

Australians at War Film Archive

Alan Pope - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 18th March 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1775>

Tape 1

00:36 I made notes and been writin' over there but I mean I've just got to take it from memory now. The only big problem is that sometimes I might run over meself and have to go back and that's gonna...

That's fine. So if you could just start by telling us where you were born?

I was born in Cobar on the 17th of January 1921.

01:00 My father was a porter on the railway station at the railway there and so that's (UNCLEAR) there and so I don't remember anything about that because I left there when I was small but one episode me mother kept drilling into me that I was passed off as dead there by a doctor as a baby

01:30 and they sent Mum home to by taxi to the place where they used to live and the nurse while the nurse laid me out and while the nurse was layin' me out she saw a pulse beatin' in the neck and she called the doctor and they revived me and they sent another taxi. My Mum had just paid the taxi and was when the other taxi came racin' up blowin' the horn and so the taxi

02:00 that took her home he sang out to her, to wait there was somethin' wrong and then hopped in a taxi and went back and so Mum often told me about that but I remember nothing about that and the first thing actually I remember was down at a place called Uranquinty. That's way down out from Wagga [Wagga Wagga], west of Wagga somewhere and I was only a youngster and all I can remember there was aeroplanes coming

02:30 up across and coming up over the back fence and disappearing and I said to me mother years after I could still remember that. She said, "You can't." She said, "You must have been too young." She said, "That was at Uranquinty." So that's how I realised that that's what it was.

Where did you go to school?

At Fairfield but Dad was a like a young fellow on the railway and when the First World War diggers [soldiers] come home they got preference for jobs.

03:00 So Dad was shifted from one place to the other and he did Cobar, Gerogery, Uranquinty and the Rock in three places round there and from there we went to I had a brother born there in Uranquinty in 1923. We from there we went to a place called Piper's Flat, which is near Portland out in the middle west

03:30 there. We was there in 19 October 1924 because I had another brother born there. I at that time well say 1921, well see that'd put me around about three year old but there's a couple a things I remember there. Mum gettin' a scare with a bloke walked in alongside of her one day in the house and she just swash spotted him. She just said to me, "Get your father."

04:00 With a railway station and house was right on the edge of the railway station and I yelled for Dad and then the bloke took off and another one that's vivid in me mind from that was a dirty old tramp, whiskers and filth all over him, come to the door and he said, "Missus, could you spare me a billy a water, hot water, boiling water if you can," and Mum said, "Oh there I'll get it." Away she went

04:30 and I'm lookin' at this dirty old tramp and Mum only gone a bit and she come back and she said, "Do you know there's a broken egg in the bottom of this and your tea leaves?" and he said, "Oh yes and it'll be cooked by the time I get back to camp." Well then from there we went to Fairfield, a suburb of Sydney. That was in 1926 because my sister was born there and that's when

05:00 I went to school. Me eldest brother, he was a bit over twelve months older than me, he had not been to school or anything. Both him and I went to school there and Dad had risen from there to a what they call a night officer. He did all night work and he was in charge of the station at night time. A couple instances one that when we were goin' to, talkin' about school.

Can you tell me about them later cause we'll go back

05:30 Mmm.

to talking about school.

So if we come back to the stories about school later Alan and if you just tell me what happened when you left school. When did you sign up to the army?

When I got to go back into there before the school at Fairfield, we was only there till 1928, 1928 when Dad's father died and we he had to go back on the property. That

06:00 was thirteen mile out from Stuart out a place called Gum Flat and there was a small school on the place there that no more than ten or eleven children ever went to school at it. We didn't get teachers all the time because it was too lonely for a lot of them and we but we had our schooling and I passed what was then called the QC [Qualifying Certificate] when I was ten year old and never went back to school. I

06:30 turned eleven in the January and course in those days Depression was on and there was a lot of work on the place to be done and the eldest brother, he'd already left so we left school and we worked on the place and that and I was only then eleven year old.

And then when did you sign up to the army?

I joined the army at, well the war broke out

07:00 and I first enlisted in 17th of May 1940, cause I'd went back and told my girlfriend I'd just enlisted and she said, "What, on me birthday?" That's how I know what day it was. Anyhow went for months and never got a call up and then they had a big recruiting drive in Wellington. So I went in there and

07:30 enlisted again but Dad vowed that after he saw what the First World War diggers come to, "None of his boys'll go to war." Anyway I heard nothing from about that. So it was usual for around Christmas time, a bit after, we always had a break and we used to go to Sydney some of the boys for a holiday. So in January I said to Dad, "I'm going for a fortnight's holiday." He said, "Yeah, righto." So I went to Sydney.

08:00 Went out to Sydney showground on the 16th of January 1941 and enlisted and went straight in. "Twenty two, unemployed." Put me age up and I was unemployed. So that's how I got into the army.

And then where did you go with the army?

I was a week in the showground camp, Sydney showground, then there was six of us

08:30 sent from there to Rutherford camp, West Maitland. I was a new recruit but this officer gave me a sheaf of papers. He said, "And hand these to the officer when you get to the railway in East Maitland. Someone'll be there to meet ya." So I took 'em up and I one funny instance I can put on that is we got to and I still don't know I thought it was

09:00 Newcastle but it could a been Broadmeadows but which station we was at the time I don't know but right across from the station was a pub and of course that's where the boys went. The guard's gettin' the train ready to go and said, "It's all out," and I panicked and I sang out to him, "You can't go. I've got these men over here." So a few a the guard and a couple of station hands that come racin' over and brought the blokes back and we got out at East Maitland and the

09:30 and the army blokes were there to meet us and I got into trouble too there because I seen this officer and I just went and handed him the papers. "I was told to give this to you," and the old sergeant went crook. He says, "Don't get onto that. You've got to pass 'em through. You should salute the officer." Anyhow but that's where I went and then from Rutherford we did a lot of training in Rutherford. Then we went from Rutherford to Dubbo

10:00 but we come on the train up from Rutherford up to Werris Creek and then went across from Werris Creek on the back line. "Slow boat to China," we used to call it because you could walk as fast as the train went. We went out the army camp at Dubbo, which is now where the army, where the zoo is at Dubbo and we was there for about I think about six weeks. And then they called for twenty six

10:30 volunteers for truck drivers to go to Bathurst. There's a bit about that you can get later on if you think to ask me and from Bathurst went down there. I'd never driven a truck in me life but we wanted to get away because the war would be finished before we got away. So we get our lessons at truck driving and loading and breaking, I was in the supply column then taking us food and then

11:00 the amount of food we had to limit to each number of persons and things like that and how to break the food up into quantities. Then final leave was on the end of June. We had final leave the end of June. After final leave the group that I was with went by train over to Western Australia to the

11:30 Northam camp that was down there. They broke down on the Nullarbor Plains and we had to wait there a couple a nights. We was in Northam for I think from memory a couple a weeks and then we went down to Fremantle and caught the a boat called the Siberjack to Singapore, landing over there either the 7th or 8th of August

12:00 1941.

And how long were you in Singapore for?

Well it'd be straight out years you could say right till I went to was taken to Japan as a prisoner of war but we camped in tents in the Singapore Island for awhile. Then we like we took north and went up to a place called Malacca where we were there camped in the showground and then we

- 12:30 did relieving company between Malacca and a place called Segamat. They'd have it for a period of a fortnight and then the change over and backward and forwards. Then when the war broke out on the 8th of December we moved to a place called the Coronation Estate at Kluang and that's where I
- 13:00 witnessed, or not witnessed but was caught up in the first bombing raid when they the Japs [Japanese] bombed an airport, the aerodrome not far off where we were and from there we got the word to move back cause the Japs had broken through at a place called Muar. So we went back and as we were goin' back we were pickin' up stray soldiers that had come been caught up in it and
- 13:30 had to fend for themselves, also some of them were wounded, and then got back onto Singapore Island. Then they picked out all us that had infantry training, which I'd had at war Rutherford camp and Dubbo, and we were taken off the ASC [Army Service Corps] and put into rifle company. When I got back I onto the Island and Singapore Island I had a 303 and five rounds of ammunition
- 14:00 but we were there for awhile and when the Japs through the shelling and that and when the Japs landed we were told to get back in a hurry and going through the rubber plantation, "I better be quiet," I went head over turkey and I apparently I must a knocked meself out. I dunno but next thing I know I was on the, I was vomiting and on the back of a truck,
- 14:30 on the tail board, and I remember sayin' to the doctor examin' me, "What am I doin' up here?" He says, "You're going to hospital. Get this bloke to hospital quickly." So they raced me off in a vehicle to a place it was just called Manor House or Mansion House, I wasn't sure which now and the nurse Australian nurses were there and the Australian
- 15:00 said to nurse said to me, "Get in there and strip off," she said, "But don't have a shower." I was in the bathroom. When I went in I stripped, I was filthy so I hopped under the shower and the water had only started hardly started and she come in, grabbed me, dragged me out, popped me on the bed and cause those days they I tried to find out what was wrong and she's, "I'm too busy"
- 15:30 and those days they shaved you from navel to knee and anyway I don't remember much more till I come woke up in bed and this bloke was down there and I said, "What the heck's happened to me?" and they said, "Appendicitis." I said, "Oh don't be silly." He said, "Yeah," he says, "You'll see when you get up." He said, "The scar's not on your stomach. The
- 16:00 scar's right up in the groin and the leg. It burst gettin' it out." So anyway oh the next day they started the shellin' through that area and they moved us from there to the big hospital in Sydney, in Sydney, in Singapore. Alexandria Hospital and that's where I was when the capitulation ran and I was there for I think it was three weeks I think or four.
- 16:30 It was three weeks afterwards because the sisters and nurses didn't want to let anyone out because they weren't sure just what the Jap reaction would be and anyway one day the trucks turned up and we were Australians were brought into the or put into the back of the truck and taken out to the Changi
- 17:00 area and we got to oh somewhere round about I'd say a couple of kilometres or a couple of miles or somethin' like that off it and we were bundled out and said, "Right you walk." A gate. "Walk in there." So I with the others we walked down and had to bow to the Jap guards and all this. Anyway I saw a bloke there and I said, "Where's the ASC units?" They said, "Oh go down there that road there and I think
- 17:30 they're in thirty two to thirty eight." So I went down there and a course they all said, "And where you been? You're reported killed." Someone had seen me go down and then nothing heard of since. So they reported me killed in action. So from there we did went out on workin' parties or first of all we had to dig bore holes for latrines and
- 18:00 no one knew much about cookin' rice and they had to work it out and then the all the group the ovens and that in the houses weren't big enough for that so they had to put big mounds a dirt and use them as ovens. Make a hole, cavity and then you make your oven but from there on it was a case of goin' in on working parties, loading ships or unloading ships, cleaning up rubbish and debris from the where
- 18:30 they'd been bombed and things like that.

How long were you there for? So how long were you in that camp before you moved?

We moved from there from Singapore Island we went to Japan on Anzac Day 1943. We sailed out a Singapore Harbour. Officially bound for Borneo as far as we were all told. We thought

- 19:00 that was good. We were gettin' close to Australia. We were battened down the holds and there was very few of us left at the time. I think there was about eight or ten or twelve or somethin' was allowed up to go to the toilet and the first one up in the mornin' come back and says, "We're not going to Borneo,

we're going north." Yeah, "We're going north," and we knew he was a cityite so we told him he didn't know his way but anyhow somebody else went up from the country and he said, "Yeah we're goin' north."

19:30 So we found then we were we must be headin' some place up China or somewhere but anyhow we finished up in Japan. So we got up there in May, I think some time in May. I can't think of the exact date. I'd have it in that notes there somewhere and

20:00 from there they took us by train and up to a city called Osaka or Ossika as some call it and they took us to work then out at the Osaka steel works owned by the Tysho manufacturing steel company and we worked there from then until

20:30 on the 13th I think it was the 13th of March 1945 that night when they big bombing raid on Osaka and they burnt the place to the ground and about eight or ten days after they then put us in the train and took over to the west coast a Japan to a place called Takefu, T-A-K-E-

21:00 F-U and from there we worked on the in the carbon factory makin' big blocks a carbon till the war finished and 15th of August.

And when did you arrive back in Australia?

On the 13th of October 1945.

And what when did you get discharged? When did you go home?

21:30 I actually went home next day out the bush but and that was on the Sunday but the mail only goes up to where out the property out there where we were on a Tuesday and Fridays and on the Tuesday I got a urgent telegram to, "Report to Sydney immediately. There's a mix-up in papers." So I said to Dad, "Well I'll get this over with and

22:00 get back on the farm." So on the Friday I went in with the mailman to and went to Sydney and they put me straight into Concord Military Hospital. They found I had TB [tuberculosis] and so I was in there and I was in there for fourteen months. Never come out of that till the 12th of the 12th 1946.

All right Alan. Let's go back now to your childhood and tell us about

22:30 **your earliest memory?**

Well, as I said, the earliest that I in me mind was when these planes went over the back fence and we see 'em as kids and that was in a place called Uranquinty and by times I'd a must a been a little bit over

23:00 three. Oh I must a been not quite three because the brother was born there and thinkin' back it could have been early 1924, so I would be three. I remember nothin' much about that until I got to from there to Piper's Flat

23:30 and I can remember quite a few things around Piper's Flat because the station ran like that and our place, the front door of our place opened right onto the end of the railway station, the platform. We used to climb up on the side fence and reach out and the engine drivers or the firemen could hang onto the rail on the side of their engine and reach out and touch our hands

24:00 and then they used to throw us coal over the fence for our fires. Across the railway line from us there was five houses all made of corrugated iron. People named McSpadden, Bill McSpadden, had one and that was a post office store and they had

24:30 kiddies much the same as what we did and we all become very friendly there. I can remember me younger brother, the one that was born at Uranquinty gettin' lost at a picnic and a big panic on and when we found him he was sittin' in a pool of water with his new cloth cap pourin' the water and slushin' mud all over him.

25:00 Then from there Dad got the word to move and we were going to Fairfield. It must a been in early '46 because when we got into Fairfield they directed Dad and Mum and them up to a house and when we started went in it all looked

25:30 dilapidated and there was no furniture in, which had been sent further or previous, and Mum was started to cry. She's not and we went in to look at the new place and there was floorboards missin' and holes in the walls and anyhow Dad blew his top and said, "Just don't move. Ya stop here," and he went back to the station. He was only away a short while and him and a couple a blokes come up and, "They gave us the wrong

26:00 directions. We should of instead of coming up this way we should a gone the other way," and we went down the other way to the house. There was a brick house and all our furniture was there and the reason I remember I must a been early '26 because me sister was born in June '26 and they were and after all the upset Mum and Dad were a bit scared that somethin' would happen with the baby. Mum was got very upset over things and so that's where we were.

- 26:30 Went to school there. When we went to school at Fairfield, the public school, some big girls or big to us anyway used to attack us with their school cases. Not the ordinary case they use now but the old straps and what school just like the boys used to wear and we'd come home with blood on us and shirts and strap torn and Mum got sick of it and she said to Dad one day,
- 27:00 "You'd better do somethin' about it." She said, "They can't have this all the time," and Dad said, "Well they can't hit girls." So we're havin' tea and Dad says, "I got a good idea," and a course we were all ears. He says, "When they attack ya next time," he says, "the two a youse. Run at 'em. Tackle one and get her down. Kiss her." Now we didn't like the idea a that but anyhow and the next afternoon they usual habit of
- 27:30 attackin' us and I don't know it was Les or I said, "Come on," and we raced one girl down to and kissed her and those girls never touched us again. I mean it could be different nowadays. They might a come back quicker but that's at Fairfield and anyhow we went to school one, no it wasn't that was the craze then the old Charleston [type of dance] come in
- 28:00 and we had a school teacher named Miss McCarthy that was very lively in herself and dancin' and she used to try and get the kids dancin'. Anyhow one day we were home and we heard a lot a noise and screamin' goin' on and went out and the railway gates was only about oh less than a hundred yards from where the house was and in those days
- 28:30 they had the railway gates to stop the traffic from going through and this woman was screamin'. We went up there and a car had jammed her against the gates and broke both her legs and he panicked and he couldn't and instead of reversin' he it kept goin' forward. Hit the gate and bounce kept goin' forward. So needless to say we had no teacher then for oh well the one not the usual one wasn't there. Another one took her place a course but I remember
- 29:00 that.

How did you enjoy being near the city after your childhood in the country?

- Well we were too young sort of to appreciate it. We went into the city and walk and Dad took us in and Mum and walk round the shops and things like that but oh it was a big event and things like that but it didn't seem much. Nowadays it would you wouldn't take much notice but then it was especially
- 29:30 around Christmas time. All the little things, the shops it had to attract the customers and things like that but that we only stopped there from 1926 to early 1928 because on the 17th of January, my birthday, in 1928 when Dad's father died a few days before but he was buried on the 17th
- 30:00 and my father asked for permission from the railway to as he was the only son, there was five girls, could they he go have time off to go back and fix the estate up and the railway wouldn't let him. So he told 'em what to do with their job and the railway and everything else and went up there and we settled on the property.
- 30:30 Everything was sort a rough and ready and the only thing we had was horses, which us kids loved and those places those days there was no electricity and horse back was the only way or sulky and if you had to go to town you rode a horse thirteen miles to town and but often Dad and Mum rode but sometimes they went in the sulky and then by that time there was
- 31:00 five of us, six of us. There was six of us and they opened up another big area for settlement and Dad put in for part of it and well one of the blocks and he didn't get it. People named Honeysets got it
- 31:30 but apparently they couldn't meet their commitments and when you got these blocks you had to do so much improvement over a year or two years or somethin' but anyway in either 1935 or 1936 Dad got word from the government, "Was he still interested in the...?" So I remember Dad and Mum and us two elder boys
- 32:00 sittin' at the table talkin' about it and Dad says, "Well if I get it, you two boys will be the one'll be up there to work it." Well that good we were right, us silly lookin' kids but anyway he wrote away and accepted it and he got it. So we went up but only by horse back could you get to it.
- 32:30 If you went to when the rivers were down you went on the flat area you could it took ya about an hour and three quarters to ride. If you went the rivers were up and you had to go around through the hilly country it took anything up to two and a half to three hours to ride. We'd have a horse each and pack horses and we'd take enough food to do us ah, ten days to a fortnight type
- 33:00 a thing. Up there was a mud hut with walls about eighteen inches thick. Wooden door, makeshift door. Two windows with no shutters or anything else on 'em, just wide open gaps and straight opposite the door was an open fireplace. No stove, no nothin'. So we had to pack everything. Iron,
- 33:30 cast iron kettle and all this gear that we had to pack up there. When we put two single beds in the hut two people couldn't walk together between 'em, that's how small the place was. The bed was two beds on one end and a makeshift table across the other end and that's where we used to spend our time. Dad'd come up for awhile and so when he
- 34:00 come up, two of us blokes boys had to bunk together and we had to do fencing and rabbiting and

cleaning up the rabbits were mostly poisoning and trapping and then there was no shearing shed or anything else on it so we had to it was a all day job to take the sheep down from there down to the bottom place for shearing and same when we finished shearing to bring 'em back and that's

34:30 where I was when the war broke out. How was that, from there we just went backward and forwards till when I enlisted and got away.

How did you hear about the war breaking out?

Oh well, as I said, the mail come out Tuesdays and Fridays out home but Dad had a

35:00 old battery wireless. He used to listen to the news and then they'd disconnect the battery to save it for the next time the news was on and things like that and heard it over the news and of course blokes like meself I thought, a bit silly I suppose, I thought you know and I was always on read, I'd read anything at all. Books or whatever there was to read and I thought, "Oh

35:30 that'd be interestin' goin' there," you know and then when the recruiting drives come that, "Do somethin' for your country," type a stuff and I suppose it got at me a bit patriotic or somethin' and the eldest brother, he had been in the militia before the war and was out of it again before the war broke out but he wasn't greatly interested. He got a job on the railway and so that tied him up and

36:00 the next brother to me, him and I were the ones then that were lookin' after the top place and so that's how the war broke out and so as I said, Dad saw them come home and we could see we had some of 'em on our place that used to camp and the Glawson brothers, they were First World War diggers and got property next to us on the other side of the river. They weren't very fit people at all from the gas and that and Dad vowed

36:30 that he, "None of his boys," but I got a bit headstrong, which I and I still carry on now for that matter, some a the things I do. So that's how I knew the war broke out.

Did you have an argument with your father about joining up?

No I had no argument. I just said that I was joinin' up and he said, "You're not." So a bloke name of Jack Ashworth was a New Zealander. He did

37:00 jobs for us but also workin' on the next property and I was going home one day from the dam ridin' and I met him on his way down and I said, "Where ya goin' Jack? Unusual for you to be here." He said, "I just got me call up." He said, "I'm still in the reserves from the First World War with the army." He said, "I got six months to go but," he said, "they've just give me a notice to either go back to New Zealand or join up in the Australian Army."

37:30 And I said, "What are ya gonna do?" and he said, "Join up in the Australian Army." I said, "Right, let's go." So went down to Bathurst was the nearest recruiting depot at the police station. That's where I joined up.

Just back for a moment on the farm, how many helpers did you have?

How many helpers? Virtually only the brother and I on the top. Dad come up occasionally and then the younger brother when he got old enough to come up and do something.

38:00 When it was shearing time we did our own shearing. Dad and Les and I would do the blades and then the younger brothers'd do pickin' up and things like that and then we got the wool all started to mass up on us we'd knock off and clean that up and put and bale it and then go back on and so I finished up well fair blade shearer but...

38:30 **How many sheep did you have?**

There was a bit over a thousand on the bottom block, on the bottom place, and about fifteen hundred on the top place.

And how did you bale the wool? Can you explain that to us?

Yeah. When the fleece was taken off you did the skirting and cleaned up all the dirty parts of it. Rolled it up and then stacked it in a

39:00 store in a bay and when the bay got full you had these big wool bales that were sent to ya from the Goulburn Wool Company and that many to a press and you pushed these fleeces into 'em and stamped 'em down and when you were satisfied you had enough you filled the other block box up. Then you tipped it up on top and then use a big ratchet brace, a two handed brace, one

39:30 in each hand, you'd (UNCLEAR) it up and ya pressed them down and there was roughly in the vicinity of three hundred pound in each bale.

And how would you get them from the top property to the market?

Oh we had nothing at the top property. We had they all went down to the bottom property and I can remember one of our first lots from the bottom property was taken in by a bullock team and the bullock wagon was loaded with wool got

- 40:00 bogged in the river right below the house and Dad couldn't tried to help him. He said, "No," and Dad said, "Well the only thing I'd do is put the old draughthorse in front," and the bloke said, "No." Bloke named Chinery I think from memory. He said, "No." He said, "The horse won't work with bullocks," and Dad said, "This one will." So he got old Toby and took him down and hooked him in the front
- 40:30 and he said, "When I say 'Go'," he said, "you whack the bullocks," and this old draughthorse laid into the collar and took the strain and eventually they got it out and unhooked the draughthorse. Then he took the wool to town and but after that we had a bloke had a big got a big truck so he did the loading from
- 41:00 there and took it in by truck. A couple a loads we took ourselves in by horse was in a in the big flat top wagon. You know horse driven wagon. We took it in but thirteen mile you can only put a certain amount a bales on and with it (UNCLEAR) in 'em and so you had to have two and three trips to get the wool but it still time meant nothin' and it saved ya money, which was what we were tryin' to save at the time.
- 41:30 End of tape

Tape 2

- 00:31 **How many brothers and sisters did you have Alan?**

Two sisters and six or five brothers and meself. Eight of us in the family.

How did your family get by with that many kids?

Very hard. Hand me downs durin' the Depression years. If you had to go to town, first in best dressed. So it's just one a those things. I mean on the land we grew our own vegetables and

- 01:00 killed our own meat and milked our own cows and about every two or three months we'd the neighbours'd get a bullock and kill a bullock and split it up amongst the neighbours because one bullock was a bit too much for us individuals you know. So all in all and then of course way up there in the bush you didn't have to get yourself dressed up every day. You went out in some a the clothes you did wouldn't be seen past the house in

- 01:30 and barefooted. I never knew what it was to wear socks till I went in the army and I can tell ya somethin' about that later. So that's how we got on you know and so and a course I think in big families everybody helped each other and bought up 'em and helped 'em up and that's the way.

How old were you when you were sent to manage the top property?

I'd be either, as I said, 1935 or 1936 so I'd either be

- 02:00 fourteen or fifteen and the older brother he was fifteen months older than me. So but Dad used to keep a pretty good eye on us and give us a tell us what to do as far as the fencing's concerned and then when he come up he'd go home then and then when he come up he'd check off on what we did and pick out any faults or we become our

- 02:30 own doctors. Doin' fence posts I shattered the point a that finger with a sledgehammer but we didn't go home. We just pushed it together and wrapped it up and one time when we were loppin' for sheep, loppin' the trees for sheep in a big drought, the brother cut the top off the two first two fingers on his left hand. Skinned it through. Took the complete nail off the first

- 03:00 one and half the nail off the other one and wrapped it up. He was in one area, paddock and I was in the other and when I went back to the hut he was there with a towel wrapped round it and blood everywhere. As I said, it was up to two and a half hours horseback home. So I said, "You gotta go home." "No." He said, "I'll be right." Anyhow it was still bleedin' two days after and I got worried and I said, "Right. We're goin' home," and away we

- 03:30 went and Dad had a look at it. He said, "And there's no you can't do much there," and on a horse into town and then had to go by train then into Wellington to the doctor and the doctor seared the end of it and that was right. You know that sort of thing you learnt to do these things. The younger, the second not the younger next one but

- 04:00 the one after that you know, he run a bamboo splinter up the instep of his foot there one time. Dad and Mum were in town and a course if you know anything of bamboo, that's when it gets in it stings and he's yellin'. So I went and got Dad's cut-throat razor and we got it and we I run down the skin on top of the splinter and lifted it out and then had to tell Dad I used his razor afterwards and

- 04:30 Dad bein' on the railway he had he knew first aid so he looked it over and it was all right. So things like that. Another one, a double scar there and there and there I did that when I was only about ten year old and fell over on a broken bottle in the dirt and mud. So we washed it out and

- 05:00 usual habit in those days, iodine. Pure iodine. Poured on it and push it together and it healed but when it healed it left a piece sittin' out almost the top like the top of your little finger and now and again I'd bump it and it'd bleed. So one day said Dad said to me, "Well that's no good. Get up on that chair." So he got his cut throat razor. Went 'schhhoomp'
- 05:30 and cut it off and dabbed it with iodine and that was all right and it healed up. I mean they're things ya learnt to do. You weren't you not only learnt them, you had to because all the time you couldn't ride a horse thirteen miles and then you had to go another well that's thirty five kilometres so you can work it out in miles. I don't know what get the mileage, from there into Wellington to where the nearest doctor was. So that's how you survived.

What about

girlfriends?

