

# Australians at War Film Archive

## David Bloomfield - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:40 **Can I begin by asking you to share an overview of your life? Where you were born to where you finished up now. About five minutes.**

Right. I was born in Glebe in 1923.

01:00 From Glebe my family moved to Dee Why and I attended school there, going to a private boarding school at Beecroft. After finishing on primary there, my family then moved to Elizabeth Bay, and from there I went to Scots College for the following seven years. After that I joined the army. I wasn't accepted for the

01:30 AIF [Australian Imperial Force] because I was a little bit underage but I managed to get into a unit that was sending volunteers to a place called Rabaul, which in those days all I knew was that it was a tourist resort. Anyway we left Sydney on the 6th August, 1941, due for Rabaul and arrived there ten days later.

02:00 We arrived in Rabaul and very hot, humid natural tropical conditions, and loaded up with my gear we marched along what we found to be later Malaguna Road, in which was located the camp of the 2/22nd Battalion AIF which was part of the 23rd Brigade. We settled in

02:30 there and started, once our guns were unloaded, we started our normal daily gun drill, routines. Until Pearl Harbor, when our guns were moved from Malaguna camp off up onto a narrow ridge which was called Observatory Hill, but which we named, renamed, Frisbee Ridge - after

03:00 our OC [Officer Commanding] who looked like a legendary British officer of type, complete with a flowing moustache. So it became Frisbee Ridge. On the 4th of December, sorry, I beg your pardon, on the 4th of January, 1942, We had our first excitement

03:30 when a single Kawasaki flying boat came over about ten o'clock, obviously on a reconnoitre, and at eleven thirty an arrow head formation of seventeen Kawasaki bombers approached from the north over Wottan Island headed directly in our direction. We had been told that bombs landed on their objective as the planes passed overhead.

04:00 They continued to pass and approach us and naturally we were rather apprehensive, but they passed overhead and continued on over the harbour over to the lower aerodrome, Lakonai Aerodrome, where the bombs landed and unfortunately they hit a native hospital, Rapindik hospital, causing some casualties to the natives there.

04:30 From then on we had pretty much daily air raids which are not very successful as far as we were concerned, as an anti aircraft unit. I should point out that the equipment we had was not anything like the equipment on which we trained here in Sydney before we embarked for Rabaul. We had the latest equipment here like a UB-7 predictor, I mean a UB-7 range finder and

05:00 predictor. In Rabaul we had a ring side telescope. No predictor, no range finder. We did succeed in shooting down some aircraft during the ensuing air raids. One in particular was recovered, some souvenirs were recovered when it crashed onto the Mother Mountain, which is an

05:30 extinct volcano in Rabaul.

**So we don't get too much into the story, we'll do that a little bit later, just for the overview, can you tell me what date you left the island and where you went to from there?**

We were an anti aircraft unit, but on the 22nd January we were ordered to destroy our guns,

06:00 the enemy armada having been sighted out to sea and obviously headed in our direction. At four o'clock in the afternoon we destroyed our two and three inch anti aircraft guns, and loaded onto our transport which comprised one three tonne truck and a Ford utility. We were directed, we were told to report to forward headquarters,

- 06:30 because the invasion was immanent. We arrived at a place called Three Ways, we were told to get off the trucks and to dig in. That was B Company of 2/22 Battalion, under Captain McGinnis. We had finished digging in when our CO [Commanding Officer] Lieutenant Selby called us together and said that we were evacuating B Company and were going down to Raguana Beach,
- 07:00 where of course we were going to be frontline troops. As artillery men without infantry training we thought that was a bit strange, but nevertheless you didn't query, you did what you were told. We made our way down in rain to Raguana Beach and we arrived there at eight thirty in the evening. We had our first food since lunch time, a cup of soup and were set about
- 07:30 laying barbed wire in the waters edge of Raguana Beach. Raguana Beach would have been about the size of Bondi, a bay about that size. Having laid the barbed wire in the water, Captain Shier then directed us to different positions, and I was directed to cover a Boyce anti-tank gun together with some of my fellow friends.
- 08:00 We just waited. About two thirty in the morning, a star shell lit the sky like daylight, and we could see the ships that we had seen earlier in the day out to sea, had virtually sailed into the harbour. Simpson Harbour, into Rabaul's harbour. From then on what we heard was a lot of rifle fire coming from our left,
- 08:30 where A Company of the 2/22nd were located, around the base of Vulcan Island, an extinct volcano which had erupted in 1937. It had risen from six foot above sea level to six hundred and fifty feet overnight. The A Company were located around the base of that island, what was now called Vulcan Island. There was heavy
- 09:00 gunfire and a bugler, not ours, was up on Vulcan blowing a tune but apparently he didn't get very far with it. There was concentrated rifle fire and he suddenly stopped. There was a lull then when the Japs obviously withdrew, and there was a lull in the fighting and
- 09:30 we just lay there in the dark wondering that next was going to happen, and more star shells in the sky, and we could see and hear landing barges coming straight for Raguana Beach. We knew that any moment we were going to be called on to repel the enemy.

**Before we go into that in more detail, how long were you on the island for before you got off,**

10:00 **at this period?**

Well we landed in Rabaul on the 16th August, '41, and we were rescued on the 4th April, or were found on the 4th April, 1942. But actually we were rescued on the 9th.

**Just for the sake of the overview, where did you go after you left the island?**

We were transported to Moresby. Where

- 10:30 we embarked on the Macdhu, which was being held for us to take us south, and from there we went to Cairns and then to Townsville, then to Sydney, then to Moore Park enlistment area where we were all medically examined and those of us, most of us were sent immediately in ambulances to hospital,
- 11:00 but I was fortunate in that the doctor that examined me was the father of two boys with whom I'd gone to school. He knew me and I knew him. He used to come to the football matches, and I asked him as a special favour, could I have seven days special leave rather than go to hospital. Well reluctantly he agreed and of course I was suffering with malaria quite regularly. I was given
- 11:30 the seven days leave and went home.

**From there did you try again and enlist in the AIF?**

Yes, but having been classified, but I spent nine months in hospital, first of all in 113th AGH [Australian General Hospital] at Concord and to the 114th AGH in Goulburn. Then up to the Rich Con [Convalescent] Home at Leura, then to the Lady Davidson at Turrumurra. We were guinea pigs in the malarial

- 12:00 treatment. We were the first people to come back to Australia with malaria. They were testing out different quinine, Atebrin, Plasmaquin, different treatments, and they'd treat us for five days, send us out on leave and we'd come back in an ambulance. It wasn't then, I was classified 'B - unfit for active service' and I was
- 12:30 designated to Victoria barracks as a desk job. I suffered a couple of attacks of malaria there and finished up in the 12th camp hospital at the showground in Sydney. And from there on I was reassigned to the district records office, as a pen job. I answered...

**Hang on, we'll just pause there... Sorry we weren't recording, so I'll come back, you were saying?**

- 13:00 Oh, well I was assigned to district records office, which was of course a non-combatant unit, but when new units are formed, a screed is sent to all units for volunteers to give the opportunity of volunteering for active service units. And a sergeant there of my knowledge and I both put our names down for an

active service unit.

- 13:30 Again we had to be medically examined and again I came up to my doctor who was the father of my school friend. He said to me "There is no way in the world that you're going to be passed A, classified A fit for active service." To which I expressed horror and he said "Would you rather be discharged?" and I said "Yes, I didn't join the army to push a pen." So he said "Right, you're out."
- 14:00 And that was on the 24th September, 1943. From there I took a civilian job, when Penfold's Wines was still in York Street at the bottom of the Queen Victoria Building. From there I was offered another job in Clarence Street and I accepted that, and from there I left to
- 14:30 join up with the American small ships with a friend of mine who I had grown up with. We were walking along York St one lunch time and we walked past the Grace Building and they had a sign up, 'Volunteers required'. Well having had some knowledge of navigation, having been a junior member of the Royal Motor Yacht Club just around the corner from where I lived in the eastern suburbs. I applied and
- 15:00 my friend applied and we again had to go for a medical examination. We presented ourselves and on the desk of the interviewing doctor were two files, which we recognised as our medical files from the army. He looked at those and he looked at us and he said "You don't really think I'm going to send you two guys away do you?" and we said "Yes," and he said
- 15:30 "If you come back, I'm going to have your asses, if you come back sick." Well I did come back sick. I came back sick at the end of December. This was in January '44, and my honourable discharge which is inside as you saw, says I was discharged in '44, honourably discharged. So, that was that.

**What ships did you serve on during that time?**

The two ships I served on, one was called the

- 16:00 WT - standing for 'Water Transport' - 57, from there I was transported, transferred to the FS 2B - FS standing for 'Fast Supplier'. And I was operating out of Finschhafen up to Hollandia, Biak, and I did one trip up into Leyte. We were running ammunition and supplies, fast supply being the operative word, they were doing, they were 32 knot boats.
- 16:30 They were a cross between a Fairmile and a torpedo boat, and the only armament we had was an Oerlikon in the well of the boat. That was it.

**So after you were honourably discharged?**

Then I came, oh and in the meantime I had met my now wife. Met her in December 1943 and left to go with the American

- 17:00 small ships in January '44, but we were right into each other and I came back and we renewed our acquaintance and we got engaged, and subsequently married in 1946. And fifty seven years and ten months later we're still here. We have two daughters, two sons in law and four grandchildren, and one great grandchild, great grandson.
- 17:30 That brings us up to date.

**And after the war, where did you work then?**

I worked, my first job after the war was at a firm called Insulwool Product, which are the home insulation people. From there I went to Gillette company. From there I went into real estate, and from there I started my own business.

- 18:00 In which I continued for thirty five years up until 1984 when I was put out to pasture by Veteran Affairs [Department of Veterans' Affairs], having been made TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pensioner], I had suffered at that stage two heart attacks and one stroke. They suggested that of I gave up work they would make me TPI and I could
- 18:30 go out to pasture. It hasn't worked out like that, because unfortunately I have been the recipient of in excess of twenty operations and six minor strokes, but I'm still here. I'm a survivor.

**You are indeed.**

Well I'm known as a survivor.

**We'd now like to go back to the very beginning, and your memories of growing up.**

- 19:00 **What are your first memories of growing up?**

First memories was going to Hawthorn...

**I'll just pause you there... Right, what's your first recollections of growing up?**

I suppose I would have been about three years old and I attended a church school called Hawthorn College in Toxteth Road, Glebe. It was called Miss Brink's, and I attended there until we moved from Glebe to Dee Why, where I attended

19:30 Dee Why Public School. From there I went to Beecroft Grammar School, then to Scots, then to the army.

**What are your school time memories?**

Well I loved boarding school. I played in all the sports, football, cricket. At Scots I played tennis, did a bit of rowing. Then I later took up golf and

20:00 acquitted myself quite well. I played in the first pennant team of the Monash Country Club, and then I played in the team at the Ryde Parramatta Club which I'm still a member.

**Do you have any memories of friends during school time?**

They've all passed away. One of them lived in the very close vicinity to here with whom I was very closely associated until he died about two years ago. We

20:30 knew each other from Prep School at Scots.

**What sort of things did you get up to?**

Well, nothing very daring. David was a great coy fish fancier, and we used to go out to places like Bringelly to buy fish, and he had two huge ponds down at his house,

21:00 just around here in Morton St, Crows Nest. But we never got up to any mischief. We'd go up to the North Sydney ANZAC [Australia New Zealand Army Corps] Memorial Club and blow the froth off a couple ales occasionally, but we never got up to mischief. We were too old. The only thing I do, is twice a year I have friends on the

21:30 Gold Coast whom I visit. Much to my wife's chagrin I still drive up there rather than fly, because I enjoy driving, and particularly as the Pacific Highway is now almost a freeway. I enjoy driving. I don't get booked for speeding, but I did get booked, or pulled over - I didn't get booked - for driving too slowly. I was driving, I had the cruise control

22:00 set on ninety kilometres an hour in a hundred zone, and I was pulled over by a police car from Kempsey, to tell me that they had received two calls on mobile phones to say I was holding up traffic, and would I please put my cruise control on a hundred, which I did of course. That was after I was breathalysed.

**Your memories of Glebe? What memories do you have of Glebe?**

Oh, mainly the fact that

22:30 Alfie Deedam was a little boy who lived opposite, I played with him. At the bottom of the street was Wentworth Park, or Harold Park Raceway, and it was my sisters and I would go down there with various neighbouring friends and watch the horses trotting. They were trotting, and I think it must have been

23:00 Harold Park? Anyway, it was a race track, and she used to get jelly beans in the colour of the saddle cloth of the horse we were given, that we fancied. I can remember that there was a horse called Rogilla, that was my favourite, and it was a champion, and I had the pleasure of meeting the trainer of that in club that I joined later on.

23:30 But I had a good childhood, I'd have to say a privileged childhood. I never, I mean in the Depression I was sent to boarding school. My sister was also sent to boarding school. She went to PLC [Presbyterian Ladies' College] in Pymble, so we never had it, fortunately, never had a hard childhood.

**What did your Dad do for work?**

24:00 My father was a bookmaker.

**And he worked out of Harold Park?**

No, he was at Randwick and Moorefield and Rose Hill, and Warwick Farm in those days. He was a horse, he was member of the AJC [Australian Jockey Club]. I don't think the AJC was interested in trots or dogs, I'm not sure.

**Did he take you along to the races?**

No, I never showed any interest whatsoever and still don't.

24:30 I've never been interested in horse racing, or punting. The only thing I ever gambled on was golf, and that was up to my, when I say gambled I would bet on golf because I was gambling on my own ability. And that was only friendly bets with members that I played with.

**Did he ever share with you or talk with you about his work?**

No and I never asked him. No,

25:00 I just wasn't interested. And I don't think he wanted to follow him.

**How did he get into it, do you know?**

No I don't. He came from England and married my mother out here, and I don't know how he got into it. But, he had a brother who also came from England and he also was a bookmaker.

**What was he like as a man?**

My father?

25:30 A typical English gentleman. Quiet, retiring you'd say. Not the kind of person that one would associate with say, a bookmaker. He was a gentleman bookmaker. He wasn't one of the check suit type. On the contrary, he was named as one of the ten best dressed men in Sydney at one stage, by some newspaper. He was very quiet.

26:00 **Were you close to him?**

Yes, very. We were like brothers more or less like father and son. He was a bowler, he was a lawn bowler, and he was the city club single's champion in 1941 I think it was. He was a very good bowler and was picked to go to Canada in the Commonwealth Games but couldn't get released from his,

26:30 from the AJC, to go. So he had to forgo his trip to Canada.

**What sort of things did you do together growing up, as a young kid with your Dad?**

Well I was at boarding school, but at the end of term Dad would take us away, my sister and I and my mother on holidays. We used to go to Katoomba mostly for holidays.

27:00 But as I say, up until I joined the army I was in boarding school. So I was a boarder at Scots as well, even though we lived just down the bottom of the hill from Scots, I was a boarder. Which I preferred to be. I enjoyed being a boarder, it taught me to become independent. When I went into the army I was quite competent at army drill because I had been in the Scots College cadets

27:30 and I'd done all the basic army drill and marching. I fitted in quite easily.

**You touched on earlier a little bit about the Depression. What did you notice in regards to other families with the Depression?**

That they were less privileged than I was. Mostly the boys, at the Dee Why Public School that I went to, there was a Salvation Army home very

28:00 close to the school, and these boys used to come home every morning from the Salvation Army home to come to the public school. They were obviously less privileged than I was.

**Did your Dad's bookmaking sort of increase in profitability during the Depression years, or was there a downturn in gambling?**

Well at '31,

28:30 in 1931, well 1929, what was I, six or seven years old? I don't, as I say I went to boarding school when I was seven, so I didn't see very much of what was happening in the outside world. As a boarder at Beecroft I only used to get end of term leave holidays, and it was then that my father would take us up to the mountains for two weeks for holiday, while we were on school holidays.

29:00 **What was your Mum like?**

Very nice. A nice lady, she died when she was ninety four years and nine months old. She was Mum, she was always there when we wanted her. When I first came back from the army

29:30 I frightened the life out of her when I used to have my attacks of malaria, because it was an unknown disease in those days. And I'd come home and I'd be shaking and sweating, and all I wanted to do was lie on the lounge room floor with as many blankets on me as I could, and the radiator as close to my face as possible to try and get warm, and then of course when the fever broke, you'd sweat. I had a blanket to protect the carpet of course,

30:00 and used to scare the life out of her. But I was taken to Concord Hospital naturally once they started, and as I say, I spent nine months in hospital altogether before I was classified B and put out to office jobs at the Victoria barracks and the district records

30:30 office which was at Moore Park.

**Were your Mum and Dad close?**

Yes, they were married for fifty, fifty five years before Dad... No, Dad was buried on his fifty third wedding anniversary. Yes, in December 1972. Yes, they were a happy couple.

31:00 **Family holidays, you mentioned going up towards the Blue Mountains.**

Yes, at Katoomba, and Dad used to rent a cottage in Line St, called Raheen, and another one further down towards the Three Sisters called Chesnewold. And they still exist.

**What did you do? What sort of activities?**

Oh my sister and I played tennis in the courts around the area.

31:30 And there were other kids of our own age on holidays, and I remember one occasion we went down the giant staircase that goes down beside the Three Sisters, down to the floor of Megalong Valley. And I raced them back up. Nothing, just what kids do. Again, nothing elaborate.

32:00 You know, going to boarding school you're pretty regimented and you behave yourself. You're taught to behave yourself, and I did.

**Do you remember discipline in the family home? What sort of things did your Dad do to discipline you?**

Well, Dad liked things kept in order, and if

32:30 you did anything, if I did anything that was out of order, well then I'd be remonstrated with in no certain manner, in very uncertain manner. But never hit or anything like that, just verbally remonstrated with.

**Now, Dee Why, what are your memories of growing up there?**

Swimming. I learnt to swim at Dee Why, I joined, I was a

33:00 junior member of the Dee Why Surf Club, and I had a very good friend there called Keith Dudley, whom I still see. He lives at Forestville, or French's Forest, and he's a member of the Gordon Club, as I am, at Chatswood. We meet there and have lunch and keep in contact with each other. His sister and my sister were very good friends.

33:30 **So you lived near the beach?**

Yes, we lived in, my father built I think the first all electric double brick home in Dee Why, on top of, overlooking the baths and out (UNCLEAR) and as I say, you just go down the reserve and the baths were there, and the beach continued on of course from the

34:00 baths. I liked Dee Why, it was very nice. I only saw it at the end of term holidays of course.

**Can you describe to me the house that your father built?**

Yes, it was a three bedroom house. Nice garden. My mother had a maid in those days and she had her own quarters. She used to take me on walks over to Narrabeen,

34:30 her boyfriend was a surf life saver over at Curl Curl, and she used to take me for walks over the cliffs on those days. It's all housing now. And that was the excuse to go to Curl Curl. Not many other memories except Keith and I would play as boys do. A boy we knew from

35:00 school, fell over the cliffs at Dee Why, and survived. A boy named Sutter, I think it was. But as I said, only a couple of weeks ago, I was reminiscing and I said to Keith about the boy Sutter that fell over the cliffs, and he remembered. But, no, as I say, I didn't have a

35:30 remarkable childhood. It was pretty orderly, because I was brought up to be orderly at boarding school.

**When you were home from boarding school, what household chores were you expected to do?**

Chores, no. That wasn't my scene. That was the maid's scene. When my maid, my mother had a maid at Glebe and also in Dee Why, so I wasn't called upon to do any chores.

36:00 **Do you know the family moved from Dee Why to Point Piper?**

I don't think, I think my mother thought it was a bit remote. She didn't drive and if she wanted to go to town she had to get the tram to Manly, and the ferry. I think it was a bit remote for her, and Dad, when

36:30 Aviva and I were getting married, he offered the house to me and I said, "Thank you, but no thank you. Too far." We didn't have a car when we first got married, and I didn't want that same drag in to town. Walking up to the tram and getting the tram to Manly, and getting the ferry to town, no that didn't. So we didn't accept my father's kind offer, so he sold it.

37:00 **So your father had held on to it since 1928?**

Yes.

**He rented it out?**

Yes, it was rented up until the time. I think it became vacant just around the time we were getting married and that's when he offered it to me, and it was let again after I said, "Thank you, but no thank you."

**So, boarding school when you were a young kid, before Scots, what was the name of that school?**

Beecroft Grammar School, run by the Reverend Booth,

37:30 B-o-o-t-h.

**Linked with the Salvation Army at all?**

No. He and his wife. No he was an Anglican minister, and he and his wife and his two daughters, Gwen and Shirley, both of whom they went to Abbotsleigh up at, was it Warrawee, I think. Yes.

**What are your memories of boarding there, the sleeping accommodation?**

Well, I slept in a dormitory. I

38:00 was happy there. I made quite a few friends. Learnt to play football, learnt to play cricket.

**How many boys to a room?**

No, there were about twenty boarders. It was also for day boys, for boys in the area. But there was about twenty boarders, and I think there were two dormitories with each about ten. Yes.

**Was there a reason that your Dad sent you to an Anglican boarding school?**

No.

38:30 Only because my father had a friend whose sons were there, and he recommended, that was Joe and Freddy Marks. And their father was the representative in Australia for United Artist Film. But one thing I can remember about Beecroft Grammar was that every lunch hour we had a choice of eight desserts. Eight desserts. I'll never forget it, I keep telling my wife

39:00 that at Beecroft we had a choice of eight.

**Do you remember the kinds of things that they were serving for dessert?**

Oh, chocolate cream pudding, steam pudding, tapioca, ground rice, rhubarb of course. Chockolate cream pudding was the, that was the top of the heap. Oh and lemon pudding.

39:30 She was an excellent cook, Mrs Booth. She and the older daughter, Gwen, they used to do the cooking. And they'd have help to do round the house, and do the grounds of course. But the food there was very good. And as I said, the day boys used to lunch there too, if they wanted to, if their parents had arranged that.

40:00 And there was a table, it must have been thirty or forty foot long. Mr Booth would stand at this table with all this dessert and he'd start at the top, and the boys would say "Chockolate cream, please," the next boy would say, "Same please, sir," "Same please, sir," until the chocolate cream pudding was gone. They were good days.

40:30 I enjoyed being a boarder at Beecroft. And as I say, it was only when I reached the top class that I left there.

## Tape 2

00:48 **Coming back to Beecroft, what uniform did you wear to school?**

A grey uniform. I still have the hat band inside, and

01:00 a badge on the pocket. The motto at Beecroft was 'Finum Respisi', 'Look to the End'. I never found out what that meant but I presume it meant look forward. And I still have the hat band in my room up there, if you look up, with my Scots one. The Beecroft one, also blue and gold, alongside the Scots one which is blue and gold.

01:30 **These days when kids go to school they get detentions when they get in trouble. What sort of discipline was there when you were at school?**

Plenty, and I had my share of detentions. But I had a problem. I never liked going to detention. I would rather turn out for football practice. As a result of which, my name would be called out at assembly the following morning, "The following boys will report to the office after assembly," and you'd

02:00 get six of the best, and I mean the best. Mr Anderson, the principal of Scots, I think he used to love his work. And you'd put you're hand out and if you pulled away he'd got you coming up on the knuckles. So you didn't, you learnt to leave your hand there and cop it sweet. Well having fielded in first slips in cricket, my hands were quite hard. I used to practice on the

02:30 slip - you know what a slip rack is? Well I used to practise on the slip rack every afternoon and my

hands were like leather. I could pick them out, I could pick a catch out of anywhere. I was very good, I was opening bat. That reminds me. I was opening bat for the school with Basil Thorne, the name may or may not mean anything to you, but he was the father of Graham Thorne.

03:00 Basil won the Opera House Lottery and Graham Thorne, his son, was kidnapped and murdered. Basil and I were opening bat for the school and he and I created a GPS [Greater Public Schools] batting record. We passed the other team's score without the loss of wicket, opening wicket. I had the privilege of sitting in the body of the court for the trial of Stephen Bradley, who

03:30 finally caught up with him for murdering Graham, and I attended the funeral of course. Very sad days. So, don't win the lottery. If you do, hide your kids.

**In your primary school where you were boarding, did they also give you the cane, and detention?**

I don't think I ever had the cane at Beecroft. I think I must have been a good boy, but at Scots I got the,

04:00 I was a regular participant.

**So what were the things you were getting in trouble for?**

Mostly for talking in class, and getting a detention, and then not attending detention and getting the sock, as we used to call it. It's not allowed these days, but I'll tell you what, it never did me any harm. And I think if they reintroduced it today I think it would do a lot of good.

**It was helpful for cricket anyway, wasn't it?**

04:30 Cricket was helpful for getting the cane.

