheyville. At the last graduation parade, and we had four graduation parades a year, four big church parades a year and this is immaculate, everybody turned out and every spot was dusted off and their shoes and they shone etc,

38:30 and we had viewing officers, such as the Governor General, the Lord Casey. We had the various generals come through as viewing officers at each of these parades. The last parade that I attended before leaving was in December 1959,

39:00 and the acting general, General Long called me to one side and said, "Outside," and said, "You're being posted to the ground liaison group at Lapstone," I said, "Yes sir," I got a posting order saying "I was going up there as a general staff officer grade 2," he said, "You're going up there as grade 1," which means a promotion to lieutenant colonel.

39:30 I really, really was happy that night. However, my posting, this was the 23rd December and the posting orders were separate and they hadn't come through, the culminant of OTU and was left and a new culminant was marching in, in January and I'd done the stock take for him as the incoming officer,

40:00 and somebody had supervised the stock take for the outgoing office. Because it is very critical in an officers career that everything had to be right on stock takes. Big units like that become a bit blasé with equipment they took out here and there and don't do thorough searches to pick them up at the end, you could have discrepancies. But we had a fantastic good quartermaster and I presented a report in January, in early January

40:30 to the incoming culminant and he said, "I really don't believe this," and I said, "It's true sir, it is," he said, "What are you doing wearing lieutenant colonel pips?" and I said, "I was promoted on the 1st

January," he said, "I've got no record of that," "Well," I said, "The military secretary personally rang me two days ago, congratulated me, and General Long congratulated me on the 23rd December."

41:00 So fortunately, I was being posted out of the unit, that confutation didn't continue. I went up to Lapstone, which is only three miles down the road from my home here and I spent two years as the CO of 1 GL Section, ground liaison headquarters and from that

41:30 headquarters I had about seven or eight sections scattered around the countryside. Such at Richmond, Canberra, Annerley, Port Moresby, Singapore, Butterworth, Long Tan and New Delhi and so I had plenty of leeway to go visiting these people of mine, in my sections. I had two very excitable years there.

Tape 5

00:30 As I said when I'd left Headquarters 1GL [Ground Liaison] Group, I was posted to Randwick. The unit there was called 9 Supplies and Transport Column, which was a transport unit. This unit changed its name twice in the next three months

01:00 when the RAASC merged with the Royal Australian Engineers Transportation sections it then became the RACT, the Royal Australian Corps of Transport and when it became the Royal Australian Transport the name 9 ST column changed to 9 Transport Regiment. When I was at Randwick I commanded 9 Transport Regiment

01:30 and during the two years that I was there, I was only with the regiment for six months and then I stood in at Headquarters Eastern Command with the RACT [Royal Australian Corps of Transport] throughout New South Wales because the present officer there became ill and they didn't have a placement for about eighteen months. I was at Vic [Victoria] Barracks for about eighteen months. From that position I could oversee what was going on in my

02:00 own unit, 9 Transport Column, and all the other transport units and supply units in New South Wales. That appointment lasted for two years and then I was asked what my terminal appointment, what I would like as my terminal appointment, by the military secretary as I would be reaching fifty in a couple of years time. With tongue in cheek I said, "Oh, I would like to go back to Headquarters

02:30 1GL group," and he knowing full well I only lived three miles up the road and I was beginning to start to look to starting a nursery on retirement, he said, "Ok, we will put you back to Headquarters 1GL group." That's where I finished my army career, virtually another two years at Headquarters Command at Glenbrook. On the 8th June 1975

03:00 on my fiftieth birthday I retired. Then I came back to Warroo, where I had bought this house and we bought the ground ten years previously when I foreshadowed I'd be going out at forty seven or fifty and we bought nine acres here for the magnificent sum of two thousand five hundred dollars and then we immediately built a house on the vacant land

03:30 that we had. Then I started to build up a nursery. Three years later after retirement the army approached me and asked whether I would accept the appointment of 'Honorary Colonel of the RACT in New South Wales', and I said, "Yes, I would be gratefully honoured." For the next four years I was the Honorary Colonel of the RACT

04:00 in New South Wales. It was a very interesting job, I used to go around and visit units, visit unit functions. I did short speeches here and there on parades. Then that all came to an end in 1982 and I held the honorary rank of colonel during that period. In 1982 I finally retired and said goodbye to the army, but I have kept

04:30 up affiliations with a number of army associations and also living only a couple of miles up the road from Headquarters Operation Command, I have been an honorary member of their officers' mess now for twenty seven years. Then I ended my service in the army. From there I started a nursery, and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do,

05:00 whether just a small nursery, and just sell a few plants at market days or go to a bigger size, then I decided if I was going to do it, I might as well do it properly. I had a first glass house I built myself which was two thousand square feet, heated, oil heated and I started growing plants in January 1946,

05:30 the plants that I have been growing for the last several months, I made my first sale in the Bathurst area. Tongue in check I went to Coles and I said, "I've got some plants for sale," and he said, "I'll ask the lady who looks after the plant department," I thought "I hope I do sell a couple of dollars worth of plants." She came down and looked at the vanload of plants and then said, "I'll take the lot." That's where my business really started off, from one Coles store

06:00 they mentioned my name to others out west such as Orange, Dubbo and Central New South Wales. Very soon I was delivering to a vast number of Coles stores in Western New South Wales. Four years after I'd started the business expanded out to about grossing ninety thousand a year, and I had four people working for me.

06:30 It became very difficult when employing people, the wages kept going up and there's a very slight margin in selling plants at the right price, so as these guys left voluntarily or for other reasons, I didn't replace them. When the last of them went I employed my daughter who was living close handy and she was working for me for sixteen years at the nursery.

07:00 Around about 1988, I suppose the competition became very vast. When I first started off it was what you could grow, you could sell, but by 1988 there were lots of nurseries out through the Dural, Kellyville area, a lot of nurseries up in Queensland and they were sending their plants down.

07:30 The great advantage of the nursery in Queensland, during the winter months was they didn't have the expensive oil to worry about. When I started oil was 8c a litre, and by 1988 I think it was up 60 odd cents a litre. When you are using 300 litres a week it didn't become a paying proposition. So I let the nursery run down,

08:00 so it could be managed quite easily by my daughter and self and we kept it going until she remarried and for the last seven years I have been running it myself, but I reverted to my original thoughts, now paying hobby.

What I will do now is go back and ask some questions.

08:30 **Yesterday you were talking about how you used to read books about World War I?**

Yes.

I was wondering what you knew about the reality for a soldier during war, did you know anything, did they teach you anything at school, or did you hear any stories?

No. We didn't have the cadets at Katoomba High School. I was always interested in the army and I

09:00 used to buy magazines with stories in it about the army. And of course when World War II started, the newspapers were full of articles about the Germans invasion of Poland, and on the 15th June 1940/41, they invaded Russia and the newspapers were dominated with news with war stories. I think

09:30 it was the 7th Division, marched from Ingleburn to Bathurst, around about probably 1940, and they marched through Wentworth Falls and the soldiers were on their two infantry feet and they had one hundred and twenty odd miles to march, so they actually bivouacked along the way, the group of soldiers bivouacked at the oval at Wentworth Falls. I went to the camp and

10:00 talked to them and also soldiers on the march I would talk to, particularly those transport people who were driving old trucks of the day and I would ask "How do you get into transport?" they'd say, "You've first got to join the army, son," I said, "Good going yet but I'll wait." I always had an interest and probably it wouldn't be the in thing to say today but I always had an interest

10:30 in shooting. The army seemed to be an outlet for my aspirations as far as shooting on rifle ranges, etc. I met all these guys from 7th Division, then three or four months later when I thought I was able to pass, I tried to join the air force as I said as an air gunner,

11:00 guess again, the AIF, without success so then I joined the militia again, because I was called up on the compulsory basis. I think I mentioned a call up and going to Lancer Barracks, etc. My interests in the army was basically something that I had from fairly early childhood from reading about stories of the First World War, particularly the Wentworth Falls Library had a magnificent

11:30 collection of the British magazine called the London Illustrated, and the volumes through 1914 to 1918 were absolutely full of war pictures and stories and in my spare time that I had I would go down to the Wentworth Falls School of Arts and sit down and read about the gallant soldiers of the First World War.

12:00 **Why did you always want to be in transport?**

I just had an inspiration, I'd be like to drive, to be able to move around, and virtually you would do your own thing, after been given orders of where to go, you're on your own and you could drive. I don't suppose I looked

12:30 far and wide for other interesting employment that was offered in those days. I just know I had my eye set on transport. The great day came when I drove around the oval once, the clashing of gears and the guy choosing drivers for the transport section of the 22nd Field Ambulance, "You're right, move over there," so there I became a transport driver.

13:00 I just went on well right through until 1947 when I was in Japan and I was never sort of offered promotion during the war years because our unit stuck together and the sixty eight people we had, we kept all our NCOs and the warrant officer, and the platoon sergeant and the five section corporals, they never moved they just stayed there and we had

13:30 no casualties, through sickness and so there was not a lot of promotion in that particular unit. I was quite happy as a driver and then the only vacancy for BCOF was when I went down to offer my services to BCOF, was a typical corporal driver and a 253 Supply Depot Platoon. There I stayed and immediately I got to Japan, six or seven months later

14:00 I was offered a corporal job as a clerk in the transport office. I couldn't think of anything worse, like sitting down and writing forms up, how much petrol each vehicle used per day, how much petrol per week, how much petrol used per month, and how many miles each vehicle did etc. So I said, "No, I prefer to remain as a driver." However, when 1947 came around,

14:30 I was offered the promotion of to corporal and I accepted that and I think around about May 1947, and of course at that stage the AIF was disbanded on 30th June 1947, so all those soldiers went home and a lot of the NCOs were warrant officers from BCOF went home at that stage. After that I got very rapid

15:00 promotion, I think it ran something like I was promoted to corporal in May, I was promoted sergeant in July and I was promoted staff sergeant around about November. It's unheard of now days it takes a regular soldier around ten or fourteen years to make sergeant in the army now days. So I had very, very rapid promotion there and

15:30 so at that stage I'd lost my real interest in driving vehicles and I had other things to concentrate on particularly in the supply depot, accounting for stores and doing all the chores and the orderly room, accounting for the medical records of all the soldiers we had, and a multitude of other things. That really started me off on the career promotion run

16:00 in 1947, and of course when the AIF disbanded on the 30th June 1947, AIF soldiers had the opportunity of joining the interim army and the interim army I think was a period of about three years, but most of the wartime soldiers said, "No," they'd had enough and so off they went home. On the 1st July 1947 I joined the interim army and I got a new army number

16:30 from my AIF number and my new army number was MP27066, so this was the third army number I had since joining. The first was the militia number, the second was an AIF number which was NX165694. The third was the interim army number and a year later the regular army came into being and I joined the regular army,

17:00 and my number which I stayed with for the rest of my army career was 2905, 2 indicating New South Wales, 905 indicated that I was the 905th person to join the regular army. That included a lot of people who were regular soldiers pre war and still serving. So 2905 was a very small number and certainly people used to

17:30 look at it years in advanced and say, "Hey, that's a small number, and they had five digit numbers," that's what happened about joining the regular army.

