Australians at War Film Archive

Henry Sargeant (Harry) - Transcript of interview

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http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1712

Tape 1

00:39 **Can you give me a summary of your life please?**

Yes, I was born on the 21st, 1921 10th November, a place called South Hurstville in a private hospital, grew up in Kyle Bay, Georges River,

01:00 quite a wild bushy place. I went to work with my Dad and help out when I was 12. And got a job in a foundry, which I was an apprentice. The war started, my Dad joined the army and I wanted to join the army of course, but I was in a protected industry. Dad was in the garrison at a place called Cape Banks on the big guns. Coast guns doing guard

01:30 duty. He knew I was going to join the army, so he took me down to Cape Banks. I enlisted in the army there, went to North Head for about six weeks, rookie bashin' and back to North Head – back to Cape Banks I am sorry, and from there was posted to Darwin. On the guns there until a couple of bombings from Japan. Went from there back to Sydney, from Sydney transported over with an artillery unit

02:00 over to Western Australia. Stationed on Garden Island, was there from approximately the end of 1944 and we shipped back to Sydney and went from there up to Infantry to Bathurst to Greta, to Canungra for jungle training, on to a ship and ended up at Morotai. I got sick there and ended up in hospital when the war finished. When I was discharged from hospital I went to the 2/1st Guard Regiment and they called for volunteers to go to Japan,

02:30 I enlisted/volunteered for that and I went to Japan in 1944 and from there back home still in the army, from there I was at North Head at the artillery A-Field Battery, from there I went to national service instructing, from there a little while after I was married. Three months married I was posted to Darwin. Darwin after 2.5 years I went to a unit in

03:00 Kelvin Grove, Brisbane. Decided to buy a house here, within 2 weeks of buying the house I was posted to New Guinea. Went up there for 2.5 years, posted to army aviation at Amberley, was there for about 7 years, and took my discharge in 1947 and went to the Department of Defence. Worked for the provos [Provosts – military police] for about 7 years then to ordnance, took my discharge when I was

03:30 47, sorry 61, and from there I went to civvy [civilian] life. Stayed in this house since 1958. And here you see me today.

That was fantastic. Okay Harry can we go back to your childhood, can you describe your childhood for us?

Well, we had a quite a wonderful life

04:00 really, Georges River where we grew up at a place called Kyle Bay, Blakehurst. It was all – houses here and there scattered round. My Dad had a big block of ground, which he divided up into 8 parts later on. It was on the escarpment – sandstone rock ledges. Trees, bush trees and everything, all sorts of wild flowers growing. We were allowed to run wild. No hesitation.

04:30 We had our work to do and we did it. After that we were had free time. We used to run round the river, get oysters, bake them on the hot piece of tin with a fire under them, had our oysters, get Mum's potatoes and burn them in the – cook them in the ashes. And swim on the river just like kids. And we got brown as berries, black as berries almost. We had a full life and good life. Dad had a vegetable garden and we had

05:00 to do our work in it. Plenty to eat. Had two cows, plenty of milk, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, ducks and he had a pig. He brought home a little suckling pig in a sugar bag one night, he had a few beers in him, and he staggered down to these rocks at the big, and the pig was squealing and it was fun, really fun it was. From there, eventually the pig got that big, and he was in a little stone pen in up above the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK pen up above a ledge,

05:30 and he decided to raffle it. So he raffled this pig for 3 pence a ticket, which is less than 5 cents I suppose. A lady called Mrs Randle won it, and she was as big as the pig, she was a big fat lady. She didn't want it so she sold it to my Dad for 6 pence. Dad then decided to take it to Homebush Abattoirs in Sydney. And we had to get it on the truck first, and from where it was in the pen, to the back of the

06:00 truck. He had to go through Dad's garden, and of course all nice soft ground. We got the pig eventually into the back of Dad's truck, took it to the abattoir's and Dad said, it's been well fed, should be plenty of bacon on that. Fella says, don't know about bacon, good for pork and beans. Dad said the amount of pork you give a can of beans it's going to go along way. Anyway that was the episode of the pig. The cow's were another thing, we had to tie them up, we didn't have a

06:30 paddock especially for them, we had to take them out and chain them up out on the slopes of the gully. Occasionally they used to break the chain or pull the peg out of the ground and they would disappear. My job was to go and find them, bring them home and milk them. I was school age then, going to South Hurstville School. It was a terrible job, because I used to get the cane when I was late. Anyway that was South Hurstville School.

07:00 Sometime in my early age Dad got a job in Queanbeyan making bricks. He was a brickmaker by trade. And, Mum and I and my sister went up there, and it snowed a few times, and we didn't get much schooling while we were there. Dad came home the bricks must have – Parliament House got finished, and Dad came home about 1928 I suppose. I went back to

07:30 school. Mum had put me in 2nd grade, and here is me an 8-year-old. But anyway I got over that and I got to 6th grade, and Dad took me home, I had to go and help Dad out when I was 12, stone masoning building stone walls around the river front, putting swimming pools in. Did that for a while, then I got a job in a furniture factory, and first on first off sort of thing when it gets a bit slack, but I learnt enough about French

08:00 polishing to be able to do it later on. Then I got a job in Riga Products Foundry, makes pumps and sprays and all those things in Marrickville in Sydney. Didn't like that very much, because they were all brass and the all the fumes. I got another job in the foundry at – near Randwick, just this side of Randwick, Rosebery. Near the old Rosebery racecourse and later on troops were stationed in it.

08:30 And I used to ride my push bike from Kyle Bay to Rosebery 6 days a week, rain hail or shine and work for 10 bob a week, and I did that for a while and come home and give 10 to my mother, she would give me 6 pence to go to the pictures, and that was my life until I joined the army at 18. Dad knew I wanted to join the army, but this work I was in the detail making parts for rifles, guns all sorts of government industry

09:00 defence stuff. So the boss could have kept me out if he wanted to, but Dad said, come with me he was down at the garrison at North Head, he joined up straight away. He wanted to go overseas, and he put his age back, but he was on a pension so they caught up with him. They put him in the garrison, and he was on guard duty at Cape Banks fort. He said well one day when he was home on leave, he said come with me you want to join the army, I didn't' know which branch of the army

09:30 was what, I thought in those days it was just the army. I said okay, went down there, introduced me to the major, the major said OK go down and see the doctor. Went down and had a medical inspection. He said did you bring a toothbrush, I said no. He said well you better go home and get and report to North Head. North Head, where the hell is North Head, I didn't know where North Head was. So I took the ferry over to Manly and all that, anyhow I did 6 weeks

10:00 bushy wushying around the parade ground, and it was round about June, pretty cold westerly winds out on the parade ground with the old giggle suit on. Managed to get through that okay. Then I went back to Cape Banks. And they signed on – you had to get paid on a pay sheet like in a factory. Anyhow I got a pay book then, issued to me and it was attestation on 9th, 6th of the 9th 1940

10:30 actually I joined up on the 9th of the 6th, and they didn't count that, it was probation sort of thing.

Sorry Harry I don't mean to interrupt, but I just wanted to ask you a little more about your family life, in what way was your affected by the Depression?

Depression years, as I said Dad had a big garden, he used to get relief work, that's when we were still goin' to

11:00 school, and he used to get relief work and he had to go out and work for anything up to a fortnight he would be away, and camp out on the job and at this particular stage they were road making, making roads in the Royal National Park in Sydney. South of – a place called Audley. We visited him a couple of times, we had to get a train to Waterfall and walk about

11:30 I don't know how many miles to where they were camped. We would stay with him and then we would go home. They had to work for the dole in those days. Relief work. He must have been getting – not a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension], but a war pension, because he had damage to his knee, and he was also gassed with mustard gas. And periodically he had to go down and get treatment and so on.

Did your father talk to you about his war

12:00 **experience?**

Yeah, yeah he spoke to me about, he'd come home he might have been with a few of his mates, especially Anzac Day or something, he would tell us a little bit about what happened to him in the trenches. He was at Pozieres, what do you call it Menin Gate, he was at all those places. He was in Egypt training, and he said his life was

12:30 saved by a tin of strawberry jam.

Can you tell us that story?

Apparently they were out root marching in the desert and they got lost. His mate had a big tin of raspberry jam, he told me that he got the job of making all the little seeds to put in it. He said they used to get a spoonful of jam every now and again to keep – until a recce [reconnaissance] flight came over and found them.

13:00 But he didn't say much about how and why, he didn't like Egypt very much. Then he went to France. He was in the 54th Battalion, 5th Division. And I read a fair bit about the 1st World War, and I have got tapes, the one they are taping at the moment?

To what extent did your father tell you about his experiences?

13:30 Not a great deal, he was fairly closed mouth about it. A few things in the trenches about the mud. One day they were sitting in the trench itself and his mates were having a bit of a doze, one on each shoulder sort of thing. And he said a shell burst right at his feet, and deafened him, hit him in this ear and killed this fellow alongside him. And that fellow there

14:00 got badly wounded and died later. But didn't touch him anywhere else. Amazing but the shock of it and the hit, he was completely deaf in that ear. All the way through from then on. He was a Lewis gunner, and one of the raids up over the top, he used to say he was heading off and he got hit in the knee. He said he ran for another 100 yds before he suddenly

14:30 collapsed. He said you had to watch where you fell if you could, because there were all shell holes full of mud, and if you fell in that you wouldn't get out again. And you know it was a terrible thing. And later on I realised why he wanted me to join the army where he did, I didn't realise until later on, he was thinking about all those things, he didn't want me to go through it. Not knowing it was a militia unit,

15:00 not the permanent army, a militia unit, that he got me to join. He thought I would be staying at home. So that was one of the little things, but apart from that he didn't say too much.

How much do you think his experiences affected your family?

Ah, not to a great degree, he – apart from him being sick and gassed and that,

15:30 he got up and he built his own house. As I said we lived on an escarpment of sandstone rock and he blasted, I used to help him dump the holes in. Blasted the rock out and cut it and built his own house out of stone. Big beautiful house. And when my mother died of course, he had to sell the house, nobody could afford to buy it. To share up for the family. They sold all the stone,

16:00 they pulled them down and sold them separately. Somebody come and bought them. He had a big garden, plenty of vegetables, we were more self contained. I used to take a big barrel load of vegetables up to the local butcher, and he put the meat in that and I would take it home again. And things like a breast of mutton, and sausages, and things. None of the real choice cuts.

What sort of entertainment did you and your brothers and sisters have?

Oh,

16:30 picture show, local theatre, that's about it. We made our own fun. We used to go down the beach, and there was a sort of a tidal swamp alongside the creek where all those bull rushes used to grow there in clumps. We had good times, a good mate next door. A couple of other fellas from the other side of the house. And, no all in all we had a real happy life. Used to get a belting from Dad every now and again, I was the eldest. I should know better, the others getting into mischief.

17:00 Didn't do me any harm. No, everything was pretty good.

At what point did you decide that you wanted to go into the army?

When me mates was going in, and news was coming to us of the war, and Dad had a motorbike and sidecar, he had bought that, and we used to go around canvassing, selling stuff you know. Door to door. To help out, but

17:30 didn't do much good.

Your mother worked as well didn't she?

Yes, she used to go with Dad selling haberdashery stuff out of a suitcase. But that was the only work I

ever seen her do, she had too much to do around the kids. Keeping the house in order. And of course the house was always half finished, knock another room on here you know. Start it all again, lived in 2 rooms, then 3, then 4 then 5,

18:00 the big veranda around the front, the big veranda round the back. All done in stone, cement and concrete, there was no timber except for the roof and the floor.

Can you tell us a little big about your mother?

She was born in Forbes, in 1905, they moved – her father, there are the memories, her father was – her grandfather was a ticket of leave fella,

18:30 one of the convicts come out. Pinched a handkerchief I don't know, they used to do that to get out here. Anyway they moved to Blakehurst, I don't know what year, but Mum went to school at Blakehurst, she would only have been in her teens, not even in her teens, 7, 8 or 9 maybe. Dad was in Randwick Hospital, with the gas, he came home from the war and went to Grenville, he got a horse and

19:00 dray, he got a job with Council and he couldn't keep up because of the mustard gas, typhus and all sorts of things happened to him. He was in Randwick Hospital, and they thought he had TB [tuberculosis], but it wasn't. That's where Mum met him, she went in to see somebody else in there, one of the sisters, and met Dad there. And of course he came out and saw the little stone house on the hill at Blakehurst, so they got together and got married. In Hurstville, there's a photo over there of them.

19:30 **When your mother was selling haberdashery, can you tell us what she did and…?**

Yeah she used to sit on the –they first started off on a little 2-stroke motorbike, and she would hop on the back of the motorbike with the suitcases, little wooden cases tied on each side of the bike and off they'd go, they'd go down to Wollongong, the south coast, and up to the north coast, and really get about and do things. When he had the

20:00 motorbike and sidecar it was much better. At one stage this little bike, they were in Hurstville or something buying haberdashery for their cases. She went to sit on the back of the bike and he took off. She sat in the middle of the road at Hurstville. Anyway that was one of the funny things I suppose. But they worked hard, built a house, brought us kids up pretty strictly. Little pigs could be seen and not heard and discussed

20:30 so I didn't know anything, I was as innocent as a new born babe. Didn't know anything much about sex until I was about 21, I had an inkling but never worried about it.

What was your impression when you left school at 12, were you enthusiastic about going to work?

Well I didn't get much schooling, and I was just starting to – I was at South Hurstville School, they built a new school

21:00 at Collis Point, just up, well almost the back yard, just up the road from our home. So I was never late then, I was always there nice and early, and I was just starting to get maths – just started to enjoy my maths and things like that. And I turned 12 in November, and when school finished Dad said, "I need an assistant I need somebody to help me work," and I said, "Oh, that's mine, I don't mind that." So away I went. I went

21:30 over to Sylvania, across the river putting in a fence a stone fence, on a bit of a beach on the river front. After that as I said I went to work at the foundry, furniture factory and so on, and then I got that – I used to do a bit of canvassing before that, walking around with the suitcase all over the place. I don't know whether you know Sydney at all, Kyle Bay, across Georges River, all around Sutherland, Miranda, Cronulla,

22:00 all the way down as far as Brighton and Rockdale lugging a suitcase around. I didn't get much at all, I would come home with about 2 bob [shillings] or 4 bob or something for a day's work. But I walked everywhere it was never a problem to walk. Then I got me pushbike and as I say I used to go to work.

Can you tell us why you were so enthusiastic to join the army?

Well me mates were joining the army, and I said

22:30 I wanted to be in it too. Dad was in it, my uncles were in it. I am 18, turned 18 in November, and I said to my uncle, Jim Lane, he was a Gallipoli veteran. I told him I wanted to join the army, and he must have passed it on to Dad. And said Dad won't let me, so

23:00 what about taking me down to join the – I wanted to join the navy at first. He said I don't know about that. But I could take you down to see – he didn't think I would get in see – I could take you down to Rushcutters Bay, to the navy, have a medical, "Okay we'll call you up when we're ready." And then I waited, and nothing going on, so I said to him what about the air force. Went down there and the same thing happened. They said wait there

23:30 we'll call you up when we're ready. This is in 1939, see November/December. Then Dad must have got

wind of it, this was the middle of the year and he said come with me and I'll get you in the army. That was good, and the boss didn't stop me, fortunately. As I said before I didn't know one branch of the service from the other. I

24:00 didn't know it was not allowed to go overseas or anything, but being in the militia as they called it in those days, you only saw service in Australia, and it was territories.

What did you know about what was happening in the war?

Used to listen to it on the radio, we didn't have television of course, but we had the radio. It used to be quite graphic, the bombing of London,

24:30 and we said we have got to get over there and help stop this sort of thing, help. So that's one of the reasons I wanted to get into the army.

Why did you as an Australian think you should be involved in that war?

Well, those days it was an Empire, the British Empire, more British, not like it is today. Anybody born in England or of English parents, were classed as British.

25:00 All Australians were British. They didn't class them as – they classed them as Australians only by living here, by birth you were still English. You didn't have to have a passport to go to England or anything like that. So you know that sort of heritage I suppose, you might put it down as that way. So that's what I like to see and what I wanted to

25:30 do. Anyhow we didn't know what the consequences were, and I knew Dad was pretty tough, had a tough time of it. We heard the others, 8th army over in Egypt. They were having a great time at that stage.

You said your father wasn't keen for you to go overseas, what did he say about that?

He didn't say anything about that, he just – that's later on when I realised what he

26:00 did, telling me to come down with him and join the militia. He difference between the militia and the AIF [Australian Imperial Force], so volunteers for the AIF was volunteers to go overseas. Militia was home guard sort of thing, the Australian territories. Could go to New Guinea, because it was Australian territory. Which some of the troops did on the Kokoda Trail was militia.

What did you think war

26:30 **was?**

I thought war was some greedy country wanting to pinch everybody else's country and if you didn't stop them there, were they going to take the whole world over. Had to be – that's what I thought it was. They had taken Belgium, France, every other country round there Egypt. They were taking England, and I said what's to stop them going further.

27:00 **What did you expect your own personal experience might be?**

Didn't have a clue. Just that it's going to be exciting. And the way we were brought up too, we were freelancers. We were pretty much did our duty and then go about our enjoyment of life, it was great.

27:30 **Can you tell me about signing up?**

Dad took me down as I said to Cape Banks Port and I looked around and I thought this looks good you know, being 18, and I said oh I was 19 then, no sorry 18. And I went down there and he introduced me to the major, I forget his name, Primrose I think, and

28:00 showed me over the guns. That'd be great. All right he says, go down to medical. Now, there was two big 9.2 inch guns in a big fort with outer buildings down in a sort of a pit, up on top of cliffs at Cape Banks just around the corner from La Perouse. In between the guns there was a medical centre, down underground. He said go down there and see the doctor,

28:30 the medical aid post. And I went down there, he gave me the once over, inspection, and looked at me. He said, "You're fit." I was too, real skinny. Probably only weighed about 7 stone. Wiry as anything. And of course you run round like a hairy goat and never wore shoes much. He said, "OK" I went back to report to the major and said, "Got your toothbrush?" I said

29:00 "Toothbrush, no." "You had better go home and get it," he said, "and report to North Head." I said, "Where's North Head." He said, "Take the ferry over to Manly and ask somebody there they'll tell you where to go." And I caught a bus up to North Head. So I had to go home and tell Mum, packed up a few things I wanted, which wasn't much. I think a jacket and the clothes I was wearing. Didn't have a toothbrush in those says. If I wanted to

29:30 clean my teeth I used a bit of charcoal. Broken chewed up bit twig. So I got to North Head, and got issued with all me gear, except the forage cap, he said come back, we haven't' got any at the moment. So I went back later, no they're not in yet. Anyway…

How did your mother respond to you joining up?

Didn't worry. She said look after yourself.

30:00 Keep in touch. Because I used to give her all my money, and as soon as I joined the army she got 3 bob and I only got 2 bob. The deferred allotment. And I used to send her 3 bob out of my 5 bob a day. Anyway at North Head, we got to North Head, issued with me kit, box of soldiers, a wooden, still got it downstairs. Box of

30:30 soldiers wooden. I said what do I want with a box of soldiers for, it must be for training. It was a kit box to put your gear in. Anyway we got there a big modern North Head barracks, beautiful barracks there. Beautiful parade ground.

Can you describe the barracks for us?

The main barracks was in the form of, looking from the air in the form of 'H', there was 1, 2, 3 rings coming out from the central dining room, ballroom,

31:00 and in front of that was the canteen, OR's [other ranks] corporals' barn sort of thing. At each end of the wing was a 2-room annex sideways on with was the NCO's [Non Commissioned Officers] quarters. There was six rooms, it was 2-storey, 6 rooms on each wing, on the ground floor and 6 on the top,

31:30 so that made 12, 24, 48 barrack rooms with 6 beds in each. And underneath the dining hall in the centre was the main big dining room, underneath the dining room was the boiler and – we used to shovel the coke [coal] down, and alongside the boiler was a big laundry. What they called a drying room, with hot blowing in.

32:00 That was the main building.

What was the kit you were issued with?

With a giggle suit which was a khaki cotton trousers and blouse with round flat buttons on the jacket, and a funny lookin' hat which was called a giggle hat. Made from the same material. Two big pairs of red boots. Two pairs of socks. Some

32:30 winter underwear, long johns. Slouch hat, one of those giggle hats, forage caps they called them, because they fold flat. What else was there, oh, uniform, the old one with the – jacket with the pockets on it. Gaiters, putties, a pair of putties,

33:00 that's about it for the start. Oh, rifle bayonet. Aspirator they gave us as well. Steel helmet. No I didn't have that – yes they gave that to us. Anyway that was our full kit. Rifles had a leather sling on them.

What sort of rifles were they?

303 Enfield. Enfields, ones they used right throughout the war. .303

33:30 size bullet. And that was okay. Blanket, sheets and pillow and a mattress. Now the beds were made of steel, little wheels on the bottom of it, and the slats were made of flat pieces of steel about 3" wide, down the middle each one, and the mattress was about 3-inch thick and made of horse hair

34:00 or coconut fibre, was as rocks. But they used to fold up in half. The beds used to slide up so you had a short – half the size of the bed, used to slide up out of the way, and then you had the mattresses packed on top of one another. Your sheets folded nice and neat, your blankets folded nice and neat and level. And a bedspread over that wrapped around it,

34:30 and that was at the head of the bed with the pillows on top of it. The great coat was folded neat and hung up on the peg above it. All equipment was hung up on the peg above it. And that had to be every time. And you had a big cupboard alongside your bed, wardrobe.

Can you tell us about daily life in a barracks?

Yeah, the lino [linoleum] floor was brown, and you had to have it polished every morning absolutely see in it. And

35:00 everything had to be clean, then you had reveille, go up on parade. You had your fatigue parades, to go around and pick up scraps of paper, and go into the kitchen and peel the potatoes. Go down to shovel the coke in the furnace from where it was on top. Various things like that, then you had breakfast, you got dressed and then you had a period of about 15 minutes or so to have your barracks ready for

35:30 inspection. And they'd come in and inspect it. And the NCO, one swipe, like little tin gods. They were permanent forces doing that. Permanent troops, and he was a corporal, a little lance corporal, bombardiers they were. They had white gloves on, and go along the cupboards, and he'd look at the floor, and if they walked in there and saw the floor with a mark on it, that's not good enough, this afternoon

36:00 report, and you'd be down shovelling coke. If you didn't have a spot. Then you'd be out of the building, which is a big parade ground. Up at North Head it's wide open to all the elements from the south in the wintertime. That was the OC [officer in command], now on the right hand side of the parade ground itself, was the main administration building, and it had a big archway, where the road come through it

had an archway. But on top of the archway was buildings,

36:30 like a sort of a square, and the wings out each side was offices and so on. And up on top of the archway was the RSM's [Regimental Sergeant Major's] perch. His office up there, and he could look out and see everything that was going on. And he was a very, very tough bloke. On the other side on the harbour side of the parade ground, which was on the side of the slope so there were steps down, was the officer's quarters

37:00 they had a bit 2-storey building there, and on the other side the ocean side which was on the left hand side of the barracks was the sergeant's mess quarters. Behind that there was a big gymnasium, where they had squash courts. They had a big gymnasium with all the acrobatic things in them, above that on a landing was a boxing ring and so on. Up behind the barracks was a big

37:30 oval, that was up high again, and a couple of tennis courts. That was it.

How did you like life in the barracks compared with being at home?

It wasn't the same I can tell you. It was a bit – being a raw recruit it was a bit tough, because you had to work pretty hard. I enjoyed it really, looking back on it. A few moments I didn't like very much. Freezing out there in the giggle suit and you didn't have your buttons polished up

38:00 enough, little lance bombardier would come along and pick on you.

What did you enjoy about it?

Getting somewhere, doing something. I was a pretty active sort of bloke. This is going to get me – I had to do this, and let's get it done. We were very smartly turned out troops in the finish. It was all marching, learning how to salute, rifle

38:30 drill. That's all we did, we didn't even fire the rifles at that stage. We did all the drills. We got pretty good. And I was a skinny tough bloke anyway.

Had you had any experience with a rifle before that?

I had experience with a .303 before that, because my uncles were, 2 of my uncles were in the militia in those days. They were in the Light Horse, somewhere, there used to be a

39:00 depot at Arncliffe which is a bit toward Sydney from Hurstville, and they joined the militia. They used to come home with their .303 and bullets, and we used to stand on the back veranda of Dad's home and firing at match boxes up there sitting on the blinkin' box. I had a fire a couple of times, I knew how to hold it, it would give a good kick.

How old were you then?

Oh, 14 or 15. I had a rifle

39:30 of my own, we used to go rabbit shooting, this was when I was about 14, 15, we used to go out with my mates and my brother, and we'd get our rifles and hop on a train, old paper train and used to go and pick up the milk, and stop at all the sidings, and get out as far as Mittagong and Picton, and get out of the train at a whistle stop, and go down into the bush along the creek somewhere, next morning we would

40:00 hunt up the farmer, and ask him if we could camp down there and shoot rabbits. We used to get a rabbit and cook him up in the stew pot, next night we'd get on the train and come home again. We did that a few times, we went down as far as Berry. On the Illawarra coast. They were good times, we knew how to fire a rifle, aim it. So it wasn't any hassle when we went to Long Bay Range. Anyway, after we finished our recruit training…

40:31 End of tape

Tape 2

00:32 **You were telling us about Long Bay?**

Went back to Long – went back to Cape Banks after me recruit training, and Attestation on the 6th of the 9th 1940, that's on my record as my enlistment date, after all that. There we did rifle range, at Long Bay Rifle Range, where we fired

01:00 the .303 and later on the Owen gun there, the sub machine gun. I qualified, qualified as marksman, so I must have been able to shoot a rifle. So we got a little – my sister's got it, no my daughter's got it, I had a little shield given to me. Anyway, we went back to Cape Banks and from there we had to do our

01:30 normal duties, like guard duty at night on the Tommy guns, and fatigues around the camp. I don't remember getting' much leave while I was there, but we were kept pretty busy. One night I was on

guard duty, I was put in the office to operate the switchboard. I never knew what a switchboard – he said you just pull this little lever and that window drops there, and you

02:00 pull that cord out and stick it in that hole and then you put that one in there and you listen then they want somebody and you take that out and stick it in there. I said, “Oh yeah, okay,” First couple were all right, but when it got real busy, and things, I ended up getting the major’s wife hooked up with the major’s girlfriend or something or other anyway I never got that job again.

02:30 I was free and easy from that. So then they put me on what they called the district staff, and the district staff consisted of a warrant officer, two sergeants, two bombardiers and a couple of gunners. And they maintained, looked after the gun. And these guns were about 2-storeys high. Had to check the ammunition down underground, and the shells

03:00 weighed 368 lbs. You had to roll them around you had to be careful of the driving band. Check them all out and you had to wear moccasins, so if any sparks fly out or anything. And the guns – and you had to get the ammunition rolled up in a lift. Rolled the shells into the lift and went up to the gun floor. And from the gun floor into another lift into the gun cradle. And they were automatically shoved into the gun

03:30 or hydraulics. We had to do all these hydraulics and check them and make sure everything was working. So I enjoyed that, it was good.

Was this your first experience with big guns?

Yes.

What was your impression of them?

I thought it was terrific. We fired them, they make an awful noise, the practice shells were the same weight, but they were just a big lump.

04:00 No explosive in them of course, and they have a target, what they call target. Going left, going right, whatever it was out there. Targets – trying to think of the name – windjammer, no. Something like that, it was floats with lattice work on them, and canvas on them

04:30 and there were 3 one behind the other, and there were 3 of these targets hooked up and that’s what the targets.

Can you tell me about those big guns and your first impression of them?