**When you were in primary school do you remember your teachers at all?**

Yes I do. At Beecroft there was Mr Beardsal and Reverend Booth of course, and Miss Craig. Aviva and I went and visited Miss Craig at the old school many years later, and Miss Craig, Reverend Booth has passed on, and Miss Craig was running

05:00 the school. And of course, she was a little old lady herself then. At Scots I can remember there was Mr Webster, Sandy Dunnet, who claimed to be the finest penman in the north of Scotland. Mr Palling, the headmaster, who claimed me in the war. He was a captain in district records office, and claimed me. And that's how I finished up in

05:30 district records office. He kept my family informed when I was missing, after the fall of Rabaul. He kept my family informed as best he could on the knowledge that he could acquire, that everyone thought we were just holed up in the mountains living off the lands, having a real ball. And he advised them that I had been rescued and when I got refused

06:00 for the active service unit, I found out that he had claimed me and I was sent to the district records office, for which I didn't thank him. I thanked him by getting out of there, by volunteering for an active service unit. And Dr. Carlo did the right thing.

**Was he trying to do you a favour then?**

Probably, yes. To keep an eye on me you see.

06:30 I mean I'd been student at the prep for three years.

**You've mentioned a bit of sport and I've noticed that in your study there's a pennant for rowing.**

Oh, that was just in the falls, I didn't achieve anything, any great heights there. My claim to fame, if any

07:00 in sport was, oh and I played ice hockey but that was only just pre-war. I played for eastern suburbs Monarchs, and barber at David Jones used to play for Glebe. So we were good mates. But golf I did particularly well. I finished up with a fairly low handicap.

07:30 Unfortunately I ruptured my superus bonatus, and that kept me from playing for a couple of years. And then I found a coach called Bernie Oakman who tailored a swing for me to cater for my injured arm, and brought my handicap down to four. I played off a handicap of four. Which of course in those days, without

08:00 the help of the modern equipment, it was quite good.

**You mentioned playing ice hockey before the war. What ice rinks were there around Sydney?**

There was a Glaciarium at Broadway, and the Ice Palace which was district records office, no district finance office during the war. The Ice Palace at Moore Park and the Glaciarium at,

08:30 which was the Sydney meatworks at in Broadway there, in Railway Square.

**Can you describe for me what the Glaciarium looked like back then?**



An old barn with an ice rink, yes. It wasn't at all, but the Ice Palace was very up-market. A chap named Bendoight who was an entrepreneur, he made the ice rink, it was quite nice.

09:00 You could sit there and have a meal by the ice and they were very strict though. They had chaps on the ice stopping you from lairising, or from playing up. We'd go to the Glaciarium and we'd go down and we'd do what they called hockey edges in the corners, and if they caught you you'd be put off for a week, and then you'd go out to the Ice Palace.

09:30 It was quite a game.

**Why weren't you allowed to do that?**

It cut the ice up. You did your heels in and it chips up all the ice, it sprays people sitting having meals. Your hockey skates are very sharp and you'd dig your heels in and put your weight on them and

10:00 it would chip up the ice, and spray people sitting in the low, beside a low fence. And they'd be eating or something. And if Ivan caught you, "Week. One week." We were regulars, and that was playing up in those days. Yeah, Phil Ginsberg and oh, and

10:30 Phil Tyler, I went to school with Phil. He and I and Phil Ginsberg, we're all hockey players and we'd been showing off, just showing off.

**And the other ice rink?**

No, not in those days, no. The one at Canterbury didn't exist.

**But there was the Glaciarium and the other one was called the?**

Ice Palace.

11:00 **The Ice Palace. What did that look like, the Ice Palace?**

Oh very nice, very up-market.

**The same thing?**

Well the Ice Palace, the ice there was better, it was harder and didn't melt as quickly. The ice, the Glaciarium, if you fell, you'd get really wet. At the Ice Palace the ice was much harder, and consequently if you slipped and fell, you

11:30 didn't get wet. You'd get a bit damp but not wet. But it was much, very modern and much more artistically, nicely furnished if you like. Nice tables and chairs right around the ring. But it was policed also if you misbehaved there you'd be sent off, and you'd go back to the glacier.

**How much was it to go into these?**

A shilling.

**Both of them?**

12:00 About a shilling. A shilling to in for the session.

**And you had ski boots?**

Well I had my own hockey boots and skates I got, a friend of mine brought them out from Canada. CCM Extras he brought them from Canada for me. They were the makers of skates in those days. And CCM Extras, I don't know whether they're still available. But, I sold

12:30 mine to chap from Glebe Hockey Club when I came back from the war because I couldn't skate, I wasn't allowed to. I could skate but I wasn't allowed to play hockey. Just going to the Glaciarium would bring on malaria, with cold. Any sudden cold would bring on malaria - for me anyway.

**Do you know how they kept the ice cold?**

Well yeah they

13:00 had tubes under the, tubes in the floor and then water, and then froze it. In between sessions they'd shave the ice with a machine. In between morning session and afternoon session, or afternoon session and evening. It was like a, what would I say, it had a

13:30 blade in the front and it would shave, it would take the top covering off the ice and it would be perfectly smooth. And then hose it and put on a new surface for the next session. Yes, it was interesting to watch.

**Why was the ice at the Palace colder or better?**

Better and newer. The Glaciarium was only just the Sydney ice works, the Sydney meatworks.

14:00 It was like an after thought, making it into an ice rink. The Ice Palace was designed as a skating rink. Yes, it was very nice.

**And these were open all year round, in summer and winter?**

Yes, summer and winter. Oh yes.

**Would you notice a difference in density of ice during the winter verses the summer?**

Well at the Ice Palace, no. The equipment there kept the ice there a very hard. The Glacier as I say, it had

14:30 a film of water over it after a couple of hours. Two till five was the skating session, three hours, by which time you'd had enough.

**Ice hockey, were there many teams?**

No. There was Glebe, the Bears which was North Sydney. The Monarchs which was the eastern suburbs. The Bears, the Monarchs, the Glebe.

15:00 And they brought out a team from Canada. Of course you can imagine what they did to us. They picked a team out of the three teams to play Canada, and I wasn't one of them. I mean Canada, it's a national sport over there. They really showed us how the game should be played. It's a very fast game, and today they check on the

15:30 boards, which you weren't allowed to do in our day. You weren't allowed to body check on the ball, just there was a chap up on what they call the boards you, couldn't go and body check him. Now it's par for the course. It's like all sport, it's got rougher. You've seen the American ice hockey where they crunch them up against the boards? Well that was barred, you were sent off penalty for two minutes if you did that in our day.

16:00 **Did you ever win a season there?**

Not a season, no, but we won games. I don't remember winning a season. No, Bluey Mayes was our top skater, and Bluey Mayes, and my friend Max Clifton the barber from David Jones, he was a good skater. He played for Glebe, he was good. I was all right but I was just one of the team.

16:30 **You've mentioned a bit of sport in respect to Scots. The head of the river, did you ever go out to the head of the river?**

No, I went out there but never much joy. I think we won it in 1964, long after I had left. I don't think we've won it since. No, Scots is not renowned for rowing. Robson, who coached Shore, they had a long run of wins, just as

17:00 Joey's did at the football when they had Brother Henry coaching them. But Scots was never, Scots does well at football and cricket but not rowing.

**So how did you go in rugby during your years there?**

Oh I was, I like it very much. I started off as a breakaway, which they now call a flanker, and finished up as what is now a fly half, but in my day it was called five eight.

17:30 I was quite good at it. I had key positions, I had good ball handling skills apparently. And I used to kick for the team.

**Were there any easy beat teams within the GPS competition?**

No we were all pretty even. No there were no easy beats. We used to like playing Cranbrook which we used to call the

18:00 Rose Day Ladies' Finishing College, but subsequently they ended up beating us. After I had left. We played a few combined high schools. There was Trinity, Cranbrook, Armidale. They weren't GPS but they were high schools which we used to play.

18:30 And in the prep we used to play Barker or Knox, and they're the only two teams I remember apart from the GPS schools that we played. Good days.

**Scots is a Presbyterian school. Did religion play much in your life growing up?**

No.

19:00 Being Jewish I didn't participate in their religious classes and I was bar mitzvahed as all Jewish boys are at thirteen and wasn't, there were other Jewish boys at Scots but, in fact quite a few. No, it didn't play, I mean, oh, the Catholic boys, Jack Perini

19:30 never went to the Presbyterian religion classes and he and I would sit out the class. He was a good cricketer, he was wicket keeper for the club, for the school. We had a bit in common and we were good friends too. I still see his brother Peter there, Corinthian Doors. I still see, as a matter of fact I saw Peter here at the North Shore Medical Centre a couple of, a few weeks ago.

20:00 We seem to knock into each other a few places, the motor show and up here at the medical centre. But

his brother, his elder brother Jack is not well, and doesn't get out these days apparently.

**What can you tell me about your bar mitzvah?**

What can I tell you about it?

**What are your memories from it?**

20:30 I used to go in every Friday afternoon from school to the great synagogue to be coached, taught Hebrew. And that when I sat for my exam I naturally passed, and then I performed in the great synagogue on my thirteenth birthday, or the Saturday nearest my thirteenth birthday, which was the 4th July, 1936.

21:00 The party that followed, not grand, like a small party of family and friends and relations. And that was it. But I must admit that I haven't carried on the tradition as Mum would have expected me to, or hoped I would. But my wife and I have just observed Passover. I didn't have any bread or beer or anything like that, that I shouldn't, much to her surprise.

21:30 But other than that, I'm not very religious. The war cured me I'm afraid. I just, I seemed to lose faith. I think someone was looking after me, they had to be. I had too many narrow escapes in the war not to be some guiding hand. That was my feeling. But I haven't followed along. I never, I mean I'm Jewish and I'll never deny it. In fact

22:00 I let everybody know before they start saying anything anti-Semitic that I am, and that if they want to be anti-Semitic then they've got to answer to me. And I'm not frightened to defend myself as it were.

**During 1936, '37 and '38, did you and your family know what was going on in Germany at the time?**

No. Well, refugees started to arrive and we

22:30 didn't have much to do with them. We never had an occasion to meet them. But we knew that Hitler had become chancellor and was making it hard for the Jews. We knew that and as I say, they started to migrate to Australia and other countries, and we had an opportunity of seeing them, meeting them mostly in the eastern suburbs, they seemed to migrate. To the eastern suburbs, and living

23:00 there ourselves we let them, or came into contact with them. But no, we weren't really aware of what to follow. Nobody could have been.

**Anzac Day before the war, did that play any part in your growing up?**

I went a couple of times with Dad when they still had tanks driving through the city. Small tanks,

23:30 and of course that was unusual, and naturally of interest, but I wasn't a regular. I was in the cadets at school, and that I think caused me to have a bit of interest in army activities. Nearly all boys were in the cadets in school. We wore the kilt of course.

24:00 No don't have a photo of myself in a kilt. I did start off in the bagpipe band but finished up as a drummer. You know what they say, "A bagpipe is an ill wind that nobody blows good."

**Your Dad, did he serve?**

No, Dad missed out. He came to Australia I think in 1918, '17 or '18.

24:30 I don't know now. I don't know how or why he didn't serve, but both he and my mother come from London, from England. But Dad, no, I don't know. I didn't know the circumstances under which he didn't serve. He

25:00 never volunteered any information and I never asked him. It was just one of those things you never thought about.

**School cadets, what can you tell me about cadet camps?**

Oh, a lot of fun. A lot of fun, yes they were good. All of those things made my entry into the real army very easy. I mean I was a good mixer. I like to think I

25:30 was popular with my school friends and chaps I met from other schools in the cadets in camp. And as I say...

**You said they were a lot of fun, but what about them was fun?**

Well, good fellowship, put it that way. We're all there doing the same sort of thing. There was never any fights, I mean I never remember any fights. I used to have a few fights at school. Why?

26:00 Because I was Jewish. The only time I ever had to fight, and my father had been wise in having me taught to box so I could acquit myself reasonably well. I'd say that I won more than I lost. I got the respect of people by the fact that I could acquit myself quite well with my fists.

**Scots wasn't anti-Semitic itself?**

26:30 No, there were Japanese kids there, we had Hungarian boys there, we had. No, it was a lot of different nationalities, like I remember we had Hungarian boys there, Japanese kids there. Mostly from diplomatic families. I can remember the Japanese kid especially,

27:00 Yamashita - Y-a-m-a-s-h-i-t-a, pronounced Yamaster.

**Going back to the cadet camps, what were they training you for or to do?**

Marching mainly. Rifle drill, shooting, mostly I think no artillery.

27:30 Just marching, mostly discipline. That's what it was mostly, discipline. To do what you're told when you're told to do it. Which is what you do in the army. You don't question, you just do it. That's like when we went, when the anti aircraft unit gunners were sent down to the beach at Raguana. I would have liked to say, "What the hell are we doing

28:00 down there? We're going to be first front line troops, and you've got an infantry battalion of scattered companies all around the place, and we're going down to the beach?" You don't say there, you just think a lot.

**Now war is approaching. What did you know about the coming war, about the events in Europe? What did you know about that?**

Well, we saw the, where we lived we saw the

28:30 first contingent of AIF leave on the Queen Mary and the Mauritania, they were anchored right outside where we lived. The Queen Mary, we woke up one morning and here's this huge grey thing, and we got Dad, took my sister and I into town. We went to Circular Quay, they were running special cruises to Bradley's Head, to Athol Bight. That's where the Queen Mary was anchored. And they had these ferries

29:00 that went round, and you looked up at this Queen Mary and it was huge. It was a big ship. There was the Queen Mary, the Mauritania was huge too. I learnt that that convoy was called Schooner when I got into the district records office. That was the Schooner convoy, the one that took the first of the 6th Division over to the Middle East. There was a third ship - the Queen Mary, the Mauritania

29:30 and I forget I'm sorry. It was a long time ago. That was in 1939.

**Do you remember where you were when war was declared?**

Yes, exactly. Point Piper, at home on a Sunday evening listening to World's Greatest Tenors and they stopped the music in the middle of a Schmidt, Joseph Schmidt aria, to announce that

30:00 England had declared war on Germany, and being German, Joseph Schmidt's record was taken off. Yeah. That's my recollection of the 3rd September, Sunday the 3rd September, 1939. Listening with my family to the World Famous Tenors. It was a Sunday night program, we always used to listen to it. I always like music. Go to my car there and you'll find it's all classical music.

**30:30 What was your parent's response to the news?**

Well, we were a long way away from it, and I don't suppose there was much of a reaction, I noticed much of a reaction. I mean it was a talking point but I don't think we knew anybody that was going to the war. My Dad's friends were all old and

31:00 older men. No, I have no recollection of my parent's reaction but I was aware of it of course. We talked about it at school. One of our older boys from Scots went to England and joined the RAF [Royal Air Force] and got killed. Frank Whittaker, a fighter pilot.

31:30 Nothing much else until I got to where I was old enough to think I'd like to go and someone blew a bugle in my ear and I thought it was about time I ought to make some enquiries. I got refused first. I went, I was studying accountancy and I had a temporary job.

32:00 I used to get temporary jobs during the school holidays, the college holidays. And I went up to Martin Place to enlist, and the chap looked at me and said, "How old are you?" and I said, "Eighteen, sir." I was a bit younger than that. He said "Well you come back and see me in about two years time and I'll enlist you." Well that of course annoyed me, so I got on a bus and I went out to Moore Park

32:30 recruiting department. They didn't refuse me there, and I took my attestation and the next thing I know I'm being put on a truck to go to camp. And I said, "Wait a minute," and I got paraded before a captain, and I said "Look, I haven't left my job, I've just taken time off to come out," and he said, "I'll give you twenty four hours' special leave and I want you back here tomorrow

33:00 morning. I want you to get yourself a knife and fork and spoon from your local hardware store and be back here tomorrow morning." Which I was. I went home, my Dad was away at the time. He was on a bowling carnival up at the mountains. So I arrived home and I said to Mum, "I won't be home for tea tomorrow night, Mum," and she said "Why, where are you going?" I said, "I'll be in camp." "Oh," that

33:30 was it. So, they threatened to pull me out and I said, "If you arrange for me to be taken out, I'll rejoin under a different name and you won't know where I am." Well that was in April, in August we sailed. I was only in camp in Sydney from April to August. And shipped to Rabaul.

**So just coming back, you said your Dad**

34:00 **was away?**

Yes, he was an excellent bowler, I told you.

**So your Mum's reaction was shock and horror.**

Yes.

**When did your Dad actually find out?**

I think she phoned him.

**Did he speak to you?**

No.

**When did you get the idea that you'd like to join up? Was it that day that you went to the recruitment office?**

No I'd been thinking about it, but I made up my mind.

34:30 On that day I made up my mind, stop thinking about it and do something. Yep.

**What was it about the war that...**

I'd have to say adventure. You know, I've always been a bit adventurous, and my friend and I, next door neighbour and I rode, from Point Piper, rode our bikes to Palm Beach.

35:00 I mean that's a long way for a couple of kids. And another time we went down to the National Park on our bikes, you know it's all traffic, and yeah. Can we have a break?

## Tape 3

00:44 **After enlisting you were sent to camp. Where was that?**

St Georges Heights.

**And what went on there? Can you describe St Georges?**

Yes it was an artillery unit, anti aircraft unit at Georges Heights which is just near Mosman, as you would know.

01:00 And I just became a soldier. Sleeping on a palliasse on duckboards in a tent and getting up at six in the morning and do spud barbering. And then having a shower, getting into uniform, going to have breakfast and go on parade. And there he would, Sergeant Eddie Fanoucan,

01:30 ex-rugby union representative, about that wide and about that tall, who I played inside centre to in a game of rugby union against a search light unit. I never saw the ball, Eddie Fanoucan was marked. I never saw the ball. We used to do rifle drill and he taught us how to slam a .303

02:00 onto our shoulder like that. Then we'd do gun drill, but we had 3.7 guns at Georges Heights and a predictor and a UB-7 range finder which meant tracking a plane would be easy. When of course we got to Rabaul, it was two WW1 3 inch guns, no

02:30 predictor, no UB-7 range finder but a ringside telescope which you virtually had to guess the height. That's what we had.

**How did you take to army discipline and army life when you first joined?**

Well having been a boarder for many, since I was seven, and having done the cadets at Scots, I fitted in like a

03:00 glove. I didn't have any difficulty with the chaps I was in the army with and they weren't all privileged like me, but I never discussed my upbringing with them. They were just blokes mostly off the track. Young blokes like myself, I mean at seventeen what are you, just a callow youth, and we were virtually just kids, young kids together.

03:30 Then came the...

**What was an eye opener of being in that environment for you, with the new people?**

Sleeping on a palliasse on duckboards on a tent. And cold showers. That was probably the rudest awakening but then again having been up at army camp up at Liverpool, in the cadets, I wasn't

- 04:00 had any expectations of anything really. I was quite, I was able to accept what was, the status quo was acceptable to me. This was the army, we were at war, you know. That was it.

**What about the gunnery, was that difficult?**

No, if you paid attention and did what you were told to do, and you did it, you got on fine. And I never got,

- 04:30 we were given, after two weeks in camp we were given leave pass for from five o'clock to 23:59 which is one minute to midnight. I went home and saw my family and went back to camp. All went well until the screed came round asking, well the rumours were that they were going to send a unit overseas.

- 05:00 We having tried to join the AIF originally until I wanted to get into the 2/30th Battalion which was called the Black Watch Battalion because the Black Watch was the kilt that we wore at school. Well then I was dead keen to get away. I volunteered for it and fortunately I think because I had met Mr Selby at the synagogue on final leave, that

- 05:30 he recognised me. I think he recognised me as having had some sort of good education. I was picked. There was only fifty three in the unit. There were two officers, three sergeants, two bombardiers I think, two lance bombardiers, and the rest were gunners. But there's one thing I eventually have to tell you,

- 06:00 was that in Rabaul there was a chap who was sent who was in the orderly room who became ill and was sent back to Australia in November. This is August we arrived in Rabaul, in November he was sent home. And because of my obvious education, Selby pointed me off the guns into the orderly room. And in those

- 06:30 days even if I say so myself, I had almost a photographic memory. And I used to have to make up the pay every two weeks for the boys. And I had to take out certain moneys for allotments that were sending home for their parents. I used to have to balance the payroll and order the money - so many pound notes, so many ten shillings notes, blah, blah, blah.

- 07:00 And having studied accountancy I didn't find this at all difficult, and I could even type, which I used to do. I had stencils in those days and I used to stencil, cut stencils and make orders which would be posted on our notice board, at Mr Selby's direction. But I learnt to know every

- 07:30 chap by name, by number, rank, and surname and initials. That came in handy later about which I will tell you. Anyway up when Pearl Harbor was declared, we moved from Malaguna camp which was down on Malaguna Road up onto...

- 08:00 **You were just telling a story about someone that went home in November, was that...**

Say again?

**You were just telling us someone who went home in November, was that when you moved?**

Yes, AJ Cummins - C-u-m-m-i-n-s. He was sick and he was classified as B2 and unfit to be on active service, or to be an active gunner, and he was sent home. He was to be replaced by Gunner Kingston from Queensland - Q75552, and

- 08:30 he replaced Cummins to make up the strength of the unit while I stayed in the orderly room until Pearl Harbor. And once we moved from Malaguna Road up to Observatory Hill, later to be called Frisbee Ridge, then I became back on the guns. Because it looked like it was obvious something was going to happen.

- 09:00 There must have been a reason for us going to Rabaul. I think it became more obvious as time went on because on Christmas Day there was a plane sighted very high, flying very high. Then on the 4th January, Sunday the 4th January, a bright Sunday morning at ten thirty, this single Kawasaki four engine flying boat bomber came

- 09:30 over and we knew something was, you could just feel it. At half past eleven this arrow head formation of seventeen was sighted coming towards us. And as I say, all we knew was that when they passed over a position that's when the bombs were fall, drop. We saw them leaving through the gun telescope. We were told "Bombs away," that they had let their bombs go.

- 10:00 When they passed over us and kept going we were naturally relieved. It was all very exciting, but I mean kids, I don't think we actually realised what was happening. And then we saw these bombs land on the lower aerodrome. And the Ripindik native hospital was hit, and as told you earlier there were casualties, but they were only native. But there were casualties, there was no Europeans.

- 10:30 **I'll just pull you up there, we're getting a little ahead of ourselves. I want to go through**

**everything quite thoroughly, so I'll come back to that first attack. Before we even get to Rabaul I just want to know a little bit about your training on the guns. Can you tell me how a guns crew worked? And what you were being trained to do?**

Yes, well you've got the gun layers who operate the guns going up and down and side that way. We're all trained in different

11:00 positions on the guns so if someone unfortunately got hit, someone could take their place. Then there were those that were operating a semicircle of ammunition that set the fuses. The predictor would predict the, and the loader or the chaps on the ammunition, they set the fuses. You've got a ring that sets the fuses,

11:30 up to fuse 3-0 which was maximum. And that goes to the loader and then he punches it into the breech, the breech comes up and you've got the chap that pulls the lever and away she goes.

**How many people at each gun?**

Two, four, five working the actual, two layers. I was on the

12:00 dial, on the set of deflection dials. One dial, I was on one deflection dial. There was a friend of mine on the other dial, that's two. That's four. And then you've got the loader that punches the shell into the breech and the breech snaps forward and then pulls the firing handle and makes the next shell come up. Waits for the order on the settings, I have to wait

12:30 for the settings on the dials. I remember the first setting was 'Fuse 2-9, up 3 a half, right 4'. Fuse 2-9, that's pretty, he had to guess the height, up 3 a half, right 4. Pull the lever, away she went and the shells we saw burst, they fell far short. So the guns only had a maximum of 3-0, so that's

13:00 what we went up to and fired at them for the rest of the time they were within range. Fuse 3-0.

**Who were the orders coming from? Who was giving you those orders?**

It depends, the officers took turns on being duty officer. The day, the first air raid was Peter Fisher. And the biggest raid was Peter Fisher, that was on the 20th. That was for an hour and a half that we were in action.

**Without a predictor how did they**

13:30 **get the information?**

Well you could get the angle, but you couldn't get the height. The ringside telescope gave you an angle but it didn't give you the height. You had to guess the height. And he wasn't too bad.

**When you first got the orders that you were going into this new force to go to Rabaul, what did you tell your parents or anyone else? What were you able to tell them?**

I couldn't tell them, we were told we couldn't tell them where we were going. We could

14:00 just tell them that we were going overseas. That's all.

**And what was your family's reaction to that?**

Well I volunteered, I was going and that was it. "Best of luck," and, "Good luck," and, "Keep in touch," and you know how parents are. But nothing, we weren't allowed to divulge where we were going. Even though we knew it was to Rabaul, and it was still mandated territory. It was overseas as far as we were concerned.

14:30 **Was your mother, having been reticent to see you join, was she reticent to see you go to...**

Well naturally, mothers worry like all mothers do. Yes my mother wasn't disinterested, she was concerned because, but as I said I would write, and she said that she would and Dad said he would. That was it. We went to see my grandmother and my uncles and they all, you know,

15:00 "David is a soldier, he's going overseas, that's what soldiers do."

**How would you describe your own emotions at that time?**

Anxious to get away. I wanted to get on with it. I wanted to get away and you know. I volunteered to go away and I wanted to go away.