You mentioned that as a transport driver, you would get your orders and go, was there a fair bit of freedom in your spare time with vehicles?

18:00 The job in the 22nd Field Ambulance you went out on the jobs that I'd mentioned previously, picking up patients from regimental aid posts. When you came back into the unit lines, in those days when you were assigned to a vehicle, after the first parade in the morning, after seven o'clock,

18:30 the first thing that you did with your vehicle was check the petrol, oil, water, battery, headlights every morning and tyres and invariably you might have to pump up tyres with an old hand held pump. Then your driver maintenance consisted of oil changing, and engine oil changes were done every one thousand miles and the gear

19:00 oil changes were done every five thousand miles and tyres were changed on a regular basis, I'm not too sure if it was absolutely necessary, it was something to do. You would change the front wheels to the rear wheels, etc. Yes, there was a fair amount of freedom in Australia. It was nearly the first parade in the morning was seven o'clock and you would normally finish whatever chores you had by about five o'clock in the afternoon

19:30 and then your time was your own. In these camps you had to get a leave pass, to go out and although at Wallsend you were only five hundred metres from the local West Wallsend township and we didn't have to have a pass to go there but to go into Newcastle you needed a leave pass. Because the military police checked for people who were AWL [Absent Without Leave], etc.

20:00 If you were a soldier in uniform and the military police happened to be around they'd say, "Show us your leave pass, soldier?" If you didn't have a leave pass they would take you back to your unit and get your history, whether you were illegally out for a few hours or had absconded from the camp.

When you were in the field ambulance, can you describe a trip from the aid post with a

20:30 **patient?**

Let's go to Bougainville, down the Buna road. I said previously the chain of command for casualty evacuations was from the advanced dressing station down at the casualty clearing station and from the casualty clearing station to the Australian General Hospital, all spaced out by a number of miles and

21:00 suitable locations for medical units. We were based at Motupena Point, and every day two or three of our ambulances would go down the Buna road which was, a lot of rain, a lot of mud, engineers would put logs across the road to stabilise the

21:30 mud underneath and so you had to ride over the logs in parts. Other parts they had crushed coral and that helped to stabilise the roads. We would go up to the advanced dressing station, you know casualties would come in from the front line and things were continuous, it depends whether there was a squeamish up front or a small patrol

22:00 battle or maybe an attempt by the Japanese to assault our lines, or vice versa that we were assaulting Japanese lines. The number of casualties on a daily basis and a weekly basis went up and down, depending on the activity on the front line. At the ADS [Advanced Dressing Station], once the patient was stabilised, by the doctors and orderlies they would try and get them back to the casualty clearing station as quickly

22:30 as possible. Where surgical facilities were available, and proper nursing care was available. We would pick up these wounded, maybe three or four and put them in one, because our ambulance could carry four patients. I was the, drivers were sitting up front would have a little communication system from the back to the front, which was a piece of pipe with two little speakers on either end.

23:00 Each ambulance we had a medical orderly, not transport, he belonged to the medical service and that person sat in the back of the ambulance, with the patients and he was apart of the ambulance when we went back to base and the medical orderly came back. We would load two, three or four patients and the medical orderly would make sure they were strapped in properly and as comfortable as possible on a stretcher and

23:30 he would give a nod to say, “Ok, let’s go.” He knew the problems with the wounded, and he would say that we had to take it very, very easy over the bumps or let’s have a reasonably fast trip if we can, and get back to the CCS as quickly as possible. The roads were pretty dreadful and so sometimes the CCS was probably three or four miles down the line from the advanced dressing station and

24:00 it might take two hours, or if it was a slow trip to do, four miles or being able to go as fast as you could over the roads, you might get there in an hour or so. There was certainly, you couldn’t speed with sirens blaring as you see now days on bitumen roads. You just had to take it steady and the driver

24:30 was responsible to make the trip as comfortable as possible for the patients in the back. Once we got to the CCS, the medical orderly would come out and classify the patients, because each patient at that stage they had a medical tag around their necks with an envelope with what treatment he had received up to date. First from the regimental aid post and the regimental medical officer.

25:00 Secondary, to treatment they had received at the advanced dressing station. A medical orderly and sometimes a doctor would come out and look at the tags of each patient and say to the crew standing by to “Lift them out, ward four, ward five,” depending on what was intended for the wounded person. Then of course from there, if the patient was stabilised

25:30 enough and he appeared to be a long term patient, or they might have had gangrene, and a lot of our soldiers who were wounded, particularly well away from the front line, to get back to the first medical sections, gangrene had set in around the wounds which was pretty horrific. Of course if these soldiers had gangrene at the time, they wouldn’t be operated on of amputations at the CCS

26:00 they would get back to the Australian General Hospital. They had a bed facility of six hundred beds. There they had surgeon specialist, radiologist, specialist physiotherapists. The best medical treatment possible was available at the general hospitals. These badly wounded people would eventually

26:30 get back and be given the best treatment possible. Those unfortunate people with gangrene, and I’ve seen them with gangrene, their legs, arms, in fact a man shot through the face and he had gangrene on his tongue and all these gangrenes, there is no cure from it from the best of my knowledge. The only sure way of stopping the spread was amputation. Quite a few

27:00 of the soldiers had their legs and arms removed through gangrene, and not necessarily a gunshot wound. So that was the sequence of getting the patient back. Finally, I think I did mention before from the Australian General Hospital, if they were further long-term patients going to the repatriation hospital either in Sydney or Melbourne they were then flown

27:30 out from Bougainville, they would have been flown out to somewhere in Northern Queensland and rested and stabilised by another medical team there, then been flown to either hospitals on the route down south, mainly probably there was a repatriation hospital at Greenslopes in Brisbane. So they either

28:00 went to Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne for long-term treatment. Of course they would try and get patients in these repatriation hospitals in the states from where they came from to give relatives and friends the opportunity to come and visit them. That was how we got a patient with a gun shot wound from the front line or shell shrapnel, virtually right back to the ultimate

28:30 treatment in a repatriation hospital.

Was there ever a time when you had to jump in the back and help out if there was an emergency?

No. I think the patient, before the medical officers would allow them to be loaded, they were stabilised. I suspect in lots of cases they were given drugs to stabilise them and make sure

29:00 they would be as comfortable as possible back to the next point of where they would be downloaded from the back of the ambulance. No, seldom did I have to get out and I can't even remember one occasion where the medical officer would say, "I need assistance in the back," and I would come out and help. Down at Buna there was always the likelihood of ambushes along the way

29:30 and the general thoughts that the Japanese weren't going to ambush ambulances because they can get nothing out of them - the ambush. They would try and ambush trucks, jeeps and trailers, maybe carrying food up to the frontline, which Japanese were very, very short of. Our chances of being ambushed were slim but the cautions were the medical orderly was not armed, they wore Red Cross arm

30:00 band. One would hope that this would be recognised by the Japanese. Of course it wasn't because they had slaughtered a whole field of ambulances in Rabaul in early 1942. The driver was armed, and we had an Owen gun. The Owen gun was slung around your neck while you were driving.

30:30 Actually the driver's side door was taken off the vehicle so if you were ambushed you could fall out of the vehicle without fiddling around with opening the door. The ambush drill was - A, to protect the patients, if you had patients onboard. If you had fallen out of the vehicle and immediately fired in the direction where you thought the enemy were and that might hold their heads down for a while,

31:00 you know seconds and give you time to think, "What's the next step?" When you're on your own a single driver might have had two or three ambulances or you might have joined another convoy of a supply of vehicles going back. Ambushes were always a thought in the back of your mind but it never happened in my time and in any of the places that I was operating as an ambulance driver.

31:30 **Did you hear it happening to anyone else?**

I think on Bougainville, there were a small number of ambushes, as I say of supply vehicles, but then the supply vehicles were normally escorted by maybe a half-ton truck with half a dozen armed soldiers in the front and another half-ton truck

32:00 behind with another half a dozen armed soldiers. They would be escorting, lets say, six to twelve jeeps and trailers. Because it is pretty difficult to get heavily laden half ton trucks down these tracks. Normally these supplies took place, to the best of my knowledge with only jeeps and trailers. When an intelligence alert might say, "We know there might be Japanese behind our lines,"

32:30 and I think then the escort system was put into place, but we never had armed escorts bring our patients back. I was always on the lookout naturally, wherever you were on these very narrow tracks with the enemy lines only two or three miles away. Certainly patrols could be behind our lines and they could

33:00 be observing and that's probably what they were there for, to observe the traffic going up and down the front line.

The patients that you were transporting, were there people evacuated for disease as well as injury?

I would say that well over fifty per cent of the casualties that we evacuated were disease,

33:30 and malaria was the most prevalent disease, because soldiers in the front line didn't have the opportunities of mosquito nets and they should have been given their Atebrin tablets, which was a malarial suppression. They should have had anti mosquito lotion to rub on their hands as an antiseptic.

34:00 I'm sure that happened but it was just impossible for front line soldiers to be completely covered at all times, particularly going out on patrols, on ambush patrols, well behind front enemy lines, lining up, you were at the mercy of the mosquito who carried the malaria. Yes, we got a lot of malaria patients and I think if you read the medical histories of the war in New Guinea and Bougainville. The

34:30 malaria in New Guinea was very, very prevalent indeed. I don't think so in Bougainville because I think Bougainville was mosquito free from memory. We didn't have the stringent anti malaria things in Bougainville as they had in New Guinea. Malaria was the first

35:00 casualty maker. The second was scrub typhus which was a fatal disease, and if you got scrub typhus, a tiny little red mite, I understand, a tiny little red mite that you couldn't see, and if it bit you and you got scrub typhus, medical treatment was nearly non-existent, they would take you into the hospitals and do what they could for you. I should imagine

35:30 a number would have recovered but a lot were quite fatal. To stress the point, a brigadier died from scrub typhus, one of the brigade commanders and I should imagine he wouldn't have got any better treatment than anybody else. It just shows the scrub typhus had no fear or favour for rank. Probably the third disease

36:00 would have been cerebral malaria, which was more up in the brain area, and it would send you mad. I never saw Australian soldiers in this state, but I saw lots and lots of natives in New Guinea who had cerebral malaria, but they were cases that virtually had to be tied down on stretchers.

36:30 In New Guinea we used to evacuate the natives from various places. Those were the three major diseases and as I say I'm sure the diseases out striped the battle casualties in both New Guinea and Bougainville if you were to compare the number of people evacuated in the medical chain.

You mentioned evacuating the natives, can you tell me what state a patient would be in

37:00 **with the cerebral malaria?**

We had an organisation in New Guinea called ANGAU, Australian New Guinea Administration Unit that looked after the natives. We used the New Guineans very much for carrying supplies, working in our supply depot,

37:30 doing menial tasks in bases areas. These people would occasionally get sick and they were treated exactly the same as we were, but they had their own hospital, there weren't evacuated into our hospital, they had an ANGAU hospital. I know there is one at Buna, I think there is one at Finschhafen, so occasionally

38:00 we were asked to go to such and such a unit and pick up a native New Guinean and evacuate them to the nearest evacuation point nearest to their hospital. As I say they were treated in the evacuation chain exactly the same as the Australian soldiers were. I not too sure what the treatment was in their hospital. I'm sure they had a medical officer

38:30 there, a civilian rather than army of course who were attached to ANGAU organisation and they got medical treatment which was what people felt fit to give them in those days. But they certainly weren't left out from medical treatment if they were sick, and they belonged to us.

