

Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Foreman - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1728>

Tape 1

00:34 **Pretty big family, how many people in your family?**

There were 6 children.

And where are you in the family?

I'm the eldest.

And whereabouts did you grow up, Ed?

I was born in Fremantle, my parents were itinerant farm workers so went to many country towns, mainly wheatbelt, I went to school in Meckering,

01:00 Cunderdin, Dowerin, Doodlakine, Northcliffe.

There all pretty small towns?

Yes the first 4 were wheatbelt towns, then the Depression came and my father who was share-farming they went broke and at that time they were sending bankrupt wheat farmers with dairying

01:30 experience down the southwest to take over abandoned group properties. So we moved down to Northcliffe in 1932 I think.

What actually is share-farming?

Normally one person owns the property and everything on it, the other person does all the work, lives on the property and do all the work and they share the proceeds,

02:00 if any and during the Depression there wasn't very much.

Well what can you remember about the Depression?

After the bankruptcy of course we had to leave the property, we built, I say we my old man did most of it, built a house using bush timber for the uprights, flattened kerosene tins

02:30 for the walls, pulverise ant hill mixed with water, flattened, spaded flat dried by the sun makes a very concrete cement like surface for the floors, straw for the roof. And we lived in that for 18 months and we ate quite well really, far better than city folk because we had plenty of wheat,

03:00 which you could use for cereal and making bread or whatever and rabbits was the meat.

What would your mum be cooking on?

Wood fire stove.

It's doing it rough isn't it?

No electricity, no.

What were you sleeping on?

Oh we still had our furniture, most of the furniture was in my mother's name, we actually had a

03:30 horse and sulky as well, in my mother's name therefore the bank couldn't claim it. So we were fortunate in that respect, and we had 2 cows as well so we had milk and butter. My mother made the butter, she made our clothes, she made the soap, made practically everything, we were more or less self-supporting. And farmers who

04:00 went bankrupt if they stayed in the district, the local roads board - wasn't a shire in those days, it was a roads board - would employ them for 2 days a week so that your income was 2 pounds a week - 4

dollars - as the value originally came in. So you made do on that and you didn't get cash you got a order redeemable at a local general store

04:30 and you took your order in and got what you needed.

So literally you could only buy food with that?

There were ways out. I know we used to buy a lot of salt - actually it was tobacco for the old man, but you couldn't say that you were buying tobacco, so we bought salt instead and the shopkeeper was in on it of course. I think a lot of people did

05:00 things like that.

What would an average day be like for you at that time?

We would get up about 7, I'd go round the rabbit traps, bring in the catch, get ready for school, get the horse and we had to ride 2 miles then tether the horse under a shady tree, fit a nose bag on it with food in it

05:30 to keep the horse going all day and then we caught a school bus. It was one of the only 2 school buses to operate in Western Australia at that stage and this bus ran from Meckering to Dowerin Lakes, which was a small settlement 8 miles from Dowerin. And we caught that bus and then we had to travel about 5 miles on the bus to school. After school, back

06:00 in the bus, get off, untether the horse, put the saddle on, ride home, have something to eat, go and set the traps again.

Did you have any chores apart from rabbit trap setting?

Oh I suppose so I don't really recall anything in particular, I think I had to feed some pets or something.

What was school like?

It was a small 2 teacher school,

06:30 it's not there now, long gone. The senior headmaster you'd call him I guess, was very keen on plays so we had an annual play in the Dowerin Hall and we would practice these plays and the mother's would make the costumes and whatnot. I remember having to walk once carrying my costume 8 miles into town

07:00 because there was no transport. So I started off about 2 hours earlier, walked into town carrying the costume ready for the play.

Gee you must have been exhausted?

We didn't think anything of it in those days, kids were used to walking, you had to walk, no other means of getting around, we didn't have bikes. Very few people had cars, we had a horse and sulky but

07:30 cause a 10-year-old kid wasn't entitled to help himself to that.

So you just had to use your feet instead?

Yes.

So what happened when you had to go to high school?

Never went to high school, the nearest high school to Northcliffe was Bunbury, 100 odd miles away, never went to high school.

So how old were you when you finished school then?

08:00 I was approaching 14 I think.

So what did you do?

I worked on the farm for about, dairy farm, helping for about a year I suppose, occasionally I'd go and spend a few weeks helping other farmers, getting paid 7 [shillings] and 6 [pence] a week and keep. And then it took a job in Pemberton which is

08:30 next town, a big mill town and I worked there for a year I think.

And what were you doing in Pemberton?

A bit of everything, it was the closest farm to the town, he was also the town's milkman and he also owned the butcher shop in town.

He's doing very well for himself?

Yes he did. So I worked mainly in the vegetable garden,

09:00 also helping with the milking because, and every morning I would do a small milk round walking, where the horse and cart found it difficult to get in, so I would do that every morning deliver the milk and did various things, kept the dairy clean, always something to do. I was quite happy there it was a good job,

09:30 unfortunately they had a teenage girl developed a crush on me and would harass me a bit and had to go, I got the sack.

Really?

Hmm.

So was this girl a lot older than you?

No, no she was younger, she was away at high school and she came home for the holidays you see, the school holidays. Oh she was a nice girl there was no harm in it or anything like that but they didn't approve.

They didn't approve of the fact that she had

10:00 **a crush on you?**

On a farmer's son yeah, I think they aimed a bit higher than that.

Oh that's sad?

Just one of those things?

So what did you end up doing after that?

I went back, it was harvest time, or haymaking time, I went back to my parents place and helped there with the haymaking and then I got a job in one of the local stores in Northcliffe, there were 3 general stores so I worked in there until I

10:30 enlisted. I was there about 2 and a half, 3 years, yeah.

How aware were you of developments going on in Europe as far as the war was concerned?

Well you'd hear all these things, we actually had a radio then which I bought out of my wages from working in the shop. The first radio we had, it had 3 big dry batteries, a small dry

11:00 battery and a 2 volt wet battery and had to be recharged every 6 weeks. And we erected 2 terrifically high masts so that we were able to, when the weather was suitable we picked up JOAK Bangkok, which is most unusual in those days, and also 2YA, which was Auckland New Zealand.

Gee?

But you couldn't do that all the time,

11:30 just occasionally, and we never got any daytime reception until the big 10,000 kilowatt station at Milngavon, 6WA, was built and came on air and then we could daylight reception.

Was that just a weather condition problem with receiving radio signals?

12:00 Radios weren't strong, transmitting stations weren't strong enough, just couldn't receive them during daylight hours. Night time apparently made some difference and you could pick them up quite well.

Gee. Was it quite expensive to buy a wireless?

I think I paid about on time payment I paid about 45 pounds I think, which is quite a lot in those days.

12:30 **That is quite expensive for those times?**

But we didn't have much choice we had to buy it from Perth on time payment and pay 17 and 6 a week or something.

Just rewinding back a little bit did you play any sport?

There were no team sports in the district, we did play badminton,

13:00 fortunately a neighbour a couple of miles away had a good tennis court, on a Sunday afternoon we'd play tennis, a small group of just friends of the neighbour. I was very friendly with his son. But there was no organised sport like football or cricket, nothing like that no.

How important was things like Sunday school

13:30 **and church?**

They had a church building in Northcliffe and a Deaconess came from Pemberton once a month and took a service, I believe it was Anglican but I don't know we never went. Transport was the main thing, we kids would

14:00 have had to walk if we were going to Sunday school, if there was a Sunday school, which I doubt. Otherwise we would have had to go horse and sulky.

So how did you go about signing up?

Well at the time I'd left home and I was living at a boarding house in town and had the radio of course and old Pig Iron Bob came on the air, Bob Menzies

14:30 and said we were at war, if Britain's at war, Australia's at war and that was it. So my mate Les Beebe and I wrote up to Francis Street Barracks, which was apparently the headquarters of the army here at that stage and said we wanted to enlist, but we never ever heard anything about it. And we heard that the first convoy had sailed in December

15:00 for overseas so we said this is no good to us and after Christmas we gave up our jobs, I was working in the shop and he was a stockman working for the Agricultural Bank, and he had a motorbike too by the way. And we rode the motorbike up to Perth, we lived just over the Barrack Street Bridge, which is now part of the railway station, it was a private house there, more or less a backpackers thing.

15:30 And we lived there for about 3 weeks and no call up and were running out of money we had to get jobs again, so Les went to Jandakot, worked on a poultry farm and I went to Tammin as a rabbit trapper. And I got my call up papers came there and I caught the train from Tammin through to Northam and I was enlisted on Anzac Day 1940.

So were you actually with your mate Les?

No

16:00 he wasn't called up till much later, he finished up in the 2/16th Battalion, 7th Divi [Division]. But I was only in Northam 16 days and I sailed.

So can you just take me through the kind of training you got in this really short period of time?

We didn't really have any training other than marching and some squad drill, half a day at the rifle range,

16:30 and we did actually, what happened when the second convoy left Sydney on the 5th May 40 our unit, 2/3rd Field Regiment was 12 men short for various reasons, some doing specialised training, a couple ill, some didn't make it for some reasons or other. So at Northam camp they asked for volunteers to go overseas immediately without any pre-embarkation leave.

17:00 And there were a lot of volunteers, I was on of the 12 selected.

What did you - ?

Actually I cheated a bit because 2 officers were coming along, we were all lined up the volunteers and 2 officers were coming along and asking questions, I heard the questions and I answered what they wanted, so they picked me.

Well done. What did your family think about you

17:30 **enlisting?**

Well they didn't have any say really cause I put my age up a year therefore I didn't have to get parental consent.

So how old were you really?

I was 20.

You were 20?

Hmm.

So you put your age up to 21?

Yeah, so my army age is a year more than I actually am.

What was the camp site like at Northam, what sort of facilities?

Oh yes, as I say I was only there a

18:00 few days, it was quite good. I know 1 exercise we did, we went out at night and we were divided into a small group and a big group, out in the bush, in the scrub and they put a lantern down by a bush and the small group they spread out around that, about 50 yard out, in a big circle,

18:30 and their job was to stop anyone getting into the lantern. And the rest of us, the big group went even further out and we had to try and sneak through the outposts and blow the lantern out. It was quite exciting we got a lot of scratches and prickles and all sorts of things.

Did you succeed?

I didn't, somebody did. But I suppose

19:00 it was pretty good training sort of thing.

How much of an emphasis was there on fitness?

Yeah a reasonable amount, there probably would have been a lot but as I say I wasn't there long enough. In those 16 days before I sailed they did relent and give us 3 days pre-embarkation leave, so I was away for 3 and travelling time made it 4 days out of

19:30 the 16 so I was actually only 12 days in the actual camp. And most of the time we were getting needles and vaccinations and equipment and lining up and waiting an hour for this, and lining up somewhere else and waiting half an hour for that, yes time went quickly.

What sort of weapons did they give you?

Didn't have any.

Didn't?

No.

So you were just getting - ?

We were given rifles when we went to the

20:00 rifle range of course, but the majority of them were country boys and they quite used to weapons.

Do you think that the fact that you're a country boy is one of the reasons why you were chosen in this volunteer group?

No I think the reason was as I said I heard the officers, the questions they were asking and they seemed to be looking for mechanically minded people, so when my turn came I said I worked in a garage.

20:30 **You lied?**

I know, but I got picked.

So what did you do on your pre-embarkation leave?

I, it took me a day to get down to Northcliffe, I had a day there, took me a day to get back, that was my 3 days. I walked in, walked into the house about 9 o'clock at night, they didn't know I was coming of course, I

21:00 think they knew I was in the army at that stage. They were all home except my father who was away fruit picking, to help out from the dairy farm, little bit extra, so he came home the following night and I went to the local dance, they usually have a dance every week. And I got a little bit of a send off there, and I got a private send off later, came home and

21:30 back to camp the next day.

So did they train you down to the Fremantle docks for?

Yes we marched to Northam, the special train straight through to Fremantle and we embarked on the Empress of Canada, which was a 36,000 tonner formerly on the Japan, North America run. So it

22:00 was fitted with heaters in the corridors and all that sort of thing and we were going to the tropics.

Can you describe some of the living conditions on board the ship?

Yes we, the convoy had come from Sydney, most of the Regiment was on the Queen Mary but the Empress of Canada had a bit of space, right down the bottom, so that's where we were, in bunks

22:30 and the only furniture was some round 4 gallon drums painted red and stencilled 'vomit cans' for sea sickness.

Vomit cans, that's not very delicate is it?

Well it was serviceable anyway.

Was there a bit of sea sickness going on?

There was because majority of them were land lovers, most of them had never been to sea, and we were,

23:00 well we 12 new comers were still suffering from vaccination, which knocks you about a bit and bad weather on top of that, yes there was a lot of sea sickness there.

Was there a lot of fellows that were suffering from the vaccination?

Some it affected quite badly and other didn't affect very much.

How did you feel?

Oh I sort of, I was in the middle I suppose, my arm came up bit

23:30 and I didn't eat for a few days.

And what did you do to pass the time on board?

Lectures, physical training, more lectures, more physical training, more lectures. The thing I remember about the Empress of Canada mainly they had a speaker system throughout the ship of course and they played music most of the day, I think they must

24:00 only had about 20 records and the one they played the most was Thanks For The Memory, I think it was sung by the comedian that's died not recently in America.

Bob Hope?

Yes Bob Hope, every time I hear that tune now

24:30 I could be back on the Empress of Canada, it's so embedded in here.

What sort of lectures were you given?

On the mechanics of artillery of course, all the various things we had to know, also they were placing a lot of emphasis on gas, poison gas at that stage because nobody knew whether

25:00 somebody was going to use it or not, as it turned out nobody ever did during the war. But they were thinking back to the First [World] War when gas was used widely, so we had a lot of lectures on gas.

What was the procedure for gas?

Well there was no procedures really they just told us the things that could happen and what we should do and I suppose

25:30 they relied on repetition to get it through. When we got to England of course we had actual training.

Did you stop off anywhere on the way to England?

Yes we got half way to, almost to Ceylon, Sri Lanka on the way to the Middle East when Italy came into the war and the British government advised all shipping the leave the Mediterranean or not go there.

26:00 So our convoy changed course to southwest and we were headed around the Cape of Good Hope and we called in at Cape Town. Our convoy comprised 7 big ships, the Queen Mary the biggest ship afloat at the time, the Aquitania which I think was about the second biggest and the Empress of Britain which is also very big ship.

26:30 The smallest was 26,000 tonnes so you can imagine they were big ships. When we left Fremantle we had escort, 2 Australian heavy cruisers and a New Zealand light cruiser. When we turned at, is all this -

It's all enormously relevant?

When we changed course after Italy came into the war the Australian cruiser, the

27:00 Australia went onto Colombo and we had a British cruiser take it's place. When we left Cape Town we had 2 British cruisers, I'll come back to Cape Town in a moment. We called at Sierra Leone Freetown, which was half way down the coast, down the West African Coast, when we left there we had the aircraft carrier [HMS] Hermes as escort for 2 days

27:30 and when that left we had a 3rd heavy cruiser join us, because our convoy was as you can imagine was 7 ships including the biggest in the world was a pretty good target. When we got opposite Spain, heading for England we were joined by the battle cruiser [HMS] Hood and the flotilla of destroyers, we actually had more escorts than we had ships in the convoy.

But you would have had an enormous

28:00 **amount of men?**

Oh yes there were 5,000 on the Queen Mary alone. Oh that's what happened at Cape Town, we disembarked from the Empress of Canada, we went by electric train from Cape Town to Simons Town, which was the naval base, and the Queen Mary and the Aquitania of course were too big they couldn't get into Cape Town Harbour so they had to anchor in this naval base, which was 20 miles away. So we went by electric train,

28:30 which was something quite new to we West Australians, and rejoined the rest of the regiment on the Queen Mary so we travelled on that to England.

Did you have any time off when you were in Cape Town?

The day after we arrived every ship except us was granted leave, we weren't granted leave because we had an Asiatic crew and they refused to take the ship any further, because they said going into the Atlantic

- 29:00 was dangerous, there's too many German submarines. So they weren't going to take the ship any further. So we fixed bayonets and encouraged them to leave the ship which they did and the crew was replaced by navy reservists. But because they didn't have enough to make a full crew they decided that the smallest ship in the convoy, the Empress of
- 29:30 Japan wouldn't go any further. And they took the troops off that and spread them out amongst the other ships and the crew to help crew to Canada. So that is why we were taken off the Canada and sent to the [Queen] Mary to rejoin our own regiment. I understand that the Asiatic crew were subsequently sent back to Singapore or somewhere.

It just sounds ridiculously

- 30:00 **complicated when it should have been quite simple?**

Well they wouldn't give us leave so we did, I think there were about 20 of us went ashore as pickets, 6 Australians wearing a bayonet and 1 South African policeman with a revolver, that was a picket. Our area of picket in Cape Town was what they called District 6 which would

- 30:30 correspond to I suppose Northbridge, is the worst area there. But we never had any problems, and we came back and we were given leave the next day but the rest of the mob weren't given leave. So after a while they said, "This is no good for us," so they formed up and marched themselves off and the whole ship load went AWL [Absent Without Leave].

How was that received

- 31:00 **by - ?**

About 1,200 troops.

That's a lot of AWL?

It certainly was.

So what did the officers do?

They couldn't do anything in fact some of them joined them, they couldn't do anything with that amount of men. So the 3rd day we were there we were rounding up these people and trying to get them back on board ship so we could sail and as we round them up, caught a few we'd take them to the central police station in Cape

- 31:30 Town, put them inside, which was a big brick walled enclosure, probably a block of land, a full residential lot and it was in the middle of the city. We found that we were catching the same people again, what was happening they were taking them in, taking their details and turning them loose inside these high brick walls, but they had a ladder
- 32:00 so they were putting them in, they were climbing up the ladder and down the other side and going back to the city and we were catching them again and bringing them back again. And some of them were caught 2 and 3 times, it was sort of a merry go round, still we had a lot of fun.

So you think it was actually fun, it wasn't frustrating?

Oh I guess it was frustrating to the authorities. On our day's leave,

- 32:30 the 1st day we were pickets, the second day we were given leave a mate of mine Bernie Blonde J we were walking down, I think it was the main street and a car pulled up alongside and a middle aged lady said, "Would you like to have a drive around our town?" And we said, "Yes we'd like to." So she drove us all around town, all over the place and up on top of Table Mountain and so forth. At lunchtime
- 33:00 went to Muizenberg Beach which is equivalent to oh - the what's the elite area down by Cottesloe?

Oh, Swanbourne?

Somewhere like that where all the well to do lived.

Right Peppermint Grove?

Peppermint Grove thank you and we had lunch there

- 33:30 with her with a black servant standing behind each of us, and there was so much cutlery we had to stop and watch what she selected before we selected our pieces, marvellous meal. And then she drove us back to town and her brother owned the biggest store in town which would have been the equivalent of Perth's Bones in 1940. And we met the brother and had a short talk

34:00 with him and then he, there was 2 of us, he called in a couple of very nice office girls and said, "Take the rest of the day off and show these fellows around town." So we really did well, we were well looked after.

Certainly in the right spot at the right time?

Hmm. I'm sure the lady that offered us a lift I think we probably exceeded her expectations

34:30 of Australian soldiers, whatever she expected of them. Yeah that was quite eye opening actually.

What did you think about the use of servant, you know the black servant cause that would have been pretty different to your upbringing?

Oh yes, absolutely, oh well we enjoyed it. No we realised we were in a different country and different

35:00 conditions and what not, it was the routine thing there?

Sure, well for quite some time. So was it from Cape Town that you went to Sierra Leone?

Yes. No leave there because very unsettled population there, having civil wars and things all the time.

Still is unsettled?

Yes still, it was very hot, the only entertainment was to,

35:30 natives came out in what they called bum boats, 1 person to a boat, small boats and you could throw coins over the side of the ship and they would dive down and come up out of the water with the coin in their mouth. But only silver coins because they reckon they couldn't see copper coins, the water was brown, muddy water from the river. So we used to throw silver coins over, they must have made a fortune, that was really the only

36:00 entertainment available.

From Sierra Leone where did you go, did you mention that you went past Spain?

Yes we went up the, between Ireland and England and we landed at Gourock, the port of Glasgow. We had this enormous escort all the way of course and at one stage we passed the wreckage where a tanker

36:30 carrying oil had been torpedoed and there was oil all around the place and wreckage, wood and stuff from, stuff floating all around and we just ploughed through it all. And at one stage a submarine alert sounded and the destroyers were racing around dropping depth charges, we never saw any submarines and no torpedos were fired so might have been a false alarm. Anyway we got to Gourock and we,

37:00 for some reason our unit was the first one to land off the Queen Mary and the Mayor of Glasgow was there and gave us a spiel and gave us the freedom of the town, but they put us on a train and sent us down south of England so we never saw really other than the suburbs of Glasgow. On the way down we stopped at a fair size town Carlisle in the north of England,

37:30 we were side tracked there for some time because trains carrying troops evacuated from Dunkirk were passing. And it was while there an English couple we were talking to asked us to speak in Australian, they said, "You can speak English well, but now let's hear you speak your own language."

Did you think that was funny or did you think

38:00 **that was offensive?**

Oh no we just thought they don't know much about Australia do they. So we finished up at Tidworth on Salisbury Plains, which is a Garrison town of course and we had, went into camp there, the camp had already been prepared by British troops. It was about a mile out of Tidworth and about 15 miles north of Salisbury

38:30 and near Larkhill, maybe you don't know about Larkhill. Larkhill is the British Premier Artillery Training School, so we were very fortunate that we were so close there, or we were sent there I suppose because we were an artillery unit. But we never had any guns, we had rifles we'd bought with us and that was all we'd had. So we,

39:00 they drew on the ground the outline of a gun and we'd train on that. We'd load imaginary shells into an imaginary gun and then the imaginary charge in afterwards, ram the shells in, go through all the aiming procedures and what not, fire the gun that wasn't there.

39:30 But it was good training.

It must have seemed pretty ludicrous though to be doing that?

No we could understand the reason for it, we had no equipment, they gave us a few vehicles, bakers vans and things, they'd confiscated from the general public. The Royal Air Force had a number of bases around about and they complained about lights being flashed at night from wood,

- 40:00 they don't call their forests woods they call them copses, about lights flashing from this particular cops, which was a fairly big piece of timber. So they had a battalion surround it and all the members of 6th Battery, out of every 10 man, 1 man was given a rifle and the other 9 had pick handles
- 40:30 and we beat through all this timber looking for the spies. So that's how well equipped the British were, we had no guns, no field guns and they never had enough rifles to give us a rifle each, because the rifles we bought with us were taken off us and given to the infantry because they needed them more than we did. So went spy hunting with pick handles, but every 10th man had a rifle. I think we were in more danger
- 41:00 of the man walking behind us with a loaded rifle than we were from any spies we might of found. We did apprehend 3 people, 1 in British uniform and the others in civilians, but we never heard the result, but I think they were just poachers, cause a fair bit of poaching went on in England.

What were they poaching, deer?

Oh hares, rabbits, things of that nature, fruit and

- 41:30 stuff that they were pinching.

What were the facilities like at - sorry - is it Larkhill?

Larkhill was excellent yes, we did a course there with a number of other, a British artillery unit and at the end of the course we had a competition shoot, that is rushing the guns into action and

- 42:00 firing at a target -

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Maybe we should pick up where we left off then Ed and ask you about the competition?**

When we arrived at Tidworth by the train we went to this camp, the camp was called Arena Road, the first night when they mounted a guard we 12 newcomers that had only been in the army 16 days before we sailed

- 01:00 we were put on guard of course, being the newcomers naturally you fall for the guard. We fell in on the parade ground, we had rifles and the order was, the regiment sergeant major was out in front and the order was given to load live ammunition. Okay us fellows from the country had no problems but 3 or 4 of them were city guys and they didn't have the faintest idea how to load
- 01:30 a rifle. So some bullets were dropped on the ground and a couple of the rifles were correctly loaded and cocked and their pointing there at the regiment sergeant major, he realised what was happening and got out of the road very quickly. These fellows could have easily shot him, pulled the trigger or something. So we 12 instead of mounting guard that night we spent it doing
- 02:00 pocket rifle training, we learnt more in about 4 ours than we probably would have learnt in 4 months, of how to handle a rifle, load it and what not. Us country guys we were all right we knew but these fellows from the city didn't have a clue some of them.

Unusual circumstances to be in?

Yes but you see they had no training, here we were in England

- 02:30 in a unit that was suppose to be there to help stop the projected invasion and they didn't know how to load a rifle.

What other kind of training did you receive following that incident?

Very good training we were trained in all aspects, we went through the gas chamber, wearing gas masks, they had a big gas chamber in Tidworth being a garrison town. We went through wearing gas masks,

- 03:00 okay just walk through, then we had to walk through without them. And we very quickly found out that gas is not very nice, they were using tear gas of course, but it could have been poison gas. So we learnt a lot about gas to and how to not get gassed.

What were some of the instructions that you received in case of a gas attack?

Well mainly the fitting of,

- 03:30 we were issued with gas masks there, how to care for them, look after them, how properly to wear them and what to do when you take them off, how to clean them, what not to do, how to speak on a telephone by wearing a gas mask and that sort of thing. Yeah the training was good, I must say that.

Were there any other kinds of exercises that you'd commenced?

Oh yes we did a lot of

04:00 manoeuvres, we didn't have guns but we had some vehicles, we did a lot of marching, we did a lot of rifle drill, we did a lot of physical training to.

What kind of PT [Physical Training] were you doing?

One I remember quite well we had a 7 mile run in army boots, up hill down dale, bit strenuous.

How did the boys cope?