What were they? No, it was I was about sixteen. Dad we had two tennis courts at home and mostly only people that come down and play on a Sundays was our neighbours and some of them were related and then Sunday nights they'd no, yeah Sunday night mostly

- 06:30 they'd come and have a dance at our big long kitchen. Thirty-odd feet that way and fifteen feet that way and nothin' else. Just push all the furniture up one end and it was on and but bein' pretty well tennis Dad and meself and the other two brothers were pretty good tennis players and we'd ride into Stuart Town and then meet other groups from different other places and go and hold tennis matches
- 07:00 and things like that and about 1936 we went on the back of a truck to the Wellington Caves to play tennis against them and this skinny long legged brat of a girl, she's listenin', was there and no matter what happened she was picked to play with me against a mixed pair, mixed lot and then found us seated together
- 07:30 and then from then on the different dances we went to for some unknown reason she always seemed to be close handy. Anyway we decided then that we'd start goin' together and got engaged on final leave. They wanted to get they wanted us to get married. I said, "No way. Come home invalided and that sort of no
- 08:00 burden, "no lot for a woman," but anyway that's the only girlfriend I ever had and after we were married, or some months after, we ran into some a the people from Euchareena, a little place just away from Stuart Town that where the well then the girlfriend used to go to school
- 08:30 and this Dot, I can tell ya her first name but I probably not on this said to him, "Well you got him," and I said, "What's this?" It was a standin' joke that course I when I come home I went into Concord Hospital and that I couldn't a stayed. I said, "Oh yeah, you mean, oh yeah, she caught me in bed." Meanin' I was in hospital, you know. And she's the girl's... Dot said, "No way." I said, "Why?" She said, "You don't remember
- 09:00 probably but," she said, "when youse had your first holy communion in the church at Stuart Town," she said, "Kath said, "That's the bloke I want to marry'," and I said, "She didn't tell me that," and Kath said, "No. You'd a run," because I tell ya this. Out there just with our own family most a the times girls and I were I was shy. I kept well away from 'em. Get to dances well you'd dance with 'em and nine times out a ten they had to come and ask
- 09:30 me for a dance cause I wouldn't go and ask anyone for a dance. We used to hop in on these barn dances and things like that when you just jot in with the mix-ups but apart from that and I'm still shy with girls. Well I won't say shy, more backward, I'll put it that way.

All right. So you went down to Bathurst with your Kiwi [New Zealand] mate to sign up. Is that right?

Yeah.

And what happened?

Well, as I said, went home and nothin' happened. I

- 10:00 Dad knew where I went down to enlist and I always had it in my mind that he stopped it but I mean I couldn't prove nothin' and so when the recruiting drive was on in Wellington they all the family had all went in there and I went and enlisted again.

How much after the Bathurst experience was that?

- 10:30 That was in September and Bathurst was in May.

1940?

1940. That was in September when the recruiting drive was on and I enlisted again and when we went home Dad says, "You're not goin'." I just wouldn't argue. I just said, "We'll see." Then I'd heard nothin' and that went on till Christmas time and then I said, "Oh well. When the Christmas is over I'll take my

11:00 usual holiday to Sydney." So I went down to Sydney and stopped at the Aunty's place, Dad's sister's place, in Sydney and for a day or two and then I said, "Oh, why not?" and I went out to the showground and enlisted and then a course in those days they had three days leave a at the end of every month and I went home in full uniform. Dad hit the roof and threatened to drag me out again

11:30 and the and Mum says and I said, "Well if you do," I said, "I'll shoot through." I said, "My mind's made up. I'm gonna go," and Mum said, turned round to Dad and she said, "Let him go. If he wants to go it's better to go like this than what it is to shoot through and enlist somewhere else," and so that's the way I'd...

So you actually had to enlist three times before you got

12:00 **there?**

That's why I'm shirty on signin' papers now.

Why were you so motivated to enlist?

Candidly, I don't know. I have tried numerous times to go over it. I was always at school fond of history. I passed in high marks in

12:30 any exam they had in history and I in my own mind I think that had somethin' to do with it. Of reading and having that in my mind and all I could say is you know that was you know I won't say patriotic, although I was a proud to be Australian. We still faced the flag every mornin' at school and salute the flag and I'd and I

13:00 think that was what it was.

So when you first enlisted where were you? At the showground?

Yeah, I enlisted at the showground.

And what training did you get there?

Well actually next door to none because I was only there a week. From the time we just settled in and got this and got that and got else and then six of us

13:30 had volunteered for to go in the infantry and then the infantry mob they detailed us to was at Rutherford camp East Maitland. So they said, "Right," and that's where they bundled us off up to them. As I said, they gave me papers. I for what reason they gave 'em to me I don't know because there was blokes in there older than I was and up there and I got meself

14:00 into trouble as I handin' the papers straight to the lieutenant and instead a goin' through the proper procedure the sergeant and things like that. When the there they really got stuck into us for infantry training. They took us I think within the first day or two on a six mile route march and we were doin' three mile an hour and it was two hours out and then two hours back

14:30 and when we come back the old sergeant says to us, "Right. All youse go down and have a Condies Crystals [blue dye] foot bath," and that was to toughen your feet up. So muggins me, I didn't need one cause I'd been used to goin' without socks and heavy hob nail boots and green eyed boots in the bush and a lot of times without boots. So I just laid back on the bunk

15:00 and the sergeant come round and let out a roar and paraded me before the major and went up before the major and he said, "You mean to tell me you went on that route march and your feet are all right?" and I said, "Yes, sir." "I don't believe ya," and a course I just shut up. No couldn't say anything against that. He's the sort a the boss. He said, "Take your boot off." So I still had no socks on. So I took me boot

15:30 off and popped me feet up on the end a the desk and he says, "Good God man. How'd you have feet like that? All right you can go," but he says and I got half way to the door and he said, "Just a minute." So I pulled up and he said, "You're in the army now. You never refuse an order," and I just looked at him. I said, what could I say, "Well sorry sir. I didn't know," and went back and that's so that's one a the instance that

16:00 but I lucky for me I wasn't ever backwards in any way I wanted to say somethin'. So I got away with it.

What other training did you get there at East Maitland?

Oh infantry training. Unarmed combat, bayonet practice. You name it. Anything to do with the infantry and fighting against each other in a mock battles type a thing. So

16:30 that was our training in there. Then the 7th Division had moved out of Dubbo so they decided they'd put the 8th up there. So we went up there and I was in headquarter company and the 8th Training Battalion and the one of our sergeants,

17:00 or sergeant major actually, was in that forty thousand horse men. Sergeant Major Smiley, a First World War digger, and we did a lot a battles and mock battles and one very, very well we thought it was funny but certain ones didn't. They had this mock battle. Headquarters Company against A Company. The

major come down and says, "I've arranged a mock battle." He said, "Now A Company's gonna be on that rise over there and headquarter company on that one." He said, "I'm the referee," and he says, "I'll go down in the valley," and he said, "I'll set up fairy light," or in case you don't know a flare, and he says, "Now you take prisoners. That hut is the prisoner's hut. Now," he said, "the one that captures the most prisoners

- 18:00 wins the battle," but he said, "No matter who it is, what rank they hold, take no notice. If they're a prisoner you take 'em prisoner and put 'em in." So I can't remember now whether it was four or five of us now. We reckoned it was all a big joke. So we were all together talkin' about it and then someone says, "Well we'll stop this."
- 18:30 "How's that gonna happen?" "Watch where he goes and we'll take him." So needless to say we thought, "That's good." So we after dark we watched where he went and we followed him. Give him chance to settle in and then we lumbered him and boy did he kick up a stink. "I'm the major." Someone said, "Oh if you're the major
- 19:00 you're the one that said, 'No matter what rank or anything they hold, take 'em prisoner. They go in there.' You've been taken prisoner. You go up there." A Company's waitin' over there. Headquarters Company's waitin' here. No fairy light. No flare went up. So anyway it come back the whole lot was a wash out and we all got a big lecture next mornin' about how things flopped
- 19:30 but we just took it as it was and about a fortnight after, word come through for one they wanted Headquarter Company was to give twenty six truck drivers to volunteers to go to Bathurst to go into the ASC and the whole headquarter company stepped forward. They take one step forward and the whole Headquarter Company and that was the sergeant's order that. The next minute the major jumped up. He said, "I said
- 20:00 no," he said, "The sergeant said 'One step forward.' Now twenty six a youse step forward," and the whole Headquarter Company stepped forward again and he went down and he just went along, "You, you, you and you," and went along the line pickin' 'em and out a the four or five, I think it was five, he got four of us that were in this got him. So we used to say to him he did that deliberately but then we were taken and then taken by truck to Bathurst into the
- 20:30 ASC.

How would you describe the training you got prior to going away? Was it effective?

Yes. The infantry training, well it was very effective in a sense although bred in the bush, havin' the brothers and there was four of us very close together.

- 21:00 We used to fight and manhandle each other and that and you learn what a lot about things there but the essential part of it and I thought that when we did get into action, it although I'd been off it for a good while it still come back to me for different things I had to do. So I'd say yes, the when we had to break up supplies and travel 'em well quite frequently we were in the trucks twenty
- 21:30 three hours a day when action started. By the time we went from where we were, Kluang down to Tanglin Barracks and picked up supplies and went back and broke 'em up and things like that. All that sort a training did the world a good because not only was it just ordinary routine but any hour a the day or night they'd call you just come out and you might a just got to bed and they'd call you out and give you five minutes to get dressed and
- 22:00 out on parade and then we'd go for a run somewhere and we might have had to run a hundred yards and back but you had to be ready at the and been able to prepare yourself very quickly. So that's and all that sort of thing stood in stead.

Okay. Tell us about Bathurst then.

Well there wasn't such a great lot at Bathurst. They taught you to do the supplies, as I said.

- 22:30 Oh one instance a corporal, not to mention no pack drill, a corporal took us out on compass reading, range finding and things like that. Anyhow we went out, bitterly winter it was, and away we went. Camped the night. No
- 23:00 (UNCLEAR) right out in the bush and bitterly cold night so a few of us bushies [men that came from the bush] said, "We'll fix this," and we lit a log fire and the order went out to put it out but when the old sergeant come down and the warmth a the fire and the whole heap of well over a hundred blokes crowdin' round to get warm, he changed his mind.
- 23:30 So the corporal says so the corporal anyway next mornin' after we'd had breakfast he lined us up and gave us a lesson in compass reading. "Now the contour's here, you go around that there to the contours are this that and the other thing." And he said, "Now we'll go down here. Then," he said, "we'll bear slightly left and then straighten out and go back to camp," and I looked and I said to the bloke alongside
- 24:00 me, another bushie, "He's wrong," and the bloke alongside me said, "I think he is too," and I was he said, "Any questions?" and I said, "Yes, corp [corporal]." I said, "You're wrong." I said, "Camp's over there." "No," he said, "I've got the...," and then of course I done the cruet [got angry]. "Never mind

what ya got. I'm from the bush and I know me directions. Camp is over there," and I turned to the blokes and I said, "Who

- 24:30 reckons camp's over there?" and there was seven of them said, "We do," and he said, "You go there you get lost." I said, "No, you won't." "All right," he says. I said, "Who's comin' with me?" Just like that. You know just as a had a shot at him and he says, "All right," he says, "Away youse go. If youse if you get lost we're not gonna come find you till tomorrow." So that done me. "Come on boys," and as we started
- 25:00 off he says, "When we get when I get back to camp," he said, "You're all under arrest." "Oh well." So away we went. Anyhow I used to play lock in the rugby union football team and our captain, Jimmy Milner, he was a in the team he was the boss of the team and a course only we only caught 'em through on parade. Other than that we just (UNCLEAR). So I went back and I went up to the and saw him and told him what
- 25:30 the set up was. We got to camp, back to camp quick time. So, "Oh," he said. "they'll turn up." He said, "I can't help ya till he comes back and I hear his side a the story." So anyway we'd had dinner. We had tea and eight o'clock that night the runner come down and he said, "Alan, you're wanted up the orderly room." So up I goes and
- 26:00 Jim's in there. He says, "They're not back." I said, "No, apparently no one's come in." He says, "Come over here," and he had the big map on the wall. He says, "Right now where were youse?" So I traced where we were. "Now where do ya think they'd be?" "Well," I said, "they were followin' that contour down there. Bear slightly left and then go straightforward." "So," I said, "Could be anywhere in that area
- 26:30 but," I said, "that was this mornin'. So this time at night lord knows where they'd be." So, "Righto," he said to the runner, "Righto. I want four trucks. Get the drivers up here immediately." So he took off and I went to go. He said, "Don't you go," he says, "You're comin'." So I waited. When the truck turned up and I went to get in the truck, "No," he says, "In the staff car." And a course you get a chauffeur driven and he's at the back and I'm sittin' alongside the driver
- 27:00 and away we go. We went about six or eight mile. Fairly dark and here they are trudgin' along and when I say 'trudgin' along', they were, I won't say it, they've had it. So he said to me, "You stop there." So he got out and, "You're a long way from camp," or somethin' like that I could hear him say. They went, "Righto." He said, "In the trucks."
- 27:30 There was one holy scamper and the boys got into the trucks and they drove 'em back to camp. He said, "Righto, go to the cookhouse." He said, "And have a feed and then be on parade in the morning." So next mornin' on parade everything was checked off. The roster was checked up. Everyone was there and the old sergeant broke us off and I stood there and the
- 28:00 mate alongside a me he says, "Aren't you goin'?" I said, "No." I said, "officially we're under arrest." I said, "No good walkin' away from it. We gotta take it." So he stood there and Jim Milner looked up and spotted us. He give a dirty grin and, "Hello, somethin's on here." So he went over to the corporal and said somethin' to him.
- 28:30 Then he come back. He says, "You can go." he says, "No charges are being laid," and had a dirty grin and he said, "There wouldn't want a be." So that was one of our episodes in Bathurst.

And how did you go learning to drive a truck?

Oh no trouble at all. You threw her into gear and let it take itself. I mean you made a lot a mistakes but course the old sergeant's and he, "Don't be nervous, son,"

- 29:00 and they blamed it onto nerves see. cause all us young fellas, we were very nervous. Like hell, but you soon learned what to do. They're mostly three tonners and they were fairly easy you know.

Were the Japanese in the war at this stage?

Nope. They never come into the war till the 8th of December.

So from Bathurst where did you go?

We went from by train across the

- 29:30 to Western Australia down to Northam camp.

What was the journey on the train like?

Crowded. We got to Albury and had to change trains because the difference in the tracks [Victoria and New South Wales had different rail gauge sizes]. We got over to Goodwoods showground in Western Australia, in South Australia. Then that was in the early hours of the mornin' for breakfast

- 30:00 and a course army days they opened the wet canteen [canteen with alcohol] there. The locals weren't allowed in but needless to say the locals got in. They weren't in there too long there was an all in brawl. So usual army stunt, right, they closed the canteen and bundled us onto the train and we took off across the Nullarbor Plains. I can't remember how far we went,

- 30:30 but it was a fair way, and all of a sudden the train stopped out in the middle a nowhere and the word come through, "Engine broken down," and within minutes there was Aborigines comin' up outta the holes in the ground. We'd had ten or a dozen Aborigines along the train. Men and women,
- 31:00 kids. Anyway they said we'd be there for at least a day. They had to send back to Adelaide for some part for the engine. Bitterly cold. So the usual stunt. Try and gather up all the rubbish you can and set fire to get warm, which we did, and a bloke one of our
- 31:30 blokes was a runner and before the war and he so he took off to get warm runnin' around the paddock, not the paddock but the vacant areas and at that time I was smokin' and I someone said, "Righto Popey, you're a smoker, light that." So I lit the fire and we were all round and a course as the fire got goin' others come into it too and they were all pickin' up bits a rubbish and stuff to burn and needless to say wasn't
- 32:00 long before one a the sleepers caught fire. The old sergeant come down and went crook and then the captain come down and started to go crook. He says, "Get that out." Well there was no water so what do you had we had to do? Well all had to line up and piddle on it. That's how we put the sleeper out. No cruet. That's how we
- 32:30 had to all put out the fires. She probably, oh she probably heard did she? Put the fire out and anyhow Jim said, "Who lit that fire?" and a course none of us a gonna admit lightin' the fire and one a the boys said, "Hey sir, look at Hendo runnin' around there," and everything was dropped after that. Anyway we went into Northam camp
- 33:00 and we were there for I dunno, a fortnight or three weeks or somethin', a fortnight I think it was and took a couple a trips or one special trip into Perth to have a let us look round the capital. It was a rainy day. The troop train loaded with troops couldn't get over one a the ranges. It'd go up then it'd run right back and (UNCLEAR) to get up. He had to put sand on the tracks, which they'd have
- 33:30 a place from there somewhere where they dropped sand in front a the wheels off the some compartment there. Couldn't do it. So we all had to get up, or most of us had to get out a the train, walk up the let the train get up over the top. Then walk up the train get back on it, up the railway lines then get back on it. So that was an episode into there. Then word come we were we had to embark. So we got on the train
- 34:00 and went from down to Fremantle. Secret service and you thought half the world was there. So anyway met on our ship was what was called the Sibberjack was loaded, Dutch ship, it moved out in the harbour a bit and the next lot was in and loaded and just after dawn they got all prepared to sail and then there was a hell of a noise went on in our ship.
- 34:30 They found a police man in full uniform still on it. The boys'd get him on for a beer the night before and he'd got full and took off. So we had to wait then while they ferried him back to shore to be took off to Singapore. More times under the water than over the water and it was pretty rough and these were like bobby corks. As I say, we landed in Singapore about the 7th or 8th of August.
- 35:00 **What were conditions like on the ship?**
- Well it's fairly crowded but then you expect that in the army. You know crowded up. We had bunks, oh not bunks, hammocks most of us and a course in the swayin' they'd sway and you'd sway one way and you'd bump the one alongside a ya and sway the other way you'd bump the other bloke alongside a ya and that sort a thing but all in all there's one or two bad faults we found.
- 35:30 One was everything was tasted of oil. Even boiled eggs tasted of all, oil, I'll get it in a minute. There's another one for ya the lady to block her ears if she wants to. We went to the toilets. Now I don't know whether you know it or not but the Dutch in the army blokes used to carry a bottle round. Instead of wipin' their backside they washed it. On their toilet
- 36:00 there was a button there, you pressed that and a jet a water used to hit ya in the backside. Anyhow they we lined up. All of a sudden there was a mighty yell. One a these blokes had been investigatin' these things. He pressed that and when he come back he was tellin' us, "Be careful of that button that's on the right hand side up the front." So after that we were all right you know but all in all it wasn't too bad.
- 36:30 We nearly had a mutiny at the when we landed in Singapore. When the ship got in course going into the wharf there's only one side goes to the wharf and we all crowded onto that side and the word went round, "Move back off the side," but everybody wanted to have a look at this new place we're goin' to and this lieutenant, a young city bloke,
- 37:00 we were all there and all of a sudden a voice sing, "For God's sake don't draw that. They'll kill ya," and we looked round and a course officers wore a revolver on the side and he had his hand on it and the First World War digger happened to be standin' just behind him and spotted it and we knew damn well if he'd a drawn it he had no hope against the whole lot of us you know but anyhow they just slowly got us off the side and the ship
- 37:30 righted keel again but and you know it was just a place and smell, it didn't actually smell it was high pong. Oh, putrid. They had planks across these big canals and the canals'd be wider than this room.

There'd be planks and when they men and women when they wanted to do business they just pull in the middle a the plank and let it go. Vegetables and meat and that and things were just throw it into the canal.

- 38:00 A lot of us. You'd get sick. We walked down the streets you'd either have a handkerchief to your nose or and that and many a time we vomited you know but that that's what it was in those days but they did get it cleaned up after the war and during the war they got it cleaned up properly.

And as a young boy from the bush what was it like arriving in this exotic destination?

It was frightening to be the truth. You

- 38:30 didn't know you didn't know their language. You, what shall I say? Everything was so strange that you said, "Oh I gotta be careful here," and that's what we were and the older ones, well they were more straightforward, knew their ways about but a few of us younger ones banded together and we stuck together.

And what did you did you have free time then or?

- 39:00 Yeah. Well we were out on Selangor Road they had these tents. We went out on them. We weren't allowed to leave the camp. Of course there was parades and training and things like that and then every now and again they'd allow a certain number of people to go to town but they told us all to stick together and a course over there they had the Pommy redcaps [military police] or the Pommies were there, the English, and the red caps they thought they owned us

- 39:30 and tried to order us around. Well a few Australians just dropped 'em and then told 'em what to do and bits a fights started regular. Nearly every night there was good fights on with the Pommies but we they soon got used to us. As one Pommy said, "You bloody Australians, you're bloody mad." I said, "Why Choom?" He said, "You call each other a bastard and you laugh," and I said, "We'll call you one. What would you do?" He said, "We'd fight." So I mean that's

- 40:00 the way they were. You know they couldn't understand our free and easy way. An officer walked past, no matter if they're fifty yards away they'd salute and things like that. You know it just they were so regimental that an officer or higher up they would just stand to attention as they were a bit of board or somethin'. It didn't suit us. We just took it as they come. So that's all. That was our attitude and that's what they liked. As officer

- 40:30 went past if it was on a parade you called him a Jim or Laurie or case may be and he did the same to you. He'd call ya be your first name if he could think of it and that's the way life went and I think that stood the Australians in stead whenever they had things to do. They used their own initiative of free and easy manner. So but all in all every

What did you think of the locals?

We thought they were a bit weird. Queer. Couldn't

- 41:00 make out their attitudes and their language and their different gait a the way they walked and chanted and things like that and all the buildings with their washing hanging out the windows on long poles. They used to put the long poles they'd hang 'em out the window to dry and things like that. It was all so strange. You know to our way of life but the biggest thing was everything was so crowded. There was, I won't say thousands, there was millions of people all there and they all seemed to be in the one place. So

- 41:30 but that's the way things went you know.

Tape 3

- 00:31 **What souvenirs what trinkets or personal items did you pack from home when you left for Singapore?**

What?

Personal items?

Next door to none. They supplied me razors in the army and they applied this, that and the other thing and they supplied the clothing. So I just I went as I was.

And how often did you write letters home when you first

- 01:00 **arrived?**

That's a hard one for me to answer now. The I used to write a lot a letters home because I had the home and the and then the girlfriend and things like that. So I I'd say that well until action started there'd hardly be a week goes I didn't write at least one or two letters.

Okay, and how long were you in the city of Singapore for

01:30 **before you went to the tent camp?**

About a fortnight.

And what did you do in that fortnight?

Oh training. I was we was training and checking up on how to get to the main food depots for supplies and when we got to these huge depots how to or where to go to get the stuff that we wanted because there was the Australians and there was an English and

02:00 then there was the Indians and all this that all in different groups you know and you and that's where you had to go and the different roads you had to take and then we had to go and take go out and practice on convoy work, how you making sure you didn't get too close together in case a bombing raids and the trucks had to be a certain distance apart each time when you're driving so that you didn't interfere with the city life but

02:30 also didn't get caught up with the if one bomb fell you didn't get two or three trucks and this type a thing you know. So it was all taken up with training and then apart from that side we still had to do our route marches to keep ourselves fit and so that was took most of our time. It time didn't lag and you did guard duties. Matter of fact our first big supply was on a guard duty. Over there, there was such

03:00 things as fire flies. I don't know if you've ever heard of 'em or seen 'em or anything but you've seen the person draw on a cigarette and see how the glow comes. Well of a night time that would just resemble a someone drawing on a cigarette. From out a nowhere this flare would come up and a bloke, matter of fact he enlisted the same day as I did in fact but was right through, he was on guard duty and this night

03:30 well into the night there was a burst of fire. The old rifle went off and of course everybody out, grabbed their rifles, all prepared for action and then the word come back, "You can settle down. False alarm." So we found out that this light had approached and Choom sang out to him the challenge, "Halt, who goes

04:00 there?" No answer and by this time the fella didn't stop and it was just come out and went on you know and then he sang out the second time and no answer. So he just let a few shots go and the old sergeant pointed out fire flies. He said, "Look, there's one over there," and you know you, as I said, that was our first big scare what was going on. So

04:30 needless to say we he didn't actually get into trouble but they told him to be more careful but it was a good training lesson for us you know. To get us out a bed quick in a hurry and get in ready for action.

And at this stage when you first arrived in Singapore what did you think of the Japanese?

The Japanese? That's before they went into war? Well I dunno. I just didn't I

05:00 just treated them like the same as you'd treat anyone else. There was had been talk about the Japs coming into war but there was Japs there that owned shops and businesses in there and we reckoned they were Jap because they were different to the Chinese and things like that and we were all warned to be very careful and we found out afterwards

05:30 they were, they were there fifth column. They were there gettin' the lay of the land and things like that. Matter of fact some of our boys shot a couple of 'em through tryna give signals. When we action was on they had trees lopped pointin' in the direction where the camp was and they had the suspicions that somethin' was on because they when they come bombin' over they knew where we were goin'. Anyhow one bloke one of our blokes heard someone choppin' one day and went down and found this bloke and

06:00 choppin' trees that went into a point in the direction what where we were. So he nabbed him and brought him back and needless to say he didn't walk away but see, that's the sort a thing that's why they went so quickly through Malaya, because they knew every back trail and everything about the place because they'd been planning for years to take Singapore and Malaya

06:30 and that was oh name of a book. I can't I think it was the Japanese version of The Fall of Singapore I think or somethin' like that and that's this bloke told how many years they'd been trained and done special trips in there and worked out what they were going to do.

So after you left to the city and went to camp where you were living in tents, what were the living conditions like?

In the tents?

07:00 Oh fairly good. Mostly there was four no, six to a tent and you had bunks and with what would you call rope mesh stuff, a net, that's all you laid your a blanket on that to slept. You didn't need blankets much and just more under than up because it was so hot and humid over there

07:30 and so the condition was pretty good and they had their own cook, where their own cookhouse and mess and things like that and also that for next door to nothin', only a few cents or pence or case may be, you'd have a servant. They'd come round and they'd clean your boots and they never we never let

'em touch our rifles but they'd clean your

08:00 boots or if you wanted to they'd take your clothes away and get 'em cleaned and bring 'em back and all this sort a thing and do our money changes with theirs, I can't think what money they what they call it's the only thing, that now that it was next door to nothin' you know and so we used to lay back like lords a manor type thing. Yeah.

And what training did you do when you were living in the tents?

Oh the usual training.

08:30 We'd go out and on trucks and training that way and we went on parades to go out on route marches to keep fit and things like that but they made sure that you were never left idle too long. We did guard duties and practice unarmed combat and all sorts a things to keep ya fit.

09:00 **And what were you eating?**

Oh geez, usual army food. Baked beans had a favourite place with most of it and things like that but no, the meals were fairly good and you had your turn at 'spud barb' [potato duty], as we used to call it, and you had to go and peel vegetables of a night time ready for the next day so the cook didn't have to do that. He had all he had to do was put 'em

09:30 on and cook 'em and then you had the job of every day of makin' sure your truck was clean and your even though it was spotless you still had to go over it and clean it and the old sergeant'd walk round and rub a finger on it to see if any dust on it and if there was you did it again. We used to reckon he used to pick handfuls of dust himself and pretend it was off the truck, but still.

And what mechanical maintenance did you learn for the truck?

10:00 Oh we only learnt the movements of what to do and ran out a petrol or a spark plug went or and somethin' went in the distributor. Nothin' I mean the biggest stuff we had our own workshops. Each ASC company had its own workshops and when somethin's wrong with the truck, didn't sound right, and it went in there to for check over and even when it was

10:30 goin' all right once a fortnight that truck had to, this is before the war started, had to go in and they'd run over it, check it over to see it was all right. So needless to say that then we had next door to no maintenance but we learnt the odd rudiments a things and how to change a tyre and stuff like that. If we were out on a trip and the tyre went on us and all that sort a thing.

And what did you do with your free time?

Well

11:00 there wasn't such a great lot a that because you after you'd had tea you had to be back in camp by ten o'clock if you went out. If you went into town, sometimes we were could get a bus into town and that but we were warned never to go on your own, always to have someone, two or three or four a youse with you. The more the merrier and so you didn't have such a lot of free time.