39:00 When I say belong to us, they were working for us. I'm not too sure what happened to the natives who became sick in their own islands and other places. There might have been an ANGAU system to treat them, but I couldn't answer that.

Tape 6

00:30 **You were about to tell us about some of the sadder cases of the native disease?**

The sad cases of the natives being second, it could've been quite prevalent in their native villages, which we never saw because they were well into the jungle areas. On one occasion I went to the New Guinea ANGAU hospital and I saw one

01:00 poor unfortunate man, he had elephantiases in the testicles. He virtually, and I'm not lying, he had a wheelbarrow in front of him and this enormous testicle about six times as large as a football, and that's no exaggeration, in the wheelbarrow. He was wheeling himself around. The treatment for that severe

01:30 case of elephantiases, I wouldn't know, it was just passing view that I saw of this guy walking along, and I asked one of the medical nurses. "What the hell was that?" he said, "The man has got elephantiasis," I didn't ask could he be operated on or what had happened. That was one case. You used to get quite a number of natives, far more natives than Australian troops got cerebral malaria.

02:00 We were treated as I say with Atebrin and we took anti-malaria precautions. The natives, although they have lived there for more than one thousand years, cerebral malaria struck them down on occasions, and they went quite mad. You'd pick them up and they virtually had to be struck down on a stretcher and they're normally additional to our orderly in the back of the ambulance,

02:30 a native orderly from wherever this guy was picked up from would accompany our medical orderly because he could speak the native language. On those cases they had to be physically restrained. What they would do if they let go, no one wouldn't know, but they were quite mad in my opinion and they were evacuated to the ANGAU

03:00 hospitals and I would think in their case, and the same as our case of malaria it was a disease that was near fatal if it had taken hold.

What did you see in the actions of the natives who were going mad, before they were tied down, what would they?

They were flinging their arms around,

03:30 and talking in their own native language, in a very high tone, virtually shouting and raving. This wasn't in every case, you got mild cases and you got sever cases, and this was a severe case that you had like that, that were diagnosed

04:00 were quite placid and would sit down in the back of the ambulance and seldom were there stretcher cases, because in our ambulances you'd folded the stretcher axe down, you could comfortably put eight walking wounded in the back, four on either side. Those were people who didn't have to be put on a stretcher to be carried. They were called the walking wounded and they just fitted

04:30 up to a maximum of eight in the back of an ambulance. Yes I only saw a few cases of the natives with cerebral malaria but I just felt very sad for them at the time. I doubt very much whether very much could have been done for them. I never traced what happened to our Australian soldiers that went through the chain of evacuation.

05:00 Whether they were successfully treated or just too far gone, and they'd just passed on.

Were officers generally better treated than regular average army fellows from the front line?

We are talking about medical treatment?

Yes.

They were all treated exactly the same to the best of my knowledge.

05:30 In the Australian General Hospital they had an officers' ward, but that officers' ward mainly catered for cases of malaria and minor diseases. To the best of my knowledge if an officer had gun shot wounds he was put in the surgical ward with others,

06:00 both ORs [Other Ranks], NCOs, warrant officers and officers altogether. I know there was an officers' ward and I can't recall whether all officers went into the officers' ward. I suspect they went to the surgical wards, where the nurses and sisters, in particular were trained

06:30 in casualty gun shot wounds, etc. They had specialised naturally, like in every field and I suppose some of the sisters specialised in wounds and for treatment and others specialised in malaria cases, etc. In the general hospital in Bougainville for instance,

07:00 the had nursing sisters, as I had mentioned previous, and they had their red capes on and their white veils and they also had Australian nurses from the AMAS, the Australian Medical Army Services [AAMWS, Australian Army Medical Women's Service] who were women, who acted as medical orderlies on the wards. They also had in the administrative fields the AWAS

07:30 which was the Australian Women's Army Service. They manned the orderly rooms where records, etc., were kept. At the [UNCLEAR] at Bougainville, the three different categories of women, you had the sisters, they had the medical nursing orderlies, the women with them and the administrative staff who were the AWAS.

08:00 They had their own compound, which was guarded, a large, large compound with their own mess and their own sleeping quarters and a large fence put right around so people couldn't wonder in and out. To get into the AWAS quarters, you had to get a pass from the orderly room and as an invited guess to go to,

08:30 these little functions there, from time to time and you might be invited down to the AWAS mess to partake in a meal or whatever. Now coming back to the officers who let me kill it for once and for all, they were treated exactly the same as the private soldier, ranging through the rank, as I say up to brigadier and he was the highest ranking officer

09:00 that I saw that got caught up in the medical evacuation chain.

Was there much talk amongst the fellows who would come down to the units where the nurses were in attendance, about the nurses and sisters, just given that they had been in action or in the jungle, and hadn't spent any time with any women at all?

No. When the

09:30 infantry battalion were relieved they'd do a week or several weeks on the front line, depending on the severity of the action they were taking part in. When they came out as a battalion they came back into a battalion sort of recreational rest area, some distance behind the lines. Of course I never saw them, in those situations I

10:00 would imagine they would have talked among themselves. I was outside that group of people. In the ambulances we used to talk to these guys, you would put the first patient in and you might say, "How are you? How's it going up the front?" they'd talk quite rationally to you. We never got into details on fire fights, etc that went on

10:30 but I'm not saying that it didn't happened down their rest areas where the battalions were resting up.

Were there any other cases that you heard of, I guess nurses forming relationships with patients or men that were treated in the hospitals?

Well, to the best of my knowledge they're certainly not any homosexual relations.

11:00 In those days if it was detected, you were out, no questions asked. Yes, there were relationships that took place between the soldiers and the female members of the Australian General Hospital. One of our members, ambulance drivers, actually married an AWAS on Bougainville and

11:30 they had a formal marriage ceremony, it was put on and everybody pitched in and made up a wedding reception, a big marquee tent for them, and the cooks came to the party, make the cakes and all the little things that we never got in out units, and that took too much time to do. There was quite a nice wedding reception. From memory there were about thirty odd people at it.

12:00 The base commander, who was a brigadier in Torokina, he had a little house built down by the beach and he loaned his house to the married couple for three or four days and they had their honeymoon in this little over looking the beach. That was the incident of a

12:30 marriage that I can recall. Probably there were others, because in the units you were in a little cocoon and you didn't hear what was going on outside your own unit. So, undoubtedly there were others that took place but I don't hear of them.

It is a gorgeous story though?

Yes.

I was just wondering if I could take you back to something that you mentioned yesterday,

13:00 **you were talking about Newcastle and the hexam graze and the mosquitos and things, and you also mentioned there was a suicide there?**

A suicide?

What did you hear about that?

Our units were conscripts. That's the transport section that I was in, we all started off down in Lancer Barracks,

13:30 Parramatta, about sixty-eight of us and we stayed together. We were all N numbers, which were militias, they are called up. I ran there to the recruiting depot, when others were very reluctant and didn't want anything to do at the army. They were called up into the system, they'd turned eighteen or they had finished employment where they were protected from call up, and they were eventually called up.

14:00 We were altogether, and when we went to Tomago, as I said the conditions there are pretty atrocious, eight to a bell tent, and a bell tent is only a round tent and all feet into the centre pole. The food was pretty grim and we didn't have catering corps there. During the day we were out on marches, keeping fit and doing lectures, or hearing lectures on malaria and all the other things

14:30 that we might encounter when we went to New Guinea. I suppose, I didn't know this person, but the next morning the rumble went around camp, "So and so committed suicide last night." We had all been together for a maximum of three weeks at this stage, four weeks and you just knew one or two people, in their own little group who had lived together in this bell tent

15:00 or you were befriended because they had similar likes to yourself. The rumble went around that this fellow had committed suicide, and that's all I ever heard "That he committed suicide." There was no military funeral or such as we had in Japan, a military funeral being a ceremonial sort of an occasion. I don't know what happened to this fellow.

15:30 I don't know his name, otherwise on the war memorial net for World War II and find out a bit more about him that was all that I know about the unfortunate case that took place within a month of joining the army.

In the rumble that went around about it, was there much chat about why? Or?

Generally, the reasons were that they,

16:00 if you came out of a comfortable home, I have no idea where this fellow came from, if he came out of a comfortable home, and he was living in the bell tent with seven other people who may not have been his friends in anyway. It might have just prayed on his mind, "I don't want this, I shouldn't be here," "Didn't want to take part in killing in New Guinea,"

16:30 although as a member of the transport section of the field ambulance you were unlikely to partake in any hostile aggressive action. I don't know what went on through this fellow's mind, it must have been something fairly serious to make him commit suicide.

How did it affect, in one way or the other, the morale of the troops in your unit at that stage?

It was a long time ago and I was very young at that time

17:00 and I was sixteen, it never entered into my mind. Everybody appeared fairly, I wouldn't say happy, but resigned to their fate, those that were called up and making the best of it. When we moved out of Tomago and into better surrounds in West Wallsend, I never heard this case mentioned again,

17:30 all the reunions that we did, post war, the name never came up again nor the incident came up. The incident in Bougainville, where we lost one of our guys was a topical conversation continuously.

Did you tell us about that yesterday, the incident at Bougainville?

Yes, I said that Steve McGowan was swimming at Bougainville on the beach at Motupena

18:00 Point and he dived into the surf and he broke his neck and this was only one hundred yards from the CCS, casualty clearing station, so he was immediately put into the casualty clearing station, and I think this happened in the afternoon, and at night he was operated on to relieve the pressure on one of his neck vertebras and the

18:30 operating theatre was a large tent, with netting all around it and it was well lit and I watched the operation from outside the tent. After about half an hour you saw the surgeons shake their heads and the sister pulled the blanket over his head. That was our one, and only casualty, which was caused

19:00 by accident in our unit during the war years.

That was a sad story. You also mentioned yesterday about how a lot of your guys in the unit had to band together to basically load up ammunition and supplies to go up to New Guinea because of the strike on the wharves?

At Townsville?

Yes.