My first impression of the big guns was, magnificent. Gigantic things, I never realised they were that big. They were 9.2 inch, they weighed, the barrel weighed 27 tonne, and that’s

05:00 apart from the shields and everything that was over it. It was all done by hydraulics. They were about 3 storeys high and that was from underground and the base. Underneath that was the magazines, the shells weighed 386 lb each. And they were rolled into a lift a cradle type life and they went up to the gun floor where they were put into a sling and

05:30 moved over and rammed into the gun automatically. But there was provisions for them to be hand loaded, and you can imagine how much effort that’s going to take. Apart from that we were working on them, and I was in the district staff. They were all done by hydraulics, and we had to check all of them, and they were called squash plate motors. And they operated the guns elevated and traverse, they could traverse around in a circle 360 deg.

06:00 Three and a half times, and then they would have to go back the other way. And the elevation was up to around about 85 degrees in elevation. They didn’t go straight up in the air because the bullets would come straight down on top of you. And their range was, approximate range was 27 mile out to sea. We did fire them during practice and the targets were towed by,

06:30 frigate or a tug and they were tugs, three of them on buoys and they were like lattice work. They called them – they had a name for them but I have forgotten what it is now. Some of the old Chinese name it was. Anyway that was the target we had to shoot at.

07:00 Apart from that it was great.

What was your job on the guns?

I was helping the artifices, maintenances, greasing up things, checking things out with the staff, which I think I explained before. There was a warrant officer, 2 sergeants, 2 bombardiers and a couple of gunners, and each there was a team for

07:30 both guns. And that was our job, to maintenance, grease and look after them, and put paint and make sure there was no rust.

Can you explain exactly what was involved in maintaining those guns?

It’s a bit difficult, because we didn’t pull them to bits or put them together, but we had to check the calibration in other words make sure they hadn’t shrunk because metal as you

08:00 know expands and contacts. The long barrels which weighed 27 tonne made to check them, measure them up and make sure they didn't droop. Get a bend in the barrel. Any alterations had to be checked and made available for alterations in range and bearing. Because they guns were all rolled around on bearings. And made sure all the truncheons

08:30 and everything didn't fall to bits when you fired it. Apart from that nothing much else could go wrong.

How do you calibrate the gun?

Well you – on the muzzle, on the top of the muzzle there is a flat plane with a groove in it, same on the breach end. You have an instrument that sits on top of that, it's like a it looks a bit like a sexton.

09:00 It has calibrations in it and a little bubble, and you had to get that bubble in the right, centre, when you put it there. So you had to make sure there was no grease or grit or anything underneath it. Because a little bit of grit could make the difference between the reading. So that was to make sure it was still reading normal. If it wasn't, if it was out a fraction of an inch, it would make a difference of 3-400 yards out to

09:30 sea. And if there was a difference, they altered the range of the gun and range takers. The instrument panels themselves on the gun, consisted of two dials, one dial was with an arrow, when you moved the gun the arrow moved around, the circle of degrees. The other one was the range taking barn stroud up in the tower, that

10:00 transmitted the range to the gun from the barn stroud. So that moved around and you had to put the gun underneath that other arrow, keep the arrows in line with one another, and the same with elevation, up the other way. So that was the range and that was lining it up. It was easy you would just wind this big handle around and it was just like driving a car.

Were these guns being used in the war at the time?

They were used

10:30 yes, they were there for coast protection. If you didn't have them there the enemy warship could sail straight in. They were there – they must have been put there during the First World War. They weren't just put up for the 2nd World War, they were established. The ones at North Head, they had the same 9.2 at North Head. At South Head they had 6 inch Mark

11:00 VII guns, on Signal Hill the had 6 inch Mark VII guns. They had radar at Signal Hill, that was just up north of Bondi, and they had small search lights and things like that along the coast. That was more or less the defence of Sydney. Middle Head that's in the Harbour, had 6" Mark Elevens or Mark VII, I can't remember,

11:30 and then George's Heights sits up a bit from Middle Head was artillery – anti aircraft guns.

Can you describe your routine on a daily basis at Cape Banks?

Really at around 6 o'clock, fatigue parades, have those. I was only a gunner. You might have been in the kitchen, you might have been chopping wood,

12:00 or whatever. Then you had breakfast then you had a parade, make sure you were shaved, roll call. Always had roll call, that was done as soon as you had reveille up for roll call. Then after that you might then be working around the camp, doing gardens, washing rocks whatever, around the camp. The other section might have been down on the guns working. Others

12:30 general about or might have been on leave. You worked in threes, three circles. I was – my fatigues were of course would be on the guns. And that was the general routine, you might have been painting, paint it green of course, painting guns, chipping off any rust. Even on board the navy, you chip them off and make sure there's

13:00 no rust there. Of course they were right over the ocean too, and get the salt spray and stuff.

How did you come to be selected to be in that group that looked after the guns?

I couldn't work the switchboard too well. My only surmise about it. I was interested, I don't remember whether they asked for volunteers or not, they could have done, I can't remember that bit. Anyhow that's the job I was on and that's what I had to do.

13:30 **How many men were … I still had me guard duties to do at night. Yeah. I had those. How many men?**

Gee, now you are asking me something I don't know. In excess of 100, gun crews, I think each gun crew had about 10, 12 at least 12 people. And that was two guns that was

14:00 24, and there were 3 shifts. 3 x 24, so that gives a rough estimate.

How did you spend your spare time together?

We went to the canteen and that's about all, we had a billiard room too I think. We had the canteen, the beer used to be only for a big pot full, only 3 pence. That was good. And of course you couldn't go into a hotel until you were 21.

14:30 **Did you have much leave while you were there?**

Not a great deal, we got – that's what I said, I can't remember very much about going on leave from there. But anyway I know I had to go to Victoria Barracks to have my teeth fixed, and I had – my teeth were broken off there, my two front teeth were broken off playing soccer once. And I went in and I got them pulled out. I was gappie in the front then. And I

15:00 had that, and I didn't get those fixed until I got to Darwin. They called for volunteers to go to Darwin. I said yep I'll do that. They said pack your gear up and went back to North Head, where we did a bit more bushing around and we got issued with our tropical kit. Which consisted of a pith helmet, a puggaree, which was about 27 metres long and about 1 foot wide. Which you had to

15:30 fold up and get it all folded neat and wind it around this frank buck helmet. Had a slouch hat with a red bank around it. Artillery badge on the side of course, short sleeved shirts, two of those. Shorts, two pair of those, long socks, khaki, black shoes, red tabs on them something like scouts have, red band around the hat, did I mention that.

16:00 RAA scrolls on the shoulder, Royal Australian Artillery. We had a long jacket, a long pair of pants, khaki, I think I have a photograph somewhere with them on. Steel helmet, respirator and a cape. The cape was made of rubberised canvas,

16:30 khaki colour with a collar on it, and straps used to cross over and button at the back to hold it on. And when rained you just pulled it round the front. Like Mandrake. That was our uniform and that's the way we used to get around Sydney, when we were on leave. We got pre embarkation leave, oh that's when I had to hand the old kit back in too. And they said

17:00 to me, where's your forage cap. You never give me one. You are down here for one. You'll have to pay for it. So they docked me pay for it. I was real mad about that. I couldn't do much about it.

How important were friendships with the other men when you were in Sydney?

Ah, well everybody seemed to be equal. I don't think at that stage I had made bosom friends

17:30 as you might say. They were all equal. Didn't have any particular blokes. Anyway we had our embarkation leave and I went home for a few times. I went to the Blood Bank when I was there, in George street, gave some blood, twice there. My first blood donation. As you see here I have got my 100 blood donation badge on.

18:00 Yeah then we embark, went to Darwin, headed off on board the steam ship Selandia, it left from Circular Quay. Mum and my uncle was there to see me off. She was tied up to the rigging, and you know, we had the portholes, we were shown to our cabins,

18:30 and our cabin with two beds in it, a mate and myself. We were in this cabin, and it was right in the bough. The only thing in front of us was the chain locker for the anchor. And it was on water line, and of course we had the portholes open and we forgot to shut them when we went out through the heads. And the first wave we dived into came through the porthole didn't it. It wet the beds. So quickly

19:00 while anybody else wasn't around, we whipped our mattresses off and took them up to another cabin in the middle of the boat and whacked them in there and changed them over. But we didn't hear anybody going crook about it so it might have been empty all the time. We had a comfort fund parcel they give us on board. That includes toothpaste, soap, seawater soap, balaclava, pair of big knitted thick socks.

19:30 And what else, a few other things, biscuits might have been some cigarettes. Something like that. Anyway we cruised up to Brisbane, nothing spectacular happened along the way. Pulled into Brisbane at Hamilton, took us for a root march up to – through Hamilton, to a park, I could never find it again, towards Ascot I think. Or somewhere up there towards the racecourse,

20:00 Eagle Farm racecourse isn't it? We come across these avenues of Poinciana [Jacaranda], they were all in flower. They were absolutely beautiful. First time I had seen a Poinciana tree. We did a root march around there, we got some leave, we come back to the ship and got some leave. We had a look all round Brisbane.

Can you describe Brisbane at the time?

Yeah, it was a big town, shops still had their veranda posts still holding them up, most of them.

20:30 A few big shops. Roma street markets were at Roma street, near Roma Street Station, the town hall had King George on his horse in the middle of the square in front, and on the other side, the street divided there into two, and King George was there in the middle of it. On the other side was the Wintergarden Theatre. Opposite the Town Hall.

21:00 The church was still there if I remember. The XXXX brewery was still in the same place, we went there

and visited it, they took us all over and they gave us some drinks and so on. Gave us all a bottle of stout to take home, I lost out going home with, I did, we got the tram of course. Got out at the markets on the way back. The policeman was there, and the tram driver was calling the legionnaires, because they had a

21:30 hat on with a cover down the back like a legionnaire. They thought it was a great joke. And the policeman there with – was a big bobby helmet on it was white. And we went up to them and said have a drink. And they wouldn't. And while I was there I visited my uncle's foundry. Which was in Alice street, near where Park Royal [Hotel] is now.

22:00 He had a big foundry there, and went and made myself known to him, and a couple of me mates. He said, "Oh yea" I don't know who it was then I can't remember, the manager's name, but it was one of the relatives cousins or something, showed me all around the place and how to do. And of course being in the foundry I knew a bit about it, but this was all steel of course. And one

22:30 of them said – one of the foreman, "Take them around and show them around the factory." Anyhow we were there with our big cigars and we were shown around the factory. The fella said look out there, out the back. Out the back of the factory was Margaret Street I think it was. You know those girls there, stay away from them. They were prostitutes. All sitting in chairs, in cane chairs outside this little old

23:00 little old cottage it was out the back there. I said, "Doesn't worry me, doesn't worry me." Thanks for the warning. Any rate we went up town and back to the ship that night.

How old were you at this stage?

18.

It was 1940?

Yeah, it was 1940. Any rate we went back to the ship.

What did you know about prostitutes at that stage?

I didn't know anything about them. Didn't even know what it meant, I don't think.

23:30 My mates did, they put me wise. I didn't know anything about. There was a couple of things that happened, but I don't know whether I ought to tell you about it on camera.

I think you ought to?

No, I'll tell you after. If you want on camera, okay.

No seriously were any of your mates interested in visiting those prostitutes?

Oh gee, I suppose they were, I didn't notice anything. Maybe later on they was.

24:00 Anyhow we got back to the ship and we had to scoot off pretty quick. There was U-Boat [Unterseeboot – German submarine] hanging around outside. It was there in Sydney but we didn't know anything about it. And the navy got on to it. They said there were U-Boats shadowing you going up the coast. So when they left Brisbane they headed up inside the reef and hoved off Mackay for a

24:30 while, didn't go ashore, just stopped there for a day I think. And then continued up to Thursday Island. Pulled in to Thursday Island and they stayed there for about a week. We lived on board the ship of course. Every day we got out and marched around the Island, which was only about a mile or so and then we got back on board and then had leave. Well the town had one street and had 3 hotels, a lot of coconut palms, mangoes all growing up and down the street.

25:00 We had a real good time there. A few beers and what have you.

This was on Thursday Island?

Yeah, Thursday Island. They unloaded some of the troops there, and they manned the 6 inch guns there they put in on Thursday Island. So I don't know what their names were but…

What did you know about the U-Boat?

We didn't know anything about it at that stage. It wasn't until later on when we were in

25:30 Darwin that we were informed about it, that the news come through. Anyway, we left Thursday Island and went to Darwin, arrived there sometime in November, I was 19 on the 10th November. I don't know whether I was on board or in New Guinea at that stage, Darwin at that stage. Any rate we pulled into Darwin they only had one wharf there, we offloaded on to the wharf. I don't know whether we marched into Lavarack Barracks or

26:00 whether we were trucked in. We might have gone on trucks, I can't remember. Anyhow we got to Lavarack Barracks which was a modern barracks for the tropics, 2-storey buildings, much the same as North Head a bit, but the buildings were all had bottom of the windows had wooden louvres, and the sides of the walls just opened up like big verandas you pulled them open, and all you had was this steel

locker alongside the bed.

26:30 But we didn't stay there, that was the barracks looked like, a big kitchen and everything.

Why did you volunteer to go to Darwin?

I don't know, I just wanted to get away. Adventure I suppose. Just wanted to be in it. I didn't want to be stuck around here all the time. If I had've stayed there forever and a day.

Did you have any idea what Darwin would be like?

No, I thought it would be great.

27:00 I enjoyed Darwin, don't get me wrong. A lot of people didn't, they went troppo. But I got there. Anyway we formed up on a parade when we got there and a roll call was called out. There was a captain there his name was they used to call him Dinnie, I have forgotten now, anyway, he had a lisp, and we were on this parade and he called our names out,

27:30 and we answered and he said, you go over there, and you go over there. In two lots, and he said you people go to Emery Point. Which was just down the road from where we were, to the 6 inch guns. They were Mark VIIs lower shield. They were just down the road, they not far from the barracks, about 500 metres down the road. You people East Point, OK.

28:00 The next thing he says, "Dick Smith." "Yes sir." I said, "Dick Smifth," he had a lisp. "Oh, dismissed, thank you." So on the trucks and we went out to East Point. It was lovely going out there, way along the roads round past Brandy Bay, right around the harbour, past Brandy Bay goal. Into an avenue where we went to a place called Dudley Point. It was the first army camp and they were fortress

28:30 engineers. And went past there and past Port Wall, which was the navy signal station, big, big tower there and so on. They were building. And then around the corner at East Point. There weren't any big high cliffs there or anything, part of East Point was limestone, went out into the sea, and around a bit further where the guns were

29:00 was up a bit of a cliff, about it would be 50 feet. That's about all. If that. Anyway when we pulled up and got out of the truck, there was somebody running around the parade ground. Somebody with a rifle and somebody else with a frangipani sticking out of his hat and somebody else chasing him, "Catch him, catch him." All these blokes there, and I thought it was a bit funny

29:30 meself. Getting a bit worried about this. But they were putting on an act, of course. I thought it was funny. Any we were allocated to our sections.

That was an act for your behalf was it?

Yes. An act on our behalf. But some people did go troppo, they couldn't stand the tropics. They would get all sorts of rashes and things. But I had me old cake of Lifebuoy soap and Johnson's baby powder. So I used to get Mum – 'send more Johnson's baby powder'. I asked the canteen

30:00 to get some in they did. But I used to as soon as I showered, use the old Johnson's baby powder. I never got dermatitis or any skin rashes. The others did, and they used a thing called microsol, it was a green thing with a brush and you had to paint it on. It would burn, and they had it down round their crotch, and they'd be there with their hat. Waving it, cooling down. Any rate

30:30 the allocated us into three sections, some into this one and some into that. Same as down at Cape Banks, they had A Section, B Section and C Section. I can't remember which I was in now, but – that's how I was on district staff down there. Oh you can go down to Sergeant Anderson, you can be his offsider, I thought that's great, that's good. That's what I used to do, fatigues or anything, I would be down on the guns, so

31:00 sweeping up the things, white washing the rocks, whatever you know. That was good.

The guns up there were they the same sort of guns you…?

No, the guns were 6 inch guns Mark Elevens. I believe they came of the old Sydney, they were guns with a big round shield on them. I have got a photograph in the album. There are photographs somewhere in the

31:30 archives, somewhere would be with the Women's Weekly. The Women's Weekly did a section up there in 1940 early 1941, 1940 I think or 1941. Would be 1941, round about wintertime.

Can you tell us how different from the guns you had been working on in Sydney?

Well these guns were much smaller, of course they were 6 inch instead of 9.2."

32:00 They were mounted on a flat piece of concrete, no underground. Bolted to a pedestal on a big slab of concrete. Behind them was a pit about chest deep. And inside in round the pit under the side was the magazine where they kept the shells and cordites that pass up to the guns, on to the gun platform, which was just cement. The guns were

32:30 mounted there and they were just a barrel on truncheons with a big shield around them. Later on they put a pivot on the shield and put another put a railway line, single railway line around the back of the pit and mounted another shield so you could move it around and stop strafing, because you had no protection from the air. If the enemy come over you would be protected, more or less.

33:00 It was open slather at you.

So, exactly what was your job there in Darwin?

District staff. Still on the gun crew, and I was the line-layer, elevation-layer, I had qualified for those, got a certificate. Got an extra shilling a day for qualifying for gun-layer.

Can you explain that to us?

Yeah, you had to do a course learn how to lay the gun,

33:30 put on the bearings, and swing the gun into action, all had to be elevated for applying the range.

What exactly was involved in that?

When it was – the same as the big guns, when it was on instrument panel from the range-taker, they'd come down on big cables, electronic cables on to the gun shields, dials.

34:00 They'd move – the trigger would move around, he had to keep the gun pointer on the arrow so he got the correct range. That was from the barn strand up there, and the barn strand was a big long flat tube where they had a prism at each end, it might have been 12 foot long, with a prism at each end of it, and they aimed at the target with wheels and knobs and so on, and they get two

34:30 images, well they had to bring those two images into one, and when they were one image that gave you the range for the target, and the bearing was read off a dial around the bottom. Circle around the bottom of the instrument. And that was transported electronically to the gun dials. And the guns themselves, when you went to move the gun, the gun arrows would follow those, you had to do that by manual.

35:00 **When those guns were fired how did they compare with those guns you had seen in Sydney?**

Big difference, the big guns in Sydney were boomed, they just boomed out, a fair bit of concussion with them, but it wasn't hard on the ears, it was just like a big explosion you know. But these other guns they were a much sharper crack. They weren't real bad, but they were bad enough. But you had a shield to protect you from the

35:30 blast. But they were oh not too bad. Depends on what elevation you had them at too and so on. Low elevation, you didn't cop such loud noises as you did with high elevation.

When they were fired how did that impact on you…?

Oh the recoil, there was a recoil of course, the big guns had to recoil the same. They recoiled around about 10 – the more they were elevated the less

36:00 recoil you had because they would hit the ground otherwise. So the recoil mechanism would close off – like a port with windows in it. And as you elevate it, it closed that shield and closed those ports up. But the oil would take longer to force back, so the recoil was lessened and the shock on the gun was greater. The

36:30 6" shells only weighed 100 lb as against 380 lb. And then the shells were rammed in with a rammer, a big bucket with a sponge and a rammer on the end with a brass knob on the end of it, he used to ram the shell in, it took a couple of blokes to get it in. Cordite was in a bag, like a calico bag, and you made sure that the igniter pad was one end which was a red tab.

37:00 You had to put that in the end otherwise it wouldn't fire off. You put that in the gun, you close the breach up, there was a big screw breach, in the end you put a little trigger back and you put in a thing like a detonator, as I was saying, like a cordite, like a cartridge from a bullet. You put that in, and closed it up, and that was the trigger. Then, the elevation layer was

37:30 for putting the elevation on. Then the line-layer would come around and once his gun was on target he would say set, and the elevation-layer would bring his up and when his gun was there, he would fire it, just after that when the word fire came, and that's what he'd do he would elevate the gun and then fire it.

How often did you fire those guns?

Oh quite a bit. Yeah. Same again in practice, we didn't fire any if any ships were

38:00 coming in. We fired across a bough of a ship that didn't want to stop. A blank one across one across his bough, and he pulled up quick smart. Of course Port gives the signal from the navy, put a bough across that ship, put one across the bough of that ship. It was an American boat coming in. Liberty boat or something, I don't know what it was, but they stopped anyway, and started blink, blink through the

control tower.

38:30 That was the only time – plenty of practice. They had something they called splash target, it was like a little buoy 24 gallon drum shaped like a bit of a boat, bit of a bough on it, with 2 tubes in it, and the tubes were bent and stuck out of the top. When it was towed, it was towed by a Fairmile, which was a speedboat type of thing, and the water would spout up in the air. Quite a bit

39:00 like a whale blowing off. And these sprays of water would go up, one behind the other like that. So you cold see both of them. Any rate we used to fire the gun at those, and sometimes we hit them, and they would go crook, you are not supposed to hit these things. They would have to go back and get fixed up and come back again.

What was the impact like when you hit them?

Those were only using solid shots, shelling practice,

39:30 didn't use any live stuff, just solid shot. So it was hitting big spout there, if it was low trajectory, it would just skim along the water. And of course it would spin away to the right. Later on I will tell you about the other two guns they put in and had to proof them, shows you what you can do. They put another two guns in there later on.

40:00 But that was it, we had to do our normal guard duties and so on. Do patrols along the beach. We went around to where they had a lighthouse, a search light around on the next point and you had to go across to Rapid Creek, mangrove swamps and so and, and get round there and do that patrol and come back again. Which wasn't too bad. But one night when we come back, we just slept on the – with a blanket on the cement, and

40:30 and one night I was doin' guard duty there, and it was that cold and I had me lumber jacket I took with me into the army, and it was made of a sort of camel hair type of thing, and it was a beige colour, came to your waist. And they used to call them lumber jackets. And it was that cold. Cold – your nose – and doing guard duty with this jacket on. You wouldn't think it would get that cold in the wintertime in Darwin.

41:00 It was freezing. And anyway after one of these patrol nights I was there and come back, I was that sick the next morning, and I got back to the barracks, now the barracks were a big tin huts, steel framed but big tin, and the whole section would sleep in one building. And they had 3 of those, A B and C. Big buildings, they were

41:30 metal galvanised iron. And the windows weren't glass but they tin but they used to open up, there was a gap around the floor about 9 inches up off the floor and outside it had a little veranda, so when it rained it didn't splash in. For circulation. That was quite comfortable to sleep in. Nice beds, mattress. Sheets,

42:00 pillows proper sheets.

42:04 End of tape

Tape 3

00:32 **Just continue with that story about coming home that night and being freezing cold?**

Yeah, it was cold. I had me coat, me lumber jacket, yeah, I took that with me from Sydney before – I had it when I was with – before I joined the army I had that. Anyway I didn't realize that I wouldn't need it in Darwin, but it was that cold

01:00 you wouldn't think it got cold in Darwin it was the middle of the night I was down around the gun apron on picket duty, anyway that was just an incident people don't realize just how cold it gets in Darwin. Anyway I was doing this patrol, I come back from this patrol and one night and got down on me blanket and had a bit of a sleep, woke up in the morning and I was that sick. Managed to get back to the hut and I asked me mate to go up

01:30 and ask the doctor to come down and see me because I was just about out to it. I had been vomiting and didn't know what was wrong with me. He come down, took one look at me and the next think I am in the ambulance headed of to the hospital, which was just outside the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] aerodrome. Under marquees, it was the 2nd 19th AGH [Australian General Hospital], I think,

02:00 I am not sure of that, it's in the records somewhere. But when I got there I was taken out of the ambulance, and I was told, sit here, and it was just a tent fly with wooden stools, and I had to wait they called you in, my name was called out and they said in here, and I had to walk up some steps into a hut, and I get in there and the doctor says what's wrong with you, and I said every time I take a deep breath like

02:30 that, I don't remember any more, I just faded out, completely out. Next thing I remember I was in a bed in a hospital ward, building, and 2 doctors there, and one was arguing saying, he's got dengue fever, and he's got pneumonia, he's got pleurisy. So I had pneumonia and pleurisy or a type of pneumonia and

03:00 pleurisy, and dengue fever, I was in hospital anyway there. They treating me to get me better. The doctor gave me a bottle of beer a day. And the nurse used to come and dish it out in a tin mug. Have you ever drunk beer from a tin mug? Anyway that was my ration. Anyway I got better after a week, and then I found out I was in the officer's hospital ward. Because the others were out in

03:30 the tent. When I got better they put me out in the marquee, but marquees, tents. In the marquees they have got about 4 poles, I think they had, and they had a couple of ropes joining the poles together to hand towels over. Anyway this night the cyclone turned up, down come the whole lot of course, with the rope across it, luckily the poles didn't hit nobody. That I can remember, but there was a

04:00 pole down alongside me on the bed and of course with all the canvas on your and this rope holding me down on the bed, I couldn't get off. Anyway I stayed there until morning, they eventually came around, cleaning us all up, getting us out. Ramming us into double beds inside the building again, until they fixed the marquee up again, and fixed it all up again. Went back in there, it wasn't

04:30 long after that they sent me convalescing. I must have been down to round about 6.5 to 5 stone, I was only about 7 to start with, and I must have lost about 2 stone in weight. Anyway, they said down to Adelaide River for convalescing. Which is a fair way down the coast, inland. On the train. Took me to near the wharf area and the train

05:00 was what we used to call Spirit of Protest we used to call it. So, up on top of a big pile of logs, wooden beams or something, sit on top of that with me kit back, and off we went. Didn't have a cattle truck or a carriage, I had to sit on top of this timber. It took us the best part of a day to get down to Adelaide River. Some of the gradients the train didn't get up at first go, they had to have a go twice or three times. Back and get up steam and head for it

05:30 again, we eventually go down there. And the camps were big tents under big mango plantation, alongside the river. It was quite good. All we did was normal army fatigues in the morning, one of the jobs they gave me was trying to burn this big heap of rubbish, all kitchen refuse and stuff. Somebody had been throwing kerosene on it and it just burnt the

06:00 surface, they had to dig it all out and burn it bit by bit. Plenty of kerosene just chuck on it. But it was a nasty job. Any rate I would good that burning and clear off and go and have a swim, in the river. I didn't have to do anything else, go for meals. Next morning have another go at this big pile of rubbish. Back up, there was a high narrow bridge there,

06:30 way above the flood level. We used to dive off that into about 4 foot of water. I used to do a lot of diving in our free time swimming and diving. I used to dive and do a shallow dive. We used to sit on the bank and catch yabbies. And how you catch yabbies you know as soon as you move they go backwards, so we had a copper wire and made a loop in it and we used

07:00 to put that behind them, and then make a move and they would back into it. So we used to get quite a few of those and put them in the old kerosene tin and boil them up and have a feed. And mangoes, plenty of mangoes. Anyhow I don't know how long I was there, maybe 3 weeks, and then on the train again and back to Darwin, and back to me old job again.

When

07:30 **how long after that did the Darwin bombing start?**

That would be sometime in – I am not sure when, must have been June, mangoes were being ripened, could have been July or August 1941. 5 months or so before the war…

What was Darwin like at that point before the bombing?