11:30 You had to, alongside of our camp there was the Ghurkhas and we were warned never to go through the Ghurkha camp of a night time but a few of us did and until we got a scare and then after that they'd know when you were comin' home

12:00 and they'd be there ready waitin' for ya but I remember one night a bloke by the name of Pop Lee and meself had come home a bit under the weather. "Oh we're not gonna walk round." You had to walk from the bus stop up around the pad, the camp their camp and into ours. So we cut through and next thing you know there's a hand went up over me shoulder and a voice says, "All right Aussie." I mean you nearly dirtied your pants when it happened but it was a Ghurkha and he'd feel

12:30 your 'Australia' across the shoulders. You had 'Australia' with a metal Australia on the lapel and, "You right Aussie?" see and then day time we'd get talkin' to them they alongside the fence. We'd get over the fence and talk and they knew what time we were up there. cause the bus we had to be in by town out in into the camp at ten so in between half past nine and ten nearly every night, I wasn't

13:00 goin' out every night and a lot of others didn't either but the Ghurkhas'd be waitin' down near the fence where the bus stop was and when they got off the bus, "Come on Aussie, through here," and they'd save us a big walk.

What about smoking and drinking?

Well there was no limit on smoking. I mean cigarettes were plentiful. Drinking you did not drink in workin' hours.

13:30 You weren't allowed to have drink in the camp. So when you went into town you had your few beers or whatever you wanted to drink and but the only time you didn't smoke was the meal time, meal rooms, or parades and things like that. So I had been smokin' before the war, just the odd cigarette, because a

14:00 bloke that the family knew in Sydney at Fairfield he come up the bush on holidays. He'd never been in

the bush and he used to smoke. He was about four or five years older than us and so he got us brothers onto the cigarettes. The others all got sick but I didn't and I had the odd cigarette here and there but the others they didn't smoke and then of course in the Depression days and we had no money. Had

14:30 to work our way rabbit skins and things like and I remember I was only I must a been either nine or ten, and ten I'd say when one day I Dad and I were goin' musterin' sheep and Dad had a funny way a swearin'. He'd start off, "I'd swear me jumped up never come down days," and then he'd swear and he said, "This this day," and we're ridin' along and

15:00 I said, "What's wrong now?" He said, "I left me so-and-so tobacco at home," and not thinkin' I says, "Oh never mind. Have some a mine," and he went, "whack," and nearly knocked me off the horse but he was that pleased to get a smoke that he took it and rolled a cigarette and give it back and he said, "How long you been smoking?" and I said, "Oh since Cyril Weston come up here." "Do you smoke at school?" "No." "You don't smoke in the house?" "No way."

15:30 So that's how I know it were must a been while I was no later than ten cause I left school at the end when and turned eleven in January and never went back to school but in the army well I thought I used to smoke fairly heavy.

How many cigarettes would you smoke a day?

Oh that's only a wild guess. That's only a wild guess. You'd start and you were busy most a the day. You'd have a smoke

16:00 probably you'd have one of a mornin' and then you'd have one before you went on parade and you'd have one or two before you had dinner or after dinner case may be in the night time. Oh I suppose about eight or ten or somethin' like that a day and it would be your a mostly that I'd smoke in one day there but when I was taken prisoner of war well we got no tobacco but you'd pick up buppers [cigarette butts] and roll them up. You'd smoke tea leaves. You'd smoke dried

16:30 leaves. You'd smoke anything at all. Even rolled cardboard together and smoke because it stayed your hunger and when you were smokin' and that it just stayed your you didn't feel so hungry and then of course a prisoner of war you were hungry all the time type a thing. So that's what happened.

So tell us about Japan coming into the war. How did you hear about it?

Well the sergeants and that

17:00 yellin' out, "Everybody action stations," and then we cleaned up the camp and went back down to a place Coronation Estate, which was marked as our we knew that we if the war started that was our first action station. Coronation Estate at a place called Kluang but so from there we had spies and goin' out and just off there they had this aerodrome. It was I'd it was only a small drome [aerodrome]

17:30 but it didn't matter to the Japs. They come along and they bombed it and that was our first taste of I remember meself and a couple a others gettin' blown over and we couldn't find any injuries and they said it was the old sergeant said, "That's all right." He said, "You got knocked over by the bomb blast." So what it was I don't know. cause I said to him, "Oh no it mightn't a been that. It might a been just pure scared." He said, "Uh uh." So that's all I know about that. I

And

18:00 **what was going through your mind when that when you first**

Scared as hell. "Is this it?" So but that's it and then that's right, we were still there on the 17th of January cause that's me twenty first birthday and I remember a few of us had been down to Tanglin Barracks and picked up supplies and

18:30 come back and the old sergeant says, "All right." He said, "You won't be needed to go out to so-and-so'll take these out." So meself and a mate from Tasmania, his birthday was the same day although he was four years older than me, and a few others we got on the on the grog. Our fuel used to come in kerosene, what's commonly called a kerosene tin. Square tin that stood about so high like that

19:00 and when we were the bombing started coming down on our trips a lot a people left the houses and towns. They went and we'd come through and a course the first thing we'd grab was with the grog shop and we'd go in there. If any there was wine and beer and rum and you name it in the shops and we'd just confiscate that because it they weren't comin' back to it. So someone suggested, "Righto Popey," and they we're tippin' this wine, beer

19:30 in the into this kerosene tin and our pannikins [metal drinking vessels] we downed them and I woke up, it was dark anyway, and I woke up on the back of a truck pretty half furry mouthed from got up in the tin again and some more and the next thing I know the old sergeant's pummellin' me and I'm and goin' to town about

20:00 it and draggin' somethin' out a me throat and I staggered through and said, "What's wrong with you?" and, "God mate," he said, "You're nearly dead." He said, "You're green." I said, "Oh give us another drink." I can remember him saying, "No way, no more for you." So anyway they poured somethin' into me, I don't know what it was, but anyhow when I really come good and I started to find out what was

wrong and he says, "You were lucky," he said, "I went down there." He said, "You'd a been

20:30 dead," and I said, "Why?" He said, "Lead poisoning." I said, "Oh don't be silly." He said, "Come over here." So he showed me the kerosene tin and all the leading inside had been eaten off the side and when I had that pannikin a that luckily I did I only had the few mouthfuls. If I'd a had the full issue anything could happen and I said, "But what was they draggin' out a me mouth?" and he said, "We had to use a stomach pump on you," he said, "to get it out." So didn't cure

21:00 me from drinkin' but that's how I know what it was but I wasn't the only one. A few of the others were a bit on the wayward side too but so he said. "Righto," he says. "You're not drivin' today. You're a loader." So I had to go out and lump these heavy sides a beef and stuff like that as punishment.

And what was the atmosphere like within your camp after the Japanese entered the war?

Oh well before that, goin' down

21:30 also on that next day after the I'd been on the grog they did a real big raid on the airport and some wise guy sang out, "Hey Popey, here's your presents." They reckoned the Japs were droppin' presents [bombs] to me but luckily none a them had me name on it so I was right. Now what was else you said?

I asked you how the atmosphere changed after Japan entered the war?

You lost a lot of ya

22:00 jovial attitude. All become a more serious business and you were more careful of what you did and how you did it. I remember one truck I took to from where we were up to this place, well not up to a place called Gemas to the 2/30th Battalion at just

22:30 before they put the big ambush out there. A bloke name a Col, I won't give his surname in case this gets out somewhere, he was a spotter and he a spotter used to stand on the back a the truck and a plane come over, "bang, bang, bang," on top to warn you, the driver because with the truck goin' he couldn't hear ya. So there was 'bang, bang, bang' as we were approachin' a place called Yong Peng

23:00 and it was a hump bridge like that over the railway line. Anyway I I'd been travellin' fairly fast and I had to go over this bridge and I found a cutting into the scrub and I dived into that into the jungle. Anyhow the all clear went from this the gun on the Yong Peng bridge and I

23:30 backed out and no Col. "Oh hell, what happened? Don't tell me he's fell off." So I went back and I went back quite a way and here's Col trudgin' along the road and I said, "What happened?" He said, "I left." He says, "I wasn't gonna stop on the truck with them around." So he, while I was travellin' pretty fast he must a left the truck but anyway that's the way things were. You know ya took it and as it comes. Another truck come in, they'd been out to deliver goods out near

24:00 Muar where they got the others had got cut off, hadn't got cut off at that time and when they come back they were gettin' things off the truck and one bloke says, "Come and have a look at this," and in the back we carried a spare tin a petrol and a spare and a tin a water and jerry cans as we called 'em and through the jerry can a water there was a bullet hole. So he said, "I knew

24:30 nothin' about it." So he was very fortunate. Had it been a bit further forward he might a copped it through the cabin. So I mean there's things that happened and you just took 'em. Well then word come for us to get out. The Japs had broken through at Muar. So we had to turn around and they said they asked me they said, "How far have we got a take the trucks?" and they said, "Well just keep on going till we tell you to stop," and on the way down we'd run into wounded blokes

25:00 and put them on the trucks and stray soldiers on the road and there was when they got cut off every man for himself till they got out a the ambush and took them back and they finished up going right across onto the island, the causeway onto the island. That was their next stop.

What sort of shape were the men in who you picked up along the way?

Well I could use a good adjective but I'll only just say they were

25:30 really had it. You know they'd been fending for themselves and the jungle wasn't just ordinary trees. There was vines and they had to push and shove and cut your way through them and but they were all fairly determined to keep havin' another go at 'em you know and the wounded ones, well some of 'em were pretty badly wounded and we just laid them in the truck and they took 'em off and so you know it all seemed to be goin' fairly well. When they got back in the island well they had to find out where their units were and it

26:00 was such a lot of turmoil and confusion that you know we actually didn't know what we were doin' (UNCLEAR). See one lot went across the river at Muar, like below Muar and come across this vacant lot with a hut in it and they looked up and they could see some Australians leaning against the, sitting down leaning back against

26:30 the wall of the hut. So they thought, "Oh well they're resting," and they come across the paddock and they or this vacant allotment and the area and when they got near to it the Japs were inside and they

opened fire and they shot 'em across there and so this is the and only one out a that lot got in there. cause they piled 'em all together, put petrol over or somethin' over and set fire to 'em but one bloke, he must a been near the bottom or somethin',

27:00 but he finally got out, pretty badly burnt, but he reported it all later on that just what did happen. That's how we knew what happened to 'em. So that's the way things...

And when you were driving the truck where did you carry your rifle?

Mostly right alongside of us. So but it was the only place you could leave it.

27:30 I mean when the war started very seldom the bloke, your loader, stopped say in there. He'd be on the top out the back as a spotter and so he had his rifle with him and so you it was propped against the seat ready to grab it as case may be. So don't know what'd happen if you had to use it.

So what happened next for you?

Well when we got back on the island into an area,

28:00 they called all us blokes out that had infantry training and put us into a rifle company and they took us into an area which we were supposed to guard and protect and we were there for quite some time and I forget how many days it was, doesn't matter, in that area and then the bombardment started from when the Japs (UNCLEAR) on the island

28:30 and a bit a shooting started and word come back to us group that to fall back and going back through the jungle I tripped over and I don't know whether I knocked meself unconscious or what but I know when I woke up I was or come to type a thing I was on a I was vomiting and on the back tow board of a

29:00 truck and I said to, I presume was the doctor I said, "What the hell am I doin' here?" and he, "You just lie just wait. You're goin' to hospital." So he sang out, "Get this bloke to hospital straight away." So they put me into a on the back of a utility and I went straight through to a house that was I think it was Manor House or Mansion House from memory that was usin' a hospital and the

29:30 Australian nurses there were there and one of 'em said to, "Get in there," pointin' to the bathroom, "get in there and strip off but don't have a shower." So when I got in there, stripped off I was filthy. So I jumped under the shower and turned it on and hardly got it going. Next minute in she come and grabbed 'em and dragged me out and, "Told you not to have a shower," and I said, "I'm dirty." "Never mind about that," and bunged me onto a

30:00 bed and next minute out come the cut throat razor and they shaved me from the naval to the knees. I said, "What's goin' on?" "You know, you'll be right. Don't worry about it," and next I know I woke up and I'm in bed feelin' pretty sore and sorry for meself and there's a bloke standin' there alongside me and we orderly I presumed he was an orderly and I said, "Well what the hell happened?"

30:30 He said, "Son," he said, "you're had a very, very bad appendix. You burst gettin' it out." I said, "Oh don't be silly." He said, "Yeah, you want to you have a look when you get up," he says, "The scar's not on your stomach." He said, "It's in the groin," he said, "And a big scar too." Even now it's about that long and he said, "You'll take it easy a few days." Well not that day but the next day the shell come through the

31:00 top of the building. The nurses come in and dragged the mattress off the floor and just, "bang," onto the bed. Then the orderlies come through and bundled us downstairs and I was taken to the hospital, I think it's the main one Alexandria Hospital and I was there when the surrender was given and I was there

31:30 for I think round roughly three weeks afterwards and they weren't game to we were I was walkin' around a lot well before that but they didn't let us out cause they didn't know what the Japs'd do.

Just going back a tiny bit, when you were in the camp how often did you wash?

When you could and then it was only a lick and a promise because you had no bathing materials. You were just a dish

32:00 a water or a bucket a water or a I say dish, it was a bucket a water more than anything else and the only way you could get a decent wash was just to strip and tip it up over the top a yourself and that sort a thing but you just didn't a lot of 'em didn't just didn't have time. You made your hands and feet, hands and feet, hands and face was the main thing you kept washed so you could for eating and that's the thing and the rest of it was just takin' it any chance you got.

And at that stage did you suffer from

32:30 **any illnesses?**

No. I was pure as I thought. Never had a pain before till I went down with this. That's why I couldn't understand. cause I always thought appendicitis you got pains, aches and pains and things like that beforehand but that's what happened but it did me a good turn because it got me out of the action and quite a few of our blokes got killed in that area and some of 'em got killed on the truck gettin' away.

33:00 They machine gunned the truck and blew the truck up and so someone guided me out a that and easy.

And when you were in the hospital, the Alexandria Hospital what did you know about the progress of the war?

Only rumours that were brought in and where the nurses and Sisters there were dubious of lettin' us out word come through that the Japs had gone through Tanglin Hospital.

33:30 They machine gunned patients and nurses and the lot. Though I found out years after, matter of fact after I come home in fact, that the Indian it was actually the Indian hospital and the when the Indians got surrounded and they panicked and come through, a lot of 'em raced into the hospital and threw themselves into bed and pulled blankets and sheets and that over themselves

34:00 and things like that and of course when the Japs come in they were they could see what happened and they just machine gunned 'em. Well any nurses and anything in the road and they copped it as well. So that's why the sisters and that at the Alexandria Hospital wouldn't let us out until they knew what was gonna happen or found out what was gonna happen.

And tell us what happened when you left the hospital.

Well they the would come up well to start with, when the capitulation was on they all

34:30 those that had ammunition they we had to get the ammunition, destroy it. Take the lead out, empty the powder out and just sort of scatter it around and delouse grenades and things like that so the Japs couldn't use them and then they word come through that we were all wanted downstairs and we went down and there's a heap a Jap guards and some trucks there and we had to bow and turn to these guards and

35:00 those that didn't do it quick enough got a bashin.' So we thought, "Oh this is good," but anyhow there's one bloke could speak a bit of English and he said, "All on the truck." So we got on the trucks and we went out to about oh I suppose about two or three mile, kilometres the case may be out from the camp, Changi, and we were put out and told to walk and we had to walk down through the gate and learnt the lesson after gettin' a bashin' up there that

35:30 you Jap you bowed to and went through and I met one a the blokes in there and I said to him, "Where's the ASC group camp mate?" and he said, "Go down there." He said and I think from memory he said, "Houses thirty two to thirty eight." I think from memory but anyway, went down there and when I walked in the boys all got a big surprise. "Where'd you come from? You're dead." I'd been reported dead. Someone saw me go down and thought I

36:00 was shot and there was no report for quite some time afterwards. That's like it'd be oh near enough to a month from the time that I went down to I wouldn't be probably, yeah about that and so I had to go then up to the orderly room where the orderlies kept all the records to get it all straightened out and so lucky for me I'm I didn't get hit.

36:30 How many of you were on the truck from the hospital to the camp?

Oh that'd be a wild guess now. There was quite a few but there was I think in the little group that got out the gate there was oh eight or ten I think. Some got out some other gate and things like that but out a the mob I was got out this gate and so I think from memory but I mean I would that'd be only a fairly wild guess.

And at this stage were you well enough to walk easily?

Oh yes. I'd been well for

37:00 oh at least a fortnight beforehand but they wouldn't let us downstairs because they didn't know what the Japs and were gonna do to us when we get out there. So apparently the Japs knew we were there because they'd come to with trucks to take us out back at the camp. So and that's what I found out afterwards like years afterwards what happened at Tanglin and that's why I surmise the sisters wouldn't let us get out in case the same thing happened to us.

And did the sisters remain at the hospital?

Beg your pardon?

37:30 Did the sisters stay...?

They were, they were when I left but they were the ones that didn't get away on the boat. There was some of them never got away on the boat. See a lot of them, when I say a lot but a few of them refused to go but there was a lot of English nurses and sisters there as well. So that a few of the Australians refused to go and they got caught up and they were lucky because the others got machine gunned and killed at the beach. Part a life.

38:00 Win some, lose some.

So in the trip on the truck to the gates of Changi did you talk much to each other?

Oh yeah, we wanted to find out what we wanted to find out what was happening. See we were sort of isolated and nothin' much come in, only the rumours and come down from some a the sisters and some

a the orderlies and a lot a them were English and Malayans and lord knows what they weren't and so we were tryna to find out what happened and also the

38:30 what was going to happen. You know we yapped away and we a lot of us were all different types a units, different units. Some a them had been wounded and that sort a thing and just like in the camp. When we went to the into the Changi camp. To start off with there were and when you weren't wanted for somethin' you'd wander down to another unit and sit and have a talk and I went round and found a couple a blokes from me own home town were there and things like that you know and so

39:00 it was a way of keepin' yourself sane if you wanted to put it that way.

And what did you think on that walk from the trucks into the camp? What were your thoughts?

Well that's another thing that's hard to say. Well, "What are we in for?" You know not what I don't mean in, but, "What are we up gonna get?" You know, "What's gonna happen?" and you try to puzzle out and there's and what what's likely to happen and I

39:30 didn't know how many was taken prisoner or what and that sort a thing. You're thinkin' who a your any a your mates were still alive or what was doin' you know and but then cause it's we hurried along. We didn't take us too long to get away from the Japs and get as much as we could and so you know it was all such and such what do you call strange, the atmosphere and all.

Did the Japanese accompany you down to the camp?

What from that, from the truck

40:00 to the camp? No, they let us off. There was nothin' you could do. It was just wide open space all round. The guards were down there and then we were lost and an Australian stood out like a sore thumb to so there was just one a those things you just you had to do. You and a top a that, we'd been locked up so much in hospital that we were pleased to get in and see and find out some a your mates, who they were and where they were.

And what was the land like in the camp on that walk in?

The

40:30 land? Ah there was not big hills but fairly rolling country. There was no what you call big hills, not from the area I was in, and some a the houses were built on the sides a slopes. Off the ground here and on the ground down there but all that area was a Pommy officers and Pommy military camp you know and there was all made from they'd been there for, I won't say centuries, but years and years and years and had everything there. It was a real home from home to them

41:00 and then they get transferred back to England and then a new lot'd come in and take over and that was like their, you wouldn't call 'em barracks. You'd call 'em that was their houses, their homes. So that's the way things went.

Were there many trees?

Oh there was but they didn't in the area I was in there was no big creeks. You know they were more hollows than creeks. You know and then when it rained there were there was a fair bit a water went down but there was nothin' rushin' as far

41:30 as torrent stuff you know but they had the Pommies always picked the best of things they can.

And what about trees and grass?

On there was a lot a trees around and the grass around was all like made out run out into lawn. That used to be looked after properly all round you know. The whole area was mowed down and in the English times and it was all grass and a lot of trees and palm trees and

42:00 other types a trees all over the place.

Tape 4

00:31 **Alan, from what you saw of the fall of Singapore in that last bit of confusion how organised was the defence?**

You mean the allies defence? Badly organised in the sense that they never thought they would come down the mainland. So they prepared for

01:00 a sea invasion but the one British officer who was in charge of the lot never sort of confided or with the other heads of the other armies type a thing. He was the lord supreme sort a thing but I know that Bennett [General Gordon Bennett], who was our general,

01:30 he when the capitulation he didn't want to capitulate. He wanted to take the Australians and go back through but it is been reported that Percival [Lieutenant General E.A. Percival], who was the other British bloke says, "I am the supreme commander here. You'll do as I say," and Bennett was supposed to have said, "Well I'll escape." He said, "If you escape before the that time you'll be charged with treason."

02:00 So Bennett then made arrangements but he never went out till after the capitulation time but they crucified him when he got back to Australia but it was badly organised in they thought the British thought, "Oh we're supreme. We can win anything."

And what about from your level in a rifle company there? How was the organisation?

02:30 Fairly good initially but as we got further back down Malaya and then into onto the island it got what you might call fairly confused. The rumours'd come through, "The Japs are comin' through here. The Japs are comin' through there"

03:00 and the position we where Malaya is only bein' a narrow neck a land, not neck a land it was a block a land, that was quite easy to what's the right word? Quite easy to get in behind 'em you know and get cut off. So when the rumour come through we were cut off they fell back and

03:30 they passed word that, "So-and-sos fell back." Say the 2/18th say for argument's sake. Then the 20th had to go back too even though they mightn't a fired a shot because they were in fair of them gettin' cut off but from all reports there was a the Australians did their duty. They did their really tough fighting and but just when things got to a stage where you thought you'd advance the word'd come from

04:00 to drop back. So we all and I got no authority I suppose to say it right, they blamed Percival for not having enough contact with all the different leaders. He made the decisions and that was it. It's like when we asked afterwards why did they capitulate with

04:30 fifteen thousand Australians plus a heap of British and Dutch and Malayans and Indians and they said, "Oh well they didn't want to upset the Sultan of Johor." With they wouldn't let us he had his big palace and we knew they were usin' the police up the top of the palace as a

05:00 look out for spottin' for bombing and artillery fire, we weren't allowed to fire on it. We could see the look out but you weren't allowed to fire on it. I mean things like that. How true they are I don't know but they were that rife that there's a had to be a certain amount a truth in it.

So after enlisting and training and

05:30 **coming to Singapore you now found yourself a captive. How did you feel?**

BA, blinkin' awful, but there was nothin' you could do. Just had to take it as it comes and just try to make the best of a bad job.

Tell us about those early days in Changi. What was the routine?

Well the very early days

06:00 was to clean up and straighten up a lot of the houses in the camp that had been bombed and get rid a the rubbish and that from 'em. Making ovens in outside ovens in big mounds a dirt to take cook the rice in because the ordinary house ovens were and stoves were

06:30 useless to feed the big mob a men and things like that. Holes for the for latrines. There was just latrines were just holes bored in the ground. Ya had to try and rig somethin' up for that and did that type a thing and a general all round maintenance of tryna keep things going and then when you got the chance you sneak off to some a the other units to see where some a your mates were

07:00 because you got and that goin' round to the different units with supplies you got to know a lot a blokes from different units and also nearly every unit had a different experience and you'd learn the different experience and they'd talk about the different ones from that. Others, like some out a the 2/18th and 20th the Japs took them back to Mersing to clear up the mine

07:30 fields cause they thought it was better to use the Australians than get caught themselves and things like that. You know there was the Japs very, very seldom come into the camp itself but boy they watched that perimeter very smartly you know. Well then later on some of them got brave enough at night time to go out and pinch stuff and steal stuff, mostly food stuffs and

08:00 then they decided that they had a cheap labour force so we had to go to town and they'd take us in trucks to town and some of us'd be cleanin' up rubbish from the bomb debris and others'd be unloadin' ships and others'd be loading ships from something stuff they want to send back and to Japan and so different things like that and I mean we did a bit a

08:30 sabotage and stuff like that. Any food and that we pinched we could and if you were lucky enough to get on the ship unloadin', whether you were on the ship itself or on the wharf, you'd make yourself confused with the Jap signals cause everything had to be done in a hurry. "Haku, haku," and they'd keep yellin' out. If ya didn't hurry fast enough ya copped it.

- 09:00 So if you're on the winch the Jap'd be on the side and tell him to wavin' to lower the net down. Well you had a good idea what was coming. Any foodstuffs on it, the tins especially, you wait you got really to the ground and then you'd drop it fast and a lot of the cases and everything bust open and while it was bust open
- 09:30 a lot of them he's gatherin' up but a lot of 'em he's sneakin' a bit here and there and all that type a thing and one bloke got rid of a couple of Japs. He dropped a net of full of stuff on 'em and got rid of them. Another bloke, they was on the wharf and the signal come through and he swung the load onto the side a the ship and jammed a Jap between the load and the side

- 10:00 a the ship and he dropped into the water and but you know things like that we'd we were what they call a GS job, a, "get square," you know.

Were the men who killed Japanese in that way punished?

They couldn't prove it. I mean some a them got bashin' but they couldn't prove it. They used to say the bloke up in the Jap up in the top he's wavin' and when the boss and that the officers come over to inspect and check it we'd point to him.

- 10:30 "Hey that's haku, haku," and let it go. I mean you cop a bashin' but they couldn't prove it was deliberate and this saved you but quite frequently the Jap that was givin' the signals he copped a bashin' too. cause they used to bash one another, well not quite as bad but nearly almost as bad as they used to bash us but those type a things you just you know took as a routine thing if you

- 11:00 understand what I mean.

How did you hide what you'd stolen?