**Were you at all anxious that you might be involved in an action?**

No, I don't think any of us were. I think, I mean

15:30 kids at our age I think it was still an adventure. No, I don't think any of realised the seriousness of the situation that could confront us, as it eventually did. On the beach scene with the landing barges coming towards you, you know it's a bit hair-raising.

**Obviously the army knew that Rabaul might be a target and that the Japanese might come**

**into the war. Did you know you know about that possibility?**

Nothing. Not until Pearl Harbor. As soon as

16:00 Pearl Harbor happened all the women, children and a lot of the civilians were evacuated from Rabaul to Australia. We moved from Malaguna Road up on to, we knew something was on. I mean we knew that we were more or less on battle

16:30 conditions from the time we went up there. See once upon, when we were in Malaguna camp, every afternoon at four o'clock there used to be a quinine parade. The sergeant would tip a dessert spoon of liquid quinine down your throat, you couldn't get away from it. And breakfast was at seven thirty and you'd start drill, start being a soldier at eight o'clock,

17:00 eight thirty. All that changed. Once we got up on Frisbee Ridge we stood two, or manned the guns at four o'clock in the morning. It was the crack of dawn. And there was no, the only time we stood down off the guns was when it got dark, because there was no search lights and we couldn't, you couldn't fire without search lights. So everything changed.

**Can you tell us about the trip over to Rabaul?**

We went as

17:30 passengers on a tourist boat, on a tourist ship. Full menu, the lot. I think I sent a menu home, it was first class passengers. And we did callisthenics on the deck, that was all, of a morning. We didn't do any marching or anything, we just did exercises on the deck. On the poop deck. And that was all

18:00 we did, and enjoy the scenery.

**Who else was on board that boat?**

There was Damien Parer was on it, the war photographer. I got to know him. Other civilians I didn't get to know.

**But where were these civilians going?**

Rabaul. Some got off at Lae, some got off at Salamaua, some got off at

18:30 Rabaul. They were mostly people who had been on leave to the south. Every twelve months apparently the civilians would come south on leave, they'd call it, and they were making their way back. But we didn't have much to do with them, I just got to know Damien Parer and went to his cabin and he was sharing with someone and we used to chat about things. But nothing of importance.

**What was he doing, where was he going?**

19:00 Back to Rabaul.

**Was he working as a photographer?**

I don't know, but I knew who he was. I knew he was a photographer and he was going to Rabaul. I never saw him once we got off the ship. I mean we had to parade for breakfast, lunch and tea. After that we just wandered around the ship or read in our cabins or whatever. But it was a cruise as far as we were concerned. The first

19:30 port of call was Lae, and we went ashore at Lae. Somebody knocked off a pistol from the girl who ran the hotel in Lae. There was a hell of a kaffuffle. The ship was held up from leaving and the police came aboard and everyone's kit was searched. I didn't even go in the pub so I didn't know. I went down to China Town and had something to eat.

20:00 I think I bought a lap-lap of coloured material. Anyway they finally found out who knocked the gun off, and he was taken into custody I believe. And then we set sail for Salamaua. Well we didn't get off the ship at Salamaua we just anchored off at Salamaua and then off to Rabaul. And we arrived at Rabaul and unloaded at the Burnsville Wharf,

20:30 and I bought a camphor wood box from one of the crew. Just half an hour before so it was a good bargain in point. I paid thirty shillings for this beautifully carved camphor wood box to keep my gear in. What with my kitbag over one shoulder and my rifle, one of my mates helped me carry this camphor wood box up Malaguna Road, as we marched up in the heat.

21:00 As soon as you got up there though you could feel the heat, and what do you call them?

**Sticky, humidity?**

What do you call it?

**Humidity?**

The humidity, yes. Not the humidity either it was the humanity. Anyway and then we turned and kept marching up this beautiful canopy of trees, Malaguna Road.



- 21:30 Then turned right into the camp. We were allocated our huts and were told where the mess hut was, and we had our first meal in the tropics. Well after the meal on the Neptuna it was a rude shock. Everything was tinned – the beetroot, the carrot, the butter. Everything was tinned.
- 22:00 I can't remember whether it was bully beef or camp pie, but whatever it was it was a big change to what we had had for the previous ten days. And then we were just given the rest of the day to store our kit, get our huts in order and that was it. Made our way down and found the canteen.
- 22:30 Where we found out that we could buy cigarettes for four pence, for a packet of ten Capstans, and a shilling for a bottle of beer. Mostly XXXX and Bulimba Pale Ale, oh and then Fosters export lager, which became the favourite. Then next day was back to work.

**What were your first impressions of Rabaul the place, when you arrived?**

The humidity.

- 23:00 And the fact that we went straight from the wharf and didn't see anybody, straight to the camp. And the 2/22nd Battalion kind of looked at us rather, I won't say critically, because we were Chockos ['chocolate soldiers' – militia]. You know what a Chocko was? Well I was a Chocko, I mean we volunteered, I volunteered to join the AIF and told that I could come back in two years.
- 23:30 But I was going to get into the army that day one way or another. They weren't happy up there either, they were just doing nothing. You know, there was no war, there was nothing going on up there. And the different infantry companies would go and do exercises different places where they were about to defend. They looked at us kind of quizzically, these young kids
- 24:00 with our gun. And our gun drill was a long pipe, a long piece of timber with a long model aeroplane on the top for the gun layers to focus on. The chap carrying that was called a pilot officer. And he'd walk around our parade ground and we'd do gun drill.
- 24:30 Go through all the motions of shooting at them. On Saturday there was a Lockheed Hudson, he used to come in every Saturday morning about ten o'clock with the mail, and we used to 'shoot that down'. When it left in the afternoon we used to 'shoot it down' again. That was the only actual live aircraft that we had to practice on. There was at the
- 25:00 24 Squadron RAAF was in Rabaul, there were a few Hudson bombers and half a dozen Wirraways [Training aircraft]. I don't know if you know what a Wirraway was? But we weren't, they weren't, we never had any, we never saw them. The only time we saw them was for about ten minutes when they went up and got shot out of the sky.

**Can you just describe a bit about the layout of Rabaul and where the camp was in relation to the town?**

- 25:30 Yes, it was on a flat section between a row of extinct volcanoes and Simpson Harbour, except for one volcano which was very active, called Matupi – M-a-t-u-p-i. And that was spewing sulphurous fumes, smoke and fumes all day, every day. At night time sometimes there'd be an eruption and there'd be white hot boulders thrown up into the sky.
- 26:00 The sulphurous fumes used to rot everything. It would rot through the seams on your shirt, and on the collars, and we had to limber the guns – pull them down and oil them everyday. Because there was this sulphurous dust that was forever falling on Rabaul. You'll see in the
- 26:30 photograph I've got there, you can see it's almost like looking through a plate of pea soup. That was, I mean occasionally you'd get what they called a (gouria UNCLEAR) where the ground would shake, and you'd actually see the ground moving. Like when you, you know how you drop a pebble and you see the rings, well then the huts we were in were only timber and fibro
- 27:00 and they'd rattle as the gouria went past. Some gourias were quite severe, others were noticeable but barely noticeable. It was different and that kind of added to the excitement of Rabaul. You could apply for leave if you wanted to, but where would you go? There was one of three hotels. There was the Cosmopolitan, the Pacific or the Rabaul Hotel. There was the picture show,
- 27:30 or there was China Town. And we'd go to China Town for a break in getting a different meal, and then you'd go to the picture show which was open of course, you know, open seats. All the pubs were always very popular. I used to like the Cosmopolitan, Bert Gaskin ran that. That was
- 28:00 life in Rabaul, and if you didn't get a leave pass, I mean you didn't run much risk if you went AWOL [Absent Without Leave]. You could walk into town and if you were wanted, being in the orderly room, I knew where to ring. Our three ton truck driver, Alby Curtis, was also our Don R [Despatch Rider], and he'd go down on the bike and pick you up
- 28:30 and bring you back as a pillion. Selby didn't care. When I say didn't care he wasn't that hard, I mean where could you go in Rabaul. He knew where you'd be. You'd either be at the pub or the picture show.

**What dealings did you have with the civilian population?**

None. I go to meet one because he looked me up. Bert Renton owned the picture show at the aerated waters factory in Rabaul,

29:00 and he used to come to Sydney regularly. On one of his visits, he happened to meet my father, in a club they both belonged to. And when he came back to Rabaul he looked me up, and he invited me out to his place for lunch. As I wasn't on duty of any nature I asked Selby if I could have leave to go to lunch with Bert Renton, and he said, "Yes" and I did.

29:30 With him I went to, he drove me around to Kokopo where we met Mr Lou Frogget and Vic Pennyfather, a planter that he knew. I got to meet a few of his civilian friends. Now I remember, when I was at Scots, in the middle of the year a boy arrived to come to the school. He came into my class and we got talking. His name was

30:00 Basil Bault - B-a-u-l-t. "Where are you from, Basil?" "Oh, I'm from Kokopo." "Where?" "Kokopo." I said "Where the hell's that?" and he said, "It's up on an island called New Britain," and I said "What are you doing down here?" and he said, "Oh, we've just had a big volcano, an earthquake, and I've been evacuated." And he said, "It was remarkable. There

30:30 was this island six foot high," he says, "and overnight it became six hundred and fifty foot high," and I said to myself, "I know this is a bit of exaggeration." And driving back from Kokopo with Bert Renton in his car we passed Vulcan, and he told me exactly the same story that today it was six foot high, tomorrow it was six hundred, and it was a bare, it was just covered in pumice. And we were driving through canyons of pumice

31:00 they'd cut the road through this pumice. It was as bare as that table, there wasn't a blade of grass on it. Well it was 1937 and what was this, 1941. I must say that when I went back in 1982, it was covered with vegetation, and bananas and coconut trees and everything. You couldn't see any of the pumice, it was just completely covered.

**What was the mix of population like in Rabaul, between the colonials,**

31:30 **the natives and the traders?**

Chinese, Europeans and soldiers. Yep. Some of the officers got to meet some of the civilians of course, and the New Guinea Club of course to which was out of bounds to but privates and NCOs [Non-commissioned Officers] and privates. But the officers had access to the New Guinea Club which was a bit select.

32:00 Through the New Guinea Club they met civilians, the officers got to meet civilians and that was that. But we never got to meet them, and we were not allowed to mix. Well, we never saw many natives anyway, and you wouldn't want to. Although I had a wash-wash boy who used to do my washing, do a kitbag full of washing for a shilling. A one fella mark, a shilling with a hole in it. They used to

32:30 wear them around their neck.

**Can you tell us in a bit more detail your officers? The people who were commanding you?**

Yes, there was David Selby, who was a solicitor in civil life. And Peter Wallace Fisher, who was an accountant. He had a very narrow corridor of thinking, he was a text book lieutenant.

33:00 David Selby was more of a father image, he was a very nice man. Not because he was Jewish or not because I had met him, but he was just a nice man.

**Can you tell us for the archive how you met him and how you found out he was Jewish?**

Yes. I met him at the Great Synagogue on final leave. That's where I first met him. Well I didn't meet him, I saw him, and he recognised me when we got back to camp

33:30 and I recognised him. We were both wearing the same colour patch, and I knew why he was there. He was on final leave, as I was.

**Was there any talk between you after that?**

No. "Yes sir," "No sir." I mean Mr Selby, I called him Mr Selby, I would salute him naturally and I would call him Mr Selby. He would call me David, or Gunner Bloomfield, whatever,

34:00 depending on the circumstances. Yep.

**What was your daily routine in camp before Pearl Harbor? Were you working in the office or were you training?**

Not all the time. Yes, I was in the office mainly, there was plenty to do, always plenty to do. I mean there was always the payroll and orders and things to be typed and radioed.

34:30 But it was pretty boring. Actually Japan coming into the war made life much more interesting.

**What was the news of that event, of Pearl Harbor?**

Oh, it set everybody a talking and when we were up on, when we moved up the Observation Hill or Frisbee Ridge as we called it. There was a guard posted every night

- 35:00 on the road leading up to the guns, up to our gun site. On the gun site there were guards posted, you were on guard, and I was on guard. And as I said in my book we were all a bit twitchy because there were a lot of German missionaries up there, and Germany of course was an ally of Japan. And we would see light from where we were looking out
- 35:30 on the islands you'd see lights flashing. It was obviously Morse Code. We tracked, we went tracking it down one night in the utility, to try to track it down. We knew there was a German mission out in that direction but they'd stopped. Stopped using their Morse by the time we got there. But we didn't know. We knew about the fifth
- 36:00 column, and we had to be aware that someone could come and try to destroy our guns, or vandalise them somehow. And that's why we had a guard on the winding road up to the gun position, and on the gun position. Unfortunately we used to have fireflies, and you'd be on guard at one or two in the morning and you'd see this firefly
- 36:30 and you'd swear it was someone moving. You know, you'd be tempted to challenge, but you'd realise that it was the fireflies. So I mean, you're on your toes. It was a different atmosphere entirely once Pearl Harbor became known.

**What I wanted to know was what news did you get of Pearl Harbor? What was the atmosphere when it was received?**

Not much. We were pretty much shielded from all sort of news. Nobody had a radio,

- 37:00 Selby had access to a radio, and he would post news bulletins on our noticeboard. Like when it was immanent that we were going to be invaded, he went down to see Colonel JJ Scanlon DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and bar to get directions. About, as an anti aircraft unit what we would do in the case of an invasion, like a land invasion or a sea invasion. And
- 37:30 Selby didn't get me to type it. Of course there wasn't a real office up on Frisbee Ridge at all, there wasn't an office, apart from doing the payroll there wasn't any office duties for me to perform. Of course there wasn't an office. There was barely enough room for the guns and there was a mess hall and tents.
- 38:00 I mean, you've got fifty-three blokes living on a back garden. The garden that we were on was the vulcanologist's who was up there, a Dr Fisher. He was up there to keep an eye on the volcanoes and we dug up his front garden to put our guns in, which he rang me about not so long ago. Rang me up and said, "You dug up my garden in 1942," and I said, "No, it was 1941."

- 38:30 **How long was it between the news of Pearl Harbor and you moving up to this Frisbee Ridge location?**

7th December. Within two weeks.

**What was the atmosphere like in Rabaul when the Japanese had entered the water in those two weeks?**

Well we didn't have any contact with the civilians population at all. Once the

- 39:00 air raids started I managed to get leave and go into town one night, and I was drinking there, and there were some chaps from the heavy gun battery out on Parade Point and we just got talking about everything. We said, you know, "We'll be busy and probably you'll be busy, if they ever send any ships down here because they have a six inch gun battery, naval battery," or shore batteries. But they were right at the entrance of the harbour, like North Head.
- 39:30 We got talking to them but apart from that there was just a feeling of, not tension, but excited anticipation, you would say. We were young, I don't think any of us realised what getting killed was all about. Or what it would be like to get wounded. I don't think we ever thought about it, and we were all bulletproof.

## Tape 4

- 01:03 **Was there any time that you thought you were badly prepared? You said that there was an air of excitement, was there any resentment for lack of...**

After the first air raids we realised that our equipment was inadequate for the job for which we had been trained. We'd been trained on 'A' and they give you 'B'. Well we got used to 'B' but we had expectations that it would have the same result as 'A', and of course it

- 01:30 didn't. That was always a talking point. That we were using WW1 antiquated obsolete equipment.

**What equipment did you have? Can you describe the position that you got up to in Frisbee Ridge? Can you describe what was there and what guns you had what equipment you had?**

Well after we had ruined Dr Fisher's garden we set up the two guns. It was barely wide enough to have the two guns on it. And then they had to

02:00 build the command post which was built into the edge of the ridge and under the ridge. I mean that's Frisbee Ridge – the guns are here, and the command post is here. We had to cut down some coconut trees.

**We may not be able to see that on the camera, so just try and describe it without using your hands.**

Oh. You've got to remember that the whole area was pumice. It's all volcanic, so the command post was set below

02:30 level of the guns and reinforced with coconut logs which we cut down, and which of course is forbidden in the tropics to cut down coconut palms, but we did it anyway. That's where the ringside telescope and the officer of the day was located, with an assistant to shout out the orders at the gunners like me on the guns.

03:00 **Why was it important to have the command post below the level of the guns?**

Well because if you lower the trajectory of the barrel you blast yourself, as I will describe. That's how I got deaf, through my position on the gun, was such that I was close to the muzzle. So I got the heat, the blast of the heat of the muzzle when the shell was fired. And the crack of the gun

03:30 and I, lucky I'm only half, three quarter deaf.

**What about ammunition and provisions? How were you supplied at that time?**

Well they arrived on the ship with us, and were brought up to Frisbee Ridge by truck. And set out behind the guns, each gun, so they could have easy access. They were set out in a semicircle behind the gun, and the gunner

04:00 to three or four gunners would be there setting the fuses and then there was the chap that passed the shell to the loader, and the loader would punch it into the gun and pull the firing handle and that was it.

**What was your view from Frisbee Ridge? What were you looking out on?**

Simpson Harbour, and to the south, Simpson Harbour. Vulcan Island,

04:30 beyond which was Kokopo. To our left, to our southeast was Parade Point and Matapi the volcano, which was continually in eruption. Further to the left was the South Daughter, then the Mother and the North Daughter. To the right we didn't have a view, because to our right was

05:00 the Doctor's, the vulcanologist's cottage. But beyond that if you looked was to Lily Bay and Wattam Island. That's the other side of the island, the other side of the peninsula on which Rabaul is, Rabaul is situated on a narrow peninsula. And say Wattam Island and Lily Bay were that way.

**What were the Mother and the Daughter?**

05:30 Extinct volcanoes but likely to, nobody knew, they could have gone off at any time. And they formed a virtual semicircle around the township of Rabaul. Rabaul township was set on the flat between the base of these extinct volcanoes and the harbour. Actually a terrific view, really.

**What changed in December then,**

06:00 **before the air raids started, in terms of the troop movements in Rabaul?**

We never saw the 2/22nd Battalion at any stage. We just knew that they were out doing their normal manoeuvres because we didn't get leave in general from Frisbee Ridge, and I don't know what leave they got but we had very little

06:30 to do with the 2/22nd. As I say we were a bunch of 'Chocko kids' and they were AIF, and they all thought they were going to Malaya, Singapore, when they enlisted – the 8th Division went to Singapore except the 23rd Brigade, which was three battalions. The 2/22nd went to Rabaul, the 2/21st went to Ambon, or Ambolia, and the 2/40th, that was the 3rd Battalion, they went to Timor.

07:00 Each of which of course was badly mauled by the Japanese in the ensuing invasion.

**What about the aeroplanes that you mentioned before? Were they in the air at that time?**

Ours?

**Yeah, Wirraways?**

No, never saw the Wirraways at any stage, and the Hudson. The only Hudson we ever saw was the one

that brought the mail in and out on a Saturday morning, which we shot down of course. Theoretically.

07:30 **What was your routine then, you mentioned you were on guard in the morning?**

The same as it was when we were down below in Malaguna camp. You'd go to breakfast, you'd go and get showered, have breakfast, and go on parade. I used to have to call the roll in the morning when I was in the orderly room. The parade would be formed up and I was ordered, "Call the roll," which I did. I knew everyone was there anyway.

08:00 But nothing changed apart from the venue and the fact that, shall we the feeling of anticipation.

**You were standing guard in the morning at that stage, or was that only later on?**

Four in the morning. Once we went up to Frisbee Ridge it was four am. Yes, and stood down once it got too dark to fire.

**And what about practice with the guns from those position? What**

08:30 **practice did you do there?**

Oh yes, gun drill every day. Gun drill.

**Were you firing live ammunition?**

No. Funny you should mention that. We had never heard a three inch gun fired, any of us. I think two sergeants and one officer had heard a three inch gun fired. Selby asked permission from the commanding officer

09:00 of the 2/22nd Battalions, Colonel Kerr. And permission was refused. So nobody knew what to expect. And there was a minor, a very minute crack in the breech block of number two gun of which I was stationed, and nobody knew what would be the result of that under constant fire. I mean the breech block is solid metal.

09:30 I mean you could hardly hold it, but it was solid. It was about that deep and about that high. Anyway, we soon found out that nothing happened. But getting permission to fire practice rounds, no. The same as when Selby or somebody asked, we heard, about preparations

10:00 for food being put out in the event of possible retreat. That defeatist attitude was Scanlon's attitude towards that. So, we starved for three months.

**Where was JJ Scanlon based?**

Down in the headquarters in Malaguna camp. Never met him, never saw him.

**Was there any resentment between your officers and the higher**

10:30 **powers at that point?**

Yes there was. It wasn't made known to us, but Selby did go up, go down to see Scanlon once the war was actually on, to find out in the event of an invasion, what would our function be. And all that Selby came back with was an order which he placed on the notice board.

11:00 'You will fight to the last man', and in capitals, 'THERE WILL BE NO WITHDRAWAL'. That was his orders to Selby. Now I should mention that soon after Pearl Harbor, our name was changed from Ack-Ack [Anti-aircraft] Battery, Rabaul to Ack-Ack and AMLC Battery. The AMLC stands for Anti Military Landing Craft. And

11:30 Selby explained to us that in the event of an invasion our guns would be used to fire down, because of our high position, on landing craft coming in to land. And even at seventeen and half I said to myself, "That's crazy, what are the Japs going to be doing while we're firing down the ships from which these landing craft are, warships,

12:00 they'll be firing at us with point blank range." And in my book I said that I hoped that would never happen. Anyway, as I say, we were ordered to destroy our guns before that situation arose.

**When was the first time that invasion was mentioned to you?**

It wasn't mentioned, it was made very obvious by the line of ships that we saw

12:30 out on the northern horizon, on the 20th January.

**Before that, when you were renamed for example, an anti landing craft battery, was there talk then of the possibility of an invasion?**

Well it was a possibility but I don't think that anyone took it too seriously. Of course if you push the guns to that level, they toppled over.

**Can you tell us what happened then on the 4th when the first air raids came over?**

13:00 **What date was that?**

The 4th January. Sunday 4th January, eleven thirty a.m.

**Can you take us through what was happening immediately before that?**

Well we got the report, we had, there were coast watchers. And they were phoning through to Rabaul that there were planes on their way, and an air raids siren was sounded in the township. Well once that'd go we took our

13:30 positions on the guns and just waited to see what planes were involved. There was an air of excitement and nervousness naturally, once the air raids siren went. Of course we didn't know what was going to happen, well you're talking about the 4th of January now, well we just stood ready to do what we'd been training to do since we joined. And when we saw the

14:00 arrow head coming towards us and the first order was shouted up, "Fuse 29, up 3 a half, right 4." It was done automatically. In went the shell, down came the firing handle, up went the shells. And we had to wait and see then, for the cotton wool puffs, which they provide in this clear blue sky. They were well below the target. In the general direction but well below the target.

14:30 But because they were three inch guns and not 3.7 their maximum fuse was 3.0, which would probably be about fifteen, sixteen thousand feet. We didn't know exactly how high they were but I'd say they would have been maybe sixteen or seventeen thousand feet. They would have known what we had anyway. I mean there was that much fifth column going on, with all these German

15:00 missionaries. They probably knew, the Japs probably knew more about our equipment than we did. Or as much. And as I say, apart from an air of excitement and anticipation, I know it was a bit nerve racking until they passed overhead.

**How much of a shock was it to have the gun fire for the first time?**

Well, I was deaf for a little while.

15:30 It was a revelation, and of course my position on the gun, I got the heat of the muzzle blast, and the crack of the explosion. But we all took it in our stride. The next day when the planes went overhead, the bombing raid swung to the north and went home.

16:00 All day we were talking about it of course. I would say it was a talking point all day. We were chattering around like young kids would do. I was complaining that my ears were ringing, but nobody seemed very interested.

**How did it change your conception of what was**

16:30 **going to happen and what you were there to do, when the first guns were fired?**

I assessed that it was going to get worse. There was another raid that night. So I guessed that this was going to be like a fairly regular occurrence. And that they were, obviously that the Japs were bombing the air field, the two air fields. Through the canal up the hills

17:00 to our west and Laconai down to the south-east. And they didn't bother about bombing the towns or anything else. The township or anything else. So we guessed that they must have had something in mind like taking the town intact for their own use. They didn't want to camp, the only thing they ever bombed, on the

17:30 20th January when they sent about a hundred planes over - dive bombers and the lot. They sank the Westralia which was a hulk out near Matapi that was used for storing things. And the Hurstseine which was a Norwegian ship tied up to the Burnsville copra wharf, that was loading copra. Of course they sent three dive bombers down.

18:00 If you can visualise, we are here, and just in front of us and about fifty, sixty feet below us, as the Hurstseine at the wharf, and these three dive bombers came in from their left practically at mast height and just dropped bombs right along the length of the boat, the ship. And within minutes, of course she was on fire. There was a chap on top of the bridge with a machine gun, a Norwegian seaman, but he

18:30 soon got off there when she caught fire. They ended up cutting her loose and she just drifted around on the harbour, and she came to rest over near Matapi. We saw her the next morning, she was red hot from the water line up. There was no flames but just smoke drifting up the whole length of the Hurstseine.