04:30 Some didn't make it, some did well. Oddly enough our unit doctor, regimental doctor for 800 men, old Doc Cherry, he won it.

He was fit was he?

He was fit, hmm, good doctor too.

You mentioned manoeuvres, what kind of manoeuvres were you doing?

Oh taking up positions,

05:00 a lot of it was sort of on the surface, didn't look to be anything but I suppose more training for the officers than the men because they had to pick out a gun position where you could place guns, where they could have a good range of fire and yet be protected from enemy shell fire as much as possible. Where ammunition trucks could get into them

05:30 easily and where they could be brought out of danger quickly if it was necessary, a lot of that sort of thing. And then of course there was a lot of practice for the staff at each gun position where they had to survey the guns in so they knew exactly where they were so they could work out how to hit a target they couldn't see. It's all done

06:00 by -

Measurements and?

Yeah working out, so there was plenty of that sort of practice.

When did you actually become an ammunition driver, was it at this time?

No when we got to England, up till then we hadn't been given a job, a specific job. When we got to England I was put as a loader

06:30 on one of these imaginary guns, so there was 6 men to every gun, I think I was number 4. So I'd have to, number 5 would hand me the shell, I'd have to take the cap off the fuse and hand it onto number 3 to load that sort of thing. And also we had to dig holes, gun pit to put the gun in so that it's protected.

07:00 But you didn't have a gun to put there?

No, no we didn't have a gun to put there, and of course we had to dig slit trenches and all that sort of thing, oh.

What about rifles, was there a shortage of rifles?

No we eventually got a rifle each, yes .303s. As I say we left Australia with rifles but when we got to England, most of them were taken

07:30 to re-equip some of the infantry units. The convoy that was diverted to England consisted mainly of the 18th Brigade, which was 3 Battalions 9th, 10th and 12th, the 2/1st anti-tank, which was an anti-tank unit, 2/1st Machine gunners,

08:00 a lot of specialised units like mobile laundry's and postal units and all those sort of things and some reinforcement drafts. Well when they got to England and things were so bad and the German invasion was expected any time they formed another brigade from all these odd units and from the established units they took,

08:30 I think about 100 men from each so that 100 of our men were taken and sent to form these 3 new Battalions, which eventually became the 25th Brigade. So we had the 18th Brigade, we had the new Brigade the 25th Brigade and we had a New Zealand Brigade that came with us, that was in the convoy. So that in effect made a division, there's 3 Brigades in a division. The commanding

09:00 organisation was the 9th Division so we in effect we were the first 9th Division troops, even before the 9th Division had been formed in Australia, they had to call us something.

When we changed tapes before you were in the middle of describing a competition you had, a gun competition?

Oh yes.

Perhaps we could go over that again because we missed it?

This was at Larkhill

09:30 the competition shoot which was at the end of the course. The British units went first for some reason, I don't know why maybe they drew numbers or something, but they went first and then our turn came. I think the officer might have been George Killey, I can't remember really, he realised what, the British were doing everything by the book, they were

10:00 selecting their gun position, taking their guns in, surveying them in, going through all the procedure and then engaging the targets, which were just wooden canvas contraptions away in the distance. Our bloke saw what was happening and he also saw the terrain in Salisbury Plain is fairly flat but there are little ridges every now and again.

10:30 So instead of going through all this other procedure he rushed our guns up just behind the crest of one of those little ridges and opened fire point blank. Not a surveyed shoot an open sight shoot, so we knocked the targets out in about a tenth of the time the others did, so we won. I don't think the British approved of the way we did it but it was certainly effective.

11:00 **It would only be possible if there was no enemy artillery firing upon you?**

Oh yes, yes.

Which in a competition there wouldn't have been?

No, no, it would work depending on the conditions.

That's quite cheeky though?

Yeah.

I'm surprised that they let you get away with that one and win the comp?

Well we did what they asked us.

Yeah in your own

11:30 **Aussie interpretation?**

Yeah, I think it shocked some of the British officers a bit, their used to following the book.

What was the discipline like amongst the Aussies [Australians] with the British officers there?

Yes I don't think we had any troubles, you always have a certain amount of strife in any unit.

12:00 We of course had First War Lewis machine guns issued to us for anti-aircraft defence, because at the time German fighters were coming over and strafing, they strafed our camp a few times. Our gunners were alert and fired at them until one day some Royal Air Force decided they'd do a bit of low level practice strafing,

12:30 but they didn't tell us they were coming so we fired on them to. And they weren't happy about that at all and they complained and they wouldn't come anywhere near our camp after that to do their low flying exercises. As senior officer, now I've got to be careful here, a very senior officer in our regiment, the officers had a marquee which was the officers' mess and they'd had a few drinks one

13:00 night and they said, somebody said about this senior officer "Oh he wouldn't know how to fire a gun anyway" so he said, "I'll show him." So he ordered a gun in from the gun park, we had some First War guns by then, some old 18 pounders [field gun] and some 4.5 Howies [Howitzers], not enough for the regiment but just enough to train on. So he ordered one in loaded a blank and he fired it, so that he showed he could

13:30 fire the gun, the only thing was he blew a great hole in the marquee, air raid alarms rang for 20 miles around and we had a really irate report from the RAF [Royal Air Force]. This senior officer they got him out of the regiment, they sent him away on another job.

Doesn't sound like he

14:00 **was very good authority figure?**

Well he's quite a figure actually that's why I'm not mentioning any names. But he did know how to fire a gun, even if he did all the wrong things.

So what was his excuse that night, was he drunk or?

Oh I suppose they'd had a few, I don't know I wasn't there, we only heard the bang.

What was the buzz or rumours around the camp when you heard of what had happened?

14:30 Oh we just thought about what you'd expect I suppose.

Did you think he was a fool or, remember you haven't mentioned his name so?

No I know.

So you can be as open and as honest?

I wouldn't say he was a fool I'd say he was an old timer because naturally when you're trying to raise a volunteer army a lot of your officers come from high society because they have

15:00 status and what not, pull and so forth, but doesn't mean their good officers. In fact we had another one much later in the, during the war who was so inefficient that they actually manufactured a job for him and got rid of him. That's the thing that happens in the British army, if an officer makes a mess of anything they usually promote them and then give them a dead end job somewhere.

Put them

15:30 **behind a desk?**

Yeah, yeah exactly.

Can you describe the camp at Salisbury Plain?

I can show you a map of it.

I'd rather try and imagine it from a from a description that you can give me?

Yes it was a flat area surrounded by woods on two sides, elms and ashes and the British trees sort of thing.

16:00 A main road in front that ran from Tidworth to Shipton Bellinger which was another village a bit further down. And behind there was a sports ground where a British unit used to play sport there. We actually watched a soccer match there once, one team

16:30 was lead by a British officer who's a well-known film star, can't think of his name now [David Niven], anyway that doesn't matter really much. There was a mansion there, a very old house, quite a big one that Lord Nelson had given to Lady Hamilton way back in early 18th Century, Lady Hamilton was his girlfriend of course.

17:00 **Interesting history?**

Hmm.

You mentioned you were strafed by Germans what sort of planes were they?

ME-110s, twin-engine fighters.

What was the air raid drill when they would strafe the camp?

You duck in your slit trench as quick as you could, kept your head down and you left it to the 2 Lewis machine gunners we had to, because all over in seconds

17:30 you know you hear the plane coming you don't know whether it's one of theirs or one of yours and then there's a spate of bullets all over the place and their gone.

How regularly were you strafed?

Oh wasn't regularly at all, might have been a couple of times in 10 days and then nothing for a couple of weeks.

Do you recall your first air raid?

Yes

18:00 yes nobody was hit in our lot but there was some fellows hit in the new battalions, the new brigade I was just speaking about, some of those were hit yes.

Were there casualties or fatalities?

Casualties yes, I don't think there was anyone killed, wounded hmm. One of those new battalions got into a lot of strife to

18:30 a farmers pig mysteriously disappeared and I think they had pork chops for tea, it cost the battalion funds 50 pounds to replace the pig. The farmer went to the police.

Must have been a prize pig?

Yeah, or inflated value I guess.

What was the food like you were getting in the mess?

Yes quite good, a lot of potatoes

19:00 and a lot of what they said was New Zealand pig's liver, actually what it was I don't know but that was our staple diet, this particular meat whatever it was and potatoes. No shortage of it but there wasn't much variety. And if you went on leave and you wanted a cup of tea or something you seldom could buy

19:30 cakes, what you could buy were fish cakes, but seemed to rely on fish quite a lot for food. We got, after we'd been there for a while we got 36 hour leave to London.

Had London been bombed at that stage?

Yes it was bombed while we were there.

Tell me what happened?

We had 36 hours leave

20:00 we got out at Waterloo Station and there was a pub opposite and we thought we may as well book in there for the night, we were there for a night and we started to walk across, there was 3 or 4 of us and one bloke was Eddy McNally from South Australia. And a British bloke came up and said, "Oh Australians, I've got a nephew

20:30 lives in Australia. His name's Eddy McNally, he lives near Adelaide." And he's talking to him, what a multi million dollar coincidence, hey?

It's uncanny?

Yeah, yeah, the only connection was that he was Australian you see, fancy picking one like that.

One in a million chance?

You wouldn't believe it would you?

So did they have a beer together?

I don't know what happened we went on, we left them. My mate and I,

21:00 Gavin Slims, Stevo we went on and left them cause we usually split up into pairs. So we wandered around and had a look at St James Palace and the old curiosity shop and all those things, the Windmill Theatre and the Discovery. In case you don't know what the Discovery is it was a ship that Captain Scott used to go to the South Pole, built of timber and the sides were about that

21:30 thick timber, which certainly they needed because they got frozen in, the pressure of ice if had been thin it would have just crushed it. They eventually took it away, it was moored in the Thames as a tourist attraction but they took it up to Scotland when the heavy bombs started.

Sound like a remarkable ship?

Hmm tiny little ship to go to the South Pole in,

22:00 I wouldn't have got to Rottneest [Island] in it.

So you were actually caught in an air raid while you were on leave?

Yes there was an air raid that night and bombs came down all around the place, none near us. But we were up fairly early in the morning, naturally first bombing raid and hadn't gone far when we saw this smashed building and all

22:30 wrecked and there's some bodies in it too, we thought crikey, the home defence had been swamped and hadn't got time to get around so we clambered through all these broken timber and bricks and stuff to rescue these bodies, but they were shop dummies. So we rescued the first shop dummies, well actually we didn't we left them there,

23:00 and we slunk away very quietly. It was a bit of a let down. But I saw Messerschmitt fighter in the 7th floor, he'd flown into the building on the 7th floor and he was, his tail was sticking out the window. I saw a bus, passenger bus upside down on an air raid shelter, they built

23:30 concrete air raid shelters about 7 feet high with a, you've seen our bus stops, our concrete bus stops well imagine a much bigger one, they made air raid shelters like that only they had walls all around not just at the ends.

Were they above ground?

They were standing they weren't sunken in, they weren't dug in they were just above the surface and the bus had been blown and was upside down on top of this.

So

24:00 **lifted up in the air and landed on the roof?**

Yeah, hmm.

Must have been a large blast?

Yeah, oh blast is bad does a lot of damage.

What was the atmosphere like in the streets?

Yeah people sort of took it in their stride, I suppose they had a bit of practice before we got there. Nobody, everybody got into shelter as soon as they could, the tube railways were very popular

24:30 people got down there, especially when the heavy bombing started they got down there in the thousands. But that was after we'd left.

How long were you there at Salisbury?

We were there, we got there in June and we left in October, by then we were fully equipped, we'd got 25 pounders, we had all our equipment and what not.

Did you get some time to train with those?

We were well trained,

25:00 we had ammunition, so we were sent over on the east coast opposite France ready for the German invasion which was expected at any time. In fact the alarm did sound one night and we limbered up the guns and stood too and all equipment ready to go because we weren't the first lot, we were the counter attack force,

25:30 the Australians. The British were manning the beaches and what not and if the Germans had made a landing then we were to counter attack and push them back. But it was a false alarm so it never happened, but we were all ready to do that then.

So what kind of defences did you have set up?

Hmm?

What kind of defences did you have set up there?

Oh we didn't have any defences set up, no

26:00 we were mobile, ready to go where ever we were needed. At that time actually we were in barracks, the only time we were ever barracks, we were in barracks in Colchester, which is inland a bit from the beach.

Can you describe the barracks?

Yes they were double storey barracks consisting of a series of rooms, fairly long rooms

26:30 at the end of each one there was a little room where an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] would sleep, he would be in charge of the long section. We actually had sheets and pillows, the only time ever.

Sounds like relative luxury?

Yeah, I wasn't there very long really, my mate Stevo and I we got the job of

27:00 mess orderly's so we didn't do any training, we just helped in the cookhouse all the time.

What kind of food were you preparing?

They had something that was a real eye opener for me, I never even realised they existed we had potato peelers, instead of peeling potatoes like we did in our first camp this was a regular army barracks, you just upended them into a machine and the machine peeled all the potatoes, we thought

27:30 that was pretty good.

I bet you would have welcomed those?

Yeah. But being mess orderly's we didn't do guards, we didn't do training, we got out of all that sort of stuff. And we also had the opportunity to whiz off to surrounding towns, cause no one was checking on us, as long as we were there to help

28:00 serve and produce the meals they didn't worry about us.

Sounds like you enjoyed working in the mess?

Yes, oh I say it was a racket.

What were some of the blokes like that you worked with?

Oh there all right, all grizzle of course but that's the standard procedure everybody grizzles, complains.

Cooks and chefs can be pretty tough on?

Well they were our own cooks.

They weren't too tough on you?

28:30 No, no, they couldn't be we tell them what to do.

So you weren't there very long?

No we weren't at Colchester that long we had this 36 hour leave in June I think it was. In October they bought in 6 days leave at a certain period because an invasion can only be carried out when the weather's right

29:00 and the moon's right, there's only about 5 or 6 days in each month when it's actually invasion weather. Which they found out for D-day as well, they could only land at a certain time, cause the moon had to be right, you had to have a certain amount of light, not too much. The weather had to be right, you can't do it in the middle of a storm or anything, and the weather has to stay calm afterwards so you can bring in reinforcements

29:30 and supplies and all that sort of thing. So they worked it out that the Germans couldn't invade during this period and they gave us 6 days leave. So my mate Stevo and another fellow named Ray we all went together and we went to, you can go anywhere you like in England or Scotland in the 6 days, free pass. So we decided we'd go to Plymouth and we were the first Australian soldiers to visit Plymouth.

Why did you choose Plymouth?

30:00 Well it was a naval port, we were interested in naval matters, it was from where the settlers for America sailed way back in those days. And also prior to the war Australia had bought some flying boats from England and they'd sent Australian airmen over to collect them and they were there when war started so they stayed and they were stationed

30:30 in Plymouth, that was another reason is that Australians were stationed there.

So how did you enjoy visiting Plymouth?

We did we enjoyed, as I say we were the first Australians there and people just stood and stared at us and we could hear them saying, "Aussies!" and some were saying "Canadians, New Zealanders, Cowboys!" some of them didn't know what we were. A couple of lads, about 10 said, "Do you know Tom Micks?" I don't know if you know Tom Micks, you

31:00 probably don't, he's an early cowboy film star, we said, "Oh yeah we went to school with him."

What were the girls like in Plymouth, were they equally interesting?

You had to chase them away with your hands, as I say we were the first there, yeah so we spent 3 days there and then we went back to London for 3 days.

What kind of accommodation did you have?

We stayed at a private house,

31:30 I don't know how we finished up there but somebody suggested, somebody we met I think said, "Oh go down there they'll have beds for you."

Did you spend much time with the family that you were boarding with?

No none at all, no we were up and gone and came in probably midnight.

Spent the days roaming the streets lapping up all the attention?

Yeah, yeah and sight seeing.

32:00 **What did you do when leave was over?**

Well we went on leave from Tidworth and while we were on leave the regiment moved to Colchester so we went back to Colchester we never went back to Tidworth. So they were, they had already settled in when we went back so we went straight into the barracks and straight on as mess orderlies. So never did any training at all in

32:30 Colchester.

So you managed to avoid plenty of training?

Yeah oh well you've got to.

But also got the necessary training?

Oh yes we'd had the training at Tidworth. Also at Tidworth one day they called for volunteers to become

trumpeters, we thought this might be all right so I volunteered. We went for 3 days I think to a nearby

33:00 garrison town called Bulford to a British trumpeter instructor and I had about 3 half hour sessions of training to blow a trumpet. But then we went on our 36 hour leave so I never finished the course, but I did once blow a re-valley. For some reason this particular morning our regular trumpeter wasn't available so the

33:30 Battery Sergeant Major pulled me out of bed and said, "You've got to blow re-valley" so I did, it woke them anyway even if they couldn't understand what it was. So that was the only time I ever played the trumpet because then we moved to Colchester and it fell through, didn't do any more training.

So what was your next move?

From there we received

34:00 warning that we were going overseas again and our guns and equipment were taken away and sent to Newport in Wales for shipping and some of the blokes went with them, I didn't because I hadn't sort of got a regular position then. So with no guns we were put on anti parachute roles, we still had rifles of course. And

34:30 we had to form outposts and picket lines and so forth. The favourite one was a picket line stopping all busses, passenger busses going into Colchester, you'd stop the bus, get on the bus and everybody had to show their pass, cause everybody had to have a pass then and you'd have to examine the pass to see if it was genuine and all that. Some of the passes took quite a bit of checking

35:00 especially if the holders were female and young, yeah.

Had to give them a bit further examination did you?

Oh yes, yes had to make sure.

Memorise those addresses?

So that was the favourite anti-parachute job. And then of course we moved in the middle of the night, the army never moves any other time except in the middle of the night. We went by train up to Gourrock

35:30 and boarded ship to go back to the Middle East.

What was the train journey like?

Yeah bit crowded, never stopped anywhere, but when we got to Gourrock and they said, "That's your ship." It was the Empress of Canada again. Oh, which wasn't our favourite ship, still.

What was morale like before you realised that

36:00 **you were starting on the Empress of Canada again, were you looking forward to going overseas?**

I think it was sort of half and half, a lot of us would have liked to have stayed in England cause it was very nice there and we were doing all right, we were equipped and ready to repel any invasion and what not, and I think we would have given a good account of ourselves to. But you go where you're sent.

It must have come as a relief though that

36:30 **there was less threat of an invasion now?**

Oh yes it had almost sort of died away by then hmm. Well the British had re-armed by then, I think had the Germans landed they would have got a heck of a hiding really. They had their home guard, practically every Britisher would have fought somehow,

37:00 if they'd have thrown petrol bombs or something. And they'd built concrete anti-tank obstacles all over the place and, yeah I think the British would have given them, cause the British weren't beaten. When we got there in June 1940 they had hardly any equipment, their best troops had been thrown out of Dunkirk and were disorganised and not,

37:30 not reinforced, and they were in a heck of a state but nobody told them they were beaten, so they just kept going. If somebody had have said, "We're beaten," they would have chucked the towel in, but nobody did, certainly Churchill didn't, so they just kept going. And had the Germans landed I think they would have given them a heck of a hiding.

Which you would

38:00 **have been in the thick of?**

I've got a lot of admiration for the British, they would have certainly, although at that stage of course they didn't have much they just, they'd have died I think rather than give in, yeah.

And you would have been on that front fighting alongside them in your role?

- Oh yes. So we left Gourock in a convoy of 12 transports
- 38:30 and we had a fair escort and we ran into a storm as soon as we hit the Atlantic, the storm, really bad storm which the naval escort didn't mind a bit because it kept the German pocket battleships away who were at sea. And we finished up in Sierra Leone again. From there we went onto Durbin this time, not Cape Town and we were in Durbin for about 10 days
- 39:00 which was really, great place Durbin. And then we sailed again and finished up in the Suez Canal, we spent Christmas on ship in the Red Sea, the Red Sea's actually quite blue, it's called 'Red' but it's not. And we sailed through the Suez Canal, it's a bit funny being on a ship and seeing the shore going by alongside there and
- 39:30 alongside there. And we landed in Alexandria in the Mediterranean which is the British naval port full of war ships, lot of shipping and we disembarked onto Egyptian soil on the 1st of January 1941.
- What was your very first impression of Alexandria or Egypt?**
- They loaded, we unloaded,
- 40:00 got off the ship at the wharf straight into iron goods wagons, closed wagons, roof, sides and what not, all iron and I think they'd been carting coal in them. So we stood in those for hours while the train, we finished up at a place called Ikingi Maryut, which was about oh 60, 100 miles
- 40:30 out of Alexandria before we disembarked, so that was all we saw pitch dark, didn't see anything. And when we got to Ikingi it was just a flat barren country with tents, a pit dug and then a tent erected in the pit, their protection against bombing you see cause it was within range of the Italian
- 41:00 aerodromes.
- Was the climate quite different to?**
- Yes it was hot, but it was dry it wasn't bad we didn't mind the heat.
- Must have been a few degrees warmer than the UK [United Kingdom]?**
- Oh yes, yes, it was actually starting to get a bit cold in November in England, yeah, the winter was coming, we had an extra blanket
- 41:30 there, we normally had one blanket, but there we had two. So we were quite glad to be back with our own division in the Middle East and yeah.
- Just getting the wind up there so we'll pause before we ask you another question so we can change tapes.**

Tape 3

- 00:35 **Just in the break you were going to tell me about what the secret weapon was that somebody thought the Germans had?**
- Oh yes we, while we were in Tidworth we received an urgent warning to be wary of a thread like substance being dropped by German planes. So we couldn't really make
- 01:00 head or tail of this but it turned out to be a type of spider spawn that floated on air, it probably occurred at that time of year for the last 500 years in England noticed for the first time by some chair-born boffin or big wig, never seen that before, must be a secret weapon.
- And where was**
- 01:30 **it falling?**
- Round the country apparently in England.
- Just all around the country?**
- Yes.
- Oh that's interesting. You also mentioned that you received a really big welcome that you didn't mention before?**
- Oh yes now lets see yes the British people certainly welcomed us
- 02:00 and this particular chap we'll call him Jim he got a very special welcome from this lady. He was enjoying that welcome when the husband came home unexpectedly and Jim took off more or less, I don't know whether he had his boots on didn't have much on. But the husband in

02:30 chasing him raced through the kitchen and grabbed up the nearest thing and got in a couple of hits on Jim as he was disappearing. Now if you've ever been hit on your bare back with the sharp edge of a frying pan you'll know the number of stitches that he had to have to repair the damage.

So he had a big circle around his back?

Yeah.

Well that's something he certainly won't forget?

Yeah.

03:00 **Scared for the rest of his life?**

Yeah exactly, he get married he'll have trouble explaining that one.

You also mentioned something about a leave pass?

Oh yes when we were on our 36 hour London leave this British NCO, corporal or something pulled us up and said, "I want to see your passes"

03:30 this is never done in the Australian army other than military police. We thought oh well a bit odd okay "Let's see your pass first" okay he produced his pass and we looked at it, just sort of remember that. Anyway we showed him our passes and there was nothing on our passes all it said was 6th Battery, didn't say our regiment or where we were or anything. About, so we thought this

04:00 is a most unusual thing, we went around at an army headquarters in London and told them about this and they were quite interested. About a fortnight later a report came out in the papers they'd called 2 German spies in British uniform, now we don't know if there was any connection at all, whether it was just a coincidence or whether it might have been.

That just seemed a bit odd to you and you decided to?

Yeah

04:30 well that's something you just don't do. Anyhow he wouldn't have learnt much all he would have learnt was that there was a 6th Battery somewhere.

How strange?

Yes these odd things, yeah.

So going back to where you left on with Julian [interviewer] at Ikingi Mariut?

Yes we, life went along there -

Sounds like

05:00 **it was pretty grim though having tents in holes and?**

Yes it was pretty, very barren nothing to do. We were, I was driving a 30,000 weight truck then with all the gas, anti gas equipment on it. We'd been there about 2 days when we coped a khamsin, which is the dreaded desert dust

05:30 storm and it came through the camp and you couldn't see the door, it's that thick. The only way you could eat your meal was to get under a blanket and you had to keep some of the dust out and your cup you sort of peeled the top of it, which was sort of a dusty slimy skin and then drank what you could of the liquid underneath.

06:00 But being on guard was the worst thing in that because you couldn't see anything and of course the Arabs being used to it they would come into the camp and they'd pinch any and everything they could lay their hands on. And I was a bit lucky on my guard duty because I was just sort of wandering around not really knowing where I was and I bumped into this Arab and he had half a box of ammunition in his arms. But he didn't like a bayonet being

06:30 pricked in his tummy so he dropped it and shot off, I never saw him again but he never got the ammunition. But the dust was so thick. And when we left, orders came down, we'd just arrived there and they, Bardia had already fallen and they were going to attack Tobruk and they wanted more artillery there. So they sent for us but we never had enough transport for both batteries,

07:00 so they must have tossed a coin and 5 Battery won and they were going up the desert. But they were 6 men short so they took 6 from 6 Battery and I was one of them.

When you were in Ikingi Mariut were you just sitting around in the desert waiting?

Well we were training, physical training, marching not much else.

Was there anything about the desert that they were teaching you at this stage?

No, no. they didn't

07:30 know we only just got there.

How about supplies?

Yeah the food was plentiful no problem there, water I think we were restricted in the amount of water. Anyway I was one of the 6 selected so we set off for the front.

How far away is it just roughly from Ikingi

08:00 **Maroo to the front?**

Oh several hundred miles.

So it's quite a hike?