Well people have a job to believe you can hide things on your body when you've got next door to no clothing but you can. We used to do that but one of our favourite ones they would search us, not when we were leavin' the wharf but we were getting back into

- 11:30 not nearly always we didn't go back into Changi. Some of us were in Thompson Road and some was in Havelock Road and some was in we'd stop in there for probably a week or a fortnight at a time and they'd search ya before you really got into the camp. So we all had to march back and sometimes your rows were six or eight. So as you're going along someone'd say, "Right?"
- 12:00 and you knew soon as they said, "Right," the word was goin', "Who's got somethin'?" Then you'd signal to the bloke alongside you as the case may be that you had somethin'. So the idea was, if you were in this row the Japs searched that row and that way. So you couldn't pass things in the row or pass it forward in the row. They kept an eye that way
- 12:30 but someone'd collapse and course you'd all that row and part a that row and part a that row'd turn and pick him up and you'd put him in the row that'd been searched and the bloke that was in there he'd be back in here and strangely enough they never woke up to it. I think and one funny instance in Changi, this day we were all, all our group anyway down there, the others didn't, all our group
- 13:00 we had on parade on this big vacant area and then all of a sudden a car pulled up oh probably fifty, eighty yards away and this Jap officer strutted up, sword swingin' and they put a box down for him to stand on. We thought, "Oh what's goin' on here?" Then he got up and he give us a lecture. "All Australians are thieves"
- 13:30 and he rattled on and rattled on. Then he says, "I show you how you do it." I mean I can't take off his accent with it right, and he got off the box and he put a packet of cigarettes on the ground. Took off his cap, put it over the cigarettes. Got back on the box and pretended to look all around. Walked out, picked the hat and the cigarettes up.
- 14:00 Put it on his head. "No cigarettes." Everybody never said a word. He said, "No more do that. I know." So he walked off and got into the he'd been in there for I suppose fifteen minutes I suppose, might be a bit more. Got over got into the car and he only went about two hundred yards and the car ran out a petrol. While he was on with us someone siphoned all the petrol out of his car.
- 14:30 So needless to say they're all but he knew it wasn't us so he didn't know who it was. No other blokes were there. I mean things like that that just showed you know. Another, well it was serious incident (UNCLEAR). They took us from Thompson Road into a place called Bukit Timah where they buildin' a shrine for the Jap fallen soldiers. They cut this top off this bit of a hill and big wide steps oh probably as wide as this room goin' up,
- 15:00 concrete steps, and concrete posts up the side and all this and the job and the gang that I was in and our job was makin' these concrete you see these concrete posts. You see 'em round town most places. You got these wooden frames and ya put the concrete in a bit of force, reinforcement in and then build up the concrete. Stamped it. Left it for ten minutes, did another couple. Then broke 'em open. They were you didn't touch 'em, just let 'em sit
- 15:30 and you went on and you'd be makin' a whole heap, one after the other. Anyhow this day a different Jap

officer the one that was in got called in there he come along and the steps was were fairly steep and also a fair lot of them and the Jap guard was standing against a the side and one there and there's one further down and all this sort and never let you too far away and he took off his belt with this sword

- 16:00 on it and hung it on the post and he said somethin' to the Jap, which would be oh possibly bit further from here to the gate where you come in there way we were workin' then he hop up the steps. He was there for a good while, oh hour might be more but all of a sudden a whisper went around through the boys,
- 16:30 "Be careful and watch this but do nothin' wrong." So we thought, "Oh hell here it comes." So we just pretended to be workin' but sort of looked up and he's comin' down the steps. Nearly always had to put on a show and act as though they were the bosses so we thought, "Here's trouble." See, comin' down and we got our heads down, our eyes on him and he walks over to this Jap standin' there and next minute he let out one holy roar.
- 17:00 So we all straightened up to see and he's pointin'. His belt's there but there's no sword. So while the Jap guard that was guardin' us he was supposed to be apparently supposed to guard the sword and while he's watchin' us someone had sneaked round, took the sword out a the scabbard, put it in on the as reinforcement in one of these cement things. Well we thought we were copped some bashin's but boy did he lash this poor Jap. He just about
- 17:30 killed him. Then he went down these he went round to all us and we talked to us and we'd be goin' we wouldn't speak. We went like that just as though, "We know nothin' about it," you know. cause you knew if you spoke you'd get trouble and he went round looked at all these and there was heaps of the cement posts laid round and stacked round ready to go up top. If he'd had any sense he'd a woke up to oh well there was there would be quite
- 18:00 probably in the fifty or sixty new fresh ones been done in the time he was away and then he let out another mighty yell and booted the Jap again and away he went. So when he was gone someone sung out, "Who did it?" No one admit to doin' it cause once someone admitted it he'd become it didn't become a secret any more and then someone sang out, "What happened to it?"
- 18:30 And someone sang out, "Don't be so-and-so silly. It makes good reinforcement," but they're things that just happened. Another night one of our blokes, a bloke the name of Hoot Gibson was caught with a few others pinchin' cement and I don't know whether the Japs or the Sikhs who did the raid but he dived under the car to get out a the road and they brought an iron bar down on his leg and broke his leg. So for all that
- 19:00 messin' around we got marched back to Changi and that was either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day 1943. So just shows ya that that's part a things that went on and that was we'd only been a prisoner of war about what, ten months then.

How did the army chain of command work between you and your officers in within the camp?

- 19:30 Well to start off with the main commander of the camp was a colonel in charge of the 2/30th. A First World War digger and he wanted officers' respect. He was one of the first ones that I struck when I went into camp
- 20:00 and we only a day or two after goin' in and of course when I went into hospital and operated on and that I had all me gear was gone. I had no (UNCLEAR) no nothin'. So I had full beard, sittin' down fairly well and he took one holy hell at me and made me salute and things like that and wanted to know what do and, "You're a soldier," and, "Get that off." I was very cocky. "No razor sir"
- 20:30 and next thing we know there's a razor blades were issued and you'd have issued one and you never got issued another one through you know and so it finally come off. It was more blood and skin come off with it than anything else but other than that most of those were good. You called 'em by their first name unless there was a bit of a parade or a bit of an inspection or some of the high powered ones come down wantin' to inspect. They formed a concert
- 21:00 party in Changi. There wasn't a big area where you could go. It was out in the open air and they used to have it in turns from different groups to go. So you wouldn't out crowd it but one of the funniest someone had knocked off some women's clothing cause there was just things goin' around and they reckoned they'd impersonate a woman and get that on. Now at these concert nights,
- 21:30 the front seat there used to be four to six Japs sit on the front seat and that was their position. Not the same Japs all the time but this night this female impersonator or bloke dressed up right, name a John Woods, he come on the stage dressed as a woman. Well these Japs burst an unholy roar, jumped up on the stage and wanted to know where the woman come from.
- 22:00 So they explained to him. They wouldn't believe him. They made him strip right there. Couldn't go behind the screen or anything just stop they made him strip and then of course they burst out laughin'. They're pointin' and pointin'. It was in their language we didn't know what they were sayin' but they're pointin' to him and that sort a thing but you'd ought a seen the roar went up from the crowd when the Japs thought there was had a woman in camp and not that wasn't allowed.

What were you getting to eat at this stage?

- 22:30 Mostly just what plain boiled rice and we'd have leaves a trees, grass or anything else we could get to mix-up with it and sometimes someone who'd gone out'd get something and if it was one a the blokes you knew went out and he he'd come along, he'd give it to somebody else or give it to you as case may be but they didn't want too many goin' out a camp cause the went out a camp the more chance of gettin' caught and
- 23:00 they had in there it was well I think it most of it was sort of chain wire or somethin' mesh or somethin' round there. So ya had to be careful when you went out. When we got into town it was a lot easier gettin' out because most of ya the compounds were wire fences and they were strained pretty tight but what we used to do and get two pieces of board about oh a bit over a foot long
- 23:30 and put a nick on each end and then get 'em under the wire on top of that wire and under that one and slowly move 'em up and you got enough room for someone to crawl through and if a bloke inside he'd take 'em off and hide 'em. If you were goin' out on your own you'd put 'em down, get out and hide them outside till you were comin' back but boy you had to be careful.

What were you going out to do?

Oh pinch food stuff if you could. I didn't

- 24:00 get out. Pinch food stuff, trade with the Chinese watchers and things like that because you're hungry all the time and oh I think it's the same as any person that you tell 'em not to do somethin' they do it and just because they were locked up at that certain class a person will try to get out.

What would the punishment be if they were caught?

Well it is told that

- 24:30 several got their heads lopped off. They were taken some of them were taken away from the camp and put into the Changi gaol, the actual prison itself and things like that. You know but the excuse they used was that when you were outside the fence you were attemptin' to escape. They wasn't (UNCLEAR) about gettin' back in. Out anyone out there and that you were attemptin' to escape.

How did the Japanese keep track of the numbers who were going in and out on work details and so forth?

- 25:00 Well they'd count 'em out of the camp and they counted 'em back into camp and when they got around to it different times durin' the day they'd count 'em again. So that's the even when we went to Japan the same thing applied. So, gettin' ahead of me story but when in gettin' marched out a the factory there and
- 25:30 the mob that brought this mob a blokes to work he'd count them out the gate like sheep. Then the factory guards well they'd count that mob in and that that's the routine they went right through.

So you've got boiled rice to eat. Anything else? Any fish? Chicken?

Odd times they formed a fishing party and they used to go down to the

- 26:00 sea and drag bits a nets. They couldn't weren't allowed to go too far out and they'd also build stone walls out and leave a gap in 'em but put a arm goin' up. So when the ocean come in and went out it'd seep through the stones but any fish got in behind there'd stop there and
- 26:30 the they'd take they might take three or four from that lot and three or four from that lot and they'd go to different places and that's how they'd get the fish. They also used to go out there too to bring back buckets of salt. They used to get the salt water and then light fires down at the beach and boil it and boil it and boil it and the salt was didn't look like salt. Didn't it tasted
- 27:00 like salt but it was mostly all dark and that sort a thing and so that's how we got our salt and that used to go with the rice and you'd go along and most of the cookhouse got most of it but us individuals that went on different things we'd get that too. So

Who was doing the cooking?

Oh we always nominated someone and out of each unit or each house even did the cooking. Our own blokes.

- 27:30 So we got one bloke was a Greek that was with us and he was cooking and this is the thing and sometimes they'd change over and they had to dole the rice out and first of all the first bowl come out was put aside. That was theirs so that no one else could turn around, "Oh you've got more than me," you know, which went on a lot. Where whingin' because they were hungry and
- 28:00 every lookin' another looked a damn sight bigger than yours you know and some was on bowls and dishes and plates depending what you could confiscate and what you kept you know. Some still had their dixies [large iron pots used for cooking]. So that's the way it went.

What was the accommodation you were in?

Oh just in the houses and you just had and you laid on the floor and no beds and you laid on

28:30 the blanket on the floor, concrete floor but over there it was so hot you didn't need I had a red blanket I'd confiscated from somewhere and the one blanket and that was it but you sort a virtually sort a slept in your clothes half the time. So

Were you locked up?

No, only in not in the houses but only in the camp. The guards were on the gates all the time

29:00 but you could wander round almost anywhere you liked in the but if the officers wanted you for somethin' they'd had somethin' was planned out and you weren't there you in trouble but we all tried to get into town as much as possible with a chance of pinchin' stuff. So you never went too far away in case a work party was and soon as a work party was on you'd nearly everybody'd nearly volunteer for it type a thing you know.

What would happen

29:30 **if you were caught pinching stuff?**

The usual thing. Terrific bashin' but every time then every time you went anywhere the your word was passed around. They gave you a cap to wear with a some Japanese writin' on it and they knew, even if you had the wrong cap on they knew who had the wrong cap on and so they kept anyone that was a bad boy they used to call 'em, they kept a good eye on them.

30:00 **When men were being bashed was it just with fists?**

No. No way. They'd have sticks. They'd have rifle butts if there was a the guard doin' it. They had sticks as oh about two inches thick made out into swords and boy they knew how to use her and they didn't care where they hit ya. One a the favourite places was across the kidneys

30:30 at the back or in the groin or if you were wounded and they knew you had a wound, that's the first place they'd hit. Sadists they were, that's it.

And they also did this to their own troops?

Yeah well their own troops from the right down from the officers to the sergeants, the two the three stars, the four three stars, the two to the one and when you got to the one star you had nothin' to bash.

31:00 So he had to just take it and they pass it all the way down but when they bashed them they weren't as severe as what they was with us, see, but they did give them quite a few bashin's. Matter of fact we could get someone that was a bit played up a bit and we didn't like him we'd try and organise him to fall foul of one of the sergeants and the Jap sergeants and we'd get back but you daren't smile because every time you smiled

31:30 or laughed they'd think you were ridiculin' them and you'd cop a and also if you got caught, two or three of youse got caught or two or three together and you got caught, they'd bash your mates as well. That was a way of keeping if you didn't want them to get bashed you didn't do wrong.

If a prisoner was seriously hurt in one of these bashings what medical attention was available?

Only

32:00 what your own doctor'd do back at the camp. They had put their own hospital in but there was next door to no medicine, or no nothin' to do it and that's why some of them used to go out a camp and take food and pinch food and that to and take down to the hospitals. They'd swap the Chinese certain watchers and things like that to try and get hospital medicines because the Japs didn't they didn't care. You were just nothin'. You lived or died. Didn't matter to them.

32:30 **How important was mateship?**

Well you know what, workin' on a series from one to a hundred per cent, well they were five hundred per cent. To make it if you didn't have one or two or three mates you were in a lot a trouble. You went down, those that went down their mates nine times out a picked 'em up, pulled 'em up and that and it was

33:00 so easy for not so much the country bloke because he were used to bein' on his own all right and used to thinkin' for himself but a lot of the city ones or town ones was a difference. You know they, "Never get out of here." So they'd get in the doldrums [depressed] but when they did that you had to try and get 'em quick before they got really too far down you know but that's I used to read a lot before the war and I've read where they'd point a bone at the Aborigine

33:30 he'd die in three days and I never believed that but in prisoner of war camp I've seen a bloke die in less than a week. Just give up. So I mean there is something in it. You can will yourself to die if you want to I reckon now.

Can you remember your mates that were special to you?

Yeah. I can. One in Tasmania at the present time. Matter of fact

34:00 he's sick in hospital not expected to come out. Tommy Cain. His birthday's the same day as mine and he's four years older and Pop Lee was another one. He died on the Burma railway and Chum Woods. He died on the Burma railway. They went away on F Force, ah H Force and I was on G. I tried to get onto that force and they and a course one thing once they Jap knew you wanted to get one thing

34:30 they wouldn't let you because they knew you had mates there and then they wouldn't let them come onto so they died up there and I was the lucky one that come home. When I say lucky, I someone guided me onto G Force and through a few tight corners and I've got to put up with this.

What about hygiene in the camp there?

Well we had very, very strict

35:00 hygiene in both in Changi where we were and also up in Japan, our camps in Japan. In if a fly come round you got him. You were not allowed to eat or anything else unless make sure you washed your hands or put it differently, not allowed to handle food put it that way, at least you had your hands

35:30 washed and if you didn't have your hands washed you got away out a the road and things like that. You know they were very, very strict. As the doctor said, "Hygiene done right'll get ya home. If you get a disease what have we got?" Now a lot of us got tinea, mostly around the legs or in remind me to tell ya somethin' else about that, about the tinea but anyway

36:00 when we went in the doctor says, "Well if you go on one of the fish parties and that walk into the ocean up to your knees and the salt water'll do it good." We did that but then the Japs'd start yellin'. Once you got above your knees the Japs'd yelled at they'd think you were gonna walkin' away from 'em but the one I'm gonna tell ya, another one for your lady friend to block her ears or necessary but oh I'm on the air,

36:30 we were at a camp, Havelock Road I think from memory now, but a lot of us got a rash in the groin. Oh that was painful. Anyway the doctors had manufactured a ointment, brown ointment we used to call it. No name for it. We asked him the name and he says, "Just call it a brown ointment," and boy, when you put it on

37:00 you had to be careful otherwise you'd be pickin' stars up and on your way down. Anyway he decided that the best thing to do was to cure that is this. Now in the camp and about oh possibly roughly speakin' now thirty yards that way there was a Jap guard and about fifty yards up there there's another Jap guard. That the opening was up there and the opening was over there. So they're two places

37:30 they were guardin'. So we used to line up, go up the doc. He had a wooden pat. He'd dip it into the ointment, you'd put your hand out like that. He'd wipe it on and before ya did anything else you had to lift the testicles and wipe it on and we all vowed that we wouldn't make a noise because of the Japs watchin'. Just to you know we didn't let them know how weak an Australian is.

38:00 This Jap up there was very interested. He was really onto us. Anyway it wasn't long and he come down and as you're linin' up and I'm the doctor he stood there and he's eyein' it off. The doc looked up and he said pointed to him and he nodded his head. The doc said and pointed for him to step in and pointed him to undo his pants. So

38:30 did it, undid his pants and dropped it a bit and the hand out and the doc put it on and he put it under. He's got the rifle in the other hand. He give one unholy yell, took off half way between the where he was and the where he's guardin'. He dropped the rifle. There's a tap there and he threw the turned the tap on, threw himself down and under it and he's got this tap pour water pourin' on it. We're all pissin' our sides laughin'.

39:00 The guard up there he come runnin' down yellin'. He didn't come runnin' at us. He run to the Jap over there and he he's yellin' and talkin' to him and then all of a sudden he put his rifle against the wall and he's roarin' laughin'. So anyhow finally the other Jap got up and he sent him to and the other the one that he wasn't gonna be in it but boy we had enough to do us for weeks, this Jap and when we went back to camp, Changi, and told 'em what the

39:30 how everybody wished they'd a been there to get square with this. The doc thought it was a great joke and he said, "That cured him."

So there were times when you had a laugh.

Oh we made a lot of our own fun to well you had to try and do it. Someone'd have a crockery dish or a bottle, a bottle they'd cut off and made into a mug. Accidentally bump it and drop it and break. No one'd

40:00 sympathise. We'd all roar laughin'. It was a funny thing. I mean you had you made that you made that funny thing to keep yourself goin' you know and it is what stood the Australians in stead. It backed 'em up all the way with that type a thing and you know it was really all right. When I say all right I don't mean the camp was all right but the mateship that kept that thing goin' and that. Then we got a habit of comin' out with some you'd say somethin' and somebody else's

40:30 they're listenin' break in with somethin' funny about it and then get the mob laughin' you know.

Was there a reaction from the Japanese if you if they found you laughing?

Oh yeah if you if they saw you laughin' they were way up there and saw you laughin' you'd probably cop a bashin' but if they were here and it was amongst yourselves sometimes they'd wake up and very few of them could speak English but also among them was some Americans.

41:00 They'd been born and bred in America. Gone home to Japan to visit their relatives and got conscripted into the army cause they're Jap once a Jap you're always a Jap and you're in the army and this is what it is.

Tape 5

00:34 **You've talked about the good times and the mateship between people. There must have also been men who used the system to their advantage and didn't behave as well.**

Well I don't actually know then if we were lucky or not

01:00 but nearly all the mob that I was with and the group they were all very you know good. There was no arguments and things like that and it just patterned off fairly well. I think I'm not quite sure, I will say this. Naturally most of us that I was with was country people and we just were ganged together and for some I suppose bondship of bein'

01:30 in the country and talkin' sheep, cattle, wheat or anything else that keep us occupied and that sort a thing. Whereas talkin' city and factories and things like didn't sort of oh go in with us at all. So I mean I could say that nowhere along the whole line I've that I've seen I have heard of others that you know disagreements with somebody else but I don't well the group that I was in is all I can vouch for that there was no fisticuffs [fights] or

02:00 sometimes we got oh I suppose angry with 'em to a certain extent but a bit irate with some a these that dropped their bundle and you had to get at them and sort of start a semi argument and get them into it and once you brought them into it and got them on their feet and in the argument and you'd say, "Well look what's wrong with ya? You're not sick at all. Get into it and stop playin' up." I mean it was a way of buildin' up but there were nothin' serious

02:30 in the whole group and that. We all woke up and said that, "That's the way to get through this is to do what we can for each other," and sort of what shall I say, help each other if we could.

Were you able to stay in contact with home?

No. They never knew I was

03:00 a prisoner of war. All they got, I found this after I got home, a telegram to say, "Missing. Believed killed in action." Dad, Mum never believed it and Dad said, "Well it happens. It could be," and it wasn't till some six months after we were taken prisoner that Dad come in one day and Mum said to him, and this is where I'll probably break up,

03:30 "Alan's not dead." And Dad said, "Oh, don't be silly, woman. Why?" She said, "Young John," he was only a baby when I went away she said, "He was on the table in the other room pokin' a crust a bread at him. He said 'Alan's a prisoner of war'," and Dad wouldn't believe it but he said, "Oh," he said, "it could be but that," he said. And it wasn't till the war finished

04:00 and they got a message out in the bush, sort of a semi type of letter sayin' not to, they weren't, didn't want to build up hopes but this ham [radio] station somewhere up in northern New South Wales they'd picked up a message to say that a Alan Pope, Stuart Town, was safe and well and just released in the prisoner

04:30 of war camp. And when we tracked it down it had gone from Western Australia to all the states and no one had a Stuart Town with any that name but they were spellin' it S-T-E-W-A-R-T. The one out there's S-T-U-A-R-T and no one thought to then but this one up in north, he happened to know of it and that's how they knew that I was okay.

05:00 **What do you think of the television series Changi that came out a couple of years ago?**

Is that silence enough? The greatest ratbag show, matter of fact for months I never even turned on to the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]. We wrote letters and about it and the greatest ratbag show that should never and supposed to be a reasonable amount a truth put into

05:30 these things and that was wouldn't wish for any worse than that. That's what I think of it.

What did you think was inaccurate about it?

Oh well most of the whole thing. Almost the whole thing. Smokin', livin' in mosquito netting. Clothing that they had on. Cigarette smokes. A Jap bashed 'em and they're yellin' and screamin'. You never made a sound when the Jap bashed the more you

06:00 sound you made the worse you got it. He got sick and tired after a few good hits that if you didn't make a sound he couldn't hurt ya and this is the sort of thing that even now, I'll only turn the ABC on for their news or if there's a outback Australia talkin' like what do ya call 'em Northern Territory Police or somethin' that and that sort a thing and they just I

06:30 won't turn the ABC on for anything else. Oh that's it should never been allowed.

What sort of when you went on the working parties what sort of hours were you working?

Well when you're in when Changi goin' workin' parties in town you worked till well virtually close to a bit after daylight till dark but when till the Japs decided they'd had enough. Sometimes you might

07:00 only work for half a day and they'd decide they'd had enough and they'd take ya back to camp. A lot of that depended on the what I call the good Japs and the bad Japs. Some were in there because they had to. Some were real sadists and others weren't quite so bad but when we went up to Japan we were workin' sixteen hours a day.

What

07:30 **was the difference between a good Jap and a bad Jap?**

Oh about a less three bashin's a week. Instead a gettin' the usual six or eight you might only get two or three. Matter a fact one Yank, we called him Yank because he was an American went over, he said to us, "Now I've gotta bash you cause they're on me too." So he says,

08:00 "I can't pull me punches much," he says, "They wake up to it," and he said, "I'll get a bashin'," but he said, "You try and ride with it because," he said, "I've gotta hit ya." I mean that's the sort a bloke he was you know and we said to him one on the back of a truck we're going out to pick out cement one day, bags a cement, and said to hi,m, "What's gonna happen when the Yanks come here? What's gonna happen? You gonna fight with your own mob?"

08:30 He said, "Boy I'll be runnin'," but he said, "I won't be runnin' away from them." He said, "I'll be runnin' straight up with me both hands as far in the air as I can reach." That was his attitude and that's what he told us then he'd gone over to Japan to visit his relatives and the war hadn't broke out then and a course he's a Jap he got conscripted into the army and even though he could speak English and like American and stuff like that very well and was a businessman in America he had to then work

09:00 his way up from the one star up and that sort of thing and but you know I mean there was a few of them and that but they had to be careful and but he didn't bash us near as hard as or near as brutality I'll put it this way as the others did.

And what contact did you have with the Singaporean people?

None. You daren't speak. If they even caught ya lookin'

09:30 they'd be on Japs'd be right on you in case you were tryin' to arrange somethin'. No and I'm not talkin' those blokes that got outside the wires and things like that. I'm just talkin' about just our own little group. There was none with the outside people.

And how do you think the Australians compared to the other nationalities of prisoners in the camp?

They were far

10:00 in excess. We lost a smaller percentage. We were a lot cleaner, even the Pommies boy some of them they were filthy some a them themselves and some a their camps were just filthy. Oh well they never knew what it was to have a bath or somethin' like that. So the Dutch were nearly as bad

10:30 and the Malayans and Javanese were worse. So but I think a lot of it was our doctors and officers. We had, oh I won't say a hundred per cent but we had at least ninety per cent respect for our main officers and our doctors so they never stood over you. If they wanted somethin' they did it in a sort a man to man fashion type a thing you know

11:00 and so I mean that stood us in stead. Yet no names no pack drill in this too, one of our officers when I come out a the hospital and went into the camp, prison camp, they said, "Don't have anything to do with such and such lieutenant." I said, "Why?" He said, "He dingoed [dingo - slang for coward] it." "Well," I said, "We're all scared," but I know nothin'

11:30 more about it so I dropped it. Now when we were in on Thompson Road buildin' the camp, buildin' a road round through the golf course to a part of the shrine there, one of our group workin' group I don't know what he did, never saw, but next minute there's a mighty yell and he's on the ground and the this Jap officer had the sword raised and this officer that's supposed to dingo in the army raced

- 12:00 across and he must a gone around twenty or thirty yards away. Raced across, threw himself on top of this bloke and said, "You've gotta go through me to hit him," and here's the Jap with his sword up and he held it there. Then he put it down. cause we were all standin' waitin' for the show and he says, "Up. Up." The officer got up and
- 12:30 the other bloke got up and the officer walks right up to him and he says, "You brave man," and he got the bloke, "You." He went 'whack, whack' across the face. "Go on." The officer, "You brave man. Go." Never touched the officer. Now here's somethin' that taught me a lesson. There's people that
- 13:00 said he dingoed it. Not to have anything to do with him and there he is, he done one the bravest acts you'd wish for. So I said and I still remained it all through me years of welfare life, "You don't judge a book by its cover." cause I don't think there'd be one in a million'd do a thing like that again.

What privileges did your officers have over that you other

13:30 ranks didn't?

Well as far as I can see and found out, none. They ate the same as we did. They might be better off in their clothing because they were in a better type of clothing than what was the army blokes did but they ate the same as we did and so I don't think they had any virtual privilege. Although they did not go out on

- 14:00 working parties and didn't have to go out and work but then there's problematical whether that was a privilege or not because when we were out on workin' parties there's gotta be somethin' wrong if you couldn't pinch somethin' to eat and some a the times I've often wondered why we didn't get real sick because if we got a tin of somethin' we really got into it because if you had a mate with you, you got half but if you were on your own or somewhere and your mate might only be twenty or thirty yards away or might even be less,

- 14:30 there was too dangerous to get over near him you wolfed into it ya as much as you could yourself. That's the only way you survived.

What sort of food, stolen food, did you most prize?

Oh beef or anything like that and with American Spam [canned meat] and all those that bully beef and or anything at all that was eatable, even tins of fruit and that. You got

- 15:00 'em and busted 'em open and got into 'em and so what was food it was food.

What sort of diseases were a problem in the camp?

All those diseases you could talk were caused by malnutrition. Tinea and all that type a thing. Dermatitis. Rashes come over you anywhere and everywhere

- 15:30 and you know you some a them are that bad they'd job to walk about and another one for the girl, your testicles quite frequently swelled up to about damn near the size of football. I didn't get 'em thank goodness but some a the boys did and they were nicknamed the typical, "rice balls," but I mean no

- 16:00 I'm just sayin' these are things and the doctor said it was just because of lack of a certain amount of certain stuff that caused 'em to swell up but pellagra and all the inside a your mouth'd get red raw and all that type a thing. So all through malnutrition. That's why a lot of us are still sufferin' today because the body got into such a condition. Arthritis, I had arthritis when I come out a the prisoner of war camp.

- 16:30 When they put me in Concord [repatriation hospital] the doctor, Doctor Grant, says goin' through what I had. This that and the other and then he said, "And arthritis." I said, "Oh don't be silly." He said, "Yes you have." He said, "Look at ya hands," and he said, "That's caused by," he said, "in my estimation a certain amount a the fluid in the joints and stuff like that either dryin' out or deterioratin'." Anyway he said, "Easiest way of puttin' it." So I mean this is the way it goes.

What could be done for men that were suffering?

- 17:00 In the camp?

Yes.

Only just next door to nothing. Just what they could do with treatment. Doctors made up a lot of ointments and stuff they could make to try and help them and things like that. I mean I'm not gonna talk about the Burma Railway because I was not there and a lot there they suffered a lot of ulcers and that from the tropical bumps and that that are gotta be attended to

- 17:30 but I was fortunate that and most of our blokes, even in Japan, we didn't get ulcers. You know that even the cuts and bruises.

The condition with the swollen testicles, would that eventually go down again?

Oh they'd eventually go down but it might take weeks and months. They just had to put up with it. They'd get a oh if they had got a cloth they'd get 'em wrapped around 'em and tied up around your neck and that to take the weight of 'em or

18:00 a big palm leaf banana you know the banana palms and sort a tie 'em in and push 'em in and oh they'd job to walk and well they almost couldn't walk. You know that sort a thing but it was just one a those things and lack a vitamins it caused ya.

What washing facilities were there at the camp?

Um well we made showers and made 'em and that's in

18:30 well both in Changi and Japan. We made showers and that for the boys to go into and if you got the chance like when we were on the ship go to Japan a bucket and a long rope over into water and just tipped it over your head.

And your clothing? How was that deteriorating?