Well you

19:30 know that was simple. We had an early breakfast at the staging camp, loaded into the back of three-ton trucks and taken it to the docks at Townsville and allocated tasks. To physically load supplies onto pallets, underneath the ships gantries might be a case of supplies like ammunition and in

20:00 my case, and the number of case I went there, we always seemed to end up in the mail room and we had retag mail from a list, whether the mail was for Buna, Lau, Finschhafen or wherever it was, and these mailbags were labelled and again we loaded them on pallets and they were lifted up on the gantries to the ships haul. And the reason that we had to do that, as I said before,

20:30 all of the labourers they called them the dockers I think in those days, were on strike as usually, they were very, very anti the establishment, although it was the Labor Government at the time and they were Communist-inspired. This was 1943, eighteen months after the Germans had invaded Russia

21:00 and later on the dockers became reconciled with the fact that we were all in one war and we were out to beat the enemy and so they carried on without further strikes to this my knowledge. I remember I left Australia in 1943 and I didn't return to 1952, so I didn't get the dockside news on a daily basis. At that time in Townsville

21:30 they were very prevalent that they would not load. They were on strike for a certain period, and I suppose when I say they would not load ships, they went on strike to show they were against loading the ships to New Guinea but they, most of eventually went back to work otherwise they wouldn't get any work at all, and I don't think there would have been very much civilian shipping around the ports in those days, so they must of buckled down

22:00 and closed their eyes and thought, "That's not ammunition. That's a case of food or something," I don't know. But certainly the soldiers were very, very angry about these people refusing to load supplies, urgently needed in New Guinea, whether it was foodstuffs or whether it would be ammunition.

That's what I was curious about, just the reactions of the guys in the unit having to?

22:30 Their reaction was, "Those so and so, so and so, dockers we're going down there to do their work for them at five bob a day, fifty cents a day, when these people were probably being paid probably one hundred and fifty cents a day," again I don't know, but they certainly were being paid a hell of a lot more than the private soldier, on five shillings a day and after the deduction of his deferred pay of one and eight pence a day,

23:00 given the take home pay for your own pocket of three and four pence a day. There was hostility there, no thought of every marching down there and beating the drum, none whatsoever. They were called all the names under the sun, "Why doesn't the government call them up and make them serve in uniform?" then we have got some

23:30 control over them and telling them to do it. That was the sort of talk that went on, "Call the bastards up and make them work in uniform under army discipline."

I was just curious. Let's get back to New Guinea for a while, were there ever occasions you were treating Japanese

24:00 **wounded, was that ?**

To the best of my knowledge I never carried a Japanese wounded patient, but I am sure others in the unit did, because once the wounded Jap was captured and put in the medical evacuation chain and of course you didn't know whether he was going to be violent or not so normally in the

24:30 wards where I saw the odd Japanese prisoner, they were in the ordinary ward but they were isolated with a screen around them and there was an armed guard there. You didn't know what they might do. They were put in the medical chain and to the best of my knowledge they got exactly the same treatment as our soldiers and they eventually ended up back in a prisoner of war compound.

25:00 They were only kept there for a very short time because they were evacuated to Australia. The policy was to not keep prisoners in the islands and have to guard them and feed them for no reason at all when they could be evacuated into Australia. No, I never evacuated the Japanese soldier. I did see Japanese soldiers, on Bougainville, in Torokina,

25:30 had been wounded and captured and they were put in the hospital there, separate hospital there to the Australian General Hospital, they probably had jumped from one of the field ambulances there, a medical centre. I was amazed I went there one day and they're walking around the wards

26:00 with a broom or a rake were the Japanese, raking up the leaves and sweeping the homemade paths around the wards, completely and utterly unguarded. I may have mentioned to the other diggers there "Those chaps, do you let them out?" He said, "They're harmless, there been there for about a fortnight waiting for evacuation, after being medically treated, so we

26:30 put them to work, save the other diggers sweeping the paths," the Japs are sweeping the paths and they were unguarded. I think when the Japanese soldiers, at that stage of the war and this was 1945, could see they were getting nowhere and they were starving and contrary to the propaganda that was being said that "They would be ill treated

27:00 and probably executed when they are captured." They found "Hey, I've got some old baggy khaki clothing that they had given me, which was better than my own, they'd given them a pair of boots, they feed me three times a day, what better could I ask for?" They had no intention, I don't think of any violence because after being on Bougainville, isolated from any supply ships for probably eighteen months or two years,

27:30 they suddenly started living the real world of food, clothing, medical attention, and there it was.

Were there any adverse reactions from some of the Australian troops who had been through a lot of fighting, seeing Japanese like that?

Well again I was in an isolated cocoon and I didn't hear all the comments, I was only there for ten or fifteen minutes, and I just spoke

28:00 to this one guy who said, "They are harmless and make them do the chores that we would normally do," whether the infantry soldiers who had been fighting up front, had adverse comments, I couldn't comment on that. I could comment later on when I was in Japan, about Japanese prisoners were being demobilised, and the attitude of the Australians towards those people.

28:30 **When you first arrived in New Guinea, what had you been told of the Japanese at that stage, what were you expecting?**

Of course, from some of the lectures they did on the Japanese army, we were lectured on Japanese uniforms and badges of ranks, we were told about

29:00 the weapon systems they had and how to counter them, and this was generally basic infantry training that all soldiers got other than the medical side of the army. Whether they were base people or were front line troops, we were indoctrinated, telling them much about the Japanese army as possible. Booklets, little booklets were issued showing us as I say the Japanese uniforms,

29:30 Japanese badges of rank and how to recognise them and photos of Japanese weapons. We were told about what the Japanese were like and of course we were told that they were very vicious and they ill treated their prisoners, and of course the story went around in the medical unit that

30:00 I was in that a field ambulance in Rabaul probably about January/February in Rabaul was overrun by the Japanese and the Japanese executed, well murdered, you don't use the word 'executed' when you are talking about prisoners. Execution to my mind is something after a fair trial, when the criminal in the case gets its just desserts and as Japanese criminals did

30:30 at the end of the war. At this stage this was just plain murder. People would surrender and they were just taken out to the outskirts of the jungle and shot or bayoneted. All this thing was a part of our indoctrination, "Don't get captured, because you won't be a prisoner, they will kill you."

31:00 So that sort of thing was indoctrinated into it. Both here in Australia and particularly pre-implication to New Guinea, what the minor Japanese tactics were and how to counter them, and we went through these ambush drills in our vehicles, like taking doors off and how to get out and what to do in the

31:30 first moments when an ambush had been sprung on you. We were told the Japanese were pretty vicious.

In 1944 we had an army newspaper that used to be circulated about five or six days a week, produced by the army and on the front page of one of these showed a

32:00 RAAF officer, who at the time was thought to be Flight Lieutenant Newton, VC, who was shot down by the Japanese, executed him and murdered him. It shows this person kneeling on the ground with his hands bound behind him and a Japanese officer standing over the top with a two handed sword raised and ready to decapitate

32:30 him. That was very, very good propaganda, particularly to the front line troops who might have had a spark of pity for the Japanese. After seeing that photo I would think there were few if any Japanese prisoners taken. Again I can't comment because I don't know, it's only my opinion. That there was

33:00 a very, very much anti Japanese feeling after that photo was taken and put on the front page of the army newspaper.

We have heard many stories of, "Take no prisoners?"

I don't think that was an official order, but amongst the troops themselves. They would have thought that if the opportunity came, they were in the salts and they'd just knock out a

33:30 bunker and they'd just killed three or four Japanese and one guy came up with his hands up, while the machine gun that was just knocked out and it was still smoking, I would think he would have probably been shot on the spot. He was a legitimate target at the time, because you don't know, he could have had a grenade in his hand, he could have had a grenade in his pocket.

They had a reputation for that?

34:00 **They had a reputation for doing that in certain places?**

Yes, particularly the Americans encountered this, because there were far more savage fighting as you are aware in the Northern Islands and the Philippines than the Australians were on Bougainville. We had a very savage time in New Guinea, assaulting Japanese positions

34:30 and very, very adverse conditions and I suppose there are a lot of Japanese tricks, such as a body lying on the ground, and the idea was to search the body and get any papers they might have for intelligence purposes, any diaries etc were taken, and the Japanese would put a live grenade under the body

35:00 with the pin pulled out but the body resting on the grenade to stop it going off. Once you move the body the grenade would activate and go off instantaneously or in three seconds time. That sort of thing was certainly was known, I'm sure that that happened many, many times up around the front line and our commando actions behind the Japanese lines.

35:30 **Is there anything that stands out, or anything you can remember specifically about training in terms of self-defence against the Japanese, maybe in terms of unarmed combat?**

When you say our training, it's laughable in comparison to when we put a recruit soldier in our training battalions now for twelve weeks,

36:00 he comes in a raw civilian, sometimes fairly long hair, bearded and not all that well dressed. We put him into, in recruit training battalion and for twelve weeks he is trained and he comes out a trained soldier. Let's just reverse for a moment, I went to Kapooka when I was a honorary colonel of the

36:30 RACT in New South Wales and I was invited down as one of the invited guests to one of the graduation parades and these soldiers had been in for twelve weeks and they were immaculate and they were real soldiers and they looked good, and their uniforms all smart. They had been rehearsing for this parade for a week or a fortnight and families came from all over Australia to

37:00 see their sons, daughters, boyfriends graduate. At the end of the parade we have a couple of big marquees put up that hold two or three hundred people and really lavish food was put on the tables as a buffet luncheon. During this period I talked to one lady from Western Australia who came

37:30 across to see her son graduate and I said, "Well what did you think of the parade, and who did you have in the parade?" she said, "My son," I said, "How did you think he looked?" she said, "Bloody miraculous. Now the change that you have done to him in twelve weeks." That was the sort of opinion that you got after twelve weeks training. Back in my time in 1942,

38:00 as I said we went to Maitland Showground for sixteen days I think it was, so we got sixteen days training then and all we learnt was to how to wear a uniform, and how to march, how to instantly obey orders, not complicated orders but orders that a corporal or a NCO would say to you, "Stand to attention!" and immediately you wouldn't have to think, you would just do it.

38:30 Marching around the parade ground to various manoeuvres that you had, as I had mentioned, left turn, right turn, about turn and this purely was instilled into you, instantaneous obedience to an order given by an NCO or an officer. When he gave you an order, you did it straight away. That's the main sort of training that we had there,

39:00 sure we had bayonet drill, rifles with fairly long bayonet about probably twenty inches long and we had sacks filled with straw handing on a frame work and you charged this filled bag of straw and the thing was the NCOs would say, “Shout, shout, shout,” and you’d get angry and you would be racing down twenty five yards

39:30 and shouting at the top of your voice, “I’ll kill you, you bastard, I’ll kill you,” and as you plunged the bayonet into this sack, and that’s sort of training that we got. We also went on the rifle range once and fired about ten shots and then we were deemed to be trained soldiers and put out into our units. Probably there would have been a little bit of unit training, later on, particularly drivers.

40:00 I suppose when the infantry, but there were no infantry from our course, went to the units they would continue vigorous sort of infantry training. When I just talked about Kapooka, that twelve weeks down there are very, very good trained soldier came out of it but when you went to his infantry battalion and I would think for about six months he’d trained in infantry tactics, etc.

40:30 It would be nine months before he took part in battalion exercises, and it would be twelve months before his battalion was deemed to be fit for operational service, and that goes back to the Vietnam War and that’s exactly what happened. A battalion would go into training for twelve weeks and then go to Vietnam for twelve months. Our training is really laughable

41:00 when looking back on those sixteen days training and a lot of these people were thrown straight into action, you’ve heard stories about people going to Singapore and they hadn’t even been issued a rifle, before they disembarked for Singapore.