Yeah it took us 3 days I think, yeah 3 days. We got to Sidi Barrani the first night and that was the first time we'd seen where fighting had taken place, there was equipment lying around and smashed trucks, broken stuff, slit trenches and what not. But of

08:30 course everybody's looking for souvenirs, this was the first time we'd actually been on a battle field. But we very quickly decided that we wouldn't go looking for souvenirs because you walk in Italian trenches and a cloud of fleas would descend on you, Italian fleas of course, so we gave that away. Our second night we got to Fort Capuzzo which was the big frontier fort which the British

09:00 navy had been in with their 15-inch guns and knocked a few holes in it. So on the following or that night we took up position in the dark, we didn't know where we were, flat in the desert somewhere. This was the night before, no 2 nights before the attack. So we spent that night

09:30 carting ammunition up to the guns, cause you only carted up at night time because you were then in range of the Eyetie [Italian] guns.

So where would you shelter during the day if your only working at night?

Just lay beside our vehicles I think, you slept beside your vehicle or beside your gun because every night the sand would

10:00 blow and if you slept out in the open you put your blanket right over you and you'd be covered by sand in the morning. And they had, in the early days people had been run over because vehicles moving around think oh just another sand ridge and drive over it and there's bloke underneath it. So you slept near something, but you just slept on the ground in the open. And we were taking ammunition in, we had an old lieutenant,

10:30 his nickname was 'Scrooge'. He'd been a teacher or something. We took the first load of ammunition yeah that was okay, the second load we seemed to be going further and further and we couldn't, it's pitch dark and there's no lights of course and we couldn't find the gun position.

How would you know where the gun position was?

Well that's what it was we didn't know. Well this lieutenant's suppose to be leading us didn't know. Anyway we

11:00 eventually we heard voices but they weren't speaking our language, so we turned around very quietly and went back the way we'd come. We'd apparently gone through our forward posts because during the night there was a lot of reconnaissance undertaken and they were used to small vehicles going out taking raiding parties out or

11:30 reconnaissance parties and what not so they never took any notice of us. And the Italians must have been the same they were used to their mob going in and out, so we actually went into their lines, without knowing it and without them knowing it. We were the first in and the first out, not of the actual fort but only of their forward advance line.

Must of come as a bit of a shock though?

Well we didn't really know at the time what was going on, but we eventually found the

12:00 guns and unloaded the ammunition.

How much ammunition would you be unloading in an evening?

Well we had 3 tonne trucks and we could carry about 25 cases of ammunition each case had 4 shells in it, each shell was 25 pounds plus the cartridge of course, so that was the limit the load. So we probably did about 3 loads

12:30 cause we had to go a fair way back to get the ammunition from the dump.

So you'd do 3 trips in a night?

Hmm.

Was there enough ammunition?

Oh yes, plenty of ammunition.

What was some of the difficulties in getting the ammunition to its destination?

Finding your way around in the dark, because no lights, no lights at all and you were driving without

13:00 lights of course. No you had to be careful, and there were mine fields around to, if you run off an area where your not suppose to be you get blown up on a mine. And coming up there we also ran into another desert storm, another khamsin and we actually had to have somebody walking in front of the vehicle because we couldn't see beyond the radiator cap. You couldn't see

13:30 further than there, it was just a wall of sand. And interesting thing there to the driving sand on the metal vehicle built up a pretty big charge of static electricity and the first person to step off would cope the lot, so the drivers never stepped off first, always let someone else.

Would it be a pretty big jolt?

Yeah they did to, they'd really complain about it, said we

14:00 should have told them, somebody had to do it.

Did you have any protective eye wear to?

No, no.

Cause your eyes must have got pretty sore from?

Oh full of sand yeah, terrible which didn't help your vision at all. And then during the night the navy came in and shelled Tobruk and that was very noisy and then the air force came over and

14:30 bombed it, so we didn't get much sleep that night at all.

How far away were you when the battle actually broke out?

Oh we were about 2 miles from where they actually attacked. The Italian anti-aircraft fire some of it was quite spectacular, it was like coloured balloons slowly going up into the air. I don't know just what type of

15:00 anti-aircraft it was but it was really spectacular, you'd see these streams of coloured lights going up all around in front of you.

Was it loud?

Yeah everything was dead silent until about, I think it was about 5.30 or something and then 80 guns opened fire together, 88 guns opened fire together and they went on for about 2 hours,

15:30 so your ear drums, you couldn't hear anything. And then we had to move up and we went through, the Italians had dug big trenches, anti-tank trenches to stop tanks coming in, so they had to fill in one and you had to cross at this one point which was where there had been a road, only the road had been dug up so there was no real road there. And we went through there, there was

16:00 an Italian cruiser had been damaged and ran aground in Tobruk Harbour and it was shelling this spot all the time cause they knew just where it was. So you went through with shells landing all around. But we went through quite safely but much later in the night a vehicle going through exploded a land mine. What the Italians had done they'd put 1 land mine on the top

16:30 where the engineers had found it and removed it but then they buried another one about 2 feet further down and it wasn't until the number of vehicles had gone over and impacted the dirt down that it actually blew up. Which was quite a cunning move really.

did you have to be on the alert for booby traps?

Yeah, oh yes another little trick they had they were dropping imitation thermos

17:00 flasks, they looked just like a thermos flask, you pick one up and you haven't got a hand or an arm, they were booby trap. And then we got into Tobruk with our ammo [ammunition].

What could you see in front of you?

Nothing at all just dark. Got to a certain place and we stopped there and slept on the ground and

17:30 when we woke up in the morning there was bodies here and there. I saw my first dead Australian, I still remember his name he was an 18 year old named Harry Saw from Victoria. And there were lots - we'll skip over this lots of bits and pieces of bodies and things lying around. One

18:00 of our chaps who was a bushman from the Northam Territory a very well known bushman actually Ben Nicker, he found an Italian body with a pair of fancy boots, he said, "Oh I'm going to have those." So he

started to pull one off and the body came to life, the Eyetie was having a shaming dead, he was quite annoyed that he lost his boots to and he was carted away as a prisoner. Oh and that's what happened to

18:30 a long column of Italian prisoners being marched past, the Italians who were still further in the fortresses of Tobruk evidently saw them and shelled them, their own people they didn't realise. So there were not only bits of Australians lying around there were bits of Italians lying around to.

Did that cause a problem with flies?

19:00 I suppose I don't recollect seeing any flies.

I'm just thinking smell and?

Maybe there wasn't enough moisture around for flies I don't know, now that you mention it I don't think I saw any flies.

What did the men do in order to get rid of all these bodies and pieces?

Oh well they had burial details, they collected the identity tags

19:30 and marked them and all that sort of thing, you just left it, you went on, you didn't stop for that, not in the desert anyway.

Was it around about then that you realised this is really serious stuff?

Oh yes, yeah, yeah there was, we thought when we started through we thought gee there

20:00 must have a lot of bees around here there's bees everywhere, but they weren't bees they were bullets, sounded like bees zipping past you but they were bullets. Got a few hit the truck but didn't do any damage. But I used to keep bees and I thought god bees here, wrong sort of bees.

20:30 **How difficult was it to get through that area when you're transporting ammunition?**

Well you went as quick as you could of course, being an ammunition truck I only ever really saw one hit, and all it was there was a big hole and there was a few bits of black metal and I did see a hand

21:00 of the driver, nothing else, just gone, when you get a load of ammunition blow up it wipes out the lot. So a lot of people didn't want to be ammunition drivers but another mate of mine George we thought, there were 2 ammunition trucks to each battery, we thought now if we take this job we don't do any duties, we

21:30 don't do any guard duties, we don't do cookhouse duties any of those things, so we decided we'd do it and we did, never did any duties, made up for it.

But still you seemed to be in a more dangerous position than other people?

Yeah the first man we had killed was an ammunition driver, he wasn't hit but a shell burst alongside and the blast killed him.

22:00 **Did you ever really worry for your own safety being in that position?**

No you get apathetic, you think oh well if your hit if you're not your not, you just don't worry in the end, if you worry you go bats.

Was there much of that going around, a lot of men not being able to handle the pressure?

I don't recollect seeing any in the desert, not in the desert and not in Greece

22:30 and Crete because we didn't see enough people, but certainly there was some cases in New Guinea.

Sure?

Which I'll mention one case later on when we get to New Guinea.

Okay. With the medical supplies was that available, how far away were you from medical

23:00 **supplies if you got injured?**

I don't know. You had a bandage, every soldier carried a bandage first aid, which was a fair size bandage which you could slap on with a couple of straps to strap around, that was all that we had. Each unit had their first aid men, I think we had 2, how much training they had I don't know

23:30 and what equipment they had would be very little. But then of course we had a regimental aid post but that would have been anywhere, I wouldn't have known where it was a quarter of the time, somewhere around.

So what happened after Tobruk?

Well we had prisoners by the thousands and you'd bring them to an area

24:00 and they'd drop their rifles and their machine guns and what not. So if you can imagine an area from the street down there to the end of the street up there and a couple of hundred yards wide, just guns, just dumped guns, there must have been thousands and thousands of them. Well they did later on ship a lot across to Greece to the Greeks who weren't well armed

24:30 and whatnot. And the Arabs used to come in with their camels when there was no fighting and load up the camels with rifles and clear off. Oh the Arabs were very, they'd come in selling you chocolates, they'd sell you a date slice too, and I wouldn't advise eating the date slices. Instead of dates they had cockroaches in them,

25:00 and they ate them. You could tell, there was this little bit of doughy stuff and if it had little black things sticking out of it you didn't eat that one because that was a cockroach inside and it was it's legs sticking out. And that's genuine, that's real.

Sound revolting?

Yeah and they'd offer you a scorpion and they'd hold it by the stingy tail

25:30 and they'd bite the head off, here you can have the rest.

You don't look very impressed?

No I didn't try any of those. And little sand snakes, I don't think they were venomous, little sand snakes, wouldn't be more than a foot long. We had one chap he'd been a clown in a circus and he used to carry one in his pocket and if he met someone he'd have this little snake circled up in his hand and

26:00 he'd shake hands with ya. I remember one occasion you naturally dig your slit trench at every position and these blokes had got a sand snake and a scorpion and put it in the bottom of their slit trench and were trying to make them fight, they didn't want to fight but the blokes wanted to make them. But over came a couple of planes strafing so they jumped in and joined them,

26:30 they didn't bother about them then. Yeah well we were there at a place called Fort Palestrino for a day or so and then we were ordered to go out and support a force that was attacking and outpost out in the desert called Mekili. So we started out there and you would have thought there was a major,

27:00 you've ever seen a major Australian bushfire? You seen the smoke that covers the sky like this, we thought crikey there much be bush out there, big fire, but it wasn't it was sand, it was a sand storm coming.

Gee?

Thick and heavy but we didn't have to go because the Italians withdrew so we continued around the coast. We got to a place called Derna where our own WA [Western Australia] battalion

27:30 2/11th was mainly involved in capturing, we were supporting them. And the Eyteties were retreating quite rapidly but we couldn't keep up with them, we didn't have enough transport. So they decided that as 5 Battery wasn't a full regiment, only 1 Battery they would leave them there, they would take all their vehicles and move Infantry in them. So we unloaded

28:00 all the ammunition and we picked up about 20 infantry men and we joined the pursuit and we finished up in the front. There were 2 utes with the Bren gun mounted in the back, went in front, 2 blokes in each and then I was next with 20 Infantry man and there was another one of our fellows Wiley Nelson behind me with another 20, then there was half a mile back to the main mob, because we were the advance.

28:30 We were going, we were out of the desert then we were in what they called the Jebal Achtor, which translates into 'the Green Corner' of Libya where there was actually trees and, there were actually Italian farmers, quite a few thousand of them, white houses, kids, stock, cows, quite civilised, we were out of the desert. So

29:00 were following this retreating Italian army, when we come to a corner it's downhill we switch off the vehicles so there's no noise and we just coast down and we come around the corner and here's a broken down Italian army lorry and there's a farmer there with an axe smashing up the engine. So we fired a shot over his head, he left the axe in mid air and, he must have covered 20 feet in his first jump I think. And then

29:30 the axe fell down after he'd gone, which was - no a bit further on, a few miles further on 2 armoured cars of the 11th Queen's Own Hussars took the lead and about 2 miles further on they ran into an ambush and both cars were knocked out, the crews killed, and that would have been us if they hadn't taken the lead. The fortunes of war, you just never know.

30:00 And then we got to the edge, we left this fourth hole section, we came back to the desert and there was a big escarpment, 600 feet down onto the flat desert and the Italians had blown the road so we couldn't drive down. So the engineers sort of smoothed out a sort of a passage and we tied ropes on the back of the vehicles and held it, about 30 or 40

30:30 chaps hanging onto it and we slid the vehicles down, and guns, just slid them down. You couldn't get back of course but hopefully the Italians were going to keep retreating, which they did. So we got into the biggest town there, a town called Barce and we were able to make a few captures ourselves, a few cases of tin cherry's, condensed milk and stuff.

Where did you

31:00 **find these?**

In the army stores because no authorities had got there yet, we were right in the front you see so we helped ourselves before anyone else arrived. So we stocked up, lasted us most of the time we were in the desert.

You were living off cherries in the desert?

And tin milk, yeah, they weren't for the Italian troops they were for the Italian officers. The

31:30 Italian officers even had a special cigarette for them which was different to what there was for the troops, our troops wouldn't smoke the ones that were issued to the Italian troops, they smoked the ones that were issued to the Italian officers, cause apparently, I never smoked, they were a bit better. But the others they said was only made of camel dung they reckon.

So the name of this little town is

32:00 **called?**

Barce b-a-r-c-e pronounced Barce

Barce, just like the chocolate. So what were you doing when you were in this town, was it?

Oh we were only there for a few hours and then we continued on the pursuit, they'd blown, the Italians had blown up the ammunition dumps there so there was no ammunition available. Because by then we had a few captured Italian weapons as well, like machine guns and things that we were using ourselves.

32:30 **And what were they like their kind of guns?**

Yeah they were quite good, because at that time we didn't have any Bren guns of our own because for some reason or other we never got an issue of them, I think they were in short supply in the Middle East.

So were you actually looking through these towns for bits of ammunition?

We had limited opportunity yeah. Cause normally

33:00 when you got into a town and you found it was clear you would stop to see if there were any headquarters there, anything that would help you in further advancing, maps that sort of thing. Maybe orders that had been dropped or abandoned or something when they were leaving in a hurry, you pick up whatever information you can

33:30 especially about the conditions onto the next town and so forth.

So where were you heading to?

So we continued on we were heading for Benghazi, which was the capital of the Italian area. We ran into another ambush and there was a couple of blokes killed.

Can you describe the ambush?

Yes we came and we found where the road had been disturbed and obviously

34:00 it had been mined so the engineers were trying to get out, dig out the mines so we could continue. But the enemy had set up some guns further back, so they shelled the place a bit but their aim wasn't very good. But one of our despatch, or 2 blokes on a motorbike, despatch riders had been given some orders to take back

34:30 and they, instead of turning around on the track where we'd already driven they swung off the side and ran over a mine that hadn't been cleared, they were both killed. So that's one thing you learnt to do, not get off a track cause there could be land mines anywhere. So we continued on and we were overtaking Italians, a lot of them

35:00 were on foot of course and we'd just take their, if they had machine guns or revolvers we'd throw them in our truck, their rifles we would just smash on rocks, bash it across a rock and smash it and just left them there to be picked up by the troops behind because we couldn't stop you see.

Their quite fragile the guns?

Well you bash them on a rock, you break the stock off or you bend the trigger

35:30 or something, make them, you can't use them. No you couldn't break the barrel they were solid steel.

So was there any threat that these Italians would just ping you off once you were driving along?

No they weren't, they weren't putting up a defence expect as set places, all these odds and sods that they'd left behind, never had enough transport before were just walking trying to get away,

36:00 they never offered any resistance. Well they really weren't in a position to do so.

They just wanted to get away?

Yeah. And we got to Benghazi and there was no resistance there either, they'd fled. But we didn't stop in Benghazi we continued on, the Italians were then fleeing around into Tripolitania,

36:30 towards Tripoli which was also Italian territory. But the British 7th Armoured Division which had been in the desert all the time were quite desert wise, they had made a surprise and very daring cut around the desert and come in behind the Italians and blocked them, so there was quite a scrap there for while, lot of tanks knocked out.

37:00 Until the Eyeties surrendered and just about wiped out an army, several divisions.

Were you supplying ammunition to them when that scarp was happening?

No we never had our guns then, we were with the infantry, we'd left the guns behind, we were transporting infantry.

Right okay?

But the armoured they had their tanks they were using them as artillery as well. And of course an armoured division

37:30 has motorised infantry with it. The Italians fought for a while, fought quite well for a while until a lot of their tanks were knocked out and then they surrendered. So there were trucks and tanks and small vehicles and motorbikes and things, acres of them.

Sounds like just a mess everywhere?

Yeah, hmm. So we continued straight, we, after they'd surrendered we went straight on

38:00 for about another 100 miles until we ran out of reach of our support and supplies and had to stop. And our guns came up and we were at a place called Mersa Brega for a while and that was when the Germans first came in, they had landed in Tripoli and were sending their Africa forces up to the front.

How are you finding out all this information at the time?

Well at the time we didn't really know what you were doing, most of the time they never told you anything, why. And I'll make an observation here, I don't think any side from what I saw ever wins a war, the other side loses it, because their more disorganised,

39:00 more ill informed or unsupported or something than we were, and how that could be I don't know because we were disorganised enough. So we were there for a few weeks and we fired a few shots, exchanged a few shots with the Germans but no attacks. And we were strafed a few

39:30 time by their -

So you had to dig in trenches?

Yeah, we were, had a few wounded but not many, because we were being called back to Egypt to go to Greece. That was the 6th Division, the one that had been in the desert all the time and we were the other 3rd of it that had been in England. We had the most experience so we were going to Greece, some of the 7th Division

40:00 the 2nd Australian Division was coming up to take over. But they, something, for some reason they were kept, they came a certain way and they were stopped and then the 9th Division that had only just been formed came up and took over. So they were straight into it without, I don't know how much training they'd had, I think they'd been in Palestine training a bit.

40:30 But they were the ones that eventually got shut up in Tobruk when the Germans advanced and we'd gone, we were in Greece by then. So we did the long trip back to Ikingi, joined up with the other battery.

Were you happy to get out of the desert?

Oh we didn't have any idea then we thought we was just coming back to join the others and then come back up to the desert.

Oh?

Because they never told us anything

41:00 about going to Greece, they don't tell you things like that. They gave us 36 hours leave in Alexandria and the highlight of that I had 2 hot baths, I had no bath for 6 weeks and they were good.

So you managed to squeeze 2 into 36 hours?

Yeah. And then the leave was over we were back in camp and we were told to pack

41:30 up we were off. We were the advance guard again, we were, took the vehicles and guns. We loaded onto a Norwegian freighter, the Brattdol in Alexandria, 4 ships and we headed off for Greece.

What were your uniforms like by this stage after you'd been in the desert?

Oh well we were, quite a bit of the time in the desert our uniform was boots, shorts and a hat,

42:00 nothing else -

Tape 4

00:31 **What else did you get up to on leave whilst in Alexandria?**

Yeah well we sailed off 4 ships.

There's nothing else worth mentioning about the leave you took, you mentioned you had a couple of baths?

Baths yes -

Did you go anywhere for a beer or did you meet any young ladies?

01:00 No, no young ladies.

Did you eat out?

Yes I guess we did I don't remember. One thing I never mentioned about the desert in Tobruk of course we captured a number of headquarters and we finished up with thousands

01:30 and thousands of lira, the Italian money but as far as we knew it wasn't worth anything we were using it to light the fire, to clean weapons, even as toilet paper. When we got back to Egypt we found it was good money in Egypt cause Egypt wasn't at war. The British were in Egypt they were at war but the Egyptian government itself wasn't at war, so it was good money there

02:00 and we'd burnt it, or used it, thousands of it.

I bet you were kicking yourselves?

Yeah, yeah. Anyway we sailed off on this convoy of 4 ships and 2 destroyers, we were attacked by Italian torpedo bombers on the way but they never did any good. And we got about 2/3 of the way across the Mediterranean to Greece when all of a sudden, as dusk

02:30 fell as it got dark the convoy turned around and headed back to Alex, Alexandria, we call Alexandria Alex for short. And we wondered what the heck was going on, we had no idea nobody told us anything. In the morning when we were about a 1/3 of the way back again, back towards Egypt they turned us around and were heading back to Greece again. And the reason for it all was these torpedo bombers that had attacked us had reported back to

03:00 Italian headquarters that there was a convoy heading for Greece. They sent the Italian fleet out to sink us, but the British navy woke up to this, they turned our convoy back towards Egypt and they took our place, the British fleet, and that was the Battle of Mattapan, I don't know if you've heard of it or not, and the Italians got a heck of a hiding, they lost 2 heavy cruisers and several destroyers and a lot damaged,

03:30 they didn't come out to fight again, not against the British fleet. And the British never had any, never lost any ships.

That was a nice twist of fate?

Yeah, so instead of finding a more or less undefended convoy they found the British battle fleet there.

Can you describe the attack from the torpedo bombers?

They didn't really make a determined attack, they

04:00 came in within range and then they, instead of running in and dropping their torpedos they sort of circled around the outside a bit and the destroyers were firing at them, cause we only had rifles, we couldn't do much good. But the destroyers never hit any of them but they were doing enough to frighten them and they circled around a few times and then

04:30 they dropped their torpedos and shot off. Of course their torpedos never went anywhere, they weren't like Germans they didn't come in and make a proper attack.

So you returned to - ?

So we continued on our voyage to Greece and we berthed in Piraeus, the port of Athens. Lovely green country, very mountainous, everything nice and green, nice big port town

05:00 there, we were unloaded there, unloaded using the ships and own derricks. And we moved into a camp, a place called Halaron, about halfway between the port city and Athens itself, it's a bit like Fremantle in Perth only a bit further apart, Athens would be Perth and Piraeus the port would have been a bit further away than

05:30 Fremantle. And of course as we were the advance party, the main body of the troops hadn't arrived yet they were coming on a troop transport, we had the guns and vehicles. So we had to get them camouflaged from a sandy colour to blotchy grey and green to match the Greek countryside. So we had that done and then we had leave into Athens.

That sounds like it would have been quite a big task?

Oh they had spray guns,

06:00 they had plenty of equipment to do it, yeah they did it quite quickly, it wasn't hand painted by any means.

And was there a special unit to do that or did you have to get your hands dirty?

I don't know how it was organised but it certainly was organised.

How many vehicles and pieces of artillery did you have on you?

Well we had 12 guns, no we had 24 guns and we would have had 60 vehicles anyway. Sigs [signals],

06:30 utes and reconnaissance vehicles, survey vehicles, all sorts of support vehicles, ammunition trucks. Each battery had a Bren carrier, you know the small armoured vehicle without any top on it, all open, you've seen those?

07:00 Yeah had quite a lot of vehicles and then there would have been half a dozen motorbikes probably, sergeant majors usually had a motorbike to get around, cause it's a mobile unit.

So everyone had to be mobile?

Hmm, yeah. You don't walk in artillery.

That's a good thing?

Yeah. So we went into Athens and yeah people were pleased to see us,

07:30 great place Athens, all a lot of pavement cafes, tables on the pavement. If you've been down to Fremantle of a Sunday you'll know roughly the sort of thing.

It's taken a while for that culture to reach Western Australia?

Yeah, yeah. Lots of offers of strange drinks, uzo and risoti, oh I forget all the names of them, all pretty potent anyway.

Did you sample them?

08:00 Some of them, they didn't taste all that good they tasted a bit turpentine some of them. Arak was pretty potent.

Did any of the lads get onto the grog?

No, oh no not to excess anyway, we all had a bit. But course we couldn't talk very much cause strange language. My mate and I Stevo we were lucky we found 2 girls that had worked in

08:30 England and could speak English, so they showed us around for a while until it was dusk and then that was time for good Greek girls to be home. So we caught a taxi back to our camp and the taxi driver had worked in America and he had an American twang so he showed us around a bit and eventually took us back to camp.

So did you visit a few of the tourist sites?

Hey?

Did you visit a few tourist sites there?

No, oh we went up on the

09:00 Acropolis and looked at the Pantheon and the ruins there and what not. Magnificent ruins, huge

buildings all pillars and things, very fancy.

What impression did that make on you?

Well I had seen illustrations of it before, never thought I'd ever see them of course but, yeah quite impressive and it overlooks the town

09:30 it's higher than Kings Park. Very impressive really, think of all the history that's gone there. Athens itself is quite a nice place, bit old of course, narrow streets and that sort of thing, a lot of the buildings are old, grey, probably hundreds of years old. People very friendly.

10:00 Traffic wasn't all that good, but what was noticeable there were no young men because they were up in the Greek mountains fighting the Italians. Cause Greece and Italy were at war then, Germany hadn't come in yet, they were just massed on the boarder waiting to come over, the Germans. So when the main body of the regiment arrived we headed off for the frontier,

10:30 because being mobile we could go. As we drove through the suburbs of Athens people threw roses and offered us drinks, waved and what not.

Must have been good for morale?

It was good for morale, it just made your realise what the Greeks had been through. Pretty tough, didn't have too good a lifestyle to begin with I don't think, not a very rich country.