Half the time we had nothin' and we'd have a

19:00 get a tear a bit a cloth as much as we could and tie a bit of rope or string or somethin' around your waist and then let the cloth through the back of it and then bring it through the front and then wrap it over the top. The old 'lap-lap' we used to call it and that's where we got around mostly, especially in the tropics we got around like that. So a lot of us then we thought, "Oh well," we tried to save

19:30 our trousers or so much as possible if in case they we did get released and things like that but I mean even that started to wear out in time.

Sunburn must have been an issue.

Well I was burnt pretty black from workin' before the war in the and that and then the army and then over in Singapore workin' in the we had a shirt and that and

20:00 some a the boys got sunburnt but I luckily for me I didn't. Just mainly because I was burnt pretty black in the but it'd be a different tale now of course after it's all gone off.

So how long were you at Changi for?

From the I went in there about what, three weeks after capitulation so that'd be say roughly early March 1942

20:30 till Anzac Day 1943 when we sailed or Anzac Eve we got on the ship on Anzac Eve and then sailed next mornin'. So that was Changi and of course then there was work parties in and out a town and all that sort a clobber you know.

Was Christmas celebrated that year?

No different to anything else. We knew it was Christmas. Then some of them started to sing songs and that sort a thing but I mean down at the concert party they put on sort of a Christmas

21:00 carols what they could do and what they make up and things like that but that's about all they could do. It meant no difference. No extra rice, no extra this, no extra that.

What role did religion play for people in the camp?

Beg your pardon?

What sort of role did religion have amongst the prisoners?

Ah religion played a reasonably important to the few of us. They they'd have church service with all the different denominations.

21:30 They didn't force ya to go but quite a few of us went to our different denominations well as sort of as often as you could. I mean quite frequently there was the only thing you'd be out on a work party somewhere but I mean it played a very important part.

What about for you?

Beg your pardon?

And for you particularly?

I think so. I was a Catholic and although I wasn't

22:00 brought up a real strict Catholic because we were too far out in the bush for regular but Catholic and I was still much the same now. Church and prayers and case may be. It's it becomes part a your life of what you're brought up as a kiddie to.

Do you think it helped you in your captivity?

Oh yeah. Oh you can well it's a bit hard

22:30 somehow to put it but I think it it's like talkin' to somebody. I think that's it was a big thing and it sort a hard way to put it but till you somethin' to look up to if you understand what I mean so it's part of it.

The population of the Changi prison what changes were there? There must have been men going in and out

23:00 All the time. See there was parties went from there was the officers' force then there was A Force and B right down till I went away at G Force. H Force left the day before us to go to Burma and then there was forces after us but there was the changes around and then there was blokes that was in one unit and they wanted to swap to another because some a their mates were there

23:30 and you'd they'd swap over and this sort a thing and but there was changes all the time and on top of that there's the blokes going out to working parties so I mean all in all you didn't know who was there half the day and who was not you know.

How were these forces decided upon?

Well that I could never actually find out but all I know is that G Force, when it was formed our

24:00 captain, Ted Longi, says, "So many ASC blokes have got to go on G Force. Now I've got to pick 'em. Who wants to go with who?" So he picked one and he'd say, "Any a your mates want to go?"

24:30 "Where are we goin'?" "Well they're talking now Borneo." Well everybody wanted to go because it was gettin' closer to Australia but anyhow he finally picked a group. I forget, I got it somewhere I mean ASC but there was about twenty seven different units in the two hundred that went away with us. So it was one of those things. The officers I don't know whether that happened the other camps or not. I don't know.

How did it feel saying goodbye to your mates?

25:00 Well goin' to Japan from Changi it was no different just going in on a working party because I mean there was so much changin' over each day you didn't know who was here and they'd say, "Oh you're in such and such a force?" "Yeah." "Oh good luck," and that sort a thing. That's all it was. So there was no heart breaks or anything like that. It was just part a the

25:30 routine of army life but and even when we went in we were told never to make good strong mates in the army because many a person gets killed goin' back lookin' for his mate and things like that but when it become a prisoner of war camp it become a different matter altogether.

At this point did you ever think you'd get home?

Always thought I'd get home. I always had my

26:00 I'd get home but I used to say, "These little yellow so-and-sos won't get me down," and me mate Tommy was the same. So it was that's the way it is. I mean we had our scares. That's part of it.

Was there ever a time that you wished you'd been killed instead of being taken prisoner?

26:30 No. Actually I've I have said and a lot I think others too. "Oh God, a bloke'd be better off gettin' killed doin' this," but not meaning it. It was just a part of a conversation because I don't care where you go, life's life and that's it and once it's gone there's no comin' back. So it's, although I'll come back three times.

27:00 When did you find out that you were going to be leaving Changi?

About a week before. They formed started to form the party up about a week before and so we had nothin' to pack. Just the clothes we stood in and a blanket. So campin' and goin' was easy.

And

27:30 where were you taken to?

Taken up to Japan. We thought we were going to Borneo but we boarded the ship on Anzac Eve 1943. Went to ah next mornin' we moved out very early hours of the mornin' just breakin' day. We moved out the harbour. A convoy, I don't know how can't remember now how many ships were in the convoy. We were battened down the holds. We

28:00 had not enough room to lay down properly. We was head to feet, head to feet was the only way we could lay down, even then you were a tight squeeze and only allowed up oh half a dozen to a dozen at a time to go to the toilet and the first lot up come back and says, "We're not goin' to Borneo. We're goin' north," and some of us country blokes said to him, "Well your so-and-so city blokes wouldn't know where you're goin'." So the next

28:30 lot that went up and a bloke from the country come he said, "No," he said, "We're headin' north all right." So we started to surmise and guess where we were goin' to. Some said, "Oh to China," and things like that and Formosa and Philippine Islands, all these things come up and we finished up going to Japan. So we landed there in oh 9th or I don't know whether it was the 9th or 10th of

29:00 May I think. I'd have it on that paper there. I forget now.

What were the conditions like on the ship down there in the hold?

Ladies present I can't tell ya. No very bad. The ladders were straight up the hold. Almost a hundred per cent were sufferin' from dysentery and you had to climb straight up this narrow rungged ladder and quite frequently

- 29:30 you couldn't make it. The only time you got a wash if you got the bucket and threw it over the side and heaved a bucket of sea water up and tipped it over yourself. So and needless to say with two hundred people batten down there things got a bit high. Odd times they they'd let a few more up like to satisfy that was enough and they they'd cut it off
- 30:00 and we had to pulled in at Formosa and had to wait there because there was a submarine scare. Then between Formosa and Japan we had two or three scares there from submarines. The ship started to zig zag about and the Japs made us all get down the holds and batten the holds down and we knew somethin' was on with a they were very agitated and panicky. You couldn't even if you didn't
- 30:30 dawdle a little bit you'd cop it and anyway we found out afterwards there was a sub [submarine] scare but we got right through and landed at a place called Moji in Japan. So from there they got us on the train and took us through to, I don't know how long it took but I know we were a couple a nights or so on the train going through to Osaka or Osikka as they call it.
- 31:00 The only funny instance I remember on that is this night it was dark, so that's why at night this Jap come through and he handed the first bloke he saw, which is another one of me mates, Sammy Sopher, lives in Victoria, a bit of paper with all our names on. He said, "You find out their job in Australia." So he Sammy sang out, "So-and-so."
- 31:30 "What's their name what's their name in Australia what'd you in Australia?" "I was a bricklayer," and he got called the list a bit and then he got to one of the parts that we thought we were real good. Bloke by the name a Les Holt. "Les Holt." Les said, "Yeah." He said, "What was your job in Australia?" He said, "I come from Canberra," and he said, "I was a public toilet tile layer," and a voice come roarin' out, "That means he's a shithouse tiler,"
- 32:00 and excuse me for sayin' it. Anyway Sammy sang out, "Who?" No it wasn't, it was KKK [Keith Kingsford Smith] goin', "Who said that?" and Charlie Bennett says, "I said it." I mean that's one a those funny things that crop up but the whole carriage just simply roared you know but then I that's about I remember goin' on about all the train because they kept the windows shut so we couldn't see where we were goin', what we were doin' and things like that.
- 32:30 Then from Osaka they went they took us into this camp, freshly made camp. No runnin' water. We had to put that on. The hut was a long hut with an alley way down the middle. Split into five bays. Each bay had an alley way across. Each bay had
- 33:00 a lower deck each side a the alley way and another one up there and the five used to sleep on each in each bay. So that put twenty to each side and that give us the five bays for the hundred, ah two hundred and oh wash house was on that side and the toilet was a long trench slopin' towards one end. Boarded
- 33:30 over with an odd seat put here and there. More or less were more or less like a hole in it. Not a seat just you just squatted over it and down the everything used to flow down to the bottom end and they'd pick it up from there in the baskets and take it out to put on their paddy fields and on the gardens and cookhouse was across that end and it separate. The wash house was on that side. There
- 34:00 was taps there and makeshift basins but no water on. So we had to make arrangements for all that but luckily some of our blokes were plumbers and things like that. The shower we they hadn't got that on and so all they had then got a pipe and put through one a those inch pipes and for the time bein' we showered just with the water runnin' out and out the end and we'd all strip and push round
- 34:30 and shove to get in it and we'd only been there a few days and we'd, no we went out to work the next day actually or next day so it must a been then when they got the plumbin' blokes stopped to get those things. The rest of us went out this the works and we raced in to get a shower and get a wash and this afternoon late we raced in to get a wash and the water was goin' all over the place. Someone said, "To leave the so-and-so water alone," and looked up and the pipe's
- 35:00 goin' like that and this Jap come racin' in and, "All men out. Jishin, jishin." We thought, "What the hell's 'jishin'?" We never heard of it. "All men out." So we knew what that meant. So went out and here's the buildings like this. They had an earth tremor, which frightened the dickens out of us but we got used to that and there was quite a few we had while the years were there but we had to walk about two miles
- 35:30 to work to the steel works or Tysho steel manufacturing company but the Osaka steel works and they the guards'd take us out. Count us in the guard camp guard ah factory guards'd count us in and then the same happened of a night time. The guards go back and count us back out a there and you know and you only got fed for the number of
- 36:00 people that went in that gate and if you were sick and couldn't go you didn't get fed and many a time we had to carry blokes to work and half prop 'em up and let 'em work and things like that but we

managed.

What contact did you have with the Japanese civilian population?

Very very little. The those in the camp

- 36:30 were not allowed to talk to us, in the factory I mean. You did no one the camp no one was allowed to come anywhere near the camp gates. The first couple a days from the camp to the a couple a Japanese women raced out and tried to give us somethin' to eat and they simply got bashed. The guards bashed them and when we got in into the factory
- 37:00 the ordinary worker round there was if they were seen talkin' to ya you got bashed and they got bashed. The odd occasion was when you had to do something and a workman had to be there to help you or you had to help the workmen do something and they split us into gangs of eight and each gang had a different one were welders and one was splicin' ropes and the eight of us we were
- 37:30 keepin' the rail tracks around the docks and in through the factory in good order because that's when they wheeled the stuff round on trolleys and the heavy stuff they had little small motor to take it round and our job was to keep that track in fit order and we told that if they had an earth tremor or earthquake to grab and lay on the line because they were connected and they wouldn't
- 38:00 go but we had several pretty severe ones. One that bad one day that the props that hold the ship in the dry dock after it comes in, the props broke. The waves sprung the leak in the dry dock and the sea poured in. Japs were workin' inside the ship and that were comin' out over this planks. Some of them didn't make it and
- 38:30 crashed to the bottom of the concrete floor and got killed and injured. A couple drowned. You ought a seen the mob a rats come out a the hold when the light was all let in and things like that. You know and so it was bad but then we were just laid down and the big tall chimney stacks you'd see 'em really wave. Three and four feet at the top. How they stood up we'll never know and that type a thing. So we had our
- 39:00 little bits a fun there. A German ship come in at one stage for repair and the Germans went off they went they had free run of everything and I'm workin'. Luckily I was workin' down where the gangplank is and I dived in and in lookin' at cabin there was a packet a cigarettes there. So it went in the pocket and come out and looked up and our Jap guard was lookin' up the road. So and
- 39:30 out and handed round to some of the boys to take cigarettes out and he looked round and he spotted one a the blokes and he come down and course we'd all hidden our cigarettes we'd grabbed out of it. He come round. Grabbed the packet a cigarettes and give our bloke that had it and had a couple a smacks across the face. Went up and out. Lit a cigarette and while he was smokin' another German, not the one that we seen go out, another German come round
- 40:00 and he must a spotted the packet in this Jap's hand or pocket or somethin'. Not pocket, would be in his hand and he walked up to him. Without hesitation he went, "whack," and dropped him. Anyhow another Jap come runnin' over and Jap guard and the German told him what he did, so he booted into the bloke on the ground. The German come back past us and he said, "That's one square little black so-and-so," he said, see, and he started to talk and he said,
- 40:30 "I'd better not," he said, "Don't talk to us you'll get we'll get a hidin'." "Oh," he so he went back in there but no one ever knew that I was the one that pinched the cigarettes or the other boys never let on but when we got the chance we had a we'd sneak a smoke. One cigarette'd do about you'd have two or three draws and pass the next one. Two or three draws and pass the next one but you didn't hang on too quick in case the Japs spotted it and then that one had it he'd cop it but

What nationalities were in this camp with you?

Our own camp only Australians.

- 41:00 That's we had our camp with our Australians. That's it. Over across the road, Kobe across the bay I should say, and they had English and Australians and other nationalities in that were that were straight across the bay but in ours we were Australians.

Tape 6

- 00:31 **Okay. Alan can you tell us about the doctors in the camps?**

Beg your pardon?

Can you tell us about the doctors in the camps?

About what? I don't know much about the doctors in Changi because I wasn't there and never got bad enough to have a so I can tell you about the ones in Japan if you want now.

Please.

Right, now in when we first went to Japan we had

- 01:00 no doctor. There was just two hundred straight Australian blokes. One of them, a bloke named Jim Carr. He's dead so it won't matter. He was our first aid in their unit. So they made him the doctor. Then they got a Jap doctor, called himself, "The Japanese Nightingale," and you never saw anything more like a eagle or somethin' like that gettin' round but anyhow he was
- 01:30 and everything was his way. You couldn't talk to him. Couldn't tell him what anything. Then we got a Doctor Ackroyd. He come down, he was pretty sick lookin' when he come there. We found afterwards that he had TB. Then we finally got a Doctor Sam Stenning. Now Sam was the doctor on the HMAS Perth when it was sunk at Sunda Straits and he'd been prisoner of war different places and he finally got to us
- 02:00 in Osaka and a very, very good doctor and he copped many a bashin' because he was tried to keep blokes home from work that were too sick to go and they used to take it out on him and bash him and Jimmy Carr but he was very, very good. I had a personal experience with him, actually twice, but the first time was when we were up at
- 02:30 the last camp, Takefu, a lump formed on me backside. Couldn't make it out. So I went to him and he said, "It's gotta be lanced and it's gonna be some fun lancing it because." He said, "We've got no medicine and anything to do with it but it's gotta be done." So anyway they got the bloke to lean against the
- 03:00 back against the wall. I put me head in his stomach and a bloke each side arms hangin' onto me, holdin' me and the other hand was back onto the cheeks of me backside holdin' it open while he lanced it. It did hurt but anyway afterwards and got off all right. Drained out and went down.
- 03:30 So I dunno whether it was the truth or not but days afterwards and I said to the blokes, "God I'd must a been lucky. I didn't know the doctor had anything like to lance it with," and this bloke that was one of 'em that was holdin' me he said, "He didn't. It was a hacksaw blade." Now whether that's true or not I wouldn't have a clue and I wouldn't like to back either way but he could a been havin' me on but the other time was
- 04:00 after the what do you call 'em after the blue went up and the finished the Yanks come over and dropped food and supplies or everything. Then this lone pilot who was supposed to be a British from all reports what I found out afterward he tried to drop a bundle a clothing and like all mad pilots he tried to drop it through an open doorway. It didn't hit the corner a the compound
- 04:30 and I was in the yard and a few others in the yard too and a piece a tile they said about three inches big, I don't know I don't think I ever saw it, hit me on the head and knocked me unconscious. Next first thing I know about it I'm layin' in the little area they called the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] with it and he's workin' on me and he says, "You're lucky." He said, "Quarter of an inch lower," he said, "it'd a taken your scalp."
- 05:00 So that's all right. The other instance was when they did drop food later, no it was earlier sorry, they dropped in forty four gallon drums. The welded together in a parachute. Well they dropped 'em first of all too low. The parachutes didn't have time to open properly but some a them were that heavy they the parachutes were turned inside out and quite frequently
- 05:30 one drum was buried almost completely into the dirt in the vacant paddock alongside of us. On the quarter of the compound which was about eight inch square posts, a shiva come across that and went across about oh I suppose fifteen, twenty feet and pierced a bloke don't know which knee now, behind the knee and that sinew that's runs down behind the knee,
- 06:00 cut it completely in half. His name was Len Keogh. They turned round then and the doctor dealt with him. Well then it luckily it wasn't long after that, only a few days when they come round checkin' the camps, the release crowd mostly Yanks and they took him straight away and I dunno how soon it was
- 06:30 but I never saw him for years after when he was flown and they said flown straight home. So he was what ya might call lucky. Another bloke had a piece taken out a the calf of his leg down there and they flew him home. When they got him home they put cut the skin off the other leg and put 'em both
- 07:00 together to get the flesh to build up. So the experience that I had with Sam Stenning was you know he was a really good doctor and a good caring doctor. So but there was five, four, four Stenning brothers all doctors in Macquarie Street. After the war when I was workin' as a parking police down there I went along one day, they put me into Macquarie Street and I went along and I saw, "Stenning. That name's familiar." Then I see, "SEL Stenning." That was his
- 07:30 initials. So I went down a couple a steps into where he was and I said to the girl, "That Doctor Stenning." I said, "Was he on the Perth?" She said, "Oh I dunno," and I said, "Was he a prisoner of war?" She said, "I dunno." She said, "You got an appointment?" I said and there was four old ladies sittin' on a seat and I said, "No." I said, "I just wanna know if that's the bloke," and the door opened
- 08:00 and this doctor ushered the woman out and he looked up and he seen me. "Mr Pope," he said, "you're late for your appointment. Come straight in." Well you can just imagine when I come in. "Bang." Yeah.

Tears all round but that's what I'm just sayin'. He was a really, really good doctor and funny enough, although he'd been on the Perth and then in the army with us and things like that

08:30 when he come back he went training, I dunno know what you'd know what to call it I wouldn't. It'd be not obstetrics but after the baby was born any baby with any difficulties he was that doctor that took over. So you'd know the name for that, I wouldn't. So that's my experience with him and he was the one that come right home with us to Australia.

And were there instances when he could do nothing to help

09:00 **a prisoner?**

Beg your pardon?

Were there any instances when Doctor Stenning could do nothing to help a prisoner?

Not up in Japan. Everyone was attended to. Lucky there was nothing what you call dangerous, nothin' not dangerous that happened up there but there was some in Singapore that they were takin' to hospital and they were said there was no hope. You know there was just nothin' to do but I can't vouch

09:30 for that because I knew nothin' about it.

And what were the instances you saw of animal instincts taking over in the camp?

Of which?

Animal instincts.

Not with any of our blokes. They looked after each other right from the 5 section right down to 1 section but with the German, ah Germans with the Japs

10:00 they were animals and that's all I'll say for 'em. They cruelty with that. I've seen 'em put two cats in a bag and tie the bag and take it out on the carry it out on the playground, on the parade ground and then go out put bayonets on their rifle and go around tryna stab the cats while they're hoppin' around in an enclosed bag. Things like that. You know they were complete sadists and virtually you might call 'em although I don't it's a disgrace

10:30 to call 'em a trained apes but a disgrace to the apes but that's all I can say about them. I have no time for 'em. Some may say, "Do you hate 'em?" Well I hate's a funny word and I don't hate them. I've had to talk to 'em. I've had to meet 'em but I get away from it as quick as I can and as far away as I can.

What changes did you notice in your own body in the time that you were

11:00 **a prisoner of war?**

Well when I went in gosh I'm joinin' real good, usin' good words, I was what you might call fightin' fit. Trained. When I was released in Takefu the boys found the scales and that what there and we weigh and I was six stone seven. So I give you an idea and I was not the

11:30 thinnest by any means and you'll see in that book Guys Crucified I showed you there this morning, some drawings of some of the boys in that. They had your ribs were showin', you could play it like a piano on your ribs. The only thing was big was your belly and it was potted out because of the they used to call 'em a, "rice belly," and it wasn't oh food,

12:00 because we was on a starvation diet but the reason I'd say that is because when the food was dropped to us there was all sorts a food dropped and the doctor gave and lined us all up and gave us a lecture that if we get into it and hog it we would bust our stomach because only your stomach only got used to a small issue of rice. So all everything went into a store room and he gave

12:30 a list, a paper with the list of all the names on and a few of us ASC boys that's been workin' in the supply in the army were put on there and relieved every now and again by others. It was a tin of large, tin of fruit to two to three men, depending what the circumstances were. There was cakes. The size of the cake depended on how many men you'd do and everything. You had to jot down the name a the bloke that got

13:00 it and the name that was gonna share it with him. So they couldn't one send the other one and this and as I say, all our boys we it was named G Force but we called 'em, "Good," because every one of 'em obeyed and knew what the set up was and there was no dissent. They'd come back and say, "Oh do ya think our time's up yet?" We said, check up, "No, I'm sorry mate you can't get one for another twenty minutes or so." They'd go away over there and over there but you could see 'em. They

13:30 you knew they were hungry. The only thing we were allowed to give 'em freely was cigarettes. Just passed them out cause that in those days that didn't hurt. No one knew it was gonna cause cancer or anything else. Just passed your cigarettes. Matter of fact the Yanks dropped parachute after parachute of cigarettes. I come home with a full army kit bag full of tobacco and cigarettes.

You talked earlier today about how cigarettes stop you feeling so

- 14:00 **hungry. What else did you do to divert your attention from how hungry you felt?**
- Well when you were startin' to feel real peckish and you'd probably get a leaf or a twig or somethin' like and chew it and things like that. Somethin' to take your mind off it. Now something, you're talking about hunger, now something I've asked doctors, specialists and no one could tell me the answer to it. You'd
- 14:30 go to bed at night time. You'd dream of havin' a baked dinner. Not only could you taste it but you could smell it. Yet there was nothin' anywhere around the area that was in 'em and no one can answer that. Not only I wasn't the only one. There was nearly everyone had and they'd come out, "Oh I had a beautiful feed last night." "Yeah, what was it?" Tell ya and the bloke says, "Oh damn it. I had such and such," and that. You know it was on and you could taste it and you could smell it
- 15:00 and that's somethin' just shows ya doc said, "Well that just shows you just you the state of starvation you were into," and so you're a nurse, you might have the answer. No but this these are things that amazed I'm I've often cause when I come home I made prisoner of war blokes my life. When I went into Concord Hospital virtually the only the RSL [Returned and Services League] did come
- 15:30 round and the Red Cross but they were more on sort of official business but the New South Wales Prisoner of War Association was there and they were there to help. So after that I when I come out not allowed to do any work as the sayin' is, I loped around and I joined the parking police and always wore two little ribbons because all ex-service men and
- 16:00 one a the boys said, "Put the ribbons on. It'll save you gettin' a fight," and many a time they'd say, "Oh you a digger?" "Yes mate," and they'd ease down and I some a them diggers come up and they'd be in trouble. Nervous or somethin' else like that and start talkin'. Well I used to take 'em then up to Grace Buildings, which was in the corner a York and King Street repat [repatriation], "Come on. Up you go," and I'd give said to the blokes at the counter, "Can you put this bloke - help him. He's got such and such." "Yeah righto mate. Leave him with me." I'd be in
- 16:30 full uniform and that started it off and when I went to Wollongong I was joined the RSL and met a lot a prisoners, they was always prisoner of war, and without exception I'd say ninety nine to a hundred per cent were nerves and a lot a them in a very, very bad way.
- 17:00 Now anyway I started gettin' it together and talkin', things like that and then one day I got a bright idea. I rang the repatriation department up and spoke to a bloke there and, "God mate," he says, "Leave it with me." He said, "Where can I get in touch with ya?" So I told him well where the police station was and I told him round about such and such a time and I'd make sure I was in the police station.
- 17:30 So next day he rang up and he says, "Yes," he said, "We'll send ya down a lot of pension forms," and I thought, "God, I know nothin' about pensions." So this bundle come down and I started goin' round and fillin' forms out and I knew nothin' about wordings for I just used me own what me own languages I used to put things in. You know anyone else?" "Yeah so-and-so," and I finished up just before I left Wollongong I had two hundred
- 18:00 and eighty eight prisoner of war blokes on me books and out of that I'd have at least two hundred, two hundred and fifty got pensions for 'em and a lot of 'em would thank me for what they did. Matter of fact some soon as they got pensions some they just retired because they were too sick to work. Then I started to have get it together have reunions and to show you what they were like,
- 18:30 one bloke I found out where he lived and went out to see him. Dudley Wilkinson. He's dead now, I see it in the paper the other day. I told, "Oh no," he said, "I won't go to a reunion." I said, "Why?" He said, "They'll kill me," and I said, "Kill ya? What did you do to get killed by one a your own blokes?" "Oh," he said, "I was in the band." He says, "I had to with the band had to march through each hutch and wake 'em up first thing in the mornin' and," he said, "They used to abuse us and tell us
- 19:00 'When we get back to Australia we'll kill you'," and I said, "Oh don't be silly." I said, "Anyhow I'll tell ya. You come along to the reunion on such and such a date," and I said, "If you're not satisfied I'll give ya your money back and then you can go home." So I knew what unit he was in and I worded two or three other units. "Oh we thought he was dead." So I said, "When he comes in." I said, "I'll bring him over to your table."
- 19:30 He put his hand up and I took him over to the table and I said, "Know any a these?" and, "No, I don't know 'em," and Wally Scott jumped up. He said, "Dudley you old so-and-so. Come here," and then two or three others that were in the same unit, well all night the table up against the wall talkin' and they hardly sat down. That was it and that's what the reunions were for.
- 20:00 You could heal, they'd unwind and get it out a their system. Well that went on for two years and I used to have it in October. Then some a the women come to me. "Why can't we go?" I says, "Well, you know what men are like together." They said, "Yes but I think we're entitled to a have a get together with our husbands' mates." So, "Righto." So in June of each year, winter time,
- 20:30 I organised a mixed reunion at the Ironworkers' Club, ah Master Builders Club I should say, at the Masters Build Club, Builders Club in Wollongong and a men's reunion at the RSL. Well you never heard the likes in all your life. It that's the way it was and I when I was transferred up here another bloke took over and he ran it for awhile and matter of fact he got awarded

- 21:00 the award of Order of Australia medal but that's neither here or there but that's what it is and when I come up here I did the same up here. They used to run reunions up here and I joined in with 'em and it finished up I got the they were only men's reunions then so I said, "Why not a mixed reunion?" "Oh you can't have that." Anyhow I finally got to it and I got the women in onto the reunion.
- 21:30 They never looked back because the wives used to make 'em go and then I retired in 1981, no it was 1983 I think it was or something I think it was 1982, 1983 I went from up to Brisbane for a reunion. I Kath and I used to go to a lot of reunions. I went up there and on our way back I went round through a place called Cement Mills. It's a between Warwick and Inglewood
- 22:00 and the old sergeant and the one that the mainstay and the backbone a gettin' us out a the camp, Keith Kingsford Smith was his name but we nicknamed him KKK but it got shortened to Cady and he was proud of it. Anyway I said to him, "Now," I says, "I've been round most Australia and found out where all our blokes live." I says, "A lot of 'em dead but why didn't you come down to the Brisbane to the reunion?"
- 22:30 and he says, "Oh I wouldn't know any of my mob now," but he said, "I'd walk barefoot from here to Brisbane to see some a the G Force blokes again," and I said, "Well that's very unlikely to do that," you know. He thought for awhile and he said, "Now look, you found out most of 'em where they are. What about runnin' a reunion?" I said, "Oh not me mate." I says, "I couldn't do it. They're all over Australia." Anyhow I come home and a few months after I was
- 23:00 sittin' there one day and, or one night actually and Kath said, "Now that'd be a good idea wouldn't it?" I said, "What are ya talkin' about?" She said, "Gettin' the boys together." I said, "How?" "Well," she said, "You got the Tamworth reunion comin' up and in about four months. Why don't you check off and see what whether they can help ya?" I said, "What do ya mean?" and she said, "Well you should be able to reserve
- 23:30 an area for yourselves." So anyway I went in and saw the president and asked him about it and he said, "Oh well all means." So we sat down and wrote letters and sent 'em out and I think 1987, it's on that table anyway, we had our first reunion and boy they nearly flooded the place out and I didn't mean by the number there, I
- 24:00 mean by the cryin', the tears. The shirt my shirt was wet and oh we booked 'em in at the motel down here and everybody had a good time and the some a them never missed every reunion I had from every year from then on until 2002 when I cracked up and me mate cracked up. The only two that were runnin' 'em and since then we haven't been havin' em but I still write to 'em and quite a few of 'em and get answers back but
- 24:30 to me I still don't know I've often puzzled why did I pick it out to go and almost round Australia and pick out these blokes that I were with you know. No one has ever done it and they weren't all ASC units, like my mates. They were twenty seven different units in a so just one a those things that happen in life.
- 25:00 **I'm gonna take you back a bit now to Osaka. Can you describe to me the morning? Who woke you up each morning?**
- The Japs slammin' the doors and yellin out to get up and that was about four o'clock every mornin'. They never missed and you had a short piece of cloth, about I suppose it was about eighteen inches long roughly speakin'
- 25:30 and you had to get up, stand down in a line all round the bays like that and then you had to get it and rub the cloth across your back and across your stomach. That's supposed to start the circulation goin' for the day and that went on every mornin'. Sometimes they'd be early. It depended on what guard was like and they and they do it and then after that was done they'd go around and they'd count ya. Make sure no one escaped durin' the night. Things like this. A new guard a new
- 26:00 guard'd come on durin' the mid about midnight, a bit after, and they'd call everybody out to count 'em in case the there was some escaped from the previous guard. So that's the way things went.
- What did you sleep in?**
- They had on these bays they had straw packed down and matting over the top of it made out of straw. I don't know what name you'd call it but it was a you know those
- 26:30 ordinary mat straw mats you see on the ground. Well that was all tacked in over the top of this straw and it was oh about two and a half, three inches thick, and that then summer time we had two blankets and winter time they gave us a couple more but it was still not because there was snow there at times and the only way you could get warm was to fold the blankets over the top and crawl and then crawl in between and you have about four flaps under you and about four flaps above you. Somethin' like that. So
- 27:00 and you slept in all your clothes. So it didn't make any difference.
- And what would happen after you'd got your circulation going? What did you do then each morning?**

Oh well you got yourself dressed and washed and dressed and then you had your breakfast and then straight out to work.