Tape 7

00:30 **You mentioned before about conscription into the militia?**

Yes.

I was wondering having been in the army for so long, what your attitudes generally to conscription were at the time that you were conscripted?

At the time, we had a very, very large volunteer force, the AIF,

01:00 and I think by 1940 we had 6th Division, 7th Division, 8th Division and 9th Division, four active divisions, who went to Malaya and the other three served in the Middle East. That probably left the home army pretty denuded of lots of soldiers. The Japanese threat was looming there and you could see that, there from probably

01:30 1938 onwards, after the Japanese invaded Manchuria, China and I think that the alarm bells started to ring. Of course, after Pearl Harbour the government were looking for quite a sizable force, and the volunteers that were allowed to join our AIF from protected industries were not as in

02:00 great numbers as they had wanted. So they brought in conscription and I think everybody between 18 and 35, had to fill in these forms which you got at the post office, registration forms. They went in and of course on the registration form was your occupation, where you were employed. Somebody in the bureaucracy would be going through it and say, “Look, a small arms factory.”

02:30 “Out.” He stays there. Then the ones that were in non essential jobs would have been issued with a notice, “Call up.” So they were called up into the militia. I was a militia soldier but the general attitude was that the militia were called ‘Chocos’ – chocolate soldiers – and that was a very prevalent term,

03:00 although it was the militia battalions I think in New Guinea on the Kokoda Trail that first stopped the Japanese. Of course then a lot of these militia people may not have been A1 front line standard, health wise. They were employed in base areas and there were enormous base areas throughout Australia, supplying

03:30 the forward troops. Generally, throughout the war, there’re Chocos, and units such as the 22nd Field Ambulance was a militia unit, when we first went to Wallsend but within weeks the call went out from the CO, Lieutenant Colonel John Leah, that he wanted

04:00 to convert the 22nd Field Ambulance into an AIF unit and he wanted people to volunteer. To the best of my knowledge everybody in the transport section volunteered for the AIF. I was still under age at that stage, so I had to defer for another year, as much as I would have liked to have.

04:30 **We were talking about Chocos?**

That’s just my recollection that throughout the war years if you weren’t AIF and you were called up you were classified as Choco. The equivalent is, when we went to Japan the HMS Stanford Victory a troop ship from Morotai arrived on the 18th February the Taos Victory that I was

05:00 on arrived to Japan on the 22nd February four days later. Throughout the time we were always called reinforcements because the people on the first ships said, “We’re first there, we guys are reinforcements.” The same was with the soldiers, AIF and Choco, it just stood and nothing really derogatory, there was no “You’re choco, why don’t you join our air force or something?”

05:30 nothing like that at all, it was just a saying that you are a AIF or a Choco, it’s like saying AIF or militia, that’s how it was.

Did you think at the time, or looking back, was it right to be forced into military service?

I suppose it is for the good of the country, it is absolutely essential. They weren’t getting volunteers. They had to defend

06:00 Northern Australia, particularly after Pearl Harbour and the Japanese were rapidly advancing down the Lau Peninsula. In fact Pearl Harbour was on the 7th December and the Japanese troops landed on the Malaya Peninsula on the far East Coast on the 5th December and they started to advance down. Singapore was absolutely impregnable because they had big sixteen inch guns there

06:30 and moved out towards Java the wrong way. It was thought at the time that the jungle was impregnable and nobody could move through it or fight through it, and because this turned out to be a myth because the Japanese loved the jungle from the point of view they were able to move very quickly through the jungle and we weren’t trained for that. They landed on the 8th December 1941

07:00 and Singapore surrender on 15th February 1942. So it only took the Japanese a couple of months to capture the whole of Malaya and Singapore, and because once Singapore was captured the Netherlands and the East Indies, now Indonesia, it just fell island after island until they go down as far as Ambon.

07:30 There the Japanese halted and consolidated, they tried to force their way through New Guinea and they were stopped on the Kokoda Trail, they were defeated at Milne Bay. The battle of the Coral Sea took place in 1942, I’m not sure of the date, the Japanese navy were beaten in the battle of the Coral Sea. Although I think the Americans lost an aircraft

08:00 and several other ships, and the Japanese also lost several ships. Contrary to opinion, I’ve heard time and time again and I think I’ve read the invasion force in the transports in the battle of the Coral Sea weren’t headed for Australia they were headed for Port Moresby area. That really stopped the Japanese defence of moving further south at that point.

08:30 Three things happened, the Kokoda Trail stopped, Milne Bay defeated, and the battle at the Coral Sea navy defeated. So that was the end of the Japanese southern advances, and over the next three years it was just a slog island by island to retake the islands, which the Japanese took in three months and it took us three years or more to get them back to the point where

09:00 the Japanese surrendered after the atomic bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I’ve read that people didn’t often, the American conscripts particularly eager soldiers, I was wondering in your opinion how the militia rated?

Honestly I couldn’t talk first hand about that. The American soldiers suffered

09:30 very, very high casualties due to one of their principals of war, was strike in mass. The Americans will stay at platoon level trying to take out a small Japanese position, wouldn’t use the same tactics as the Australian Army. We would look at the Japanese position and put a patrol

10:00 forward and observe it and find out what was there, and this all happened probably in hours. Then launch a two second attack on that position with a reserve of one section as a follow up force. What I know of the Americans, the Americans would have said, “Hey, there’s a Japanese machine gun bunker, lets take it,” and the whole platoon would rush forward and in doing that they were massed together and they suffered

10:30 greater casualties, than a planned operation, which might have taken an hour or even half an hour to think about what are we going to do. This is how we will do it and issue relevant orders, at an orders group to the section commanders of what each section was suppose to do. This became again very prevalent in Vietnam and they suffered enormous casualties in Vietnam,

11:00 through this attitude of mass and artillery fire and air power will allow us to move forward, but after the artillery barrages, and the air strikes going in. The regular North Vietnamese Army was in South Vietnam, just popped their heads out of their bunkers and fox holes, and desolated

11:30 the attacking American forces. I think this has been stated and shown several times in American pictures, twenty or thirty years after the Vietnam War that their tactics were at fault. Here we were in Vietnam in Nui Dat, and in need of our own area to look after, and we had a task force there and I suspect it was

12:00 four or six thousand men at its peak. Our casualties were fairly low, and we were there for three or four years and we had training teams up in enemy territory for want of a better word. For about five years and our total casualties in Vietnam, KIA – killed in action – was four hundred and thirteen from memory.

Of course we probably had about one thousand wounded or even more.

12:30 You asked me about casualties in the method of evacuation. Could I reverse and tell you about the method of evacuation in Vietnam, or will we come to that later.

Yes, we might come to that later, because you weren't involved or were you involved in the method of evacuation, did you?

I was involved to the extent, and

13:00 as you know I was the CO of one ground liaison group and I had an overview of what was happening in Vietnam. I knew what aircraft they had there, the helicopters and from intelligence briefings, down at the Headquarters Operation Command every morning you could follow what was happening on the air side in Vietnam, aircraft by aircraft, casualty evacuation by casualty evacuation. I didn't have first hand

13:30 information other than the periods and I spent time in Vietnam on three or four occasions. But I had first hand intelligence information on a daily basis from the intelligence briefings every morning down at operation command.

We might come back to that if that's ok, because that would be interesting? Coming back to conscription, in your unit in the field

14:00 **ambulance were the conscripts committed as the regular AIF in your opinion?**

As I'd just said the whole of the field ambulance to my knowledge, there might have been specific AIFs among them particularly those and maybe officers, and in the field ambulance all the officers were medical officers other than the administrative officers and the quartermaster who were non medical officers.

14:30 I think the majority of the men were militia, and that's what I said when Colonel John Leah said, that he wanted to turn into an AIF unit, everybody stepped forward who was eligible and it was turned into an AIF unit within weeks of the call going out. Sure there might have been three or four there who remained militia, I don't think there were any

15:00 in our transport section who remained militia other than I was a clearing case, I wasn't old enough allegedly to join the AIF, I had to wait a year. I had to get my parents permission to join the AIF but I didn't have to get my parents permission to join the militia, I did because they had to sign the form. I was under nineteen or something.

15:30 In the field ambulance we turned into an AIF unit and there was absolutely no difference, we were the same people, it was just that one had a NX number and the other had a N number, there was no difference whatsoever. Except for animosity you know if someone said for family reasons "I don't want to join the AIF."

If I can take you forward to Japan, and your time in

16:00 **BCOF, you said yesterday that you went to Hiroshima sometime after the A bomb had been dropped, I was wondering if you can describe the scene?**

We know the A bomb had been dropped on the 6th August. My unit, we moved down to a place called Kaitaichi, which is about four miles from Hiroshima and we were camped there for about three or four weeks,

16:30 pending our move down to Iwakuni to setup a supply depot. Naturally we used to go into Hiroshima on every occasion possible and get a three ton truck and sixteen of us would sit in the back and get about half a days leave or night leave, up until ten o'clock at night down to Hiroshima, so we went down there.

17:00 Remember 6th August, to mid February 1946, what have we got, August, September, October, November December, five months, January, February, six and a half, seven months after the bomb went off in Hiroshima. There was no warnings at all about radiation, or don't touch things on the ground.

17:30 I quite believe there was no danger of radiation in Hiroshima at that time. The Americans had occupied Hiroshima a couple of days after the surrender took place and until we took over the BCOF area from the Americans in February 1946. A hell of a lot of American soldiers would have been wondering around Hiroshima, maybe weeks after the bomb went off the American scientists at the time, and this was the first time

18:00 the bomb had been dropped in a city, and they swarmed into the place with the Geiger counters of the day which allegedly detect radiation. They wouldn't have allowed American troops to wonder around and touch things if there was danger of radiation. When we went in there six months later, the Americans were safe there, three or four weeks after I believe that we were very, very safe six months later. This is contrary to opinion of a lot of people

18:30 who served in BCOF, suffered cancer in later life and contributed to being in Hiroshima at the time. I think the Department of Veterans' Affairs did a couple of medical studies on this and I can't quote because I haven't seen the papers but the talk goes around that they found nothing in the difference

between the ordinary population of that age group

19:00 and the soldiers who went to Hiroshima and were subjected to alleged radiation. Coming back, our first trip into Hiroshima, it was absolutely dreadful, here was a force city and sure bricks and water like the cities we see today, a lot of the buildings certainly were bricks and water, steel

19:30 and but a lot of them were wooden and tiles on the wooden frame work. When the bomb went off it melted tram lines, it melted tiles, bottle collections were fused together because the bottle just became molten mass and the evidence was this.

20:00 When we wondered around the streets and looked through the rubble etc, and a lot of guys picked up pieces of bottles that were fused and kept them as souvenirs, I didn't for some unknown reason. It was all inspiring to know that just one bomb had done all this damage, and everything was flattened and the bricks and water building and steel reinforced,

20:30 and some of them stood. A very famous one I think was the Hiroshima Observatory or something with a large dome on top, which still stands today as a memorial to Hiroshima. Of course the tram line overhead, power poles were all down, the electricity poles were all down and anything - wood was burnt to a cinder.