11:00 So we headed off and at one place we crossed a river and drove down and then camped on the bank there for a while, overnight and there was a village on the opposite side, and that was out of bounds, of course that was an invitation. So half a dozen of us poked up and down the river until we found a ford we could go across. We waded across and had a look at the village,

11:30 came back, continued on up Greece, as we got half way up Greece we came across bombed towns, the Italians had bombed them. One of their biggest towns Lorica had also been hit by an earthquake so there was quite a lot of wreckage there, as well as the bombing wreckage, we spent some time there later on. And we eventually got up to the Piera Mountains,

12:00 which form part of the big mountain range there, and we stopped there overnight at a little village and we got an issue of Chinese beer. What Chinese beer was doing there I don't know but it was very nice. And we got orders in the middle of the night to advance up to the front so we headed off on a narrow road, just one vehicle width bituman. And we hadn't gone too far and

12:30 we ran into refugees coming south, away from the fighting, where the Greeks had been fighting all the time and now the Germans were massed there, waiting to come over the boarder at any moment. So that made driving a bit hairy, dodging pedestrians, refugees on the road and what not.

Were you anxious about what lay ahead?

No we didn't really know, we knew

13:00 we were going to run up against the Germans but we didn't know, the country was pretty rugged and we thought this is much better than the desert, at least some chance of making defences here. And we thought that we were having plenty of support, we knew the, our division and the New Zealand Division, that's 2 divisions and we knew there was British there, we didn't know how many and we knew that the Greeks were there,

13:30 and they had about 5 Divisions. But they were just almost thread bear then, they'd been fighting the Italians for so long that they weren't very well equipped and they weren't very well equipped to start off with, their artillery was pulled by horses and it was World War I artillery. The donkeys was their main form of transport.

What was their reaction to your arrival?

14:00 Oh yeah they were happy to see us, very happy to see us.

How did they greet you?

Oh we couldn't talk, it was hand signs or they would give us, try and give us a bit of fruit or something, probably all they had because they had very little. No it was more I suppose body language than anything.

14:30 So we took off, eventually got to where our gun positions were, behind a bit of crest, and it was the frontier. 6 Battery were okay, they were on good solid land but 5 Battery didn't draw very well and we were on a low slushy land. We dug gun pits and put up our camouflage over the top of course and were pretty good camouflaging

15:00 by then, the German planes couldn't pick us up, they couldn't pick up the guns because of the camouflage overhead.

What kind of camouflage did you use?

Netting with streamers attached to it, coloured brown and green, the camouflage was pretty good the Germans aircraft never picked us up.

Was there any kind of restriction on action so that you wouldn't draw any attention to your positions from the sky, apart from using the camouflage

15:30 **netting?**

Oh no fires or anything of course, no lights. We got there in darkness, we dug in darkness and I'm a bit hazy whether we opened fire that night or whether we opened fire the following night, cause we were carting ammo all the time so didn't make much difference when it was.

Where were you carting the ammo to and

16:00 **from?**

We were carting it from a place called Servia which was the next range of mountains back, 40 or 50 miles something like that, on this narrow road which was congested with vehicles of several, of the Division moving up.

It's a fair way in the rear to

16:30 **have the ammunition dump?**

Well you've got to have it a fair way in the rear because of bombing and shelling, you can't have an ammunition dump in danger or you'd lose all your ammo. They did establish a dump half way between, not a very big dump but the Army Service Corps would have bought that ammunition up. Anyway when the attack

17:00 developed we were about a fortnight then from the desert, overcame the clouds it was snowing, we had no more clothing just the same clothing, we had our uniforms on you know the green, grey uniform they have, we didn't have our shorts on. But the snow was, our feet froze and we hadn't had any sleep for about 3 nights

17:30 except just cat naps because we, you cart all night and we were carting all day cause the Germans hadn't attacked then.

Can you just describe the?

The ground was covered in snow, slush, it wasn't solid or anything it was just all mucky slush, I think the proper name for it, icicles

18:00 dripped off the bow of the guns, if you, your eyebrows had snow on them, sort of frozen on your eyebrows, it was cold.

How did you cope in those?

Well the one and only rum issue I can recall in my army life was issued then.

18:30 Presumably they have the rum on hand always but they made an issue of rum and that made a lot of difference, it warmed people up, that's pretty powerful stuff that rum. And half a cup of that and you felt much better, quite warm.

So how regularly were you given half a cup of rum?

That was the only time we had it, only time it was issued.

That one issue?

Hmm.

Well that wasn't going to last for very long?

No but it lasted that night which was when it was needed.

19:00 **Did it only snow for that one evening?**

Oh no it snowed I suppose 36 hours or something like that and snow was, it got quite deep in some places. I have read reports, people have written books and what not where it was waste deep, but certainly not in our area, it might have been 3 or 4 inches deep that's all.

When did the firing open?

We opened fire that night

19:30 on the, the Germans advanced over the frontier and this is another coincident to, there were only several roads, weren't a lot of roads so they advanced down this main road which came from Monastir coming through to where we were called, a place called Vivi and the big town was called Florina. The German tanks advanced down this road, the tanks first, they had some motorbikes

20:00 in front and then the tanks. So 6 Battery, oh by the way I was, went over to 5 Battery to make up the numbers to go over to the desert and I never went back to 6, some of them did but I stayed in 5, I thought this will suit me 5 Battery and I stayed there. So 6 Battery were the first to open fire and their first shell

20:30 believe it or not hit a tank, hit the leading German tank.

Bullseye?

Yeah I mean that's almost a miracle, but there you are it was good shooting.

What kind of a response did that get from the troops?

Well of course only the ones in the EPIP [English Pattern Indian Product] on top of the crest could see that, we behind the crest couldn't see it so we didn't know

21:00 until afterwards. But it only stopped the Germans temporarily, they then advanced around the sides, not only the road but up each side as well. They fired a lot of shots there but half of our defence hadn't reached the front. When we were there the guns were dug in the infantry were still walking up,

21:30 because they had to walk most of the way, they came by train as far as they could and then they had to walk the rest. So they hadn't reached their positions before the attack started, so it wasn't very long before they were pushed back, because the Germans were mounting with tanks and guns and infantry and aircraft, and we had no aircraft, and we had very few tanks. So it was a foregone conclusion

22:00 before it even started really. So it wasn't long before we were being pushed back. We had Greeks out on the right of us and British out on the left of us. The Greeks were being forced back and they actually became mixed up with us, it was dark and there's fire coming from everywhere it was hard to tell who was an enemy

22:30 and who wasn't, cause the Greeks had different uniforms to us and a glimpse in the dark you could mistake them for a German quite easily. So things were a bit mixed up there.

Sounds chaotic?

Yeah absolutely. So we had to withdraw the guns back to another position and 5 Battery were ordered to withdraw first. Okay but the snow and the slush and what not,

23:00 they couldn't get 2 guns out, they were just that deeply bogged they couldn't get them out, they had to blow them up and leave them there. Anyway they got out the other 10 guns and opened fire while 6 Battery withdrew. And we couldn't hold them, the British were being forced back as well as our left flank, the Australians were forced back as well so we had to withdraw back to this next line

23:30 of ranges. So we had to drive at night without lights on a snow covered road not knowing where the edge of the road was, cause you couldn't see it was all snow and all you could do was follow the tracks of the vehicle that had gone in front. And that was pretty hairy, our eyes were still too from driving all the time at night. But we got back

24:00 eventually, got back, got the guns in and then we unloaded and we had to go back to this half way dump and see what ammunition we could get. And the rear guard had come back by then, so there was nothing between us and the Germans, the advance guard. So we raced up to this dump and we got there before the Germans did and we loaded the ammunition, 15 tonnes of it

24:30 in about 10 minutes, flat out you can imagine. And when we put charges on the rest of it to blow it up when we withdrew and we got back before the German advance guard reached there.

So you would have been in a pretty exposed position?

Oh yeah absolutely, we'd have been gone if they'd got there in time, but they were probably having trouble with the snow covered road to you see and they were probably thinking oh there might be mines here,

25:00 don't think we had time to lay mines, but they didn't know that. So we got the ammunition back okay.

How venerable did you feel?

Very venerable actually, cause we were on our own we knew our rear guard had gone, we left them to come out again so see if we could rescue this ammunition, yes it was a bit exciting there for a while.

25:30 But your too busy so you haven't got time to dwell on it and your too occupied trying to keep to the road when your driving, and while were loading the ammunition were just seeing how fast we could load it. Throwing 100 pound containers of shells around.

How stable were the bombs, could they explode?

No the shells are pretty stable until the fuses are fitted.

26:00 **So what was morale like after having to make the retreat?**

Oh it, the morale was good all the time, we knew that, well we thought that given an even go we could beat them, but we never got the even go. We had no air support, British air support was cleaned

26:30 out after the first day I would say of the German, once the Germans crossed the frontier, cause they sent their planes over in hundred at a time, they'd send their dive bombers, 100 stokers at a time. And we had nothing, what could you do, we had no fighters, no opposition at all to them.

And your morale was okay?

It's not very morale building when you've got a stoker coming down

27:00 and they fit them with screamers too, fit the plane with screamers so that the air as there diving the air rushing through these screamers makes a heck of a banshee howling. If you've hadn't experience before it would frighten 6 months growth out of ya, but we had experienced it before so. But it's not very pleasant I can tell ya.

So what position did you

27:30 **retreat to?**

Back to Servia, I think it was the Piera Mountain range there, somewhere near Mount Olympus, yeah I think it was Mount Olympus, get a bit hazy now. And we held them, we could of held them there because we were in quite a good position with the river in front of us, we blew the bridge, as soon

28:00 as we crossed over with the ammunition they blew the bridge up, most of it fell into the river, not all of it the Germans were able to scramble across, but they couldn't bring vehicles across until they fixed it, but their engineers are pretty good, it didn't take them long to fix it. But they, we were all right, but each side of us they were outflanking us, they were coming around behind us so we had to withdraw, we had to leave that good position and

28:30 withdraw. And we withdrew to a place called Elasson and this was a fairly, the road ran through a range of hills, quite hilly each side with just the road through the middle. And we put, we'd lost 2 more guns then, withdrawing from this position

29:00 we had to withdraw over mountain tracks because the road had been cut, they were shelling the road anyway. So we had to withdraw over these mountain tracks so somebody walked in front of each vehicle with a white singlet or something over their shoulder and you followed them, they picked the track cause you couldn't see. And you had to be very careful because around the sides of mountains the track actually sloped out a bit

29:30 and being snow and whatnot and wet, miserable, it didn't take much and you'd slide right off the road down the side of the mountain. And a gunman limber did slide over, not the tractor, the tractor stayed on the road but the limber is a small 2 wheel vehicle that carries ammunition, which hooks on the back of the gun tractor and then the gun hooks on the back of the limber, so you've got a sort of a 3 vehicle then.

30:00 The gunman's limber slide over but not the tractor, so we couldn't get it back, we had to unhook it and let it crash down the mountain, so we lost a gun there as well.

Sounds strenuous?

Hmm. But we didn't loose any vehicles fortunately, everyone drove very very carefully and kept as close to the mountain as you could. So we took up to this position with 10 guns each side of the road and

30:30 we were there, we carted ammunition, there was another dump a New Zealand dump this time we carted from. We carted ammunition all day, our first man killed as a ammo driver as I told you. Because you had to be out in the open you see, you couldn't take cover, and if you had to bring the ammunition up urgently and in day time you were a sitting target, and that wasn't too enthralling.

31:00 However we got plenty of ammunition up and the Germans were advancing down this narrow road but we had 20 guns aimed on it and we also had 4 British 60 pounders, which is a much bigger gun, a 60 pound shell as against a 25 pound shell, they were further back behind us. So they let the tanks mass up ready

31:30 for an attack and then they opened fire on them. And they held them back all day, 2 German armoured divisions, they held them back in time to allow the flanks to fall back, because the front went right across Greece, Greece fortunately is not a very wide country, if you've seen a map of it you'll know what it's like. So we held them up there -

How many

32:00 **loads of ammunition would you have been carting on that instance?**

They estimate, I don't know I lost count, they estimate they fired, our guns fired between 7 and 10 thousand shells that day. In fact the guns got so hot that the paint peeled off, off the barrels and what

they had to do they, a battery is divided into 3 troops and each troops has 4 guns, they had to put 1 gun out of action in each

32:30 troop to cool off, and then when it cooled a bit they put the next one out of action, let that cool off a bit, because they got so hot. But they stopped that armoured division getting through, in fact I believe, I don't know really, I believe that armoured division was so badly damaged that it was withdrawn from the advance and they sent another one to take it's place, the Germans.

Were you

33:00 **receiving any return fire?**

Yes we, 3 of the guns were hit, 2 shells failed to explode, German ammunition wasn't all that reliable, same as the Italian wasn't always that reliable either, it didn't always explode, ours did, nothing wrong with ours. 2 of the guns were hit but the shells didn't explode.

Anybody injured?

The 3rd gun the shell did explode, 2 killed

33:30 and 2 wounded out of a crew of 6, but they replaced them and kept the gun going.

What did you do in that instance when you knew that you'd lost half a crew?

They just sent up more men, replaced the crew.

Were they men that you had formed a bond with?

Well everybody was suppose to have a certain amount of training on the guns so that you could take the position if needed.

34:00 The same as you had to have training on the machine guns and so forth, so that you could take any position, replace any casualties.

Did you know the men in that crew that were killed?

Yes Dave Beveridge and who was the other one, Wallington, can't think of his first name.

What was your reaction to hearing

34:30 **the news that they'd been killed?**

No time to stop and think about it, you were flat out, just thought oh well bad luck, better them than me sort of thing, unfortunately you think like that, you get that way, you get - you sort of accept it as the routine, otherwise you'd go nuts.

35:00 So it was quite an exciting day that.

Any personal experiences of your own that you can recall from that day?

We saw a bloke up on a bit of a rise sort of, as though he was signalling, I think he probably was I don't know what he was doing otherwise, so we grabbed him and locked him in one of the vans, we thought he was a 5th Columnist

35:30 signalling to the German guns, but whether he was or not I don't know. But I've no idea what happened to him, nobody seems to know what happened to him after that, we locked him in a van and wasn't our van, so I don't know what happened to him or what he was even. He may have been a 5th Columnist [supporter of the enemy], there were quite a few in Greece.

Did you have any difficulties carting

36:00 **shells that day to and from the guns and the dump?**

Oh we were strafed a few times, you can't do much about that, you either stay with your vehicle and keep going or you can stop and abandon your vehicle and dash off to the side. There's not much good doing that with a load of ammunition because if that blows up you're not going to be far enough away anyway.

So what do you do?

36:30 You just keep going.

Just keep the accelerator to the floor?

Yeah, oh you can speed up, wait until the planes diving at you then slap the brakes on so that he overshoots or you can travel slow, wait until he's diving at you and then speed up, but then he can lift his plane and still get you that way. And you can't dodge

37:00 off the road in most of the places cause the roads too narrow and Greece is a very hilly country, mountainous country so you can't get off the road in lots of places. If you could you can leave the main

road and run along the side for a while and then come back on the main road, but not many places you can do that. But we did it in places.

What was the road like that you were travelling on that day?

Single bitumen.

How far was it to the ammo dump?

37:30 It wasn't all that far to the ammo dump, probably about 4 or 5 miles.

What kind of speed were you travelling to and from the dump when you were carting the ammo?

Fast as we could yeah, fast as you safely could. Not 60 or anything probably around about 40, 45.

How many incidents that day were you attacked from the

38:00 **air?**

Several, I wouldn't know, you didn't count them, you just hoped there wouldn't be another one.

And you were literally just playing chicken with those planes?

Yeah really what it amounted to hmm.

38:30 **What eventuated that day?**

Well we held the advance until night fall and then we limbered up the guns and got out of it as quick as we could. We'd stopped the armoured division for the required time and given the rest of the force time to retire back to the next mountain range, where they'd make another stop.

39:00 **So how far did this leap-frogging continue?**

At least 4.

Till you got back to Athens?

Yeah we never stopped in Athens, we went back to, now what was the name of it, Kriekouri Pass I think, first of all

39:30 first of all we had to go through Lorica the British town I mentioned and as we were going through there was another earth tremor and more masonry came down and the German advance group had got through to the side of it but they didn't make any attempt to stop us, there probably weren't enough of them. And the town had been bombed

40:00 and for hundreds of years apparently storks had nested in the top of chimneys and of course the chimneys had been blown down and the storks were flying around, no where to go sort of thing just circling around in figure 8's above the town, I noticed that quite, noticeable sort of thing.

That's an interesting observation?

Yeah, their homes had been destroyed so you could see them but

40:30 you couldn't see the people.

Where had all the people gone?

Fled, hmm. Unfortunately all army's use towns as places to make a stand because there's buildings, there's walls there's all that sort of things that can be adapted to defence so civilian populations suffer quite a lot.

41:00 My worst memory of the war would be here, the place had been, there'd been an earthquake earlier, weeks before the debris was still lying around, it had been bombed several times, there was wreckage and stuff everywhere but there was still a few civilians trying to stay on there, most of them had fled. This day, this time there'd been a

41:30 strafing attack on it as we were going through and I remember seeing this, never told my wife even this, this little toddler about 3 or 4 trying to run with one foot blown off, he'd fall over he'd try to get up, he'd fall over again, and of course the blood's spurting out, he didn't last very long he died very quickly.

42:00 But that's war -

00:32 We were in, I can't name the village now I've forgotten it, it was being bombed and strafed and I saw this 3 or 4 year old.

Oh this is, we got that story we were, I was thinking more along the lines of you mentioned there was an Australian who raped a - ?

Oh yes, yes

01:00 well this occurred on Crete, we haven't got to Crete yet, but never mind. At an isolated village where there was a patrol, by the time we got to Crete of course we had no field guns left, we were equipped with some old captured Italian guns, captured in the desert and a couple of First World War French guns that you open

01:30 the breech and you sight it down the barrel at the target, it was the best you could do you had not sighting equipment. But the rest of us were formed into what they called a composite battalion with an anti-parachute role and we roamed around the hills looking for groups of parachutes who had under shot their landing mark and taking care of them. And this

02:00 particular chap I think shot through from somewhere and had come to this little village and found a Cretan woman, obviously on her own and had raped her. And the patrol arrived and more or less in the aftermath of it, so they promptly shot him.

Do you think that - ?

Summary justice.

Do you think that that was justice?

Definitely,

02:30 it not only affected the women but affected the whole Cretan co-operation with the Australians and New Zealanders. You see instead of being on our side they would have regarded us as animals and so forth, they were a great asset to us and some of them fought very hard on our side against the Germans.

So what you're saying - ?

This would have put all that in jeopardy.

So what your saying is

03:00 **the reason why they shot him was also as a demonstration that?**

I guess so, although I doubt that because no one was supposed to know about it, it was just summary justice executed on the spot.

Was it covered up at all?

Not that I know, probably didn't become very publicised there were too many other things going on.

03:30 **Do you know if it was a firing squad execution or was it just one guy?**

I don't really know, I'm quite convinced it wasn't an organised firing squad, it was probably just 2 or 3.

Well going back to where we were before lunch I believe you were in Piraeus?

Syria?

No Piraeus?

Oh, Persia.

04:00 **Maybe I've pronounced it wrong sorry?**

Well whichever way you like, depends where you come from. Yes well actually we had held 2, 3 positions we were retreating through Greece south because we were in danger of being, the Germans were getting behind us so we had to leave some quite good positions.

04:30 After leaving Elasson where we held up the armoured division we had to cross a large river and the Germans were well aware of this and were bombing the bridge, the bridge was already damaged, a direct hit could have cut us off, at least cut off all our heavy equipments, troops could have probably swam across.

So it was a large bridge?

Hmm. So

05:00 the engineers charged with doing something about it -

Can I just, sorry Ed, can I just pause you there - continue on where you were there Ed?

So the engineers 2 or 3 groups of whatever available vehicles to go and look for other crossing points, and I remembered where we had camped going up to the front and where we had crossed the river, waded across, found a wading place. So we went straight there

05:30 and it was suitable for vehicles and there was the second crossing point, no problem at all, just a coincidence again you see.

Well that certainly worked in your favour?

Hmm. Somewhere along there we had a shell land underneath us, it landed under the bitumen, ploughed in the side of the road under the bitumen before exploding, lifted the truck up and down like that,

06:00 made holes everywhere except the petrol tank and engine. My spare boots were lost, went straight through them but my feet weren't in them.

So the shrapnel just?

Yeah.

Gee that was lucky?

Certainly was and there were 2 or 3 other people on board too.

Were they injured?

No none of us got hit, all the shrapnel went through places that didn't matter, through the mud guards, through the side of the doors, through the canvas on top.

06:30 **But you wouldn't even know what hit you, if this?**

We had a fair idea what it was cause they were landing around.

What was going on in the skies at the time?

At that particular moment nothing I don't think, it was in between strafing attacks. Yeah so we continued on after we crossed the bridge, continued onto

07:00 Kriekouri - I think it was - Pass, the name of it. We, the guns were camouflaged on a steep hillside with a little village at the foot, and this is the main road that wound through up the hillside, or the mountain side. And when it reached flat ground it ran straight past the little village and straight for some distance. We camouflaged the wells so well and the Infantry

07:30 dug themselves in so well this time we were with New Zealand troops. When the German advance guard came along the scouts they weren't fired upon and they must have reported back that the pass wasn't defended because they drove right up to the foot of the steep road up the hillside and we didn't fire on them. So then they advanced along in close order, trucks, troops whatever,

08:00 cause they had no air opposition to contend with, we didn't have any. When they all got within the range and the road was packed solid we open fire with 20 guns and it was a resounding success. Most of the trucks were blown up and tanks blown off the road and whatnot.

So it was a pretty big ambush then?

Yes it was really good.

And how many Germans did you manage to ambush?

I don't know,

08:30 there were a lot of bodies, it was impossible see were looking down, it's impossible to say, a count. But what did occur they immediately, of course called in their air force, cause they have fighter and bombers on demand, just waiting for a call. They came and they cruised up and down over the hillside but they couldn't spot, we were so well camouflaged. And we were still firing when the plane

09:00 came past and went there, we'd fire while he was going that way, when we was coming back we didn't fire. When he'd pass and going that way we'd fire again, so that he couldn't spot the gun flashes. But a German bomber flying along a bit lower there suddenly blew up in mid air and we think, were pretty certain that it flew into the flight path of one of our shells. Now when you shell something you don't fire directly

09:30 at it the shell goes up in a big curve and then comes down, and we think he happened to be just where a shell was going. And he was shot down with a 25 pounder shell, probably the only time it ever happened, certainly wouldn't be very often, if any time at all.

His number was certainly up then?

Hmm.

So how many planes came along after that ambush?

10:00 Oh there would have been 30 cruising around looking for us.

So that's quite a lot?

Oh the Germans had plenty of planes. When they were bombing Piraeus out of commission, which they did the bombed it, an ammunition ship blew up there and flattened the port and most of the town. They were using 200 planes at a time.

Did you continue to hide effectively in the hills?

Yes

10:30 we did, we stayed there Anzac Day 1941 and then we were suppose to leave that night but we got orders to stay another day, the 26th of April because some of the troops, the Greeks had surrendered, they'd fought themselves to a stand still, they'd surrendered and they were trying to get the rest of our troops out. But of course some of the

11:00 evacuating ships were being bombed and the evacuation was being held up. So we had to hold them another day, which we did. By the time they organised a mass attack to actually come around up the hillside the day was over and we were able to retreat that night.

How did you spend Anzac Day, was there any special consideration because of the fact it was Anzac Day?

Yes we had to

11:30 drive back in daylight to Athens, about 40 miles away to get extra ammunition and we were strafed by German fighters going and coming back again, but they never hit us fortunately.

So how many of you were going back to Athens for extra ammo?

3 trucks I think.

So you're a pretty obvious target?

Oh yes, hmm, I would think that through experience they would realise that they were ammunition

12:00 trucks, the German pilots.

So you were in a very precarious situation, it must have been quite frightening that whole journey to and from?

Well the defence depended on a supply of ammunition so we had to get it.

But who would have taken your place if you guys all got?

Well they probably wouldn't have got the ammunition and they might have been overrun.

So it was a last

12:30 **ditch effort?**

Yes, well we weren't expecting to have to hold them an extra days because of the delay in evacuations.

And what's to stop them from just, you know how you said the Germans were coming along this area and that's when you ambushed them. What's to stop them from ambushing you knowing that you have to go back for ammunition?

We

13:00 were going backwards, they were coming forwards, they had to catch us first, they would have had to get around behind us and then ambush us.

Oh I see?

We drove through Athens in the middle of the night, German troops were in the suburbs but they hadn't got into the centre, it didn't hold us up. We drove, there were a few fires burning, a few buildings burning, bombing apparently. We drove some 10,

13:30 15 miles out the other side of Athens and we smashed everything up, smashed our vehicles up except the guns and some ammunition, everything else was destroyed because we had to evacuate.

You had to evacuate from where sorry?

From Greece.

So hang on have you hooked up again with your

14:00 **troops after you've bought the ammunition back?**

Oh yes hmm yep.

And so what actually, can you step me through what happened that day or that night after you've bought in your ammunition, are you still under attack?

No not at night, no German patrols were making sort of half hearted attempts to come up the steep hillsides

14:30 but they didn't try too hard cause it was too dark and they couldn't see where they were going and what not. And the terrain is quite rough and rugged, in fact there's more rocks in Greece than in good country I think.

But how did you get down off the hill then if you were surrounded by Germans?

Well we continued on over, we were on the side of the hill, on one crest going up to the top, we just continued over the top and down the other side. And they still had to get over,

15:00 we blew the road of course so they couldn't use that.

Oh I see what you're saying. And so it was back to Athens at that point?

Hmm we got through Athens yes we got out the other side, destroyed all our surplus equipment. I was given the task of carrying out of Greece the battery records which was paperwork recording all the mister miners of the troops, fines they'd had

15:30 for being AWL and all this sort of thing. Well I buried those beneath a tree, when we got back to Palestine about 2 months later they had an enquiry as to what happened to the records, they couldn't find out what happened to them.