What was breakfast?

A bowl a rice. There's no set menu, no change of menu. It was just a bowl of rice.

How big was the bowl of rice?

27:30 Oh just about the ordinary bowl like that. Just that was just about the size of it and it was never full. So it was might you might say about a cup of cooked rice.

Did it you eat with your fingers?

Well some ate with their fingers. Some had spoons they'd kept with them. Some manufactured bits a spoons when they got the chance out of the factory. Bits a tin bent up into

28:00 spoon shape to do it. A lot of make shift stuff. You had your drinkin' material was nine out of ten was bottles cut off with a bit a hot wire and then smoothed all round the top to take the sharp edges off and that was a your cup the case may be. Some still had our dixie. Some of us still had our dixies. So

And how did you get from the camp to the factory?

28:30 Walked. Marched. Two I thought it was two mile I don't know but someone said, "I don't know whether it was two mile or two kilometres," but it was two mile as far as I was concerned. Those that were sick, no work, no eat. So they counted the food was all supplied by the factory. So they counted you in the gate and what went in the gate got fed and some of them they were that sick they couldn't go to work. We'd we sort of semi carried 'em to work to get 'em to work.

29:00 The guards didn't mind, they were gettin' them out a the camp and they had to keep their side of it up and so that's what happened.

What was the countryside like that you walked through each day?

Oh most of it was fairly close settled with houses and that and odd market garden here and there, the odd one about but it was mostly reasonably level and there was a canal

29:30 we had to cross across in the barge and one of our or a lot of nicknames we had for our one we called the Walrus. Fat stomachy bloke old up in years. Had a big droopin' moustache. He was a bowerbird. He used to pick any bits a string, bits of wire anything he'd pick up and put in his pockets and he had a favourite sayin' when he wanted to torment us, "King Georgie cry. King Georgie cry." course it was King George on the throne at the time

30:00 and he'd see us all onto the boat onto the launch the punt and be on there and then he'd push his way through and be at the front to get off and check us off in case of any of 'em went in. Try as we might for years we tried to dump him into the canal. Anyway one day it did happen and he come up just as you see a walrus come out. Every time I see it on the TV,

30:30 a seal or anything come up out of the water there I say, "There's the bloody Walrus." You know you he just come up and there was water drippin' off him and a lot of those canals they weren't real clean either, see, but other than that everything went off tamely. There was a few good instances that at the camp. One a the first funny ones, they split us all into eight. Groups of eight, different gangs. Some welders, some fitters, some on the moulds and some

31:00 jack hammers. I was on the railway lines goin' round the docks and the gang that I was on. Anyhow we weren't workin' very long and some a the boys decided they want a break. So they decided they wanted to go to the toilet and a course you had to go to the guard, bow and say, "Benjo icki dicki muss." That was, "Benjo", "If you please," you know and he's you'd go in. Now they had a lot a women, Jap women, workin'

31:30 round the place of all ages and they wore these we just called 'em pantaloons. Big puffed out pants that tapered off into narrowed right down near the ankles. Our boys were in there and they weren't in there very long and next minute they come out full trot and the Jap guard's roarin' laughin' and we couldn't make out what it was all over. A few that didn't go, three or four of us didn't go in.

32:00 "There's women come in there," but apparently women go to the toilet. Well they just step back, drop the (UNCLEAR), back up to it, pull 'em up and out and a course they did that along some of ours blokes and our blokes weren't used to that and they out quick. That was one of the incidents. Another instance there was, I thought was funny at the time one guard, not the one that was lookin' after us but another guard used to wander round

32:30 checkin' that any troubles and things like that. Oh he had a funny name and we couldn't pronounce half their names but the Australian word for danger was, "Red light." So when he come we, "Red light," and it'd pass all round the way he was headin' to make sure. One day he come up, "Me red light, me red light." He knew we couldn't pronounce, "Me red light," and we thought he thought that was the name and this went on ages. Could be twelve months, could be more

33:00 and this day he come round the corner and the word passed down. He lined us all up and boy we all finished on the ground flat. Says, "What's the dickens goes on?" and he waited until we got up and he says, "Me no red light. Me understand what you say. Me no red light. They tell me red light danger." They said someone had told and we still couldn't find out whether one a the English speakin' Japs told him or one of our own boys that in another unit, another group opened his big mouth you know. We

33:30 tried to find out who it was but couldn't find out.

Did that happen often? Did boys in other groups open their mouth?

Oh we had some a them gets a bit what shall I say? If they can talk get a Jap speakin' the English or want to speak English it was a way of gettin' him interested and stoppin' him from workin'. You know you'd just get a spell from workin' but most of them were very, very good. They never opened their mouth on things like that but that's how we think it was an English speakin' Jap but

34:00 another funny instance happened with me this time. A German ship come in for some repair in the dry dock and got it in all propped up and the water drained out and course you're workin' along on the lines runnin' down alongside the dock probably only three, four feet off the edge a the dock and when I got down I was near the gang

34:30 plank where they go into the ship. So I glanced round, couldn't see anyone and our guard was lookin' the other way. So I hopped up the gangplank to see what I could pinch. First cabin there's a packet of cigarettes. Well we'd had none so I go 'whffffit' in the pocket. Nothin' else there so I out before I got spotted and passed them round to the blokes and I had a cigarette and then another somebody else took one out and then the guard happened to turn around and spotted 'em.

35:00 So he come down to the bloke that had 'em and give him a couple a slaps and took the packet a cigarettes and the cigarette he had in his hand and went up and puffed away and just then or about that time the German come round the corner on the top end of the dock and he must a seen the packet cause he they all smoked, the Japs most a them smoked, and wouldn't it wouldn't be the cigarette and he walked over and he just looked at that and next minute he went 'whack'

35:30 and he dropped the Jap. Anyhow another Jap come runnin' over and the German pointed to the cigarettes and that and then the other Jap belted into the bloke that had just been knocked down and the German come down past, cause they had no time for the Japs and, "Oh that got him," you know. He started to talk and one a the boys said, "Don't talk. Our bloke's up there and you're not allowed to talk and we could cop a bashin'." "Oh yeah." So he went on into the ship you know but we

36:00 got square with one bloke but little things like that you and you did a lot of little, not so much with us because we could only just put balance under the sleepers and make sure the lines were safe but you did a lot a little things that the boys like shovelfuls a dirt in the furnace and things like that, which put a fault in the steel and anything you could get away with

36:30 that's what we did. Another instance that they used to have the furnace up there with the everything got the molten metal come out and it'd come down a bit of a trench into buckets, the crane'd pick it up and take it down and drop it down in onto the different little moulds that had to (UNCLEAR) and this day the bucket couldn't have been passin' properly, hooked up properly,

37:00 and as it took off, it was goin' down and there was all our blokes workin' and down when it was finished, the mould finished the Japs used to tick put 'em onto a trolley out a the road and one of our blokes saw the metal leakin' out of it cause it was a bit on the slant. So he raced through underneath it. He could a got caught too but he with it but he raced through underneath it, through and jammed the pulley block.

37:30 Anyhow the Jap boss, Hanchō they called him, he come racin' down and then he seen the metal comin' out. So he looked at our bloke and he said, "Hiroshi, hiroshi," which meant, "Good." So anyhow they wheeled it and took the metal back to repour it in the thing and our bloke got two bowls of rice and an award for savin' the Japanese gettin' burnt. Our

38:00 bloke says, "Bugger the Japanese." He says, "I was tryna save our blokes," but he didn't tell the Japs that you know. I mean little things like that. So

What was the morale like when you moved to Japan?

The morale was good. It the first day we were a little bit whatcha ma call not downhearted so much but sayin', "Oh we're gettin' further away from Australia," but

38:30 we thought, "Well this is not bad conditions up here," and of course we hadn't got what you call got into winter then. It was into it was their hot weather and but then again the doctor, not the doctor the sergeant, KK, he gave us a talkin' to and said, "Well this is it. We got a make the best of this," and he kept us on that he's the backbone he kept us goin' you know. Our two officers, well

39:00 the less said about them the better, so.

What were the periods that you found the most difficult?

That is very hard to say because nearly every difficult, every period was difficult. You were down in

condition. It got that way at times that you had a job to

- 39:30 force yourself to walk and I'd say that they're the times that were the most difficult but you knew you had to do it. You knew your mates were down the same as you and you wouldn't give in cause you knew once you give in, he'd give in. So you had to it was the same as going into action into the army in the war. You were scared and so was he, but you didn't want to show it because once you started a certain lot of scares
- 40:00 shows on a few people that's when the panic'll set in. So you braved it out and so that's you know that's the way things went. It's somethin' that's very, very hard to explain but it's a the mental adaption. You know you do it do that. So I've often since the wife passed away thought of this and gone back through these things and tried to
- 40:30 puzzle out but I didn't have enough schooling to go or enough brains to work out why it is. It's the same thing with comin' home. I well I've often said, you come home because you wanted to come home. We said, "You're not gonna die in their country," and that's one a the things we used to say. Anyone got down in the dumps. "Don't tell me you're gonna die in this country," and this is the way things are but who's to say what the set up was? I don't know.
- 41:00 I can't fathom it out and the whole issue even the years and years I've tried.

We're gonna put in another tape.

Tape 7

- 00:33 **Alan, what did you think what did you look forward to the most about going home?**
- Gettin' home. That the most thing was make sure we got home because there is quite a few prisoners of war that even after we released didn't get home. When I was goin'
- 01:00 through getting the names of a lot of our boys in 1980 about 1985, 1983, 1984, 1985 somethin' I come across where a plane in the Philippine Islands Australians, ah American took a plane, I don't know how many on it, to fly to Australia. He radioed back that there was a cyclone. That he was gonna turn to the Chinese coast to get around it and was never
- 01:30 heard again. Another one, there's a funny type of ending, he was supposed to on records run into a cyclone and was downed and no one ever heard about it but that was in 1945 but here oh a few years ago, I can't remember
- 02:00 in the Pix magazine, the old Pix I don't know whether it's still today, I saw where a navy bloke, Australian navy bloke, they'd been on a ship in the Pacific Ocean somewhere and they run into this cyclone and while they're battlin' with the cyclone, the waves were that big they were bustin' over the ship and things like that,
- 02:30 they could hear a plane and the plane was low down over the water. It went past them and it said they thought this plane was in trouble. It hadn't gone a very far or long or somethin' but it turned and come back and as it come back near them there was a flashing of lights from the plane and then the plane
- 03:00 dropped into the ocean. Immediately the plane dropped in there was people jumpin' out of it. They I think it's eight or twelve, I'm not sure which now, they put ropes down and rope ladders down and they went out themselves to try and pick 'em. They either picked eight or twelve people up and when they got on board they found they were prisoners of war headin' for Australia
- 03:30 from the Philippine Islands. Now there was no more about it but that's all and that was in the Pix and I read that and I've often wondered whether that was the one that was missing that flew into it and couldn't get out or whether it was the one that was turning towards the Chinese coast to go round it or just another one but see a lot a them all wanted to get home and we were in this camp in Manila to fatten up
- 04:00 and as much food as you could eat. They didn't worry about you bustin' yourself because they you'd been offered on the ordinary food for about a month so you could get over it like. They got down to the Yanks and of course the Yanks they were the big chiefs as the sayin' is and a lot of 'em did. One bloke took off and he was gonna go to fly to Australia
- 04:30 when the Australians left our camp and he about I think some time the next day he come back. I said, "Couldn't you get a trip?" "Oh yes," he said, "We didn't get out very far," and he says, "All of a sudden the pilot says, 'God,' he says, 'we're nearly out of petrol.' He says, 'They didn't fill the so-and-so goddamn plane up.' He says 'We won't get very far.' So he said 'We got to turn and go back.'" I mean there's things that did
- 05:00 happen and so you I don't know and wouldn't have a clue how many and that. We had, as far as I know we had none die on our ship comin' home but others died on the ship.

What about men who died in the camp? Did that happen often?

We had actually three died in the camp but one died on the boat the day before we got into Moji. One that died in that camp was a reject

05:30 from the First world War and he was put into a the 8th Division and but he a bloke name of Bill Brocklehurst. They the Japs, well I suppose they cremated 'em. They brought back a little jar with ashes in it and as far as I know our sergeant brought them home to Australia and

06:00 was had them all tagged and presume he was gonna send those ashes to their next a kin but whatever happened I wouldn't have a clue cause I never questioned him about it. It was just one of those things. So the bloke name of Johnny Patterson, Victoria, Ron Ahearn from Queensland and Bill Brocklehurst. I wouldn't know his, it's in me book there anyway and a bloke named Mick Hartley. He died on the, the day before we got on

06:30 the off the boat at Moji on our way to Japan.

Did you find that you experienced conflict with other people in the camp? You mentioned that the officers the less you said about them the better.

No, well see what we had

07:00 a couple of us, a few of us anyway had against our officers was that when we got to Japan this major told us, "We're here. We're gotta do best we can," and he says, "Only two of us get out of this camp," he said, "The lieutenant and I we'll be the two. Even if we're gotta use your rations to keep us goin'," and someone sang out in the back in the ranks,

07:30 "If we get out a this camp don't come home with us or you'll never reach home." Well to put it straight I didn't know they came come but I found out when we landed they did but they locked themselves in their cabin and didn't come out. cause I'm pretty sure that some of these boys would a carried out their threat. That was one instance. Another instance that we had one bloke, oh well he he'd been in trouble with the

08:00 police before we went in the army, got in the army to get out a the road and things like that but he was a stubborn little bloke and anyhow he did somethin' wrong one day and the major warned him and a couple a days later he did it again. So the major dobed him into the Jap and he got a hell of a hidin'. Well as far as we the rest of us were concerned that's the worst, to dob him into an enemy, and that's when we told him straight,

08:30 "You're in for it." He couldn't do anything there because the Japs wouldn't let him. If he started to bash some of us the Japs'd been onto him. He got copped a hidin' or two but he was a big bloke, over six foot and a big solid wrestler before the war. He didn't give it up there. He wouldn't back us up against the Japs or anything you know. That's part a life. Human nature. You name it.

Did you did that did he separate himself from the rest of you

09:00 **for the rest of your time in the camp?**

No. He was there. He lived in the end of the huts in the number one bay with 'em but they just well virtually they just ignored him. He had nothing. He didn't go to work and so we had nothing to do with him all day and Cady Smith was the one that we all turned to if we wanted to do anything or was in trouble. We all turned to Cady.

So Cady was the leader?

He was. He was the leader and well even

09:30 I'll tell ya how good he was. In 13th or 14th of March 1945 when they burnt Osaka to the ground the Japs locked the doors, locked us all in but there's a gap under the eaves like that. You could a crawled well did matter a fact snow time some of us crawled out to put the snow away from the door and we were up the top bays and we were watchin' out the big fire.

10:00 The all clear went and the Japs opened the door and the boys said, "Well thank goodness we didn't get hit. They must a known where we were." Then all of a sudden we heard this lone plane comin' and said, "Ha ha, a Jap plane takin' off now they're gone. That's (UNCLEAR) us." Sayin' amongst ourselves and next minute we heard 'em.

10:30 They the camp was like that and the fence was so wide from it and a go down was from there goin' that way and he come over our camp after that go down and one cylinder hit the edge of the go down and the some of the cylinders landed in our camp and set fire to the kitchen and a part a the wash room sort a

11:00 thing. So as soon as we could see the glow and so Cady says, didn't wait for the major or the Japs, he says, "Come on, quick. Get the buckets." So we raced out with buckets and a whole lot of us and grabbin' buckets a water and thing and throwin' it over 'em and then the gate leading out was just above the top a the go down and he went to go out there and this Jap sang out,

11:30 "No, no, out there. No, no, no," and the Jap says, "We're gonna save that because that if that burns our camp goes." So he raced out and took the top into the go down to stop it (UNCLEAR). He didn't wait for Jap permission. Just ignored them and the same with the major and anything else you know. So it just shows you what sort of a bloke he was. He was knew what to do and he went and did it and they tell me he was a colossal bloke in action when the while they although he wasn't in our unit

12:00 in action. He was in the ammo [ammunition] section and they reckon he was a colossal bloke in that. Afraid a nothin'. So it just you know that's just the way it was. So he was a colossal bloke and the backbone of our camp as far as everybody else was concerned.

Now I understand that your fiancée had heard...?

Mmm, go on.

That you were captured

12:30 **or that you were missing in action but didn't believe it. Is that correct?**

That's right. She didn't believe it right through. We had a funny we had a somewhere around there was a bond somewhere that we knew we could almost talk to each other when we were way apart

13:00 but both her and their mother I say were the two that have kept me dry. So when we come back to on the HMS Formidable we had a bit a fun before we got on the off the boat. The provos [Provosts - Military Police], the Australian Army police, got on at the Heads

13:30 and the boys had a big banner, "We want Bennett," and the provos asked 'em to take it down and they wouldn't. So they said, "We'll be under arrest when we...", and they'd lock us up as soon as we got off the ship. Well I'd had, like I always do, roam around and the many a time I'd been up on the bridge between the Philippine Islands

14:00 and that and talkin' to the skipper or the captain as we called him. Talkin' to him and he wanted to know all about what happened during the prisoner of war life and the whole issue and I'm tellin' him the same as I'm talkin' to you and anyhow there looked like bein' a riot with the prisoner of war against these provos. So I just sang out turned around, "Hold it," and I ran up and as I ran up towards the bridge this Pommy

14:30 navy ah well navy bloke, sailor, he said, "Where ya goin'?" and I said, "There's a bit a trouble down there." I said, "A riot." I said, "I might get the skipper." "Oh you can't go up there." He said, "He can't leave that deck the bridge while it's landin', berthin'. Just a minute," he said. "Wait there." So he took off and a few minutes later this captain come racin' down. "What's the trouble?" I told him. "Come on." So he raced down. He walked up to these provos. These's four of 'em. He walked up

15:00 to 'em and he says, "Right. I own this ship. I'm the one that's the boss a this. Now," he said, "Leave those men alone," and one of the provos started to back he said, "Look." He said, "I'm in charge. What happens on the shore you please yourself but I'm in charge here. Now," he said, "If you don't walk away immediately," he says, "I'll get me men to lock you in the brig until we land," and he turned to them and he said, "You heard me. Well make 'em do what they're told," and he took off and went

15:30 back. Anyhow they walked up to the provos and said a few words and they moved off and just as they did that one a the boys, "Hey Popey you're wanted." I said, "What's wrong?" and he says, "There's a big flag down there waitin' for you." So where the aircraft carrier sloped down I went down, two blokes hung onto me, down there and the, "Welcome home Alan Pope." It was the family.

16:00 So anyhow that's the way things went and but she waited right through and even when I was in hospital she been so but we had a happy knack cause I could be at work and I knew somethin' was wrong at home and I could she and she'd know somethin' had happened to me. cause often she said, "Did ya have a bit a trouble before dinner?" and I thought, "How the hell would you know?" Anyhow this got this way. So

16:30 give you an idea a the bond, when she got sick with lung cancer, never smoked but got lung cancer, one night they put her in hospital. She wasn't gettin' enough air, oxygen and one night I'd been asleep and I rolled over, "Ah, don't tell me she got up on her own." So I flew out a bed and I got half way to the toilet

17:00 to see where she usually goes, "Oh she's in hospital." I looked at the clock. Eight minutes to ten. So anyhow when I went up to the hospital to visit her she's on tubes in the nose and things to get oxygen into her lungs and the sister come in just then to check the machine and I said to sister, "What sort of night she have?" and she said, "Very restless." She said, "As a matter of fact I caught

17:30 her gettin' out a bed," and I looked at her and said, "That'd be eight minutes to ten would it?" and she give me a queer look and she says, "How do you know?" and I said, "I know," and that's the way things were you know and the mornin' she died the daughter come home from Gosford and she was asleep in that spare room and a course once night time my hearin' aids go on there

18:00 and I don't hear nothin'. The phone could ring and I wouldn't hear it and quarter past five in the mornin' I heard this sharp voice, which she used to use at times, "Alan," and I flew up out a bed,

"What?" and by that time I was at the door and I thought I looked up and I said to the daughter on the phone, "What's wrong?" "You're wanted at the hospital immediately." So we raced up and we were a bit late in gettin' there and

18:30 the sister, "She went about eight minutes ago." I said, "Yeah I know." She looked at me and I said, "A quarter past five." She give me a queer look. She said, "How did you know? You weren't here." I'm just pointin' out the different things you know. That's life.

19:00 **What did you do when things were getting tough to have a laugh? Did you play games?**

Where?

In the camp.

No, well they wouldn't let ya play games. You didn't have virtually no what you might call idle time. Up in Japan well you know it was what spare time you had you're either tryna find out who brought the lice into the camp and

19:30 clean 'em up or try to keep catch any flies that come into the camp and things like that. You're always on the go doin' somethin' and I dunno know what I did but we always had a happy knack of yarnin'. You'd get up to a bay and you'd and you'd talk about sheep and cattle or what you're gonna do. How many were gonna buy pubs and close the doors and drink 'em out when they got home. Well I don't think there'd be a pub left in Australia that was our talk

20:00 and but we learnt a good trade, me included, how to thieve. When I come home I was in hospital and I said to 'em and they used to laugh at me, "Don't ever let me go into a shop on me own." They said, "Why?" I said, "If anything's there I want, I'll take it." You never pinched off your own mates or off your own off the Australian prisoners of war but the Japs or anything

20:30 else left anything there and you had it and I near did once in Canberra. The wife said to me, "What are ya doin' with that?" I said, "Putting me pocket, oh." I had this halfway into me pocket and I mean that's part of it. You learnt to so I've grown out if now so you're quite safe.

In the steel factory

Hmm?

In working in the steel factory, what was your job?

21:00 Puttin' the balance in on the sleepers around the railway lines. They all had to be kept in order. We couldn't sabotage 'em because if we tried to sabotage 'em your own mates pushin' wieldin' the trolleys would a been the ones to get caught. So we had to make sure that everything was right because if you've got big plates of steel probably ten, fifteen feet

21:30 long and about four or five feet wide, some a the plates might even be twenty feet long, I mean it doesn't take much to shift them so they had to be they'd be balanced on it and they were then taken up. So you had to just make sure that everything was as close to safety as you could and oh, we had our bits a fun. We nearly had a fight along a bloke named

22:00 Freddy Santos, Tongan island bloke. Little, four foot, black as the ace a spades and you had wicker baskets and they used to slide 'em onto a pole and you'd be a pole between you and you'd carry this these baskets full of metal to take down to different parts of the line. You'd carry it from a big heap up there you'd carry 'em down and spread 'em along the line.

22:30 Well Freddy was four feet. I'm five, well five feet eight. So when Freddy'd get in the front when you go along the basket'd slowly work his way and he'd go crook. Then he'd get he'd say, "I'll go up the back," and when he'd get up the back it'd go his way and Fred

23:00 at the end a the day Fred come up to me and he said, "Gee Popey. It's good," he said, "You don't get cranky." I said, "What do you mean?" "Oh," he said, "I had real," I'm usin' his words, "I had really had the shits today," he says. He said, "I flew for you three or four times." I said, "Yeah, but I knew what was doin'." I said, "You knew what was doin' too but," I said, "You just had to get it out a your system," but that's the sorta thing you know there was especially with our group but most groups I never

23:30 heard one really argument with, fair dinkum argument. I've heard a few when tormentin' a bloke that's got down in the dumps. Tormentin' him to I remember one I nearly come into once with a bloke that was down the dumps and I'm up in the top bay and they're down the bottom. All of a sudden I heard this bloke say, "She wasn't." "What's goin' on?" Bit of a loud voice

24:00 and I looked over the top and down this bloke and he looked up and spotted me. He said, "Hey Popey isn't that right?" He says, "That Shirley Temple's a prostitute," and before I could say anything this bloke said, "She wasn't." He said, "Get up here. Come on. Get up here instead a layin' down there while we're talkin'," and so the bloke got out a bed and got up and they're arguin' and this bloke said, "Well I only heard it mate." He said, "I only heard but hey, you're on your feet.