21:00 You got the effect of three things when the bomb went off. Immediately under called "Ground zero," you have got the full force of the terrific heat generated. Again I'm just guessing that probably it went out four or five hundred yards either side of ground zero. Nothing, nothing whatsoever survived at temperatures

21:30 because it was thousands of degrees. Then you came out further and you still got the heat blast where anybody living we'll say the next several hundred yards out, the heat was so intense that it would have killed a human being. It may not have burnt things to a cinder as under ground zero. You went out still further and those people in those two zones are unlikely to have survived

22:00 the heat. They would have been badly burnt and I am sure they would have died nearly on the spot. Further out was where the radiation was very prevalent, there was a heat menace there and lots of people were burnt, badly, badly burnt but survived, but this was the height of the radiation screen around the bomb and those people were subjected to thousands of

22:30 measurements of radiation. They didn't fall down and die on the spot, but in twenty four hours, forty eight hours or seventy two hours they started to be violently sick, vomited, diarrhoea, a craving for water and then of course they drank what water was available and at that early stage that would have been radiated and they would have just increased their chances of dying

23:00 from radiation. Of course the burn victims could not be treated, there were no hospitals because they were all gone. The burn victims were taken out to the provinces where there were small hospitals, and treated as they could there. The radiation victims, nobody knew what it was, they just got sick, their skin turning black in some cases and they were dying.

23:30 So it was some considerable time before it was realised that these people had been radiated and that they were going to die of radiation with a month, two months or three months whatever it was. That was the first impression that we got of Hiroshima, everything was devastated, things under ground zero

24:00 were melted and the Japanese people wondering around scavenging for anything to build a house, which we use to call a hootchie [field shelter], because they had no buildings. Any piece of material that survived they'd take out and put up the frame work of sort of a tent and put paper or old pieces of galvanised iron over this and this is what they lived in, this is what they were living in Kure

24:30 when we landed and in some of the photos that I have shown you, you see the dwellings, these hootchies, that families were living in. They were poorly clothed, because all their possessions were burnt in the fire. That was the case here in Hiroshima, they were burnt and their homes destroyed. Those that survived only had what they stood up in. No money to buy anything else, even if the shops did have things. Hiroshima was a disaster,

25:00 I didn't see Nagasaki. One kept ones fingers crossed all the way through the cold war that some hot head, on either side wouldn't press the red button because it would have been devastating, the world would have ended. If the two supper powers would have exchanged, we were looking at two very, very small bombs going off in Japan and at the height of the cold war,

25:30 you were looking at hygiene bombs with millions of tons of TNT. The Hiroshima bomb had twenty thousand of tons of TNT, and the world would have come to an end. Hiroshima, vivid recollections of what I saw seven months after the bomb went off and my first visit there. And subsequent visits I was in around Kure area for number of months or a year or so at a time, and Hiroshima

26:00 started to rebuild and there were nightclubs down there, there were floor shows with Japanese dancers, the Asahi beer was served, these were policed fairly well by the military police, unless unforeseen took place in these nightclubs, the military police would place a big sign out the front saying 'Out of bounds for all the troops', and they would police outside and you would be arrested

26:30 on the spot and taken to your unit and your unit would deal with him for disobeying a lawful command by entering a prohibited area. That was Hiroshima, and over the years it had built up again. I've got a photo in my album there of Hiroshima station, that was built. The Hiroshima station was a great big, big station before the bomb went off because it was an enormously busy city,

27:00 I think it was the headquarters of one of the Japanese armies. The 6th Japanese army had their headquarters there. Plus it was a sea port and that was one of the reasons it was chosen as one of the second secondary targets for the first bomb. The crew of the Enola Gay had a primary target and when they got over to the target it was covered in cloud. They couldn't release the bomb

27:30 precisely where they wanted to go and they turned back and went to Hiroshima, Hiroshima was cloud free and history was made at 8 minutes past 8 on the 6th August.

Could you go right to the ground zero?

Yes. Ground zero was that famous building, the observatory type building with the steel dome on top, right underneath that. How that survived

28:00 immediately under ground zero, nobody has been able to say. It was generally accepted as the aiming point for ground zero. That building was certainly very well constructed and you can see the steel framework etc, how it survived, I don't know. Other than, maybe all the other buildings in Hiroshima were just destroyed completely, were built of a lesser structural

28:30 status of inferior materials, that I don't know. There it is, it is generally recognised that that particular building which is famous throughout the world now, as an aiming point for ground zero. Contrary to what I said about everything under ground zero was melted, how it happened I don't know.

Do you know if

29:00 **during the war and at the end of the war, soldiers who were very much pro to the dropping of the bombs, in the BCOF forces, were there ever discussions about whether that was a good things after seeing the devastation?**

I think so, as I have said previously, in June 1945 allied casualties were seven thousand a month,

29:30 and they projected the 13th infantry division was introduced into Japan in November 1945 and another sixteen infantry divisions landing in Japan in February 1946 and they thought, "That would take at least another twelve months to subdue the Japanese because they would have fought with bamboo poles." It was expected that one million casualties would have happened in the next year

30:00 of vicious fighting, and ground fighting. The general opinion was from the soldiers, "Ok, it's a good thing this happened, otherwise the war wouldn't have ended and we would have suffered a lot more casualties." We were on Bougainville at the time, with four fighting divisions were in Sumatra obtaining the oil fields there but there was still

30:30 being casualties mounted by Australian forces for one reason or another. Politically it was expedient to continue the fight, militarily it would have made sense to run a parameter around the area and just contain the Japanese and they would have starved on the vine or existed, you know scrounge

31:00 from the local areas in the way of fruits and vegetables etc, and probably in Malaya and other places they would have had rice crops, etc. You have got two schools of thoughts. Government wise, 'keep the pressure up', and I think they always had in the back of their minds that we definitely needed a big say at the peace table, although we did magnificent things in early New Guinea

31:30 and stopped the Japanese advances without the American assistance, virtually. If we just had run parameters around areas that we wanted as airfields, and just stayed there we would have become more relevant, and if we had raised our voice that we wanted to sit at the peace table, I think we would have just been pushed to one side.

32:00 That was one of the main reasons that BCOF was called to form part of the British and Commonwealth occupied forces with fifteen thousand Australian troops as well as the British Indian division, and the New Zealand air force squadrons. The Canadians didn't come into the picture until the Korean War started.

How did the BCOF

32:30 **forces generally, but the Australians in particular react to the Japanese POWs and former soldiers coming home?**

To the best of my knowledge there was no animosity in our unit the 253 Supply Depot Platoon. We had a soldier join us about three months after the war ended and we were in Japan at the time and this guy

33:00 had been a Japanese POW and apparently he was fit enough to convince people that he wanted to stay in the army and join the occupation force and came over to Japan. He was far from anti Japanese, because we looked at it, ok, whilst the war was on they were a vicious cruel enemy and as I said before the emperor said

33:30 “I’m no longer god-emperor, I don’t want any violence to take place.” That ensured that BCOF were fairly safe from clandestine attacks because the emperor said so. We saw in our area lots and lots of troop ships come in and this was probably several months after

34:00 the surrender took place, when shipping became free to the Japanese prisoners out of Singapore, India and the East Indies and all the places that Japanese forces were. Bougainville, parts of New Guinea, Netherlands, East Indies, Singapore, Malaya and Burma. I think there were about eight thousand Japanese overseas when the surrender took place. We saw these groups come

34:30 back and marched from the docks to a decontamination centre, which was just opened ground, lots of tables there with Japanese mainly asking you, “Your name, where you came from?” And you’d say, “I came from Tokyo,” and he would make out a rail pass from Kure to Tokyo, and that’s what the soldiers got,

35:00 just a rail pass home, no other, and he might have been given a couple of yen to spend but that’s how it was, they got nothing on their return home at that stage. The soldiers, you know, I think they used to look upon these people if anything might have even felt sorry for them and they were soldiers and it was the Japanese officers that created the

35:30 atrocities that took place. They weren’t initiated by the ordinary soldier from the ground, unless it was in the front line, and as I said before in the heat of battle nasty things might have taken place. That’s just my impression, but I only saw this two or three times and you had to be out on the road at the time near the docks to see these people were coming off, or had to be near the decontamination

36:00 centre to see what was going on, and that was my impression, there was no animosity towards the ordinary Japanese soldier.

Was there a real hatred towards the Japanese during the war, amongst the soldiers you were with?

No, not the soldiers I was serving with, our transport people. Remember we were virtually based

36:30 troops and we weren’t at bayonet’s tip right up at the front. Our attitude towards the Japanese, they were hatefully and of course that photo that I mentioned yesterday of Newton, it turned out later it wasn’t Flight Lieutenant Newton, it was another air force flight lieutenant that was executed and that had front page news in the newspaper Guinea Gold it was called, the army newspaper.

37:00 Even people down the base areas saw this photo and said, “They’re dreadful people,” and I think if the Japanese had appeared in front of them, his life would have been in great danger by the animosity stirred up by that one particular photo. Because our propaganda machine that fed this that the Japanese were dreadful people, they were cruel soldiers, etc and so and I think that was

37:30 probably the infantry soldiers up at the tip of the fighting that had a greater animosity against the Japanese than those in the base area that were not in day to day contact with the Japanese forward troops. That’s just an opinion that I have and there’s probably lots more around.

Did any of the ambulance drivers that you were working with,

38:00 **did it make them angry to see so many casualties coming back?**

No, I would say angry, they felt dreadfully sorry for the badly wounded and dreadfully sorry for those who had injuries that were going to be suffered for the rest of their lives. Like patients from gangrene, gun shot wounds through the face,

38:30 gun shot wounds in the lower parts of the body, etc. There was a great feeling of these poor guys, being awfully sorry for them but that was just our opinion and we would be dealing with casualties every day. On another occasion on Bougainville, a truck turned over going up what they called the Numa Numa Trail, and it was

39:00 a mountainous trail up over the top of the mountains where the fighting was taking place, not down the Buna road down to the south but this was out to the east. One of these trucks tipped over in a flooded river and three soldiers went missing. About five days later I and two other ambulances were called up to the river, a couple of miles down the road and we had to pick up three

39:30 soldiers who had been drowned, and of course in the tropical heat their bodies were decomposed, and the smell was absolutely dreadful, but we had to take them back to the morgue at the secretary of the AGH. When we got back to the unit we had to isolate the ambulances and scrub the back out with Lysol to get rid of the smell but even it was there several days later and we had to continue to use Lysol

40:00 to get the smell of these rotted bodies out. It was very traumatic and I’ll always remember that. If anybody says that sometimes when I was going for loss of hearing with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, they said, “Have you suffered any stress?” I said, “I’ve got no stress whatsoever,” and they said, “What are the nasty incidents that you saw in the war?” and I said, “One of my mates got drowned at Motupena Point,”

40:30 and the other point was “That we picked up three bodies and that was vivid in my mind.” They said, “That didn’t cause you stress?” I don’t think that that incident affected me in any way. Of course worse things than that happened out of my sight. When you saw terribly badly wounded people, who were hit by shells or close by shells and their bodies were mangled, etc.