08:00 Darwin was a lovely little town, it was a country cosmopolitan town. There was Chinese, there was Japanese, there was Japanese there. Japanese had a store there, and of course a lot of them got put interned. There was Aborigines, Indonesians, there were miners. Policemen used to walk around with khaki uniform on and a slouch

08:30 hat, and a pistol in the holster. The Don Gordon Hotel was the nearest one to the wharf, and they had bat wing doors, like in the old westerns. And if you weren't careful walking past there somebody might come flying out. There was the Victoria Hotel, which is still much today as it was then. Didn't get bombed I don't think, it might have got a few scars. The Darwin Hotel, which I think they have just knocked down,

09:00 the Darwin Hotel and putting another one there. The administration building is still there, it didn't get bombed, it is still intact. The post office got wiped out of course, some of the other buildings, some of the banks got pretty well scarred up. The Star Theatre was still okay. Otherwise it was a good town. And Chinatown, was the next street back from the main Smith street,

09:30 it was good, you got there for a beaut meal. One of our favourite times when we were on leave we'd go in there and have fish and chips and onions and fried egg. It was beaut. Lovely meal.

Did you have close mates at this point?

Yeah, I had a few close mates there, one was Morrie Lee from Tasmania, another was Billy Gibbs from Sydney, I can't

10:00 think of a lot of their names now. Harry Brown, quite a few others. Ted Anderson, of course Sergeant Anderson we were pretty well good pals because we working together all the time. It was pretty good. About this time I think it was, no it was after this time, they – oh yeah we used to have our sheets, put them in a kerosene tin

10:30 and boil them up and put a fire underneath them. We had a fish trap out the front of the guns, and when the tide was out we would go down and collect fish. It was in the form of an arrowhead shape with the ends turned in, so when the fish come up they'd turn them back. Down the centre of the apex was a box all done with wire netting. The wings would only be about 7 or 6 ft high. When the tide come in

11:00 it would cover them over, and they would get trapped. We used to go down there and catch quite a few fish, clean them, fillet them and hang them on a bit of wire and cook them. Eat them fresh. And we'd supply the kitchen of course. The cook was flat out trying to get fresh foot and stuff he used to put peas and beans out on a wet piece of

11:30 hessian, and they would all sprout and he would cook them up in stews. And you know when beans sprout they leave little things like grubs. And some people would come in what are all these grubs. And I said they are bean sprouts, shut up and eat it. And outside the kitchen door they had a big wooden barrel, and it was three parts full with glucose, plain

12:00 glucose. And when you go past, line up to get your food, you were supposed to dig your spoon in that and get a spoonful out and eat it. It was hard, do you know what glucose is, it's like real thick syrup and you would be munching on that when you went in.

What was the point of that?

Probably a bit of sugar, I don't know what it was for. Energy. Didn't do us any harm anyway.

Were people in Darwin feeling

12:30 **threatened?**

Not at that stage no, everything was going along fine. As I say, it was cosmopolitan, a big happy place. It had its problems with drunks and that, and the wharfies would get into fisty cuffs, and the wharves used to be supplied by ship. All supplies come up by ship or flown up by air. And the food was very expensive, if you went to buy a

13:00 banana it would cost you a shilling each. You would pay a shilling a pound down here for them. Cabbage would be 4/5 or something, and newspaper was 2 bob and 2 pence down here. Of course all air freighted up. The other supplies would come by sea and mostly from Perth. Of course when the come up they would put the beer on last being fragile. As soon as the beer got loaded

13:30 off we'd be in the hotels. The wharfies would all knock off and go into the pub. So they woke up to this scam and put the beer on the bottom of the load first, load it on first, so they had to get everything off before they could get the beer off, and that worked fine. Darwin Hospital was down the other end of the main street, way down the other end of the headland, overlooking the harbour. There was a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]

14:00 every man's hut, used to be run by the YMCA people. There was a billiard room there and cups of coffee or tea or something, have a read or listen to the radio or whatever. No TV [television]. And that was good when you were on leave. We used to do town pickets, and go in there all dressed up with our nice uniform, and bayonet on the side. We had to

14:30 stop people from barging into the theatre when they were drunk. It was an open air theatre at the front, people sit at the back, 2 storey, and the door at the front was open and all the Aborigines used to go down there, and if it rained they would be in the rain. Upstairs you used to be able to get over the side of the theatre into a Chinese place, and go down a ladder into a gambling den. And

15:00 that's where they sued to go and play two up and fan tan and all that sort of thing. The Hotel Victoria had a big secret in and out gambling place. They called ins and outs, it was a dice game where double twelve, two sixes would give you 20 to 1 if you put a shilling on it you would get 20 back, and different numbers all round. They used to play, odds or evens was in

15:30 or out. So if you had an odd number and you put something on it, you got it if you had an odd number. That was just part of our entertainment in those days.

Did you make much money?

No, no. I didn't gamble very much. I didn't have that much money anyway, I only had 2 bob a day. And

Mum got the rest. She kept the rest too. Didn't have it when I

16:00 finished the army. She didn't have it. I didn't blame her. Anyway Darwin was good. Mende, the jewellery store, he used to do all the photography work, you know print all our pictures up and he was a Japanese. We weren't allowed to take pictures of the guns and stuff, that's why I don't have any big ones there. During June, I think it must have been

16:30 1941, Women's Weekly went up there and did a story on the East Point, and it had 'Big guns under gum trees'. Photos of the gun, and one of them had me sitting on the layer seat. And that photo is in the museum at East Point. They have a movie stills and that put

17:00 on video. There you are. I was skinny lookin' bloke sittin' up there.

Can you tell us about the lead up to the bombing?

Lead up to the bombing, well we knew the Japanese were coming round, we knew they were in New Guinea, and we were kept informed of the Kokoda Trail and all that, and we heard about the Sydney Harbour with the submarines going in there, and

17:30 really we had anti-aircraft guns, we had slit trenches dug, our anti-aircraft defence which we didn't have when we first went there. We – at East Point we had a detachment of Americans, with 50 calibre machine guns mounted up with sandbags around them. There was about 3 of those at East Point. We didn't have any big guns there, we didn't have any Beauforts or anything.

18:00 On the golf links, just before you come in to East Point proper, there is quite a big of jungle there, vines and ground cover and trees. On the golf links there was a 3 point – 3 inch anti-aircraft battery. With about 4 guns I think they had, might have been 6 I am not sure, but they were pretty close to us. The other anti-aircraft guns were on the oval in the city

18:30 itself, and some out near the aerodrome. So they had those in place. But when the first raid started, it was early in the morning, we all got up and looked around. And around 10 o'clock or 9.30 or something like that, way up there was this dog fight going on. You could hear this

19:00 ratatatat. We only had a couple of Wirraway aircraft, and the Japanese had Zeros. Anyhow they are chasing this poor little plane around up there and I said, "Look at that," I said to Ken Anderson, he said, "Oh they are practising." I said, "Not with machine guns. You can't fire machine guns in practice." Not in those days you couldn't. Now they have a blank type of thing. Of course machine guns bullet goes out to force

19:30 back for the next one. Compression. And he said, "Oh yeah" Any rate it got shot down out at sea, followed it right down. You could see the pilot bail out, but the Japanese still dive-bombing him, machine-gunning him, and we were mad. Anyway we reported it to the fire commander and they got – our fire commander got on to the barracks that something was going on,

20:00 and in the meantime these planes were coming, they only looked about the size of a 10 cent piece, way up in the sky, they were that high up. They were in V formation, quite a few of them. We were expecting American planes to come in, they were saying we are expecting a flight of American planes. Most of us said, "Oh they are here at last" you know. The bombs were falling before the

20:30 sirens went. The post office people got out they got in the slit trenches okay. But the bombs bang, bang, bang, hit the slit trenches, and blew the post office to pieces, and all that staff was killed and the wharves were hit. We couldn't see much, we could see smoke and stuff going up. We were at the mouth of the harbour, and looking at the harbour you could see ships getting hit. One went up and it looked like an atomic bomb going off.

21:00 We could hear it from out at East Point, it was the MV Neptuna, it was tied up at the wharf, unloading ammunition. It is still under the wharf as far as I know, they built the wharf over the top of it. There were 7 ships sunk in the harbour, the USS Perry, the American destroyer got sunk, all hands, still firing going out the harbour. The hospital ship the HMAS Arunta I think it was, got strafed. It

21:30 made a mess anyway. We had anti-aircraft guns, Bofors on top of the oil tanks, on top of the oil tanks in the harbour, they were blown up. Some of the oil tanks got blown up. After that the engineers tunnelled underneath the cliffs and put oil and stuff in under there so they couldn't get bombed. All in all the first raid it was drastic. The second raid came over the same day.

22:00 Mostly concentrated at the RAAF aerodrome. And those parts. There were a few around. And we were strafed, a plane came flying right round the coast. It was a – it wasn't a Zero, it was a two pilot plane, with a canopy on it, I don't know whether they call it a Betty plane or what, anyway he was up there with a machine gun and the pilot was in the front, and he was up there with a machine gun and it was a

22:30 Lewis gun that he had, you could see it. And of course we all shot at him, we had our rifles, bang, bang, bang. And our American friends with the anti-aircraft gun. And we think we hit him, because he staggered off and he went around towards White Cliffs and he finished up, I think he ditched in the ocean. So, everybody round the place was shooting at him, right round to Dudley Point. So, I think we got him.

Close enough to see their faces?

Yeah, much

23:00 later on, close enough, he was only 50 ft above sea, flying round the cliff. Big grinning face, bang, bang, bang. Of course you had to fly ahead of the aircraft, we knew that. Fire, put me hand up and said that's right, bang. Didn't have any tracers but the other one did, the Americans had a tracer. Anyway

23:30 we got a report that paratroops were landing at Trip… Cove that was further up the coast. That's it, get your gear together, get your emergency rations together, we might have to get from here, we might have to destroy the guns, we won't have any protection. So anyway, it turned out it wasn't it was only

24:00 pilots bailing out and they managed to collect them and take them down to Cowra. Anyway our emergency ration advice to get away and our route to escape was across the boom defence, which consisted of criss-cross 2" piping, most of the way, with a big net on buoys across the main channel. The tide

24:30 in and out was anything from 7-8 knots a hour, because that was 6 ft fall and rise of the tide. We had to go across there with our kit hand over hand and swim across the river and get to the other side, which was approximately 9 mile distance. Our rations were one tin of jam between 3 fellas, 1 tin of bully beef between 3 fellas, you carry this one, you carry that one, tea and sugar

25:00 in a plastic, no plastic, a brown paper bag. Broken biscuits in a brown paper bag, where we put those I don't know up under our hat I suppose. But that was our emergency rations to get across. People had to share up the food. Of course we didn't know what was on the other side until we got there. We had to carry our kit rifle and everything. We had a leather bandolier with 30 rounds of ammunition in.

25:30 Our respirator and steel helmet, shirts and shorts, and that's it.

And you didn't have to do that?

This story about everybody clearing out of Darwin and shooting through, every man for himself. We never heard about that, that was news to us. I said I don't believe, we couldn't believe it. We stayed at our post all the artillery people in the garrison were all still there. All the

26:00 anti-aircraft people stayed there.

When did you hear those rumours?

Sometime later on. 3 or 4 months later I think it must have been. But what happened was of course, the RAAF was getting shot to pieces and it was only the RAAF people. And it was make your way out and get on the track. They had no aircraft left. All the aircraft was – they only had a few, Wirraways, they were destroyed,

26:30 and they were getting bombed to bits out there, bombing the whole air field. And I believe the commander said, "Well every man for himself, get out, get down to Adelaide River or somewhere and we can form up again." Down to Batchelor and things like that. When more aircraft come, they made airstrips along the roads and off the road, and everything like that down there. About 2.5 miles down. And when the American Kittyhawks came and so on,

27:00 they had dispersal bays all down through the bush. But the RAAF was too big an open target. That's my idea of it anyway. They were the only people involved, were the RAAF people. The civilians some of them panicked a big and made a rush to get out of the place. But of course they were told to get down to Adelaide. They did evacuate some

27:30 earlier than that. Some of the women and children were evacuated to Adelaide. Some of them managed to get aboard a ship before it got to hair scary and get down there. They managed to fly some down to Adelaide in the DC3s they had.

Did you see any evidence of looting?

No, no. We had to do town pickets later on go in there and with bayonet.

28:00 There could have been some going on because there were still civilians there, and – see they had no main road out. So whoever did the looting must have had bush shacks or something. But

Was it – describe the atmosphere in Darwin directly after the bombing?

Well we were at East Point and we didn't see too much of it. We didn't get into town only on picket.

28:30 **How had it changed when you went in?**

Devastated. Buildings blown up, the Bank of New South Wales, it wasn't blown up but it was all big holes, bullet holes. The town was strafed as well by dive bombers and so on. But mostly the bombers were concentrated around the wharf area. Communications, of the aerodrome,

29:00 railway siding, and then the few around the town. But the bombing after that, they spread out a bit more and went for the cold stores, and Vesty's meat works which is what the ordnance used to have.

And the ordnance shifted it after the bombing into the Victoria Hotel. And we had to go in there and pick up bread and stuff. The ration truck would go in there and get the bread every 3 days, enough to last you for 3

29:30 days. One of the ration trucks coming home went down past the Mendel Beach along the road past the beach, just at the foot of the Botanic Gardens, a lot of coconut palms growing. Here's an unexploded bomb in the middle of the road, all scrunched up. One of those daisycutters, a big long fuse sticking out about a foot. They bundled into the back of the truck and brought it out to East Point.

30:00 Much to the disgust of the major and the CO [commanding officer], could have blown yourselves to bits. They took the truck up and gently unloaded it, and put it between the bags and the guns. So they have to go past it every day going backwards and forwards, and they put a little barb wire fence around it. So, you couldn't touch it. Eventually they got the engineers out to dispose of it and at low tide dropped it over the cliff and

30:30 waited for a while and nothing happened, went down and blew it up. The stupid things they did. We used to have beach parties when we had time off. They used to take us on trips buffalo hunting. Get a buffalo for fresh meat. Down to Mt Yap Dam for a day's outing. That was on your days off, we'd get on the truck and away we'd go. Bit of rest

31:00 and recreation I suppose. Those things happened, periodically everybody got a turn.

What did you enjoy about those days?

I enjoyed the whole lot, I liked the tropics. I liked the smell, the atmosphere of it, the smell of the Poinciana trees, and different smell there, especially when you get near the pawpaw flowers, and anytime I get near a pawpaw flower it takes me back

31:30 there. Good perfume. It was good health apart from when I was sick before. But that was the second time I had pneumonia, as a kid I got pneumonia, I was about 12, 12 or 13, I had to go into hospital at St George in Sydney, I had pneumonia. Pains in the chest. I got another bout when was up in the islands, I was in hospital there. But anyway that was good.

32:00 Periodically the bombings came, I was there for quite a few of them. The day we left Darwin the bombing raid came on. I was down at the wharf getting on the train, cattle trucks this time. And this was round about October 1942. And then down to Adelaide River to a place called Lorimar at a staging camp, a big army staging camp, I was there for a few days waiting for the truck convoy to be made

32:30 up. Down there they had bush huts, the mess hut was just tables with a bush top, no sides for walls. If it rained the rain would come through it. The toilets were a great big long ditch with 20 thunder boxes along the top, with a screen around them. Half of them would be shut off while they used to put

33:00 timber in them and burn them for hygiene purposes. You'd throw some kerosene or dieseline, light it and burn that off. We'd use that half. Anyway this day, the bloke doing the job went down there and put the dieseline in that half and shut the lids down, and he went over to the kitchen to get matches, he didn't have any matches, he come back to get the matches to throw down there,

33:30 and this fella come in and sat down lifted up the lid and lit a smoke and threw the match in didn't he. Everything blew up and a couple of other blokes sitting on the toilet they jumped up too. He got a bit singed. Didn't get hurt really, but this explosion and the fumes had been coming up while he's over there. I tell you, things happen.

34:00 **Just going back to Darwin for a bit, did – how did it change your attitude toward the war when the bombing started?**

Well, I don't know whether it changed it at all, I said well this is it sort of thing, no more pussy footing around you know. I said well where do we go from here. We didn't know where we were going to be sent to.

34:30 Being in a militia unit which I didn't know about at the time when I joined up, it was – you didn't go overseas, you only went to, or you could have gone to New Guinea, or the Australian territories, supposed to be looking after, New Britain and New Guinea. So they called for volunteers to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] so we all volunteered to join the AIF up there, and they took our particulars

35:00 and everything. And they decided they would give us a new number. And they said, "Well we can't call you NX, we can call you, because we didn't enlist in New South Wales you get NX, you'll have to… Well we could call you DNX, Darwin enlistment, New South Wales AIF." So that was in the air, we thought we were going to get an NX number. Anyway, We

35:30 eventually left Darwin, oh in the meantime, I have to tell you this, N Battery came up, a unit called N Battery. Now they were supposed to go to Ambon and guns were supposed to be put in, guns were being put in over on Ambon for them. Blokes like Ted Gallagher and a couple of others like myself, being on the district staff, supposed to go over and maintain them and

36:00 fix them up, not stay there, just fix them up. And we went over there and come back again, because the Japs [Japanese] had taken over the place and had to blow the guns up. So the guns were spiked and

blown up, and got back on the Fairmile, in the meantime N Battery was on their way over there on the ship, turned around and was sent back to Darwin. Now, what guns were there I don't know what sort they were, but the other ones

36:30 they got more guns, 6" like we had, and they put them out to the left on more less flat ground, where the sand stone stuff was on the camp. And they put them on what they called cruciform mounts, which was 8 steel girders about 12' long, and they were made into a big cross

37:00 Then they put a circle of steel around it and bolted the guns on the top of that so they were there. I had to proof fire them, had to help Ted Gallagher and of course they had proof fire them on the flat trajectory lowest trajectory you could get it to make sure they didn't jump off the thing. And of course when the shell went out it hit the water just in front. And way, way across seeing it go for miles skipping over the water.

37:30 Anyhow they had to do it to maximum elevation and check it stabilise them after that, both guns you had to do it to. Anyhow that being on a level platform, they had to make the range elevation and range as the gun went round they had change it because if you went up a bit of a hill, and you went down, and when you went round that bit of a hill the elevation changed. All these

38:00 adjustments. You had to look at your little charge bearing so and so add 50, bearing so and so drop 20. On your scale because it wasn't level. Anyway, didn't have to fire them in anger anyway.

What did you enjoy about that work?

It was good work I liked it, it was – it kept you happy and something to do. In the meantime they started to put in a 9.2"

38:30 I have got a photograph over there of it, a big concrete bunkers like they had at Cape Banks. They were putting those in them. But I didn't see them finished, I left before they were finished. A couple of funny things happened when a raid was on. We used to get into the slit trench and wait for things to come. Dodge the shrapnel coming from the anti aircraft guns. I got one in the shin, a piece of shrapnel, it stuck there and

39:00 burnt, I pulled it out, didn't do much damage. I got one on the side of the jaw there. Most of that stuff was from anti aircraft. All the stuff that goes up there comes down again, it's like rain. Big shell nose caps and things, whiz as it goes past you. Anyway we didn't worry too much about it we put our tin hats on. There's a – behind the guns was a control tower, behind

39:30 in front of those were two big magazines with ammunition in, half buried in the ground. Big asbestos top on them. And behind that again was another magazine in reserve, but between that was a big long toilet block, this day raid came on and seen this bloke duck into the toilet and Ted Anderson, and we picked up this big clod of dirt and threw it over the top of the roof. Never seen somebody scatter out

40:00 of the building so fast in all your life. His pants around his legs. Nasty thing to do, but these things happen.

Were there times when you felt really threatened?

Yes, when they said that paratroops had landed. The only time, other times, you could see the planes come over we got bombs around at East Point, but none on the gun site itself.

40:30 We watched them and it was one Sunday I think, an air raid come over, there were two big V formation might have been 12 aircraft in it, V formation and the anti aircraft got right amongst them and started peeling them off from the end. They must have got about 7 aircraft that day just by shooting them down, before the Zeros, before the fighter planes got to them, and everybody was outside the fence cheering. This is great.

41:00 Didn't feel threatened at all, apart from that one instance which was a bit scary, because we knew how they landed and how they used to surge through. Read about it about them coming down the Malayan Peninsula and so on. They wouldn't have got far once they got inland. Because we would have all gone bush and sniped them off. Their lines of

41:30 communication were getting a bit long. And the squads earth policy was in up there. So if they had landed everything would have been burned up, everybody would have scattered out into the bush and used same as Russian tactics. Because most of the inland cattle around Derby and Broome they all would have moved out. Big overland cattle drive into Queensland.

42:02 End of tape

Tape 4

00:31 **I was interested to know with the bombings, you were a bit further away from the city itself, did you get debris come down through the water there, what sort of things did you see?**

Aaah, being at the mouth of the harbour, we had bodies washed up on the foreshore, 2 or 3 days

01:00 after, 4 days after. Lots of debris and stuff, oil, all sorts of stuff coming out from the harbour, and coming on the next tide. The tides were between – were anything up to 10 knots. When you saw a ship coming in through the harbour, against the tide, you would think it was doing 20 kms an hour with a big bough wave coming up. But it's only just hardly moving.

01:30 But that's the race of tide. But yes, we had a lot of debris come up, oil, bits and pieces.

How did you deal with the bodies?

Just contacted the people at the barracks and they sent somebody out in an ambulance to pick the bodies up. They found one, must have been a civilian seaman. Could have been a Dutchman or anything.

02:00 He had been in the water 2 days or so. Some of them that same day, and got caught up in the tide, on the outgoing tide. But then, a lot of the bodies were washed up into the mangroves, on the far end of the end of the bay. Crocodiles would – plenty of those around, sharks. So I don't know how many people,

02:30 they estimated the number of deaths, I forget what the figure is. But there's a lot they didn't know anything about. A lot of the coolie deckhands and so on.

Is that the first death you had experienced?

Aaah, I was at home when my aunty died at our house. I don't remember any other deaths, that was the first one that really nasty thing like that.

How did it affect you?

03:00 Oh, I don't know at this stage how it affected me. I suppose I was a bit upset about it. But, just sort of had to take that along with the rest of us. Trying and put it behind you, and think what you are going to do next.

03:30 They had to send a fellow out and walk around, in the morning first thing and then again during the day, and first thing before nightfall, to make sure there weren't any more there. We didn't get that many there. Of course the tide would take them right out, and bring them back in again if they were still close in. So it wasn't a nice sight, but as I was saying,

04:00 there was quite a catastrophe in the harbour that they really got stuck into the ships. If they had been there a couple of days before, there was a – they had 27 ships in the harbour, most of them got out, a lot of the American ships went. I don't know whether they headed east or west, but they weren't in the harbour when they bombed.

On the day, how did your group react to the chaos?

Most of them said,

04:30 we'll be next, get your slit trench dug. Expecting to be bombed anytime. Because we were – they couldn't sail in with us there. They would have copped it fairly, they would have come in with their ships, but they would have landed further up the coast anyway, that's what they said, their paratroops landed up there, but when you come to think of it the Japanese didn't have any paratroops. Yeah.

05:00 So old Darwin was a mixed experience, it was something when you look back on, it's something a lot of people don't know about. But it's as I say they were putting 9.2 inch guns in when I left. And I didn't realise how many troops were moving up north, they put the north-south

05:30 road in and the other road there before was just a track following the overland telegraph line. The Civil Construction Corps put the roads in and they were the ones working on the 9.2" guns, putting the placements in, and they were camped just outside our camp, alongside the road into East Point. The CCC Civilian Construction Corps. The Americans put the road

06:00 in from Alice Springs in. It's only dusty dirty road. As I found out travelling on it going back in a convoy.

Tell us about that, when did you come to leave Darwin?

Left by train, on the Spirit of Progress in the cattle truck. The cracks in the floor was about quarter of an inch to an inch wide. Probably let all the stuff fall through with the cattle in there. But if you wasn't careful you got

06:30 pinched when it moved. So we got down to Larrimah and I told you about the big toilet explosion. We camped there for a few days, not much to do just roam around the place. If I had've know I could have gone over to Batchelor and I had an uncle over there, Harry Sargeant, and his farm is Litchfield National Park, his

07:00 farm is still there as a memorial type of thing. And I had a cousin at Batchelor, and I had a cousin in Darwin that I didn't know about. So not until after when we did the trip back there later on. Anyway we got the trucks and it took us 3 days to get to Alice Springs. We stayed overnight at a couple of staging camps on the way down. Banker Banker was one and probably Tea Tree Well was another. I don't know

about

07:30 Tennant Creek, we might have stayed there. And various ones where we had meal breaks as well, and you know net over the hat, pulled in for the bushflies, the bushflies were that thick they could carry you away. Anyway, a dusty trip, in open trucks. They had a roof over them, but the sides up, and in a convoy they always rode on a dusty road, bull dust like, clouds of dust. The trucks would open up as

08:00 they could, a couple of hundred metres between them, and then you would have to close up when it got later in the evening. But there you are sitting in this dust and breathing it in. But after all that you look across the big fat plain, foxes and galahs would fly around. And you would see grey then pink big flocks, maybe 3-400 in them. They had grass parrots. The little budgerigars, they were

08:30 the same, thousands of them.

What did you guys do sitting on those trucks all day?

Just sitting twiddling our thumbs or singing songs.

What sort of songs?

Oh 'Roll out the barrel' or a few songs that you don't mention these days. Had your own sort of thing.

Can you give us a burst of one of the ones you don't mention?

"We're a mob of bastards, bastards are we, we're from Australia, the arsehole

09:00 of the world and the sea."

Fantastic.

Yeah, it was made up.

What was the atmosphere with the other blokes like?

They were all the same, they were happy to be leaving Darwin, most of them. But on the way down, after we left Larrimah, we saw these big camps. One camp we stayed the night at. There were all these troop camps everywhere, and they said

09:30 gee they are all movin' north up there, there must be thousands of troops. Americans, – an old school mate, a bloke that used to live next door to me, he was up there. I didn't know until after the war. I remember goin' to a two up school there one night. I won a bit of money too. I think around about £50. And I said save that up and spend you money on

10:00 the canteen didn't have much stuff in it up in Darwin. And I had accumulated a bit of money, so I spun 5 heads in a row, and I got – started off with £2 and finished up with £50. That was all right, and I didn't go back again, on the truck next day. We got to Alice Springs eventually, and under canvas tents, off the trucks into canvas tents, in the showground,

10:30 and if you wanted a shower you went to the ablution block, which was tin wall around and no roof on it, and turn the cold water on. And I tell you what, I have never had such a cold shower in all my life. Neither had anybody else, we were all the colour of your pants when we were finished, we were blue. That was it, I didn't have a shower next morning. Anyway, we had to go into Alice Springs, and one of the stores there was

11:00 taken over by ordnance, up on the corner it's still there as a matter of fact. They issued you with a winter uniform, great coat and a winter uniform and winter underwear that's all we got. The rest of our gear was what we already had, rifles and bayonets and helmets and things. And then we got on the Ghan [train], and the carriages were – toilets were in the middle of the train

11:30 with a passageway, the rest of the train was just open with seats, bench seats down each side of the carriage, no room to sleep, if you wanted to sleep you put your palliasse out on the floor and sleep. Palliasse, it's not a friendly donkey by the way, it's a bag full of straw. And I can tell you about when my young son went to a jamboree, he said what's this palliasse Dad, is this a friendly monkey,

12:00 friendly donkey to carry all your gear with. Oh dear me, I don't know. Anyway we came to this range, the McDonald Ranges. Everybody had to get out of the train and we marched, we crossed the railway line I think about 4 or 5 times, until you get the last one near the ridge and you just walked up, wasn't that far. The train went down there, and back there and back there, and everybody got off the train to get there faster. And the

12:30 carriages had running boards on the sides, hooked on, just jumped on and swung up into the end of the carriage, it wasn't going fast, you could walk along side of it. And everybody got on the train and we went down through the valley. Quite nice goin' down there through the wheat fields and so on. And we came to a place, Quorn, and there we stopped and changed trains. We had – the ladies auxiliary took us to the

13:00 showground stand, grandstand, and had a big long meal for us, oh it was great. Fresh vegetables and all

sorts. I hadn't had fresh vegetables for years. They put that on. Then we got on the train, and Corn always amazed me because it had full sized railway tracks. Three gauges, it had the one to Darwin which was 3'6," like Queensland, you had the one from the Sydney one to

13:30 Broken Hill, didn't go to Broken Hill then, but it has 4" 8.5" gauges went across the Nullarbor. And the 5'6.5" went to Victoria. Anyhow we got on this train and we got to Adelaide Showground, we stayed there, Woodside. Stayed there for a couple of days, on another convoy to Victoria, got off there, had to stay there for a few days in Royal Park, had leave there.