24:30 You're not sick after all," and that was the idea that was you know things like that and I said to this

bloke, "You so-and-so," I said. "You nearly had me in then. I nearly come into it," and he says, "Well just as bloody well you didn't," he says. "We got this bloke," I mean you do those sort a things and once you got a bloke cranky and got him on his fee then he'd wake up that it was only a mind matter. Well it was more than a mind matter you know but his mind was gettin' him down. You got a get his mind workin' again and that was it

25:00 and the whole lot of us was all in that same pattern. I'm not talkin' about the officers, I'm just talkin' the blokes we used to deal with and we had our church services and we had this and we had that and we'd talk and give lectures on cattle and sheep and pick on them, "What were you doin' before the war?" and let him give a run down of what he was doin' and things like that and that's the way you put in you know because

25:30 I don't care where you go but there's virtually no two people alike and some of them had some different, "Oh good, I'll try that when I get home." The different ideas and different methods they had and the whole lot of us hard to understand ah hard to explain but that's what kept us going in the camp.

What were the lectures that you gave?

Beg your pardon?

What were the lectures?

Oh most mostly on rabbiting and fencing and

26:00 sheep, shearin' a sheep and things like that and course with us there was quite a few city people that hardly know a sheep from a dog type a thing and couldn't make out the shears. Tried to describe, "Oh, like a pair a scissors?" I said, "Yes, but only in a bigger and wider blade and a bigger pattern." You know give the idea what it was you know. "Well wouldn't that cut the skin?" "Oh it does occasionally if you wasn't takin'," and describe how

26:30 you did it and things like that and you know it was marvellous when you're talkin' like that. The same as talkin' and different here like different things crop up that you hadn't thought of for years and one thing leads to another. Some'd have cattle and some'd have wheat and all the different things about the place and someone'd be talkin' about some a the city slickers'd be talkin' about the different things they did in the city and as kids growin'

27:00 up and that. You know it it's just marvellous when you're like that how time got away and that's the way it went and it was done we all knew it was done deliberately to keep you happy, keep your mind from gettin' depressed. So as I say, we come home because we wanted to come home and that will to live that kept us through. We wouldn't a come

27:30 home without a mate because that mate was the one that kept ya kept ya goin'. If you were sick and he was all right he'd whap a spoonful or two of rice over onto ya and we'd do the same and this type a thing. You know you always helped one another. That's why we have such a big following. Even the blokes from Western Australia they'd

28:00 come over every second year to the reunions. I mean when you look at that, that's a big effort to come all that way over for the reunions. So but you'll see some a the by that paraphernalia I've got in there on the settee in there. So that's the way it is. I have me nightmares. Not so bad now as I used to have 'em. I laid a wreath

28:30 on a Sandakan memorial up here and the 'Misleader' we call it, the Northern Daily Leader here or somethin'. We call it the Misleader because if they can mess things up and mess 'em up, they do and the girl rang up and she said, "Do you have nightmares?" and I said, "Oh occasionally. Not so much now as before." "Can you tell me about any of 'em?" I said, "Oh early in the piece some mornin's I

29:00 woke up in the half drowsy," I said, "and I was wondered if I was you know." I said, "I wouldn't realise in I wasn't in a prisoner of war camp until the light was in a different place just like now." Then they got it up that I was went to Sandakan, I got out there and I every mornin' I'd wake up and of a mornin' I woke up and no, this mornin' I woke up and thought I was in still in back in the prisoner of war. Oh, you talk about it and she said to me I said to them, "When's this

29:30 gonna be in the paper?" and she said, "Oh possibly Saturday," but she said, "Don't you buy the paper?" and I said, "No." "But," she said, "You should buy it cause it keeps me in the job." I said, "No. I used to buy it," but I said, "They made a hell of a mess of me wife's funeral notice. So I wouldn't buy it again," and lo and behold there was a hell of a mess in that one. It's in there. It's funny to read when I mean it mightn't be funny for you to read but it's funny for me to read

30:00 but just the way things go in life. Ya win some, you lose some and

When you were in Osaka how much did you know about what was happening in the rest of the war?

Surprising enough a fair bit. We had one bloke that could

30:30 speak more language, Japanese language than he let on and also he could read a bit of Japanese language and every now and again at the works we'd see a paper layin' around and we'd pinch a Jap

paper and it a lot of it took a bit of deciphering as far as workin' the truth from propaganda but by workin' out the

- 31:00 different places where they were talkin' about the different the advances the Japs had made, showed that they were goin' backward not in some places not forward. So we had a reasonable idea that things weren't goin' real good and then when the bombers started to come, the air raid sirens started to go we knew then that things were getting close.
- 31:30 They took some of our blokes to over onto a mountain range not far from the camp. No, that was at Takefu, not Osaka under the pretence of checking for gold, for coal but after we were released we found out that that is where we were supposed to go when the if the Yanks landed
- 32:00 in Japan there wasn't to be a prisoner of war left alive. Like they were gonna shoot us in there or gas us in there, what they were gonna do, but that's where we were supposed to go, in the tunnel. So but luckily it finished up but one a the biggest bluffs in the war, the Japs put the Yanks put Hiroshima, Nagasaki bombs on 'em and
- 32:30 the atomic bomb and said, "The next one's Tokyo," but they didn't have a third bomb. That was the biggest bluff. cause they knew Tokyo once they were there the Emperor was gone and everything else but it's found that out through history and I reckon if the Japs had known that they probably wouldn't a surrendered for sure. That's part a life.

Can you tell me about leaving Osaka and going to Takefu?

- 33:00 Well when they burnt it to the ground of course next day we still had to go to work and the smell of burning flesh, bodies and ashes and timbers and stuff, straw was virtually almost overpowering and area after area was just completely burnt out
- 33:30 and well I don't know I think it's I've got an idea it was ten days to a fortnight, somewhere about that, they decided they'd take us out of there. So first of all the they put us on these trams and sides all shuttered down and took us up the railway station and did the same in the train and took us for from the train then across past some big lake,
- 34:00 I can't remember the name of it, and up into a place called Takefu but all the time that you know you could peek through a bit of crack in the blinds you think, check the Jap to see if he was watchin' and you could see burnt area and then when we got out of Osaka but virtually they might as well say they burnt it, Osaka to the ground. The it might sound cruel but
- 34:30 the factory wasn't touched. Now whether they deliberately left the factories. It was all incendiary raid. There was no big heavy bombs as far as blast's concerned. So where they whether they deliberately burnt the set fire to the houses or what I'll never know and I'm not even interested in finding out but when it's incendiary, well there was steel works out there they wouldn't do much cause most of that stuff
- 35:00 was all iron and steel and things like that but I will say it was and not only was it a beautiful sight to us seeing the Japs gettin' a taste of their own medicine but they'd let these incendiaries go from well up too high for the bombers were too high for the Zeros [Japanese aircraft] to reach 'em so they were quite safe and I don't know whether
- 35:30 you know anything about 'em but they had this cone and on top a the cone was a base plate about that size and these cylinders like large bullets were stacked all over that, round that. There was a band around the outside and the
- 36:00 top these were filled with oh not naphthalene but somethin' similar, I can't think I'll think of it later on, in compressed rubber and that pressed in but on the top was another band and right down the middle was a screw and they were about that high. Right down the middle was a screw with a fin on top
- 36:30 and when they dropped it out a the plane the fin used to spin and that would undo the band that goes right through the middle. The spring in the middle would just throw these cylinders completely out all over the place and the stuff they had 'em in as soon as it hit the air they'd ignite. So you had these flamin' balls comin' down.
- 37:00 Now they'd hit on concrete, anything flammable six inches below the concrete they'd catch fire. So it'd give you an idea. If one of 'em hit ya, it stuck. So you if it hit somebody they had no hope. They was either burnt right through or case may be but that's how it was and because on the way to work
- 37:30 we marched we seen some of them on the way to work. The Japs tried to get 'em out a the road and get us out a the road a 'em but we could see what the full set up was. So when we went to Yokohama when we were released we asked the Yanks then, "What does such and such," and they described to that that's what they were doin'. So but that's part a life. Part a war. War doesn't do any good
- 38:00 to anybody and civilians get the worst hit of the lot.

When you were travelling out of Osaka that day did you see civilian houses burnt to the ground?

Oh yeah. When we were walkin' they were burnt there was just there out there just houses just burnt and they're still smoulderin'. They were burnt and there was people runnin' about and dazed and didn't know what they were doin' and walkin' here and weepin' and cryin' and all that.

38:30 I mean it virtually it made most of us feel sick but it was a part a war. We'd seen similar to that in Singapore. So we'd had one lesson there and although they didn't use incendiaries in Singapore that we saw when they bombed hell out of it and there was people killed and matter a fact that's somethin' when I come out a the hospital in the truck, as we're goin' along I won't

39:00 give you an idea how many but there was heads on spikes where they'd lopped the heads off a lot a Chinese and that and just stuck 'em on spikes to make 'em sure they kept law and order and you know they used to make us just about sick goin' out when we were goin' to hospital but they had these heads just stuck on these it's like puttin' 'em on the spike of an iron fence you know and up on light poles and things like that.

So tell us

39:30 **about getting to Takefu.**

About the work?

What did you see when you arrived?

Oh they took us to this camp, right through it, and it was just the town was about three kilometres away or three miles, either way, but all round it was open paddy fields and rice paddocks and things like that and then we had a about a mile and a half away was a this carbon

40:00 factory. So I mean we were just thought we might say isolated and we wondered what we were up to when we get there but the next day they took us to the factory and well they gave us these jobs to do and the one that I was in, the gang that I was in, we had to make these carbon blocks. They were that square and about just ooh five foot somethin' tall and when they were you just tipped

40:30 pitch and carbide and lord knows what into it from the top. When it did just turn a ratchet and just pack it down and when it got down to a certain pressure you stood, kept it there for three minutes then released it. It'd go back up then you'd pull the ratchet and this would come out, still hot, and you'd have to get your knee down in front of it.

41:00 I'd better stand up, your knees go in front of it and when it come up it leant out of it and you didn't daren't let it fall because it'd just crumble up and then you were all got bashed and the blokes our blokes had a trolley, a flat top trolley, up there and the bloke got out there got it, swung it round his knee and started to lower it and they grabbed it from there and lower it onto the trolley and took it down to the furnace because it threw a greater heat than the ordinary coke and

41:30 coal and stuff they were usin'. That's why I hurt me shoulder one day in there and I it when I swung it round it's come back and hit the shoulder. You took no notice because no work, no food and it didn't hurt that much either that one and I never knew that I did any damage to me shoulder until here a few years ago. The muscle that muscle dropped into there off

42:00 the shoulder.

Tape 8

00:31 **What were the dates you were at Takefu?**

Ah I'd have to look it up. I think around about the 20th or somethin' of March 1945. round about 20 somethin' of March 1945.

What were the living conditions you had at that camp?

Fairly good in fact. We were isolated away from the

01:00 towns and there was no bays, just a big a flat hut with a stairway up the top and big flat on top and you just laid in on top of that and on top of that it was what you may call coming into summer time and so it didn't rain but they get up to five feet of snow there in the winter so we were a bit lucky.

01:30 **And still the same diet?**

Oh yes. Oh you didn't get much to eat. They were frightened they might fatten us up but even then, all due respect, even then a lot of the Jap families were on a starvation diet too. They were runnin' short a food and there was a big scream on.

How long were the shifts that you were working in the factory at making carbon blocks?

How long a shift?

Yeah.

Sixteen hour shifts.

- 02:00 Start at midday and go through till six o'clock the next mornin'. Then they'd start at six and then they'd go through the, they'd start the then and they'd go through to midnight and that sort a thing. You know you right through. That's the way it was.

So how many hours sleep did you get after that?

Well virtually to a certain extent

- 02:30 as much as you wanted. You we used to knock off work, march back to the camp about a mile and a half or somethin' like that and then of course a sixteen hour shift we were tired and we'd go straight to bed and you'd sleep there through till about roughly midday. Then we'd get up and we'd have our bowl a rice and that was then like our
- 03:00 breakfast. So then we'd go and clean up and do the things and tidy our beds and what the case may be and then nearly all the time, I wouldn't say nine out of ten but at least seven or eight out of ten the doc'd line us up and check us off for to see how we were goin' and see what condition we were in and things like that. So I mean all in all you didn't have much time to yourself. Then we'd walk round the compound and we didn't have much
- 03:30 compound there. It was only like actually it was not much bigger than goin' from the fence there to the fence at the back here you know on this section. That was our compound. So you didn't have much to do but

Were there Japanese civilians working in the factory?

Yeah.

And what did you have to do with them?

Next door to nothing unless you had to go and help 'em with somethin' or they had to come and help you with something. I mean a lot of the

- 04:00 time if they, it's hard to explain but some a the civilian Japs in a sense were quite friendly and if they wanted somethin' done quite frequently they'd get a one a the prisoners to help them do it but eighty or ninety per cent couldn't understand or even speak English but between youse you'd point
- 04:30 out this and show what to do and things like that but they showed in the a lot of them showed in themselves that it wasn't our their fault that we were there and I remember one bloke there, I was helpin' him with one day I can't remember doin' and he was lookin' down. He just shook his head. He says, "Boom boom no. Boom boom no," and you know I just from my that he meant, "The war.
- 05:00 No." You know he didn't like the war but that's all that most of them could see. You know is you know only done by sign language.

How did you hear about the end of the war?

Well we knocked off work at six o'clock in the mornin', our gang. Counted out the gate.

- 05:30 The other lot were counted in the gate by the factory guards and we were marched back to town, ah back to camp. We went into and laid straight to bed and we hadn't been in there very long and all of a sudden there was a hell of a clatter and noise and the blokes were yellin' and screamin' and goin' on and so we gettin' up and tellin' 'em to shut up so we can go and some sleep. Then all of a sudden some
- 06:00 of them realised that, "Why were they there? You should be workin'." So we sang out to 'em, "What what's wrong? What's what happened? No work?" and we knew there was because you left in relays. It only took 'em less than ten minutes to get us out a the camp, into the camp, onto the work you know and we left everything in relays for them. We knew that was wrong and a course that's when the rumours started. "The war's finished." "This is wrong. That's wrong." Somethin' else, see, and
- 06:30 anyway we all that day there's rumours were goin' wild of what it was and all the boys includin' meself felt a bit of a lift up you know. That night lo and behold the air raid siren went again. That messed that rumour up. The next day one a bloke one of me mates from me own home town, Jimmy Bayliss, and I and someone else
- 07:00 and I can't never remember his name was walkin' down along the fence. Just we used to go for bits a walk round the fence and that, get a bit of exercise and that and of course you didn't get much at the factory. Only just standin' more or less in one place doin' this and that and there was a big vacant allotment off the, big vacant paddock and a crew in there used to have to mow it. Mostly with a scythe
- 07:30 and things like that and then he was goin', oh I suppose about four or five feet away from goin' down hunkered down and you daren't look up because the guards were on us and you daren't look up or do make a noise sort of business and he just kept goin' then he said, "Boom boom finished. Boom boom finished," and Snowy turned to me. "Did you

08:00 hear that?" and I said, "Yeah. Whole lot of rubbish," and the other bloke said, "No no no." He said, "We heard that plane," and one of us said, "Oh we heard that plane last night." Said, "Yeah, but we didn't hear any shootin' or any bombs." So we went down to the corner then sauntered back and as we come back past him again, "Boom boom boom boom gone. Boom boom finished." Didn't look up he just bendin' down doin' this. So we went in and

08:30 went over down to the doctor, Doctor Stenning, and told the doctor. "You know," he says, "That might be right." He said, "I noticed some a the Japs down there cryin'," the Jap guards but he said, "For goodness sake you three now," he said, "I'll tell ya, don't say a word what that bloke said. We can surmise all youse like but don't say a word because once that gets round the camp

09:00 those guards will know there's somethin' wrong and you never know what they might do." So anyhow he called this sergeant, Cady Smith, in and told him and Cady said, "All right. We'll give it two days." So on the second day Cady said to the doctor, "Come on"

09:30 and they went over the guard house and a couple a guards that were usually there were missing and Cady and the doctor explained to the guard that the war was finished and they were gonna take hold of, guard the camp and one bloke put his rifle up against the wall and the other bloke, who was a real cruel so-and-so, he hung on his rifle and Cady

10:00 just dived forward, grabbed the rifle and wrenched it out of his hand and said, "Right," and he locked him up in the gaol house or whatever, part of a gaol house they had there. So anyway they then called I can't think know who they were but called some of our blokes to take on guard duty. The reason being we didn't know how the civilians'd take it on. Although the camp was it was town was about roughly two and a half, three kilometres away

10:30 we didn't know what they you know might a get upset and the whole issue. So that was it and we had thirty three Yanks with us and one a them a chief petty officer, Hookem, H-double O-K-E-M and he was a hard Yankee marines they were he went over the guard house this day and we were all round the guard house and, which was between the house and the main gate,

11:00 and he went in and he grabbed this cruel Jap and brought him out and someone sang out for Cady and Cady come out and he said to Hookem, "What are you gonna do with him?" He said, "I'm gonna bash hell out of him." Cady said, "No you're not." He said, "Don't lower yourself to their level." He said, "No you're not." Hookem he said, "I'll do it," and Cady says, "Well I wouldn't advise ya to," and he said,

11:30 "Oh," he says, "We've got all the Yanks all my boys are behind me," and the boys says, "Yeah." He said, "You've got thirty three." He said, "We've got over a hundred and fifty. So," he says you know, "At this stage don't let anything be on you'll be sorry for." So Hookem turned round and he shaped up to this Jap and the Jap threw himself down and laid on the ground. So Hook threw himself down alongside him and then give

12:00 him three over the top over the top like that and then got up and walked away. So then we took him Jap away and put him back in the guard house and later on when the Yanks come through checkin' on the camps and they took this cruel fellow away with them all that and they told us that they that they'd pick us up later as they were checkin' on each camp to find out that a lot of the camps they knew were in the

12:30 town in the place but they couldn't find out where they were. Well then it was on the 1st of September we saw our first, as we say, first white man as we called it. Our first Australian. He was a bloke from the Melbourne Argus and he come up and took all our names and said, "Well look I don't know for sure," but he said, "they told me to tell you that in the camp

13:00 that you would possibly go out of here about the 9th or 10th of September." "Youse can," and then it must a been Stenning and Cady was there and then they said to us, "Right you can wander round much as you like but I want you back in camp in no more than two hours. No be away no more than two hours anywhere," and that was just to roam round the paddocks and things like that and I but before

13:30 that the before the 1st the 25th of August the Yanks come over and dropped a supply of food. There was two hundred in that camp and they dropped enough food for five hundred. Four or five days later they dropped another lot and then on the 7th

14:00 of September they dropped another lot. Well the first lot was enough for us for the time you know but anyway we were right on the railway line so they got the trucks and loaded the trucks up with all the supplies and a few a the civilian Japs that had been reasonably friendly got onto them and got them up and give 'em a bit of a the stuff we had, foodstuff we had that

14:30 thought that didn't give 'em too much cause they'd only take it to somebody else and somebody else and the next thing you know we'd have the whole lot there. Then on the 10th of September we boarded the train from there and we had three trucks of food and clothing or lord knows what and the back was, well they weren't all because our kit bags and things like that were all in with it. All in one of 'em and they took us off to

15:00 Yokohama. Now for the life of me I can't think how long it took us. I know it was several nights but we got to Yokohama where we had to line up in one room, strip and go through this real long room with

perpetual showers in it. By the time you went in one door out the other

- 15:30 the showers were goin'. There's no way you could escape 'em and when we got out the other side there was towels and that there for us to dry ourselves and the fresh new clothing for us to put on and that shower was to delouse us. Kill any lice or germs or anything else we had and then they give us a rough medical and then a feed
- 16:00 and if you ever had a Yankee feed I'd advise ya not to. They had this tray about so big with little hollows straight in it. It was a baked dinner so they put that in the tray, poured gravy over it. Now along the line you come along this big long trestle, go along there, and before you could speak they had stewed fruit and custard and just poured it
- 16:30 over the top and I could hear the boys yellin' at me but I was too late and I, "Oh don't do that." Said, "Don't matter. It's all mixed up when it gets downstairs. It's all mixed up." So that's with the food but you talk about an ugly lookin' mess you had to eat but we were still that hungry and that food. We wasn't hungry, it was the food because where there was food you ate and that was it and from there we got onto a bobby cork, one a the
- 17:00 Yank Liberty ships, SS Goodhue, G-double O good G-double O-D-H-U-E, and there was about I think from memory there was a thousand of us on that and it headed for the Philippine Islands. We didn't know where we were headed but I remember round the Philippine Islands and we were several days on it and one mornin' I got up and of course
- 17:30 you virtually had to do a circuit to get the run a the ship and one mornin' I got up and two a me mates and meself and walkin' round and I looked out and I said to 'em, "Hey, get a load a that whale out there," and you could see out in the distance, don't ask me now but it only looked a hump in the water. "Get a look at that whale out there," and this sailor come past. He said, "What did you say?" I said, "Have a look at the whale," and he goes, "That's
- 18:00 not a whale." He took off and we looked at each other and dumbfounded. We didn't know what was goin' on. Next minute, oh half a dozen at least might have been a few more come back with rifles and they lined up against the rail and they started shootin' at it and next minute there's one hell of an explosion. Water was up everywhere and we were tryna make it out and said, "What the hell was that?" "That was a mine."
- 18:30 He said, "Keep your eyes open for me." He said, "There's still a few floatin' about have broken free," and we said, "Oh don't tell me we're gonna get mine trouble," because goin' home get caught. Anyhow later on one a the other mob down further they spotted one and there was a was another explosion and someone said, "Oh that's another mine," and later on we found one a the boys. He said, "Oh yes." He says, "We spotted one out." He said, "We wouldn't a known what it was only that first lot." He said, "We," so he said but anyhow other than that we
- 19:00 got into the Philippine Islands and oh I think it was round about the middle to either middle, third week in there and we stopped a fortnight in the Philippine Islands to fatten us up. Nothin' to do much. Just walk around. Eat and sleep and so then
- 19:30 word come round that we were to be prepared to move at any moment but it could be the 1st of October. The 1st come and didn't then the 2nd come. "Righto." They lined us up and at that stage there was a typhoon coming through and things were gettin' pretty boisterous. We got on the Yank landin' craft and got out the
- 20:00 ocean and boy, all our breakfast, tea and three weeks before come up and they reckoned it was too rough to go on the board the big ship. So we went back. Next day we went out again. The seas had gone down a little bit and they decided it was too rough again, too dangerous and on the 4th we went out
- 20:30 and all of a sudden the Yanks stopped and they weren't that far off the big Formidable but the sea was fairly rough and they were on the megaphones each way blastin' each way and also the signal lamps were goin' and one of our blokes started to laugh and I said, we were hangin' on like grim death. The boat was just goin' up and,
- 21:00 "What are ya laughin' at?" He said, "I just read that signal." He said, "The Yanks ah the Yanks say that it's too rough to put them on," and he said, "The signal come from the air craft carrier Formidable 'You anchor your landin' craft and we'll bring the Formidable over to you.'," So anyway the Yanks decided it mustn't be a bit too much for them. So they finally got over alongside the Formidable and had these rope ladders down
- 21:30 the side and we thought, "Oh hell. We haven't got to climb up them surely," and a big long platform. Now lookin' at it be probably about a as wide as the table is that way and there was a whole heap a British sailors on it and our launch got alongside and it was like that the up and down.
- 22:00 Someone said, "Right. When we say 'Jump' you jump," and there was a sailor alongside us that got hold of our arms. "Now don't forget, don't hesitate just say 'Jump'." So when they'd say, "Jump," we'd jump and that time we were just at the right and out far enough and the others'd reach forward and just grab us and pull us on and then we had this steps that we hadn't seen. We thought we was climbin' up these ropes but they were only

- 22:30 security for the blokes on the raft that was out protecting and they climb up these steps on top. Anyhow it was very late, ah I think it was just about dark by the time they got 'em all on from memory but there you couldn't do a thing. These British sailors they were never far way. If you went to get out a bed they
- 23:00 were there to help you. Went to do this they would get out to help you and they looked after us all the way home then but they didn't like the Yankee sailors. They were a mob of chickens. They reckoned they were didn't know what they were doin'. So then we
- Then they took a few days to come home
- 23:30 but we all every mornin' and that and late at night we'd out lookin' for Australia. Every bit a land we saw, "Is that Australia?" "No." Some little island of some description. Anyhow comin' down and early one mornin' one of the blokes spotted a block or a blob on the horizon and sang out to the sailors, "Is that Aussie?" "Yeah that's some," it was somewhere up north somewhere and then he for some unknown reason to us then instead of
- 24:00 sailin' down there he had to go out to sea further. I've often thought afterwards whether it was the Coral Sea, or not Coral Sea, Coral Reef or what it was but anyhow he had to go out to sea and we thought, "Oh no, where's he goin'?" Anyhow we landed in Sydney then on the Saturday the 13th of October 1945. So then that's when our troubles started. I told you about that on the convoys and things like that. Well when we went down off the gangplank
- 24:30 Gordon Bennett was standin' at the bottom and everybody stopped and shook hands with him and then Dad and Mum and the most of the family right at the bottom and so I give them the two kit bags I had, one of clothing one full of tobacco and cigarettes and said to Dad, "You look after these?" So he took 'em, they put 'em in the utility and we had all to get on the bus
- 25:00 and go out to Ingleburn camp. Went out there they did the usual X-rays and medical tests, and once that was done they said, "Right. Go to your family. You're all on three weeks' leave. We'll have you back in three weeks." So we met the rest a the family and got into trouble. They were all there and I'm meetin' this one
- 25:30 and that one and the brothers are goin' I come to the sister and I and a course she was only a kid, fourteen when I went away and I said to me one of me brothers, "Oh aren't ya gonna introduce me to your girlfriend?" and the sister burst into tears. "He doesn't know me." cause you see she'd grown into a fairly big woman by then and it's been a bugbear ever since with her. She just but that's part a family life
- 26:00 and anyway we stopped in the city that night and next day we set off in the utility in the back of the utility to go back bush, Stuart Town on the farm. Got back there that afternoon right out on the farm and the mail was only on Tuesdays and Wed, Tuesdays and Fridays goin' out and on the Tuesday this telegram come with the mail,
- 26:30 "Report back to Sydney immediately. Mix-up in papers." So I said, "Oh well I might as well get it over and done with." So on Friday I got the train went back to Sydney. They put me straight in Concord Hospital with TB. They knew nothin' about it. What to do with it. It was all a strange thing to a lot of the Australian doctors. Some had this treatment, some had that and but anyway
- 27:00 and guess what we had for tea on the first night? The sweets we had boiled rice. I done the cruet. I said, "I'm not eatin' it," and this Sister Storey, a little short dumpy sister that all cheek and nothin' else and she come in to check and she said, "Why aren't you eatin' that?" I said, "We're not eatin' it. We've had rice for three and a half years." "It's good for ya."
- 27:30 I said, "We're not eatin' it." She had this little jug a milk with it. "I'm not eatin' it," and a bloke named Peter Roberts, I think it was Peter anyway was on the end bed and he said, "No I'm not eatin' mine either," and we of course we were in bed, weren't supposed to get out and I said to sister, "Look for goodness sake take it away." She said, "I'm not takin' it away." She said, "I'll stand here till you eat it." That was the finish. I bounced out a bed, got my bowl a rice.
- 28:00 We were up on the fifth floor at Concord Hospital. 530 the ward was numbered. Got my bowl of rice and walked over to Peter's and I said, "You gonna eat your's Peter?" He said, "No way." So I got it in the other hand and I said to, "Righto Sister. You gonna take this back?" She said, "No," and I just put both hands out the window and let 'em go. Well she just about burnt the floor gettin' out onto the phone. Anyway it wasn't long and this big bloke come up in
- 28:30 civvie clothes and he said, "I'm Lieutenant Colonel," or some high rankin', "Hall," I can remember his surname, "in charge a ya," he said and the sister said she said, "He did it. He's the one. He did it," and he said, "Sister just be quiet for a minute." He said, "You tell me what happened." So I told him. "I'd asked her three or four times to take it. Three and a half years
- 29:00 boiled rice, nothin' else," and I said, "And what do we get with our first night in here? Boiled rice." I said, "Enough to make a man sick." I said, "I just nearly heaved when I saw it," and Peter in the corner said, "And me too," and he said, "Well why did you drop it out the window?" and I said, "I asked the sister to take it back and she said she wasn't. She was gonna stand there till we ate it. So I just dropped