41:00 You would have different thoughts, “It’s a dreadful war and the Japanese caused this and so it went on and it was just a part of life in the war.” Different units would have different feelings about different situations. Probably people viewing this in years to come would probably say, “He’s a base wallah.”

41:30 No, I was never in the front line other than the incident I said yesterday when I used to fly with the New Zealand air force, and don’t risk life and limb, unknowingly it would have been quite dangerous if we had of been shot down.

Tape 8

00:30 **We have spoken very little about the fraternisation with the Japanese in Japan during your BCOF days, I think you also mentioned to our researchers briefly about brothels and things that had sort of sprung up, for Japanese women who were experiencing all kind of things, can you talk to us a little about that?**

Yes, sure, but not first hand experience I might add.

01:00 **Just what you heard?**

No, virtually from day one there were brothels in Kure, and these were well setup because the Americans had been in Kure for several months before we got there. It wasn’t long; it was a matter of days before our troops found the Japanese brothels at a cost

01:30 of a packet of cigarettes, costing five cents, a bar of chocolate costing five cents, for time in the brothel. Of course very soon it became very evident that the brothels, or picked up women in the street, VD [Venereal Disease] would be the aftermath. VD became very, very prevalent

02:00 in Japan and not only with BCOF but through the whole of the occupational forces. It go so bad in Etajima, when I was there, the big theatre there was crowded out with about four or five hundred people and the chief of staff at the time I think his name was Vice Marshal Scherger got up and spoke about the dangers of VD and what

02:30 about it would do to the BCOF reputation because the Australian reporters were coming up and there was a story and they were headlining ‘BCOF riddled with VD!’, but of course it wasn’t the case. There were certainly a lot of VD about, but it was a one-strike offence. If you got VD, ok, you were treated in the hospital and it was penicillin in those days, you were treated and cured

03:00 in five days. In a VD ward in the Australian General Hospital. If you came up a second time, you were sent home. Treated, and as soon as you were cured you remained another fortnight to get another medical check and then you were sent home. I couldn’t say what the percentage would be, just looking at my

03:30 unit, 253 Supply Depot Platoon. I know of nobody in 253 Supply Depot Platoon, and that’s honest, that got VD in Japan. When I was in 41 Advanced Supply Depot and I was in the sergeants’ mess there, mess quarters and I know of one sergeant who got picked up on an early morning medical inspection.

04:00 We had really good barracks towards the end, 1947, 1948, 1949, built one room, one person. About five o’clock in the morning before people got up for their duties and parades etc, you got a knock on the door and a medical orderly or a doctor would come in and you would have an examination, a penis examination to see if you had VD.

04:30 That was the only case that I really know, one that was caught there. I’m sure there were a number of soldiers in 41ASD, I didn’t know them all by any means, but in 253 Supply Depot Platoon, I knew them and I don’t know of any particular case. It was a real problem to the command in BCOF

05:00 the VD and of course it continued when the new reinforcements came in. The old timers would probably know what precautions to take, the new comers would disregard this, and so you got another group going through the VD trauma. There were lots and lots of brothels around. I think mainly,

05:30 after several months and the unit settled down most soldiers who wanted girls found one particular girl, and that’s a girlfriend, that’s a live in companion. Now a live in companion, they had to be in the barracks by eleven at night, so live in from early evening to eleven o’clock at night. Of course that cut the VD rate down

06:00 to naught, to those people who took up with what you might call nice Japanese girls, and there were a lot of nice Japanese girls from very, very good families around . They would probably sell themselves, initially, and then they became a companion and quite affectionate to one

06:33 another, and of course the guy they were with would buy them lots of chocolate and items from the canteen which they would take home and give to their families. In 1947 food started to become available in Japan and sugar was imported from Argentina. The Japanese fishing industry revived somewhat. That was the big ships, which could go out into the ocean, protected from

07:00 lurking American submarines. During the war the only fishing that could really take place safely was on the shores of Japan and in small fishing boats. The big ships going out to sea to catch big catches were just sunk on the spot. Food became more and more prevalent, mainly imported and again the Americans organised the initial food shipments into Japan. The soldiers coming back, eight hundred

07:30 thousand soldiers went back to the little villages. Their rice paddies and produced their own rice and food by the end of I think 1948, it wasn't a problem in Japan like it was in 1946 when everybody was on the verge of starvation.

Around that time 1946 than 1947, when it was more of an issue, and some of the BCOF boys would have a local girlfriend?

08:00 Yes.

Were there awareness, do you think they were, were they treating it like a short-term affair or was there an awareness of?

I think a lot of them would, and that would be an honest answer, a lot of them would, so it was going to be a short-term relationship. But as you are aware we had a very celebrated case of a BCOF

08:30 member who married a Japanese girl, tried to get her back to Australia and he moved heaven and earth right up to the Minister of Immigration etc, and his name was Parker. He used to hit the headlines, I understand in Australia, because this BCOF occupation soldier wanted to bring a Japanese girl back. The feelings against the Japanese in Australia were ten times greater

09:00 than the feelings for the Japanese by the occupational forces in Japan. Well it's still not forgiven. There are certain organisations in Australia who won't have anything to do with the Japanese, if you try and give concessions or something, these organisations rear up their head and say, "No, remember our prisoners in Burma, etc." That was taking it a bit far I think from fifty years down the line.

09:30 Those people who committed bad atrocities against the prisoners were put before war crimes tribunals and in the worse cases they were sentenced to death and hanged at Changi and others were given long prison sentences, which I think, who were probably commuted by 1955 or so. Then of course the major war criminals in Japan were tried

10:00 by the International War Crimes Commission in Tokyo and that War Crimes Commission was the Head Judge was an Australian and I think there were twelve defendants at that trial and eight of them were convicted of heinous offences and were hanged at Sugarmo prison, I think that took place in 1948. Similar to the German war crimes.

10:30 That was the major war criminals were tried in Tokyo. Then as in Germany there were lots and lots of war crime trials. I mentioned one I went to in Morotai, when I was there and of course they were being held in Singapore and they were being held in all the occupied areas. Now,

11:00 I shouldn't say were occupied areas, I should say freed areas. Each of the governments tried the Japanese that the Japanese could be proved to have being brutal or killed their population, Dutch population, and British population, Malaya, etc. This is where all these small wartime trials took place.

11:30 Australia probably had several hundred war time trials and I think about four hundred and fifty were sentenced to death and two hundred and seventy odd I think were executed and the rest of the sentences went to our attorney general, who had to view the ultimate sentences, and had the sentences commuted and of course they would have been freed

12:00 ten years later.

I was just, wonder as a soldier in BCOF, coming back to Australia, let go of feelings of animosity against the Japanese, were you surprised, of the intensity of the feeling in Australia?

Of course it wasn't near as prevalent when I came back to Australia six years after the war had ended,

12:30 in 1945, 1946 and 1947. Some of the service organisations remained anti Japanese, very vocal against the Japanese right up to fifteen, twenty years after the war had ended. I think that it has cooled down now but in some of these organisations there is still a very anti Japanese feeling. The anti Japanese

13:00 feeling originates from people who didn't serve in the war at all, they just read the stories of the Japanese brutality and they had no first hand experiences and they're the people that are keeping the hatred for the Japanese alive today and there are still a few of them about.

Is there anything, given your time in Japan and actually getting to observe the culture first

13:30 **hand for a number of years, was there anything special that you kind of brought back to Australia from that experience?**

I honestly don't think so. I lived there and there was nothing that I would want to pick up from the Japanese culture that I would use to affect here in Australia. Their manners,

14:00 their tea parties, etc are not a part of western culture. I have answered your question and I would say no, I brought nothing back to Australia that I learnt in Japan that I could usefully use here back in Australia.

How about souvenirs?

As I said I was pretty young at the time and the old and bold went out and souvenir hunted for in the

14:30 shops, we call them pawnshops here, they are called second hand shops over in Japan. They picked up quite a lot of valuable souvenirs. My father-in-law being one of them and he bought back some very, very nice Japanese artefacts. The Japanese are a very skilled in painting, not painting but putting pictures together with a tiny little

15:00 pieces of coloured bark, so you have this magnificent wall photos, and if you look closely at them you can see that it is all stuck together with little pieces of bark all over. If you looked at them from twelve feet away you would think it was a flamboyant artist with a thick brush, who made a brush painting. There was a lot of jewellery to be picked up over there,

15:30 again I didn't get into this but I know of people who brought valuable jewellery for a song and brought it back. The only thing I brought was a Japanese camera and again it was second hand because there were no Sony cameras around in those days. That Japanese camera was a 127, I don't know it would have been a millimetre in those

16:00 days, a little square photo, it probably was called a 127, about two inch square photos. Kodak film and you could buy that in Japan after a while and the Japanese were very skilled in their photographic reproduction of film reels to mainly postcard size or if you wanted blowups you could get any size

16:30 you wanted. Another skill there was street painters and you see them now in places like Thailand and probably places in Malaya and sitting on a seat on a sidewalk where there are tourists, with their piece of canvass or paper and there if you sit down within ten minutes they have a magnificent

17:00 picture painted of yourself, every feature, you'd say, "God that's good." So there are a lot of those artists about. A lot of people there had a lot of photos done on good paper or canvas and brought them back and I would suggest that there are many, many hundreds of them hanging in homes today. I brought back lots of photos but I didn't bring back anything of that nature.

17:30 There were no manufactured items in the first two or three years in Japan, only second hand stuff. Manufactured items came in much later in the occupation. As you are probably aware, pre-war, you wouldn't touch Japanese items with a forty-foot pole, because they were so poorly manufactured. Globes, the Phillips globe and it might have costs a shilling pre war, and you could buy a Japanese

18:00 exactly, a forty or sixty watt globe for a matter of a penny or two. But you'd clip it in and three or four weeks later it would fuse. So Japanese manufactured items pre-war were very, very poor quality and nobody really bought very much from that market. In the heyday when Sony and

18:30 Yamoto, the car manufacturers of the day were producing cars equal to none in the world, beautiful, and they still do. Cameras, I think they have done the Swiss and Germans out of the camera market, which use to be Zeiss Ikon from Germany, which was recognised as the best camera in the world at the time, well now you have a multitude

19:00 of Japanese cameras that are superb in quality.

I just wanted to know if you had any particular highlights from time off that you might have had in Japan?