14:00 I think that's when it rained mud, no that was later. Had a bit of leave there, only an overnight stop. On the train back to Sydney, changed trains at Albany, pick it up put it down, pick it up put it down. Got back to North Head, had a bit of leave, got home for me 21st birthday.

Before you go to your 21st birthday, can you describe the stop where the auxiliary ladies –

14:30 **just describe the whole day?**

Corn, yeah. It's like a siding with all these railway lines on it. And one side it had 3 railways, and the other side it only had one. Three tracks.

Sorry where the auxiliary ladies?

The auxiliary ladies – we left the station at Quorn, marched from – I think there peppercorn trees or big trees, across a creek, with a turnstile thing on it,

15:00 into the showground, which wasn't real big, and in underneath the grandstand was like a big hall. And, the ladies auxiliary said sit down there, and they all served us up with a meal. Which was very nice too. They were elderly ladies, they weren't young people. Mostly there children were there that I can remember.

How many men would have been there?

Gee, I don't know, there wasn't that many

15:30 of course it was only people from East Point, we got relieved and probably from Amberley Point and a few anti aircraft people. Wouldn't have been 100. There might have been 100 altogether.

Did those ladies just volunteer that food?

There might have been more I just can't remember. Just your own group you don't see how many. The train was full I know, about 8 carriages on the train. There was a – I don't know how many in the carriage, there might have been 20.

16:00 It's a surmising, not sure about those figures, but enough to say there were troops reliefs from Darwin, who hadn't had leave for what, 1940, so we were fortunate enough to get back to North Head. Anything else you want between there.

No that's okay. What happened when you got back home?

Got to North Head, had a bit of leave, had a fortnight's leave. Had me 21st birthday

16:30 which was good.

What happened there?

My brother wasn't there, I forgot to mention, he was in the light aircraft, anti aircraft gun. My sister was roaming around Queensland somewhere, eldest sister. The other sister was there, my brother's and so on. And, met Mum, Dad was in the army, he was home on leave. Had a nice party. I had a good time.

17:00 **Didn't do much, just stayed at home most of the time.**

What was your dad doing in the army?

He was at the garrison, he joined up in 1939. He wanted to go overseas, but they caught up with him because he was a pensioner, gassed and so on from the 1st world war. And they put him in what they called the garrison, remember he took me down to North Head, and took me down to Cape Banks to enlist me. He joined the army, and he didn't get out until

17:30 1943, end of 1943 I think he applied for his discharge. The Japs [Japanese] were on the run, I'll get out and get a job before the mob gets back. Which he did he got a job in a retread place, a tyre retread place. And he got his boilermaker ticket when he was there. He did very well. Anyway it was a nice quiet leave. Met some of the friends around the place. Most of the other mates were

18:00 in the army.

How did you celebrate your birthday when it's in the middle of a war?

Oh, didn't have much. I was home for me 21st birthday, we had a bit of a party a few beers and some ginger beer as well. Mum made ginger beer. Some of it had alcohol in it too, if it was old enough. It was

just being home you know. That was all right, I went up to Hurstville. I was carrying my young Russell, my youngest

18:30 brother was only a baby. I got him at this stage, we walked to Hurstville, it was quite a way, about 3 or 4 miles. Up hill to the station, the main town. When I got back to camp somebody said I didn't know you were married. I saw you with a wife and baby. I said that was my mother and my little brother you silly coot. It looked like it. My Mum was fairly young looking in those days,

19:00 she was married – she was 16 when I was born. I am the youngest of 7, oldest of 7 sorry, and I had the youngest in me arms. He is 20 years younger than me, so Mum would only have been 36 or so. Yeah, so that was okay

Did you miss home when you were away?

A little bit, not a great deal. Because from the time I was 12, I was out nearly all the time

19:30 working I didn't have much – I was home every night, but I didn't have much time with the army, with the family and that. I didn't tell you about that – do you want to know all about my brother's and sisters.

Yeah sure.

Well they were all there, Jimmy was born twins, Mum lost the girl twin to him, was Melva, then there was Georgie, Georgina, then there was

20:00 Bonnie, Josephine then there was Malcolm named after Malcolm Sargeant who was out here doing conducting when he was born. Then there was Lesley and the last one was Russell. And I was called Jack because my name was John, Jack and young Jack. I was Jack, Jimmy, George, Joe.

20:30 All had a J in their name.

There must have been some confusion at dinnertime.

Malcolm was named after his grandfather Levi. Malcolm – Russell, Lesley was named after his uncle Erin, used to be Sargeants who worked up here. Yeah, so…

So who were you closest to?

My uncle Harry, and he was working on the council at

21:00 Coonabarabran. On the graders. Don't think he went to war or anything like that. But I met him a couple of times and I was named after him.

So what happened after leave then?

After leave I went back to North Head. We had a bit of leave in between being re-kitted out and formed

21:30 up a new unit. And the unit was called J Aust [Australian] Heavy Battery AIF. And we didn't have any guns at that stage, but that was the unit, and we formed up at North Head. The day we were leaving, my brother was up at North Head in the anti aircraft battery. So I said to me mate, I am going up to see my brother. Nothing to do until parade. Parade was supposed to be at 11.30. Back for that

22:00 so I went up and saw him, he was in his gun pit. We yakking away there, and didn't even have a beer, canteen not open, so can't even have a beer with you. I left there at 11.00 just down the hill to be down there at 11.30. Anyway we got down there they were just marching on parade, and he said, "No wait until they have finished parade." So we just waited until they finished and then we marched on and the

22:30 CO [commanding officer] said you two, go up to the office, you are under arrest. Confined to barracks. Not allowed to go anywhere. We weren't goin' anywhere anyway, any rate we got on trucks and away we went to Central Railway Station, got on the train, choof choof off. Down to Albury, got off at Yea, get on at Yea and off you go,

23:00 get to Spencer Street [train station], pick up your gear, got on the scales there at Spencer Street, I was about 7.5 stone, scale went to around about 20 stone, we had all our gear on it, all our blankets, our ground sheets everything. All our kit bags and everything. We moved from Spencer Street, up to another station, put your gear down, up there down there, 4 times, we were getting miserable and tired of it.

23:30 Eventually we got on a train and headed off. I was – oh we are goin' back to Darwin, oh god, this is no good, wonder what sort of guns we'll have. Anyway when we got to Adelaide, we changed trains again, we got into a – across the Nullarbor, anyway away we went across the Nullarbor, got to Port Augusta

24:00 I think we changed trains, and I think they had a meal out on the platform, which they do, troop trains pull in and there's a meal on the platform –hop out and have your meal and get back on the train. Port August we got on to the Nullarbor train and headed across the Nullarbor and there, halfway when meal times come, train stops, you have got your dixies and you line up at the carriage where the cookhouse was at the end.

24:30 And down the side of the railway track havin' your meals. And out of nowhere came these black fellas, the Aborigines, from nowhere, mealtime comes. So they used to get half our meals. So back on the train. And fortunately we had an old carriage where the seats used to double up, and there was 6 of us in the carriage 2 could bunk head, tail to tail on the top bunk, 2 underneath and 2 on the floor. It was quite comfortable. For some of the others

25:00 just had straight seats you know, being artillery we were looked after a bit better. We got to Kalgoorlie, out of the train and into another one. Had a meal on the platform. Into a smaller gauge. Because from Kalgoorlie to Perth, it was only the same as Queensland. Went to Perth, from there we got out into trucks

25:30 and ended up at Fremantle Barracks. Where we had an evening meal. About 8 o'clock that night it was dark, on trucks and we headed out of Fremantle around the bay, past fishing shacks and goodness knows what. On the way out our truck collided with a – a little old, looked like a little old station wagon. 1927 chev type of thing, with some Aborigines

26:00 in it, must have been fishing, they come out of the side track the bush, and clipped the side of our truck. Jammed the brakes on and we all got pushed forward, hurt me shoulder there. Really got jammed up. They were American trucks, Studebaker with twin wheels at the back. Got to this place, past Perin, Point Perin.

26:30 There was a hotel there, the officers all went into the hotel it was vacant. We all had to go and find – no there's fishing shacks, just have a look around there's fishing hootchies. One bloke fell down a well. It was only shallow but he fell in the well there. And we find these bunks and they were just wire netting up on the thing, and nothing to put on them. We had to roll our blanket out and just put it on to those.

27:00 In the morning when we woke up we were on this beach, and nice spot, overlooking the harbour. And just out there was this island, Garden Island. An on the point was Point Perin. There was another – L Battery was there, we were J Battery, L Battery was there they must have been on the train with us. They had to put guns on Point Perin. They were 155 mm long

27:30 toms they called them, they were a French gun taken over by the Americans from the 1st World War, and they were all in millimetres and so on. Ours were degrees and yards, so we had to convert over to millimetres and they had our guns, and we had to help them to build roads up to – into these big sand dunes, help them put the guns there. And one of the stages we had put this road down,

28:00 I was out in the water we were pumping salt water to dampen the road down. Stomp it down and make it firm, and a big octopus wound around me leg. I jumped about that far out of the water, talk about Toyota, I done him in. Anyway I got it off, it wasn't that big, but the shock of it, and I was out cleaning the weed from around the pump mouth and he didn't bit me or anything so it was okay.

28:30 From there we went over to Garden Island, that's where we were stationed for the best part of next 18 months I suppose.

Would you have any idea of what the point of going to Garden Island was?

Well, when you look back on it, the air raids were going down as far as Port Hedland, and there were – the Japs could have landed anywhere down that coast, and they said

29:00 if they can get down that far they can get to Perth. Which would be where they would get in to where the facilities were. So, they had – Rottenest Island which is further out had 9.2" guns, and probably 6" guns and just on the coast on the mainland, north of Fremantle was a fort called Latham, and it was back up in the hills, and below it was

29:30 the road and the railway line and few houses along. So every time they fired their guns they had to stop traffic and trains and things. Because they had to fire over the top of them. So it wasn't a real successful area, but that was okay. So they wanted to defence the harbour, the mouth of the Fremantle River was the mouth of the Swan River, Swan River was Fremantle, and they had this big harbour that ships could go in, but there was no protection

30:00 on the southern side of it. So, we were over there and there was no – we didn't have any guns yet, so we got over there and we had to build our camp, there was nothing there, we was all in tents, of course, had to build roads, corduroy roads up over sand dunes, chop trees down. Lot of pine trees grown little saplings. And wattle trees.

How big would the island have been could you see…?

30:30 Yeah, it was about a mile wide and 2.5 miles long. And long, skinny at that end and taper down – and rounded at this north end. The point over looking – you could see Fremantle Harbour from the point at the north end of it. We had to put in gun emplacements there, and they supplied us with 2 4" quick firing guns, so in other words the ammunition and cartridge were altogether like an aircraft

31:00 anti-aircraft gun, and they were 4" and they were quick firing and they were off the battle ship Jacob Jones. American destroyer damaged in Pearl Harbour, I believe or so they told us. So anyway we put those into concrete. The material we had to bring over come over by pearling lugger, they had some pearling luggers there, and they could only mount – could only come into shallow water – could only

stay out in the deep water.

31:30 And we told them what material we brought in was a couple of hundred meters of sandy low beach weeds growing on them and so on. We had a barge with a little wharf out of jarrah logs and plenty of them there, and someone had brought over, and put the jarrah logs and made a little wharf out, so the truck could back on to it, and then we had a barge, and we got a buoy anchored out –

32:00 and we had a lugger come in and we used to pull this barge hand over hand. Out to the lugger, load the cement and gravel and stuff on to the barge, bring it in, load it on to the truck and take it to where the building the fort. Now we helped mix the cement and do all this thing. They had fortress engineers doing all the rest you know. And underground shelters in there and all. And the 2 guns mounted. That was our first project, and the next one we got our guns and we had to go

32:30 round to southern side of the island, but up the northern end of it overlooking the distance between Rottenest Island and the mainland. A big open passageway there. We had to do that, sand dunes on top of sand dunes. We had to flatten some of the sand dunes out. Not big tall ones but the ones down below, so we could have sand at the back of us, put these guns in on what they called panama mounts, they were big concrete blocks

33:00 with half a railway line around the back. The centre block had a raised portion in the centre, so when the wheels of the gun went on there was a mobile gun, the wheels sat on there and couldn't slide off. The trail used to split open and used to sit on the railway line. And to traverse you had hand spikes and move it around the railway line. You had to grease it so it slide easy, so the gun would go backwards and forwards.

33:30 It had limited traverse by hand, and elevation of course was okay. But there was a pit down there and we used to get in and load the gun, the ammunition depot was and magazines was dug in behind the hill and lined with jarrah logs, the sand used to trickle in now and then. So that was the two gun emplacements, with camouflage nets over the top. Fireproof

34:00 ranging and so on it, practice ranging.

Can you describe that for me?

Yeah, that was quite a big job, you had to put your own guns in and that, and they were mobile, no shield on them. There used to be one down at Slacks Creek, remember the big gun where the wreckers yard used to be and called the fruit shop, the gun, there, you'll see the big gun sticking up, that was one of them. The type. That was okay,

34:30 plotting room was done the same, dug into the sand over in the gully. Big jarrah logs all put around and that was the plotting room. The op [operation] was up on another sand hill almost to the right of the guns up on the sand dune, and that was up there so you could see more you know. Ranges and cables put down. And that was our gun, and we fired them with earplugs in,

35:00 no shield, big long main yard and the guns would jump up and down like that you know. They were – about the same size as a 6." The shells weighed about 102 lbs, much the same sort 155 mm. During practice, instead of using the big guns, the trained plotting staff and observation people, they brought us over a couple of old

35:30 18 lb guns, field guns, during the 1st World War and they were mounted up on some sand dunes on the ground, not dug into anything. The ammunition was what was called semi-fixed, it had a brass cartridge and a shell, but it was wobbly, it wasn't fitted in fast. Anyway we were firing these, and a lot of ammunition too. Firing these and popping them over there, and they would

36:00 crack the range takers and everything. Anyhow this one, we loaded it in and the cartridge case, it blew out all round the breach, the flames knocked me flying in the bush, burnt the elevator layers on the side. One layer over there got burnt, the bloke behind the breach got a bit burnt. I had a jersey, one of those khaki jersey's on, all looked like confetti when it finished. I had a chinstrap on and it broke the chinstrap.

36:30 Knocked it flying off, and I had a split from the top of me head down to the corner of me eye, as though you had a soft ripe peach and just like that. Just the skin split with concussion, but I didn't get burnt. And knocked me flying into the bushes. And the sergeant's standing there behind and great cloud of smoke and flame, and he panicked, he got into the telephone, you know the breast set, "Oh the gun's blown up and everybody's killed."

37:00 Nobody got killed, badly burnt, as soon as the dust settled down again. Got out a big inquiry about it. Didn't do anything, didn't report it or anything. As far RAP [Regimental Aid Post], put a bit of plaster on it, that was it. So that was one of the catastrophe's. The other gun we had to put in was the anti-aircraft, the Bofors, we had to pull that up a sand hill. Chocker blocker, oh

37:30 Bugger it, let her go, you know pull it up chocker, bloke would say big blocks of wood behind the wheels because there was 4 wheels on that thing. Give another pull on the ropes, move it a bit, chocker blocker, let her go. We got it up for finish anyway. We used to have aircraft practice.

How would you know every day what to do, would there be someone telling…?

Yeah, we had the CO and had

38:00 the 2IC [second in command] and a couple of lieutenants, 3 Lieutenants I think, we had sergeant major, we had sergeant's, we had bombardier's. One of my friends was Bombardier Carney, Timothy Roger – no wait on, Michael Carney, he was Tom, Thomas Michael O'Leary, he had six surnames,

38:30 I can't think of them all now. O'Leary Carney. John Derhan, he was the son of the Derhan greengrocers, not greengrocers, grocery stores in Sydney. Billy Gibbs was another good friend of mine, he was a Bondi lifesaver.

What was good about those blokes?

Nothing in particular, they were just friends, we used to go to leave

39:00 together.

How would you choose friends in the army, what appealed what sort of things were you looking for?

Just who you was with, how you got on with and who you didn't get on with, if you got on with them you went everywhere together. A bloke named Keith Bruce, he was the driver, the CO's driver, and his brother was Neville, and he used to be the CO's batman, the two brothers in the unit. The only unit that had 2 brothers in. And he was a

39:30 good friend of mine for a long time. We used to go on leave together. We drank every Sunday when we were on the island. We would be there every Sunday. The Chaplain would come round and give us a little sermon. But once every month we would get a weekend off, to make up for these Sundays. We'd go – you'd get in the launch and go to Fremantle, into Perth, and this Keith Bruce, he met a lass

40:00 at a dance, and go home to his place and his father, her father was the manager of the bar maid and barman's union. And he used to go around all the hotels collecting fees and checking that everything was okay. He'd leave it until we were on leave, and we would go with him, every hotel he'd be in every hotel from Fremantle to Perth, and the next time we'd go the other way.

40:30 So it was great. We used to go to a dance, not that I could dance very much. But bought light boots, kid shoes, kid boots. When we used to go on leave – tan boots they was – they were better than those big army clod hoppers, we had these light boots. We used to call them officer's boots. But we bought them at the shoe shop, we were allowed to wear them, with gaiters and everything.

41:00 So that was – we could dance with them and everything. That was good and we used to do a bit of fishing, heron fishing. We had one of those little flat bottomed boats that the army had. The 4 of us used to get out in that and burn round with a bit of bully beef and army biscuits, crunched up, and heron would come around and with a bit of stuff on the hooks and you'd be hauling them in heron about

41:30 anything from 12 to 16" long. We'd get such a glut of them, we'd give them to – of course we would have them for a couple of days eating them, we used to dry them and made a smoke kiln and we used to smoke them on the beach, hang them up on this thing, clean them and smoke them. I used to send packages home to my Mum. The others used to send packages home. And if there were any left over when we went on leave, we used to take them over to the markets and get some money for them, I think we used to get about 6 pence each.

41:59 End of tape

Tape 5

00:32 **Harry I just want to take us back to Darwin and some of your spare time, you talked about buffalo hunts earlier, can you tell us a little bit more about that?**

They used to send the team out to hunt buffalo for fresh meat for the troops. And this particular day, they must have wounded the bull and he charged this group of people and he charged these people and of course they

01:00 run and trees weren't very big and they climbed up this tree and this bull round the bottom of them and they couldn't get back to the truck and the truck driver saw them, and after a while he managed to attract the buffalo and get another shot at it. They were all up in this tree for about 3 hours. Anyhow they got this buffalo and brought it back. And the funny thing happened they had a meat safe out the back of the kitchen, fly wire all round it

01:30 tin roof and concrete floor, benches and meat choppers so they could cut the meat up and they hung the meat there to dry out and they went back the next morning and somebody has pinched some of the meat, and the cook was going crook, where's this part of the meat who's pinched it. And he said I'll catch him I'll sit up and wait for him. He had a big broom and he waited, and it was a big bloody great

goanna that went in there and

02:00 pinched the meat, got in underneath the fly wire. He yelled out and to us and all the troops surrounded this – I am going to get him – surrounded this enclosure and of course the goanna – he come out and he said I am not stayin' here –he went straight out and he saw this bloke in white and the goanna come to something he goes straight up over the top of it he didn't go round and into this cook, and he off into the

02:30 bush at the back. So he said no more goanna I'll fix him. So he ended up putting tin round the bottom so he couldn't get in. Funny old thing that happened.

It sounds like you had a bit of fun in Darwin what about the moments when you had a lot of tension?

When raids were on. Stand to at night. Signal comes in from the station that

03:00 something on the radar, stand-by, you are standing by everything's black, you can't see anything, can't show a light or anything. You are on pins and needles. All in all in wasn't that drastic.

What did you personally do during those raids?

Depending on what the position the gun was on, you might have been lyin' low, elevation low or one of the ammunition

03:30 gun-handlers.

Can you tell me about the different positions on the gun?

You had a gun sergeant, he's at the back making sure everything's okay to give an order to fire. He was the no. 1, the no. 2 operated the breach, the number 3, was passing up the next one, number 1, number 2, number 3 – number

04:00 3 was loading the ammunition into the do, 3 and 4 were on the ramrod, they used to ram the shell in, number 5 used to pass up the cordite into the shell and 7 and 8 were in the shell gun pit handing up, the line-layer was on the left hand side of the gun, sorry on the right hand side of the gun. He was in traverse left and right

04:30 and the elevation layer who fired the gun also was on the right of the gun, left of the gun, that's right left of the gun and he was in charge of range. That was the crew. Up in the barn stroud, up in the op, you had the op officer, you had the range-taker operating the barn stroud and you had a range-taker and a range-reader and a bearing-reader. And they pass it down through microphone,

05:00 through a cable, operated the cable, operated the dial so the gun could lay on to the – the big cables were about 3" around covered in metal and tar and all sorts of stuff wrapped around them, and they were underground. But they were having trouble with the dials, they were mismatched, things would go wrong with them, and they wouldn't

05:30 operate, so the engineer's come out and dug up the cables. And they found white ants had gotten into them, eaten holes through them, so after that they had to lay it on top of the ground, they just curled them up and lay them on top of the ground. So, after that they weren't too bad. They were big cables.

Including all the preparation time how long did actually take a crew to

06:00 **actually fire one of those big guns?**

Depending on the range, if they could just fire the gun they could just get up and fire it in a minute. Yeah, less than a minute, but you had to wait for the range to come down. If they said – if you could see a target, they could say independent gunfire, you just operate from the range, you had telescopes,

06:30 you lined your cross wires – if you were lying low you laid the cross wire on your bough, and elevation-layer would estimate the range, you would fire a shot and if it went over you dropped the range, if it went this side they increased the range until they got dropped short on the range – and if you estimated the range pretty well if you had been target practicing, they would know how far out the range

07:00 would be, and they would be. And you could whack it on.

You worked as an artificer, what was involved in that?

Same as I was doing at Cape Banks, they had a flat shield on the muzzle and another plane on the breach end and another instrument that used to measure the calibre. The calibre of the rifle, you had a machine that used to pull up through the barrel and up through the grooves

07:30 and it would measure on the dial any changes in the actual groove itself. On the muzzle you put this thing like a theodolite it had dials and a bubble in it. You had to get the bubble – at certain elevations of the gun as you moved it up and down you set it on this scale and you should have the bubble in the right place. If it's out you had to adjust the range

08:00 on the gun.

I am not sure I understand, what exactly is the artificer?

He's – well a mechanic, it's a term mechanic, he's the bloke that fiddles with the dials and adjust things, he's been trained to do these things. On the dial is a metal plate you often might have seen them, a metal plate, and they got

08:30 screws in. They have to take them and loosen them up and move the dial to a pointer – any adjustments that had to be made on this readings off these little gadgets that were put on off the front and of the bough. With the traverse the same thing happens, in case there is a – up and down like the second lot of guns they put in they had to do that nearly every so often and measure off and have a special range table

09:00 where they could add or subtract the bearings or range because it was an unstable platform. With mobile guns, they were on wheels and you usually try and keep the wheels level on the level ground. As much as possible. The 25 pounders have a round metal

09:30 type of disc type of thing they used to drop down and pull the guns back on to it so the wheels were on a steel platform and it was anchored to the gun itself.

What about looking after the ammunition, was that a complicated process?

It was a dangerous thing, you had to make sure especially the cordite, which was in big – it was in cylinders, but it was in a like a cheese cloth bag and once you got them out,

10:00 and being cordite, made like jelly, you made sure it wasn't weeping or leaking or deteriorating. The temperatures in the magazines had to be checked every day. There's one outside the door there that used to be the same things you had to read, wet and the dry. With the shells themselves they weren't too bad, you had to check them and to make sure that the driving bands were okay

10:30 They had what they called a grommet made out of rope and 2 or 3 pieces of rope together, like a quoit, you know, and they used to fit around the driving band which was soft copper, and make sure the shell caps were okay that there wasn't any rust on them. And you had to do that periodically and that was part of the district staff job that I used to do.

So what were the ideal conditions for keeping the ammunition

11:00 **in terms of climate?**

Oh in climate, up there, because they were – they were in – they were half – the magazines were half in the ground they were dug down about chest high I suppose. Down about 5 ft. And they had a concrete wall around them at ground level. Inside that concrete wall they had another building, concrete, quite thick,

11:30 maybe a foot wall, the walls would be about 1 ft thick. They had windows in them, double windows big thick glass windows both sides, and in that window you could open a port and put in a lamp, a light. No electricity on it. And these had little kerosene lights to put them in there, if you were working in the dark. You couldn't have it inside, so they put it there.

12:00 And you went down the steps open the door and into the magazine. It had a concrete roof over it. On top of the roof was a pitched asbestos – it looked like asbestos roof that type of thing. On top of that you had great big lightning conductors, about half inch strapped steel going right round the magazines and earthed. And there was two of these, right behind each gun. In placement. A third one was behind the control tower

12:30 right back in the bush and it was mostly cordite in there. The others had the shells and the cordite with it. Laid out into the gun pits and around the gun pits you had shells and cordite ready to go.

How aware were you of the dangers involved?

Well you did courses about the dangers, got to stand behind gunmen that goes off of course,

13:00 it would be carried back there, misfire drill was very dangerous. If the – this cartridge you put in to ignite the pad on what you called it was a red gunpowder pad, that these balustrade cartridge would light up, the flame would shoot in and light that first because it was very sensitive to the fire, just on the cordite it might not have worked. So that

13:30 was enough heat to burn the cordite, and this all happens in a split second, it burns so quick because it's closed up and no air, it just whoomp and explodes. It just builds up so much gas in there that it forces the shell out of the barrel. Twists and forces it out of the barrel. The driving band is also there to stop gases escaping. So when you jam it in you have to make sure you

14:00 ram it in pretty hard. So then it twists up the groove as it goes. But in a misfire drill, there's a misfire, and you count 1, 2, 3 and he pulls the trigger, misfire and then the breach operator has then got to open the little cap at the back and extract

14:30 the fuse whatever you call it, little cartridge, takes that out and hands it to the sergeant who would look

at it and say, reload, if it struck and hadn't gone, reload. If it fired, sometimes those pads get damp at the back. But being fired you got clear it away and make sure everything's clear at the back. You left it open and as soon as the air gets in there,

15:00 it starts to flare up. And that's when you get your misfire's the gun is dangerous. When it fires a lot of that gas goes out the back through a hole. It'll go right through you. I was up on elevation once – and there's a big bucket of water, just dunk them – mop in them and stick that in so when you put the cordite in it doesn't catch fire

15:30 before you close the breach, so it's wet. So, it went down right through that bucket of water. The shell down there, there was a shell down there, it would have exploded it. If it was somewhere back there 3–400 yards back, that flame would go like liquid fire. So that's the dangerous part of the guns. We had misfires.

16:00 Sometimes the shell gets out of the breach a bit, out of the muzzle and wants to go off. Faulty fuse or something in the nose.

How often were there accidents or close calls?