19:00 **Was that occasion and indeed the other air raids that started to happen...**

Sorry?

**Was that bombing and the other air raids that started to happen, start to make you think?**

Oh, the size of this raid we knew something was going, we knew something had to happen. They didn't send over, and they bombed the aerodromes and the T ships, we knew something was building.

19:30 Had to be. And it wasn't until the afternoon of the 20th, the same day, the raids started around about midday, and round about three o'clock in the afternoon through the gun telescopes which are very powerful, out on the horizon there was this eleven ships we counted. All you know, navy ship, we didn't know if they were aircraft carriers or what,

20:00 but we knew that they were on their way.

**What had happened in the two weeks between the 4th and the 20th? Were the raids building every day?**

Yes. Well, I don't know exactly how many, but my diary does recall the number of raids we had. But the 20th was the big one. I mean that was big. And the next day, the 21st, they demolished Parade Point, the six inch gun battery.

20:30 They just demolished it, and there were a lot of casualties. Out there, they kept well out of our range when they came in. Not that they had much to fear, we had only actually shot down one plane that we actually saw crash onto the Mother. But the Japs credit us with six destroyed, but I mean anti-aircraft shell can explode in the vicinity

21:00 of a plane and do damage, and it might fly for another half hour before something goes wrong. But they credit us with seven destroyed planes. I only ever saw one that was what we actually saw crash.

**I want to go through that air raid in a lot more detail in a moment, but just before we do were there any other notable or memorable air raids like the sinking of the Hurstine that happened before it?**

No,

21:30 the Guadalcanal Aerodrome was way out there. All you could see was the flashes of the bombs, you couldn't see if any damage was done or not, you wouldn't know. And they only bombed Laconai that first day they hit the native hospital.

**What about your own guns? Were you credited with any hits before the 20th?**

No, we thought a couple times, we put a couple of shells into the midst

22:00 of a formation, and we figured that someone might not have got home. But we didn't actually see any fall from the formation, no.

**Can you describe the formations that the Japanese were flying in and the numbers they had?**

Mostly in our own head. I think eleven, twelve, fifteen planes at a time. But the first

22:30 day, seventeen Kawasaki flying boats. The rest of them were Mitsubishis. Mitsubishis and Betties and Sallies.

**And what did they sound like from the ground, coming over?**

Just a steady drone. But the Jap plane had a strange four beat sound: 'Mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm'.

23:00 And I'll come back to why the 'Mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm' that seemed to be the beat of their motors. I had occasion to identify that sound once on the second or third day I came home. When I was sitting on the verandah at my place, on the water of the harbour at Point Piper. I rang Georges Heights and said there was a Jap plane up there, and of course they wouldn't have taken any notice of me. But there was.

23:30 It's been proved that they did a reconnoitre over Sydney Harbour, and I said, "There's a Jap plane up there." And I said, "I know the beat of that motor, I've just come back from Rabaul where we had ample opportunities to hear them." I didn't know if they sent a plane up, I don't think they would of, knowing Georges Heights.

**One question out of order, going back before the bombing raids started,**

24:00 **was there any celebration of Christmas?**

Oh, not really. No. They might have, Jim Herrier might have put on some more curry into the bully beef, no. I think we made our own celebrations.

**How did the atmosphere change once the bombing raids started in your unit?**

24:30 Anticipation of more raids, that's all you know. We used to play cards at night in the mess hall. We used to play poker with a strip deck got from the sevens up. And you'd get some phenomenal hands, and, no we were strangely quiet. I mean, we more or less left each other to our own thoughts. We were all very aware of what was

25:00 happening. And we hadn't had any casualties because we hadn't been attacked. Our unit, our position had in fact not been attacked directly, until the 20th. Bit before, between the 4th and the 20th, no we were just left to our own thoughts and I think we respected each others thought. I think we all did a bit if thinking. But no one said, "Oh gee, I'm nervous,"

25:30 or no one said, "I'm shit scared," or anything. You just kept your feelings to yourself, or at least I did anyway. I mean I realised that we were all going through, that we were all in the same boat. I mean anything I had to say I'm sure would have been redundant.

**On Simpson Harbour were there ships evacuating at that time?**

No. The only two ships were the

26:00 Hursteine loading copra at the Burnstine copra wharf, and the Westralia which was at anchor which was a hulk. It didn't serve any purpose during the war.

**What happened then on the 20th, what was the first sign that there was something going on?**

The air-raid siren, and then one, you'd see one formation, and you'd look around and you'd see another formation.

26:30 And then you'd see that the planes were different. There were small ones that were Zeros, there were dive bombers, and there were heavy bombers. It just went on from there, and we were so busy. First of all we'd fire, the command post would give us direction which formation to fire in, and this one and then of course the dive bombers started coming in.

27:00 They came in on the Hursteine and then the Zeros. And then the Zeros appeared and then that's when the Wirraways appeared. And our Wirraways were still climbing to meet the Zeros, and the Zeros just went down and shot them out of the sky. Five of them. There were six left by the 20th of January. The sixth one was piloted by

27:30 Flight Lieutenant Anderson and Flying Officer Col Butterworth, who I spoke to yesterday. And the reason they didn't get shot out of the sky was because their (UNCLEAR) with the motor quit, when they were five hundred feet off the ground, and they crashed into the trees and both finished up in hospital and were evacuated. That's the only reason Col Butterworth is alive today, that his Wirraway quit

28:00 and he just crashed into the trees.

**Can you describe the scene on the gun emplacement while all this was going on?**

A lot of activity, well we were flat out. I mean we were firing I suppose as fast as possible. We were loading and firing, as I said, there were so many planes in the air that the command post couldn't

28:30 command with it, couldn't cope with it. And we were firing through open sights at some of them, they were so close. But the Wirraways and the Zeros, they were from here to the other side of the street above us, getting shot out of the sky. And the Wirraways, they'd be hit by a twenty millimetre canon shell and was disintegrate in flames. And you can see all the flames, you can see all the

29:00 planes you like on TV getting shot out of the sky, but there is nothing like seeing one in actual fact. It's a horrifying feeling to know that there are two blokes up there, and they've just had their plane shot out from under them. And one of them had the tail shot half off, and he made to force a landing on Laconai aerodrome down there on the southeast of where we were.

29:30 Another Zero followed him down and was still firing when he bounced along the runway. I don't know how many air force blokes survived but I don't think too many did. Except Col Butterworth and Anderson, because they never got into the fight.

**How close did the bombing come in to your position?**

Well we were the subject of one attack.

30:00 There was a Zero that came and made a pass at us and missed us. And then we felt the whole ridge shudder and we realised that heavy bombers had had a go at us and missed, and the bombs fell down the side of the ridge and exploded, and we just felt this, the ground shuddering. So we knew we'd been had a go at, but they missed us.

**30:30 What about the results of your own firing? What did you see on that occasion?**

Only one actual aircraft crashed. Only one, that was a Sally two engine bomber.

**Can you describe what happened and what it looked like from the ground?**

Well we were so busy that we paid little attention to it. There was so much else going on, I mean one plane out of about a hundred

31:00 that had been shot down to us was inconsequential. I mean we saw it crash and we said, "That's one down," but there was ninety plus others around, and all doing damage. As I say, it went on for about an hour and a half, but it was mostly, as far as we were concerned our guns were ineffectual.

**What happened**



31:30 **at the end of that hour and a half?**

They disappeared as quickly as they came. They all just gathered, turned away from our position and flew out to sea, flew north to where they'd come from, which was I think the Marshall Islands, they reckon they came from. And from probably carriers too.

**What did you do then?**

I was as deaf as a beetle. I went and had something to eat.

32:00 Well we were told stand down and it was lunch time, so we went down to the mess hall and those that felt like having something to eat, did so. I would have preferred a good stiff Scotch [whisky] personally, but. I know it sounds like, but we were so busy doing what we had to do, we didn't have time feel scared or anything. We just did what we had to do and did it. And then rapid fire,

32:30 an hour and a half of, we were exhausted.

**Having something to eat afterwards, what was morale like amongst the men?**

Well, I can tell you having seen the Wirraways shot down it was a very depressing group of young fellas that spent the afternoon chatting with each other. And that night when we went into the mess hall, you could have heard a pin drop, nothing.

33:00 Very little conversation, we were all too shattered. I mean as I said you can see on TV planes shot down every couple of minutes, but you see one shot down in front of you in reality on fire, and you realise that there are two Australians in there, it's a very daunting feeling.

**You can look back at that situation in Rabaul today in hindsight and say that you were horribly unprepared, it was a bit of a useless**

33:30 **thing to have two guns firing at this position. Did that knowledge affect you at the time?**

Well who were we going to complain to? Who could you complain to? You could discuss it amongst yourselves but it was discussing the obvious. I mean the fact that we got one plane out of a hundred and our equipment wasn't coping to handle it.

34:00 We had a Vickers [machine] gun also, but what can a Vickers .303 gun do against a seventeen thousand foot up in the air aeroplane, nothing. No. I look back now, it was debacle. That's the only word to describe the whole thing. The Lark Force was a debacle. And it was amplified to the greatest degree on the 20th January, 1942.

34:30 And on the 21st when they came back again and destroyed Parade Point, and I mean destroyed Parade Point. Blew it off, just blew it out of existence. That was many casualties.

**What happened in the morning of the next day, the 21st? Can you take us through that?**

Yes, the alarm, the air raid alarm sounded and we

35:00 naturally expected we'd be in action. And we saw them coming in from the northwest, no from the northeast. They kept well out of our range and they just went straight to Parade Point, circled over it and broke off in singles and just went in and bombed the hell out of it. Mostly dive bombers. There were blokes buried in slit trenches there, they blew the guns off, blew the guns to pieces.

35:30 We couldn't do a thing, we just stood by and watched it. They didn't even come anywhere near us when they'd finished. They just circled off to the south-east and off they went. And then that afternoon we saw them out on the horizon through the gun scopes, telescopes. Selby rang up headquarters

36:00 and they sent two officers up and they had a look, and all they did was say, "You just standby." And the next thing we heard that there was a terrific explosion down at the waterfront where the engineers had set off a ammunition dump down there. Then came the orders at about four o'clock to destroy our guns, which was a shock and a surprise.

36:30 Which we did, and the ringside telescope was draped over the barrel of number two gun. We put a shell down the breech, down the muzzle and one down the breech and just pulled the firing. And the barrels of the gun spread out like that, like radishes. Like, not radishes, celery. You know how you can cut celery and splay the head

37:00 like that. The ringside telescope, that disappeared, and we were down below ground level on the northern side of the ridge, metal was flying above. It only lasted a few seconds and then it was all over.

**Before you got that order to destroy the guns, can you just describe what you saw on the horizon?**

Well I didn't actually see,

37:30 look through the scope, but I could see this line of ships. I couldn't give a description of what each one was but they were obviously war ships, troop ships. Whether they were carriers or not, because their carriers weren't like ours, they were much smaller. So they could've been, they could have looked like a

transport. But I counted eleven, I thought, ships. And I knew we were in for something.

38:00 I mean they weren't out for a cruise, they were going out and they came around. All the preparation for an invasion had been carried out on the north side of the island. That's where all the barbed wire was. Along to Lily Bay and all long there. So when we were sent to Raguana we had to lay our own barbed wire.

**What orders were then given?**

38:30 **Can you describe how the orders to destroy the guns came?**

Selby just told us. Selby said that we were to load all the ammunition, boxes of ammunition, 303 ammunition onto the... can you stop?

## Tape 5

01:03 As you would be aware, every soldier when he dons his uniform is issued with a .303 rifle and a bayonet. Being an artillery unit we were issued with this equipment but very few of us I think had ever used them. So once the Japanese ships were sighted, Selby in his wisdom, gave us a clip of

01:30 five 303 bullets and told us to lie in the on the mound position and to fire the five rounds in the direction of the Mother Mountain. Because apart from some of us who on enlistment had gone to Chatswood for a shoot, no one had ever fired a rifle.

02:00 I had fired mine, I had been out on a couple of crocodile hunts. We didn't get one but we got permission to draw some ammunition and go on a crocodile, or a 'puk-puk' as the natives called them, shoot. We never got one, but we managed to use our rifles and know what they felt like when you shot them. They've got quite a kick, a .303.

02:30 So, that afternoon after the Japs had been sighted we were given a clip of five and told to fire in the direction of the Mother Mountain to reacquaint yourself with the use of the 303 rifle. Some of them, as I say, had never fired a rifle. We were an artillery unit, rifles are for infantry. Anyway, so that was that.

03:00 So when we got on the, so having destroyed our guns, Selby then ordered us to put all our .303 boxes of 303 ammunition onto the utility. I also should mention that after we had fired our clip of five .303 bullets at the mountain,

03:30 Hoares and McMullen who had had some experience with explosives were told to prime some hand grenades by putting in the fuses, the detonators, which is a rather tricky job. But both of them seemed capable of doing it, particularly McMullen who was a miner on the south coast, even though he was only young,

04:00 a big chap. The only problem there was that nobody knew whether the boxes marked with green was four or seven second fuses, or vice versa. So here we had hand grenades ready to pull the pin of and throw, but we didn't know whether to throw them high or to throw them low. But anyway, that came later.

04:30 So we set off in the three ton truck and the utility which was loaded down with ammunition, boxes of ammunition and as many chaps as could climb on to it. And set off for we were told we were going to Forward Headquarters. But we were also told that it wasn't quite clear as to where Forward Headquarters were. But we were

05:00 going to make for Three Ways anyway, and we'd take directions from there. Because Captain McGinnis of B company would know where Forward Headquarters was. So when we arrive in the rain of course, being the wet season, at Three Ways we were told to get off our trucks and the utility, and were told then that we were going to "Dig in."

05:30 Having "Dug in" we were then called together and told that no, we weren't going to stay at Three Ways, that we were going to get back in our trucks and we were going to proceed to Raguana Beach. Now most of us had never heard of Raguana Beach, but we guessed where it was. It was down on the harbour. So with the rain falling and not being able to use our headlights, I was on the three tonner

06:00 this time, we took it in turns to walk on the near side, or left side of the truck with our hand on the front mudguard and keep the truck or the driver on course on the road. Because otherwise he would have run off the road with no headlights. And after a very slow trip down mostly downhill,

06:30 we finally arrive at Raguana Beach. Where Selby reports to Captain Shier - S-h-i-e-r, and he tells us that he will want us to help lay the barbed wire in the waters edge, and when that's done he'll direct us what else to do. Now the Captain Shier is the officer in charge of

07:00 Y Company. Y Company comprised of clerks, cooks, everybody who except infantry. Y Company was an odds and sods conglomerate unit. But we all had rifles and we all had bayonets so we were soldiers. I

was allocated where to lay barbed wire

- 07:30 which I did, in company with my friend, and when I had finished we reported back to Captain Shier and I was told where I would go which was with three other chaps to go and mount the Boyce anti-tank rifle. Which fired a decent sort of a shell. It would puncture landing barge no risk.
- 08:00 And we waited, and the next thing that happened was at two thirty in the morning, the first star shell was fired, and it lit up the whole area like daylight. We heard firing coming from our left which was the base of Vulcan Island.
- 08:30 Which was, as I say a volcano that was created overnight in 1937. There was mortar fire, machine gun fire, rifle fire we could hear, and a lot of commotion. And a Jap bugler on the top of Vulcan was blowing a call which came to a sudden halt after a volley of rifle fire.
- 09:00 Then it all fell quiet. The Japs obviously had not succeeded in landing at Vulcan. So there was a lull until the next thing, there was another star shell, or shells lit the sky. And looking out straight ahead of us in the water we could see landing barges, coming towards us.
- 09:30 Someone said, "They're going to land at Raguana," which was quite obvious. So we were told to hold our fire, and when the Japs' barges hit the beach and they dropped their platforms, the order came, "Open fire, open fire along the beach," and the Vickers machine gun and rifles and
- 10:00 everything that one had opened fire. Well what I didn't tell you was we were sent into action on Raguana Beach with ten clips of five .303 ammunition and two hand grenades, so that's fifty rounds of ammunition, and two hand grenades. Well when you've got landing barges directly in front of you, no more than fifty or sixty yards in front of you,
- 10:30 it doesn't take long to expend fifty rounds of .303 ammunition. But we still had the boxes of ammunition in the utility, so we guessed that that would be brought up for us when we needed it. The Japs did not succeed in getting beyond the barbed wire and they withdrew. The star shells
- 11:00 showed us once they withdrew, reversed out, that some troops had stayed back and were putting the bodies of dead Japs on the barbed wire. They would use them as a ramp for their, obviously their next probe. These were quickly, those Japs who were putting the bodies on the barbed wire were quickly
- 11:30 quietened by some rifle fire. And a burst from the Vickers machine gun. So the next thing we knew was there was shouting at the end, the right hand end of the beach, or what would be Tamarama if you relate Raguana to Bondi. What would be round the headland, Tamarama, we heard
- 12:00 shouting coming from that end of the beach. The Japs in their wisdom had obviously found out that those of us on Raguana were the end of the line. We were the right flank, and what they had done, they had landed someone in Tamarama, had come over and they were now on the beach and simultaneously the barges came in again. And there was pandemonium because we were in a pincer
- 12:30 movement. We've got them coming at us from the front and coming in from the right. So there was fighting and shouting and firing as you could imagine. Someone yelled out, "Fall back, fall back." So fall back meant get from the tree line back into what bush there was. So we fell back, and someone says, "The beach is lost, the
- 13:00 beach is lost, fall back." So made a beeline for the utility to fall back and take off back up to somewhere. I get onto the utility and Alf Norman, the driver says, "I've stripped the clutch," - too much weight from all the ammunition. "The clutch is stripped," so the only alternative is to make for the three tonner, which was
- 13:30 parked close by. So I get on to the three tonner, and Selby is in the front cabin with the driver, Alby Curtis and Tom Gordon, and the rest of us just pile on to the three tonner. And we start to take off up along the hilly, wet, slippery road that we'd come down to Raguana.
- 14:00 We get up to the top and we start making some progress, and there's naval shells or something exploding around us, above us. All of a sudden we come to a curve and the motor, I could hear the motor racing and felt, I felt there was
- 14:30 no vibration from travelling on the road. And all of a sudden being thrown up in the air and thrown to my right. And the side of the three tonner pinning me. Three of us were pinned under the side of the three tonner. Selby is shouting to try and right the truck, which they tried and can't do.
- 15:00 And here's the three of us pinned under this truck. There's Jack Hart, myself, and someone else, it's in the book. They find they can't right the truck by pushing it, so they get the, they scrape out some dirt and put the rifle butt under the
- 15:30 side, and we'll lift it up and we'll drag you out that way. Which they did and that's why I have a wrecked spine. As soon as we got out, from being extricated from being pinned the truck caught fire. So that was a lucky escape.
- 16:00 So we start on foot back to Three Ways, from whence we had come. And about five minutes later along

comes an empty thirty hundred weight truck belonging to the 17th anti-tank battery. With a metal canopy but no canvass cover on it. So Selby pulls it up and we jump on board that. I'm sitting on the back

- 16:30 with my legs dangling out and Selby is on my left and Bruce Davies is on my, Bombardier Davies is on my right, and we come to and incline, and the driver stops and says, "Some of you get off and push, I can't get the truck, won't pull." Five of us get off, Davies and I, and Selby didn't get off. Didn't expect him to. Anyway five of us get off and we push
- 17:00 and the truck starts to move and it gets over the rise, and the driver doesn't stop. I chase after it, and managed with effort to grab hold of the canopy, part of the metal canopy. And I'm starting to get dragged along, and Davies and Selby pull me aboard. And off
- 17:30 we, we kept on then without further incident until we get to Three Ways again. By this time it's starting to get light and we're told then to dig in again, but this time at the Three Ways, where the three roads meet, not where we were previously. So we dig in again and my back is quite painful.
- 18:00 Digging in I must have fallen asleep after I had dug a little pot hole for myself, because the next thing I know I'm awake and something has woken me. An explosion, I wake up and I look up and there's no one around. Another explosion and I realise these are mortars landing around me, so I get up and I run out.
- 18:30 And I run out in front of Stan Henry sitting behind a Vickers machine gun with his finger poised on the trigger. He says, "Get the hell out of here, look behind you." So I said, "Where's everyone gone?" he said, "Round the other road." So I did look behind me and I could see this line of figures coming towards us. Not ours. I went around the other road and
- 19:00 there's Selby and Thomas Parker standing there, and Selby said, "I'm going to try and get a truck and make our way up to Toma," which was supposed to be a rallying point apparently. You wouldn't want to know, but out of nowhere another 17th anti-tank truck arrives, a thirty hundred weight, pulling an anti-tank gun behind it. So Selby pulls it up and
- 19:30 we put it on board and there's three chaps already on board, none of whom I knew or we knew. And off we go to Toma. That's not the best road in the world, and as we go along it's getting lighter, and Zeros start circling around. Oh, before that, no, I'm sorry. While Selby and I
- 20:00 are talking about getting a truck, something whips between us. It must have, anyway, Selby must have heard it and we just dropped to the ground. We started to half crawl, half run in that direction when the truck turns up. And Selby takes control of it and we jump on board and off we go. There's an NGVR there, the civilian,
- 20:30 not New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, setting up a mortar, so we called to them and they said, "Get the hell out of here!" We take off and the next thing the Zero comes down. You can hear the machine guns going off, their machine guns. And then no more sounds come from the mortar crew. So we proceed up the road
- 21:00 and we pass cars that are riddled with bullets, bullet holes, and it's decided we'll put a sentry on each of the running boards of the truck, to keep watch for planes coming down. Now it isn't long before the one on watch yells out, "Aircraft!" so we stop this truck and we disperse into the bush on either sides of the truck. Down come the bloody Zeros,
- 21:30 you could see their pilots with their goggles and their helmets, leaning over the side, firing like mad, and couldn't hit a sausage. But we get back on the truck, and this happens three or four times on the way to Toma. And all we suffered, all the way up, after all their passes at us, was one bullet hole in the right hand mud guard.
- 22:00 That's all we suffered, no casualties, very lucky. We arrive at Toma, or where the road ends and we get off the truck and we're walking further towards the jungle and we come to a tent with a guard outside, so Selby apparently knew what it was, and he said, "I'd like to be
- 22:30 paraded before Colonel Scanlon, the OC troops." So the guard said, "Just a minute sir." He goes out inside and he comes back and he says to Selby, "The CO says it's every man for himself." In the annals of British history I don't think anyone has ever been given that order. I'd never heard of it. So Selby says, "Well, it's every man for himself."
- 23:00 So the guard said, "Some troops have already gone ahead, I suggest you go ahead too," so we did go towards the Binding Mountains.

**Can I just pause you there, and come back. Can I just ask a few questions of areas that need to be covered?**

Yes, of course.

**The first question that comes to mind at the very beginning, when you were told**

- 23:30 **the aircraft were attacking and you were told, "There will be no retreat, no surrender."**

That's when we were still back in camp.

**Yeah, at the very beginning. Then when you saw the Japanese fleet on the horizon, what on earth were you thinking? Did you think you could actually hold them off?**

No. We were told that we would fight till the last man. And that was what I suppose we all expected to be doing.

24:00 But we were still up on the hill. We hadn't destroyed the guns at this stage. And I had visions of, well, we were going to become an AMLC, an Anti Military Landing Craft, but then I know that the pressure of the guns, to press the barrel of the guns that much, they'd come off their rockers. Anyway, do you remember what they said, "Ours is not to reason why..."

24:30 well that was it. You didn't argue, you did what you were told. And because Selby was such a good officer I knew that whatever he had in mind would be in our best interests. That was my feeling. He, to me, was a role model. He was a good officer, and a good man too. I mean he wasn't, he didn't bounce around. He was a good officer.

25:00 **On the 22nd the ammunition dump was blown up.**

The 21st.

**The 21st. The ammunition was blown up?**

Yes, down on the wharf.

**What did you think about that, suddenly losing...**

Well, apparently it was an air force bomb dump. Apparently. We didn't know what it was but it wasn't anything that we could use. All our ammunition was up on the ridge with us,

25:30 and the 303 ammunition and the hand grenade was up there with us. I suppose I just didn't query these sort of thing, we were too preoccupied.

**You shared with me that you had great faith in Selby, what about the other officers?**

Officer.

**Officer, sorry.**

There was only one other. He was obeyed but he didn't

26:00 hold the respect of the men like Selby did. No. He wasn't popular. Selby was popular because he was a fair and just man. He was a barrister, and he didn't bounce you. I mean Fisher was a bit of a text book lieutenant and would tend to be more brusque. No, Selby was a very good,

26:30 and turned out to be a good leader, and subsequently I came to admire him very much on the escape, for a reason I'll tell you later.

**Laying the barbed wire down on the beach.**

On Raguala, yes.

**Was that barbed wire wrapped up?**

Wrapped up, yes. Rolled, it wasn't just strands, it was rolled.

**How did you actually plant it at the beach so it didn't move?**

Just at the border of,

27:00 just at the water's edge.