Are they still buried?

Their still there, if the trees still there I'd be able to find them.

What made you decide to bury it?

I didn't want to carry it, carrying a rifle and tin hat was enough.

How heavy was it,

16:00 **was it quite a few kilos?**

No it wasn't a great lot, it was a document about that thick probably, like a big book I suppose really.

It was just an extra weight that you didn't want to?

Hmm, and besides it's not the sort of thing I wanted to continue on with really.

How important are documents like that, it just seems to me that that's the last thing you need to keep record of?

I don't

16:30 think anything in this world can operate without paperwork, even the army.

You might have a point there, but you know it just seems incongruous that you, on the run and you know you're concerned about keeping a whole lot of documents safe?

Yes.

You know you should be more concerned about your own skin?

At one stage on the withdrawal we had to cross the Plain of Thessaly, which is a big

17:00 flat area, one of the few flat areas in Greece with a long straight road running right through the middle of it, very little cover of any sort, few trees and things, that around. Which was an open slather for German planes, cause they'd fly along the road and drop bombs and what not.

Because you could see everything that was going on?

Yes exactly. And the road

17:30 was marked by burning vehicles and an occasional body here or there hmm. So what happened most of the time was when the bombers arrived, and they usually came in 2s and 3s you'd wait until they got overhead and you could see where they were going to drop their bombs and where the bomb, you soon learnt where the bomb was going to land cause they land not straight down but they go in a forward direction. You either swerve off the road

18:00 or you'd stop and people would scatter each side so you wouldn't be hit. This particular chap on this occasion he didn't really approve of being strafed, he jumped off the vehicle ran for his life, ran into the branch of a tree and said, "Sorry," and ran on.

Just kept running?

Yeah he said sorry to the tree.

Do you think that that's an example of

18:30 **stress and pressure on a battle field?**

Yes I guess it would be, he obviously had one thought in mind and that was to get going and he apologised to the tree. Another chap he in the same situation he was sheltering in a bomb crater, another chap jumped in alongside him and he fainted,

19:00 and when he came too he said, "I thought you were a bomb!" When the other fellows peered over the edge and jumped in alongside him he thought it was a bomb so he fainted, so I wonder if people do faint under situations like that.

I suppose it's just complete fright?

Yeah, something like that.

Well how do you cope with all this artillery being pointed at you, do you start to get really quite nervy about it?

I

19:30 say you get, you get to a stage where you don't really care, it's not bravado it's just a combination of tiredness and resignation and whatnot.

Do you use humour at all to get yourself through it?

Humour?

Yeah?

One of the few things that helped yes, while I record, remember those 2 incidents.

20:00 **Do you try and take a bit more of a light hearted attitude?**

Well you have to really otherwise if you, you know shells and bombs are nasty things they blow things to pieces including people, it has happened, I've had it happen to me when a piece of me mate's

20:30 been splattered across me chest, you know. You've got to sort of become semi-detached from your surroundings to put up with that.

And what did you do under that circumstance?

Scrape off what you could and leave the rest there, can't change you've got no other clothes, can't wash.

21:00 Oh yes - and eventually we got to an embarkation port, a Port O'Rafferty, and we set up the guns there, they were fairly well out in the open and of course the German air force had a field day, they bombed all the rest of our

21:30 transport, got some of the guns. But they never attacked because their guns and tanks were held up by our blowing up their roads, the road they would have had to use, so we were only under sort of sniping attack on ground and strafing from the air. And again we were with New Zealand troops. The official history of the war says

22:00 in volume 3 the New Zealanders were impressed with the 2/3rd Field Regiment and asked for them twice to support them. Because we had supported them at Ellasson and Kriekouri and finally at Port O'Rafferty.

And what did you think of the New Zealanders?

Top notch, absolutely.

22:30 **Whereabouts is Port O'Rafferty in relation to Greece, is it south?**

South of Athens yes, the nearby village is Marcopoli, these sort of names get burnt into you. And from there we were evacuated, I was, thought I was very fortunate I was evacuated on the British cruiser [HMS] Ajax that had been in the Battle of the River Plate

23:00 in South America and they sunk the German pocket battleship, it was one of the cruisers there. And the sailors couldn't do enough, cocoa thick you could almost eat it and bread and butter, I don't know when we'd eaten last, 2 or 3 days before probably. And we just collapsed all over the deck, I slept on one of their best tables, I had my rifle one side and tin hat the other

23:30 so that if the ship rolled I didn't roll off, they held me on. And when I came to we were steaming into Souda Bay into Crete, and there were 2 destroyers with us and they'd bought our troops to. So the 2 destroyers, it was only a little jetty in the bay, they pulled in there and unloaded and we unloaded into lighters, boats. We climbed onto the ship with netting and we got off the ship climbing down

24:00 the netting again. And when we got to shore the New Zealanders went one way and the Australians went the other, the New Zealanders went up to the head of the bay up towards the aerodrome and we went up to the entrance to the bay in the hills there. We never had any rations, nothing to eat, we found that we could buy oranges and goats

24:30 milk and things like that from the Cretan villages so we didn't starve. And as I said they bought in these old guns and some of the regiment banned those and the others were formed into the composite battalion, the anti-parachute role.

Sounds like there's just men going everywhere?

Hmm.

Was it hard to organise?

Well it must have been

25:00 because there were hardly any vehicles, communication by telephone was non-existent, radios had largely been lost or damaged in Greece and there were hardly any. The rifles we had bought out from Greece with us were taken from us and re-issued to the infantry who were short of rifles,

25:30 in exchange we got American Hodgkiss rifles from the First War that weighed about 3 times as much they were covered in thick grease which we scraped off with sticks and then we used some boiling water to get the rest off and we had 30 bullets each.

Why are the guns covered in grease?

Oh to preserve them because they belonged to the First War, 1914, 18. No bayonets, no slings

26:00 you know a strap to hang it over, didn't have those sort of things.

And what were they like to actually fire?

Oh much the same as the .303, the ordinary service rifle, slower, heavier.

Sounds like there was a lot of weaponry that was really quite ancient?

Absolutely yes.

Were there any leftover Italian weapons?

26:30 There was a fair bit of it around that had got there by one means or another, they probably shipped some over to Crete for the use of the Greek army, and they bought more over to supply us, or re-supply us when they could of given us new 25 pounders which they had in ordinance stores in Egypt. A couple of those might of made a lot of difference, instead of

27:00 the things they gave us that you had to open the breech and look down the barrel to see what you're going to shoot at and then half the shells didn't explode.

Sounds like madness?

Yeah well what else could you do.

What sort of, how did you discuss this problem with other mates?

We didn't, we didn't have any option, took what you got and that was it.

I mean were you angry about it?

We probably were,

27:30 I don't know that we really had time for anger we were too busy trying to get something to eat. It was quite cold at night, we had no blankets and we just slept on the ground and it got a bit cold. The first night we never mounted any guards because no one could stay awake long enough, we hadn't had sleep for several days, we hadn't eaten for several days. We were pretty knocked up.

Did you feel like you'd

28:00 **been deserted in some way?**

No I don't know that we thought we were deserted we didn't really know, we only knew the situation in our immediate vicinity, we didn't know what was happening down at the 2 aerodromes which of course were the main things to be defended. We didn't know what they had there. British troops had been on Crete for 6 months ever since

28:30 the Italians had invaded but they hadn't done anything, they hadn't made any positions, prepared any aerodromes, made any aeroplanes pits or anything to protect planes, or establish communications, I don't know what they did.

Was the general consensus from the Australians some sort of a disgust of the lack of preparation the Brits [British] had gone into?

Well we didn't know at the time of course,

29:00 they told us there was no rations, they hadn't arrived cause we didn't understand that they had to come from Egypt and they wouldn't arrive for some time. We thought oh there just held up down there somewhere, and things like that with re-supply of armament and radios and things too, we thought oh well there here but we just haven't got them yet.

So you were being quite pessimistic?

Hmm.

29:30 **Are you under fire at all by the Germans?**

Pardon?

Are you under fire at all by the Germans?

Well all day long their planes were over the islands, anything that moved or anything that looked like a fortification was attacked and this went on for days on end, so you didn't move around much in the daytime. Even the limited amount of anti-aircraft guns that they had on the island

30:00 a lot of the time didn't fire because if they'd fired it would only have bought a dozen stokers and they would have been destroyed straight away. So they tried to keep them for when the paratroops, which we were expecting, tried to keep it for when they came. But of course when they did come so did the stokers with them. The initial attack was made on May 20 and we, didn't attack us, there

30:30 was our 5 Battery were at Maleme drome which was the biggest drome on Crete, they were there with 4 old Italian guns. Our 6th Battery were up at Retimo drome which was the second drome with 2 old Italian guns and we were in the middle at the entrance to Souda Bay which was the harbour, the anchorage and we were suppose to protect that. Well they didn't, the paratroopers didn't

31:00 land there they landed at the other 2 places. They landed on, actually landed right on top of 6th Battery gunners and the gun crews were 6 men and to protect them they had 1 rifle, 1 rifle between 6 men and of course they were slaughtered until the survivors were able to gather some captured German weapons and eventually recapture the guns and got them into operation.

31:30 The paratroopers were, we only encountered a few of them and those had come down in the wrong area and they came down with a Tommy gun but very little else because all the rest of their supplies were dropped with a separate parachute. Not all parachutes had a man in it, a lot of them just had supplies. Well their supplies had landed somewhere else

32:00 and they couldn't, they didn't know the country, they didn't know the terrain and they couldn't find their supplies so once they ran out of ammo for their Tommy guns they were more or less unarmed. And those were the ones we encountered and had to round up.

What did you do with them?

They put them in the prison camps but they were all re-captured or released by the Germans later on,

32:30 we had no facilities for shipping them back to Egypt and in fact we didn't have any facilities for feeding them.

So you gave them back to the Germans?

Well we didn't give them back the Germans took them, we didn't have much say, those of us still there became prisoners ourselves. Most of our 6th Battery were either killed or taken prisoner. Cause they never got any notification,

33:00 the fight went on for 3 or 4 days and then the Germans captured Maleme aerodrome, once they captured that they could fly in field guns, tanks whatever so it then became hopeless against what we had which was practically nothing. So the order was given to evacuate again but we never got the order, the communications were so bad. The composite battalion I was in never got the order,

33:30 neither did 6th Battery get the order at Retimo, so they kept on fighting, actually they were winning there, they were protecting that drome, the Germans never captured that drome until we had to evacuate. And the troops left there, being isolated and had to surrender, the Australians, so that's what happened to our 6th Battery. But 5 Battery faired better cause we were up the other end, they were able to make a fighting withdrawal and

34:00 30 miles across the island, it's flat in the middle of Crete otherwise very mountainous. It's a chalky sort of soil and you move at night and the dust, the white dust rises up like clouds and you're breathing this in to and you've got no water, it makes you very, very thirsty. We got half way across the island and we found, there had

34:30 been farms there but they'd, bombers had destroyed them. We found a well that had water in it so we used braces and belts and sorts of things to lower a tin hat down and get enough water out, everybody had a nice drink and I think everybody had, I did too a second drink during the night. In the morning we didn't have any more drinks out of that well there was a very dead Greek in it, had been dead for some days,

35:00 the water was a bit greeny, but it was lovely water when you hadn't had any for a long while.

So you just didn't know about it in the night?

No we didn't know, just as well perhaps. So we eventually got over to the mountain range, more mountains again. On the south side of the island,

35:30 actually I got lost, I finished up on my own half way up Mount Ida.

How did you get lost?

I don't know just dopey.

Do you think it's maybe lack of food, sleep and?

Yeah all those things. And I realised I was lost so I just went to sleep and was woken in the morning by a Cretan with, a goat herder with a herd of goats and he signalled the way back I should go. And I went back and caught up with the others,

36:00 I caught up with a mate of mine and we lived, we found a little cave and we lived in that. We'd had nothing to eat for 4 days so we boiled some grass and ate that, it's not all that good you know boiled grass, doesn't help you much.

I can't say that yeah I'd want to try it myself.

And there was a large spider hanging from the cave roof but we decided he wasn't big enough to eat, wouldn't have been enough to go round.

So what did you actually have on you by the time you were in the cave?

36:30 A haversack, a rifle and a tin hat I think.

And are you separated now from the others?

Hmm, but we found our way back to them, Ray and I and they had got 2 anti-tank guns from somewhere, might have been the Greek ones so they were able to hold

37:00 the Germans up, coming across the plain, cause they had vehicles, they'd landed vehicles in gliders and what not and we were on foot, we took a long while to get across the 20 miles of plain, whereas they just drove across quickly. To stop them overrunning us when we reached this mountain ridge, hilly ridge we got these 2 anti-tank guns there and stopped them, because they hadn't come over in sufficient numbers and they had to wait for their tanks to come to,

37:30 sort of thing. So we were able to hold them up for a while, while most of our blokes were evacuated. And on the last night we were there and the last night of the evacuation we got notice about 9 o'clock at night to get down to the beach as soon as possible.

How are you receiving information if you've got lack of?

Word of mouth, by runners. So we high

38:00 tailed it down to the beach and lucky enough to get on a destroyer. They couldn't give us anything to eat because it was too packed with troops we were just standing up on the deck, packed tight. And from there we got back to Alexandria.

So when you say your all packed tight were you just standing there the whole time that you were on the?

Oh some were able to sit down, some sat on various

38:30 armaments and what not. You didn't stand the whole time but you stood a fair bit of it. And we were attacked of course by stokers and fighters but as every man still had his rifle in addition to the ships anti-aircraft guns there were probably 500 or 700 rifles as well. So the planes got a fairly warm welcome,

39:00 they didn't press their attack all that much and we never got hit, although some of the other ships did.

How many were a part of that convoy?

There were in our particular one there were 4 ships, there was a brand new light cruiser [HMS] Phoebe, there was a minelayer the - hmm forgotten, and 2 destroyers [HMS] Kimberley and [HMS] Hotspur, we got off on the Kimberley.

39:30 **What did you think your chances were for actually making it back to Alexandria?**

Oh once we got on the navy we thought we were home and hosed, we had great respect for the British navy. They never let us down anywhere, no always on the job.

Was morale extremely high by the time you got on the ship?

Hard to

40:00 say it varied a lot, we also had mixed with us Yugoslavia troops who'd got away from Yugoslavia when Germany invaded that, we had some Greek troops, we had some Jewish troops who'd been in labour units, bought over to Greece to do, cart supplies and stack supplies and that sort of thing, and work on roads

40:30 and all that sort of thing. Some of those were certainly not first class troops.

Were they in a bad way?

Yeah and they'd had it too, they were -

What do you mean by that, they were just?

Their morale had completely gone, collapsed altogether.

How was the Australians morale in comparison to some of these other troops?

41:00 A lot better, I don't know perhaps Australians are more used to change and what not, not so regimented or something like that, there's some difference. A lot of the European troops we encountered seemed to be very regimented they followed the book sort of thing, like I was telling you about that gun shoot we had, the British followed the orders whereas the Australians did

41:30 something different. We were certainly more inclined to be innovative sort of thing, do something that wasn't usually done or the unexpected or.

Did you mix much with the other troops?

Well on occasions like that you had to, you mixed up with everything. We even had a couple of nurses, couple of Greek nurses

42:00 that had come from somewhere -

Tape 6

00:30 **So you were just describing the conditions on board?**

Yeah it was very crowded, we were quite happy to arrive at Alex [Alexandria]. Before we get off the ship there's a couple of points. We did have a few days after we arrived on Crete before the paratroops landed and we were able to go unofficially on leave down to Canea, the

01:00 little city at the head of Souda Bay, but the Greeks were very, they never had anything we got a cup of tea and they had wines. But a couple of our chaps in one restaurant they got what they thought was quite a tasty meal, they really enjoyed it so they had a second helping. And there was an English speaking Greek there and I asked him "What is it those chaps are enjoying so much?"

01:30 he said, "Oh that's breadcrumbs and snails fried together," we didn't have any.

You weren't that hungry?

No. Also on Crete in one of the attacks I got a bullet through the sole of my foot and it split the underneath sole in half but the boot was still held together by the leather top, try walking like that one day, it's most awkward.

02:00 **So having more than a stone stuck in your shoe?**

It pinches your foot every time you take a step.

As I say I've heard people having stone in their shoes but that's ridiculous?

Yeah, yeah I suppose it wasn't half an inch higher really. Oh the Greeks used to, the morning after we landed on Crete

02:30 they came around with morning tea for us, they bought some goats around and they were selling goat's milk, ever tried goat's milk?

No I've tried - ?

Really nice, really nice especially when you haven't eaten for a while, we really enjoyed that morning tea. Cost us a few drachmas of course.

How did you prepare it?

Just drank it as it was straight from the, they milk it out of the donkey, the goat into

03:00 a sort of a mug thing and down the hatch.

Warm goat's milk?

Yeah.

Would have been great in those cold conditions?

Yes, oh it was probably full of nourishment to. Okay we've arrived at Alex and we got off the ship and we were taken back to Ikingi Mariut the camp we'd been in a long time before and all our clothes, everything

03:30 we wore was taken off put into heaps and burnt, cause we were wearing them for 2 months, the same clothes, even boots everything was burnt.

How did you assemble to?

Oh in dribs and drabs, just as we came off various ships. As we came off the ship we had a slip of paper we had to write our name and number on it so they could check who had got back to Egypt and who hadn't.

04:00 **And where did you remove all your clothes?**

At Ikingi Mariut it's just a wide open space, there's nobody around or anything, except some other military camps around the place.

So you just got naked out there in the open, on the parade ground?

And they had an overhead tank, we stood under that and had a cold shower, the first shower we'd had for 2 months. And they issued us new clothes.

Was there any sharking or mischief going?

Everybody was too dead beat to do anything like that,

04:30 I think they must have just collapsed and slept on the ground where they were, in broad daylight.

In fresh clothing?

Hmm, and the following day we were put on a train and taken to the Suez Canal, we had to get off the train there and go across by ferry and then board another train to take us to Palestine. And that took us a while and we got to Palestine the following day I think and our camp was

05:00 in an open plain with camel scrub, which is scrub about this high on it, rather prickly grey scrub, nothing else. And they had tents there and that was Khassa Camp, it was one of the training camps that the Australians who stayed in the Middle East, who didn't go to England, had been training, the training camps. So we needed 250 reinforcements to

05:30 build us back to our strengths. We had I think other units lent us a couple of vehicles, we had nothing else, we had nothing we never even had a piece of writing paper to write a letter. We had rations certainly and we had tents to sleep in and we had our clothes that we were standing up in.

06:00 **We'll just pause for a moment. So you mentioned you just took on some, what do you call them reinforcements?**

Yes we needed 250, they took a while to arrive, some of them had been in the Middle East for some time. Some had been in army camps in India, had come from Australia to India and

06:30 undergone further training there before they came to the Middle East. It was quite some time before we got re-equipped, we got 36 hour leave to Jerusalem.

What did you do in that time?

Everything, walked all around the town, all the historical sites and what not, yeah that was really good.

What did you see?

Walked up the Via

07:00 Dolorosa, the street that God carried his cross going to where he was crucified. Looked at the wall around the old Jerusalem city and the various gates through it, back in King Herod's time, full of history there, oh stacks of history. We saw everything we could in the very brief

07:30 time. We even drove down to the Dead Sea and sat in that for a while.

What was that like?

As I say we sat in it, it's so salty that you can't sink in it, you can just literally sit in the water and stay there, like a chair, but don't get it in your eyes cause it's bitter and salty, it's quite an experience really to sit in water and not sink, the Dead Sea.

08:00 And we crossed into Jordan, just to say we'd been there, we never really saw anything. Jericho, we looked at the whole city of Jericho, history everywhere there. Countries pretty barren mostly fair bit of rock, limestone rock, but down near the river, the Jordan River, it's

08:30 orchards and farming, growing things, lot of grapes growing.

Can we just pause there - ?

We had our 36 hour leave in Jerusalem, it's quite an education to drive with Arab drivers to you know, they don't believe in road rules or anything, Allah looks after them. Going into Jerusalem

09:00 this 7 curves going down a hill, quite like this, they go down full speed, Allah will look after them, he seems to too, they have a few smashes.

Did you witness any accidents or?

One of our fellows, one of our ammo drivers, Nugget, he was mixed up, I never saw the accident this is what I was told. He was mixed up in an accident and he finished up with a donkey coming through his windscreen and sitting in the seat next

09:30 to him, and do you think he got ribbed about that for a long while. You don't usually go out and pick up a donkey do you?

Especially not through the windscreen?

No, no.

They must have been moving at a fair speed to have collected it?

Yes, oh.

Did you get a chance to talk with any of these Arab drivers?

Oh yes, yes, another thing that was quite noticeable to Arabs are very nomadic people, they wonder around a lot

10:00 usually you'll see them walking along the side of the road, there be the head man or the minor sheikh riding on his donkey and then he's wives and kids and all the servants all walking behind and carrying the trade goods and babies and whatever they need. But with the coming of war he now rides at the back and leaves all the rest in front so that they can tread on any booby traps or mines.

10:30 He looks after himself.

That's terrible, that's not very chivalrous?

There's no chivalry about it, definitely not. We had to, in some places had to tie our rifles to the tent pole at night because they very adept at creeping around in the dark and what not and some units had some rifles stolen out of their tents while they were asleep.

11:00 So that's why we had to tie them, rope them to the tent pole so that we'd know if they'd been fiddled with.

So they weren't a very trust worthy mob?

No they'd cut your throat for sixpence and give you threepence change.

What were you alerted to about them, were you given any instructions or?

No we were not to molest them in anyway, obviously particularly the women, but I don't

11:30 think anyone really wanted to. We were not to go into their villages, not to interfere with any of their grazing activities, they did a lot of grazing, they don't really do farming they just do grazing on the open country. But no they didn't seem to be a very attractive race the ones we encountered, no doubt

12:00 there were better ones elsewhere.

What kind of encounters did you have with them?

Oh there were quite a number of little villages and some of them had drink places and what not, some of them had a sort of, you couldn't really call it a restaurant but you could get something to eat there. So you'd come across them in places like that. And they were always

12:30 trying to sell you thing to.

What things did they have for sale?

Everything, including women, all sorts of mementos I've got some, a number of little cooper ornaments, their great at making those. Yeah you want something you'll ask

13:00 an Arab and he'll get it for you, if it's obtainable he'll get it, whether it's a sword stick or whatever.

You mentioned that you stopped to buy drinks, what kind of drink stores did they have?

They had their own particular brew a beer, very weak only about a quarter of the strength of ours, their main beer was called Stella, that was the better of the ones they had, the only one worth

13:30 drinking really, the others were, and you have no idea how they made them either so you probably wouldn't want to know anyway.

What kind of food could you get in the kitchens?

In their kitchens?

Yeah?

Well you didn't really see their kitchens, they would have a sort of a little brazier, little fire burning on an iron plate and if you wanted something, if you wanted a bit of

14:00 meat for instance they'd have a pile of meat over there on the floor in the corner, just on the ground, pick a piece off and put it on the brazier and cook it for you. I mean there might be flies on it and the dust and people walking by and kicking dust over it, that's all part of it, that's good tucker according to them.

So what other places did you visit apart from, you did mention Jerusalem?

14:30 Tel Aviv is mainly Jewish people, that's where most troops went, there were plenty of theatres, it was on the beach, plenty of swimming, descent restaurants, plenty of beer, mostly German beer.

That's a bit ironic?

Shortage of bottles so they, you had a half beer bottle, the top half cut off and that was your glass, they used to call them Lady Blameys,

15:00 that was your main drinking glass.

Sounds pretty innovative?

Hmm well.

How did they cut the top off?

You put a cord around, soak it with kerosene or something, light it. Or you get a wire ring that fits just where you want it and heat it until it's red hot, put it down on the bottle and just hold it there for a second or two and the heat will cause the glass to crack,

15:30 doesn't always break cleanly but it works.

You'd file the edges could you?

Yeah, hmm, sandpaper them. Yeah and we also went to Haifa which is another Jewish city, very la di dah, I'd say, must be where the elite Jews live. And of course we went to

16:00 the Sea of Galilee.

What did you see there?

Well that, main from Australia and New Zealand came to the Middle East by flying boat and the flying boat used to land on the Sea of Galilee because it's called a sea, it's really a very big lake, probably mile or 2 long, or a mile wide sort of thing. So that was a point of interest to us cause that's where

16:30 our mail was coming through and also there was a very nice town, or there's several towns around the shores. It was just a change from, and there weren't Arabs, or very few Arabs and those that were there were a better quality, it was sort of a nicer place to go, depending on what sort of a leave you wanted, whether you were just after women folk or drink or

17:00 whatever.

Were women folk popular with any of the Aussie troops?

I would say yes, hmm. There was Tel Aviv, 2 cities side by side, Jaffa, Arab city, Tel Aviv, Jewish city side by side, you don't know when your in one and when you walk out into the other. Yes plenty of women available there.

Were you lead astray?

17:30 Jerusalem was the same plenty there.

Were you ever lead astray?

Not me. And Haifa, yeah, well anywhere in the Middle East it's the same, they'll sell anything including their sister.

Anything for a dollar?

Yeah exactly.

Or a lira whatever currency they were using?

Yeah, mills.

What were they?

Mills.

Mills?

Yeah I think they're worth

18:00 a Milleme was a thousand mills I think, something like that.

What could you buy with that?

A Milleme was about equivalent to about 4 shillings I think, which would be about these days probably about \$4.

What could you buy in those days with about \$4?