Really only had two misfires all the time I was with the guns. Everybody did the right drill. Didn't have any close calls. I can't think of any others that might have had. Tripped on a

16:30 9.2 and trip on one of the metal stairs, they do that in the navy too don't they. Skid on the stairs.

What was it like for a young man to be operating one of these enormous guns?

I enjoyed it I thought it was great, because I am doin' somethin' for the war. I really did, I thought it was great. I had never seen a big gun before. Except movies and that in the First World War, and they

17:00 were all on big wheels you know. So no it was an eye opener for me. I didn't like the 155 mm very much, because no shell, no protection.

What was your opinion about the Japanese?

I didn't like them, I thought they were the yellow peril we used to call them.

17:30 I didn't like them, when I was a kid, I used to get toys – Japan – I had a little toy truck once, made out of tin, painted, on the inside – didn't have a bottom of it had wheels on it. On the inside made out of jam tin, they used to paint the salmon tins or jam tins, and put a metal label on them, they had them painted, and something

18:00 or other Jam, and it was made out of these damned cans. So, they were copycats as far as I was concerned.

And after the bombing of Darwin, what was your impression of them then?

Well I expected them to be bad then. Because what they were doing in China before that, well before they entered the 2nd World War. They were into China,

18:30 Manchuria, so I didn't like them. Then again, later on I will tell you when I get to t Japan, I have other opinions, but those days, Japan was the enemy, so – and the Chinese didn't look much better, with their eyes. Although they were quite good. They were the Chinese in Australia.

Tell me again about leaving Western Australia again

19:00 **and crossing the Nullarbor?**

Well, there was a couple of things on the island that happened, that I suppose I should tell you now. Recreation. We used to swim a lot, we used to do marathon runs, from one end of the island and back again. And one of my friends Harry Brown, he came from Lake Cargelligo, he was an ex – sheep farmer, shepherd I suppose you call him. He used to beat us all, he was a long skinny bloke,

19:30 he was about 47. He didn't have any kids. He would leg it out, would have knobbly knees and away he'd go. And I used to try and keep up with him. I used to come second. I could run when I was a kid until I did a lot of bike riding, and then I didn't run so well. Yeah, we used to run around the island. The wharf we had to pull out, to go out and get stuff off the lugger, couldn't get any

20:00 closer so we built a wharf about half way down the island on the inner harbour side, out of jarrah logs, and launches could come right in there and pick us up and we could go on leave and whatever. We had to build a road down there to get the truck down. Up and over sand hills and around through gullies. Corduroy out of tree trunks up and down the sand hills, down and around the other side. Down the southern side of the island was a pre-war holiday camp type of thing.

20:30 It had a big wharf there and people used to go there fishing and camping at that end of the island. Opposite Perin Point. That's where we unloaded guns, we unloaded guns there and ship them up to the middle of island on the ocean side and put in 9.2 guns, big guns again. That was all part of the island defence. At Perin we had to pull

21:00 cables, get cables across the channels and dig a trench from one end of the island to the other, about 1' deep, mostly sand and coral, right up to where the guns where, and had communications. The Engineer's came in they put in a big bore, so we had plenty of hot boiling water, fresh, drink. Before that we only had to catch it in canvas

21:30 safes off the tent. In front of the bore was a flap portion just opposite where the luggers used to come in, and we cleaned all bits of slate and gravel and coral off it and level it off for a football field. And we would play football there, kick hunks of coral around, it wouldn't matter. Um, just up the camp a bit there was a little valley going up the hill, that's a sand dune,

22:00 with a sand dune left and a sand dune on the right. We played baseball there. The hitting bat was down the bottom of the hill. We went up the side of the first hill, down across the gully and up the side of the second hill, down hill to third base and a bit down hill to the home base, and that's where we used to play baseball. Later on when we went on leave we played baseball against the Americans, over in Perth. And of

22:30 we beat them hollow, every time we had a game with them we beat them. We couldn't play cricket there, because we didn't have a cricket pitch or anything. But that was some of the things we had and sing songs. Tents were all out – hidden under trees. We had plenty of wallabies there they called the quokkas, they used to come down and we'd feed them at the tent. Echidnas, plenty of birds. There was an old big walrus

23:00 sea lion in a cage just at the point of the cliff and we used to watch him, we would throw him some fish every now and again. We would swim up and down there. We would go out on low tide and get some crayfish like this. Bring them and salmon, used to get some beer for the money, some drinks on a holiday. One of the stages I had a nose bleed all the time, I touched me nose with a towel or anything and it would start

23:30 bleeding. So they shipped me over to Hollywood Hospital, and cauterised and fixed that up. That was the only time I went to hospital there.

Can you describe the mood on the island?

Yeah we were all in a happy mood. The officer's were good, everybody was good. There was Major Primrose, or Primrose & Primrose, solicitors was the Major. We had Captain Munday, not Tuesday, Munday, he was the battery captain.

24:00 We had Lieutenant Crawford, and Lieutenant can't think of his name. Sergeant Major Bill Holland, Dutchie, and then we had sergeants and bombardiers, I was only a gunner. Still. Those days. Then I went back – then we left – oh, I went home on leave, said you are due for leave, there wasn't many of us it was a few out of the camp. I don't know why I had to go on leave, but, you are on leave.

24:30 Oh, my regimental number come through too. NX156855 was my number. At last we got our number. Didn't have the D on it or anything. That was sometime later – listed on my records is enlisted in Western Australia, Perth, Fremantle. I didn't at all that's all – by the paperwork got through the headquarters in Melbourne or wherever it was, by the time they got that, by the time they processed it, 9 months had gone by. Anyway

25:00 I went home on leave, going across the Nullarbor, no hitch up there, it was a good trip, got to Melbourne on the train, changed trains, stayed at Woodside changed trains there, stayed at the staging camp there South Australia, went to Melbourne, stayed a night at Royal Park, got on the train got to Sydney, got straight up to North Head, leave pass straight away, home. So I was home,

25:30 I think I got home for me 21st birthday. So, from there after leave I reported back, on the train, through the, got back to Perth again, oh, the Nullarbor's flooded on the way home. Going across all you could see. We got out of the train to have lunch at the thing, so we had to wander down through the carriages and then get out hobble along and get your lunch and then get back in the train again.

26:00 We couldn't get down on the grass outside it was all wet. Look up at the railway lines, the railway lines just go way up in the distance, and to infinity, disappears, and each side was water and every now and again you would see salt bush sticking up. From the south and splashing over the railway line. That's how bad it was. The tracks were out of the water, but the water would splash over it.

26:30 The train went fairly quietly along. Didn't go very fast.

Didn't anybody worry about it?

No, nobody worried about it. Not deep enough to swim in. Of course there are a lot of limestone caves on the Nullarbor, the water goes down underneath it. So must have been a lot of rain come down there.

You crossed the country on and off considerably for your time?

Yeah. Then of course changed trains at Kalgoorlie and into another train. Got to

27:00 Karrakatta that's a suburb between Fremantle and Perth. Staging camp there. And they said, "Oh, your

room is over there, and report back to them." And away I went over to them. "Oh here he is." And I was told, "Oh, we're moving, we are going back to Sydney." I said, "Oh great I just come from there, why couldn't you let me know when I was on leave."

27:30 "We didn't know." Left everything there, I had me kit back in Q store [quartermasters store]. So I picked up me kit bag and other stuff that I had there, I didn't want to take on leave, so back on the train, got to Kalgoorlie, had to get off the train there at a place called, it's a suburb, a staging camp, I can't think of it at the moment, a staging camp just outside

28:00 Kalgoorlie. Had to wait for another train to come in. While we were there we played a bit of two up and had meals, didn't do much. Train came off we went, across the Nullarbor, it was dry then, off we went. We got to Port Augusta, troops had to get out and shovel sand off the railway track. After we left Port Augusta, between there and Adelaide. There were sand dunes all over the track. Got to Adelaide, staging camp at the old Woodside,

28:30 on to another train, to Melbourne there, Royal Park. We had about 3 or 4 days there. We went to the hotel and saw Chloe, the only time we got into there was when we were on leave. One day it rained, it rained mud, red mud and our uniform was spotted with this red much, our hat, our khaki hat. Little red spots,

29:00 it never left, dyed, stayed in it. The hat wore out anyway, as far as our shirts were concerned, well it helped camouflage I suppose. Anyway we had that there at the showground, and that is where the Zoo is, you know, Royal Park, and got on the train again, got to Sydney, went straight to Sydney Showgrounds. There we were given leave and then we reported back after a fortnight or so,

29:30 and on the train, off we went, up to Bathurst. It was the Infantry Training Camp. So there we were out of artillery and into infantry. We did a bit of marching out there, root marching out to Greta, for advanced infantry training, doing all these platoon drills and everything. Firing rifles and all sorts of – throwing grenades. Nothing

30:00 spectacular happened except I used to get leave and go into Fremantle. Sorry, into Newcastle. Because I would be best dressed on parade. My training at North Head see, all me things done up. Best dressed on parade used to get a leave pass. This is on the guard thing. I did that about 3 times. Only twice had to do guard there. I used to go into Fremantle and stay over night you could too.

30:30 Go into a big hotel and book a room. And go to the pictures and go to a dance. Not that I danced very much.

What did you think about moving to the Infantry?

I didn't think much of it at all. We were doing all this Infantry basic training, I have done all that, a waste of bloody time. I had – it was – we were better than the instructors. We could drill better than the instructors tyring to teach us.

31:00 It was only when we got to platoon training, that was different, up at Greta. Going out with the platoons on platoon drill, and things like that. We were throwing grenades before that, and rifles and things. But platoon training was a bit different, you had to go out with the platoon. Stalk the enemy sort of thing, the enemy here and you were here, one platoon was the enemy you had to infiltrate through, you learnt a bit about bush

31:30 craft and so on war craft.

How did you like all the travelling you did back and forth across the country?

I didn't mind it. But seemed a waste of time didn't it, yeah. Talk about a tourist.

How would you describe the conditions on the train?

Quite good, they had – the trains had – every time I had one with a big seat which you could put up – the back of the seat lifted up and make –

32:00 two bunks were in there, little wash basin in the thing, in the carriage. A fairly old carriage. I never had to rough in an ordinary suburban type. The New South Wales train, the Nullarbor ones were good. The New South Wales train, was old carriages some of those were a bit wonky. The troop train, because you might have had a little compartment, with about 8 people, all jammed in, they'd be there with all their kits and everything. They weren't real

32:30 good those ones. I didn't get troop trains from Sydney to Brisbane, I went by sea.

Did you notice any difference in the way the war was affecting different parts of Australia that you travelled to?

Well, yes, everything – you go to Perth, everything was blacked out of course, at night. Very few lights were shown. A lot of the girls were working

33:00 on the land, land army girls. When we were on leave once we went up to Swan View, there was vineyards up there, and they wanted some help up there, so I said why not, so we got on the train and

went up to Swan View and the land army girls were there. So we were picking grapes for the day, and they had a sort of a barbecue and a bit of a dance and a sing song and a few pots of the best port,

33:30 and we come home the next day back to Perth and finished our leave, and we used to go out to Fremantle, Monday morning get the ferry back to the island. If it was rough weather we got an extra day. The ferry wouldn't go – the launch wouldn't go – it gets very rough there, it wouldn't risk it and we'd get an extra day. Go up to Fremantle Bay and get our leave pass fixed.

So can you describe the difference the

34:00 **impact the war was having on different cities you visited in terms of the mood?**

When we went to Brisbane of course it was very laid city, the war didn't – it was early in the peace, the war didn't seem to affect people very much, but troops were very welcome. Welcomed with open arms sort of thing. A policeman would have a drink with while he was on duty sort of thing. The trammies we called them legionnaires. People in the shops and that,

34:30 it was quite good. Being used to the Sydney hustle and bustle. Perth, was much the same as Brisbane. It was a very nice city, very quiet. They had dances in the City Hall, they put dances on for you. The Adelphi Hotel had a – a portion of the hotel was set aside for the – like backpackers, you didn't have to pay for anything,

35:00 you just signed your name in and you had a bed, so it didn't cost you anything. Things like that you know. Beer was all right, we used to go and have a few beers in the pub. There was one hotel – we went into one hotel, it had a bit of a low cellar, underground thing, some sort of tavern type thing. The beer was same. This lady is pouring the beer was the same, putting them up there, putting them up there.

35:30 They had collars on them about that much, you know, big glasses. We were waiting for her to fill them up, but no. We had cigarette papers and tied them up like a little bow tie and stuck them on the glass. And didn't she go crook. Fill up the glass. We didn't want to be short changed. Between 4 of us there would have been another full glass of beer

36:00 that we were supposed to have and didn't get. And we played baseball against the Yanks there. Went to the trots at Gloucester Park there. Went to Zoo at South Perth. Kings Park was good

As you were travelling around how much did you know of what was happening in the war?

Oh we were informed

36:30 the army had newspapers, we used to get information out, and somebody would type up the latest news about what was happening in Africa, and what the Japs were doing. Fairly well informed. We had radio. A radio in the mess or something. Didn't have portable things you carried around. Most of them had a radio that had an old radio in the mess somewhere.

So

37:00 **after you were transferred to the infantry, what happened from there?**

Just went Infantry went through the basic training, advanced infantry training, from there on to a train up to Brisbane, from there hopped out of there onto another train at South Brisbane Station I think. Then rattletrap went to Canungra on the train. It was a wonky old thing too, swaying around, a really

37:30 old carriage. I got pinched on the arm where the window and door jam used together. So I soon learned not to put me arm up there. Got to Canungra and picked up me gear and march up over the hill, couple of mile I suppose, up over the hill and down the other side. Into the army camp where it still is today. And on the way down we passed a cemetery on the left hand side. And the sergeant says, "This'll

38:00 learn to keep your heads down those that haven't that's where they go." We did our 3 weeks or 6 weeks whatever it was jungle training. And there we had to drop out into the bush somewhere and live off the land and get your way back to camp, through the camp. And there's these instructors throwing all sorts of things at you, attacking you at night. Throwing grenade made out of like a firecracker, it was round

38:30 like cardboard with a thing, and you strike it on a matchbox with a fuse and throw it and just go poof. And blanks of course being used. Lots of places where you had to get from here to there, somewhere, they'd be firing live ammunition over your head, and you'd be creeping along this gully, and phew bullets whistled over head, so you didn't stick your head up or your bum up,

39:00 you would be on your tummy to get through. Then they had all this, this stair case, you'd leave camp, one of our marches you'd leave camp and you would be – you'd leave camp and be gone for 4 or 5 days, you'd go up this hill, up this sloggy hill, slippery and wet, rain forestry stuff. Then you'd go down a little way, then you'd go up again, oh, by this time this pack's getting heavier

39:30 and heavier. We did that 4 times. Till you got to the top, and you were up there overlooking the Gold Coast just about. And then you went down the other way, down and around, and camp out at night. You had to move at night sometimes. At one stage we were walking along, we seemed to be up in the air, things were soft underneath, and all of a sudden somebody said, oh god, up on top of lantana, walking on top of big heaps of lantana. All of a sudden you fall through it, lantana is all

40:00 prickly and sticky. And wait a while vines, hook on to you.

What was the purpose of all this training?

Well, we were going to fight in the jungle. We were getting acclimatised. They had little targets that would pop out, you'd be walking along this trail, and little Japanese cardboard head would pop out. We'd shoot them. There would be snipers in trees, you had to watch you know. Get him.

40:30 Instructor would tap you on the shoulder and say you are dead. You didn't see that fella there did you. Look over a log. No didn't get him. But that was – make it quick. You didn't bring your rifle up unless you had plenty of time. You fired, you had plenty practice at that too.

How much did you know about where you would be going?

We

41:00 didn't know anything about where we were going, we – or when we were going even. After we left Canungra, we went to Logan Village Camp, staging camp.

41:18 End of tape

Tape 6

00:35 After Canungra we got on the train and we got up to Logan Village, which is on the Logan River, just south of Kingscliff, Kingston, whatever it is there. Anyway, they had a big army camp there. Lots of Americans and things staging from there going north.

01:00 And we were waiting there for a ship to take us north. While we were there Gracie Fields came along, and we had a party, concert with Gracie Fields. My Dad had a concert with her years ago. In the First World War. Anyhow they put the concert on and that was okay. They had a canteen, and General Blamey says pots of beer will be only 1 bob each. Somebody had been making a profit

01:30 out of selling the beer. 1 bob for this size pot. I had a big glass and it had a girl with a bathing suit on the front, and fill it and look inside and she had no swimming suit on. Not that you saw anything anyway, but just in the nude. But they used to make this what they called Blamey pots. Get a beer bottle and fill it that far from the neck with water, and put a string around it with metho [methylated spirit]

02:00 soaked, and light it and it would burn, and when it got hot you would shake it and it would crack, crack right round, and with a bit of sandpaper round, and they were there pots, take that down 1 bob. So my big glass I was happy with that. So that was the canteen, you had to line up, queue up, it was just a barrel put up on wooden sticks, wooden bench made out of

02:30 timber, bush timber, and pull the beer, fill it up and go and sit on the grass somewhere, on a stump and drink your beer.

Could you describe what I would be seeing. Back then what would you be seeing in the barracks?

In the barracks? Well big buildings. Big buildings,

03:00 huts, quite a number of them. Of course we didn't get to see it all, we only got to see a portion of the camp. I know on the right hand side of the road, was a beautiful log cabin built out of logs, and a veranda on it, just like a part of out of American. Hogan lamps on the outside attached to it. Years later I went back and it had been pulled down of

03:30 course. But that was where the officers lived. That was nice that was real beautiful. Apart from that we just lived in the hut, or I think we were under canvas at that time, just in a tent. On a – don't know whether they had beds, yeah, they might have had beds there. That was there and we were there waiting for the transport. Apart from the Blamey beer jugs nothing much happened.

What were they called?

04:00 Blameys. Blamey said don't matter how big it is it's only 1 bob. Bottle and they used that for a glass.

How many people, just estimate roughly, how many would be waiting to go somewhere?

I don't know, there was a boatload when we got on it. There were stacks and stacks of Americans there. I don't know there could have been thousands of people

04:30 there. To go down there now along Logan road, there's a road goes through from that point cross to, Beaudesert road, I forget the name of the place now. Where it used to be a windy track, that used to go cross a railway line that went to Beaudesert, and it came out I think of it now, just down past Maclean.

05:00 Where that intersects Logan road, there's a monument there to a dog. Up on the little box, and he used to be the little camp dog. He used to meet every intake of troops that would come in, and have a real good yap at them. And then wait for the next lot.

What did you think of the Americans?

Ah, I'll tell you a bit about them, they thought we were all black down here. One did,

05:30 the one I spoke to. Didn't contact them until we got on board the ship. The liberty boat – the boat we went on, we got on trucks and they were big semi trailer trucks, rounded front, and we were all standing up, there was no room to sit down, we all stood up in the back of this truck, and off down to Hamilton Wharf. And went on board the Seaway, the Liberty ship, manned by American sailors.

06:00 I got talking to one of the sailors during the trip. And he was a – I can't remember his name but he was from Bloomer City, West Virginia. And he said, "Oh you all speak English, I thought you were all black." I said, "Oh thanks." And I could tell him more about his own country than he could himself. School, history, and American history was right at the forefront, about their civil war, their

06:30 Mayflower and their tea party, Pocahontas and Captain.. what was is name John Brown. Oh he said, I will have to get to know more about that. And anyway they were not too bad and the ship was no hassles. So we got to Morotai, had to climb down cargo nets to get into the barges, there was no wharf to pull into, get into the barges to go ashore.

07:00 Then we went to a staging camp that night. All hot out like it does in the tropics, it must have been May, June July then, anyway, might have been a couple of nights later when I got very ill in the middle of the night. We were on stretchers, had our own canvas stretcher, and I managed to get out, pouring rain and get up to the RAP. Regimental

07:30 Aid Post and knocked the bloke up, asleep and everything. He said, "I will have to get you to hospital." I had bronchial pneumonia again, and into the 2nd 5th AGH [Australian General Hospital], and then stayed there about 4 weeks or something like that, and out of there up to a convalescent camp which was up on the island, but about 4 kilometres or so outside the perimeter. They had a perimeter guard around where they cleared the

08:00 Japs out of and all Japanese up in the island they hadn't caught up with but they were pretty quiet. And the convalescent camp was in a native village, we had some army huts there and tents. They said don't sleep under the coconut trees. They all fall down. Anyway it was quite nice there we could swim, and we used to have little lectures about various things,

08:30 religious things, lectures, little sing songs, get together, made up our own vaudeville parties. The Japs used to sneak down out of the bush at night, they knew all about this, they didn't have weapons or anything, we didn't have weapons up there anyway. They would raid the kitchen to get some food. They didn't take too much tin stuff, or anything they went for the rice and some leafy

09:00 vegetables or something like that. And they would pinch that, and nobody worried about them. I said, "Oh we'll catch them up later on" while they are quiet, anyway while I was there it was when the war finished, not the war – cessation of hostilities, the atomic bomb on Japan, and after that I went back to the staging camp and I was posted to the 2/1st Guard Regiment.

09:30 F Platoon I think, but that doesn't matter. That was at Blamey's headquarters, stationed there, we used to do patrols and guard around Tom Blamey, General Blamey, and Lady Blamey was on the other side of the island, only about a mile difference. In between was the Boomerang Theatre, the open air theatre, and that's where I saw Gracie Fields again.

10:00 Just doing guards and duties and then started cleaning up the camps all round the place, the Americans left. There was a lot of stuff left in camps, picks, shovels, all sorts of things. We just took them out and sink them, sink the barge and the whole lot. Keep one barge and come back on it. That was Lend Lease stuff we had to get rid of it all. All the stuff that was taken in the occupation force,

10:30 I volunteered to go to Japan, and they had to put up in one pool and was outside the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], not YMCA but canteen huts where they had billiard tables and could go there and get drinks. But that was abandoned. This big patio outside that's where we had to line up all the trucks and jeeps, any vehicles that were required to go to Japan. I was

11:00 seconded to that 34 Brigade Headquarters from 2 Mountain Battery, which I was in. Later when the barges come in, the landing ships come in, we had to load the stuff on. Load the ship up and away it would go, and then the next one would come in and we'd do the same thing. I was there at Christmas time, and I was there until probably February, March,

11:30 yeah, left on an LST383 [Landing Ship Tank], the last of what they wanted to take. The remainder of the stuff we had to destroy, push it over the cliff, and smash everything else down, the Lend Lease stuff, so trucks or anything that was left, we had to run them over the cliff, into the ocean, chuck a match and burned what we could. We snuck a few to a couple of Dutch people were there

12:00 they had a couple of jeeps, and a couple of Dodge sedan cars. That was about it. I got posted from 2/1st

Guard Regiment to 65 Battalion and they took a look at my record and says, “Up on the hill for you, up 2 Mountain Battery. You got all the records, you lyin’ low, you got this and you got that, all these artillery qualifications, you get up there.”

12:30 So I packed me bag and that’s where I went. And later became A Field Battery. And A Field Battery started in the Sudan War, went to the Boer War, and it’s over 100 years old and is probably still functioning now and a couple of years ago I went to the 100 and something birthday, I forget what it was now, 168th or something. So that put me on Morotai.

13:00 **Before you go on, can you give us a little bit more about your first impressions because this is your first trip overseas effectively, give us your first impressions of Morotai?**

My first sea trip.

No, but your first trip overseas?

I don’t know I didn’t think much of it at all. I climbed off the ship and it was on dusk, dark. When we got there it was rainin’ like all get out. All you could smell was mud

13:30 and everything you could see, everything had been ransacked and bombed out, trees were all ragged, mostly around Red Beach and the landing beaches were called different colours, Blue Beach, White Beach and Red Beach and so on. That’s when they could say, oh Red Beach needs an air attack or something. So, it didn’t impress me at all. It wasn’t until alter on that it wasn’t too bad. Once we got out on the perimeter and I was in the convalescent camp, it was beautiful.

14:00 Lovely lagoon water, and the villagers themselves were beautiful people. The girls were absolutely beautiful, more like Eurasians, and the fellas too, they were small in statue, and they were musical, they made all their instruments out of bamboo. They had pipes, whistles and drums, and they used to march around the village and put on these little concerts.

14:30 **Did you ever get to put on your training in the jungle into action?**

No, No.

Were you disappointed?

Yeah, I was. I didn’t have to do it because the war had finished. So someone up there was lookin’ after me, must have been. So, apart from being bombed out in Darwin, a few times, nothing really up until that stage, there was nothing really dangerous that happened. When we had to land, we were strafed

15:00 a few times, but apart from that a fairly safe life so far.

What was happening on Morotai in an army tactical sense?

On Morotai there was headquarters, it was General Blamey’s headquarters, Land Force Headquarters, and General Blamey was in charge and that was where all the troops were left to go to the attack on Burma, not Burma,

15:30 Tarakan and Borneo. On Borneo they went from there and John [Tom] Blamey used to go over by ship. On one of the destroyers and he would take guard platoon with him, on the ship, wherever he went he had to take a platoon of ships, they were his 2/1st Guard Regiment. We didn’t guard prisoners

16:00 of war or anything like that, that as Military Police’s job. We just guarded headquarters, married quarters.

Can you tell us a bit about Blamey, what was he like?

Oh, a little fat tubby bloke with a big white moustache, fairly old. He didn’t speak much, he just said g’day or how do you do, he was all right, he was a gentleman. You didn’t get to see too much of him. I know [General Douglas] MacArthur didn’t think too much of him.

16:30 He didn’t too much of MacArthur either, he wanted to take over, he said no, old MacArthur said, I’ll do all this, not you. Anyhow he finished up in charge of Land Force Headquarters, he went up to the Philippines, he wanted to take the Philippines. He wanted to bypass all those, he wanted the Australians to go and attack the Philippines. General Blamey said, “No, we are not goin’ up there yet, we have to clean this mob

17:00 out. Get down here.” So MacArthur had to change his mind and get his own troops to go up there. So, anyhow that was okay until we left. While I was in 2 Mountain Battery we were in tents, nothing fantastic happened. We got a lot of new officers from Duntroon up there. One bloke was named General Gouch’s son,

17:30 Lieutenant Gouch. And the name for no good was Titty Bargoos. We used to call him Titty Bargouch. A few others, Lieutenant Salmon, Lieutenant Sneddon, they made generals. General Salmon has since retired I think a few months ago.

Did you hear of the men fraternising

18:00 **with the local women, I mean Australian men with the local women?**

Apart from what was happening at the village, no troops, it was too far for the troops – they couldn't walk or march out there. There was nobody else in the vicinity of where headquarters was. Then there was echelons all around the perimeter, it was all cleared, there was no jungle there, just a few coconut trees and shrubs. The rest of the whole

18:30 that was bulldozed down clean or bombed to smithereens a bit.

Were there army women on the base?

And that's where they made their main landing. No women there no, ah there was nurses. The Americans used to fraternise with the nurses a bit.

Do you think…

And they used to go over to the nurses quarters, they made up, they didn't have much spirits or anything in the canteens.

19:00 The cordial factory, the soft drink factory the army had a soft drink factory, so we could make all our own soft drinks. They used to put alcohol in the soft drinks and serve them up as drinks. And I tell you what one bottle of lemonade and you have a headache the next morning. It was terrible. That's what they did. The Americans made their own, they called it torpedo juice, alcohol made out of torpedo motors!

19:30 Things in their drinks coconut juice and so on, coconut milk. Oh they were going blind, I mean blind. And they used to get the nurses on to this stuff too. There were two general hospitals there at Morotai, and of course any wounded from Tarakan or Brunei used to be sent straight back there.

What was Lady Blamey like?