**And you just pulled it out?**

That's all, yes. For the length of the beach or the length of the area that I had enough wire.

**Did you fix any booby traps or anything to it?**

No, no booby traps. We're talking about Rabaul. A debacle. Booby traps? Any Booby traps that we might have had

27:30 would have been on the other side of the island where they expected any enemy to invade. They didn't expect them to come and destroy the six inch guns on Parade Point and sail into the harbour. They couldn't have envisaged that. But that's what happened, the whole fleet just sailed into the harbour and anchored. Yeah. Simpson Harbour is no that big. I mean you've got Matapi just there, and Raguala here, and in between us and Matapi

28:00 you've got a fleet of ships disgorging men into landing barges, intent on doing us harm.

**You shared that you were issued with ten clips and five rounds in each clip.**

A 303 clip comprises five, you push them down.

**How long did that last? Did you get through your ammunition?**

28:30 Very quickly. Well when you've got them coming at you, as I say, it doesn't take long, you're not taking precise aim at one person, you're just firing, everyone's just firing at the general direction. You're firing in the general direction of the troops coming out once they drop the flap. And you got to hit something. But as I say,

29:00 you're not on any one particular soldier, but I'm sure that I would have got lucky. I think in that sketch that someone did in the Daily Mirror the odds were 13:1 against us. I'm sure I got my thirteen. At least I think I did.

**Did the Japanese have any covering fire coming over to onto you to try...**

Only the naval guns. Yes, there were some naval shells bursting behind us.

29:30 **There's a saying that says, "There's no non-believer in a foxhole." You being from a Jewish background, did you start to think about prayer and those concerns?**

No, I was too, I was just nervous, just very nervous.

**I guess that's the first time you and a lot of those men in that Y Company**

30:00 **were put together than being cooks and other sort so things. Were there any men that were shirkers or cowards and ran?**

Not to my knowledge, no. Everyone around me was busy firing their rifles. I didn't see anybody retreating or anything like that. Not until the general orders were being shouted, like, "Fall back," and that came right along the whole length of, and then there'd be, "The beach is lost, fall back." And I'm sure, when we were falling back, running through

30:30 the bush that there were Japs with us, but it was pandemonium. Raguana, you see the beach, you've got the photos, Raguana Beach was not much wider. It wouldn't probably be as wide with sand as Bondi. I'm sure it isn't. You see in the photograph. That was close encounter of the first kind. Don't ask me how I felt because

31:00 I can tell you now I was very nervous, but beyond that, or scared would be a better word. Why wouldn't I be?

**So you're on the way, moving back to the Three Ways, you've dug in again there. Was the plan in a sense to make that the next rolling point?**

Well, the troops, they had landed and they were making their way inland.

31:30 And when Stan Henry said to me, "Look behind you," all I could see was the line of figures in the distance, coming towards us. And he was there with his fingers on the .303, Vickers, ready to chop them down. We didn't wait around to find out, we were told to get the hell out of there. I joined Selby around the other road where he said to go, and there's Selby and Tos Parker,

32:00 and I'm standing between them and something went between me and Selby, and of course we both drop to the ground. What they were, they were blow flies or something I don't know, but.

**Do you know what happened to Stan Henry? Was he able to hold them off?**

No, I've never seen his name, and I didn't look for him in Bitu Paka Cemetery [War Cemetery, Rabaul]. I would say that knowing Stan he would have stood

32:30 his ground there. He and his two mates with him. They had two rifles on either side of a Vickers supporting, and one usually holding the belt to make sure it doesn't jam. And the other one's a rifleman adding a bit of fire.

**At this point as you're still withdrawing back, did you have any supplies on you besides what you wore?**

33:00 No, we went into action with boots, socks, underpants, shorts, shirts, tin hats, 303 rifle and a bayonet. Oh and our respirator, in case of gas attack. It came in handy later on, as I will tell you.

**So you withdrew**

33:30 **is it Tama, is that how you pronounce it?**

Toma - T-o-m-a.

**Well when you heard the news, "Every man for himself..."**

Selby communicated it to us, yes. What did I say? I said, "This can't be real." Here's the same bloke who's told us, "We will fight to the last man, there will be no withdrawal," and now he's telling us it's every man for, no, I've written it. I said to him, "This can't be, this has to be a joke." And in retrospect

I'd say this

34:00 in the annals of history, this has never been heard, I don't think in British Army history. "Every man for himself." Of course it was a hopeless position he probably realised, Scanlon would have realised that. He would have heard from, don't forget there are companies of infantry scattered in different areas. I don't know where they were but A Company was beside us at Vulcan, and B Company was at Three Ways.

34:30 Now where the other company were I don't know. I wouldn't have a clue. I was a little seventeen and a half year old gunner, Chocko gunner in an anti aircraft unit. What would I know? Who would tell me what was going on? I depended on Selby or Fisher to tell me what to do and what was going on. That's what I was getting six shillings a day for. Sixty cents a day.

**Given that you'd been told every man for himself.**

35:00 Pardon?

**Given that you'd been told this, were you trying to withdraw or retreat to a particular place?**

Well we thought that there must have been, well this is what I assumed, that there had been food planted somewhere, and ammunition, where we would meet and carry on fighting like in guerrilla groups or, you know, that's what I thought.

35:30 I was wrong. No provision whatsoever had been made for a retreat in the way of food or ammunition, or organisation. As far as I was concerned, Scanlon in his tent was the end of organised army fighting, as far as I was concerned. All that was left in front of me was the Binding Mountains. And that's where we were going.

36:00 **Just before we get to that, at no stage was there any mention of surrender then and there?**

No, no surrender. No mention of any surrender from Scanlon or Selby or anyone. No.

**So what happened then, after you'd been told every man for himself?**

Well we just took to the bush, took to the jungle. Made our way in the general direction of the Binding Mountains. If the Japs wanted to follow us in there, then they would have

36:30 been very foolish. I mean, you couldn't see your hand behind your back there. It was dense jungle, couldn't see the sky, couldn't see anything. The canopy, the trees. I don't know, anyway, at that stage I was with Selby and Tos Parker,

37:00 Alec Carter, about five of us from my unit. Where the rest of them were I don't know. I don't know who got away from Raguana, I didn't know. We scattered. I mean I got onto a 17th anti-tank battery truck with Selby and Davies. I don't know who else was on the truck. It's dark. I look back now,

37:30 it was a debacle. It really was a mess. No wonder the government's flipped it under the carpet. You read what, I think I showed you, I included it. The government memo, we were expendable, they wrote us off. They couldn't care less what happened to us. We were there to prevent at any cost, and at any time,

38:00 the Japanese 'Sudden Thrust' as they said. That was in their memo. But we weren't to be reinforced, rearmed or withdrawn. And we were to be regarded as hostages to fortune. Well it's nice to know.

**You found that out in hindsight, but at the time is it the way you felt?**

38:30 I began later on in the escape to think that we had been neglected, for the want of a better word. That our welfare as a unit had been, the whole of the Lark Force had been just neglected, no one, but the person responsible was Scanlon. He was what do you call it,

39:00 in a penitentiary, the chief, he was the warden in the penitentiary in Melbourne apparently. But he was a DSO and barman from WW1. You don't get DSOs and bars for nothing. But to say ten days previous "There will be no withdrawal, you'll fight to the last man," and then turn around and say, "Every man for himself."

39:30 Anyway we came to, we eventually we came to this line of our trucks loaded with food and no ammunition, but food. And that's when Fisher and some of the other units, my unit joined us at, and Selby said, "We can't leave these for the enemy. Drain the oil out from the sumps and run the motors till they seize."

40:00 We split into two groups, and we were supposed to meet in the middle as I told you before. And when we had got to the middle, Selby and his group were nowhere around. So I'm left with Fisher and my group, and fortunately Fisher had the prismatic compass.

00:45 **You were just telling us before lunch up to the point you were given the order, “Every man for himself.” What happened to you from then?**

Selby then communicated this order to us and we followed him in the

01:00 direction of the jungle where it had been indicated other troops had already proceeded. We ran out of road and came across a line of trucks loaded with food but no ammunition. Selby said it would be a shame to leave the trucks in tact for the enemy, and said that we should drain the sumps,

01:30 run the motors till they seize, smash the spark plugs and slash the tyres. We split into two groups to carry out these orders and agreed to meet in the middle and proceed as one party into the jungle.

**How many of there were you?**

I’m just trying to think, wait a minute. If I could look at my book I could probably tell you.

**We could pick up the detail later,**

02:00 **the numbers are important.**

Well they would have been I suppose. Best part of twenty of us, between fifteen and twenty I suppose, at that point.

**What happened to your group?**

Well, my group, headed by Lieutenant Fisher, arrived at the central point of the row of trucks and found that Selby and his party

02:30 had moved on. We’ll leave it at that, moved on. Fisher then consulted his prismatic compass and as we were going to head in the direction of the south coast, he indicated the general direction, and we followed a native track in that direction.

**How wide was the track?**

03:00 It’s a pad, it’s not a track. It’s just what natives use through constant use.

**What was the environment like around it?**

The environment was that you couldn’t see the sky for the canopy of the trees formed. There was a dank smell of rotting vegetation because the sun wasn’t getting through, and the bush was dense on either side of the narrow track.

**Where did you head?**

03:30 In the direction of, Fisher’s compass indicated would take us to the south coast of New Britain.

**Did you get there? What happened next?**

Well that night, if I could have my diary I could give you much better information, because there was one night, I think it was the first night, that we came across Colonel Kerr and his party, or was that the second night?

04:00 I think it was the first night we camped by a river, and I can even tell you what we had for dinner, which was practically nothing. I say, I remember digging a hip hole and using my water bottle I think at the time. Oh, going back, when we left, before we left the trucks we had disabled,

04:30 Fisher ordered us to throw away our respirators, gas masks, and fill our haversacks in which they were contained, with as much tinned food as we could carry. Shortly after leaving the trucks, planes were circling overhead, and it was within a few minutes they dived down and bombed the trucks that we had been disabled,

05:00 that we had disabled. They bombed them. I think it was that night we camped by a river and as I say, I had been given guard duty between one and two a.m. in the morning. I woke up and it’s pouring rain, and I’m in a pool of water and I carried out my one hour duty on

05:30 guard, and then went back to my hip hole and managed to get back to sleep. What I should say at this time, is that we did not have any ground sheets or capes, to protect us from the weather. All we had was what we had left from Frisbee Ridge. Tin hat, shirt, trousers, underpants, sock, boots, rifle and bayonet.

06:00 And the rifle by this time of course was empty, and with no ammunition. I think it was on the second day Fisher said that it was useless to be carrying a ten pound 303 rifle without ammunition and no possibility of getting any, and to wrap the rifles around a tree and throw the bolt as far into the jungle, take the bolt out and throw it away.

06:30 So it would be useless to anybody. This we did.

**Apart from the things you listed, were you carrying any personal items?**

The only thing I carried which was the soldier’s best friend, which was his pay book, and those



photographs which I showed you, which are now in my diary. Some personal photographs of my mother and my father and some young people of my acquaintance in those days. Skating

07:00 friends and just people I knew from the yacht club, as a junior member. And that's it.

**When did you get a chance to gather those together?**

Oh, when I left Frisbee Ridge. Well, I think they were in my camphor wood box, and I just grabbed what I could. It wasn't a panic move from Frisbee Ridge. The guns were blown up and we were just

07:30 told to gather our gear and that's it. Well we couldn't gather up our ground sheets and raincoats because we'd never been issued with any. So you can see what I mean, it was a debacle.

**So you'd been dug into hip holes. What were they?**

Just so that you've got something for your body to fit into. Have you never been camping?

**They're not dug much any more. What was the purpose of it?**

08:00 Well if you dig a little hip hole, your hip fits into it and you can make yourself more or less comfortable, if I can use the word comfortable in the jungle in the rain.

**What happened that night? You'd just come off guard duty for one hour?**

And then I slept until it was time to move off, and I don't think we had any breakfast that morning.

08:30 I mean, Fisher put himself in charge of what food we had, naturally. We had to have some guidance from someone, and being an officer, he assumed the role of leader, which one would expect. I would have to say, as unpopular as he was, he wasn't a bad soldier when it came to leading us through the wilderness, the jungle. I'm not sure but the next day we came across the CO of the

09:00 2/22nd Battalion, Colonel Kerr, and his party in a village, in a native village. And we had hoped of spending the night under cover in one of the huts. But no, we weren't, we were told to virtually move on out of the village. So we slept under the stars again, in the rain again. Because being the wet season it rains every night there, between September and March.

09:30 I think it was the second night we camped by a river, and I woke up and I was tearing at my arm. A swarm of sand flies had descended on us, and my arm was bleeding, and thousands of bites. I don't have

10:00 any - I've had a few strokes, you'll have to forgive me - complexion on my arms, they're all scarred, sand fly scars, where I'd torn them. And I woke the rest of the boys up and we got out of there. We started off and we must have been travelling a few hours and we ended up in the same spot. We travelled in a complete circle, to where we had slept that night. So it

10:30 was decided as rivers flow towards the coast, that we would get into the river and follow the river down. Follow the river on its course. This we did until, for quite a while away, until the river took a sharp bend to the right and the force of the water increased and we had to get out of the river, and we clambered back onto the bank. Fortunately we came across a track which,

11:00 checking on his prismatic compass, Fisher found still leaded in the general southerly direction that we needed to go to the coast. Round about that time, we heard and looked up and saw through the trees, a single float Jap plane travelling slowly, very slowly. He must have been near stalling because he was just

11:30 above about fifty or sixty feet above the trees, and going very slowly, obviously looking for us. Or looking for troops. This became a regular habit of this float plane, tracking us where we were going. So they knew the general direction of where we were headed. My next recollection was that we were climbing,

12:00 well each day it was, well we were getting near to the bindings of south and it was up a mountain, down a mountain, across a river, up the other side, down on the other side across a river. Some rivers were easily traversed, others were very fast flowing. One in particular, the noise of the rushing water was such that you could hardly hear yourself talk. And where

12:30 the track brought us out it was impossible to cross the river. There's a photograph of it. Hoares and somebody went into the jungle to secure some vines, heavy vines, which having done so he tied around his waist, and he made his way with difficulty across the river.

13:00 The water sweeping his feet from under him a few times, but he gradually got to the other side, tied his end of the vine to tree, indicated for us to do the same and one at a time, hand over hand we made our way across this river. All went well until Goosy Alexander went and he had his feet from under him, and he kept going under.

13:30 A chap from the 17th anti-tank battery who had joined our party with some of his party, went in and rescued Goosy Alexander, and the two of them safely arrived at the other side, after some difficulty. After we had all crossed we rested and then we had to make our way back down river to where the track had come down from the other side.

- 14:00 We were looking for a trail which allegedly was being blazed for us by a Lieutenant Ted Best, who was blazing a trail for us to follow towards the south coast. Anyway we finally found the track and up we went.
- Who was this Ted Best?**
- He became Lord Mayor of Melbourne ultimately, he was just a lieutenant in one of the companies in the 2/22nd Battalion,
- 14:30 but he did become Lord Mayor of Melbourne in due course. Although he escaped.
- What contact did you have with the 2/22nd after you saw the colonel?**
- Only with chaps that were on the track, that we casually just passed or came across. Didn't know them by name, or even get to know them by name, just soldiers escaping like we were.
- Were they in an organised fashion?**
- 15:00 No, just the same as us, travelling in little groups and scratching an existence as best they could, as we were. What we found in the village, that Kerr was in, was kow-kow and taro, which was on what natives lived. And of course it's not white man's food, but it beats being hungry. And if you cook it on an open fire, which we did, it's edible.
- 15:30 **What about Colonel Kerr?**
- Never saw him, I never saw him again. And I have never seen him since seeing him in that village on that first or second day after we took to the jungle. I never knew Kerr before and have never seen him since.
- What were he and his party doing when you saw them?**
- Just in the village, resting. They were staying there for the night.
- 16:00 Now why they wouldn't let us stay there, I don't know, but we slept in the rain that night.
- Was there any attempt to get orders from the Colonel?**
- No, we were taking our orders from Peter Fisher, he was our officer. We weren't taking orders, it was every man for himself, remember? I mean if Colonel Kerr tried had told me what to do, I could have told him, "I'm sorry it's every man for himself and I'm taking orders from Peter Fisher and not from you."
- 16:30 If I wanted to, because it was Colonel Kerr said it was every man for himself. And rank didn't count for anything, nothing.
- Were there any men who went mad, or didn't obey anyone at this time?**
- No, the only one I heard that had any difficulty was a chap called George 'the Greek' Harris, who apparently someone had told him that he was going to be charged with desertion. I don't know the story, but all I know is
- 17:00 he was found sitting in a river trying to drown himself, and finally he died of black water fever. But you only hear these things.
- Can you tell us a bit more about some of the people you were with? You've mentioned a couple by name, we've taken a photo of some of the men in your unit.**
- Well Butch Hannon was one.
- 17:30 Butch was an enigmatic character at any time, but we got on well enough. Butch was the sort of bloke you could pick a fight with without any trouble, but we never did. Who else? Tex Martin, who did survive. Jack Hart, who did survive. These are all the, I was with these people for quite a while.
- 18:00 I'm trying to think of someone else that I always, oh, Pat Salway. S-a-l-w-a-y. Pat Salway, he was a nice fella. Oh, Morrie Ogilvie with whom I shared the tent in Frisbee Ridge. And Noel Carter, NFW Carter. That would be about all that come to mind immediately.
- 18:30 Anyway eventually we came to a village where I think there was an old woman, she was the only one in the village, and it was obvious that she had been left there to die. She was very ill, very sick. And the others had just gone and left her. The next recollection is that we arrived at Lemingi - L-e-m-i-n-g-i - Mission at the top of the mountain,
- 19:00 Binding Mountains. This mission was run by an Austrian missionary by the name of Meyhoeffer, and he was very helpful and obliging. His boys, as they called them, gave us cups of black tea and some plain biscuits when we arrived. He then came to see us in the evening after he had fed us some stew, kow-kow and taro, and
- 19:30 outlined what our problem was going to be from then on. He said "The coast will be two days away, but

in your condition I would suggest three days, and it's going to be a rough trip, because the track is not very hospitable." So we left Lemingi Mission, oh, he said that he would like to help us more, but he only had a small garden and there were others following, and he

20:00 couldn't sustain any great number of troops. So we said well, "We will be leaving the next morning," which we did. Our clothes dried by the fire that we made by the hut he provided for us, and next morning we set out, and of course it started to rain again so we were wet through.

**Can you describe the mission for us?**

Not very well. We were given a hut.

20:30 It was getting on evening when we arrived, we weren't given a tour, but it was a house. But not a substantial two-storey house, just a house. I mean, these missionaries didn't go in for luxuries, they were very sparse people. They lived very sparsely.

**What directions or provisions or help was Meyhoeffer able to give you?**

21:00 Only to tell us that it would probably take us three days to get to Adler Bay, which was the nearest point on the coast that we were to make for. And that it was a hazardous trip as far as the track was concerned. And, "Good luck." He couldn't do much more. Didn't provide us with any maps or anything, but of course the tracks were clearly defined.

21:30 Anyway, we left Lemingi and half way, we reached a point where looking out to our left we could see way in the distance what looked to be the sea. Fisher said, "Now there's twenty one of us here, the Japs know we are making for the south coast, they would probably be waiting for us. We would have better chance in splitting up into three groups,

22:00 rather than be taken prisoner as one whole group." So he suggested that he would lead one group, Jack Hoares would lead another one, and Des McMullen would head another one, and I was with Des McMullen's troop. There were six of us, or seven of us. The anti-tank chaps that were with us

22:30 told us they were going to cut themselves from our party, would take back their food with them, and that Alby Curtis, our three ton truck driver was joining them, going to join their party. So we all, the three separate parties bade each other goodbye the next morning, and each went in a separate direction towards what we thought would be the south coast. We arrived

23:00 on the south coast two days later. And arrived at Eber Bay - E-b-e-r Bay, not Adler Bay. When I arrived at Eber Bay, Selby was there together with Hart and Martin. Jack Hart and Allen Martin, and Selby said to me, "There's a lot of our boys I believe up at Adler Bay." That's going back north up towards Rabaul,

23:30 about an hour's walk. So I said, "Well I could do with a bit of a rest after crossing the Bindings, I'll go along and say hello to the boys up at Adler Bay and I will make my way south after I've had a rest." So my party, McMullen, myself, Brown and Ogilvie I think it was. We left to make our way to Adler Bay.

24:00 On the way we came against a Sergeant Ernie Green, Cook, and Denton I think it was - it's in the book. They were having a rest and they told me they were going to make their way south after they had had a rest. And I went on to Adler Bay with my party and when we got there, there were quite a few of my unit there. There was Sergeant Gilchrist, Sergeant Peters, Bombardier Herriot,

24:30 Barty Vall, Ogilvie. Quite a few, and as soon as we got there they gave us some vegetable stew that they had on the fire. I was then allocated to a grass hut with Barty Vall and Ogilvie, and I went to sleep. Next morning I got up early and I went down to the beach to wash what was left of my

25:00 uniform and my clothes. The only thing that was intact was my underpants. My shorts were torn, my coat, my shirt collar had come off, rotted. My boots were soft from being wet all the time. My socks were sodden. Anyway I was languishing in the beautiful warm salt water. It was only a small bay, only the size of Tamarama.

25:30 And I look along the end of the beach and I see this long pole sticking in the sand and a piece of white cloth on it. I thought, "That's strange." So when I finished luxuriating in the warm salt water, I went back to my captain there, Barty Vall, I said, "What's that pole with the white flag, white material on it?" He says, we're all giving ourselves up here." I said "What are you talking about?"

26:00 I said, "You could have given yourself up in Rabaul, why did you come all this way and give yourself up?" He said, "Well the Japs came past here in a destroyer and they sank a little boat that was in the Bay and they came ashore and they left a note to say that they'd be back in a couple of days and that they would be taking us back to Rabaul." I said, "The hell they are, they're not taking me back to Rabaul. I didn't come all this way to give myself up."

26:30 So during the morning, I've got to wait for my clothes to dry, during the morning, Tex Martin arrives to say that he and Fisher and a few of the boys had joined Selby, and Hart and he were going to go south, and he had come along to invite anyone that wanted to come along with him to go back with him, join Selby and they would take off further south.

27:00 I said, "Tex, I can't come at the moment, I'm just waiting for my clothes to dry. I won't be long, and I'll

come along and join you." And he spoke to Sergeant Peters and Gilchrist "No, no," they were all too sick, and tired and if they go on they would starve to death. "No, the Japs are coming back, we'll go back with them to Rabaul and we'll be prisoners of war."

27:30 So that was it. My clothes are just about dry and I'm ready to go, and a party of civilians arrive. And with it is Mr Frogget, who I had visited with Renton when I had lunch. I had lunch with Renton, and I told you we visited Frogget and Pennyfather in the Kokopo district. So I said to Mr Frogget, "I don't know what your plans are,

28:00 but the Japs are due back here any time. There's a white flag down on the beach and everyone here has given themselves up." I said "Are you going to give yourselves up?" and he said, "No way, I'll come along and meet Mr Moody, the leader of the party." So Moody and his son Hutchison, an agriculturalist from Rabaul, Hutch as we knew him.

28:30 And the captain of the Hursteine, Gustafson. He was in the party of civilians. So I took them down to the beach and showed them the white flag and I said to Mr Moody, "I can't tell you when the Japs will be back, but they were here two days ago and they could be back any time." I said, "Are you going to give yourself up?" He said, "No." He said, "We got to get out of here," he says. I said, "Well that's the reason I'm leaving." He said, "Who are you with?" I said, "I'm on my own." He said, "Would you like to

29:00 join this party?" I said, "Yes I would, thank you very much." I said, "I don't know my way round the jungle." I said, "All I know is that Selby is at Eber Bay and I intended to join him." He said, "Well in the meantime you can join this party." So I made another attempt to get some of my mates to join me and go back. "No. No. No way." So that was that.

**Your mates said some of them were too sick to go.**

29:30 **How was your own health?**

Well, I hadn't had my, I had had malaria in the previous October, but I hadn't had any further attacks at this stage. I was tired and I was weak and I was hungry. I mean we had nothing to eat virtually. And I would much have like to have stayed there and give myself up, but something just said to me, "Don't be bloody stupid. You've

30:00 come this far."

**What was the state of your provisions by this stage?**

You ate what you found that day. What you found in a native garden a village, that's what you had, that's what you ate. There was no bags of rice or sugar or anything like that being lumped around by anyone. There was nothing.

30:30 We had, I mean the bully beef had gone over, the tins of bully beef that we put in our haversacks between twenty people don't last long. If you read in my book, a tin of bully beef and a tin of baked beans mixed together was served out with a stick into your hand for twenty people. So that will give you an idea. We were virtually starving.

31:00 **What kind of things were you finding along the way, to try and keep yourselves alive?**

Coconuts, green coconuts where you drank the milk from them. They're full of milk that turns into copra eventually. But a coolao is a big green thing and you just slice the top off with a knife or a bayonet or whatever.