Well

18:30 you didn't want to buy much, you might buy couple of postcards to send home, you might buy a souvenir or two, you'd buy some beer, you probably buy something to eat. You didn't normally buy anything to read because most of it was in Arabic or Jewish so it wasn't any good to you, not that any people bothered to read. You might buy a pack of cards say for back in camp or,

19:00 didn't spend a lot of money really, didn't have it to spend anyway.

Did you visit any of the kibbutzes?

Butchers?

Kibbutz?

You mean night club type things?

No I mean like those small Jewish communities?

Oh the Jewish settlements?

Yeah?

We only visited one on the Dead Sea, on the Jordan the Jordan runs down into the Dead Sea. We visited Karak which is the southern end of the Sea of

19:30 Galilee where the Jordan River runs out and then it runs down and finished up in the Dead Sea. And they had, it was an agricultural settlement, very busy people, never got to talk, well you couldn't speak the language anyway but we sort of had a walk around and saw their husbandry ideals and what not. Yeah they worked hard, cultivating and

20:00 mostly vegetables they grew, grapes and they had some stock, but the Arab terrorists were there, or Arab scavengers, couldn't really call them terrorist, they had to protect their place all the time, they had guards around it all the time. And in the middle they had a big tower with a lookout on top,

20:30 with rifleman up there, as they are now at each others throats. Not so bad during the war because there was so many troops there, there were British troops, there were Australians, there were New Zealanders, they didn't want to stir up too much of a, and besides that they were both nominally on the British side, not the German side. The Arabs and the Jews were both,

21:00 supposedly supporting the British and French.

How long were you in Palestine?

About 8 months I think.

What were you doing for the bulk of that time?

Well it took us quite a while before we got re-equipped, when we got re-equipped then we had 250 new reinforcements to train, so we did a lot of training.

What kind of exercises

21:30 **did you do?**

Manoeuvres all around the place there's plenty of open country there to do manoeuvres. You'd go out in a convoy and you'd set up gun positions as though you were going to engage the enemy and lay out the sig lines and make all the survey measurements and what not, as though you were going to fire on some specific target. And then you'd go through, you wouldn't fire

22:00 but you'd have to load the guns and then unload them again and re-load them, ad infinitum sort of thing.

Did you do those manoeuvres at 100% or?

Oh yes, you'd go through as though it was the genuine thing except you didn't actually have a target to fire at and you didn't fire at it. They had a firing range, Asluj, it was out in the desert, cause not all Palestine is desert, most of Palestine itself is not

22:30 desert it's sort of a hard sun baked country a lot of it with a low shrubbery. The Northam part is quite fertile, that's more hilly but out the southern end you run into the Sinai Desert which is just a sea sand, and that's where they had the artillery range. And you'd go there and use low ammunition there, you'd engage targets,

23:00 they had canvas and wood targets away in the distance. The only thing was you couldn't fire a barrage, you would fire a salvo and then you had to stop for a while and then you could fire another salvo. And why you stopped because up where the shells burst as soon as the shells burst the Arab scavengers would come out of the hill looking for the brass off the shells,

23:30 the riffling bands off the shells which are made of brass. And they would collect those, obviously they sold them. So if you fired again immediately you'd knock off some of the Arabs and that might upset the Arab supports so you didn't do that, you waited until they went in and collected it and then you fired your next round.

So head spectators or scavengers in a way?

Yeah oh it's amazing where they appear from you think your miles from anywhere

24:00 over the sand hill comes a couple of Arabs.

So you were doing these kind of exercise manoeuvres for about 8 months?

No not all that time we didn't get re-equipped for at least a month, maybe 6 weeks before we got our full equipment.

How did you spend that time?

Well mostly physical training, rifle training, route marches, lectures, all those things.

What were you being lectured about?

24:30 Oh strategies and tactics and learning the other blokes job, how to do a signaller's job or a gun position officer's job and all that sort, in case of casualties you could take over another job.

What was the general attitude amongst the troops during all that training?

25:00 Yeah I think those that had been through Greece and Crete were very happy to have the time off and recover a bit. And of course the new blokes needed the training cause they hadn't had their full compliment of training, they had to learn a lot. There was never any tension amongst us, we all seemed to get along fairly well. We had a canteen of sorts, they had

25:30 some theatres, most camps had a theatre which showed films that changed about twice a week. The theatre wasn't actually a first class it was a brick wall, no roof, mud floor and boxes and things inside, that was your theatre, no daytime shows of course there was no roof, only night time. I think

26:00 they charged something, not very much, so my mate and I used to go 3 and 4 times a week, if we'd seen the show in our own theatre we'd go to the next units theatre and so forth.

What sort of shows did you enjoy?

I think we saw every show there was.

Were there live shows?

No, no films, movies.

Did you see any live shows while you were there?

Yes I twice went to operas

26:30 in Tel Aviv, which were quite entertaining, you couldn't understand them because it was in Hebrew but the costuming was magnificent and of course the Jewish people have a reputation for being good at that. There very colourful and quite entertaining even if you couldn't understand you could get the gist of it, and if you knew the particular opera then you knew the story behind it.

27:00 **Well opera hasn't changed much?**

No.

Still difficult to understand cause often it's in a different language?

Yeah, oh not it was good because you just got away from people in khaki and got amongst civilians in quite well to do Jews mainly that go to opera.

They sound like very civilised occasions?

Yeah different class of people you were with.

What was interaction like with those people?

27:30 Not very much, no.

What interaction was there at all?

Yeah I suppose there was a fair bit, probably more than you realise. For instance when we were on manoeuvres we would occasionally set up a position alongside Jewish orchard or something and of course being Aussies, Australian troops we'd raid their orchard. The Jews never complained, 2 reasons

28:00 one they knew we were their protection while we were there, we keep the Arabs off their back sort of thing. And also because of the war they couldn't sell their crops very well, they could only sell small portions of them. So the troops helping themselves to a few oranges didn't really worry them that way, financially.

That's nice, it sounds like there was a good rapport there?

Yes, oh yes.

What about at those opera's etc did you, what kind of interaction

28:30 **was there with the local people then, you must have?**

Very little really because you just went there when the show was about to start and you left when it finished.

But being in Australian uniform you must have got looks or comments or greetings?

Oh yes every one sort of greeted you yes but there was no real mixing because, there was no shortage of Australians there were plenty, cause there's quite a few thousand in Palestine at the time,

29:00 there was a whole division there. So it was nothing unique for the Jews. And of course Australians been there since late December 40 in Palestine, they've been there ever since, new troops coming in as the old ones trained and moved out. They had that big reinforcement training depots there as well.

I'm just

29:30 **curious cause when there's a US [United States] naval ship in Fremantle Harbour today it's in the newspapers and you notice them on the train or in the city and there's women wanting to date them?**

Hmm, well of course newspapers weren't permitted to comment on troop movements anyway or on the fact of what troops were there, whether they were British, Australian, New Zealander or whatever. New Zealanders mainly trained in Egypt,

30:00 near Cairo, Australians were in Palestine, near Tel Aviv.

Do you think you would have preferred to be training in?

No, no because Egypt's mainly Arabs and while Cairo's quite a nice town sort of thing, much bigger than Tel Aviv, many of the Jewish people you couldn't tell them from ordinary Australians,

30:30 British or whatever, well they came from all over the place.

When did you go up into Syria?

We sent an advance party up there because at that time they weren't too sure what Turkey was going to do. When we first, or not long after we arrived back there relations with a French

31:00 Syria got so bad it looked as though they were going to let German air force into Syria. So the high command decided that we'd better occupy Syria to prevent this happening, cause that would have endangered the Suez Canal very badly, which was the lifeline. So they used British troops and the 7th Australian Division, I was in the 6th the 7th was the next one, to invade it

31:30 and they had quite a fight there. Some of our 6th Division units who had recovered a bit went up to help and we sent up an advance party and some guns but we never actually got into action. But we stayed there as garrison for some time.

Whereabouts?

Yeah good question, north of Beirut anyway,

32:00 up in the mountains, we lived in Quonset huts [prefabricated buildings], we had to drain the radiators every night otherwise the water in them would have frozen and cracked the engine block, it was quite cold, snow. I recall one occasion leaving, some terrific ruins there, Balbec, Balbec

32:30 is where we were and there's some terrific ruins there, huge ruins. And we left there, snow 6 inches deep all around the place, put water in our radiators and headed off, came out of the mountains with the snow packed 6 feet high each side of the road by the snow ploughs, which they used to clear the roads. And looked down there and there's Beirut down there brown and green, not a trace of white anywhere

33:00 and in an hour we were down there, quite hot, quite tropical, quite steamy, and you look back up and see the white topped mountains up there. That's quite a thing to do.

What kind of uniform did you have?

Just the same, no change.

How did the handle the dramatic drop in temperatures?

Well we didn't too well, we used whatever you could scrounge,

33:30 most of us had pullovers of some type, eventually they issued us with an army pullover. We had our great coats, overcoat type thing. You usually wore a couple of shirts and that sort of thing. Cause at one stage we weren't allowed to wear the pullovers, we had to have a shirt but you could have a pullover on underneath, which wasn't all that good cause they get a bit prickly. But

34:00 you had to be uniformed you see, you had to look good.

Sorry and how long were you in Syria?

Oh probably spent 6 weeks, 2 weeks here 2 weeks there.

What were you doing in that garrison?

Well we were mainly taking up supplies and brining leave personnel back and that sort of thing.

So was it a fairly low pressure

34:30 **time for you?**

Yes it was sort of a garrison position there, because they maintained positions there, like we had the advance guard there in case Turkey decided to go in with Germany, and of course they were right next door. But the Turks weren't going to go in with anyone, they were neutral, really neutral, which was just as well because it would have made things pretty uncomfortable if they'd have come in.

35:00 **All you need is another front?**

Yeah, yeah.

So when did you move on from Syria and what happened?

Eventually we got recalled, we had to come back, we went back to Syria and fetched everything back. And then we were told to prepare for a sea voyage, by then Japan had come into the war.

Where were you

35:30 **when you heard that Japan had entered the war?**

Probably in Khassa Camp, might have been Jerusalem I don't know. It was just before, yeah must have been in Khassa Camp cause we had laid in a supply of Australian beer for Christmas day and -

What flavour?

For Christmas day.

What flavour Australian beer was it?

Everything, Victorian,

36:00 at bit of West Australian some of that awful New South Wales and some Tasmanian Cascade and what not. Anyway Japan came into the war yeah and it snowed on the, not where we were but over on the Hebron Hills over near Nazareth and over towards the Dead Sea, and you could see it in the distance, the glister of the white on the hills. And of course

36:30 most of our recruits that had come to make up our compliment hadn't seen snow, so there all out there gazing at the snow.

Whereabouts did you celebrate that Christmas?

Well we had this big marque and there was hardly any room on the table for food cause it was all bottles, I've got photographs of the bottles, just sheer, a sea of bottles on the table, doesn't look as though there was anything to eat but there was

37:00 something to eat.

A pork chop in every glass?

Yeah and we cleaned it all up anyway. And a mate of mine -

Anyone get rotten drunk?

A mate of mine who's subsequently became my stepfather-in-law, he had his share and he'd rejoined us in Palestine, he'd been in a salvage unit before. He joined us in Palestine and he'd has his share

37:30 and he's a big fellow, I couldn't carry him home so I rolled him home half the way to his tent. He's quite a stout fellow so he rolled fairly easy, rolled him home and dragged him onto his bed and left him there.

How long were you in that camp then before you moved out?

Would have been about a month later I suppose, after Christmas.

38:00 **Were you doing any further training before you left?**

Oh we were pretty well up to training then yes and we had full equipment, we were right then ready for action again.

What did you do during that month?

Oh probably continued training, manoeuvres out in the, either in the hills or out in the plains, we did both. Manoeuvres on the plains in case we went back to the desert, manoeuvres on the hills in case we

38:30 had to go up to Syria or some place like that. And then we loaded everything up for this sea voyage, we guessed or hoped it would be Australia but everybody reckoned we were going to Burma, cause the Japs were pushing into Burma at the time and that's where Churchill wanted us to go.

What were your thoughts when you heard that Japan had entered the war?

Well we weren't too happy but the fact that America had to come

39:00 in also made the difference. See America never entered the war they were forced into it, they don't usually start wars they usually get forced into them, even if they did start the last one.

In those days perhaps?

Yeah, yeah.

But the thought that Japan was heading south towards Australia must have been alarming?

Well at that early stage they'd, they were capturing Hong Kong

39:30 and they were into Malaya they hadn't captured Singapore, they were a long way from Australia. I suppose we thought we'd better get back and see what's happening. There didn't seem any tearing urgency, cause we were suppose to have about half a million militia here anyway, in a home defence force. What we didn't realise of course is they had practically no equipment, cause any modern or useable equipment had been sent over

40:00 to the Middle East.

So whereabouts were you embarking and what ship did you embark on?

We, the advance guard again, I usually end up in those with the guns and all the vehicles, we drove from Palestine across the Sinai Desert, they'd made a beautiful road across the desert by levelling the sand, winding around the sand hills, levelling the hills and then pouring on hot tar,

40:30 and the tar soaks in and when it cools, dries, hardened makes a good solid road, good road and cheap road too. So we drove through the desert, there was sand hills and then all these empty 40 gallon drums that had contained tar still lying alongside the roads where they'd made the road. Crossed the Suez

- Canal to Port Tufic and we stayed in the railway yards there overnight
- 41:00 and in the morning they said, "That's your ship go and get loaded on that." It was about a 30 year old BISN, which is British Indian Steam Navigation Company ship, the Garmula. So we loaded on that and of course being artillery it had an old 4-inch gun on the stern, so we provided a gun crew for that and the rest us, there was only about a dozen of us, the advance guard, with
- 41:30 all the guns and vehicles on board we were the ack-ack defence. We established 2 posts, 1 on the bridge of the ship and one on the boat deck, the other high point. And we lived there, we didn't do any duties or anything, well we were on duty all the time as ack-ack. We ate, went down and ate with the rest of the ships crew and whatnot.
- So there were no troops on board?**
- Yeah there were a few, not many just like us advance guard, drivers
- 42:00 of other units, we had a lot of 2/11th Battalion -

Tape 7

- 00:31 **You just mentioned that you were on the boat for?**
- Yes we were on the Garmula, we took off and we called in at Aden for water, we didn't go ashore, very barren looking place. And then we headed out into the Indian Ocean and they said, "Sail independently, watch out for Germans radars." So we sailed independently, we never had any troubles. We called at Cochin
- 01:00 in India for coal and we were there 12 days I think.
- What did you manage to do in India for 12 days?**
- Coaling, cause we pulled in tied up to a jetty, there were 3 other ships with us all of the same type, the Garmula, the Nurmahal, the City of Hankow and the Havildar and the Havildar tied up
- 01:30 alongside us, the Indians bought out a barge full of coal, they put a ladder up the side of the ship, or a plank rather, a plank up the side of the ship and each Indian had a basket and he filled the basket with coal, he walked up the plank, have you ever seen people carrying bags of wheat, probably haven't that's happened long ago? No. The plank goes like this and they've got to walk on it, it's quite an effort to,
- 02:00 it's a knack to walk up there. They walk across the ship and tipped the basket down a shoot and then they walk down the other plank and fill their basket again and come back and do it again. And they have gangs of them so that there's a chain going, you can imagine how long it takes to fill the bunkers of a ship with coal doing it like that, it takes about a week. So when they'd filled our bunkers then they extended the planks across and started
- 02:30 on the ship that was tied up alongside us, the Nurmahal to fill her bunkers to. And we on the ship could roam around Cochin, there wasn't much in Cochin couple of theatres, nothing else really.
- One of the world's most boring places to have leave?**
- Yes yes well it wasn't official leave either but there was nothing else to do. We did get invited by a local rajah to
- 03:00 a magician show, you know Indian rope trick and all those things, their quite mystifying some of them. They wave their hands in the air and a couple of pigeons and out of the top pocket a rabbit, I don't know who they do it it's amazing, entertaining. So when all the ships were coaled we took the sea again, we had 1 Australian Corvette the Bathurst as
- 03:30 escort, it took us out into the Indian Ocean for 1 day and said, "There you are fellows on your way were going home." So it went back to port and we proceeded independently each ship took off in 4 angles like that and we opened our sealed orders that day I think and our next port of call was Fremantle. This
- 04:00 caused great excitement on board, but the Indian Ocean there were quite a lot of Jap [Japanese] raiders and submarines and things finding and sinking a few of the ships coming back bringing troops. So a severe storm came, just a couple of days later and this storm stayed with us for 12 days, a really rough storm. So to go from Sewers to Fremantle took us 8 weeks cause we were stuck out in the Indian Ocean. The storm was so
- 04:30 severe we were doing about 50 miles a day.
- Gee?**
- Cause you couldn't go any faster because the ship being loaded with trucks and things was very lightly laden and it was rolling like this and every time it pitched fore and aft, the propeller would come out of

the water, and if you didn't shut the engine off then and it went back into the water at full boar it could break the shaft. So every time the propeller came out they had to disconnect the engine

05:00 until it went back in the water and then switch it on again, shove you another 2 yards forward and then the propeller's out again, that's why we were only doing 50 miles a day for some of that time. But the storm kept the Japs away. When we finally sighted Rottnest we were 7 days overdue and considered lost, either sunk by the enemy or the storm. So we berthed at Fremantle on

05:30 1st of April I think 42.

April's fools day?

Yeah and we got leave and my parents, the last letter I had from them they were down at Northcliffe, way down south, down Pemberton way, but they said they were coming to Perth, they were going to lease the farm and come up. So we didn't know where they were, so we had to get to the post office and ring the Northcliffe Post Office to find out their address.

06:00 So we rang, I knew the postmaster of course, I rang him and he said yes 105 Fifth Avenue Inglewood, so the bloke I was with Eddy Phelps we caught the train up to Perth and caught the tram out to Inglewood and went to 103 Fifth Avenue, wasn't them. So went to all the other avenues, sixth, central, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth.

06:30 And we'd just about given it up then and we came back and went to Fourth and we said, "Oh well this is it, it's hopeless," our last attempt we'll try Third Avenue. So we walked into Third Avenue and - as soon as I walked onto the veranda and heard the kids' voices I knew it was the right place. Cause then there was great excitement then we had to be back on board the ship by midnight, which we were

07:00 and the ship sailed in the morning. But my, old George Moss who was to be, as I said my future father-in-law, he was AWL he'd gone out to see his family at Kenwick and hadn't come back in time so we sailed without him. It took us 7 days to sail across to Adelaide and the lightly laden ship did it rolled with the waves coming in from the southern ocean from the South Pole

07:30 the ship was rolling like this, quite exciting. We berthed in Adelaide and the wharfies were on strike so we unloaded the ship ourselves and we went up to Aldgate in the Adelaide Hills.

What do you think about the wharfies being on strike?

Oh nothing unusual. We were up in the Adelaide Hills sleeping in the open and they were arranging for us to be billeted, but I only slept in a billet,

08:00 the local clergyman I think for 1 night before we got 6 days disembarkation leave and we came home to Perth by train.

What did you do in those 6 days?

My parents of course were in Inglewood then so I stayed there and used to go into town each day and meet the blokes, who'd come on leave with me, and one of them stayed with us, George Sandercock, he didn't have a family anywhere so he stayed with us.

08:30 **Meet any girls when you were on leave?**

Well one day I was waiting at the Perth Railway Station for somebody, I can't remember who, I don't know who it was and I saw this girl coming across, it was about half past 5 knock off time for all the girls in the shops, and this girl was coming across Wellington Street, yeah that's right. I thought you

09:00 know not a bad looking blonde and she bowled straight up to me, she said, "Do you know George Moss?" That's the bloke I'd come all the way back from the Middle East with, that was her step father.

Another crazy piece of synchronicity happens to you once again?

Yeah, yeah. So 3 days later when our leave was over

09:30 and we were catching the train to go back to the camp in Adelaide my mate Stevo claims I said see that girl I'm going to marry her, 3 years later I did. But that's another story sort of thing. But we got back to

10:00 Adelaide and we were warned that we were going to Darwin, cause the Japs were expected to invade Australia. But they sent an advance party off, and I wasn't in it this time up to Terowie, which is well out towards the Northern Territory. But eventually they called them back and we went up to Queensland instead, we went to Townsville. We were there when Townsville was raided by the

10:30 first air raid on Australia by the Jap flying boats and the Yanks [Americans] were here by then, in fact the cities were full of them.

Sounds like you weren't too happy about the cities being full of Yanks?

Well everything was closed to us Australians, everything was out of bounds, I think there were 2 pubs in Perth that we could go to, everything else was Yanks only.

Why is that?

Saviours of the country or something or their money or something like that,

11:00 anyway.

Did that cause a bit of biff [fight]?

Yes it did hmm.

Did you ever get caught up in a bit of biff yourself?

Only in Brisbane hmm we had a run in there with them once and some killed there, not by the enemy but by each other, got quite serious. Anyway -

Can you tell me what you actually saw in Townsville when the

11:30 **air raid happened?**

Yes there were 2 Japanese flying boats came over, cause it was too far away for their ordinary bombers to get to and the flying boats were from Rabaul in New Britain. And they did drop a few bombs which fell in the Ross river which runs through Townsville, and they had search lights, the search lights coned one of them and the Yanks had

12:00 a fighter squadron at Garbutt Drome, which is the big army drome there and they sent up a couple of fighters and the Japanese bombers were coned over here and the Yanks were firing at something over there. Anyway the Japs dropped their bombs and went off, disappeared and never saw them again. But the following day the Yank pilot through, I think it was a national radio hook up told how he saved Townsville

12:30 and chased the Japs away. Not very factual but good public relations, good for the general hearing.

Did that make people a bit angry that they knew that that was not the case?

Well nobody knew except people that were in Townsville at the time. No actually it was good public relations, people feel a bit safer, got a bit of air support here. So we were at

13:00 Townsville for a while.

What were you doing actually when you were there in Townsville?

Well I spent most of the time in hospital because I must have picked up malaria in Greece and I went down with malaria and carted off to the army hospital.

I didn't know you could get malaria in Greece?

Oh you can get it in the Middle East, yes various places. And I no sooner recovered from that and I got dengue, which

13:30 is another fever which is rife up there at the moment in North Queensland.

Is it really, dengue?

Hmm and it can be fatal. So I had an attack of that and I was back in hospital and they gave me pills for it, I don't know what sort of pills they were but they had a rather unsettling affect, the world would tip like this and your hanging onto your bed so you wouldn't slide off, off the side of the world.

It's like

14:00 **a middle ear imbalance?**

I don't know what it was and then it would sort of wear off and another batch of pills were due, got the same thing again, I didn't like that.

And this was for the dengue fever?

Dengue fever yeah. From there we were -

Hang on just a second what was the hospital treatment like as far as the nurses and doctors?

Excellent, excellent, yeah you couldn't fault that at all, no. The army hospital was at Charters Towers

14:30 that's about 100 miles inland I think and then the convalescent camp, I went to that for a while which still further inland, 250 miles inland at Pentland I think the name of the place was.

And what was the convalescent camp like?

Good, nothing you just didn't do anything, you had a bed and they fed you 3 times a day and you did whatever else, the rest of the time was your own.

Sounds like you needed a bit of a break anyway?

Hmm, I was a bit lucky

15:00 because most troops there were militia troops which you're probably not conversant, there was quite a bit of divide between AIF [Australian Imperial Force] troops who had volunteered for overseas service and militia troops who were for home service only and wouldn't, or couldn't be sent overseas to help. And there was a bit of animosity between the 2.

Were you out numbered?

Oh well and

15:30 truly I think I was the only one there, but because I was the only one there I cornered all the females and I think I had more morning and afternoon evening teas and cakes and oh it's a wonder I wasn't overweight by the time I got back to camp.

So basically all the women were falling in your lap so to speak because you were AIF?

Yeah, yeah. It was an interesting place Pentland,

16:00 their boast was that when it rained and it rained heavy and frequently the water could run 3 ways, it could run back towards Townsville into the Pacific Ocean, it could run north into the Gulf of Carpentaria or it could run south west into Lake Ayr. They reckon that that was the actual point where the water could run one of 3 ways. Whether that was

16:30 dinkum or not I don't know, but it was a good story.

Sounds like a good piece of publicity to me?

Yeah exactly. So I got back to camp at Townsville and the troops were a bit upset there, that particular day a herd of wild pigs had stampeded through the camp the night before and knocked some of the tents over and frightened the dickens out of some of the troops, in the middle of the night. From there we were sent to Cairns because Japs were

17:00 pushing over New Guinea.

Have you been separated from your mates at all?

I was back with the regiment then.

Yep so you're back with the regiment?

Hmm. And when we got to Cairns we were divided up, by then I omitted to say that before we left the Middle East they changed the set up of the regiment from 2 Batteries to 3 Batteries, originally we were 2 batteries of 12 guns each, they changed to 3 batteries with 8 guns each.

17:30 Cause it was better for warfare sort of thing.

You can move 3 around to a more effective placement?

Yeah exactly, so when they divided us up at Cairns 1 Battery went up to Cape York and points along the coast there, 1 Battery went to Cairns and 5 Battery less half of it went to Gordonvale which is a fairly big town this side south of Cairns. But

18:00 B troop which I was attached to we went to Cooktown and we drove up overland through the old Palmer Goldfields to Cooktown and Cooktown was good, it was quite nice there. We had 4 guns and a company of Infantry and we were suppose to stop a Jap landing there on 2 beaches about 20 miles apart, just as well they didn't land.

Did you believe that there was a high possibility of them landing?

Oh there was at that stage yeah.