She was a very nice person, she was in charge of –

20:00 she was a senior Red Cross Matron in charge of Red Cross and she looked after all the Red Cross people up there, there were a few Red Cross people up there. Parcels and things comin' in. She lived in the nurses compound was, big fence around it, where all the nurses lived, the women. And we, gentlemen,

20:30 used to patrol it at night.

Did you find – we've heard rumours of people spying on the women in…?

No, didn't hear about that, if there was any hanky panky, and we heard about it, we used to find them. There was one American Negro, he tried to accost a nurse coming home from work, and they just informed the

21:00 American military police and they took him off, and they were into him, never seen him again. So, they were pretty strict in that respect. And when the concert parties come up there, they were well looked after and guarded. So there was no mucking about there.

Can you describe a concert party?

It's like a vaudeville show. They had a stage, people singing.

21:30 Gracie Fields used to go through all the sing songs. She had Monty, he used to play the piano, that's her husband. And then they had – they used to get other people from – local talent to get up and do skits, act the clown. Get the mop and start singing like a microphone. They had a record playing like it might be Elvis Presley or Pat Boone or somebody, and take them off.

22:00 Various things like that. Used to make ornaments, little badges, little brooches to send home to Mum, made from little pearl shell I found on the beach. Go to the dentist and cut it out a heart shape, about 1" high, and get the dentist to inscribe to mother on it with his drill. Then he'd put a plastic coating around the same shape with a

22:30 little chain and a little bar with a little insert in there of mother of pearl with Mum's name on it or something, and things like that, we made lots of those. We used to get bits of aluminium from crashed planes and cut out the pipes and make rings, cut out the top and put bits of toothbrush handle, all different colours, used to get. Green, red and yellow, yeah all that, just for fun.

At times was it very boring?

Oh lots of time it was very

23:00 boring. We used to write lots of letters. We used to sit down and read a magazine or a book or something. We had one fella commit suicide whilst we were in F Platoon. Only a young bloke too, he wasn't more than about 18. He was a bit funny, a bit religious go around and give everybody the New Testament, you know, the little red book you used to get. Give everybody the New Testament, he went round one day and give us all one and in the

23:30 front of mine he'd write, 'To Harry, the man they couldn't hang', that's what he wrote in it. He shot himself for some – nobody knows.

Nobody knows or?

No, nobody knows, 300 [.303], put his finger in it or his toe in it or something.

Who found him?

The bang in the night, and his mate probably in the same tent.

24:00 Lucky the bullet didn't hit somebody else, you know, the bullet go through his head and keep going. A thing like that happened later on, I'll tell you about it, when I was up in the Pacific Island Regiment. Anyway from there we got to Japan. On the way there we went aboard the LS383, crewed by an English crew. We loaded up

24:30 all the tanks, not tanks trucks and jeeps, whatever they wanted on the two decks. When they lift up the big ramp, close it up, close the doors, they had to back it off the reef and then back the ship off. Because it's sitting on the beach in front of it. They had to zigzag it in reverse, from side to side with different propellers, had two propellers. When they were on this side

25:00 they struck a reef with a propeller, and they didn't' worry much about it, they just got it off and they closed the big bar doors. And the big bar doors wouldn't close to about 18" gap in it, right down the bough. They could lock them in, but they couldn't close them right up because they had rammed the wharf in Brisbane at Hamilton or somewhere and they had damaged the doors and they couldn't close it. So that

25:30 was okay, we could climb down the ladder inside the door and it was fun in there, it was like a bubble bath, water pouring in you know. A certain amount of water got in around the ramp big ramp and flooded the bottom deck, in about 18" of water. In and around the vehicles on the bottom deck. We had to do fire picket down there mind you. And it had a catwalk along each side, about halfway up the side of the ship.

26:00 And you could walk down and around and make sure nothing gets on fire. A lot of water flopping around. Anyway, there wasn't many of us, there was only myself. I was in charge of them, 3 or 4 others, 5 of us altogether, and we had to handle all this you know, get a list and they wanted this that and the other. Get them on of course the crew would come off the ship and help load them on.

26:30 They had a stretcher at the back of the deck, the engine's are at the rear of these things. You'd hear a wave at the front and you'd see the ship jump up and down in the distance. Then next thing the back would do it and your stretcher would start jumpin' across the deck, and you'd have to tie it to something so it wouldn't go over the side. Sausages and mash for breakfast. Lunch was a cup of

27:00 tea and a biscuit, dinner you got sausages and mash or mashes and sausages, that was the English one. Anyway getting up past the east of the Philippines in the Pacific Ocean, they lost a propeller, the one with wobbling around that they'd struck. They said they carried a spare propeller so they emptied the ballast on one side of the ship and lifted it over, and a diver

27:30 dived over, with a rope around him, so you could pull him back up again, and check see and put a new propeller down there. Took him back up, can't do it, the shaft has broken off. So, they couldn't put a propeller on a broken shaft. So, they climbed up and straighten the ship up again, and started off with one engine and offset it with the rudder to keep it goin' in a straight line, only engine pushing on one

28:00 side and it goes around in a circle. Carried on for a while, and the next mornin' the rudder went. Steering gone, under the stress. Any we was floundering around the middle of the Pacific Ocean, flopping around, and it was getting a little bit rough. We finished up getting towed by a frigate and I forget the name of this ship. It was a funny thing, I was working for the dogs in there as a doorman, gate man collecting tickets. One of the fellas there was a sailor on that

28:30 ship that took us in tow. Anyhow they towed is into Hiroshima, not Hiroshima sorry, Hiro. It's just the side of Kure, where the other troops landed at Kure. We went into a loading bay, a ramp, so we could drop the ramps down and get the vehicles down with that. That night we stayed at a staging camp, about halfway between Kure and Hiroshima, which is on the inland

29:00 sea. Beautiful trip from there to Hiroshima. Along – right along the waterfront, where the mountain come down to the sea, or a ridge of mountains, and tunnelled through it. Little pine trees all growing on top. There was about 7 of those tunnels to go through, and the railway line went alongside on the inland side, and that was the trip to Koitake, which is couple of kilometres this side of.....

Before you go into – any more into Japan, because we want to get to

29:30 **that and go through it quite a bit. Back in Morotai, can you explain the atmosphere on the island when the war had finished?**

As I said we was outside in the staging – convalescent depot. We didn't hear about it of course for a while, and all of a sudden, it was at night-time, there was a great big fire works goin' up, there shells

and bullets firing and coming

30:00 out over the ocean. And a couple of rounds over our heads. And that's what they did. Everybody shootin' things off. They got on the wireless, what's goin' on. Cessation of hostilities and that's what they did. Oh beauty. So we didn't have anything to fire our guns at, nothing to drink or anything like that, just cups of tea and stuff like that. It was jolly,

30:30 we had a singsong.

How long were you there on Morotai after the cessation of hostilities?

We left June, I was on Morotai for about – after the cessation of hostilities, I was there until March the next year. The 15th August was cessation of hostilities, I was still in the 2/1st Guard Regiment

31:00 then. Still doing duties round there with Tom Blamey's doing the guard duties and everything. There was a handing over ceremony which I had prints somewhere. Of the photographs of the handing over and also prints of the surrender documents signed by….

Can you explain what happened there?

We were just on a big parade, they had like a football field, ground all levelled out, coconut trees all round it. Cleared area. And all the troops on

31:30 Morotai all lined up round and the Japanese general came with – brought him in, and he marched up to the table with the cloth over it. General Blamey that side his aide de camp and a few other, signed the surrender document, and in both languages. He signed his and they signed both of them, take one back.

32:00 From there the Japanese of course were surrendering, they were all taken into prisoners and they were guarded by the military police.

What was the looks on the Japanese generals' faces, can you remember?

Surly, just fairly – well the Japanese can put on a face that doesn't resemble anything. Just blank. No

32:30 thought of anything, we've had it that's it. They didn't – they handed over their sword, you know, the big samurai sword to General Blamey, and that was it. After a while signed all the things, they were taken away as prisoners.

On the island?

Yeah.

So did you see them on the island, the prisoners of war?

Oh went past them,

33:00 past them their blockade they called it. Americans ran it.

What do you remember of that?

I didn't go inside it, just a whole lot of poles put up just like a stockade. You know the old stockade in America. Big gate, military police on the gates of course. I think they were only in tents inside.

How did the Americans and Australians get on, on Morotai?

Oh, well, we got on well with the Americans. Yanks.

33:30 We were at – our camp was to the left and not quite at the end of the runway. They had lots of runways there for the bombers to take off. And at one end of the – one end of the runway was a big pit, not a hole, but where all the gravel had been bulldozed out, to make up on the runway. And one of these bombers had taken off

34:00 and didn't get up high enough and it crashed into this ditch. It blew up I suppose. It was loaded with cartons of American beer, cartons of beer and that. They were flying it from Morotai down to Hollandia which was on New Guinea, or Sukarno land or something. Hollandia, it was the Dutch New Guinea side of things, it was north of the border. That's

34:30 we were going round picking up cans of beer in the jungle round there. That sort of thing that happened. Then we came across a whole stack of ammunition in belts. For aircraft, using belts. We only had our .303s and I said this is good we'll go out to the edge of the jungle to the perimeter and we'll have a shoot at some of these nuts up in the trees. And here we were shooting these bullets, and we were taking them out of the magazine.

35:00 Some of them were tracers. And the rifle got that hot the oil was coming out of the woodwork. Poor old .303. That was a bit of fun sort of thing. Had a bit of spare time off. They had a theatre there. Yeah. But when we got transferred from the islands, it was in the

35:30 Celebes island group. And there were other islands there you see them. But we never got off that particular island. Oh got on a barge and went round some smaller islands in the bay just close by and a

bit of fishing with the hand grenade. The fish all get stunned and you bring them in. Didn't have fishing lines and hooks.

Were some of the men on Morotai keen to get home, because we heard a story about…?

36:00 Oh Yeah, yeah, we only called for volunteers. Then to get home you were on a point system. If you were married you had so many points, if you had children you got so many more points. If you had more than one child you got more points. And so on. The more points you had you were the first to go home. I think the age, whether you were married, how many children you had, and that was it,

36:30 you had enough points, I don't know whether you got 2 points for each one, or 1 point each. But the ones with the most points were the first to go, and so on down the scale. I didn't have a girlfriend, I didn't want to go back to moulding, yet, 'cos all I had to go back to was apprentice and I didn't want that, I might as well go to Japan with the occupation

37:00 force. I don't how long – didn't know at that stage how long you'd be there, might only been short term, might be for a couple of years. So that's what I did, that's why I volunteered.

We heard a story about a bunch of Aussies on the HMAS Kanimbla who protested about getting off at Morotai and another crowd were getting, were you there when that happened?

No, I don't remember it. They

37:30 they, the Kanimbla was probably taking the main troops up to the battalions. I was in a rear party with A Field Battery. A Field Battery went on the main ship, but myself and 4 others I was in charge of this group with 34 Brigade Headquarters, so I was seconded to 34 Brigade Headquarters as the rear party. So they all went off and we were stuck in this tent all by our little selves. And

38:00 the main troops, 65, 66 and 67 Battalion, went by barge, that's the only way they could get out, probably by the Kanimbla, or the HMAS Westralia or the HMAS Manoora, whatever ship was there, and they went to Japan in that. So I don't know there could have been…

How did the atmosphere of the island change after the war? Did everybody feel a bit useless?

Well, there weren't many of us left there. There were a few Dutch people there,

38:30 they'd come back because they had lived there before. A few of the natives come wandering down that end. As I said they wanted to get this and they wanted to get that, and I said no they can't do it, because there were some Americans there, Lend Lease, they had to be destroyed. And some of the vehicles there, workshop vehicles with lath and everything in it. Ambulances,

39:00 jeeps, fire truck, generators, pumps, there were some of them still left there. Not a great number but they didn't want any more in Japan they had their quota. What they wanted. So we just had to, start them up, jump out, over the cliff. Pile up over the cliff on the edge, deep water off the reef. Somebody put some petrol over and chucked a match in.

39:30 We managed to smuggle the Dutch, I think we got him a jeep and one of the other weapon, dodge weapon carriers. They're like a sedan with a canvas roof and big seats in it. So, he was a Dutchman, he went off into the bush somewhere, so we didn't see him again. Thanks see you. They got plenty of petrol.

What were the locals like?

The Dutch, they wanted to be standover merchants. They wanted this, they wanted that and they wanted the other thing, so.

40:00 You can't do that. I was in charge and I didn't want to be wrapped over the knuckles. Now Lynn's brother he was a different kettle of fish, he went to another island somewhere up in that area, with a quartermaster. He managed to sell lots of that stuff off. Sold that for 1,000, came home with stacks of guilders. He used to – when he was discharged you were only

40:30 allowed so much foreign currency, there was a limit to what you could cash in. He would say, hey want to make yourself 5% of 1,000 guilders, yeah, just hand that in and cash it for me. He did that. He had a fair bit of money when he got home Lynn's brother, Christopher. He's still single, still a rogue.

40:59 End of tape

Tape 7

00:31 Landed a hero, unloaded the ship, went to a staging camp, for the night. Walked around a little village, it looked very quaint, all the little houses were sticks, wood, bamboo, paper windows, all the ladies in kimonos,

01:00 kids all around the place, bow to you say g'day. That was just for the night, the next morning the trucks

took us to our camp at Kaitaichi, which is about 2 kilometres, which is the next station by rail from Hiroshima. Going towards Kure which is going north. The barracks themselves were on reclaimed property, reclaimed land in the inland

01:30 sea. It had a big stone wall around the perimeter of it. And between the main road and the barracks themselves was a big canal, with guard posts on the top, with like a bridge across. There's a photograph over there. The buildings themselves were big warehouses, concrete floors. The timbers in them – they were all made from timber, but all the big joins were all made of 4 x 4 inch timber

02:00 beams but all sharpened like pencils and all fitted in together. Like in the grooves and held in place with big steel staples. So when an earthquake come they could all move around and they would not fall down. The barracks were okay there was no central heating in it, it was getting on to winter time. So all we had was 44 gallon drums, to make up heaters, which was a drum of dieseline,

02:30 with a drip tap on it, and it used to drip down into a little hot plate in this 44 gallon drum, and you would put some oil down there and light the fire down there, on this drip tray, and you had a jar of water in a drum of oil, or kerosene or distillate and drip down on this plate and just keep burning. It would go out round the side of it and the drum got

03:00 quite hot. And we had 3 of those up and down these buildings to keep us warm. And it made a noise like fish and chips fried. And of course smoke. Smoke would come out, but anyway it kept us war. That was the barracks and we stayed there for quite a while. We used to get leave and go into Kaitaichi township itself, and get to know the people. They had a big community bath there,

03:30 like the Japanese had. When the troops got there they used to bathe altogether, the Japanese and all – when we got there they put a big bamboo fence down the middle. And have a hot bath there without being embarrassed by the women with them. Japanese men would go in the same tub with you. But that hot you could cook crayfish

04:00 in it. You would get in gradually by pouring cold water over yourself and so on. But it was quite good and refreshing.

How did the local Japanese people respond to you?

Very proud, there were no worries at all. I never had any worries with Japanese in crowded trains or trams or anything like that. They were very polite people. In Kaitaichi itself we went round made various friends and talked to people.

04:30 One of the little shops in the streets, little narrow streets you could drag a cart up it and nothing else, was a tailor, he was a Japanese tailor, Sigio Haramura and his wife, fairly plump lady, he had 2 sons, one was still goin' to school, and the other a teenager worked in the railway. He was very polite and we used to take our shirts down there and get

05:00 stripes sewn on. Do anything for us, sew our badges on. His wife would go round – food was fairly scarce in Japan then. Vegetables and rice was okay They put a meal on for us. Quite friendly, Ken Anderson and I used to go there. We were quite friendly with them. Anything we got from the canteen we would take over to them. Cigarettes, tin of condensed milk, things like that,

05:30 just small gifts, didn't worry us. You could go down to the black market with a tin of condensed milk and get all sorts of things for it.

You said earlier you volunteered to go to Japan, why was that?

Well, I did mention it, I had nothing else to come home to, I had no girlfriend. Didn't fancy going back to work in the foundry, more adventure I suppose and I wanted to see Japan.

06:00 So.

Why did you want to see it?

I was interested. Heard all about it. As I said I didn't like the Japanese, but I wanted to se what they were like at home. That was most peoples idea of going there.

When you heard about the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, what was your – what were your thoughts then?

We didn't hear about it until – well and truly after the war had finished. About the bombs bein' dropped, I mean it

06:30 wasn't general knowledge, not up there.

When did you find out?

Oh I found out when we volunteered to go to Japan, they gave us a bit of a run down on it, and lectures on Japan and what it was like and so on. They give us a paper on it, no fraternisation, no this that or the other. A whole rigmarole of stuff about the occupation forces should act. Don't be aggressive,

07:00 show kindness sort of thing you know. Most people did. A few of ratbag Aussies, or Americans mainly,

used to go past the Japanese and give them a whack for no apparent reason. We had one friend, not a friend I suppose, he wasn't a friend of mine, but he was a colleague, he used to drive a truck, an American Studebaker truck, no doors on them, he used to get a piece of flat bare

07:30 wood, and when he would go past a Japanese riding his bike, he would be up and whack him across the backside this stick. That's you see, things that happened. But, very rarely happened.

How did the Japanese react to him?

They were on their bikes, probably shake their fist. But all in all.

When you did learn from the army

08:00 **about what had happened in Japan, what were your thoughts about that?**

I said well it ended the war. That saved thousands of lives. We didn't know then the extent – at that stage we didn't know the extent of damage of what an atomic bomb could do. No details of it. Just that it flattened out a couple of square miles of territory and then the second one, the Japanese didn't take much notice of the first one either,

08:30 they dropped the second one on Nagasaki and that's when the Emperor of Japan said, enough. He would have copped the next one on Tokyo, probably.

Did you have any idea what to expect from Hiroshima?

No, not a thing. There was an atomic bomb, we had a little bit of a brochure about it. That radiation would be around and should be cleared when you get there.

09:00 There was only there and the wind will blow it away. They forgot about it being impregnated into the soil. And the vegetables and the trees, they didn't think about that.

So tell me a little bit more about Kaitaichi and what the town was like?

Well Kaitaichi was just a small town, it was a branch line for, station had a branch line that went up into the hills. They had a beautiful big

09:30 old Shinto temple there, went up steps into it. And it was the old pine – pine trees around it, and paddy fields around it on the hill between the town – between the railway line and the town and the hills was paddy fields, then the paddy fields went up the hills in terraces. It was really good.

What was your impression of Japan?

I rather liked it.

10:00 We had a nice trip getting up into Kaitaichi, along the inland sea, all in colour, the flowers starting to come in, cherry blossoms, all the coloured leaves from the what do you call them, trees anyway, think of it in a minute, like they have got in Canada.

Maple!

Maple, yeah, all the different maple leaves. Anyhow Kaitaichi was this big

10:30 camp, 67 Battalion was on the canal on the other side of us towards Hiroshima. The other battalion was up at Osaka, that was 65 Battalion, 66 I am not sure where that was, I think that was somewhere down at Kure, anyway we used to go – have to do pickets in Hiroshima and…

So tell me about your first visit to Hiroshima?

First visit to

11:00 Hiroshima was on guard duty, picket duty we had to go down there. Some troops were on leave, and my first trip there was on picket duty and we had to go down there and make sure there was no people bashing Japanese up and that sort of thing. Keep the peace more or less. And making sure no troops were attacked. There were a lot of troops there. They weren't allowed to travel on the trams, you had to walk from wherever you wanted to go.

11:30 And they had the trams running. Some of the old buildings were being done up, putting partitions in and so on. Big multi-storey buildings were being partitioned off. Putting floors in and walls, they were there bartering, before they moved in and they were there.

Can you tell us about the devastation you saw?

I can tell you about it but I can show you better.

12:00 The whole place was just flattened. Have you ever seen a wheat field with the wheat growing up and then a scythe come along and cut it all down, and then you got the weeds, a few big weeds sticking up here and there. Lookin' at it, it was just like that, flat. Trees telephone posts, trees were stripped to their branches, and just the main trunk left standing. The buildings were knocked down, some were just twisted up. The railway station itself

12:30 hadn't got too much damage, it was on the far side of the town. The big barracks, the military barracks was just flattened, that's where we played football, on the military parade ground. The bridges were all – it's a delta city, with lots mouths of rivers going through. They all had bridges over them. They all had flat bridges with a 3-foot side-rail. Solid side-rail, and they were all flattened out, most of them just

13:00 laying out the side of them. The bridges themselves seemed to be in tact, most of them. One or two damaged. Apart from that there was nothing there, schools, hospitals, everything flattened.

What was your reaction when you saw that?

Hope they never use it again. It was terrible. But just looking at

13:30 it, it didn't quite gel until you saw the people. And once you saw the people and the ones that had been – and if you went into one of the hospitals, with all the burns and – it was terrible. Disfigurements, and they were dying, still dying from radiation.

Can you tell me more about that, your visits to the hospital?

A couple of times we went in there to visit them to see if we could do anything for them. Not much you can do. The hospitals

14:00 were understaffed of course. Because a lot of the hospital staff themselves were all killed in the thing. Victims families that were alive used to come in and look after them in the hospital. Feed them and so on. It was devastating. Left you shocked, after you come out, you couldn't believe it. You were glad to get back to barracks and have a beer.

14:30 Anyway, on picket duty you copped – bloke getting' a tram, hey get off that. For some reason they wouldn't let us travel on trams, it was crowded with Japanese anyway. They scared somebody might stick a knife into them, because it was crowded. But

How did you communicate with the Japanese?

Well, you soon got to know their language. We

15:00 were given a little book, um first it's in Japanese words and so on. The alphabet, the A E I O U sounds and that's the words. So you soon put them together. Couldn't read any of their characters, but you could read this little book and you got

15:30 all the – where's the doctor – I am going to the doctor. To the doctor I am going. You are beautiful. It's a lovely day.

So when you went to those hospitals to see those people,

16:00 **how did they react to seeing someone like you who had…?**

They showed compassion to us, because they knew we didn't drop the bomb. The Americans dropped the bomb, we didn't and we were there to help them, and they showed compassion, to us. That's the families, the poor old wounded people they didn't know what was going on.

Have you ever seen the sort of wounds…?

The children, the schools

16:30 were all burnt, the children, with the skin off their back. Burnt off. It was a big fall of flame wasn't it, apart from radiation. And the strength of the wind that blew everything down. We had a few trips into Hiroshima, we used to go in there and play football. I got a couple of medals, but not medals, tokens from the Shimbin

17:00 newspaper about us being such good sportsman and playing ruby league – the Japanese used to come and watch us. And one army team against another army team. There it had been raining, and the parade ground, this ex parade ground, was all decomposed granite stuff, like yellow bits like gold in it, I can't think of the word, mica? Bits of mica in it. And of course I was playing the second railway you know in the scrum and shove your

17:30 head in and of course it stuck to your pants and I used to get me ears all rubbed up. The elbows would be rubbed on the gravel. Anyway we did these few games of football there. When we got back to the RAP, the old sergeant of the RAP said come over here who's next

18:00 and he would get a nail brush and scrub and it hurt like buggery, he would scrub the elbows with a bit of Dettol on it and behind the ear. To get all the gravel and stuff out of it. They would heal up in a matter of 2 or 3 days.

How much thought was given for the potential dangers of the occupational forces?

I never saw any danger there any time I was there, we just walked around.

I meant in terms of the radiation?

18:30 Oh radiation I didn't think much about it, it had all cleared away. American says the air had gone by the time we got there, 4 or 5 months after. But the Kuan Brewery just outside Hiroshima, and all the water came from the hills up there somewhere, dam up there go through the brewery. The canteen the Australian army canteen copped that, and they got

19:00 brewers – I don't know, might have been from XXXX, or somewhere in Sydney to make beer there and but it in our own bottles and everything and supply the canteens and units with beer. It was a brewery to start with the Kuan Brewery. So, that water could have been radiated that they were using. Yes.

Did you soldiers think of the potential dangers?

Didn't

19:30 think about it in those days. Supposed to have been clear, nobody was ill, everything seemed to be normal. It wasn't – doesn't catch up until later in life. Lot of the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] in the association, that one, tying the government for ages to get something done about it, by the time the government gets around to doin' somethin' about it most of them will be gone anyway.

20:00 I am 82, pushing 83, so doin' pretty well. So, no it didn't worry us. Told you we got a new camp. They built us a new camp out at Hiro. That's – you go back through Kaitaichi which is on the inland sea, you leave Kaitaichi and go up over the hill and down the next gully is Hiro. That's where I first landed. They had a big new barracks there.

20:30 All done in, lathe work, timber and lattice work and plastered both sides. 2-storey, nice barracks all central heated with steam, big steam plant our the back. Sergeant's mess all nicely done. I got promoted there from bombardier to sergeant. Yeah, so.

Can you tell me what your job was in Kaitaichi and

21:00 **Hiroshima?**

I was a gun sergeant. 25 pounders then, we had 25 pounder guns. Which was fixed – semi fixed ammunition, put the shell in, put the cartridge in, and you close the breach up and you had your elevated range-taker.

21:30 I was no. 1 on the gun in charge give the order to fire and so on, make sure everybody was okay. Everything was pretty good. In that respect I had no problems there. Kept the gun maintenance. We had our guard duties to do.

What did your guard duties involve?

Well, apart from around the camp itself, I was

22:00 already sergeant so I didn't have to do – I could be the guard sergeant in charge of the guard for then night. Make sure the troops were posted and things like that. We took 3 or 4 trips to Tokyo to do guard duty. The whole unit went. We did guard duty on the British Embassy, the Canadian Legation, the American Embassy, the

22:30 wharves. Empire House they called it in Tokyo. In the Ginza where it was a big department store type of thing was taken over by a British concern, you could go there for cups of coffee, or tea or a snack, it's like a home away from home type of thing in Tokyo. You do guards, you do pickets,

23:00 sometimes you do guard on theatres. Most times it was out around the legations and so on, and the wharves in Tokyo.

Can you tell me about your experiences there in Tokyo?

We were in an ex-army barracks when we got there in camp, Beppu, I think it was called, but it doesn't matter, it was a big barracks.

23:30 From there, we used to be taken out on trucks to do our guard duties. If you wanted the Canadian legation for instance, I would take troops out and you'd hand over from one guard to the other. Hop out of the truck, march along, spic n span [very clean], everything is shiny and bright, do the changeover properly. Change him over there, march him back to the truck. Then you go around to the next one to the British Embassy

24:00 do the same there. Then you go around all the traps, it would take you the best part of an hour to go around and change all the guards. Then you would get to bed, you would get about an hour's shut eye, up and around again, every two hours to change them over. That went on for – we were up there for about a fortnight. In the meantime we would have big parades out on the plaza, outside the Emperor's Palace. He was up on the hill, with a

24:30 big canal around him and bridges – different bridges, they called them gates across to his palace. But outside the big plaza was a big parade ground….

What was your impression of Tokyo after the war?

Oh Tokyo, looked like it had never been touched, most of it what we were seeing, some of the outskirts, or Yokohama got pretty badly bashed I think. But Tokyo

25:00 not much problem at all. We used to get out and around the outside of Tokyo and into the little villages and hop into a beer hall and talk to the Japanese. Get talking to them, have a beer.

What did you talk to them about?

We'd get our little book out and ask they how they were, and what was there job, were you in the army? Most of them, no wasn't in the army. We were employed doing whatever it was.

25:30 You soon learn because that's what you had to go out and talk to them. You gained experience as you talked to them. A lot of the Japanese we spoke to could speak English and they could translate your words, tell you what was what. We were taught by mama-san the tailor at Kaitaichi. And we would be yakking away there and he said who teach you, you teach by – woman teach you,

26:00 that's right – oh you speak polite English, you speak polite Japanese. Very good.