31:30 And you just drink the milk. But kow-kow, taro, sometimes you come across a bit of sugar cane, bananas occasionally. Mostly green of course.

**That was it?**

That was it. You lived virtually on what you found that day. And if you didn't find anything you'd go hungry. But if,

32:00 some chaps were caught raiding the natives' gardens, and the natives killed them. Jack Counter was one of those, that went, was caught we believe raiding a native garden. That's their food too, and they killed him.

**How did hunger affect you mentally?**

You dream about steaks and all the things that you'd love to eat, and I swore that if I ever got out, I'd eat three steaks a day. And I did.

32:30 **Were there any instances of people going mad for food or stealing off each other?**

No, but blokes did die of starvation. I mean malaria exacerbated my starvation, and with no medication. We lost a lot of blokes just on the track, as it were, who died. I think in one period of time I wrote that four or five died in a very short space of time. There were

33:00 blokes dying nearly every day. And we buried one chap, as I will tell you as we go along. Anyway, every

day was pretty boring. You would go up a mountain, down a mountain, and across a river. We eventually arrived, I'll bring you up to date and go forward a bit, we arrived at this village called Matong - M-a-t-o-n-g.

**Did you meet up with Selby at Eber Bay?**

33:30 No Selby had gone on. Have you got my diary handy?

**We can stop and you can have a look at it if you like?**

Yeah, let me refresh.

**You mentioned some Japanese planes dropping flyers, can you tell us about that?**

It was the same one, dropped only once. They were following, this single float plane was following us, and on the day of the landing, which was the 23rd January, they dropped these flyers to say

34:00 'Give yourself up or be killed'. And that was enough to dissuade me to give myself up.

**What did the flyers say?**

What did the flyers say?

**Please do read them.**

Well it's only a short one. "To the officers and soldiers of this island, surrender at once and we will guarantee your life, treating you as war prisoners. Those that resist us will be killed one and all.

34:30 Consider seriously, you can find neither food nor way of escape in this island, and you will only die of hunger unless you surrender. January 23rd, 1942. Signed Japanese Commander-in-Chief." So they must have printed this on the ships before they landed.

**How was that flyer received by the men on the ground?**

Well I suppose to some who gave themselves up it was good. To those that didn't,

35:00 I suppose, like me we had to take on face value that if we were caught we would be killed or taken back to Rabaul. You don't know. But having seen what the Japs did in Nanking, I would never surrender to the Japs, never, never, ever. Now, or then or any other time.

**Did you know about that at the time?**

Yes of course I did. I used to go to the movie, and I used to watch the Governor on British news. Used to see the Japs, what they

35:30 did to the Chinese. Oh no, wouldn't trust them. I hate, loathe and despise the bastards, then and still do.

**We'll continue on. I'll just get you to take off your glasses though because they're not on in most of the picture.**

No, I know it off by heart, I was there. I can recount it, it was just that I wanted to get it in chronological order.

**Okay, was there something else?**

Yes, coming up.

36:00 **The problem with having it on your lap is that you're focusing on your lap and the camera can't see your face.**

Oh, I'm sorry, right. No, on the 3rd February we were walking along with the sea visible, and we saw four or five Jap landing craft going down south, and the civilians gave the impression that they would be going to Gasmata where there was a settlement and probably a radio. So we didn't

36:30 think much more about it. Soon after we spotted them I passed three of my friends from my unit. Hoares, Priest and Davies, Bombardier Davies, Gunner Hoares, and Gunner Priest. And told them about these five landing barges we had seen, and they said they'd keep an eye out for them and that they would warn anyone else that they came across, that these barges had gone down south.

37:00 We passed them and then we were resting and they passed us. So they were ahead of us. Now, the next day we come to the banks of a river called the Bulus - B-u-l-u-s River. As we are about to cross it, out of nowhere a wild pig suddenly appears. Les Fawcett, who is a 2/10th Field Ambulance

37:30 non combatant, but a country boy, picks up a .303 rifle - I don't know whose it was, or where he got it - and shoots it stone dead. Of course the crack of a .303 rifle, the sound reverberates through the hills like you wouldn't believe. Anyway, it's decided we move off the track and up the river bank about fifty yards, to skin and cook the pig. Now while that was going on,

38:00 Mr Moody who was the leader of the party, asked for two volunteers to cross the river, go into the plantation and see if rumours that had circulated, that the Japs had in fact landed at Tol Plantation,

which is the plantation at the other side of this river. The river actually is the northern boundary of Tol. So being a combatant soldier,

- 38:30 unarmed though I was, I volunteered to go and have a look around and do a reconnoitre of the plantation. And Dr. Hutchinson from the agricultural department, Hutch – just known to be Hutch – he and I say we'll have a look while they're skinning and cooking the pig. So just as we go back to where the pig was shot on the main track that
- 39:00 we're on, Smacker Hazelgrove, Laurie Robinson from my unit, and five other chaps that we didn't know, arrive and say, "But we haven't had anything to eat for a couple of days, have you got any food to spare?" I said, "Well we just shot a pig." He says, "I know, we heard the bloody shot." So I said, "Look, about fifty yards up the river bank, Mr Moody is the head of my party
- 39:30 there, go and tell him I sent you up there, and ask him if he can give you something for you and your party something to eat. We'll wait for you." So Hutch and I wait, and Smacker goes up and about ten minutes later he comes back with some pig. He thanks me and we all cross the river together. Once we cross the river, Smacker and his friends go to the right to find somewhere to light a fire and
- 40:00 cook the pig.

**I'll pull you up right there so we can change the tape and go on to tell the rest of this story.**

Yeah, this is where it gets really hairy!

## Tape 7

- 00:44 **Smacker returned with some of the pig.**
- Right, well we crossed the river together, Smacker and his party got to the right to find somewhere to light a fire and cook the pig. Hutchinson and I proceed
- 01:00 into the plantation proper. I should point out that at the entrance where we went into the plantation, it's not rows of coconut trees, it's wild jungle bush, but in a plantation where the trees are set out in rows and the ground cleared so they can pick up the coconuts easily. We hadn't reached that part of the plantation. They're pretty big places, plantations, as you know. Well I suppose Hutchinson
- 01:30 and I would have travelled for about ten minutes and we came across a little party of natives sitting on the side of the track. So Hutchinson, I could speak pidgin but I let him go, and he said, "You fella, what you do along here?" and he said, "We sit down nutting [nothing], master. Sit down nutting." So Hutch said, "Soldier belong to Japan, he stop along the this fellow place?" "No, master, soldier all the same. You fella he stop.
- 02:00 Master Nayse who owned the plantation, he stop in a house belong him." So, "Okay, bye bye." We travel I suppose another five minutes, a few, and we come across a soldier lying across the middle of the track. Who is it? Alec Carter from my unit. "What's the matter Alec?" "Oh, I've got cramps in my stomach." I said "Who are you with?" He says
- 02:30 "McMullen, Emery and Brown," I said "Do they know you're crook?" He said, "No, fell behind. They wouldn't know I'm crook." I said, "Well look, I'm going to prop you up against this tree, make you as comfortable as we can, and we'll hurry on and catch them up and send them back for you." Right. So this we do. And I suppose we wouldn't have travelled more than a hundred yards when the track took a
- 03:00 sharp ninety degree angle turn to the left. And at the precise moment that Hutch and I arrive at that apex of that ninety degree angle, so does a Jap officer. And I will tell you exactly what he was wearing. He was wearing a helmet with a khaki net over the top, a khaki jacket, gold epaulets, khaki breeches,
- 03:30 black leggings, black boots and black belt with a sword on this side, and a holster with a pistol in it on the other side. Now, the track is only that wide, so I get in front of Hutch to let the Jap pass, and as we pass, my sleeve brushes the Jap's sleeve. He doesn't look at me and I don't look at him. By this time we are around the
- 04:00 sharp bend in the track, and I thought, "Oh Christ!"
- So the Japanese officer's brushed your sleeve.**
- I immediately thought that as soon as he's behind us he's going to shoot us or say something, stop us. But little did we know at that point, I dared a quick look over my shoulder to see what was going on, what he was doing. I thought maybe he was getting out his sword to slash us.
- 04:30 No, he'd gone round, he was out of sight. So instinctively I just pulled Hutch with me to our left which was the ocean side, and there was fallen log and just lay there. Within a minute passing where we had just stood, a patrol of twelve rifles and

- 05:00 fixed bayonets passed. So, you know, the heart's kind of beating a but quickly. So next thing we heard was, well you can imagine what happened. The Jap officer had stopped and obviously thinking that his patrol of twelve would have picked us up. And when he saw that they hadn't he probably said to the patrol leader, "Well
- 05:30 where are they?" and the patrol leader would say, "Where's who, sir?" and the Jap officer would say, "The two Australians, you lummo," and, "I didn't see any." "Well get out and find them." So there's a lot of shouting, obviously a lot of angry shouting by the patrol officer. "Spread out and find these two bastards." And I said to Hutch,
- 06:00 "Not a word. Let's get out of here. No talking." So we started to crawl in what was the direction of the beach, the coast. And after a while there's more shouting and you could hear they were getting closer. So I said to Hutch, "There's not much use this bloody crawling, let's make a run for it." And we did, we ran like hell, and we were getting hit in the face by low
- 06:30 branches and stumbling, but we kept going. And they started firing, but they couldn't see us, it was too dense, but you could hear the bullets going through the bushes and the trees near us, until it stopped. And we came into sight of the beach. We come to the line of trees where the beach starts, and looking to the right we see the five landing barges pulled up on the beach.
- 07:00 And the red roof of a hut, or a house near the beach. So we've got to go this way, we've got to go back north to cross the river we came over. So as quick as we could we made our way over to the river where it joined it ran into the bay, it wasn't very deep and we got across safely and back into the jungle. And then we
- 07:30 had to turn left to go back to where, to find the track where the pig was shot. This we did and there was a chap on guard there, and he said, "What's going on?" and I said, "All I can tell you is the Japs are in the plantation." So we made our way back to the party and Hutch told Mr Moody and Mr Frogget and the rest of the party what happened to us.
- 08:00 They said, "Well we heard some rifle shots." I said, "Well that was them chasing us. Either that or they found Alec Carter propped up against the tree and shot him, although I shouldn't imagine they would have used all those bullets." They said, "Well six Jap soldiers came to the other side of the river. They didn't cross and they didn't attempt to cross. They didn't fire any shots, and
- 08:30 we didn't have any, we didn't shoot at them, so I don't know what the rifle shots were except them chasing you." So it was decided then, well they said that when they heard the rifle shots, that they'd put the fire out. They had cooked some pig, and they said, "Well we'll take what's cooked and we'll move further up the river again. But we'll stay on the river bank so we can keep an eye out." So we
- 09:00 made camp about half a mile further up the river and they had some lunch, "Thank you," and the next day, nothing... Oh that night, we were just sitting around a small fire with some water in a tin hat to make some tea. And all of a sudden there was a 'Tch, tch, tch, tch' machine gun fire,
- 09:30 and bullets could be heard crashing through the trees above us. So out went the fire and we thought, "Any moment, they've seen the fire, they'll be crashing through the trees and we've had it." No, nothing happened. No tea of course. We spread out and went to sleep for the night. The next morning the pig had spoiled in the humidity and the heat.
- 10:00 The pig that wasn't cooked of course. Mr Moody said, "I need two volunteers to go out and scrounge for some more vegetables, kow-kow and taro." So Hutchinson, no Les Fawcett, myself and Jim Shack, a civilian said, "We'll go, and we'll be away about two hours." So we make our way back to where
- 10:30 the pig was being cooked, and lying on the ground is a soldier, or a figure in khaki. So I took charge, being a combatant and Les Fawcett was a 2/10th field ambulance and Jim Shack's a civilian, so I said, "Let's not race out there and see what this is, it could be
- 11:00 booby trapped, we don't know." So we waited a few minutes, we could see that he was breathing and he was lying on his back. So I get closer and I look, it's Smacker Hazelgrove. So I give him a bit of a dig in the ribs with my boot, and he wakes up, and he says, "Quick get out of here, the Japs are here." I said, "Smacker, don't worry. We know the Japs are in the plantation. You're safe now, you're all right."
- 11:30 I said, "What are you doing back here?" and he said, "I've been shot. All the others are dead." "What are you talking about?" I thought he might have been delirious with malaria. "They're all dead. I've come back to warn you." I said "Well thank you very much, but we know the Japs are here, we saw them yesterday." So I said, "Where have you been shot?" He said, "In the back." I said, "Have you?"
- 12:00 I'm looking for an exit wound is all. So he turned over on his right side, and where his shirt had been over his right shoulder blade, there's a hole about that big, and the rest of his shirt is just caked in dark red blood. And there's four other holes, small holes in his shirt. I said to myself, "Jesus, this is lovely."
- 12:30 So I said, "Do you think you can walk?" So Les Fawcett helps me get him to his feet and he's as white as a sheet. This is Smacker, not Les. And so Les and Jim said, "Look, you get him back to the camp and we'll go on and look for some kyan. It took me about an hour supporting Smacker and stopping very frequently to

- 13:00 get him back to our camp, and as I approach Les Pierce and Jim what's-a-name came and took him off me, and took him and got his shirt off him and he's got this big wound. It could have possibly been an explosive bullet because he's got a hole about that big in his shoulder blade. And four other smaller 10 28 calibre
- 13:30 wounds in his back. So Max Pearsall, who's 2/10th Field Ambulance fortunately had some Dettol and some field bandages, field dressings, bathed his wounds and dressed him as best he could. I said, "I'll go and find Selby," who I guessed would be further up the river. Which I did. And then I find the camp
- 14:00 that Selby had made and there's Tex Martin with a pig's trotter on a piece of vine dunking it in a tin hat, making soup he said. Trying to make soup with this pig's trotter. So Selby eventually came back and I told him that Smacker had been shot, and I said, "I'm going back there, and Selby said, "I'll be along shortly." I went and told Smacker that
- 14:30 Mr Selby was coming to see him, which made him feel better. And Selby eventually arrived and Smacker told him exactly as he had told me what had happened. After they crossed a river they had found a spot and they'd made a little fire, cooking the pig the Moony had given them. They suddenly found themselves surrounded by six Jap soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets.
- 15:00 They prodded them to get up and get in a line, and to march off into the plantation. But before they did, they threw a haversack and some other gear onto the fire, and Smacker said that one of the boys had some .303 ammunition and that's what we heard exploding.
- 15:30 No, when Hutch and I reached the river, on the way back, we heard some rifle fire, and Smacker pointed out that was our equipment being thrown on our fire which exploded. So he said, "They marched us to a little house with a red roof near the river." I said, "Yes I know." He said, "Near the water." I said, "Yes, we saw it."
- 16:00 "They marched us inside and there was a chap sitting there in an Australian Army captain's uniform." Now that could only be a missionary, a German missionary. "So when we march in he says, 'Put your hands down boys.'" Which they did. He said, "Now put all your gear on the table and I'll write your name and number and unit on this piece of paper," which they did.
- 16:30 And then they took all their dog tags, pay books and everything, watches, everything off them. Put them on the table. Then they tied their hands behind their back by their thumbs, and then they joined five of them, or six of them, no Laurie Robinson. Seven of them all together. Laurie Robinson, Smacker and five other chaps.
- 17:00 They marched them out into the plantation, and seeing the five landing barges there, they thought that's where they were going to take them. Take them back to Rabaul. "Well they kept on marching us back into the jungle and the told us to stop." And then looking around they saw these soldiers, this semicircle of soldiers with rifles and automatic weapons.
- 17:30 "We turned our back on them and they, no we stood facing in them and they made us turn our back on them," and before they had time to say goodbye they just opened fire on them. And then he said Laurie Robinson beside him went straight down and he pulled Smacker down with him, and Smacker laid doggo.
- 18:00 And he said all he remembered before he passed out was five bullets in his back, was the Japs threw palm fronds over him. When he woke up Laurie was dead and the other five were also dead. And he managed to torn his fingers getting the fishing line undone. He said, "I went down and lay in the salt water." That wouldn't have stung
- 18:30 much, would it? He said, "Then I realised I had better get back to warn you people." And I said, "But how did you find your way back?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "But that's two days ago. You were shot two days ago, Smacker." "Oh, was I?" "Yep." So he said, "I don't know how long I was out, how long I lay in the water, but I realised I had to get back and warn you people, and I just came back to where Mr
- 19:00 Mooney gave me the pig." And that's where we found him. He told that same story to Selby, and Selby out of the blue says, "Smacker you're a very lucky boy, but I'm going to ask you, would you be prepared to go back through Tol?" and Smacker said, "Are you kidding? Why?" He said, "Well I've spoken to Max Pearsall and he says if we
- 19:30 don't get you some better and proper medical attention, you're going to die. You're wounds are going to turn to gangrene and you're going to die." So Smacker says, "It's not much of a choice, is it?" So he says, "I suppose I'll have to." So then he turns to me, Selby and he says to me "David would you like to help your mate through to Kaline Mission?" What am I going to say? So I said to myself, "Well you've been lucky so far.
- 20:00 You survived the bloody air raids. You survived the beach, you survived the truck turning over. Why not?" So I said, "Yes, I will help Smacker through." He said, "Well, we'll come through tomorrow morning about four o'clock. If you and Smacker can be ready, we'll go through to Kaline Mission. It's run by the brother from Lemingi,



- 20:30 Brother Meyhoeffer. He's the brother from the one from Lemingi." So I said, "All right." So Max Pearsall gives Smacker an injection of morphine hoping he'll sleep. No, Smacker didn't want to sleep. All he wanted to do was talk all through the night. So I didn't get any sleep either. Four o'clock Selby, Fisher, Hart, Martin and Kevin Curly from the 2/22nd Battalion
- 21:00 who had a Thompson machine gun, which we later found out didn't work anyway. They arrived at four o'clock and the six of us then take off through Tol to go to Kaline Mission, which is the other side of the plantation. So all went well. We crossed the river, Smacker had showed us where they had built the fire, where some of their equipment was still there lying
- 21:30 there burnt of course. And we came to the tree where we had propped up Alec Carter. There was no sign of Alec of course. And then we came across where Hutchinson and I had questioned the natives and they had lied to us about no Japs in the plantation. Then we came to where Alec was propped up against the tree. Then we came to the sharp bend in the track where I had
- 22:00 run into the Jap officer. I showed them where we had hidden behind the log and then Smacker shoed us where he had been shot. And the bodies of Laurie and his mates were still there with the palm fronds thrown over them. So we didn't linger there very long, it didn't smell too good. We started to make our way further through the plantation,
- 22:30 until a little way further we saw a khaki figure ahead of us. "Stop," and instead of a Jap it was another survivor from the massacre, who'd survived. What was his name? Johnson I think it was. Anyway, then we looked up to the house belong to the plantation, and Selby
- 23:00 said, "We'll go and have a look in there and see what's left." And there was Japanese fish tins and Christ knows what there, they'd wrecked the place. And then we came further along, there were some huts and we looked in there and there were a couple of bodies that the Japs had partially burned, or tried to burn. So we thought, "We don't know whether the Japs are here or not here, but there's definitely signs of them," so we make our way out further to go out of the
- 23:30 plantation. We get nearly to the Henry Reed River, and we hear voices, or jabbering. You wouldn't know whether it was Japanese or what it was. So Selby had his 45 and Fisher had his 45 and Kev Curly had his Thompson ready. We go into
- 24:00 where we hear the voices and they're bloody natives. Now they could have been the natives that we saw the day we went into the plantation. We didn't know. Natives look like natives. So Fisher said, "What are you doing?" "Oh, we go bush. We frightened too much along soldier belong Japan." "You say soldier belong Japan?" "Yeah."
- 24:30 They tell him, "Rouse him." "Come back three fella moon. They give us presents." They wanted to come back, piss off, come back in three days, and the Japs would give them presents. So we left them to it. They were shocked when they saw us, you know Selby with his pistol and Fisher with his revolver and Kev Curly like that. But we didn't know who they were, or what they were.
- 25:00 So we crossed the river and in the sand is a very fresh footprint, and Smacker gets very agitated because the Japs wore a special kind of sandal with the big toe is separate, like that, from the rest of the.... And there's this fresh footprint in the sand, and Smacker gets very agitated, and I don't blame him. Anyway, we looked
- 25:30 around, couldn't see anyone or hear anyone, and nobody saw or heard us apparently. Of course we were able to proceed and then we crossed, came to this river and it was fast flowing and deep. But under the surface of the water, it was logs, and to get these two wounded blokes across the logs with fast flowing water wasn't easy but we managed to eventually. And then we get to
- 26:00 like an island in the middle of the river. Then on to the main, we get off that and on to the main bank. And we hear splashes and noises coming from around the bend to our right. We stop in the bushes and hide, and to our shock and surprise, a rowing boat with two Australian officers suddenly appear.
- 26:30 One of them died yesterday, I'm going to the funeral on Friday, Ben Dawson. And Stinker Jones. So they said, "The Japs have had us trapped between the two rivers for the last three days and the natives have given us this rowing boat." So they ferried us across to the main, across the river,
- 27:00 and Smacker and the other chap, the other wounded chap, were pretty exhausted. So we stopped and cooked some taro that Selby had, and then we set off again for the Kaline Mission. Before we arrived there we came to a little training station
- 27:30 of a Filipino named Leo, at Quinadacs or something like that. He said, "I'm sorry, look, I've got absolutely nothing to offer you. I can't sell you anything, I've got nothing, but I can offer you some coconut juice and pawpaw." I think it was. We asked him how far it was to Kaline Mission and he said it
- 28:00 was not very far. But of course it's raining. And we finally arrive at Kaline Mission, and unlike his brother Father Meyhoeffer says, "No, keep going." And Selby said, "Look, we've got two wounded men here from Jap massacre." And he said, "The Japs have been here and have threatened to kill me if I help the Australian soldiers," so Selby said, "If you don't help us, I'll kill you."

- 28:30 Anyway a long discussion transpired as a result of which Selby and Fisher and the two wounded blokes were allowed go into the mission house. But he pointed to Hart, Martin, myself and Kev Curly, and says, "You go. Major Owen and party with Dr Palmer are about one hour further on.
- 29:00 You go and join them." Bloody, I mean I'd been up since four, I'd been up all the night before, I'd been on my feet since four in the morning helping Smacker, and he's telling me to go and walk through the bloody jungle in the rain at night for another hour. So, that's nice, but I didn't want to jeopardise Selby's position with the wounded boy. So Hart, Martin, Curly and I start to get off away from the
- 29:30 house, the mission house, but there's this nice tin shed that we pass. And I said to the others, "I don't know about you fellas, I don't care what's in there but I'm going in there and that's where I'm going to stay for the night. I'm not going to walk through the bloody jungle in the rain for another hour." So we all went in there, and there are bags and bags of copra, and I've never eaten copra before, but I did that night.
- 30:00 That was what we had for dinner. We woke pretty early and we took off, and about an hour or so later we came across Major Owen and his party. Major Owen, Major Mollard, Major Palmer the doctor. And I went and I saw Major Owen, and he'd down with malaria. So I said, "We're part of a party, Lieutenant Selby, Lieutenant Fisher
- 30:30 and two survivors of the massacre in Tol." So he immediately called Dr Palmer, and he had a coconut copra bag over his shoulder with all his medical equipment, and another one over his head. He looked for all the world like a little leprechaun, because he was only a little fella. There's a photo of him. And off he goes back to Kaline Mission to treat the wounded.
- 31:00 Major Owen said that they were going to take off in the next day or so, he said, "We've got another couple of chaps here from the massacre who have found us, and we're going to stay here for another day at least, until they're a bit better
- 31:30 then we're going to push on further south." And I was told during the day that I was going to be on guard duty again that night. Now why I would be on guard duty having just arrived, I don't know, but I was. I was put down on the beach so I could see anything that came into the bay. So we're still in Wide Bay. I'm on guard duty with this chap I don't know. I wouldn't know his
- 32:00 name and I didn't know him. But round about just about when our hour was up, he said he saw this riding light, or what he thought was this riding light disappearing around a bay further up. So I went up and roused Major Owen, and I said, "You better come down to the beach, sir. My friend seems to think that he saw a riding light
- 32:30 of a boat heading our way." So Major Owen comes down with his binoculars and he says "Oh, I just saw something but it's gone. I think it's gone behind a headland." So came off guard and went to sleep, and next morning Owen called us all together and told us in the light of what he had seen the previous night, that we were moving out
- 33:00 that morning. Then Major Mollard, who was second in charge of the 2/22nd Battalion, he got up and made a speech and said that in the light of the massacres, Colonel Scanlon was in the area, and he was going to join him and together that he as CO of troops were going to give themselves up to the Japs, because that would placate the Japs
- 33:30 to stop them from any further massacres. So he said, and the reasons he gave were that his wife at least would be told that he was a prisoner of war, that, "There was a distinct possibility the way things were going, that we would run out of food, our uniforms couldn't be replaced and were rotting off our backs."
- 34:00 He was right, and that was that. And anyone who wanted to go back with him to, "Join me, Colonel Scanlon and give themselves up, could do so." Two men decided they would go back, but Scanlon sent them back. He didn't want, didn't want anyone to give themselves up with him. He said something about attract flies.
- 34:30 So, in Selby's book he quotes it. Anyway, so a little later that morning before we took off, Selby, Fisher, Smacker and Robinson arrive at the camp, and Robinson decides he's going to go back to Kaline and Smacker's going to come along with us. He wants to go on.
- 35:00 Well from then on it was just a matter of eking out a living, of trying to live off the land. There was virtually nothing to eat. Major Owen said, oh wait a minute... Before we left Major Owen authorised the purchase of a buloma cow, a water buffalo which was brought to the camp, and we left we all had a good lunch of buloma cow.
- 35:30 The food position was critical, and Owen said, "Anyone who finds any food individually must hand it in, pool it. We want everyone to share, no matter how small, but everyone has to pitch in and try to build up our reserves." Well that didn't suit a lot of blokes and they decided to leave Owen's party, which was pretty big. I suppose
- 36:00 it must have been about eighty men or so. When you've got nothing to eat, feeding eighty men is not easy. So the next day after he announced that we arrived at a village called Matong - M-a-t-o-n-g - and I

went down with malaria, as I was starting to do quite regularly by this time.