Yes, we had recreational leave in Japan, seven days recreational leave, and you couldn't come home naturally. But recreational leave were

19:30 seven days at a time and I don't think I did say but in 1948 I went to the army disposal auction and brought a 1940 Ford staff car, so I had my own transport and this cost me four hundred pounds sterling and three hundred per cent over priced but there were few of them about

20:00 and if you wanted transport that's what you bought. I spend all my worldly wealth when I bought one of these and it served it in good stead because I could range free and over a lot of areas and I couldn't possible get to otherwise by train, except you couldn't use Japanese buses. I saw a lot of the Japanese countryside by my own vehicle and a couple of other guys

20:30 from the mess and we would get weekend leave passes and say, "Ok, let's go there," probably fifty or a hundred miles away. The roads weren't good, but good enough to navigate a car on. One of the highlights of these seven-day holidays was Kawana Hotel. Kawana Hotel is situated about ninety miles

south of Tokyo. It was the seventh leading hotel in 1937, and this

21:00 was designated the BCOF leave hotel. We were very, very lucky because the Americans said what you could have and what you couldn't have outside your own BCOF area and this was in the American area. I stayed at the Kawana Hotel for a week, and I have got receipts now and it cost me one and eight pence a day, which is twenty cents a day, three meals a day, with magnificent surrounds, two golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pool

21:30 and it overlooks the Pacific Ocean. Speaking of the Pacific Ocean, a story comes to mind. General Robinson had the top floor, at the Kawana Hotel as a suite, and he spend a lot of time there in his spare time. In their spare time I thought generals worked twenty-four hours a day. When he went to Tokyo for liaison visits with MacArthur and talk things over he went back to Kawana Hotel and stayed there for the weekend. The story goes that

22:00 he invited Admiral Houser down, who commanded the Pacific Fleet, he had seventy aircraft carriers and an enormous array of ships. So Admiral Houser came down as a guest with General Robinson and they went out on the golf course and played golf. Every hole virtually Red Robbie would look up and would say, "What do you think of my hotel, Admiral?" "Oh, yes, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful,"

22:30 and this went on up until about the seventeenth hole and General Robinson teed up and 'wham' and it went over the escarpment and down there and Admiral Houser looked up, "God damn it, general, you've hit your ball into my ocean." So that was one story about Kawana Hotel. I enjoyed it, it was very, very relaxing, the meals were hotel standard, and the service and you had a room to yourself,

23:00 it was wonderful. When I was based in Tokyo I had weekend leaves and I used to go up to a place called Nikko, which is about ninety miles north of Tokyo which was a Mecca – for want of a better word – for tourists, it's a wonderful scenic spot, a lovely hotel, valley, a river running past the front door, the accommodation was the Japanese accommodation

23:30 and it was comfortable and the meals were quite good. It cost peanuts to stay there. During the day we used to walk around the hills, we used to walk around the riverbank. It was very relaxing. So from Tokyo I used to be able to drive up there in my car and take a couple of guys with me and we used to have a number of weekends up at Nikko, so that was two experiences that I remember quite well during the time.

24:00 **Just a few other questions that I have for archive purposes. Reflecting back on New Guinea for a moment, we've read quite a bit in relation to the troop movements between the US and the occupied forces and the feeling at times that what was going on in New Guinea, and particularly with the Australian forces was a bit unnecessary and given what the Americans were doing, going further north**

24:30 **to battle the Japanese and leaving the Australians to sort of do a lot of mopping up as a lot of people would call it. Did you have a feeling or a sense of that during your time?**

No, I didn't. The big picture was out of my mind as a lonely driver at the time, and it was only what I'd read in the newspapers. There was some feeling in 1944 amongst the Australian troops, particularly the front line troops,

25:00 the divisions that had fought in the Middle East, who had been fighting for a year or two, not continuously, they were air lifted out and sent back by ship to the Atherton Tablelands were, they did a retraining program before being taken back to New Guinea. Yes, we felt out of it by the Americans and leaving us to contain these Japanese garrisons, which is very important but it wasn't necessary to fight

25:30 the Japanese. Like I said previously we could have contained them by putting the parameters around the area where there were considerable Japanese forces. You can maintain the Japanese in these little tight rings without really suffering any heavy casualties by the Australian. When we did this and the Americans moved north, the Australian Army, I think,

26:00 and the Australian government thought that we should be apart of the invasion forces into the Philippines where the next big battle was going to be. But, MacArthur apparently ruled out the Australian divisions going in there and I suppose one could think that when MacArthur was thinking when I left there in 1942,

26:30 he said, "I will return," and he wanted to return mainly with I think American troops with an ally sort of thing, with ally troops it might have taken the [UNCLEAR] out of MacArthur's magnificent return – "I have returned." But that's a pretty shallow picture, strategic wise I should have imagined

27:00 there were other reasons, maybe logistic wise. We had 303 rifles and the Americans had 7.62 rimless ammunition and we would have had to setup our own supply lines with the Americans, which would have been quite considerable. That was the only sort of ill feeling that was, we wanted us there instead of pilling around with these small areas, other than Sumatra were we fought some big battles in

27:30 Sumatra, and captured the oil fields there which was a strategic interest to both the Australians and the Americans. That was the feeling.

Did you have many thoughts in the way of Blamey and MacArthur at the time? What did you think of General Blamey and MacArthur at the time?

28:00 It was only what I read naturally, because you're not up in that sphere where both of them were talking or fighting among themselves. MacArthur getting the ear of the Australian government. Blamey not having the same access to the Australian government as MacArthur. MacArthur would say something and the Australian government and they would nod their head. Blamey would say something and the government would shake their head

28:30 at the request which was quite considerable. Blamey was a pretty good general but the stigma of his time as Police Commissioner in Victoria, always hung over his head. Allegedly, he was caught in a brothel in Melbourne by the Victorian police and he was commissioner

29:00 down there and somehow he was caught there and of course the newspapers had a heyday with that. Everybody knew about it and everybody would say, "Blamey," and unintentionally you might jump back to "Oh yes, he in Victoria." I think that he was the right man for the right time, he was a senior general at the time and

29:30 he got fairly rapid promotions in the Middle East and finally full general to command the Australian forces in the South West Pacific. I think there was a little animosity, between he and MacArthur, and the story goes that our Australian troops on the Kokoda Trail weren't pushing the Japanese hard enough, they were doing their best and as a result of that

30:00 Blamey went up to New Guinea and took over the command from General Rowell. General Rowell was field officer, and remember Blamey was a militia officer. Took over from Rowell, and that caused a rift between the hierarchy of generals, of Blamey and the AIF generals who were militia generals, and

30:30 the regular generals such as General Bennett, and I think General Herring. So you had two groups there, the militia generals who had the cream of the command appointments and the regular army generals of twenty years or thirty years previously that had been through Duntroon. There was a rift there and naturally I wouldn't know how deeply, other than reading. Anyway Blamey went to New Guinea, relieved Rowell of his command and took over the fighting.

31:00 At that time two days before he did, I think the Australian forces were reinforced again and started to advance up the Kokoda Trail. It was said that Blamey turned the tide by his followers, but the regular army followers said that Rowell won the battle, and they were just waiting like the Hayden sheepdog of recent

31:30 times and politics. Anybody including a sheepdog could have routed the Japanese from now on down the other side and that was the feeling. I didn't experience that during the wartime because they knew nothing but reading history later and going to lectures on military history. That was certainly the feeling that came out, there was a rift between the militia generals and the regular generals.

32:00 **We talked a little bit about, you mentioned the guy who had a hard time in the early days in Newcastle. During your time in New Guinea and through all the experiences you had, did you ever witness any other incidences of serviceman that just had enough, and didn't want it any more?**

32:30 No, I didn't. Certainly not in my unit because we all stuck together. Those that started out in Lancer Barracks years before were still with us on Bougainville, about sixty strong. I would say that some of them had left because the unit establishment might of come down from 68, 70 down to 50 to fit in with the overall picture of what

33:00 was required from our ambulance platoon. By the way when we went to Bougainville, from 66 Motor Ambulance Company changed it's name again to 5 MAC, then became 5 Motor Ambulance Companies. We had about three or four changes during the time till the war ended, but our people, which was very, very important stayed together.

33:30 We became a pretty close-knit group. I heard of no other incidents, nasty incidents where suicide people, but again we were a small unit and you must remember in the infantry battalions are about seven hundred strong. In New Guinea and they had a lot more soldiers to say, "I don't like this or I do like this," than our sixty odd people together that

34:00 I knew pretty well. It would be an unfair comment to say anything, although I didn't hear of any incidents of people saying, "I want to go home, I want to go home." I think when the war ended we were waiting for shipping, and as I said yesterday we were in the hands of the Americans to a greater extent, because they controlled the shipping, although we had the HMAS Duntroon, and the Kanimbla

34:30 troop ships, but the priority there naturally was to get in to Singapore and get our prisoners of war back. The hospital ships went in there and most prisoners of war troops went back on hospital ships, because they were so poorly, and so physically. I don't know what happened to our shipping but the people – "The war's over and I want to go home,"

35:00 so they had to sit around on their bums for two, three, four or five months. I know several in my unit after I had joined them in BCOF, who were home by Christmas, there were ways and means of getting

home. But there was certainly some ascension that “We wanted to get home, the wars over but we don’t know how, why can’t the other government to get us home.” I gave you an incident yesterday, conversely, “Ok we enlisted for BCOF and we are sitting on our bums here in Morotai for the

35:30 last five months, why can’t we go to Japan?” The poor old Frank Ford, the Minister, got pretty ridiculed for that when he came to give a speech on Christmas Eve.

You talked a bit about running down to the recruiting office, and keen to get into active service and all that sort of stuff. Were there any moments during what your experiences that you got close to war and I guess realised that

36:00 **maybe it’s a bit of a bad business?**

No, again I revert back, I was sixteen years of age and I had a very focused eyesight on the war as I saw it. I didn’t see the nasty side of war, I didn’t see the casualties coming back, and I didn’t see the people being affected by

36:30 the war at all. My eyes were focused virtually on a transport sort of job in the army where I could drive. I wanted to drive, that was the whole thing in my life. I suppose at that stage had I been offered a chance after joining the army. Let’s say the recruiters had come around to Maitland, and setup a transport unit, and anti tank unit, recruiters

37:00 coming around, and if it had been infantry or armed recruiters coming around and looking for people, I probably would have chosen armed, because again you were driving something. If there wasn’t anything available, I would have gone into infantry and of course my career would have been completely and utterly changed, for the next thirty years I would have imagined. I may not of stayed in the army had I been an infantry soldier

37:30 and the offer to join BCOF.

I have one more question to ask and this question I have been looking forward to asking you. Given your extensive army life, we generally ask people, if there was a war, quite a serious war ready to breakout tomorrow and heavily involved Australia and a young fellow said, “I want to join, I want to go to war,” what kind of

38:00 **advice would you give him?**

I would say the same as I have always thought. ‘God, King and Country’, the three things I was brought up with, even at school every Monday morning we used to go out and stand in front of the flag while it was raised and say a few

38:30 words of allegiance to the King and the flag and the country at that stage. So if a young guy was to come up to me now and ask that question, with a lot more experience I would be able to say, “Ok, this is what you will be in for, you will go for twelve weeks, rigorous training, with a training battalion and then depending on what is your unit, you will have another for six months training, becoming a driver,

39:00 infantry soldier, an armed soldier, an engineer soldier whatever it might be.” I would say then “That unit would eventually be called forward to go to war wherever that war might be taking place to the north of Australia.” I would say, “If you’re happy with that sort of life you are going to lead, and you think you can settle into the army with the discipline and do as you are told,”

39:30 I would say, “Go for it young guy, the army is an office of wonderful life. If you follow the rules and quite dedicated to wanting to become a soldier.”

Thank you very much, Allen.

INTERVIEW ENDS