What was your impression of the Japanese?

When I first went there I didn't know much about them at all. And when we met the mama-san and her son, little boy's school, school bloke, met him, met the mayor of the town,

26:30 the so called mayor of the town and his daughter, he was in a nice inland garden, a nice house with a garden inside the gate. Inside there for tea ceremonies. Very correct. The Shinto priest, he had a daughter called Musamai and it

27:00 meant water. Met her and politely showed as all over the Shinto, the big gong. We stayed there at night-time, meal in the evenings and get around. One of my jobs in Kaitaichi – as you know all towns have prostitutes in their little hootchies around the place. In Japan they have

27:30 Geisha Houses, not Geisha girls, they were entertainers. The Geisha girls themselves were entertaining girls. But once the Geisha girl entertains you to a degree where you wanted a woman, they showed you off to the prostitute, it was all done above board, all nice and clean and everything. So one of my jobs was to find out where these prostitute houses

28:00 were and get the doctor down. The Japanese policeman would come down with the doctor and take them off to hospital. Have them examined. Okay clean, they go back, if not they get treated. There was that much VD [venereal disease] going around, and I was the VD control NCO [Non Commissioned Officer]. And my job was to find out where these were and to notify the MPs [military police] or the Japanese police and to get them to the hospital.

28:30 And if they were clean okay. They go back. There was one in Kaitaichi and there was one in the next little town down, and that was okay. That was one of my jobs. In between to get the troops, I had to give them lectures on VD, to control it, so did the doctor. But I used to come along and had all these wax models, all these Japanese, had a whole string of them. All

29:00 these made of wax, all these diseases and aftermath, things. Newborn babies that had it, and I would give it to them. Half an hour before dinner. Stick in their heads. Yeah, I was nasty wasn't I?

What was your experience with VD before that?

Didn't know anything about it.

So how did you learn about it?

Books.

29:30 Lectures. Used to get lectures. The doctor says, nothing funny, nothing clever about having sex he says, nothing clever about that. He says. You don't have to you know. If it was something spectacular like the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK does it, you had to jump on their back and balance, it might be worthwhile. It always stuck in my head, that's what he said.

30:00 That was okay

How did you locate these brothels?

Just watched, pick them up, you want a girl, you want a girl. Oh yeah, okay. There. Okay next half hour or so, off they went. Most of them were good. They were all polite

30:30 very decent. One of our jobs, in Japan we used to travel around a bit, go over to Iwo-jima to one of the islands, Iwo-jima another one further down. Jima means island, and go in there when elections, they were trying to get democratic, and lectures, we had to get them lectured, get them to vote.

31:00 And we went round and explained it all to them. They picked out the men they wanted to campaign with, you know the premier for this section and so on. We went round to make sure there weren't any stand over merchants. That everything went okay. With all this voting people. So we got to meet a lot of

them. Over at Beppu Island, Beppu, not Beppu, Iwo-jima there was a bit hot bath,

31:30 big spring come out of the wall, hot water out of this thing. And you get in it for about 10 minutes and you just about lose all your strength, you climb out and get this cold water in little bamboo buckets with a handle on like a scoop, and get this cold water over to revive yourself. And the Japanese women would come in and massage you, the old mama-sans. They would walk on you

32:00 with their feet up and down your back, yeah. Feel real good after that, get in a rickshaw and shove off to the next little town. They had rickshaws pulled by pushbike, a bloke on a pushbike, and you'd have two blokes in a rickshaw and away we'd go.

You said the Japanese greeted you with compassion, because they knew you hadn't dropped the bomb, it was the Americans that dropped the bomb, did you ever see any antagonism by the Japanese towards the Americans?

32:30 In hospital they did. I never seen it because they were not in our vicinity. There was a few Americans at headquarters at Kure, they had a sort of headquarters there with a few sort of people in it. Most of them were north of

33:00 Tokyo, up that way. The British occupation force went as far as Yokohama or Kobe, in that area and in the south. So we had British, Scottish, Punjabs, Ghurkas, New Zealanders, Australians, Canadians. That made up the British Occupation Force.

33:30 We had 34 (UNCLEAR) Brigade.

Did you ever see any antagonism towards any of the men…?

There was a – there was a bit, Hiroshima one night, not Hiroshima, Hiro one night, I think a few of the blokes had too much to drink, saki, when they came out of the restaurant. There were some young Japanese there, I think they had their girlfriends with them, and of course these Aussies

34:00 trying to make up to the girls and they got a little bit hostile. They didn't do much, they just glared at them and grabbed their girls and off. But it could have been dangerous. But apart from that nothing. There was a girl murdered near our camp, in Hiro, our new barracks. There was a vacant paddock. There was a hospital and a vacant paddock.

34:30 And then our barracks, and the station was on the other side of the road, Hiro Station. One morning I went out and there was a girl murdered in this – I suppose she was murdered, she was dead anyway, in this park. So the doctor's and everybody come along, and the police. They pulled out a makeshift table and put her on it, and held an autopsy on the spot. Chopped the head and

35:00 people taking photos of it. I had a set of photos I tossed them away.

You saw it?

Yeah. Right outside our barracks. Used to be a track going from the barracks along between the hospital and the main road, into the main street of Hiro. We used to take it as a shortcut. She was on this table. Horrible too. I didn't like it.

35:30 **Did you find out what happened to her?**

No. I didn't know what happened. I didn't stick around long enough to find out. But, some of the troops were taking photographs. Do you want a photo of that, they'd say, move aside, and they printed out a lot of prints so that everybody had one.

They hadn't seen enough death in the war?

But unusual to

36:00 find out what it was, on the spot, autopsy, dangerous. Don't go to Japan. Another one I saw he got run over with the tram, in Hiro. Jacked the tram up in the front and drag him out from underneath. That stuck in my mind too. You see his leg cut open. Nasty. Some things like that, does, it's not war.

36:30 Wartime you see blokes get blown up and like all these dead ones in Darwin. They didn't affect me as much, you are attuned to it. In Kure, on the southern end of Kure town, it's a harbour, the train comes through a tunnel, comes from Hiroshima and comes through a tunnel, and when it comes out of the tunnel it comes back

37:00 out of one house and then there's a level crossing. Well, a few times I was there somebody has been hit, a car, or a cart or somebody has been hit, by train at that level crossing, and they just go through there and another couple of hundred yards to Kure Station. We had a lot of people killed up there in A Battery. Quite a lot got killed accidentally –

37:30 by driving a truck across the level crossing. Hit by train.

You mean members of your occupation?

Members, yeah. Quite a few. I don't know how many are in the cemetery at Yokohama.

Any of your friends?

Yeah, a bloke by the name of Bill Anderson, he was a fairly good friend of mine, he got hit, he was a truck driver, he got hit, train hit him crossing the level crossing. Fairly open stretch too, I

38:00 don't know why he didn't see the train coming. We used to travel to Tokyo by train of course. The

Had you been very close?

No, not that close, he wasn't one of my closest friends. But he was a driver, being a sergeant, you didn't get that close to the troops really. And Ken Anderson turned up he came from Western Australia, and he joined the occupation

38:30 forces in Australia, and he turned up there. G'day, he hadn't changed much. He was still a sergeant, he was a sergeant in Darwin when I got there.

Why were there so many accidents do you think?

Oh, just not lookin' where they are going. Like here, accidents on the side of the road, people getting hit a truck. And they put little crosses, flowers on it.

39:00 But the Japanese, life in Japan didn't seem to mean that much. Not the way we look at it. Don't have the same value on it. While we were in Kure of course we lost a few troops on the delousing mines and things like that, battleships had to be cut up, destroyed.

39:30 Mines, sub marines, in pens underneath, tunnels all underneath with the ammunition in. So, we lost a few troops that way. But…

Did you ever have to let family know that people had died?

Not me no. That was done by the CO, the Major. Timothy Angelo Rodriguez, he was the CO of the unit.

Can you tell us about the CO?

40:00 He was a Spanish bloke. If one of the troops would do something wrong he would front him up you know. The sergeant major would march him in. He would be sitting on his desk. Hear this charge read out. This one was on a charge for riding on a tram in Hiroshima. Provos had dragged him off and booked him see, the sergeant major marched him into –

40:30 now what have you got to say for yourself. He gets around, now sir when somebody orders you around the place, he says, he edged around the to the CO's shoulder just about, he's looking over, he said some of these orders you see around the place, you have to be a Rhodes Scholar to understand the, I am not a Rhodes Scholar. The CO said case dismissed, don't do it again.

40:56 End of tape

Tape 8

00:32 When I was there one of our jobs was to go around and make sure that everything was aboard during elections, and there was no standover merchants. Ken Anderson and I, my sergeant mate, we brought a pushbike and we used to go around the different villages, and talk to the people, as best we could, out of our little directory. Mostly the questions

01:00 attained to those particular things we wanted to know about. And we'd talk to them, and we'd go right out to the farms. Now, one of the old farmers, a rice farmer in the paddock, in the rice fields, this beautiful old house in the middle of the rice field, painted white. Tiled roof, nice little wall stucco wall around it, and little tiles on the top of the wall and everything. We went in there, and of course made us welcome

01:30 come in and sit down. And of course they don't have fireplaces like we have, they have a hole in the floor, a square hole in the floor, where they have their fire down below floor level. And they have their pots and things over the top of it. Any heat from the fire goes out under the floor and up the sides of the walls. Keeps it cold in the winter because it snows there. So anyway they bed us down for the night in a nice little room there, partitions off,

02:00 for the night, stayed there for the night. Gave us meals and everything. He was telling us about his war experiences. He was a soldier with the allies in the First World War, he showed us photos of it, he brought out the same medals as my Dad got. He showed us the medals, yeah, the same as my Dad. I said how do you like the last war. Didn't know much about it he said all we had to do, they told us all we had to do was to produce more rice.

02:30 He didn't know what was going on, no news no nothing. They were left in the dark, when they tried to

find out something they couldn't. Radio, they took it away. So all he had to do was produce rice. He said all the farmers around there the same. They don't know anything, they just farmers. They were shocked to find out the atrocities and things that went on. So, got to know those people

03:00 and they were very nice polite people, really was. Just like if you were going out in the country here, you meet the odd grump, but he wasn't that bad. Then we went on – we used to go on army exercises, we had to test our, train with our guns. They had artillery ranges up in the hills. We had to take our trucks, tow our vehicles up there. And

03:30 set up in an old army camp. The barracks, earth floor, and the beds were just planks on the bed and a hollowed bit of wood for a pillow. So your neck could fit on it. We didn't use that, we had our own inner spring mattress or stretchers or something to put over the top. That's okay we fired at the ranges up there, live ammunition of course.

04:00 We had to clear the range and we sent out notices weeks beforehand that we going to do field practice range there. Anyway they were supposed to clear range, anybody on it. Anyhow this day, looked out and there's a couple of people up there. Looked like a mama-san and a couple of daughters gathering up things on their head, baby on the back, gathering up stuff. He said they are supposed to be gone from there, we'll give them

04:30 half an hour and see if they move. Anyhow we give them half an hour and they moved about 100 yards. He said send a shot over. Anyhow loaded her up, gave us the range, bang, over zoong. Still didn't take any notice. Drop one a bit closer he says. Next thing up with the skirt and they off, they got the message. So then we carried on with our range shooting.

05:00 One of the – of course with the gun you have zero – the guns are surveyed in, being mobile, surveyed in off a map, and they have a line up the centre of called the zero line, each side of the target or each side of the zero line is from zero to nine or zero to twelve either side of your scale

05:30 traverse. So this one came down and said zero 9. Zero 9 on it, and ranging shots you know, 700 yards, bang. Look out , no fire he says. Where did that shot go. Check zero 9, check zero

06:00 nine. Bloke had zero 9 on, not zero line. He got over near the railway station. That's the only time something like that happened, fortunately we didn't do any damage. Just in the bush. Yeah. It's easy to get that isn't it. Zero 9, zero line.

Did you ever meet Northcott?

He was the

06:30 he was the, Northcott was a general then, Hoskins. He did go up, probably met him on parade, marched passed us. Not to shake hands or anything or to talk to.

Because he was responsible for some of the practices for teaching about VD at that time. Did he talk about how to implement the lectures that you were doing?

Wasn't him no, we had a doctor.

07:00 He might have spoken to doctors and so on, but we had a doctor come out and tell us about VD.

How did you get chosen to do the lectures?

You can do that. I said, "Okay I don't mind."

Because it was sort of an epidemic at that point?

It was, it did become an epidemic because at that stage, they didn't have a cure,

07:30 there was the one they called syphilis and the one they called gonorrhoea. There was the 2. Then there was the something or other Pacific, more or less a strain, didn't worry them very much. But it wasn't until they got the penicillin, you know, the sulphur drug that they started to clear it up, they could get the fix you up in hospital with

08:00 penicillin or sulphanilamide or whatever the drugs they using, clear it up, keep them in hospital for a week or so and then send them back. No good trying to stamp it out, so why not go with the flow, and clear it up.

Why did it become such an epidemic with Aussie men?

Oh lot of the troops hadn't seen women for ages, didn't worry me because I didn't know much about it anyway, and I wasn't interested in it.

08:30 **You weren't interested in sex?**

I wasn't. Didn't know anything about sex until – or, I knew roughly what the cows and things did. But it didn't interested me, I never had a girlfriend – I did have a girlfriend, but I had a girlfriend – when I was in Perth I was with the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] dancing one night, and she – and I took her home to the barracks, before I took her to the bus stop, she tried it on. I couldn't do any good, I

said, “This is no good at the bus stop shelter.”

09:00 “Bugger this,” so that was the last time until I got married.

So with that kind of experience was it difficult to explain the VD stuff to the men?

No, no.

How did you know?

I just knew. We had lectures. I knew what it was all about.

What sort of stuff were you telling them – how were you controlling that behaviour?

As I said I went and got all these wax models,

09:30 with all sorts of nasty diseases things on them. See, you couldn’t control, stop them, but you could lecture them tell them what’s going to happen. Advise them to use the correct preventative methods, use a condom and so on.

Did they have access to condoms?

Oh yeah, yeah.

How would they get hold of them?

From the RAP. Medical RAP had stacks of them, I

10:00 used mine for putting things in them to keep dry. It was the best thing in the jungle. Put your tobacco in your matches in, tie the top put it in your pocket, never got wet. Of course we didn’t have plastic bags in those days.

What was worse, gonorrhoea or syphilis?

I don’t know, syphilis I think was the worst one. Yeah. Once this

10:30 millimide cleared it up, it became a curer of it, and it gradually died out. You didn’t have it so much. The Japanese didn’t have much there at all when they first started. We were warned not to fraternise, because somebody told us that the Japanese loaded their women up with all these diseases, so when we first got there it was taboo

11:00 there was nothing doing. Then we found out they didn’t at all, it was the Americans that passed it on to most of the Japanese women, before we got there. So that was the episode of that. I just had to do medicals, didn’t have to do it all the time. It was while I was at Kaitaichi, and by the time we got to Hiro we didn’t have to do much, there wasn’t that much – they didn’t have it.

11:30 **So if a woman was found to have it, what would the doctor do with her?**

Just take her to hospital, and if she had it on examination, she was treated. Once she was treated, and she was clear, she was allowed to go back.

How much….

There was no handicaps, she wasn’t charged or anything.

How much would it cost her – an Aussie man to have sex with a woman?

I don’t know,

12:00 anything from 100 guilders, packet of cigarettes, a pound of sugar. You know it depends. And it would depend on the class of woman it was too, some of the little villages, just you know – of course, Japanese men have their Geisha house, they called the Geisha house, single men, there was no problem there.

Was it organised?

12:30 Oh yeah, yeah.

Can you describe the interior, because I know you brought these women in to be examined, but…?

They were just like an ordinary house, they had the main room when you went in, took your shoes off of course, just like a Japanese house. They were all tatami mats they had, each room was – might have about 6 in, that’s how they could tell the size of the room by how many of these beds were fitted in. The furniture

13:00 was all packed like that, too was all, one chest of drawers would sit on top of one another, it was only just a single row of drawers in a box. And they had the mama-san would be there, the girls all nicely dressed up and everything. And you would go in there, and the mama-san would say which one would you like. Big kimonos there, all nice

13:30 and feathered down.

Was there a stigma ... The men would be examined first, a good brothel would, check out there wasn't anything wrong with him, and then they get on with the act. And then they clean up afterwards. That was it, see you, next week.

How would they check the men?

Oh, just have a look at it. Yeah.

14:00 **The person in charge would?**

The girl. He would just strip off and have a look and yeah, "Okay." That's all. If there was something wrong, she'd say no, wouldn't be in it.

Why was there a stigma attached to using condoms?

A lot of people didn't like it. To my understanding it's like having a bath with your overcoat on. No feeling. I suppose there wouldn't be either.

14:30 **How did they respond to you doing the lectures?**

They didn't like it very much because it was just before lunch. But they had to put up with it, and I said, "Well okay here it is." Had to put up with it, I said, "Okay you don't do it, if you are going to do it, you have been warned, and if you get it, you go to hospital. And it goes on your records."

15:00 **Was there any other disciplinary action for – because there....?**

Oh yeah, some of the COs – some of the units and COs confined them to barracks. "Okay, no leave for you until you wake up to yourself." But I don't think any of our blokes ever got confined to barracks that I can recall. There did have some cases in our unit, and some of them went to hospital early in the piece.

15:30 I would say out of our unit maybe 10%. So I must have been doin' a good job.

When you got to Japan, the Yanks had been there for a while hadn't they?

Yeah, they had been there for a while. Mostly up around Tokyo, [General] MacArthur went to of course, they signed the – on the

16:00 Shannendoah [USS Missouri] something or other ship, signed the surrender. The Emperor, Emperor Hirohito. Never did get to – yeah I did get to see him once. He was riding a white horse, when we went to Tokyo on one of our King George IV birthday parade, big parade along the Ginza. We fired the guns, there's photos over there,

16:30 of the parade, firing the 21 gun salute. Up there outside the Emperor's Palace. So that was good. I got lots of photographs of me changing the guards at the Emperor's Palace, wide open space, pill box there at the main gates there at the Emperor's Palace, when we were doin' guard duty. We had our white webbing on and everything.

17:00 Polished up, smart looking. We were, very smart, and changeover of the troops, and photograph clicking, cameras goin'. Mostly Americans, because they had a lot of American tourists there as well. They come over somehow or other.

Was there much media around considering Hiroshima had just happened?

Yes. Oh yes there was, there was the

17:30 Japanese media of course, and they had their own newspapers going. The Americans had the 'Stars and Stripes' newspaper they used to put out. (UNCLEAR) had a newspaper they used to put out for the troops. I forget what it was called now.

Did you notice much of the black market trade going on?

18:00 Quite a bit of it. We used to across it quite a bit. They used to keep it pretty quiet.

What sort of stuff did you see?

Mostly in the food lines. Cigarettes, tobacco, food. Anything in the food lines mostly. Didn't much see anything else. A fellow might trade a diamond ring for a carton of cigarettes. That sort of things but not a great deal,

18:30 but we used to get 50 cigarettes a week given to us, in a tin, a round tin, English cigarettes, Capstan or something. And I never smoked that much, I used to roll me own. I did smoke but I used to roll me own. I saved these up and I would give them, I used to give them to the mama-san, or if I wanted something up the road, bought a new camera, I had about 5 of these tins of cigarettes and I just – I got a beaut Leica 35mm camera.

19:00 Secondhand of course, I took lots and lots of photos, some of them are over there. That one over there

was taken with the guns. I had that for a long time, I gave it away, oh last year. To a chappie over at Lowe's cameras. He had a whole stack of cameras, and I hadn't used it for that long it had seized up. Probably need pulling the bits and it probably would have worked again. I gave it to him so

19:30 that was that.

When you were first driving into Hiroshima, can you give us a picture of the sorts of things you were seeing in the streets?

Well, I mean the streets were just cleared of rubble. Each side of the street, was just a jumble of timber that wasn't burnt,

20:00 scarred. Heaps of rocks, bricks, stunted trees, shrubs, grass growing up amongst it. Here and there was a building that hadn't been too much damaged. And that was it. All you could see. There was nothing else. It wasn't until 7 or 8 months later, maybe 12 months later that buildings started to get put up. Little ramshackle paper shacks,

20:30 out of the debris. People were coming back to where they lived and building their little hootchies again. Streets were cleared there were more houses. The department buildings were gutted but not knocked down, were all thriving again. The railway station was operating fully. That was about it.

Were there people in the streets wandering

21:00 **when you were first in there?**

No. No. Not when I first got there, they had been getting about on trams and going about their shopping and so on. The ones in hospital, that we visited in hospital, the stunned ones, the really sick people and children and so on, that was what was the killer of that episode.

Did you feel proud of the occupation forces and what you were

21:30 **doing?**

Yes, yes I did feel proud.

Why?

Because we were there to help them. We were there to guide them into a new democratic way of life. That's what we were told we had to do. So we went about our way and did it, in them most friendly way we could. Didn't pull any punches about it. We told them of the atrocities that happened. And they wouldn't believe that these things went on. Most

22:00 of the people in the country that you talked to wouldn't believe it went on. They knew there was a war on, and they were in the First World War, and they were on the allies side. They knew they were fighting Chinese, but didn't know they bombed Darwin. No didn't even know they bombed Darwin. But it was the same naval flotilla that bombed Pearl

22:30 Harbour, that did Darwin over. Only there more planes in Darwin, and a longer period.

Do you think it was a just war?

Just no, it was unjust war. What right did Hitler have to say – exterminate all the Jews, why did he have to take over those other countries. I mean, Saddam Hussein's the same, he killed

23:00 his own people he poisoned them, gassed them. And they say, no they didn't have weapons of mass destruction he didn't have poisons. He did it to his own people, he killed thousands of them. Just not millions. And the Russians, look at them, they went berserk, Stalin, he killed thousands and millions of people were slaughtered and killed. Nobody knows the reason. So, if the Japanese

23:30 had got to Australia, if it wasn't for the Americans they would have been here, no doubt about that. Americans coming through and helping us out with the troops, aircraft and ships and so on. Of course it was a stepping stone for them too, to get from the islands, supplies were closer, get their supplies here were closer to move them up to the islands. Than all the way from America.

24:00 We were helping in that respect. And also, they saved Australia, no two ways about it. And they bombed Darwin, right down as far as Port Headland, they bombed Townsville. They dropped a couple of loads on Townsville. They would have been here, and we would have been – well our job was to get in the hills. The Brisbane line, you know about the Brisbane line I suppose,

24:30 the Japanese landed at Townsville – Northern Territory. They were going to drop the Brisbane line through Brisbane and out across Australia. Bring everything down, and burn everything above that. So we might have been. Mightn't have been sitting here and doing this here now. It was a big step. I am glad I went to Japan, I was there until 1949.

25:00 The Korean War started, and that took a lot of load of Japan. Our troops went from Japan to Korea. The A Field Battery volunteered for a man, everybody from a CO down to the cook volunteered to go to Korea and fight. It was turned down because New Zealand had to supply the artillery. We sent some aero people over observation posts, couple of those people

25:30 from our unit. So, when the time come we finished, we came back here back to North Head.

In that – was it 4 years you were in Japan?

Yeah, 1945 I got there to 1949.

How had the country change while you were there do you think?

Well it changed from a desolate looking place to a beautiful place really. Kure, they had a big park back towards the hills in Kure.

26:00 You walk in there you would think you were in Australia. Gum trees, all native trees growing, all in there. Just that little patch. Take you right home again. You could smell the gum trees when you went past. We were just over the hill from that, on the other side of it, Hiro. I used to do a bit of bike racing, we did sailing, did a bit of hiking around the hills,

26:30 up in the, when it was snowing. It snowed pretty deep. All the pine trees with snow, like a picture card, just like you see American post cards, Christmas cards. We had a canteen, they used to get various items in for us for sale, like pearls, bric-a-brac, tablecloths, kimonos.

27:00 You had to go and buy them in the shops, a hell of a price, to buy them. But in the canteen you could buy them at a reasonable price. But the pearls and things, a scarce commodity you took a card out of the door, when you went in, and they called a number out, and if you have got that number you could buy a set of pearls, or whatever you wanted. But pearls mainly were scarce.

27:30 And I got 3 pairs there altogether. My Mum got two, I gave her two so she could have a double strand. And the other one I gave to a lass I used to know in Newcastle. And I thought I was going to marry her in the finish, anyway she married someone else anyway. She didn't give me, me pearls back. Anyhow I finished up with Mum's pearls now. There's a couple of things in the cupboard there I

28:00 bought over in Japan and sent home to Mum. Various things, souvenirs.

Was it hard to adjust to life back in Australia when you came back?

I come back with the army of course, I was still in the army it didn't make any difference. Environmental was different. Got back from Darwin aboard the Kanimbla, got off at Circular Quay.

28:30 We had a fair bit of luggage and stuff there. We had all the ship's stores on board and guns, and everything you can imagine. We had to get them all offloaded and wait for the customs to check them out. Then we went back to North Head, and we were camped over there. It had become a School of Artillery. All sorts of teaching then, we were A Field Battery, but we were teaching young juniors

29:00 and people to fight. Man the guns. They do the School of Artillery, then they go out, mainly officers, go out to Holsworthy, which is south of Sydney, near Liverpool, to the artillery firing range, and we'd fire the guns, we'd man the guns and the officers would fire them. So we would do that for a fortnight and then back to North Head. Then we'd do a tattoo at the Sydney Showgrounds,

29:30 we'd train for that. Another one we did was the 1812 Overture at Centennial Park, we had to fire the guns on the boom, the funny thing happened there. The crowd used to get around, see, around the front of the guns or down beside the shell, just behind the shell, close enough to hear the orchestra. They would start inching around the gun. So, we had a lot of orange peel, and apple cores

30:00 and various things we could find around the place, and we'd put them in the canister. It was only a blank that we were firing, but it was gunpowder, and we'd put it in the end of this brass canister and shove it in this gun, and all these bits would fly out all around the place. And people would scatter all over the place, and bits of apple core going everywhere. Bits of orange going that way. We had to be careful because the concussion could hurt them.

30:30 They ducked back out of the way. So that was our 1812 Overture. No more tattoos. Artillery training at North Head. We used to go down from North Head, and right through the city over the Spit Bridge.

How had the army changed since…?

Well it has become a permanent army. More spick and span, not so much,

31:00 well you had to toe the line more. I wasn't too bad, I was well disciplined. Being a sergeant it wasn't too bad. We had a sergeant's mess ball while I was at North Head. That's where I met Lynn.

Tell us about that?

She was there with somebody else. I liked the look of her. She was only a youngster, I didn't know how old she was. I was gettin' around 31

31:30 then. Didn't have a girlfriend. She was nice. She was with another sergeant. She come up. Her sister went, and she wanted to find somebody else to go with – and she wanted to go with Lynn, and I met here there. The next time I met her I was at the sergeant's mess again, something was going on, a

dance or something. I was up at

32:00 Holsworthy then, I had been posted from North Head up the Holsworthy to Liverpool was doing training for infantry instructing. Not that I needed it, but I had to do it. Because the bosses said so. For national service training, I had become an instructor for national service when they started up in 1951. In the meantime I was at North Head, we had the ball and I met Lynn,

32:30 or I saw here there. Do you remember a big coal strike came on at about that time, the army had to go in and shovel coal, and everything. Ken Anderson and I were doing guard duty at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. Each unit had to take their turn about fortnight on and the next unit would come in and takeover. Well we were there when the coal strike was on, and we didn't get relieved and we were all the time the coal strike was on, 3 months or whatever it was.