- 36:30 There was a chap named Ron Brown, Gordon Able, and he sang 'They used to call me Baby Dolly' at the camp concert, what was his name? Anyway we arrived at this plantation at this village Matong.
- 37:00 I'm down with malaria, by the next morning the party, Owen and his party move off. I can't go with them, I'm not well enough. And Jock Sloan, he comes down with malaria too. So we decide we'll stay, we decide the four of us that we could survive better on our own than sharing in a big party.

**Can I just hold you up and ask you a couple of questions.**

- 37:30 **Firstly in respect to the Tol Plantation, the massacre where Smacker got hit, why did they lay the palm branches over the bodies?**

Buried them. It's easier than digging graves, isn't it? But fortunately they did because Smacker woke

- 38:00 up, and all that was stopping him from getting up once he freed his hands was the palm fronds.

**There was a head hunting tribe?**

The Macolcols. They operate between Wide Bay on the south coast and Open Bay on the north coast. At one stage of our trek south, Mr Frogget said to me, "You know, we should be more," when we were passing through that corridor, "We should be more worried about the Macolcols than the Japs. They are so

- 38:30 stealthy, and they can have your head off in, well you shake it and it falls and it's gone." He said they were very dangerous.

**So it never crossed anyone's mind to try and get to know that lot?**

Never crossed our minds to try and?

**To get to know the Macolcol, to stay away from the Japs.**

Couldn't speak, I mean I didn't know whether they spoke pidgin English or what. But Mr Frogget said to me,

- 39:00 "Be careful. Don't stand still on the island anywhere. Stay with us because they're very stealthy. They can be standing beside you and you wouldn't know it."

**Malaria, which you've now been hit at Matong, had you suffered from that at all to that point?**

Yes a couple of times. I can't recall the date, but I was starting to get it quite regularly, yes.

- 39:30 Every few days. By the time I got further on I was getting it every day. I was losing weight. Just jumping ahead, I was six stone ten when I was rescued.

**Clothing wise, you said that your clothes were starting to fall off your back. Had you given your shirt to Smacker?**

Yes. Well, because the flies kept getting into his wounds.

- 40:00 Yes, I gave my shirt to Smacker.

**So you had no shirt at all, clothing wise?**

No, but I'm paying for it now. I have sun cancers burnt off my back by the dozen. Every few weeks. I've just had about a dozen burnt off these arms, and off my shoulders only last week. My doctor, GP [General Practitioner] does it. I used to go to a

- 40:30 skin specialist but you had to make a three months appointment ahead, and I got sick of that. You make an appointment for eight o'clock and he'd arrive at nine, and I thought, "Bugger you mate. I'm not going to sit in your waiting room waiting for you to arrive." So I gave him away, and I mentioned the fact to my GP, he says, "I've got liquid nitrogen, I'll burn those off for you." And he's been

- 41:00 doing it. He's going to have to cut one out of here soon. I'm not looking forward to that, because he's got to inject me, and that's going to H-U-R-T.

## Tape 8

- 00:41 **One question I had, you mentioned that you ran into some other survivors of the Tol massacre. Were they able to tell you their story?**

Subsequently I only found out their story. They had told their stories to Major Owen. I didn't have any contact with them in the party,

01:00 I just saw them, but I didn't actually converse with them or ask them. I know that Les.

**Johnson and Cook?**

Cook? Billy Cook, yeah that's right. We called Bill 'Lucky', he lost both his legs in the train shunting accident after he was discharged. We called him Lucky Bill.

**Was the story they had to tell, that they told Major Owen and that you found out, was that similar to what Smacker had told you?**

01:30 Yes. The only thing different was that Billy Cook subsequently told me I think, on one Anzac Day, that when they pointed to their Red Cross arm bands, the Japs just contemptuously cut them off them. Tore them off them or cut them off them.

**I imagine on hearing, or seeing Smacker's condition, and hearing his story that there must have been**

02:00 **a feeling of hatred towards the Japanese.**

Had? Was? Is. Right now, this very minute, and tomorrow, I will never, ever, ever forgive them. Ever. No, when I saw my, when I saw Laurie Robinson dead and with the other five blokes that had been with Smacker just lying there all shot to pieces with their palm fronds thrown over them. You don't forget those things.

02:30 And the two blokes in the hut burnt, the Japs had tried to cover them with petrol and burnt them. They were wounded, they weren't even dead. They weren't even dead. One of the other survivors had found them and put them in the hut, and had to leave them because the Japs had arrived, come back to Tol. And when he went to find them, he found them burnt, dead and burnt.

03:00 Oh, they're nice boys those fuckin' Japs.

**What did you do when you came across those bodies?**

What did we do? I'm not quite sure if I threw up or just turned away in horror. But I mean, having seen the Wirraway boys is one thing, but seeing blokes who have been massacred is something else. You don't forget those things, particularly at that age. No.

03:30 **You went down to the War Memorial?**

With a friend of mine, a school friend of mine who was a Liberator, not a Liberator. With Lancaster's who had bombed Berlin and bombed Dresden, and he was on a committee that was responsible for bring the famous Lancaster G for George out from some flying field in the country, into the War Memorial.

04:00 When we went down there it was on a Monday, oh my wife had suggested as I was going to Canberra with David, that I take my war diary with me, and ask the archives there if it would be of any interest to them. Well the only date that the archives in Canberra are closed is Monday, and David asked the guard in the aeroplane room, as they call it, if he could take me aboard G for George,

04:30 and the guard says, "Well I have no authority to let you go aboard, it's locked up. But if you go across to the administration building and see Mr (UNCLEAR), and ask him if you can have permission to go aboard. I'm sure that having flown Lancasters he would be sympathetic." So we went across to the administration office and we saw this gentleman and he said, "As the Memorial doesn't open till

05:00 ten o'clock, if you can be here tomorrow at nine o'clock, I personally will take you over and open up G for George and you can go aboard." Which we did. David and I rang our respective wives and told them that we were going to stay in Canberra overnight, and we went back and I went aboard G for George. Now I am no coward, but you will never get me into a Lancaster. No thank you.

**What did the War Memorial say about your diary?**

05:30 Well, I went there on the Tuesday after we had been on board, and I saw a man there and I just asked, "Could I view any memorabilia that they had been acquired from the Rabaul campaign?" And the chap said to me, "Well I can tell you before the gentleman I'm going to get to come out sees you, there's not very much." Anyway, I can't tell you the chap's name,

06:00 but he came out and he saw me, and he said, "Well apart from David Selby's book Hell and High Fever we don't have much. We have some notes that were exchanged, just before while you were organising the escape on the Laurabada," he says, "and we have a letter from a chap to his sister." Now this letter said that this chap saw our Wirraways shoot down ten Zeros. So after reading that

06:30 I thought, "Well my book will certainly be well received."

**Just getting off the track a bit, but what I did want to talk about, and I know it's a difficult memory I'm sure, what you saw at Tol after the massacre, but I think it's important to share those memories in as much details as you can, because they're not often talked about.**

That's right.

**What state were those bodies in?**

Well it was only a couple of days. Let's just say they didn't smell

07:00 too good. The air didn't smell very good because they, I mean in the heat and the, I saw how the pig deteriorated after two days. So the bodies had started to deteriorate. I didn't examine them closely but I could see that they were dead, and I could see that they were, I could recognise Laurie Robinson.

07:30 **Was there evidence of the way in which they were killed?**

No, they were just lying face down. They'd been shot in the back and they were lying face down. With their hands still tied between their backs.

**What did you do at that point? Did you leave them as they were, could you help bury them?**

No, we didn't try to. No we didn't know whether the Japs were still in,

08:00 at that stage we didn't know whether the Japs were still in the plantation or not. And we didn't want to become victims ourselves if we could avoid it, naturally. So we were making our way, our object was to get Smacker through to Kaline Mission, where the missionary would be able to give him some more medical assistance than we could. Or we had been able to, because all we could do was put Dettol, cleanse the wound with Dettol and put field dressings on them.

**What was Smacker's reaction**

08:30 **to revisiting that place?**

Well if you knew Smacker. Smacker was a real rough diamond, tough as nails though. Do you remember the cartoon 'Bluey and Curly'? Well he was the one with a cigarette always hanging out of his mouth, and his hat back on the back of his head.

09:00 Yeah, he was a real 'Curly', Smacker. I used to see him, he lived at Revesby and I used to occasionally go and see he and his wife. He hadn't changed. And he used to run the two-up game at the Revesby RSL [Returned and Services League]. He didn't come to town for the Anzac march, he used to run a two-up school in Revesby RSL, and he was a character. Anyway, his

09:30 wife died, and he remarried. Then he died.

**What did he do when you went back and saw the bodies?**

Well he didn't want to linger very long, and I mean, to see where he had lain beside Laurie, and being shot himself, he didn't want to linger, no. He didn't pull us away or anything, but you could see he wasn't enjoying it a while, and so you could see he didn't want to be there.

10:00 And I didn't want to be there, having seen what I'd seen. I've not that strong stomach that I wanted to stay there and see it.

**Sorry to keep going on about this but it is very important. Was there other evidences of other atrocities around in the plantation? You mentioned the two men had been set on fire.**

No, I didn't see any others, no.

**Where were these men, in a hut?**

In a hut.

**Where were they in relation to the other bodies?**

10:30 Not far away from the red rooved hut, red rooved little house. Like there was a native village, and a red house. I don't know what the red house was, probably where they got their orders of the morning, from the plantation owner, Mr Lace. And it was in one of the village huts where we

11:00 found these two Jap atrocity victims, that had been burnt. There was fish tins lying around. Oh, they're pigs. Yep. We'll move on if you like.

**Sure. We'll move back to where we were before. You arrived at Matong. What was happening there?**

Okay. Once when we moved in there, the place

11:30 was deserted. When Major Owen and his party moved out and just left myself, Gordon Able, Ron Brown and Jock Sloan. We were the only four there. It was very, very quiet. Jock was quite sick with his malaria. And very soon a native came in to the village, came up to

12:00 our hut and sang the usual song. To get us out of the plantation

**We'll just stop for a second.**

Matong. Right. Natives, well they might be not well educated but very cunning. To get, if we went into a village, to get us out, they used the ploy of having a native run into the village, shouting,

- 12:30 "Japanie come, Japanie come. He stop close too, Japanie come," and they knew that if there were any words that we didn't want to hear, it was 'Japanie come'. The whole party would get out. We got to Matong, so after Major Owen and his party left and left just the four of us, this native came running in and came into the hut which we had occupied, and said,
- 13:00 came up the step, there's four steps leading up into the hut. He said, "Japanie come, he stop close too. You go, Japanie come." And I could speak a little pidgin and I thought, "Well this is going to be a trial now," so I said, "Masky." That means 'forget it'. "This fella, white fella master, he sick too much. This white fella master he stop along here."
- 13:30 "Japanie come, Japanie come. He close too." "Masky, masky. White fella master he sick too much." So he came in, saw Jock and realised he was very sick, and he went away. Within ten, fifteen minutes we heard voices. The village was coming back, women, kids, everybody. And this bloke, the same native came back and
- 14:00 he brought us kow-kow, taro, a lot, food. He brought us food. The next morning Jock was very sick, he couldn't get up. All day he just lay up in the hut. And that night we went to bed and Ron woke us up, no Gordon woke us up, and said, "Jock's missing." So Gordon and I get up
- 14:30 and we find Jock crawling towards the bush. We said, "Where are you going, Jock?" and he said, "I wanted to get out of the hut, I fell down the stairs on my head." And with that he just collapsed. We put him under a tree and sat by him, and the next morning he was in a coma. His eyes were staring, his mouth's open, his breathing is
- 15:00 shallow, and not long, later in the morning Mr Moony arrived from one of the civilian. And we asked him would he have a look at Jock. He said, "You can stop worrying, he's got black water fever. He wont get over that." And he says, "Untreated malaria can develop into black water fever, and once you get that, unless you're getting intensive care, you've had it."
- 15:30 So that was that. That afternoon, Vic Pennyfather and Jim Rile arrived and they had a look at Jock and they said exactly the same thing. The next morning, oh, at about five o'clock that afternoon, I went up to get some matches to make a fire and Jock was dead. Fortunately Gordon Able,
- 16:00 no, Ron Brown had a prayer book, and he read a prayer over Jock. And we decided the next morning that we would bury him. Try to bury him. So using the copra bags which we used as sleeping bags, we put Jock's body in it, and with our hands and sticks we tried to dig a grave. Well if you knew what the coral composition of the soil was there, you'd realise that we didn't get
- 16:30 very deep. And I suppose if we got down two feet after a lot of scraping and scratching with our hands and sticks, that at least we got Jock under ground, and covered, using the copra bags to put him in. He wasn't a big chap, he was only a little fellow. And so we left Matong and left Jock behind.
- 17:00 Not long after leaving Matong we reached a river which was very deep, fast flowing and impossible to cross where we were. And we didn't know what to do. We looked up further river and it didn't look any better, we looked down where it was running into the bay and it didn't look any better. And then we saw some troops on the other side of the river, and by sign language and shouting out
- 17:30 they indicated to us that we had to go down to where the river met the sea. There was a sand bank there, and we should cross it and wade across the remaining part, and get back to where they were on that side of the river. Well we were fortunate that the water was only about knee deep, but it was racing, it was
- 18:00 a pretty strong current, and we had to join hands to stop from being washed out to sea. We eventually went out into the sea, onto the sandbank, crossed it and went back and joined this group and thanked them very much for directing us.
- 18:30 And they said, "We've got no food, the chap who was carrying our food got washed out to sea crossing the river this morning." So they said, "Look, we'll give you what we can. We don't have much either but we'll give you what we can." With that we gave them some food and left. But three of their chaps drowned that morning. Three of them, and we didn't want to stick around and hear any more sad stories after
- 19:00 having buried Jock, so we carried on. I don't think very much happened then until we arrived, well we arrived at Waterfall Bay eventually, which Mr Moony had told me, or Mr Frogget had told me we were making for when we were back in Adler Bay. We were going to live off the land, and land of plenty, and we arrived at Adler Bay and there was bloody nothing. I mean there was just nothing.
- 19:30 So we knew there was a plantation called Wunung - W-u-n-u-n-g - not far out from Waterfall Bay in Jacquinot Bay. I mean the coast is full of bays, as you will appreciate. It's like Bondi, Coogee, Maroubra. We eventually arrived at Wunung and found that Major Palmer, the doctor, had set up like

- 20:00 a regimental aid post in the house belonging to the plantation. And anyone who arrived there would be medically examined and if found reasonably fit would be sent on further down the coast about twelve miles to a plantation called Drina, where Major Owen, Selby and other officers had set up camp. Have you read Selby's
- 20:30 book? Oh, well he goes into far more detail, but the plantation was called Drina - D-r-i-n-a - and after we'd been given some, oh, we were told, Wunung plantation and just across further along was Mal Mal Mission, run by Father Harrison, Australian. And he was
- 21:00 being very helpful. He was getting his boys to bring over a kerosene tin full of stewed vegetables everyday. In a canoe, for the patients at Wunung, for Dr Palmer and his patients. So after we had some vegetable stew he examined Ron Brown and Gordon Able, and found them fairly fit, and sent them on to Drina.
- 21:30 Me, I did the usual thing, came down with malaria, and he said, "No, you'll have to stay here for a few days, David, and see if we can get you a bit better." Well unfortunately I was getting malaria at one o'clock every day, and I used to sit on the back step of the house belong the plantation in the hot sun to try and get warm. I hardly had any, I had nothing in the way of a uniform left, except a pair of trousers, a pair of shorts, trunks,
- 22:00 boots and what was left of my socks. So anyway, then I was getting malaria, as I say, at one o'clock every day, so he said to me, "No, you can't go on. You'll stay here." Now Fisher more or less assumed military control of Wunung. Dr Palmer was in charge of the medical duties, and Fisher accepted the responsibility of being the officer
- 22:30 in charge. Even though it was every man for himself, you still had to have someone to whom you could look up to, or accept orders. We're still kids. We looked up to Fisher in that respect. And there were rumours getting around, there were always rumours, that some of the troops had reached the north coast, that they had been in touch with Moresby, and Moresby was going to send a
- 23:00 Catalina aircraft to land in Jacquinot Bay. To land in Jacquinot Bay they were going to establish a lookout post at Palmalmal Plantation, Palmalmal - Malmal is the mission, Palmalmal is the plantation. So Fisher then decides that those patients at Wunung he would take the ten fittest,
- 23:30 or ten of the fittest including himself, would get a canoe provided by Father Harris and set up an observation post on Palmalmal Plantation. I got a guernsey, I was picked to go. And in spite of my daily malaria I was still one of the fittest in the ten to go. Anyway we go over there and there was plenty of copra bags, and we made reasonably
- 24:00 comfortable things to lie on for a bed, in the house of the plantation of Wunung, of Palmalmal. And we'd been there a few days and I got up this morning about six o'clock, and Fisher comes up from the plantation, running up and saying, "Quick, got to get out. Get out in three minutes, the Japs are here." So I go
- 24:30 into where the other chaps are sleeping, and five of them take off, 'pff', gone. That left me with three blokes down with malaria, lying on the floor. So Fisher then says, "I'm going down to see what the Japs are up to," and I go back and I look at these three blokes and I said to myself, "Well, I think my luck is about to run out." I said, "I can't get these chaps out
- 25:00 and if I do where are we going to go?" So I leave them lying on the floor and I go back to where the door, and I'm looking to see where Fisher, if I can see Fisher. And I can't see him and after about ten minutes I think, "Oh, well they've got him and they've killed him." Then to my surprise I see him way in the distance a little group of people coming towards me, and Fisher is at the head of them.
- 25:30 It looked to me to be two others behind him, three others. He comes and he sees me and he says, "We've been saved, we're saved. They're Australian." Oh, I just said to myself "Well that's good," you know I didn't get excited, I was so relieved and I wasn't well. It turns out to be Ivan Champion, Corporal Neal and Sergeant
- 26:00 Marsh. They had volunteered to come and look for us. There's a photo, and they arrived in this little stinking boat called a Mascots. A photo of which I have, and I also have a photo of Marsh, Champion and the corporal. That, anyway.
- 26:30 I think I must be getting tired. So within minutes they had some food, tea and bully beef and that was one of the nicest meals I ever had. A cup of black tea and bully beef. Anyway within half an hour, they were with the signal corps, within half an hour they had their transmitter rigged up and they were in touch with Port Moresby saying that they had located us.
- 27:00 And Moresby said they would send a Catalina to pick us up that night, and Fisher said "Just a minute, there's ten of us here, but in the area there's about a hundred scattered around. Most of them are at the plantation called Drina, further down the coast." So Champion takes some of the natives from Palmalmal, sends them up to tell
- 27:30 Father Harris that we've been found, and Father Harris sends the natives down to Drina to tell Major

Owen that rescue was about to take place. So after a lot of discussion the rescue attempt was then put on hold, and it was decided, or eventually arranged that the Laurabada, which was about of a hundred ton and private yacht of the administrator of New Guinea would be sent.

- 28:00 Would arrive at o eight hundred in the morning and would leave at eighteen hundred the same day, regardless. And at eight o'clock on the morning of the 9th, it arrived right spot on eight o'clock, and by that time a roster had been drawn up. Those from Drina had all arrived and a roster embarkation had been drawn up, and we
- 28:30 all went on board. And just as we were boarding, aircraft could be heard approaching. We thought you know, "We've come this close, don't tell us they're going to bomb us out of existence," and it turned out they were Flying Fortresses on their way to Rabaul. And whether that was a raid being put on the cover our departure or not I don't know, but they were a very welcome sight.
- 29:00 We'd never seen anything like a Flying Fortress of course, but they were easily identified, they were so big. Anyway, after everybody was on board, the officers on the top deck, other ranks were on the lower deck. Women and children and sick people. Women and children from Drina were in the cabins and in the dining room. We cast off and as we cast off,
- 29:30 the sky turned black. And the rain just came down in sheets, and even though the Mascots followed us out, you could hardly see it. And my last recollection of was like a curtain was being drawn between us and Father Harris standing on the Palmalmal Plantation wharf, waving goodbye to us. There's a photograph of him in my diary there.
- 30:00 Of him standing there in his grey pants and his white shirt, and his felt hat and his white shoes, white sandshoes. He came down to Palmalmal Mission to wave us goodbye. We arrived in Cairns.

**What were your emotions at that point?**

Oh, relief, thankfulness. Well until we got, until we arrived

- 30:30 out of sight, out of the sight of land and avoided the possibility of running into any Jap warships or aircraft, we were still apprehensive, and particularly the first morning out from when the rain stopped, one of the chaps on board had died. And we buried him at sea. After that they had two Vickers machine guns mounted up on the top deck,
- 31:00 and tested them and scared the life out of everybody. Which was only to remind us that we weren't home yet. We weren't safe until we pulled up in Port Moresby we weren't safe. Because the Japs were fighting in New Guinea and they had aircraft, and they had warships, they could have blown us out of the water or they could have shot us out of the water. Anyway we eventually arrived at Port Moresby.

**Who was on board the Laurabada,**

- 31:30 **apart form your own party you described, who made up the refugees from Rabaul?**

Oh, about a hundred odd. All units that had gone, all units which had gone as far as you could go, which was Drina. You couldn't go further south to Gasmata, the Japs had taken it. We had gone as far as we could go.

**And what was the state of those people and yourself?**

- 32:00 Oh, well I'll show you the photographs of getting off the Laurabada onto the wharf at Moresby and you can judge for yourself the condition of them.

**Just for someone watching the archive, what sort of condition are you talking about?**

Scarecrows, absolute, well scarecrows. Thin, emaciated, bearded, unkempt, in need of hair cut. I'll just show you my.

- 32:30 **Wait, we'll have a look at that in a minute. You arrived first at Port Moresby? What was there for you?**

Yes, we arrived at a T shaped wharf. We pulled up on the wrong side of the T and went up the steps. It was cordoned off to the right, there were reporters, war correspondents and the rest of the wharf was cordoned off so nobody

- 33:00 could talk to us. Nobody could come and see us and talk to us. We were marched in single file up the steps, along the wharf to the gang plank of the Macdhui which had been kept back for our pending arrival. We went up the steps, up the gang plank of the Macdhui, a steward then escorted four of us, in fours to our cabin,
- 33:30 and a very short time after I got into my cabin another steward came along and beckoned me to go with him. And he took me down into the galley, and asked me whether I would like to hold a turkey drumstick in each hand, which I did. A turkey drumstick in each hand. And from then on it was just good living, all the food we wanted, fresh uniforms.
- 34:00 We even got some money to spend in Cairns when we were due to arrive there. And for six days we



stayed in Cairns. The people in Cairns were marvellous. The shopkeepers wouldn't let us pay for anything. I went into Woolworth's to get some toothbrush and toothpaste, and a very nice young lady by the name of Winnie Sayers, with whom I corresponded for quite a while after I returned to Sydney. She told me she wasn't allowed to take my

34:30 money, from the toothbrush and toothpaste. We were walking up Abbot Street and the ladies would stop you and say, "Welcome home, and how are you this morning?" It was very, you know, you couldn't believe your luck after what we've been through. Then we took off for Townsville.

35:00 **What was it like to wash and brush your teeth again for the first time?**

Sorry?

**What was it like to wash and brush your teeth again for the first time?**

Oh, terrific. Peter Fisher had cut my hair. He had a pair of scissors, I don't know where he got them, but he cut my hair as best he could. Because it was growing, you know, long and dirty of course because none of us had soap. We used to use

35:30 sand to wash with. River sand. And I used to carry a pebble under my tongue to stop myself getting thirsty. You learned all these little tricks, pebble under your tongue.