18:30 Cooktown was very interesting, though. It's on the Endeavour River where Captain Cook beached his ship when he was exploring here, they still mine several minerals there. The town was 30,000 at one stage but it's only 500 now since the Palmer Goldfield collapsed. Yeah it was a very interesting place and we had 25 tonnes of ammunition and we carted it from A to

19:00 B to C back to A to B to C, kept moving around in a big circle all the time, I don't know why. So we stayed there until we had Christmas 42 there and then a militia unit took over and the threat of Japanese invasion had faded then, we went back to Cairns and rejoined the unit. And went up the [Atherton] Tablelands and started training for New

19:30 Guinea.

What did you think about the prospect of having to go overseas again?

Well we'd been idol quite some time in Palestine retraining and what not and then we'd been attached to the militia up in North Queensland to supposedly strengthen them with experienced troops that sort of thing. So we hadn't done anything for quite a long while and we were quite happy to think of a move.

20:00 **Did you have most of your fitness and health back?**

Yeah, yeah. Up on the Tablelands we rejoined our Division, 6th Division, up till then we'd been detached and attached to the militia 5th Division for home defence. We were glad to be back with our own division and put our own signs on our vehicles which was a kangaroo over a boomerang, that was our sign. And we started training for

20:30 jungle warfare and this was quite different, instead of having 6 men to a gun they had 10 men to a gun because of the difficulties of the terrain and the jungle and what not. So we were doing jungle training and they took half of our guns away and gave us some Australian invention, one that had been made for parachute dropping, so it was in bits you had to put them together.

21:00 We later used those in New Guinea and they were a failure, it was much danger to our own troops as the enemy as the shells didn't always go where they were aimed.

Gee, so how did the training go with these particular guns?

Yeah we trained out in the jungle quite vigorous and quite natural training as it would be. The jungle wasn't very

21:30 nice the stinging plants and all those things.

You know what sort of nasties were out there?

Well there was a stinging tree with fairly sized leaves and you just had to brush against it and you got all these little needles in you and they'd stay for weeks. And we had all sorts of things, dysentery, scrub itch which was a little insect you picked up from dust,

22:00 got all over your body and you'd itch all the time, you'd nearly tear your skin to bits with the itch. All sorts of nasty little things.

And this is in the Tablelands?

Well we weren't in the Tablelands all the time we were all over the place training. At one stage we were coming down to Trinity Bay which is north of Cairns loading into barges going out to ships, the ships would do a little half mile circle

22:30 and then we'd offload from the ship onto the barges and make an imaginary landing on the shore, we were practicing landings. That was monotonous, it was cruel that, and the crews of the ships weren't very happy either, they used to say "We take them out and we bring them back now we wish they'd never come back." Yeah very monotonous training.

Do you feel like

23:00 **you were getting trained effectively for the jungle that your about to see in New Guinea?**

Well as far as we knew we were yeah. And then eventually we were bunged on a ship and we had a bit of problem with the Port of Cairns because the wharfies didn't want to load our ammunition, they reckon it was too dangerous so we had to load it ourselves. And when we got up to the islands we found the tools

23:30 and some of the equipment out of the guns had got lost, I'll just put it like that, got lost, so that made things a bit awkward -

So who lost them the so called wharfies you reckon?

Well I wouldn't like to say who lost them but we had our very deep suspicions. Half way up to New Guinea I was on a ship taking the equipment we ran on a reef in Oro Bay

24:00 off the north eastern coast of New Guinea and we were stuck on the reef for a day until we got a high tide and floated off again.

Sorry what are the conditions like on this ship taking you to New Guinea?

Very spartan, you had a wash when it rained, mind you it rained fairly often.

Great?

And living on a steel deck with no shelter got a bit warm up there.

24:30 **On a steel deck with no shelter?**

Yeah quite warm.

That's hard?

And we were doing our own cooking with woolly beef and biscuits. Anyway we eventually got to Aitape and unloaded, climbing down ladders, rope ladders into barges.

Probably pretty happy to get off the ship?

Yes, oh we got used to it by then I suppose.

25:00 **How long were you on the ship?**

About 10 days I suppose, don't really remember.

What sort of equipment did you have with you as you were unloading?

None, the ships derricks lifted the things off and loaded them into the barges and we, the barge went ashore and we pulled the guns out with tractors and things. Oh instead of motor

25:30 trucks to pull the guns we had no Caterpillar tractors for the jungle you see, so they pulled stuff ashore. We still had our ammo trucks but we had 10 wheeler ones now, all 10 wheel drive sort of thing so that you, and we also had big winches, power winches on the front because you got bogged a lot. So you'd run a long steel cable out and winch, put your motor and your

26:00 wheels in turning and your winch working you could pull yourself out of most places. Except once I got too far out to sea and I had to get 2 blokes to pull me out when the tide came in. The tides drop and rise quite a lot there. So 6 Battery were first, the 6th Division were relieving 3 American divisions because the American divisions wanted

26:30 relief so we were replacing 3 with 1. We went into action fairly quickly the Americans hadn't done any patrolling, they had landed and established a base between 2 rivers and that was their fronts. And our job was to go over the river and deal with the 18th Jap army, which comprised 3 divisions.

27:00 Anyway we started on that and from then on it was entirely different warfare, there's nothing like the frontline, no trenches nothing like that, you have a base which is surrounded by gun pits and what not and that's where you operate from. And just about everyday you'd send out maybe 20, maybe 30, 50 blokes on a patrol and you'd patrol out in the jungle and try and find and

27:30 ambush a Jap patrol, and the Japs would be doing the same thing from their base, which might be several miles away. So that you weren't face to face with your enemy all the time, it was only when you ran into one of the other patrols, or one of their patrols tried to get into your base, that sort of thing, so it was an entirely different type of warfare. Often the enemy could be just down at the corner and you wouldn't know

28:00 because there'd be a ridge of jungle in between and you wouldn't know he was there. It didn't make it all that good until you got used to it. And the Australian guns were a failure because they bounced around too much and the sight shifted and the shells landed in the wrong places, oh everything went wrong. So we were there for

28:30 in action for about 6 months I suppose before we were relieved.

Are you constantly out on your own little base or do you return to the larger base every night?

No the patrols each troop would have a little base, generally the 2 troops of each battery were in the one base, each battery would have a base, sometimes

29:00 it would have an extra base, an axillary base. But we would have to drive back to Aitape to pick up the ammunition, so we had a cloth canapé on top of the truck, one would be driving and the other one would be standing up with the rifle because there could be Japs anywhere, you never knew where they were, might just be a sniper or might be a patrol you see.

It sounds like you were pretty venerable to snipers?

29:30 Oh you were hmm.

You have many snipers?

Our first man killed in New Guinea a sniper got him through the head yeah. So you never knew and we had to wear long sleeves all the time, we had to take an Atebrin tablet everyday, that was anti malarial and we had to douse our trouser legs and

30:00 our uniforms generally with what we used to call B for betty, betty means B for bugs, to stop scrub typhus and various things you could pick up from the kunai grass. Kunai grass was a tall bamboo like thing that grew to about 6 feet high, very thick and the only way you could tell there was somebody else in it was the tops of the leaves moving as people were moving through and pushing the stalks.

30:30 There quite a lot of fun if you've got a, stuck in one of those with the enemy as well cause you never know who was who and they were full of scrub typhus those. And scrub typhus was quite a nasty thing, you lost all your hair off your body for a start and in many cases it was fatal. But as long as you used this betty on your clothes all the time and you had putties on so that there was no

31:00 space between your trouser leg and your boots to keep anything out of your ankles.

But there's other parts of you that are you know contacted with the rest of the?

Yeah well the scrub typhus you picked up low down, close to the ground, and hookworm was another thing you got there, that wasn't very nice either.

Did you manage to get hookworm?

No I never got either of them but I got malaria a few times,

31:30 I had a few spells with that. But there's different types of malaria ones fatal and the other 2 are not, the other 2 at that time couldn't be completely cured but the fatal one could, so it was the fatal one that I got each time and the one that could be cured. And if it was left you had it, but they could cure that one, so that was a bit lucky for the troops there.

Joy?

Hmm.

32:00 **What other sorts of nasties were out there in the jungle?**

We had a few pythons, one of our blokes his nickname was 'Dasher', so you can imagine sort of guy he was, he caught one and tied it up to a tree, about a 12 foot python, had it tied up to a tree. The python must have had a feed just prior because it stayed there, it didn't mind being tied up to a tree

32:30 and it was there until Dasher was ordered to release it. But that's the sort of joker Dasher was, he went out stalking a sniper one day and the biggest part of Dasher was his behind and that's where the sniper hit him, only a flesh wound, he kept his head well down.

Sounds like he was a bit of a character?

Yeah, oh yeah.

What was your

33:00 **camp site like, your main base was it under canvas?**

No we had tents yes, they bought a thing called a 2 man tent, each Soldier got a strip of triangular piece of canvas and if you put 2 together you made a little tiny tent, 2 man tent. And it rained every night of course in New Guinea, quite heavy every night, the night downfall we used to say. When we were at Aitape, when we'd come

33:30 back to be relieved for a while, have a spell for 3 weeks I think there was big RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] base there, 3 squadrons and they had a movie on every night and we were invited to go any night over to watch their shows and we quite often did. But we had to go across a river on a suspension bridge, okay so everybody would, after the show was over

34:00 you'd hurry home because the rain would start about 11 o'clock at night, just about every night. And one night the show was a bit longer and everyone was in a heck of a hurry to get home, too many got on the suspension bridge at once and there was some loud bangs and the whole lot ended in the river. And the river was full of crocs, but nobody got bitten, I think some walked on the water until the land, they got so frightened of the crocs, I'm sure they walked on the water. And the crocs

34:30 probably got a fright anyway and cleared off, with all this noise suddenly landing in the water, no one was bitten.

Was the rain a constant problem?

Yes your shirts actually rotted on your back cause they were wet, dry, wet, dry, wet most of the time, they just rotted away.

So would you regularly just have new clothing supplied to you?

Hmm,

35:00 used to get new shirts and things, new slacks. And of course by then we were wearing green dyed stuff too, everything was dyed green and that gave allergies to some of the troops, they were allergic to the green dye.

Oh really?

Hmm a few got that. I was twice bitten by the centipede, the centipedes up to 12 inches long, red, black and sort of a translucent

35:30 orange, quite handsome looking things but they've got a nasty bite. But it didn't seem to affect me, came up in lump like half a billiard ball, hard as anything but I didn't feel crook or anything and eventually it just faded away.

That's lucky, how did you know it was a centipede, did you see it?

I killed the blinkin' thing, they were under my mosquito net, cause you had to use a mosquito net every night you see even if you were sleeping on the ground you had to throw this mosquito net over you and keep the mossies

36:00 off. Cause the mozzies [mosquitoes] were so thick they'd settle on your leg and slap it like that and kill 120, lift your hand and there's another 120 there, you can just keep doing that and they just keep coming, clouds of them.

That must have been hard to deal with on a regular basis that amount of?

Hmm, hmm.

Constantly bitten?

Cause they weren't all malarial carrying, there was only one type of mosquito that carried the malaria - the anopheles, so

36:30 as long as you didn't get bitten by that you were hmm.

Can you recall some incidents where you were caught in action with the Japanese?

Yes one night we were on the, we travelled, there had been, New Guinea was originally colonised by Germany. In the First War of course the colonies were taken off

37:00 Germany and it became an Australian protectorate, that is under Australia control until such time as they could have self-government. So it was still an Australian protectorate when we were there, but the Germans had built a road along the coast which cause is the only place you could build it cause it's so mountainous as soon as you get inland. And there were coconut plantations all along, just in from the shore, I mean the sea was there the sand here and the coconut plantation started

37:30 there. And it was only this little strip of sand and when it was wet it was hard and you could drive on it, and it was much better to drive on that then try to drive on this remanence of this road, that had logs across it and holes and mud and sand, oh you know it was a mess. So we would race along the wet sand and as the waves went out you'd go out to sea a bit following the wet sand

38:00 as the waves come in you'd come in again, so you'd have a wavy course along. But if you misjudged then you got stuck and that's what like I did that time, took 2 blokes to pull me out. We were doing this once when the vehicle in front of us was hit, must have been a small patrol or something and cause that blocked the track and that upset things a bit.

38:30 We didn't get hit, in fact along the beach you were in more danger of being strafed by Yanks than, twice we were strafed by Yanks fortunately they weren't good shots because we had a load of ammunition on.

How can that mistake be made?

Well they made a far worse mistake than that, before the capture of Wewak, Wewak was on a little cape and there were 3 little capes, Cape Pus, Cape

39:00 Moem and Cape Wewak, and the Yanks were told to bomb the 3rd one, what they do they bombed the second one where our 2/1st Field Regiment was there, 7 Australians were killed and 4 other troops killed, 11 killed and they bombed the wrong place. Yanks are trigger happy. Thereafter any Yank bombers they would send 1

39:30 Australian plane to lead them, and he would go and drop a smoke float and that's where the Yanks would bomb. They couldn't trust them to go bombing on their own.

Well it sounds like they screwed up a few times?

Also there they finally, we had our 3 weeks off and then we went back into action again, before we went back they took away

40:00 all these Australian made 25 pounders, the short ones, the folding ones, took them away and they gave that Battery 4-inch mortars, I don't know if you know what a mortar is or not? It's a tube on a big iron plate and you actually drop a bomb in it and there's a charge down the bottom and it shoots the bomb out and the bomb goes out and then down like that, for over ridges and what not,

40:30 that was 6th Battery. 53rd Battery kept their ordinary guns but 5 Battery were given 6-inch guns, much bigger ones, 155mm, the equivalent to 6 inch. This was for long range work cause they could fire a heck of a distance further, but they were so big of course they could only operate along the coast, cause you couldn't get them inland anywhere. So we had a lot of fun with those to,

41:00 when they fired, there was only this little narrow section before the mountain ridges started, so all the traffic had to come along this little flat section. And before these big guns fired you had to stop the traffic, from in front, about 200 yards back from the blast from the guns. And this particular day there was a ute with 4 or 5 fellows standing in the back and an engineer officer in the front with the driver and we stopped them

41:30 and he said, "Oh rubbish, rubbish, rubbish, were going through," and he's an officer so what could you

do. So they went through and the guns fired, the windscreen was blown in and the blokes on the back were flown flat, they stopped after that, they didn't do that again.

I know were on the edge of a tape so rather than -

Tape 8

00:31 The same as in Perth there were many places that were of interest to troops that were out of bounds to Australians and it did come to a head at one stage and there was an actual fight between Australians and the Yanks and there were some killed, I wasn't there I don't know the details, yeah it came down through the grapevine.

How popular or shall

01:00 **I say unpopular with the Yanks with Australian troops?**

Not all that popular, in Townsville we had an incident, one of our chaps got into a bit of a blow in a pub in Townsville and was knifed, stabbed by an American, cause the Americans are pretty good with knives, and always have been. But he survived

01:30 but of course that meant that more things were out of bounds for us, not for the Yanks, more for us.

What was your reaction to those limits?

Couldn't do anything about it.

Sounds unreasonable though doesn't it?

Oh yeah I think it was unreasonable but we were some distance out of town and we didn't get in there too often, there wasn't all that much there anyway. There was

02:00 some theatres and the pubs of course and that was about it, even if they did have an area called Kissing Point in Townsville, it didn't live up to it's name for quite a while.

Until when?

Until we'd been there a while hmm.

Just getting back to where we were in your story before we changed tapes, what

02:30 **hadn't we covered in terms of the time you spent in the islands?**

I can tell you some little incidents, we had to take a couple of guns inland to reach a target, it was out of range and it was causing the troops a certain amount of consternation, they couldn't do anything about it. So we said we could take 2 guns inland a distance so we'd get within range of it,

03:00 and we'd be able to blow it out of existence. But the only way to get inland was on a river, now the rivers up there flow, there's lots of rivers and they all flow out of the ranges, the mountains of course so that the beds of the rivers are fairly solid, there's lots of gravel and stone and what not, because any soft soil is washed out to sea years ago.

Ed we might just pause

03:30 **I think there's a plane flying over, is that quite loud - ?**

The river was the only possible way of getting guns inland, so we had these Caterpillar tractors, we took 2 guns, Caterpillar tractor pulling each gun. We had our 10 wheeler trucks loaded with the ammo and we had guides, there'd been a flood there, there'd been a big flood

04:00 actually machine gunners had established a post on an island in the middle of the river. And this flood came down and washed most of them out to sea, cause it brought down trees this big, you know everything went out to sea. The engineers were building a bridge, putting in piles this thick, they weren't there when the river went down they'd either broken off or been washed out, out to sea. Anyway the river was now

04:30 calm, just a small soft current flowing out to sea. So we started in with the guns, the guns went first and the 2 ammo trucks followed after and we had a guide walking ahead to pick out the hardest parts of the river, the water was only 3 feet, 4 foot deep. And our vehicles, we had a snorkel to the carburettor

05:00 and the diff [differential] and the gear box and what not and around the spark plugs were all cased in asbestos grease to keep the water out so it wouldn't stop the engine. So were following these guides along and coming down the current, the current was just flowing slowly like this was an Australian hat and somebody yelled out "Grab that hat." Somebody did, lifted it off the water and here's 'Snowy' White,

05:30 one of our blokes floating along underneath the water with just breathing through his hat, it was little things like this that kept the morale up. Everybody had a good laugh about that.

So it was a prank?

It was a prank yeah, yeah, but it certainly made people smile for once.

I'm glad it wasn't a dead body?

Yeah.

That's what I was expecting you to tell me?

He wouldn't have kept the hat if it was a dead body, no there were a few of those to.

06:00 Anyway we got the guns up and they did the job successfully and got them back. But the riverbeds are quite hard in places, not the whole lot, you've got to pick it. And really that was the only way of getting anything heavy inland. They tried tanks there at one stage and they were good on the little coastal strip but of course they were no good in the mountains, they couldn't get anywhere. So we didn't use tanks a lot.

06:30 Another occasion when we were back on our 3 weeks leave in, not leave but recreational time in Aitape we did a lot of swimming there, there weren't many sharks there. But nobody had bathers of course so we went swimming in the buff, and it was quite a sight to see because we'd all come from the Middle East, were all very tanned and brown except for just where

07:00 your shorts were worn. And there was a new sister come, there was a general hospital there and the new sister was supposed to have said as she was driving up to the hospital from the aerodrome, "Oh look at all the swimmers there all wearing white shorts, white trunks." Actually we weren't wearing anything it was where they hadn't been sunburnt. But that's an understandable mistake I guess, we couldn't do anything about it. We did have

07:30 2 cases I recall of war weariness or whatever you'd like to call it. One joker they had him in a strait jacket in the hospital, somehow he got out of the strait jacket, one of our blokes too. Got out of the strait jacket, ran down to the sea and said, "I'm going back to Australia!" and jumped in and swam off, we haven't seen him since, he was going to swim back to Australia from New Guinea. And by the time, well they didn't have any

08:00 boats to chase him, a couple of blokes swam out and tried to find him but he'd gone. Another bloke's climbed up a coconut tree and wouldn't come down, he was up there for - oh - about an hour and a half and they tried to coax him down, he wasn't coming down, he'd had the war he was going to stay up there. Eventually he fell down and broke his leg and they whizzed him off to hospital and we never saw him again either. But

08:30 they were the only 2 cases of war neurosis we had in our unit.

What was your reaction to their neurosis?

Well just one of those things.

Did you find it comical or upsetting?

Oh well we certainly didn't find it comical, no we just sort of accepted it, this is what happens. Every unit had some cases I think, depending where they were and what they were doing. One Christmas there we were promised a bottle of beer per man,

09:00 we didn't normally get beer up in the front, so we thought this is great. So they called for volunteers to go back and get this ration of beer, 1 bottle per man. So my mate old George Sandercock drove the other ammo truck and I volunteered and we had an officer come with us named Mac. And we drove back, it was about a 4 hour drive back, at walking pace through on these old tracks,

09:30 and we got back to the depot where the beer was suppose to be and there weren't many blokes, there were a couple there and we managed to wake a couple up and they said, "Oh sorry there's no beer there was a lot broken coming by ship from Australia" he said, "We haven't got any left." But we thought oh this is great, but our officer wouldn't have a bar of it cause these blokes were smelling of beer. He went off to the base CO's [Commanding Officer's] tent who was

10:00 snoring off in his tent, half pulled the tent down and woke him up, and we got our beer too, all in unbroken bottles too, they had plenty there but they weren't going to give it away. And we got it back to the unit at dusk on Christmas day, that's how we spent Christmas day. And a lot of them drank it immediately, although it was warm, some buried it in the sea sand, wet sand to let it cool off and had it the following day. But that

10:30 caused a sudden rise in malaria cases, so that didn't work out so well after all. That little bit of alcohol just tipped them over into malarial attack when the Atebrin had been holding it down. Cause the Atebrin didn't kill it, it just held it in. And at one area we got in blokes were going down with malaria left and right and that was a defence like

- 11:00 self wound, you could be charged for getting malaria because you were suppose to take all these precautions. So they doubled the dose, we had to take 2 Atebrin tablets a day and where possible you had to go to an officer, open your mouth and he would put the 2 tablets on your tongue, then you would have to have a drink of water and then open your mouth and show him that you'd swallowed them. Cause there were that many cases of malaria, the division was loosing
- 11:30 that many men back to hospital it was affecting them. But it wasn't that it was eventually found that in that particular area we were in at the time there was a malarial parasite that was immune to the drug we were taking everyday, the Atebrin and that's why it wasn't stopping the malaria. When we moved on out of that area the malaria cases dropped again, but we were being blamed for not taking our tablets.
- 12:00 **That's a bit unfortunate?**
- Yeah unfair, we were quite cross about that, although we didn't know at the time that there was this particular anomaly in the virus, we were just cross cause we had to take 2 tablets. When I got back here I was more yellow than the Japs, cause it was a dye, actually, Atebrin.
- Oh really?**
- Yeah turned you yellow, you skin your face everything was yellow.
- 12:30 **Were there any other significant events during the time that you spent there?**
- Yes let me see now - yeah while we were at Aitape having this 3 weeks rest a mortar shell burst in our lines, our camp area one day, blew up a tent and smashed
- 13:00 a bit of equipment and what not, the officers were quite concerned, oh the Japs made a sneak raid there and dropped a mortar shell. It's funny they only dropped on shell in though, couldn't make it out. What actually happened it was the crew of that tend had got hold of a large earth ware jar about this big and about this wide which contained sulphuric acid for the batteries of the radios and they'd washed it out and cleaned it and made a home brew in it,
- 13:30 out of coconuts and some wild plums and stuff that grew there, some of that other native fruit. And because it was fairly potent they tied the lid down tight and dug a hole down under their tent, about 3 feet deep and buried it there to mature. And while we were out of camp it built up such a head that it blew up, shattered the tent and everything and that's what they thought was the mortar bomb. I don't think they ever knew that it wasn't a
- 14:00 mortar bomb, it was a home brew that blew up, but we knew.
- Sounds like a lethal brew?**
- Yeah well I bet it was too, just as well it might of killed some of them.
- Rocket fuel by the sounds of it?**
- Yeah, yeah cause some of the guys would drink anything, torpedo juice and, which put them around the bend, yeah, things weren't normal by any means there.
- What kind of abnormal behaviour did you witness**
- 14:30 **when they'd start getting on the torpedo juice?**
- Well I remember at our Atebrin parade one night one bloke 'Tiger' Chinnery was missing, couldn't be found, they eventually found him down the back of the camp, completely naked. Our latrines there were
- 15:00 44 gallon drums and you used it for 24 hours and then dieseline was poured in and the contents were burnt, because if you did the normal thing and dug a trench and buried it when the nightly flood came it would wash out, so you'd have it scattered all around the camp, and that wasn't very hygienic. So they used these 44 gallon drums with a
- 15:30 circular hole cut in the top. Well one morning Tiger wasn't feeling too good apparently, he was in a bit of a hurry and he rushed out but he sat on the wrong drum, the one that had just been burnt and it was red hot. So he was the only bloke to have a circular wound on the rear, in the regiment, he got well and truly burnt there.
- That couldn't have been too comfortable?**
- I bet it wasn't.
- 16:00 **Any other incidents involving action with the Japanese up there?**
- Yes we had, we were camped right on the beach, the beach was there and we had our half a dozen tents here and we had a guard there and we had a guard there, but somehow a Jap got in, he pinched 2 rifles
- 16:30 and some tins of woolly beef and stuff and he used the area as a toilet and then shot through. We never heard him, I wasn't on guard I was asleep but whoever was on guard, he either came in so quietly or they weren't keeping a good watch.

What kind of a stir did that cause in the camp?

Yes they weren't very happy about it, we didn't publicise it too much

17:00 because we weren't with the commanding officers or anything, we were just a small group on our own. But one of the big problems of the guards at night were smokers, they couldn't go the whole night without having a cigarette. So we would have to get them right down in the bottom of the slit trench and cover them with whatever we could, so the little glow wouldn't be seen, because a glow above ground would have fetched a bullet straight away. They

17:30 were a flaming menace smokers on guard duties, you felt like shooting them yourself.

What were they smoking up there?

Oh they had tobacco, it wasn't like Crete where they were smoking, or up the desert where they were smoking camel dung and whatever they could get hold of. Dried tea leaves was a favourite, I never

18:00 smoked - I never tried smoking dried tea leaves either, are you a smoker?

No.

Well you wouldn't know either.

Did you have any entertainment there?

Yes the one and only time we ever had live entertainment was when we were on our 3 weeks recreational stop at Aitape, we had

18:30 Gracie Fields. The one and only time we ever had a live entertainer and she was good, she put on the show at the air force, wherever they held the movies and everybody that could they got there, and you know she's got a very high pitched voice, yeah it was very entertaining. The only other ones that I can recall never came when we were in action but came into camp

19:00 was Billy Cotton's band came when we were in Tidworth, England, he was one of the big bands in those days. And we had various other entertainers in Queensland and what not, but that was the only time we ever had an entertainer when we were in action, was Gracie Fields.