33:00 So we had 24 hours on and 24 hours off. 24 hours on and 24 hours off. We had to beat the retreat every week. Bring the flags down.

What does that mean, beating the retreat?

Bringing the flags down off the flagpole. Drummers going then the last post or first post, things like that, bring the flag down and fold it up. And had the troops all lined up. And we had to be spic and span every day, so half the time you have got your gear, and iron your clothes and

33:30 washed your clothes and iron them. We didn't have a great heap of supply with us. But we were there for a fortnight. We didn't get leave or anything, on off – when you were off you could go in to town or across the road to the hotel. After you did all your gear, inspected the troops make sure they were all spick and span. That was Victoria Barracks. When the coal strike finished I went back to North Head. Then I got shifted up to

34:00 Holsworthy. So instructing, to learn instructing. So, the ball was on in the sergeant's mess. And I came down and I said to Lynn, and she said 'hello' and I said to her 'what's happened to you, you don't look too well'. I had only see her once before, she did she had the flu. It made her happy I remembered her. The next time I am back at Holsworthy, then

34:30 they had the gunner's ball, which was up in the big main hall I was telling you about before, big ballroom there, stage up there. They had the artillery ball there. So Lynn rang me up at Holsworthy, to pick up one of her work mates, Zoe and she was a fairly stout sort of a woman, she used to be a sergeant in the army. I called round to her place at Potts Point, I had a car then, a little Skoda.

35:00 Called around at Potts Point to pick her up. She's in the shower, she said, "Oh help yourself to a drink." Looked at the bar there, wine and plonk and stuff. There was some soda water there, so I had some soda water. Driving – in them days I wouldn't drink when I was driving. Not when I had to go right over the city and everything. So got to North Head and went up to the ball and met Lynn.

35:30 And Zoe was there with – and eventually I got somebody else to hook on to Zoe and I was with Lynn most of the night. And Zoe pulled out a pipe, a bendy pipe, she was puffing on this pipe, got a photograph of her somewhere. I said, just as well I didn't hook on to this one too hard. That was the ball. Anyway from there went back to Holsworthy, went to

36:00 Singleton. Being an instructor and the first intake for the 12th national service training Battalion was held at Singleton, under canvas. Had to get up there and put up marquees, put the furniture in, all the – make it as reasonable as possible. And it was getting pretty cold then too. Cold winds used to come off the barrack tops there in the mountains, snow up there. From there after the first intake

36:30 we went to the barracks at Holsworthy. They were nice barracks there, wooden barracks. The 2nd 3rd 4th and 5th, got some photographs over there, of the intakes. Lou Hoad was one of my intake in one of my units. We had to let him off to go and play football, play tennis. He was okay I didn't mind that it was good. Between intakes, we had

37:00 to get all the kit in for the next one, and get into the big hall. All the sizes put up and everything, so when all the troops come in they just – to and get his shirt and his pants. The last one was the hat. Some funny ones come through there, I'll tell you later. But that was national service. I what I did was instruct troops basic drill and how to fire a rifle out on the Anzac range.

Was that for them to go to Korea?

37:30 No, this was national service training. Decided everybody had to do national service in 1950. Some went to Korea, Korea war was on but only volunteers. The national service well they were only 18-year-olders. Anybody that turned 18. The Korea volunteers were ex servicemen. My

38:00 brother-in-law went back to Japan and Korea. It finished him. He came home again, but he was never the same. He lost everything, absolutely. The next one after that was Korea, not Korea, Vietnam. So I was there until December 1953, at Holsworthy. We had 3 intakes a year, and I was

38:30 there what, 1950 to 1953, so I had 9 intakes. Trained them up. And used to have a final march out parade, and their mums and dads come along. They said the best thing that happened to him, the best

thing that happened to him. He cleans his shoes, he makes his beds, he helps wipe up. That's national service training, it was great. That was right through the thing.

Were you a hard taskmaster?

39:00 They loved discipline. Oh yes, they used to call me Hawk Eye. Because on parade, you would be on parade and they would be behind you and I had sunglasses on. And I could see reflections in – and anybody movin' I knew roughly who it was, and if I didn't know his name, I would say, third man from the right stop movin'. Cut that out I saw you turn your head. Hawk Eye, I could see them in the

39:30 reflection. They didn't know, I didn't tell them. "Old Hawk Eye, watch him." But that was good days, training those people. The CO had a horse, there was horse paddocks, they had lots of horses there at one time. With our gardening, we had to be careful of tetanus. I was with the sergeant there one day and he said, "Hold my horse" the bloody thing wanted to bite me all the time.

40:00 Don't you hit that horse. Tell it to stop biting me. Any rate he finished up he come out and went off riding somewhere. Thank goodness.

40:10 End of tape

Tape 9

00:32 On August 15th I got married to Lynn at the Church of England, Manly Corso. From there after a while, on Christmas Eve, we got posted up to Darwin. As quartermaster. To get there we had to go by train to Brisbane, get up early in the morning to catch the milk run plane

01:00 DC3 to Tenant Creek via every stop on the way. Went to Tenant Creek and waited for a connecting plane from Adelaide. We didn't get in until about 2 or 3 o'clock. From there we arrived at Darwin in the biggest storm I have ever seen, in the middle, about 10 o'clock. Nobody to meet us. Got a taxi into the Darwin Hotel, cost us about £32

01:30 a night for us, got a room, said the army could pay for it. The next day they came out lookin' for me. I walked into the barracks and said, I am here, what's happened. It's Christmas Eve, sorry Christmas Day. They sent somebody out to get us temporary quarters. They took us to temporary quarters, out at a place called Dudley Point, which is next to East Point, used to be the old engineer's camp. Then the master

02:00 gunner's hit, right on the peninsula, water on 3 sides, beautiful spot. One big room, they had rigged up beds and everything in it. We had a child there, our first child John. John Richard. And from there they decided they better shift us out and into empty quarters at Francis Bay which was the ammunition depot, supposed to be an ordnance man there. So I had to be there to let them come and get ammunition and stuff. After a while

02:30 they shifted us into another married quarters in the Barracks in Clow street. From there we got posted back in a nutshell, back to Brisbane in the same unit that I was in 122 Mobile Coast up there, I went to 121 Mobile Coast at Kelvin Grove.

Can I just ask you what was your impression of Darwin so many years after you had been there?

03:00 Oh it was great, it was like a big hick town. Like when I first got there, it hadn't changed much. Lot of new buildings had gone up. The bowling's most of it had been wiped out and cleaned up, so that wasn't there. Quite good. And we enjoyed it. I had a car then too that came up by boat, and we could get about. Lynn couldn't get around too much because she was pregnant most of the time. The roads were rough.

03:30 **Can you tell us about New Guinea?**

Yes. I got posted to Brisbane and from there we bought this house because we were tired of renting a house. 2 months later I got posted to the Pacific Island Regiment, for 3 months. To get them out of there and work in the Q-Store and straighten all their books out. Myself and another fella named Walker. Anyway, I think it was Walker, it doesn't matter. We got there

04:00 did the 3 months, oh, we want to keep you, you have done a good job. You are in A Company Quartermaster. Oh am I, what about married quarters. Well, fix that up. So, I stayed with those got posted up to Manus Island, up there for another 6 months, still no married quarters. She was in the meantime pregnant with another baby, and

04:30 she's down here. And I was parked at Tarrumba Barracks, which is outside of Port Moresby. Where the Pacific Island Natives, European sergeants, warrant officers and officers were all European. The natives were corporals and we had a couple of sergeants and sergeant majors. The natives, mostly they were the troops. Got on well with them,

05:00 except if you didn't give 'em what you told them you was goin' to give them they got a bit uppy. I was

posted to Manus in A Company up there for 6 months. Quite a nice place that's the navy depot. I got back to Brisbane. While I was there I said no married quarters no reengagement. That was when I was gone about 6 months just about finished up there and time for me to be

05:30 re-engaged in duty again. I said I am not re-engaging, I said to Major Latham, he was my CO, Company CO. I said, "I am not joining up again, not until I get married quarters." I said, "They have been promising me and promising me, and I am not joining up." "Ah," he says, "just sign here and I'll have you in married quarters." He went and got stuck in. Next thing I know, I am on leave, back to Moresby down to pick them up. Down here, only allowed me a couple of

06:00 weeks, or something to tidy up all the house up and get them back to New Guinea I went, popped them into married quarters. Into the boat back up to Nutt Point this time. So I am away again.

You were in New Guinea during the years of the Vietnam War, were you very aware of what was happening there?'

Oh yes, the Vietnam war hadn't started then.

Oh I am sorry, is it earlier than that that you were in New Guinea?

No. 1958 I went up,

06:30 1958/59 from here, and I was up there until 1961. I come back in 1961. After me service in 1961, we lost a child up there. Only seen for a few months, unfortunately, a lovely child. Came back to Brisbane and got posted to Amberley, and I was in the 16th Army Light Aircraft Squadron. And that's the unit I stayed in until I took my discharge.

07:00 Do you want to know anything about Amberley?

In all the years you spent in the army, what were the highlights of your career?

Getting' married, I think. Seein' my first child. That was the highlights. Apart from that, I suppose couple in Japan. Some of the big parades in Japan were very impressive. Being on guard at the British Embassy,

07:30 when they invited you to on your next day's leave to come and visit them. Join in their festivities when they had King George V birthday. Fired the 21 gun salute. A few of the things on Garden Island was very impressive. Garden Island was taken over, that holiday place was taken over by

08:00 Z Force to train one man midget submarines and hush hush stuff. That was on that Garden Island. Apart from that I don't think too much over the whole lot of the career.

What about the war years, how significant were they in your overall career?

Well, it made the career, I decided to go to Japan and

08:30 then I joined the permanent army, and I said well, that will be my career. Actually the army and that part, in that respect, became, I made it my career until I was up at Light Aircraft Squadron and I qualified – I was doing the quartermaster's job. I was qualified for quartermaster back at Jungle Training Centre I did a QMs [Quartermaster] course down there, I got through that okay so that me

09:00 equivalent rank to captain. I run the Q-Store at Amberley with all new aircraft, Bell Helicopters and Cessna 180 aircraft. I had to get all the paperwork in, schedules for them, make up the schedules for them, make up the different radios for them. And have all those things tabbed in book form. Look after the

09:30 stores, rations. When I went on holidays – when they went on exercise I had to go down then and look after the rations, petrol ammunition. Did all that work. My captain quartermaster who was supposed to be assisting me in all this, he was an ordnance captain, no practical, but he was learning to fly,

10:00 he wasn't interested in anything else. He wanted to be a pilot. He was taking pilot lessons, getting the other pilots helping him to fly. So that's what – I had to do all the indents, to get this thing off the ground. After doing all those things for the unit, and working hard, ordinary guard shifts, ordinary sergeant shifts, I would be home here twice in a week, every second or

10:30 third week end I would be away. I got a bit tired of it and not promoted and they said – I said by the time my next engagement comes up, which was 1967, June 1967, I said I am getting' out of this, get out because you reengage in 3 year terms, and if I had to reengage then it would have taken me through till I was 50. And you couldn't

11:00 get a permanent commonwealth job if you over 50. 50 or over or something like that. Before that, you can get in on a permanent basis. So I looked at it and said I am 47, if I get out of the army now I can get a commonwealth job, and become on the permanent basis. So that's what I did. I went down and did a course at QUT [Queensland University of Technology], at the George street, passed me exam, got notification back.

11:30 The reason why I did it so early. You won't be called up until round about March, we won't have enough people to set the course. Until they rang me up in November and said we have got enough people to set the course. Oh they brought it forward. I still had to go till June before I could get out of the army. Okay. They said, "You passed congratulations, we are putting you in the defence department."

12:00 I said, "You'll have to hold off for a while because I don't get out of the army until June." "That's okay just report in when you are discharged." So I gotta have a bit of leave first. All right, not too long. So, I did that. I am still waiting for me promotion to warrant officer, because they made it a regiment. So that took my grading up to regimental quartermaster, which is warrant officer. So at least I should have got that far, I was qualified for it.

12:30 Oh no, we want you to start a new squadron up there at Oakey. We want you to get up there at Oakey and start a new squadron. I said, well that's it, if I haven't got my warrant officer by June. You won't get out of the army. June came, May came and I applied for leave to get out early, because I had to look for a job. I didn't tell them I had commonwealth. I told them I had to have leave to analyse all these things. So I went to Kelvin Grove, Enoggera,

13:00 did the discharge things there. Come home, had a fortnight's leave, rang up the barracks. Yes, meander in the ordnance store. In the special what's-a-name department down there, attractive items, watches, compasses and things. Binoculars and things, lookin' after those, issuing them out getting them in. Did that in Christmas and new did a packaging course

13:30 at Gaythorne, packaging and preserving course and finished on Christmas Eve. And the CO over there, ordnance called me up and said you go past the military police on your way home, out to Indooroopilly, I said yes, the Major wants to see you, call in and see the Major on your way through. I called in there, saw the Major, and he says oh

14:00 god, you are a quartermaster sergeant, I said yes, would you like to work for me, I said fine I only live up the road. Fine report to Vic [Victoria] Barracks and tell them that you saw me and that you are going to be posted out here. Did that, I was working in Q-Store for about 7 years. Just down the road, I could walk there.

Harry I just want to interrupt you there and take you, we'll go back there if we have time. I just want to ask you some

14:30 **more specific questions about your time during the war because that's what the archive is really interested in. How important were those war years for you, what sort of impact did they have on your life?**

Changed me whole life. It changed me from being a bored stiff, dyed in the wool, metal moulder, I might have made a good job of that I don't know.

15:00 I did something I wanted to do, free and easy, excitement. I did, I really did enjoy my army life.

What was it about the army that so attracted you?

Just stories I used to hear about it, I used to read about Kitchener, about Lawrence of Arabia, Napoleon, all those stories. Army was – Dad used to speak a bit about the trenches during the war.

15:30 He mentioned the good times as well. He said it wasn't all mud and blood. You had your good times, you had your leave you know, down with the French fillies, get to Blighty – back to England – have a trip round. He said – he told me about the trenches, he said that was bad, and the battles. He said when you got out you tried to forget all those things, and that's what you do.

What about your own experience, what were

16:00 **the best of times?**

Best of times I had in the army. Few of the things on the beach up in Darwin. Crate of beer used to come up on the ship, it would be Ballarat Bitters or Foster's. VB [Victoria Bitter] or Swan or XXXX with straw jackets on. It would be packed in and it would be 48 bottles in a crate.

16:30 And we would borrow one of these between a group of us, go out on the beach in the front of the barracks up in Darwin just near the guns, sit on the sand with a little b it of net around it, so we could swim without getting bitten by sharks, only at high tide. We would drink this beer and have a sing song. And if we caught fish we would grill them on the fire on the thing. They were good times. Another good time in Darwin was with my wife. We had

17:00 some good times there. West Australia we had some good times there, swimming, swimming races in clear water, going out catching crayfish. A lot of good things. Hiking around the island.

What about the difficult times, what were the worst times?

I don't think I had any. Not really worst times. Worst

17:30 times would be in that hospital in Hiroshima. I went to another hospital. They used to go on courses in Japan, they'd send you on rest and recreation leave. You would have a week or maybe a fortnight

sometimes away, and they would ship you off and you might have an exchange with the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] down at Iwakuni. That was the RAAF station, and stay with them for a fortnight and some of their blokes up in your

18:00 barracks. And other times we went down to the southern islands, Honshu, Kyushu, southern island of Japan anyway. Beppu was a hotel, it was a holiday camp there, that's where the hot mud springs were, active volcano, with smoke comin' out of it, and hot water, snowing all round the place, but hot water running down the gutters. The hotel was placed over the ocean,

18:30 facing the ocean. And behind it on the hills were little cabins, made Japanese style. And each cabin was a swimming bar, like a tub. Hot water, bubbling almost coming out of the wall into these things, so you had to put your foot in bit by bit to get in, they were real hot, hot water.

19:00 That was okay you went down to the main hotel hall, where you had meals and you had these girls in their kimonos serving you. And you had to eat with chopsticks. We had to use chopsticks. I could use chopsticks pretty good by the time I finished. I could even eat soup with it. So that was good there. They had a big boiling water

19:30 lakes, and you would go along and they would give you an egg, an ordinary WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK egg, in a little wicker basket with a long string on it and you'd drop it, 5 minutes boiled hard and you'd peel it and eat it. You know those sort of things. While we were in Tokyo we used to get around a fair bit. We went to a place up – fair way inland from forget the name of the place, that's the trouble, but you went by train and by cable

20:00 car up to the top of the mountain, and there's a big lake up there, and you would roam around there and you would stay in a hotel. That was just on visits, that was while we were on leave in Tokyo. And we got a couple of earthquakes while we were there of course.

Tell us about the earthquakes?

Oh, we had a few tremors. The worst one we had was up at the lake in the mountain, we were coming home, we were coming back down to Tokyo

20:30 and there was a big long rickety bridge you had to go across, like a wooden bridge on cables. And of course with this earthquake it started swaying and you had to hang on to the sides. Wasn't a severe earthquake it was swaying about a foot either way, and you are trying to walk along this thing. We waited for a while until it eased up, and then we got down on to the cable car and got down to the bottom. The earthquake was a bit

21:00 more severe down there, sort of bounced up again. A more severe one came on the other side of the island from Hiro I forget the name of the town, there are some photographs around somewhere of it. Where it really devastated the city, chucked trams off the tramline.

Were you there then?

I was at Hiro I wasn't over where the earthquake was, but you felt it. There were pictures in the paper and saw all of it

21:30 afterwards shows you what it can do, and it could have been where we were.

How nerve-wrecking was it to be in an earthquake?

Pretty – especially when you blame somebody for pushing your cot round. We were at – this one was at Kaitaichi, we were on reclaimed land, only about a foot above sea level. Stone wall around it, canal this side and we went across the bridge. This day I was on guard at the bridge, being in charge of the guard, I was having a

22:00 rest on the cot. Next thing, the cot started jumping around. I said to this bloke, look I am trying to get a bit of a sleep here, I have been up all night, stop pushing the cot round. I opened me eyes up, the lights swinging, I said uh oh, sorry. So I just stayed on the cot, I didn't tip over or anything. And the next one after that was still at Kaitaichi

22:30 at night, and we were in this big barracks, this big warehouse. And they had a door in the side, and between the doors they had the clothesline, you know with the bar across and the wires down, between the two huts. You went out the side door, and everything was shaking, the building was swaying, so we went out there, and all of a sudden the ground opened up to about 2 ft wide. Mud oozing up and the clothesline disappeared. The posts just disappeared down.

23:00 The posts went zip, down in this. I was going to step out there, and I said oh no I can't step out there. Better stay back on the concrete, and the buildings were quite swaying, 3 or 4 feet each way. And all these pencil pointed things with the stapes, were just moving, one of the staples might have come out, but they were just going like that. Amazing to watch them. It eased up then it

23:30 stopped. But it didn't get any of those big rock ones. It was like waves coming in the thing, concrete even moved. But it was like waves on the ocean, and it was only on land. When it stopped and eased up there were a few aftershocks, that thing closed up again but the clothes line stayed down there.

How did the experience of being in an earthquake compare with being in an

24:00 **air raid?**

Not much difference really. Except air raids you don't know whether the bombs are going to hit you do you. Earthquake you hang on and say okay here I am. If you are not in a high-rise building or something, we were on the ground. In a high-rise building in Tokyo or something it might have been different. But when we stayed in Tokyo on that one occasion, was on the ground.

The way you talk it sounds like you were never really very

24:30 **scared in any situation?**

No, I have never been scared in my life. I am sorry, once I was, when we were in Darwin and I was in a slit trench and I stuck me head up to see what was goin' on. I was – will I or won't I. You could hear the bullets whistling over the top. Oh hang on I'll go out and have a look, you have got your tin hat on. Aeroplane come round, and I got me rifle up and shot about 3 rounds off at him.

25:00 But the machine was going and they were 50 calibre bullets which were half inch round about that long. They belt into him they would have fixed him up. That was the only time I ever felt scared. A few times in my childhood I felt scared. Used to go shopping through a bush track, and I would get one end of the bush track and go like a bat out of hell until I got through to the other side, you know flat out, thinking somebody was going to

25:30 grab me. That was the only time I was scared and that once.

Did you see evidence of other men during the war being scared?

Oh yes. Yes quite a few times. I have seen them scared just when guns were off.

What sort of behaviour did you observe?

Oh, most of them duck their heads down or get shivers, nervous shivers.

26:00 Some of them even cried. But I suppose after that, it's nothing serious and they seem to straighten up again afterwards. It's just the sudden shock.

What bravery, did you observe any acts of bravery during the war?

No. Everybody was brave to go in the war. No crazy people. Jump out and run around.

26:30 You would have to be crazy to do that, or you forget where you are. My Dad reckons that, anybody who stuck his head up that parapet and got out they were brave. Anybody said they wasn't they were bloody liars.

Did you observe any acts of cowardice?

I saw people shoot themselves.

27:00 We had one bloke shoot his foot. He didn't tell anybody he did it, but everybody knew he did it. The bloke who shot himself as I say up there. One bloke in New Guinea, when I was there with the Pacific Island Regiment, shot himself. A native.

What was the story of the bloke shooting his foot?

He wanted to get home. He didn't want to go over to

27:30 Borneo or anywhere else. He shot himself in the foot so he could go to hospital and go to hospital.

How did you know that happened, did you see it?

Oh he'd be telling everybody, I didn't see it, but he was telling everybody he shot himself in the foot. People got to know about it, sent him back with a dishonourable discharge. So he got home.

Was there a charge of LMF [Lack of Moral Fibre]?

Oh they charged him. Self inflicted

28:00 wound. I don't know what he got, whether he got put in jail or what he got, some of them during the trenches, my Dad did that, they took them out and shot them. No beg your pardon or court case or anything, put a bullet in them, get whitey. They know about it they shot him.

When the soldier shot himself in the foot, how did the other troops react to that?

"Ah stupid bugger,

28:30 what do you want to do that for?" I wasn't going to try that, it would hurt too much. He nearly blew his foot off, put a .303 down on your foot, but that was only the once. He didn't even take his boot off. He reckons it was an accident, he was carrying this rifle and it accidentally went off. But that was it.

Could you in any way empathise with him?

No. No way.

29:00 **How did you experience in Japan alter your previous opinions of the Japanese?**

Completely changed them. Even ex-soldiers. Well, they were – some

29:30 troops were just like our own. They were out doin' a job. Not the bad ones, the ones that did all the atrocities. I mean, the Japanese were told to do and they did it. They were trained to do it. And like kamikaze pilots. Like across the river, there was a camp across the other side of the creek, quite a wide creek in the jungle. On the other side was a Japanese camp. On this side

30:00 was troops moving up patrol, and creeping through and they saw this camp, and where the Japanese used to go to the river and wash. So, they looked around and they see a Japanese climbing down from a tree, so they watch and there's this corporal yak yakking down the bottom and this Japanese climb up the tree. He's up there lookout, watchout. So the Aussie, says, "We'll get him

30:30 first," so they shot him. He fell down. The corporal sent another bloke up, and they shot him. They did that 3 times. That's how – get up there, and they went up, but they were disciplined to do that. The ones that looked after the prisoners of war and atrocities and so on, was a lot of the atrocities that happened, were mainly Korean guards.

31:00 They were the bad ones. I met Japanese in Japan quite docile, very sorry they went to war. They were polite, no trouble.

Did you develop any close relationships with Japanese people?

Oh yes. Mama-san, she could speak perfect English,

31:30 and she was the tailor's wife and she used to do anything for us. She was a really good friend. She wrote to my Mum. Told her about what I was doing and Mum wrote back to her. She showed me the letter. Yeah, so, and you had your house-girl, she used to come and make the beds of a morning, do your laundry. Do the ironing.

32:00 Everything was ship-shape there.

To what extent did you experience in Japan affect your opinion of the war in any way?

About the war? It was a new lease of life actually. Most of the war I seen action, I seen some action, was bombed. I didn't have to get up and go hand to hand fighting somebody.

32:30 So I was excused that part of the war in actually hand to hand kill somebody. I might have killed a lot of people by firing guns at them, but I never killed anybody hand to hand. I doubt whether I could or would. Like somebody once said to me he was against killing people, he would only wound them, shot them in the leg or something, put them out of action.

33:00 Well that was one of the main things too was instilled into you too was to wound them because it would take 3 blokes to take care of a wounded bloke, and that takes them out of the front line. So the more wounded you have, the more people you have to have to look after them.

When you were shooting those guns did you ever consider the people you might kill or wound?

No, you just had a target. You didn't even know what the target was, it might have been a tank movin' by,

33:30 such and such you shoot it. Like aircraft, they fired at the plane, they didn't worry about who's in it. You are concentrating on what you are supposed to do. Never come to me what the shells were hitting. Shells used to come back at us you know, they'd find your range.

34:00 One of the range taker's jobs with artillery was with the radar. The radar would pick up the shell coming over you would see the blip, the chart measure, they would get a measure, they get the trajectory and backtrack it and they would say right where the spot was where the gun come off the ground. So within 5 minutes anyway, they would have a gun lined up and

34:30 over they'd go. And you would be on to that gun position spot. Not very many minutes later. But they got wake up, as soon as a number of round were fired they would pick up the guns and move it somewhere else, and we would have to do the same thing of course.

You were in Japan only months after those bombs were dropped and you saw the results of that, how did you come to grips with suddenly being compassionate

35:00 **with one another, two nations that had been at war and were no longer at war?**

I felt sorry for them, what had happened to them. Really when you see the devastation and the ruins that were done there, just by one bomb, and the number of people killed, they were in there thousands, and when you read about that and the Japanese tell you about it, and tell you about some of their

relatives how

35:30 agony they were, how agonised, I felt sorry for them really. When my wife and I trip to Japan, we were at the East Point Museum and they have a video going all the time there, about bombing and everything. While we were there, there were Japanese students I don't know whether they were backpackers or just touring there, and they saw this, they were most upset, they didn't know

36:00 Darwin was bombed, they said, "We didn't know Darwin was bombed, never attacked Australia." They didn't know about the atrocities the prisoners of war went through, we got talking to them. They don't tell the school children, they have forgotten all about it. It's only recently that they are trying to bring that back into the schools over there.

Harry you helped win that war, do you think we have won the

36:30 **peace?**

We won that particular peace. That what we were over there for, to win the peace. We did win the peace in Japan. Our part of Japan we did anyway. I feel sure they learned a lot from us and how we didn't go mad at them for being in the war. We said okay the war is over you capitulated. That's it.

37:00 Either be friends or we will be enemies. Because the war didn't finish until 1952. It was a cessation of hostilities, but there was no peace signing until 1952.

What's your opinion of the way war is depicted in films?

Now, films. Well lot of it is yeah, a lot of is fair dinkum,

37:30 but when you see a movie like – I have been watching this Australians at war as it was in colour. My Dad talks about a few bits of that. Now that showed me exactly what they were doing. Before you would only think about what it was like, but that showed me. And it's in colour, sort of colour, and it

38:00 really brings it home to you what Dad went through. Those people went through. The Second World War I don't think there was anything to compare with that, anywhere. Hit and miss go fight. Tobruk they were okay they were good stand offs. And the last war, the one in Iraq they just went straight through that state, they wouldn't go – you know push shove bang.

38:30 Lots of aircraft, lots of guided bombs. So, it's not really stand up toe-to-toe boxing any more is it.

Do you have a final word to say to Australia?

Keep Australia as it is, I would say. Australia is a great country, and keep it a great country, and the only way you can do that is to keep the peace. The only way to keep the peace is to go to war if necessary.

39:00 Everybody should do that if they want to be like they are today. How about that?

Fantastic.