**What communication did you make with your family?**

What? Oh, well when we arrived at Cairns we were told we were not to attempt to make phone

36:00 calls, but we could send telegrams, and that's the urgent collect pink telegram copy of which is in my album there. Which my mother couldn't understand why the government couldn't afford to pay for a telegram to tell me that I was arrived in Australia. But then the minister for the army's telegram arrived a short

36:30 time later and she realised that the first one was from me. Where would I get money from?

**What did you say in the telegram?**

"Arrived Australia safe and well, love David Bloomfield."

**Were you safe and well?**

No. I was safe, but I wasn't well.

37:00 No.

**What was in store in Townsville? Was that with the AGH? Where did you go in Townsville?**

We went into a hotel where we saw two Negroes having a knife fight, and decided that wasn't for us. Went outside and mingled with thousands of Americans and jeeps and battlewagons and goodness knows what, and

37:30 decided that after the quietness of the jungle, that was preferable to Townsville. Went back on the Macdhui and left the next morning, or left that night. Didn't like Townsville.

**In what ways had Australia changed in the time that you had been away?**

Cairns hadn't changed, the people of Cairns were wonderful people. They were the kind of people that I have always known, nice people. But Townsville, the Yanks had taken

38:00 it over. As I say, the first pub we went into, they were in the middle of a knife fight. Well we weren't used to that, so we decided that we'd give it a miss.

**You'd left before Japan had entered the war, and before America had come into the war. Had Australia geared up a lot more in the time you had been away?**

Well Townsville, there was no evidence of American troops in Cairns, not one. They hadn't got that

38:30 far north. But Townsville, as I say, it was a military town. You didn't see any civilians, they were all Americans. GIs [General Infantrymen] we were told they were called, and the most notable thing was their uniforms as opposed to ours.

**So you got back on the Macdhui, where did you land?**

Number ten, Walsh Bay in Sydney, at ten p.m on the 26th of April,

39:00 1942. I went ashore, found a public telephone off the wharf. Rang my mother, rang my parents phone number, spoke to my mother, apologised for the lateness of the hour. And she told me my Dad was away, and my son-in-law, sorry her, my dear brother-in-law, my late brother-in-law, thank God, was

39:30 staying there with my sister, and that he would drive down to my father's car and they would meet me at Proud's corner, on the corner of King and Pitt Street. They would leave home straight away and meet

me on the corner of King and Pitt Street. And they did and we sat in the car and talked. And around about two in the morning I think they drove me back down to the ten Walsh Bay, I went to bed, and the next morning

- 40:00 a bus took us all to Moore, to Paddington at Moore Park. Where I had enlisted, and we were all medically examined, and they had ambulances lined up to take the boys straight to hospital, and I was lucky that I, I think I told you, I came across a doctor who was the father of two boys whom I had gone to school,
- 40:30 and who was a very keen football follower. He used to come and watch us all play football on a Saturday. He recognised me, and I recognised him, and I more or less said, "Under the old chums act, how about not sending me to hospital but giving me seven days' special leave?" So he said, "How are you?" and I said, "Good," so he said, anyway he reluctantly agreed. And I only lasted three days. A school friend picked me up from my place the afternoon, the day I arrived home. And he took me out in his mother's car. And it was a 1937 Ford, and it had an air vent under the dash that you would push and open. I was only in shorts and the cold air blew onto my knees, and poor Peter, he died and saw me have an attack of malaria and couldn't get me home quick enough. He'd never seen it, didn't know what was happening to me. But I was shivering, I couldn't, you know, have you seen malaria? Of course you have. No matter what you do, you can't get warm. So he got me home and my mother didn't know what to do, so I said, "Look, just put a blanket on the lounge room floor, and get me..."

## Tape 9

- 00:42 **Where we left off on the last tape, you were lying on the floor with malaria in your house. What treatment had been given to you to fix you up?**

None. Until I was taken to Concord, where we became guinea pigs. We were the first lot of troops to arrive back in Australia with malaria.

- 01:00 And the treatment in those days at Concord, were thirty grains of quinine injected into buttock every day for five days. Two days break, five days of plasmoquin which gave you heart palpitations. Two days break and five days of Atebrin which turned you yellow. We were then sent out on weekend leave, and invariably you came back
- 01:30 in an ambulance and you'd go through it all again. Five days quinine, five days plasmoquin and five days Atebrin. Out on leave for the weekend, come back and go, come back in an ambulance. Or make your own way back, and have further treatment. They then got the idea of sending us down to Goulbourn, where it's very cold, as you know, to part of what was the
- 02:00 asylum down there. But it became the, one wing was allocated to become the 114th AGH, and they sent us down there in the hospital train which was all very exciting. The only problem was that anyone that got malaria attacks, which was all of us, there was no medication sent on the train with us. So they had to send for the train to send us back. They then
- 02:30 readmitted us to Concord, and then we were sent to various convalescent homes. I was sent to Leura because it was nice and cold up there. And I was given leave, and I went down to Katoomba and came back in a taxi with malaria, and of course again there was no treatment sent for me. So back on the train to Concord.

**So at this stage none of the treatment**

- 03:00 **had worked?**

No. I think Atebrin, that's the one the Americans were taking, that turns you yellow. I think that proved to be effective, but it was long term, not just five days. I think on a long term daily basis that proved to be a good suppressant of the malaria. But I eventually finished up at Lady Davidson

- 03:30 up at Turrumurra, then eventually classified B2 and sent to Victoria Barracks pushing a pen. Where I got two attacks of malaria and finished up in the 12th Camp Hospital in the Showground, and there I contracted trench mouth and they wanted to take out all my teeth, and I said, "No way," and went AWOL and was threatened with court martial. I said, "Well okay, I'll accept that, but at least I

- 04:00 still have my teeth." My father took me to the local family dentist and he cauterised my gums with a white hot wire, and saved my teeth. Which eventually had to be replaced twenty five years later.

**So you never got over the malaria?**

No, I had it for seven years, a total of seven years.

- 04:30 I hesitate to tell you that one of the types of malaria that I had, also has a deteriorative effect on another function of mine. If you have malignant malaria it can be responsible for other functional disorders.

### **Like the reproductive system?**

Yes, right.

### **Just jumping ahead now, you've touched on your discharge**

#### **05:00 from the army. How did you end up joining the American army ships?**

Right, well I was discharged and became a civilian, and I found that none of my friends, school friends or neighbours were around. I was lonely, for the want of a better word. And a chap with whom I grew up who was also in Concord hospital with me

05:30 for a time. He was discharged also, and we were walking along York St. one day. No particular reason, and we passed Grace Building. And there outside on the footpath was a stand which said 'Volunteers wanted for the United States Army small ships', so I said to Sid, "Well it costs nothing, let's go in and see what this is about." Well if you had read my book

06:00 you would have read that I learnt to navigate through my friend Ben Deburca. What I didn't tell you was in my, that when I was going aboard the Neptuna, in Sydney to go to Rabaul, with my kitbag on my shoulder and my rifle. I get up the gangplank and this voice says to me, "What are you doing here?" and I looked up and it's Ben Deburca, and I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I'm third officer on the

06:30 Neptuna." I said, "You never told me," and he said, "You never asked me, you were in the army. You joined up." And he was third officer on the Neptuna and got killed at Darwin on the 14th February, when the Japs carried out that big raid. But anyway, Sid and I go into the ground floor of the Grace Building, and they're set up there, and there's chaps scribbling out, writing out application forms. So

07:00 we got a couple and we looked at them and then we were interviewed by a Major Mijch - M-i-j-c-h, and then told him we had just been discharged from the Australian Army. He said, "Well you'll hear from us. Of course we'll have to draw your medical records, and you'll hear from us about having a medical check up with us before we can

07:30 send you away." Our letters duly arrived and Sid and I turn up at the corner of Erskine and York Streets, which was called 'the Dispensary'. And there we come across Dr Pappy Gershwin, a nice Jewish doctor from New York. And Sid being Jewish as I am, present ourselves before Dr Pappy Gershwin, and he looks at us, and he looks at the two files on his desk - both of which are about that thick,

08:00 indicating about four inches thick. And he says, "You don't really think I'm going to send you guys away overseas, do you?" We said, "Yes." And he said, "Why?" I said, "Well A, I'm qualified to navigate and I would be of use to the small ships," and Sid said "Well I know a bit about boats too." So he said, "Well if you come back here sick, I'm going to have your ass." So I said, "Okay, Doc,

08:30 that's fine," and we got notification that we were to present ourselves at such and such a wharf to board the Bonte Co, a Dutch freighter. God, what a scow that was. And we were given no cabin, we were bunked down in the hold on canvas over forty four gallon drums of hundred octane aircraft fuel. And here we are

09:00 smoking and playing cards on top of all this aircraft fuel. And on board with us, being sent up to New Guinea, were a lot of American deserters that had been rounded up in Sydney, and they were shipping up to the front line. To be soldiers. And there was one chap called 'California Callier', and he led the mutiny. As we were approaching

09:30 Brisbane they put on a mutiny, and by the time we got to the wharf in Brisbane there would have been about fifty MPs with sub-machine guns waiting for the ship to tie up, and that was the end of the mutiny. We were given leave.

### **How did the mutiny take hold?**

Well by the time, we were shepherded off the boat, off the ship and told to go up to Brisbane.

#### **10:00 But on board the ship, when did it...**

Well only a couple of hours before we were due to take over, land in Brisbane. "I think we're going to do everything, we're going to take over the ship and kill the officers." Anyway it was all very scary. We were told to get lost and come back at seventeen hundred hours, by which time, when we came back, you wouldn't have even known there'd ever been

10:30 a sailor on board.

### **So were you imprisoned while they took over the ship? In the cabin or?**

No, we were just told to keep out of the way. Cally, I got to know Cally. California was his name. I don't know his real name, I think everyone called him Cally. He just said to me, "Just keep out of the way. Don't butt in, just keep out of it, just stay down below decks." He was a nice enough bloke

11:00 as far as I was concerned.

**And the rest of the crew, were they put in any quarters?**

Don't know. We were just told to go downstairs, stay there and shut up. Don't interfere. It was only a couple of hours out of Brisbane. We were in the Brisbane River. I say, I've never seen so many bloody MPs in my life, all standing there with bloody Thompson machineguns.

**So this Dutch ship, was that the one**

11:30 The Bonte Co?

**The Bonte Co. Was that the one you'd been posted to, or had you been transferred?**

No, I was told to report to, I forget the wharf we sailed from in Sydney, I think it was somewhere in Woolloomooloo, I'm not sure. But my Dad drove me down there, and I just said, "Goodbye Dad," and went aboard, in the uniform. American uniform.

**What was your parents' viewpoint of actually joining the small ships, given your sickness?**

Oh, I think they were used to me

12:00 by then. I think they were, I think they took the attitude that this is what he wants to do, good. I was a big boy now. I'd been to war and I had a mind of my own, and I'd met Aviva, and I wasn't causing any problems. I was just getting glary, and I don't think my mother was sorry that she didn't have to hit the saddle all the time. Anyway I was lucky I didn't have malaria anywhere along the way up, until I got up into Finschhafen and Biak.

12:30 Anyway, I got crook in Biak and they flew me back to Finschhafen, put me into the 161 Station Hospital, and from there they transferred me to the 4th General, and from the 4th General I was given the board, and they said, "You're going home." And they took me to Drega Harbour, put me on a C-47 which was a paratroopers plane, with nice

13:00 steel seats tunning along the length of it. And the pilot went straight up to ten thousand feet without any pressurisation, and all the sweat on our shirts just turned to salt it was that cold. He flew over, he was told that the Japs used to circle over the hump, going over the Owen Stanleys and waiting for the transport planes. And he took them seriously and he went to ten

13:30 thousand feet. Anyway we landed at Garbutt Airfield in Townsville. And there was no provision for me to go any further. That's as far as the plane took me. I was supposed to catch a train then to Brisbane and then to Sydney. Well if they thought I was going to get a train from Brisbane to Sydney, they were wrong. So I didn't pull rank but I made my way to Garbutt Airfield

14:00 dispatch office and I told them that, "I'd been discharged, medically unfit," and that I was an officer, and that "I would like to thumb a ride to Brisbane or preferably Sydney, but Brisbane as soon as I could there was room for me." I finished up in the Bombay of a liberator, very nervous

14:30 that the wrong lever might be pulled at any moment. And we arrived at Brisbane at Eagle Farm, and then I was in Camp Ascots, which is now the commercial airport out near there. From there I ended up, I couldn't get a flight out and finished up on a train from Brisbane to Sydney. And that is something you'd have to do to believe.

**15:00 So just going back to the small ships, you had to sold the fact that you'd done a little bit of navigation and been trained in it. Was that your role on board the ship?**

Yes, oh yes. Perhaps I should tell you that the first boat I went on, they're not ships, they're boats. The WT-57 was a Captain Perano, he was what you call 'Master D'. Master was someone who had been to

15:30 St Petersburg in Florida, done a ninety day course and come out a captain. He couldn't navigate. He didn't like to lose sight of land, so when he got someone who could navigate and could read a chart, he was quite happy. I was up there for Thanksgiving, and I can tell you, if there's ever another war, join the Americans. I mean would you get tinned turkey and cranberry sauce up on the front line? I did, and Coca Cola and ice cream

16:00 from the PX [American canteen unit] store, and cartons of American cigarettes for twenty five cents a carton, not a packet. I was smoking Lucky Strike, Pall Mall and what else, Camel. They were the three chosen brands that I used to smoke. Used to cost me three cents a pack, or twenty five cents a carton. That was when I was at shore, when I was at sea it cost nothing.

16:30 Smoked your head off.

**Just in regards to your navigation, were you navigating at night by the stars? Were you familiar with all that?**

Compass. Off the chart and compass, compass readings. I'd take a heading off the charts, drawing line, and give them a compass heading and that was it. Give the helmsman a compass heading and that was it.

17:00 You weren't far off the coast, I mean there weren't many traffic signs or light on shore, but you knew

that you weren't far off shore. I might be a mile or so off shore, no reefs. No.

**What supplies were you taking north?**

Ammunition. Ammo mainly to the troops. And when we did a quick trip up into Leyte, we were Philippines, D plus three.

17:30 That's day three after the D Day or the landing, and we were running ammunition up there.

**You mention that there were no reefs, but there are reefs up north?**

Oh yes there are reefs up there, but I mean they're marked clearly on the charts and you just avoid them. They give a compass heading and then you change your compass heading to skirt a reef or go inside it, or around it. Ben Deburca

18:00 did a good job in teaching me. But he taught me splicing and everything. I mean I could, I did a bit of yachting when I came out of the army, when I came back from the American, Aviva and I used to go yachting every weekend. I used to do all my own splicing and rigging and everything. I could do all of those things.

**Did you encounter any Japanese opposition? Any aircraft, shipping on the way up?**

At Biak we did. In Biak we did.

18:30 **What happened there?**

We lost our boat. It was only wood and this Zero shot us up. And we just sank in the harbour.

**So you had arrived in the harbour?**

Yes, we arrived on the way back from Leyte and we were making our way back to Finch, and the boat just gently sank. And they came out and picked us up, took us to shore and flew us back to Finschhafen.

19:00 That's when I started getting the malaria again.

**Could you talk me through what happened, the events of that day? You were anchored in the harbour?**

Yes, and it was just after dawn. And we got peppered along the water line, and the boat, we were on the other side of the, she got peppered on the port side, and we were on the starboard side. No one got hurt, except the boat just got holed and we sank. Not like that, just

19:30 like the Titanic. She settled, she filled with water and settled. They're not very big boats, you know. They're only about thirty five, forty feet, and they're timber.

**Did you have a gun to return fire?**

I didn't. I wasn't on the Oerlikon, there was only an Oerlikon and it was just before dawn. I don't think there was anyone on the Oerlikon that morning. I don't remember anyone firing the Oerlikon.

20:00 **So you were on board?**

Yes, I was on board. We were all on board. We were just stopped on the harbour overnight and we were waiting for light to take off and go home. Home being Finschhafen.

**Can you describe Finschhafen for me?**

We yes. We were camped just around from Scarlet Beach, which was a very big fighting area for the 9th Division.

20:30 And there wasn't a tree, or there wasn't any palms on any of the trees, they were stripped bare. And around from Scarlet Beach was where we actually had our wharves. There was half a liberty ship called the Rufus King. The bow section which was being used was beached and was being used as a machine shop.

21:00 Nothing much happened at Finschhafen, there was no action at the stage. I mean the Japs had cleared out of Buna and Gona, and in fact I think they were just about out of New Guinea. There was nothing much going on, although they reckon that the Japs used to come and sit in the trees and watch our movies. I saw "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" up there. That's how old it is.

21:30 That's how long ago it was. Accommodation was good, the food was excellent. We used to get hot cakes and maple syrup and eggs for breakfast, and Spam. But tinned turkey and cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving. That's living. That's really roughing it.

**What about weather on board the ships? Did you come across any strong seas?**

No, no storms.

22:00 The weather up there seemed to be quite mild and calm. No, I never ran into any storms. They

happened but I never encountered any. And we could cope, I mean the FS-2B would have gone straight through, the WT-57 would have pitched around a bit, but you've got thirty two knots going, you're practically

22:30 bouncing on top of the waves. Not that they would be waves, they would be swell, white horses. They wouldn't be that sort of waves. And you'd be skipping over them. You've seen those sixty foot long speed boats that compete in ocean races? Well that's how, the FS-2B wasn't sixty foot long, but they would skip. Thirty two knots is nearly

23:00 fifty mile an hour. It's fast.

**Did you have a desire still in a sense, to get back and start fighting the Japanese?**

Why do you think I went back?

**Front line wise?**

That's why I, I think if I was to be, if I was to search my motives for joining the Americans, I think it was to try and get square. I never expressed it but I think if I was to examine my feelings, that was what it was all about.

23:30 **Do you remember where you were when you heard that the Pacific war was over?**

Yes, I know exactly where I was. I was at Edgecliff visiting a friend of mine, and I think Aviva met me, because I think the four of us, Morris and his sister Dulcie, and Aviva and I. I think I can remember us walking

24:00 down Williams St. from the Cross. We walked from Edgecliff up to Kings Cross and we were walking to the city I think, to join in the festivities. But I remember the four of us, I was certainly with Morris walking down Williams St. and I didn't feel any great elation. I was glad it was over but I can't remember having any great elation. Probably because, well

24:30 I'd been there, done that. I'd had all the excitement I wanted.

**Had you heard reports about the atomic bomb being dropped?**

It's a funny thing you should say that. When I was in the 161st Station Hospital there was a chap in the next bed to me. Floyd,

25:00 no not Fred Firby. Floyd someone, and he described to me that the Americans had a bomb which didn't explode on contact but it had a timer. A mercury switch that

25:30 when it reached a certain point above the ground, it exploded. And it 'khukh' sucked everything up. You know what he was describing? The atomic bomb. And this is up in Finschhafen in 1944. Round about October, November 1944. And here he is talking about this bomb that the Americans had. How would he know that? And I said,

26:00 "Oh, yes," Of course Yanks are terrible bullshitters, absolutely, oh they're terrible. All they talk about from the moment they wake up is women.

**Just coming now towards the end of the interview, your views on war itself. What would you say to future generations about war?**

Well, it would appear looking at

26:30 history that they're with us for keeps. They'll always, I think while there are human beings, be wars. That's my impression. I didn't think that when I was in school, I would be involved in a war, but when I was involved in it I could see that it could be an ongoing thing, because there will always be someone wanting what someone else had got. And if it meant going to war and killing to get it, that's what they would do.

27:00 Particularly the Japanese. I never ever forgot the newsreels, the Gaumont British newsreels that I used to see on a Saturday afternoon at the matinees of the Japanese invasion of China. Never forget it, and the stories that came out of it, apart from what I saw about carrying babies on the end of their bayonets. You know, and I believe it. Having

27:30 seen what the Japanese do, I believe everything that I heard about them.

**You've mentioned your dislike of the Japanese...**

Loathe, hate and despise them.

**Is that them as a people, or just that generation?**

The apple never falls far from the tree. No, that's my belief.

**You also shared earlier about your faith in Yahweh, and how the war really**

28:00 **shook that up. How did the war actually shake up your religious beliefs?**

Yes. Well it just made me feel that whilst I feel on one hand someone was looking after, they had to be in Tol. They had to be. I mean, having seen what happened to my friends, and to brush shoulders with the Japanese officer in charge of those massacre, and not to have pulled his pistol and shot me in the

28:30 back. Or taken his sword and slashed me and my friend. You know, someone had to be guiding me or his hand, or something, I don't know. I've never, I can't explain it, but all I know is that I think somebody or something, some power has to be looking after me that day. 4th February, 1942. I'll never, ever, ever forget it, or what I saw that day.

29:00 And finding Smacker shot five times in the back. Oh, you know.

**So you felt there was a guiding hand, yet it rocked your faith and belief in that hand?**

Yes. Unfortunately, yes. I just wondered why all those young people had to die. One hundred and fifty eight were massacred at Tol, and eight hundred and fifty drowned on the Montevideo Maru.

29:30 Not all my friends, but the Lark Force. Eight hundred and fifty troops, no survivors.

**So how can there be a God to let that happen?**

That's my question. I mean, they say he moves in mysterious ways, well, I would have to agree with that. But I can't justify eight hundred and fifty prisoners of war who weren't harming anybody, because

30:00 they were prisoners of war. But being drowned on a ship, an unmarked ship. The Japs didn't notify the allies for three years, you know, that they had lost the Montevideo. Also there was a theory that the Montevideo Maru never existed. There's stories that it went out to sea and came back in three days,

30:30 much higher out in the water than when it left. And the suggestion is that the prisoners were thrown overboard. Another theory was that the Montevideo Maru never existed, and that the eight hundred and fifty prisoners were thrown into the volcano, which was a ready made crematorium. And very plausible. I mean, it's a possibility.

31:00 I mean there's that many people, prisoners buried. There are that many prisoners and soldiers buried in Rabaul, there were six hundred British artillerymen. If you can ever find a book called What Price Bushido? and you want to find out what the Japs were like, read it. I have never read a more harrowing book, and I have seen a lot as you know.

31:30 But reading that book, the cruelty of the Japanese is unbelievable.

**Coming back to what you saw, do you have nightmares, or did you have nightmares after the war?**

No. Fortunately I don't suffer from nightmares. Perhaps I'm too practical, or too realistic, but no I never. I think about it, and then I just put it out of my mind, or try to.

32:00 But I'll never forget it. I'll never forgive or forget what I saw on the 4th February, or 4th and 5th of February.

**Those bodies that you came across, the ones that were burnt in that hut.**

They were burnt alive. They were wounded men that had been put in there for safe keeping, hopefully to avoid them being found by the Japanese. A friend,

32:30 another chap who had been wounded found them and put them there, and had to leave them, and of course the Japs were landed at Tol.

**Could you see what their wounds were?**

No, but from what my friend told me they were bayoneted. The chap who 'rescued' them and put them into the hut said they were bayoneted.

33:00 You mention Billy Cook. Billy of course was a marvel. He was bayoneted eleven times. He was bayoneted five times and feigned dead, and the chap next door, next to him, was still alive and was groaning in agony, and the Jap heard him, came back. Billy held his breath, had to let it out and the Jap saw him, and bayoneted him six more times.

33:30 They're not long out of the trees. No, I don't want to talk about our friends the Japs. As I said, I loath, hate and despise them. Regrettably, the golf club to which I'm a member, although I can't play any more because I've had a serious operation and lost half of my shoulder muscle from cancer. I can't play any more but I'm still a member.

34:00 And they have members, corporate members there, and I avoid them like the plague. I don't talk to them, I don't speak to them, I don't look at them, I don't go near them. I don't want to. I feel I want to get a one iron and wrap it around their skulls. I know they're the sons or grandsons of who I fought, but it doesn't make any difference to me, they're Japanese. And leopards don't change their spots.

34:30 I reckon given another war, they'd be just the same, the Bushido Cult. That's my opinion. It's instilled into them from birth. But read that book if you can get hold of it, What Price Bushido? It's about six hundred British artillerymen who were sent to Rabaul as slave labour, and I mean slave labour.

**Just a final question, obviously we're doing**

35:00 **this for the archive, and future generations will watch this. Is there any message you'd like to say, or anything you'd like to add to the interview that you've shared today?**

Well I just hope that my experiences and those that I have related will serve as some discouragement for any future war. But I think it's a forlorn hope personally, I think it is.

35:30 Human being, as I say, are the only animals that kill for no reason. Most animals kill for food, but human beings kill for the joy of killing. You've only got to look at what's going on in Iraq at the moment. Or Israel and Jerusalem, only got to look over there. A hatred, you can see those Arabs.

36:00 No, I'm afraid I can add nothing more.

**Well thank you for your time today.**

My pleasure. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to vent my spleen, as it were. No, when I think of the interview that somebody did in Australia Remembers with Jack Hart, his daughter

36:30 or something, his son is married to a Japanese. He's a pacifist now. Well good luck to you Jack.