You mentioned that you saw a lot of picture shows, what were the popular pictures in those days that you remember seeing?

I really don't remember any of them,

19:30 no it would be just the one picture and I think they would abbreviate it a bit to. Oh at one stage, not with us but in one area they found that the troops were watching the picture one side, cause they just had a big canvas screen up, no back to it just canvas, and the Japs were watching it from the other side. And the Japs couldn't have liked this particular show because

20:00 half way through the show they threw some grenades into our side. And that's when they woke up that there were Japs watching it too, but that wasn't in our area I don't know where that occurred.

Did you hear much of the Japanese atrocities while you were up there?

We never got any news really because we had no means of picking up radio except through the sigs'

20:30 radio, they had a couple of sets that were capable of picking up some of the radio stations. The only other news we got was what was either told to us or we had an area publication for New Guinea called Salt which was published about once every 2 months or something. And if you were lucky some of the air force would occasionally bring up a few, a

21:00 bundles of copies of it. And sometimes as they flew into their aerodrome they'd drop it over our camp before they got there. Well a lot of it would be blown to bits by the side slip of the plane and others would float out to sea, we wouldn't get, although you could swim out after them, some of our blokes did that too, swam out after them. So we didn't get that too regular. But actual news about New Guinea and what was going on elsewhere no we got very little of that. We got

21:30 more from Tokyo Rose which was the Japanese propaganda station.

What was your impression of her?

Oh she wasn't, she didn't sound very authentic you could tell it was propaganda. Not like old [Lord] Haw Haw in Germany, we used to pick up his what's it names too, his theme song was,

22:00 that well known - Underneath The Lamp Light. Do you know that song?

No how does it go?

I can't sing.

You sure?

I think of the name of it in a moment, no I can't think of it, a very popular song. People used to tune in to hear the theme song rather than hear Lord Haw Haw.

Did they raise a laugh though?

22:30 Oh you'd get a laugh out of it yeah, he coined the term 'the Rats of Tobruk', said they were always underground, well naturally they were underground. It's the safest place. He called them the Rats of Tobruk cause they were defeating the German attempts to capture the fort. Course the 9th Divi took it up as a compliment rather than a -

What about

23:00 **Tokyo Rose, what were some of the things she had to say?**

She was mainly against the Yanks because in the Pacific area, a lot of it you couldn't really follow or understand and you probably had to be an American to. But she'd make violent claims and threats of what was going to happen here there and everywhere, you know.

What about Japanese atrocities against the Islanders,

23:30 **were there any of those that you heard of?**

Yes I have seen Fuzzies we called them, the New Guinea natives, Fuzzies, they had fuzzy hair. They were very good mostly we used teams of them with knapsack sprays to spray oil films over any water, stagnate water or pools of water to stop mosquitoes breeding, we used that quite a lot and they thought,

24:00 that was a great job to them. They got paid a few pence a day and that was a fortune to them. They thought it was great. But we also saw a couple of their women that the Japs had have and they'd hamstrung them, that is they cut that big sinew at the back there so they can't walk properly and that prevents them escaping into the hills. So they got to stay with the Japs for the use of the troops, as women.

You

24:30 **saw those women?**

Yeah we saw them, we'd chased the Japs away and sort of rescued them, but they were beyond rescue. They were diseased and yeah in a bad way.

You were there?

I personally seen 2 of them yeah and there trying to walk with this hole thing.

Just exactly what condition and location did you find them in?

25:00 One was when we raided what was a Japanese base but it had been abandoned, they'd shot through the night before apparently but they'd left these women there, cause they couldn't move fast enough and they had no transport of their own to move them, there were no tracks. So they were just there, they probably would have just died if we hadn't got there and given them some food and -

Can you describe those bases, or can you describe that base?

Well it

25:30 was just an opening in the jungle, the major portion of the jungle had been taken away, spaces cleared between the big clumps of jungle, big clumps of brush or vegetation with cleared bits here and there, not very large cleared bits. In an area this size you'd probably have one big clump and a little bit of cleared sort of round there,

26:00 and they had all sorts of rubbish lying on the floor, on the ground. Old, a lot of old paper stuff, I don't know what it was whether it was their old newspapers. And a lot of postcards, they were a bit heavier, Japanese postcards all printed in, pre-printed in Japan apparently and issued to the troops, a lot of those lying around, some of them had quite nice pictures on them. Being a bit heavier cardboard they'd

26:30 lasted better, and their bits of tin and food scraps and ends of bunches of bananas, fish skeletons, just general rubbish.

So they were generally untidy were they?

Oh yes, yeah. I don't know what an undamaged camp would be like,

27:00 we never saw one cause all the camps we occupied had been damaged before, with either shell fire or something before we got them.

Just what condition did you find the women in, or the woman in that you found?

Pretty poor, pretty thin, pretty half way round the bend.

What was her reaction to your arrival?

Well almost as frightened of us as they were of the Japs, first, cause

27:30 we were males and they thought oh yeah it's on again. But after a while, it took quite a while to vacate them and get them to understand that we weren't there, we were there to help them not hurt them. And as soon as we could get hold of a fuzzy, a New Guinea native, and we used those as carriers and things quite a lot.

How did you treat them?

What our native men,

28:00 carriers?

Well just like this women for instance when you found her, how was she treated?

Oh we'd give her something to eat, give her water, indicate that she could have a wash if she wanted to. Give her some extra clothing if she wanted it because most of their clothing was in shreds, if they were still capable of that they would probably feel embarrassed. I think they were well beyond that, but we'd fit them out in clothing yeah, army

28:30 clothing.

What was the reaction amongst the troops upon discovering that women?

I'd say pity and anger, sadness perhaps, cause they really were an object of pity, they probably just go back to their native village and die, they wouldn't have had much help otherwise.

29:00 Some of them may of survived. We occasionally got an Indian ex-prisoner of the Japs too, cause they must have taken a lot of Indians and they were using them as porters, as we were using New Guinea natives, only we were paying them, Fuzzies. They were using the Indians captured, probably Indian troops from Malaya, Singapore perhaps Hong Kong using them as

29:30 unpaid slaves. And they were, they couldn't speak our language either, I know we rescued 2 out of a swamp, they'd, up to here in swamp and they'd walked across this swamp, they'd escaped from the Japs and got into this swamp and I don't know how long it took them to walk through this swamp but they got out, they were covered in leeches of course and blood,

30:00 and of course muck from the swamp. We cleaned them up and give them something to wear and send them back to base and hopefully they would survive and get back to India eventually, or wherever they came from.

What was the procedure for occupying one of these Japanese camps when you raided them?

Oh you would burn anything that needed burning, very little that you would

30:30 need salvaging. If anything perhaps looked like a document or a map you'd save it and pass it onto somebody and might be able to understand it, probably of no use anyway but you couldn't miss out on a chance. Any ammunition you'd bury or burn, explode, any clothing or anything like that you'd burn.

31:00 You certainly wouldn't occupy it, no you'd want somewhere a bit cleaner than that. Mostly you'd just bypass it and go onto the next objective. We used the Fuzzies quite a lot because our raiding parties had to take with them radios of course, it was the only means of communicating back to base,

31:30 and they were big and clumsy and they'd have wet batteries, so we'd have natives to carry the wet batteries. We had a lot of trouble at first cause the natives would carry the batteries, anyhow upside down, by the time they got there, there was no electrolyte in the battery, it had all drained out, probably on their legs and they wouldn't realise it was sulphuric acid.

Maybe we'll just pause there for this plane Ed - ?

Of course nothing else to do. Two-up

32:00 of course, some people made quite a lot of money out of two-up and some lost quite a lot. I didn't gamble and I didn't drink and I didn't smoke, must have been a goodie-goodie, mustn't I? But some of the blokes used to give me money to hold, because as I say I didn't gamble. I sometimes held in excess of a thousand pounds of people, because one bloke in particular he had a

32:30 cattle station in Queensland with his brothers and when Japan came into the war they drew straws to see who would stay and continue raising meat for the troops and who would join up. And old Fred lost or won, whichever so he came as a reinforcement to our regiment, and he was always at the 2 up and he was always winning to. So he used to give me 500 pounds to hold, because if he went back the next night and lost he would loose

33:00 the 500 as well. So when the next night came along and I'd give him a 100 and keep the 400, if he won okay he'd give me some more to hold, if he lost well he'd only loose the 100 he's still got the 400 left, so

I was a walking bank. I never charged interest, didn't I miss out!

You must have been very trustworthy?

Oh well they're your mates.

It sounds like they trusted you more than themselves?

33:30 Oh well the gambling urge gets them yeah, they keep thinking oh well I'll just have one more bet and I'll win it all back and they lose that. It happens you read about it in the papers now don't you, that case up in Karratha I think, the bank manager didn't he do something like that?

I haven't heard the story no?

Got away with \$9 million or something before they caught him.

Gosh out of control?

Yes cause he was the manager so he was able to cover it up,

34:00 until it got too big and he couldn't.

Ed what happened when the war was announced over, or there was a cease fire?

We were told that the armistice was on and the sigs tuned their radio in and we could hear, we got Melbourne I think, and you could hear the crowds chiacking and cheering and what not and oh it sounded great.

34:30 And oh we listened in on and off for about 2 hours to this and suddenly shells started landing all around us. And we had to open fire in return and we fired a thousand shells that day and eventually, there'd been a few Jap guns we hadn't been able to pinpoint, they'd been harassing us for quite some time. They were in caves with only the barrels sticking out sort of thing

35:00 and air reconnaissance couldn't pick them up and we couldn't pick them up by triangulating the sound and what not because of all the hills and things in between. Anyway I understand they had to drop the Japs a radio set so they could pick up the Emperor from Tokyo telling them that the war was over, they wouldn't believe it until they heard the Emperor say so.

35:30 So they were out to attack us that day after we'd had, got the amasesis, so we fired the last shots.

So how many shells did you say you fired that day?

About a thousand, all 3 batteries opened up. Because we were a bit annoyed the war was supposed to be over and here they are shelling us, but they were only shelling us because they hadn't been told that the war was over.

Bit of a precarious

36:00 **situation to be in?**

Yeah, yeah, you would have hated to get knocked off then.

For sure, when you've made it so far?

Yeah, yeah. I was very lucky as I say I got a bullet through the shoe there and I got a bit of shrapnel in my hand there, you can see the scar still, but it wasn't that bad I never reported it we just kept going.

That was on that day?

That was on Greece yeah.

Oh right?

A shell

36:30 burst under the truck sort of thing and a bit of shrapnel went through there. But we had to keep going so we put bandage around it and kept on.

So what happened after you'd, like released a thousand shells?

Well their shelling stopped, we were told much later by a prisoner that we'd actually destroyed their gun, the one that was, the troublesome gun and the others had knocked off,

37:00 I don't know why whether they'd run out of ammunition to they decided it was getting a bit hot so they stopped. And eventually they allotted points, you got so many points for service and if you were married you got extra points and what not. That's how they discharged them, longest service first and I think about the second batch that left our mob

37:30 I was in because I had long service. So we boarded the same ship that had taken us up there the Duntroon and we got, we called in 2 other ports down the coast to pick up other long service troops. And when we got down to Finschhafen they commandeered us there and loaded on a lot more troops

and we went

38:00 to New Britain, which is another big island there and up some more troops to Jacquinot Bay and took them around to occupy the capital Rabaul which was the main Japanese base for the whole area. Cause they had no other means of getting occupation troops there, this was after the war. And we didn't know how the Japs were going to receive us so we crept into their harbour there at midnight with everything blacked out, we had war ships with us as well,

38:30 and in the darkness I walked into a gun barrel and just about knocked myself out. I was crook for a long while with that.

What size gun barrel?

Oh about a 4-inch I think. So I saw the doctor on board the boat but he couldn't do anything and when we got back to Townsville they had leave, everybody went ashore except me I think, I couldn't be bothered I was feeling to crook.

39:00 But my mate George bought me back a block of ice cream, I think that was the best medicine I'd ever had by the time we got to Townsville I'd recovered, not Townsville Brisbane.

Did you hear of the bombs being dropped on Japan?

Yes not much detail other than they'd dropped an atomic bomb.

39:30 **Did that raise much curiosity?**

We didn't know they'd dropped two, yeah oh we thought that's a good thing -

I'm fine thanks Alice, I'm not sure about Ed, how are you?

Yeah I'll survive, aquapura.

Well shall we wind up and change tapes there.

Tape 9

00:31 **So you arrived in Brisbane?**

Yes we disembarked there we weren't there very long and we entrained to Melbourne, didn't stop at Sydney. In camp at Melbourne for a couple of days and then we were onto Adelaide, from Adelaide to Port Pirie,

01:00 Port Pirie home, in cattle trucks, cattle trucks with a bit of straw spread on the bottom, that's all we ever travelled in across the Trans Continental. Carriages were reserved for other people.

Other people like whom?

Like Yanks and air force, just ordinary soldiers you know.

You get the kennel?

Cattle trucks will do us, put a bit

01:30 of straw in for them, the dust almost killed you but it got you there, where you were going.

Was your morale pretty high knowing that you were going to go home?

Oh yeah absolutely.

What was the first thing you did when you got into Perth?

I got put on guard.

Great?

Yeah, yeah, we landed Claremont Showgrounds was the depot

02:00 and of course they had a guard on every night, even though the war was over they still had a guard on, cause there's stuff there that could be pinched. So I couldn't let my parents know, we didn't have a phone, I had no way of letting them know so I wasn't very happy about that. The person who was responsible for it was well known for this sort of thing, wasn't at all popular with AIF

02:30 troops. But I had my revenge later, after the war I became a trammie and was driving trams and this particular character lived at home and he worked there, he was in the army, he used to catch the same tram every night of the week at the same spot. And a couple of times I drove that tram and he never caught it. I don't

03:00 you if you, you probably don't remember the old trams we had here they had a platform back and front and they had a collapsible gate, extendable gate across each platform. And if you put the gate up you couldn't get on, so when I saw him waiting there I'd put the gate across. And I was quite within my rights in doing this because you stop the front platform being crowded and the driver could have been impeded. So I did that twice to him.

Good on ya?

Yeah

03:30 **So you finally got off guard duty, how were you demobbed?**

Oh a few days later just there and then, just handed in your, I think we handed in our uniforms and things, must have had something to wear to come home though. I think we probably handed in like the surplus things and just kept what we were wearing.

04:00 No I don't recollect anything, oh we had to do a test and aptitude test for a possible employment after the war or something like that, but that was all I can't recollect anything else at all.

Did you know what the aptitude test said about your aptitude?

In my case I think I said I would like to do

04:30 woodwork or something and I had fitting sizes and things together and putting a certain shape in a corresponding shape hole, that sort of thing. I think I did well out of that because that was what I was interested in, I wasn't looking for an office job or anything. But I never really heard any results, they didn't tell you.

What sort of thing were you thinking about doing?

Well I had no

05:00 idea what I was going to do, whatever came along, jobs weren't at all plentiful so I finished up going on the tramways.

And where did you end up living?

Well we lived, I was demobilised on the 6th October, I was married on the 24th of October.

Did some quick work?

Yeah well Alice was

05:30 stationed at Bandiana which is on the Victorian, New South Wales border, what's the big town there? Anyway that's where she was stationed and I saw her on, I went AWL off the troop train and stayed there overnight and then went onto Melbourne the next morning and caught up with the others and they covered for me. So that was okay.

06:00 And she got, put in for leave and got leave and came home and we got married and of course once she got married she could get out of the army, out of the Women's army so she did. So we lived there for about 12 months I think, my parents went back to the farm and they cancelled the lease and went back. And we lived there for about 12 months and then we moved down to Bennett Street in East Perth because it was closer to the tramway's barn. We lived there while our house was being built

06:30 in South Perth, we had a house built in South Perth which was very close to town also. And we lived there for 28 years until we moved here 20 odd years ago.

Did you take advantage of any services or?

No, no.

Why's that?

I would have qualified I think but there was a certain, there was an age cut off for something

07:00 and as I'd put my age up a year I cut myself off from some of it, I'm not sure what. I think going back to university was one of them, or not going back but going to, cause I never went to university, I never went to high school either. That put me out of that but I wasn't really interested to going to that, I just wanted to get a job and get on with it.

Did you enjoy the tramways?

Oh yeah they were quite good,

07:30 had a lot of fun there one way and another.

Sounds like mateship extended into your job after the war then?

Yeah there were a lot of ex-service blokes on it, quite a lot. I was there for 5 years and then I

transferred over to the railways to their investigation section, in other words their police section.

Oh right what does that involve?

Well 2 things that didn't

08:00 disturb me at all was walking along the railway line looking for somebody's foot, that had been cut off in an accident and using a shovel to pick up the remains of a lady that had been run over by a train. But it was the army's experience, in a day's work.

You'd seen it all before?

Hmm, yeah, yeah. But I got into trouble there on the railways,

08:30 I didn't believe you should only just catch the ordinary working man, the ordinary porter or whatnot for pilfering or whatever, I thought the upper authorities were equally, should have been apprehended equally which I did and got into a lot of trouble over it cause your not suppose to do that sort of thing. It's all right catching the ordinary

09:00 wage man but leave the salary people alone, their not to be touched.

So what sort of things would these salary men end up pilfering?

Well I can quote one case to you, I didn't go to our own chiefs because they wouldn't take any action so I went direct to the police force, I saw an inspector

09:30 and explained the position to him, he allocated a detective to go with me, we went out to a place in, oh one of the suburbs and we apprehended a railway painter, a painter employed by the railway who was suppose to be painting west Perth station who was home erecting a garage with timber and iron that had been delivered on a

10:00 railway truck from railway stores. And of course that involved a few how this could be done, how could it happen, how those quantity of stores could be taken out with no accounting for them and one thing lead to another and yeah.

So you managed to get him in the end?

Oh certainly we got this bloke and the same day we got about 5 others and

10:30 yeah, we got a couple of truckload of goods back, railway material back all on the one day.

Gee?

Oh there was plenty of it went on in those days.

So did this make you unpopular?

Very, hmm, you don't do those things was the attitude. It's all right catching the porter on a low wage who yeah.

11:00 And some of the things they did really made you mad, now I can quote a case, people up in the goldfields, this particular case once a month they would buy a case of fruit from the markets and that was their fruit supply for the family for the month. They put it into the goods shed to be railed up to Wiluna or wherever it was,

11:30 a porter would come along with his hook, break a plank on the side of the fruit case and take out an orange or whatever it was. Okay that was 1 orange gone, but then it went through several hands until it was actually loaded in the railway trucks to go up there and by that time half the case had gone. So when the case got up there if there was any fruit left in it is was very little. And he'd paid for that case, he'd paid the freight on it and what'd he get, practically

12:00 nothing all because somebody wanted an orange. That used to annoy me that. And another thing that happened too, people down south would kill a yearling cow, beef, clean it, you know remove the in trails and rail it up to Perth to be sold in the meat markets up here. But on the way somebody would fancy a kidney and they'd take the kidney

12:30 out of the carcass. So when it got to the markets the health inspectors would say oh there's no kidney in that one it must have been deceased, that carcass can't be sold it's got to be burnt, it's finished. So the poor chap that sent it up from down south, lost his carcass got no money returned for it and had to pay the freight as well.

So these were the people that you were trying to?

13:00 These are the people I delighted in catching.

Yeah?

Yeah, it's a bit rough, isn't it, those sort of things.

Oh well your doing the right sort of job there?

And then I went onto after that, I fell down an inspection pit in the middle of the night and broke a few ribs and things and I finished up getting the job on the West Australian.

13:30 **Well that sounds like a comfy sort of a job doing a bit of proof reading?**

Yeah I was proof reader for 20 years.

Did you enjoy that?

Yeah it was good -

14:00 ...

14:30 The only other point was I was

15:00 going to mention why I thought our unit was unique. We had the lowest numbers, cause each state started from WX was West Australia, SX was South Australia, NX New South Wales, VX Victoria, that's how they started from 1. We had WX1, we had DX 1, which is Northam Territory, we also had -

We might just have to pause there for a moment this plane is -

15:30 **unbelievable, it sounds like it's right on top of you?**

Yeah they go over, just over a bit, I think they take a wide circle and then head for Singapore.

Oh I see, that's a bit better, so yeah you were saying you're quite unique?

Lowest numbers yes, we were

16:00 the first British troops, first Australian troops to land in Britain in World War II, we were the first artillery unit to be, Australian artillery unit to be equipped with 25 pounders, we were also the first one to lose them all in Greece. We were the first and only Australian artillery unit to fight in snow, in the last war, we were the first one field artillery to fire on

16:30 German forces, what else did we do, we've got a whole string of firsts I can't recall them all but that will do to your honours.

Do you think that it's made all your blokes a lot closer having all these firsts?

I guess it has yes, would have helped anyway.

How much of a strong association do you still have?

We have the remanence of quite a strong association yeah. We have about 8

17:00 active members now, on Anzac Day we'll probably have probably the same 8 will march but we'll have another dozen sons, grandsons marching in lieu of their parents. And we'll have 1 or 2 eastern staters who haven't got a unit here to march with, they'll be marching with us. The artillery units raised

17:30 in the eastern states, we'll have 2 or 3 of those probably, but that's all we'll have on Anzac Day now. And to our monthly meetings we get down as low as 3 so were going to fold, the association has folded in South Australia and in New South Wales so it's going to fold here soon, were the last one going. Which is a pity but that's how it goes.

How do you usually celebrate Anzac

18:00 **Day?**

We got to the march and then we usually have a dinner, I think there's possibly more drinking than dinner, I don't go I'm with the family, various members of the family come here and we go and have a lunch somewhere and that's it. I like my drink but I don't want to just spend an afternoon doing it sort of thing.

And how important is Anzac Day to you?

Yes

18:30 I'd say it's quite important, not for us but to remember what Australian troops have done over the years, right from the Boer War on. I think, they don't teach much history in schools nowadays but I think some mention should be made of these things.

What do you usually think about,

19:00 **as your part of the service?**

On Anzac Day itself?

Yeah?

Well of course it recalls many incidents, many of our fellows who never came back or have since gone. I've only got 1 mate left now out of about 12 close mates.

19:30 But they all, time catches up with us all.

How important has mateship been to you throughout your war experience?

A wartime mateship is something that to most people would seem abnormal, it's much closer than a husband wife relationship but that's because it's different. There's no sexual element in it

20:00 at all, it's purely, it's really something you can't explain and to people that haven't experienced it can't sort of grasp, it's something that is quite unique. I mean after all when you spend 24 hours a day 7 days a week for 5 years with somebody, and a lot of that time depending on them for your life, it does form a basis

20:30 for camaraderie that's quite different.

How do you think your experience in war has changed you?

Well probably a lot more knowledgeable about things, geography anyway, oh that's another thing were the most travelled artillery unit. Yes

21:00 you certainly experience life in many different ways, probably made you more tolerant, although my wife might decry to that. No it does change you undoubtedly but exactly how I don't know.

Do you have any regrets about

21:30 **signing up to the AIF?**

No, no, none at all. I think it was sort of, I suppose it's a sort of duty really. I had a girlfriend when I enlisted and she said, and I can remember her exact words, she said, "Go do your duty,

22:00 I'll still be your cutie, go do your duty." So that's one person anyway that regarded it as a duty. I suppose it was really if you were in a position, if you were able you didn't have a family of kids and that sort of thing, I don't think those people should have had to go. You were young and

22:30 free and unattached well, just the same as the average person would go to the help of someone who had an accident or something. You certainly wouldn't go to the help of someone in a burning house if you had a wife and 6 kids and so forth, because you have responsibilities, if you are single you don't have a lot of those.

23:00 Some people went for the, thought it was a trip, free trip, some went because they, members of their family expected them to, some went to get away from situations no doubt. I don't know if there'd be any general reason for enlisting.

Do you have any general life philosophies

23:30 **that you'd like to pass onto future generations?**

I don't know about future generations we seemed to have done all right we can't get rid of our own kids without a stick. Our son comes in 5 nights a week, our youngest daughter was here this morning, our older daughter rang and her husband rang, our adopted daughter, or our foster daughter, not adopted

24:00 is always out here. I have a grandson who's a captain in the army, he's at the moment training helicopter pilots, his with the First Aviation Regiment in Oakey next to Toowoomba in Queensland. And he's done 3 terms of peacekeeping in Bougainville. But he never went to Iraq because he's too valuable training helicopter pilots.

Sure?

And one of the things they have to do

24:30 training helicopter pilots they fly to a certain height, he's got the trainee pilot alongside him and he's sitting next to him. They get up to a certain height and he reached across and switches the engine off, and the trainee pilots got about 8 seconds to decide what he's going to do before he's got to take over to save them. So that's -

I hope he gets paid really well for that job?

Oh I think he does.

That sounds like hell on

25:00 **earth?**

Well he's just been on a world trip to South Africa or somewhere, South America. Yeah he's coming home next month actually 10 days.

Lucky man?

Hmm.

Well Ted I'd like to thank you very much for talking to us today for the archive it's been quite an inspirational experience you have certainly had a very, very long service under some pretty extreme conditions so thank you very much for sharing it with us?

Yes it's certainly an education anyway, if nothing

25:30 else, like every other job I suppose you get ups and downs, the good times and the bad times and I think it's fairly well known that you remember the good times and quite quickly forget the bad times. Which is probably a form of self-defence anyway.

Yeah?

INTERVIEW ENDS