it," and he thought for awhile and he said, "Well

- 29:30 I don't blame ya," but he said, "You did a dangerous thing." I said, "What was that?" He said, "There could a been people walkin' underneath," and I said, "Well I never thought a that." So that was our first episode. You wouldn't credit it, the next day a bloke named Jack McLelland was in bed straight opposite and there was only about that much room between the foot a the bed and this Auntie come in to see him.
- 30:00 She must a been a bit deaf and I heard her sayin' and that, "And what's wrong with you Jack?" real loud voice, and he said, "Oh I dunno Auntie. Some chest trouble," and she said, "Oh I hope it's not this TB that all these people a dyin' from," and this is a full TB ward mind ya and you could hear it all round the ward. Oh but anyway that's how things went off and then
- 30:30 they decided they'd put air in the lung and collapse the lung and then there's up here in the top there was a lesion I think they called it. Tied the lung to the chest wall so I had a, that was operated on early January and then I got a sudden telegram that me brother, I hadn't seen him since I went away to the war,
- 31:00 had dived into the river and broke his neck and drowned. So I looked up and the doctor was in the I could see him through the window at the nurses' section where the nurses used to be. So I banged on the table, the tray that goes over the bed table that there. He looked up and I'm
- 31:30 he give me a frown and he come in. He said, "What's the problem?" I said, "Look. Oh what are ya gonna do?" I said, "Well I've just had that operation two days ago and I'm not supposed to strain or move or anything like sudden. Just take it easy," and he turned and got the sister. He says, "Could you bring the," or she called him, that's right, and said, "Could you bring me his
- 32:00 history from the books?" So he read it and he said, "Oh well there's been no bleedin'." He said, "You want to go?" and I said, "Well I hadn't seen him since I went away." He said, "Well you can go if you can lay down in the back seat of the car all the way up and all the way back." So I said, "Righto," and then the trouble petrol was rationed probably get a Red Cross
- 32:30 promised to take prisoner of war blokes on trips like anything emergencies and things like that but they refused to take and so I got onto an Uncle and he put me onto a people named Spies that had a hire car service. Anyhow they agreed to take me. So we left in the early hours of the next mornin' all the way up the back. Went to the funeral. Back in the car and all the way back. Got back
- 33:00 there about half past ten at night and guess who could be on duty? Sister Storey. Well from the time she saw me comin' down that passage way she never let up. Me girlfriend was with me. She you know anyway she said, "I'll go," and away she went and I'm just sayin', "Look Sister. I'm tired. Don't worry me." "You had no
- 33:30 right to go. You could a been dead. You could a do this," and I'm fightin' meself stoppin' goin' really crook on her. So I grabbed me pyjamas and walked up into the shower room and she's still followin' me. I undressed, got under the shower and she's still goin' crook and I can still remember. I reached across and got the face cloth and I said, "Sister, while you're goin' crook, wash my back will ya?" Well next minute she was out that
- 34:00 door and up she stopped the door and she said, "You're gonna be reported for this. You're gonna be isolated. You're gonna do this. You're gonna," I and I said, "Oh shut up." Had me shower and went back to bed. Next mornin' the doctor that come round, the one that told me I could go, used to come to that ward and he said, "How'd you go?" and told him what happened. "Righto," he says, "Roll over." He went over me.
- 34:30 "Oh no," he says, "Everything's all right." He said, "You must a done what I told you." I said, "Yeah," and I says, "You want to hear what happened?" I said, "I'm in trouble." He said, "What for?" I said, "You didn't mark on the sheet that I was allowed to go," and I said I told him what happened then with the sister and everything. He said, "Don't worry." He said, "I'll fix that." Next night when the sister come on she was as quiet as a lamb and that sort a thing and then she later on she walked past and she said, "Don't you tell me to shut up again," and I said,
- 35:00 "One thing about learn to do as you're told." We never had any more trouble over that again but she was a cranky little piece but anyway they fixed that, well not fixed it but they had it down enough but they decided to do somethin' about me abscess that was on the backside was operated in on up at Takefu. It was still leakin'. So they had a investigation and said, "Right."
- 35:30 To go down the surgery. Down I went. They cut me from the back a the head to forehead, just one big long gash, and they put five and a half yards of impregnated gauze in it. So you can just imagine the cut. From high on the tail bone right through here to the front and every day they had to pull that gauze out and do the dressing because they didn't
- 36:00 want it to heal on top and not heal underneath. It had to heal from the bottom up. Well they used to give me a shot of morphine before bunged the needle into me. Did that for two or three days and I started to feel a bit off. Just couldn't feel meself and I was talkin' to one a the blokes alongside a me and he said, "That's the so-and-so morphine they're givin' ya." So this tall lanky sister come from, I don't know what her name is, come from Young

- 36:30 come in and that she said do the dressing and you had to lay on your belly and two pillows under your groin and stick your backside up in the air and I said, "Have you had any practice pullin' these out sister?" and she said, "Oh a lot," and I said, "Then why instead a just pulling and then jerking, pulling and jerking, why can't ya do it in rhythm. Get hold of a piece, pull and pull and just," you know I said, "it'll all come out pretty quick." "But," she said, "You won't stand the pain a that wouldn't ya?" "Well," I says, "It's gonna pain anyway"
- 37:00 and the first mornin' I bent the row that come down the head a the bed. Arms round it, bent that but after a few minutes it disappeared. So ever after that that's the way it went. Well that part healed up but all of a sudden it get a bit wet again. They had to take me down and do another channel and that went on about three,
- 37:30 four, three or four or five times. Then I was out before it went I finished in hospital and on the 12th of December. Then I went home and then later on it was leakin' again. They had to go in there and I don't know I my reckon I must a had about eight or ten operations on it and the last one was in 1957 with a Doctor Pullen.
- 38:00 He's in Wollongong. He had a look at it and he said, "Oh well," looked like an operation. So he said, "Come down," inspect his customers on the Wednesday, do the operations Thursday and go back to Sydney. So he said, "You have to go to Sydney," and I said, "Oh can't I have it done here?" and he said, "No," he says, "Repat won't allow it." I said, "Who's gonna do it in Sydney? He said, "Oh probably me." "Well," I said, "Don't be in a big hurry." I said,
- 38:30 "I'm gonna get in touch with repat." So I wrote 'em a letter stating that I had no business in Sydney and the wife and the kids were here and I if I'd had it done here. Anyhow quick answer I got back to say that and I also told 'em that Doctor Pullen told me that more than likely he'd be doin' it. Quick answer come that the they couldn't guarantee a bed but if I could get a bed in the Wollongong Hospital they'd do it. Well I'd been there for awhile and I knew a lot of them from up at the hospital. So I went up there
- 39:00 and told the sister what the set up is. "Oh," she said, "We'll arrange that." So they contacted she said, "Could you be ready Thursday?" I said, "I could be ready at a moment's notice." So she they contacted Pullen in Sydney and then on Wednesday I had to be in there and for him to examine me and Thursday did the operation. I was in hospital for a week and went home and the next week I went in to see him check over and he says,
- 39:30 "Uh uh. It's not healed." He said, "I'll fix it this time." He said, "I'll put a mincin' machine in." I said, "What the hell's that?" He said, "I'll put somethin' in there," and he said, "I'll grind it in." He did that. It healed up and touch wood I haven't had no trouble ever since and that's 1957, September 1957. So

So you weren't fully recovered from your prisoner experience until then?

No, well even then I've been back and forwards into hospital and for this for and the other

- 40:00 thing and how the wife managed I never know but that's the part of it. So mostly it's oh I suppose age troubles now and things like that. Haemorrhaging and so no, I think it's most of me war lot it's trouble arthritis and stomach troubles and things like that through malnutrition and
- 40:30 so I can't they made me TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pensioner] so I've got to put up with that and I can't go back to the land although I got me mate's place and help out. Not doin' hard work but just potterin' around the bush and that's the way I gotta do it.

Do you eat rice today?

Yeah, now I do but it's never boiled rice. Not plain boiled rice.

Tape 9

- 00:31 **When you were in Takefu and the war was coming to an end in those last couple of days, did you notice any change in the attitude of the guards?**

No. No we didn't because we had no virtual contact with the outside world outside Japs. Just the odd one at the factory that had to be careful. They wouldn't talk much with you because then they'd get bashed, and the guards

- 01:00 and well we kept as far away from the guards as we could because for somethin' to do amuse themselves you'd get a bashing if you weren't careful. So the idea was to keep away at the top end of the compound out of the road.

And how did their attitude change once it became certain the war had finished?

Well some of them changed pretty quickly but a

- 01:30 few of them just shot through. I we surmised they'd went home. That's what gave the officers an idea, not the officers the doctor and the sergeant, that it must a been true when some of them had shot

through. The usual number of guards weren't there but as far as the attitude, the only one was this cruel so-and-so and he was gonna be real dogmatic right till the finish until the sergeant took the rifle off him.

What feelings did you have hearing that

02:00 the war had ended?

Well that feeling'd be hard to it's hard to describe for the simple reason you felt one of relief. One of, "Well we shouldn't be hungry any more," but then we still had no food. We didn't know the Yanks were gonna drop food. How we were gonna get from here to home. "Does

02:30 anyone know where we are?" cause up in Japan you wouldn't have a clue whether they knew where we were or what you know and all these sort a things crossed my mind. We talked about this and talked about that and talked about buyin' pubs and closin' the door and drinkin' 'em out and all this type a thing but it was just one as though a big weight had been lifted off you, put it that way.

What feelings of vengeance did you have against the guards?

Well actually we had none

03:00 because we'd all had adopted the attitude not to lower ourselves to their category. The that way we reckon if they gave us any cheek or more tried more bashin' might give 'em somethin' but as it was, finished. The ones that the cruel blokes mainly in our camp they had him

03:30 and they knew that he'd get their or matter of fact I we heard many years after that he was one that was hung. So and also too there was in Osaka (UNCLEAR) us and they were both cruel. According to the records they were both hung. I read that in oh some book I got in the library on that there. So

Was that justified?

More than justified. Should a happened years before.

04:00 Would a saved a lot of us and a lot of bad times and injuries and see they they'd belt ya across the stomach, across the back, in the groin no matter where and actually I semi blame some a those hidin's for a lot of my deafness because they can put a machine on me and they say, "That's hearin'," but your that's it says so but it's not. I

04:30 said to doc about it, "Well of course I was knocked unconscious with a (UNCLEAR) hit with it at Takefu," and then I was blown over when the bombing at Lewang and there's no sayin' that in that also I was I must a been knocked unconscious when I fell over in the jungle and comin' back when they told us it was on the island, on Singapore Island.

05:00 So there's no sayin' that I done some damage there but they'd just walk up behind you with a that big waddy and it didn't matter whether the head or neck or middle of the back but the favourite one was across the kidneys as far as hittin' you concerned and so there's nothing to say which has caused it. I think it's just a percentage of each and one there the other one but I've just learned to put up with it and that's just so what you gotta do.

05:30 What sort of food was dropped by the Americans?

Tinned all the tinned stuff. Meats and vegetables and fruit you could think of. Energy chocolates, chocolates. You name it, it was all dropped. All brands of cigarettes. Any food you could it was just dropped in these tins and any that was busted we had to get

06:00 rid of quick because with that sort a stuff once the air gets at it if it doesn't get out of the tin, the tins ferment it and that's it. So there was that much food, well they said for five hundred and there was only two hundred of us there, so

Was it hard to discipline yourself not to stuff it all down?

Yeah well if you read that poem that I got in there, El Alamein. "They took to the con [convalescent] camp where there was food galore, but no matter how much I ate I always craved for more"

06:30 and what reminded me of that, when the wife was pregnant with the kids. She had a cravin' for somethin' and I'd just say to her, "Oh cut that out. I did that in the Philippine Islands when we'd get the food. You always craved for more. You don't want that," and that I mean that's a part of those thing.

You mentioned before that the doctor had to set up some sort of system to ration the food so people didn't get sick from eating too much.

07:00 Did everybody obey that?

Yes. They had to because the doctor come round periodically. You'd never know when he'd come round and he'd check the list and you had to put the name down of what he got of, put down what he got, his name and who he was sharing it with and that stopped some of those that he was sharing it with comin' back and sayin', "Well I didn't get any." So this way you kept a full control and he did that and he told us straight,

07:30 "If you want to get home this is your chance now but if you want to get home do it this way and you'll get back into trim. If you don't do this you're just as likely to bust your stomach and once that's busted," he said, "I can do nothin' about it." So I mean all of our lads without exception took notice of it. They all they were all ages. There was about five different age groups in us. Some of 'em were only

08:00 didn't turn twenty one till after they got home and one bloke turned he was way up in his sixties and he put his age, well he was a reject in the First World War so you can you can get an idea. So I mean this sort of thing.

What about the Americans? Did they ration the food as well?

They had to because the doc was in charge. He was the highest senior one there and they had to but then we didn't have much trouble

08:30 with them because they were only there a couple a days after the food drop before the Yanks picked 'em up and took 'em took them out and all they were interested in was taking their own men out and telling us that they we'd be picked up later you know. So that's the way they worked on it.

And when you went out for walks from the camp, where did you go to?

Oh virtually anywhere to some of them went into the town but I didn't. A few

09:00 of us we just roamed round the countryside and never run into any Japs. We'd see a Jap but if they see us comin' they'd get away outta the road and we'd roam get outta the outta that compound. Just roam sometimes we only just moved out and roam round the big open paddock alongside of us. Sometimes we might walk a couple a mile that way and turn and come back but it you virtually hard

09:30 to put it, but you had to do something to just sittin' there thinkin' and while you're walkin' you could still think if you wanted to but your the action was a different to what just sittin' there thinkin' you know and so that's what happened well.

Did you run into any Japanese civilians?

You did but you didn't talk. They kept outta the road. They I think they were like us. They didn't know what was gonna happen. Whether we were gonna take revenge on 'em or what. So when they saw us coming they'd

10:00 keep out of our road. They'd go which way or that way outta the road but right on the finish just before we left Takefu a few of the civilian mob from round the factory and that, they were fairly friendly. Some of the boys that worked at the factory walked out of the factory cause that all stopped work. They walked out the factory and seen some of the blokes that had bit friendly with and so that that's when we were loadin' the food up. We got some of them to come in and

10:30 pick up a few things as long as they didn't take too much and well we didn't they didn't because we just doled out to them what they we wanted them to have because we knew that if we turned around and gave 'em plenty then they'd give it to some of their mates and their mates'd be all around then all of a sudden we'd have a whole hoard of Japs in there givin' us trouble so that's what we had to do. I mean we also we gave them quite a few cigarettes and stuff like that because they were had virtually had never had much of them

11:00 at all.

How do you feel about Japanese people today?

Be careful. I don't mean that B-E-E either. No, I I've had to meet 'em. I've had to talk to 'em and I can't don't stop with 'em as much as I would anybody else. I'd move away. To give you a funny example a that,

11:30 in June 2000 yep, one two four yeah, I won a free trip up on the Indian Pacific. So the wife and I decided we'd go over. Well I won it back early in the year. So we decided we'd go over in June and of course if you've ever been on the Indian Pacific or know anything about it,

12:00 it's a cosmopolitan train. You have people from every nation in the world get onto it and on this one there was two real old Japanese women and a younger one that was in, I'd say in her thirties, might be a bit more and they had a cabin to themselves and in this big lounge room they'd often come into there and I sort a just kept away and

12:30 one day there was the only seat vacant was near them. Kath got sat over there with one of the women talkin' and near them and she mentioned that and I just went and walked away and up the top and stood up. Then we got to Cook over the Nullarbor Plain and the train pulls up there for awhile for souvenirs and I suppose water or somethin', I don't know.

13:00 Anyway Kath was in lookin' round the souvenir shops and I just walked up and June, it was cold, and I just walked up and down, although it was sunshine, up and down outside the train. It's a damn long train and while I'm walkin' up and down I come into a good patch a sun and I stood there warmin' meself and these three Japanese women come down, walkin' down, and all of a sudden

- 13:30 this Japanese girl come over to me. She's got a camera in her hand. "You. Camera." I said, "Yeah," I said, "I'll take your photo." She said, "No, no, no." She said, "You," and pointed to these two old ladies and wanted one to stand each side of me while she stood up against the train and took a photo of us and I thought, "Hell."
- 14:00 "Oh all right." So they stood alongside a me and I made 'em hands down at me sides and stood there and all of a sudden it hit me. I started to laugh and she put the camera down and she looked at me. Put the camera up and I couldn't stop me. Anyhow she took the photo and she come over to me with a frown. The other two walked away. So she'd said somethin' to them and she
- 14:30 give me a sort of a queer look and I said, "You're wondering why I laughed," and she said, "Yeah." I said, "I was a prisoner of war in your country," and I said, "If my blokes and my mates could see me here doin' this," I said, "they'd get the greatest laugh out or I'd probably get the greatest bashin' out," and she looked at me, "No, no prisoner of war in Japan," and I said, "I got news for you, sister. I was one,"
- 15:00 and I walked away. Now that night I was sittin' on the seats in the lounge car. Been up for tea. Sittin' there and she turned round and I sensed that someone was starin' you know and I sat down. It was her and as I looked up she said, "Oh." "C'mon." So I said, "Oh you can't put on a bit of a scene in the train with the whole lot
- 15:30 round. All right." Kath says, "Go on, get over there." So I so I went over and sat between these two old ladies and this woman sat on the arm a the lounge, big lounge. She said, "You prisoner of war Japan." I said, "Yes." She said, "No." I said, "Yeah. (UNCLEAR - speaking Japanese)," and she went, opened her eyes. That's counting one to ten in Japanese. "Me.
- 16:00 Meoki." That's sick and she looked at me, "Where?" I said, "Osaka. Takefu." "Osaka?" I said, "Yeah. Takefu," and I pulled me note book out and wrote it T-A and looked at it. "Oh. Oh." See. Then she yapped to those two and they're shakin' their head and lookin' at me and shakin' their head, lookin' at me and then she said, "Oh. Oh. We sorry."
- 16:30 I said, "Yeah so am I," and got up and walked over and sat down and I mean that's one thing. Way back in 1984 or 1985 I went over. The wife and I went over and there was a Pommy parliamentarian on the train and this is going over...

Over to where?

- 17:00 Perth. From Sydney to Perth and on the train and I'm standin' there, which I do in trains and lookin' out the window. I mean if there's seats there I'll sit but when there's a lotta just look at the countryside and pick out the kangaroos. So this Pommy bloke come over and he said, "You Australian?" I said, "Yes."
- 17:30 He said, "Oh I'm from England." I said, "Yes, I know." Could tell by his voice. You couldn't (UNCLEAR). He said, "I thought I'd see some kangaroos," and I and he said, "There's none." I said, "Oh don't be silly. Come out here." So he's up near the window and I said, "There, look. There's one. See his head?" "Nah. I can't see it," and I said, "Look," cause the train had travelled along a fair bit, "There's another one there." The next minute the one that was there hopped up. "Oh,"
- 18:00 he said, "I always thought that kangaroos moved." You know how nine times out of ten they're kangaroos hoppin'. I said, "No," and he's then he said, "Oh," started to pick, "There's another one." Anyhow I heard this Japanese voice come behind me and he said, "No kangaroo," and I looked at him and I, "Shut up Popey," and I and the Pommy said to him, "Yeah," he said, "Look, there's one," and he said, "No." "See, see,
- 18:30 they're up there like that. His ears," and, "Oh yeah." He looked at me and the Pommy said, "I couldn't see 'em until this Australian here," he said, "told me," and he turned to me and he said, "Ah," he said, "You good. You live here?" "Oh yeah," I said, "I live up in Tamworth," and he started yappin'. I said, "No." He looked and I said, "I was a prisoner of war
- 19:00 in your country," and he straightened up. He says, "There was no prisoner of war in my country. I'm Japanese," and I said, "I know you are." He said, "I'm a professor." He said, "I teach at school." "Well," I said, "Learn your English." No, "Learn your history." I said, "I was a prisoner of war up there," and I told him where I was. What places I was in. He looked at me and he said, "Oh. My country?
- 19:30 I went to school there. Went right through high learning to be a professor." He said, "I not know nothin'." He said, "That is wrong." He said, "When I got back o Sydney I will go to the consul in Sydney and find out all the information I can," and the way they speak, short sharp and I said, "Good," and I turned and walked away. I mean I've had that experience with 'em but I don't...

So what's your opinion of the fact that this aspect of history is still not taught in Japanese schools

- 20:00 **even today?**

I just keep me mouth shut and just shake me head in bloody wonder. Well they reckon they got to trade but when we'd come out of the prisoner of war camp, or even before, when the war was finished the Japs there says, even in Yokohama, they say, "We own Australia in fifty years," and all due respects,

20:30 that's more than fifty years but they just about own it now. There's not any day in Australia that there's not thousands of well trained Japanese in Australia. So all they've gotta do is bring a shipload of arms in. They've got control of most of the key positions and they could just take Australia just like that but if a Japanese is not smiling you trust him. If he smiles,

21:00 look out.

How did your mental the mental and physical effects of your imprisonment, how did they affect you in your post-war career?

Physically I can't do much at all because of firstly, the arthritis in the knees. The knees are bad. They've been talkin' for years about givin' me new knees but at my age I don't want it.

21:30 I take pain killers every now and again. Mentally, well it's hard to say. People say I'm a dull head and people say this people say I don't give a continental what people say about me. I do it my way. I shoot straight from the shoulder and if people don't like it they can lump it.

Have you had any effects of like nightmares and so forth?

Oh yeah. Yeah. Not so bad now.

22:00 I will admit I had one the other night and there's no sayin' that I won't have one over this but they're not that vicious. We'd only been married a short while, can't remember now, and one night I nearly choked the wife in a mad nightmare but luckily she knew what to do and knew what was doin'. She gave me a hell of a punch and woke me up and I had her by the throat.

22:30 So I mean they're part of it. It hadn't got that bad and never got that bad afterwards but I mean you can't forget. I could be watchin' somethin' and somethin'll crop up and I'll get up and walk away because it's some of these things I've got in there, when I got 'em I couldn't read 'em. I only read 'em in this last ooh twelve months and there's a couple I haven't even completely read yet

23:00 because it soon as I start to feel that affectin' me I get up and walk away.

And how has organising the reunions and keeping in touch with your friends helped you?

It gave me a an interest. It keeps the bondship going that I've got with my friends. I started doin' welfare way back in 1947 and I knocked off here a couple a years ago

23:30 and that is what's helped me more or less along the same routine as it was in the prisoner of war camp. I'll admit I've been in this and I've been in that and I'm on with the rights for disabled now and I'm welfare officer for Sydney branch of the TPI up here. I'm on the Committee Order of the of Old Bastards. I'm president of the prisoner of war group that's here, that's nearly defunct because there's only about four of us left in Tamworth and the other three are pretty sick.

24:00 So I mean, I keep meself busy and occupied. Until me arms and hands went bad I used to play a lot of bowls. I'm hopin' to get back into it the next few weeks when these finish healin' up properly but in a sense, and I'll say this and I've said it not once many a time, my experience of going through the army, the prisoner of war life and that has gave

24:30 me a better understanding of human nature and what humans will do and won't do. The reason that did was because I was, oh I won't say one of the few, but I was way out in the country. Isolated. Didn't go to town sometimes for months on end because you had to ride a horse and on top a that you were workin' too hard on the on your own not your own property, Dad's property, and it's

25:00 my upbringing that you worked before day light and after dark. So I mean ya and that's why they laugh at me my wife, Kath, used to laugh at me with women. Even now I I'm I won't say so much, shy, but I'm very careful where women are concerned. They I've laughed they've laughed at me. I've stepped back from a door, well here on last Friday

25:30 the brother come over from Dubbo. He's got a grandson at doin' the TAFE [Technical and Further Education institution] up here and he had to pick him up to take him back to Dubbo. So we're goin' along and the brother opened the door and as he opened the door in this passage way I heard this patter behind me and I glanced and there's a woman comin' and I say she says late twenties to mid thirties, in that bracket, and I had the door open and she said, "You goin' in?" I said, "No. Women first," and let her in and she give me a

26:00 queer look and opened her mouth. I said, "Don't say anything." I said, "It's I was brought up that way," and I said, "I still do it," but she give me such a queer look as though I might a been a lunatic or somethin'.

Why do you think that you survived when others didn't?

Three things. That bloke up there, he's taken me out of

26:30 a very lot of numerous fairly dangerous places for some unknown reason. The will to live and not die in that country and my mother and me wife, or me girlfriend, and those are the three things that kept me and they can say what they like. There was times in the war when I doubted whether there was

someone up there. I don't care

27:00 how religious you are or if you are or not, doesn't worry me, but there's somethin' that's guided me not once but heaps a times through life that's got me out of danger. I'm not blamin' meself for it because I had no control. Where do you go? I don't know if that answers your question but it's about the best I can do.

Why do you think that it's important Australia remembers the POW [prisoner of war] experience?

27:30 Well they should never let it happen again. They won't admit they did wrong. We went under over there not a full battal, not a full division. The other division was in Darwin, other brigade in Darwin. Very poorly armed and no air craft. So it just shows you that we were

28:00 over there and that's far as we're concerned. They talk about, and I'm not shirty on this, but they talk about Vietnam diggers and Vietnam, the Vietnam boys went over there the best armed lotta soldiers that ever left Australia. I mean their war was fought differently, certainly, but at times we had one automatic weapon to a hundred, a hundred and twenty men and as I say, I come back off the main

28:30 land there was .303 and five rounds of ammunition. What was the good of that in action? You had a job to find out where to get ammunition. Everything come back in a turmoil and we were grossly under, well we weren't under trained but we were under equipped. Just because they thought that no one'd come down the mainland, they'd have to come from the sea, that was it but I'd say this, that

29:00 Australia in its present position should always have a fairly good army, navy or air force because that's its greatest protection and it's somethin' that is vital. I don't care people say, "Oh I'm not you're a war monger." I'm not a war monger. You've got to be prepared. You've gotta be ready. That's it.

And if somebody was watching

29:30 **this in the future, what message would you give to them about serving your country?**

It is the best country in the world. You can live in Australia and have say almost as much as you like any time you like without being caught for treason. It's your country, be proud of it and fight for it. If you can fight overseas do it. It'll stop them coming

30:00 but for goodness sake try and stop them from fightin' in Australia because war does a lot of damage to civilians as well as others. So I mean it's bein' patriotic I know but at the same time that's my feelings and I tell ya now, even what I went through, if war broke out tomorrow and I could help in it I would. That's the way I feel because you fight it over there

30:30 but these people that try war mongerin' won't do nothin' and try down the monarchy. They're all mad far as I'm concerned. That's it.

And what are you how do you feel when you see Australians going to war these days on the news to Iraq and so forth?

I say good on 'em. Keep it over there. Keep it out of Australia. That every bit they do there

31:00 is in a lotta ways probably a lot of them unseen, helping Australia. They're keepin' the terrorists down. They're keepin' themselves well equipped. They're keepin' themselves well trained and those people would make good training troops when if anything's happened that they had to form a new one. The only thing that I say

31:30 about Australia that they should bring in conscription. It would take a lot of these hoodlums off the streets. If you're on the dole if they put 'em in the army for a short while, navy or air force for a short while they'd learn discipline and there'd be less trouble and strife in Australia today and I'm talkin' about both men and women.