

Australians at War Film Archive

James Cross (Jim) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1800>

Tape 1

- 00:40 My name is James Charles Cross. Jim, they call me, Jim. I was born in Moore, little town in from the Back-Back Range.
- 01:00 In Vision Valley. I was brought up, I was actually born in a little house just up in the hills from the station, I didn't have a doctor, I had a midwife and I was actually born at home, type of thing. I come on a - lived on a dairy farm, I was born on a dairy farm, we - I had four sisters, two brothers. And we milked 100 cows plus all the year
- 01:30 round and of course, all us kids we used to do all the milking. I used to get the cows in and help to milk and then go to school, come home from school, milk them again, that was our life and we really enjoyed it though, it was really beautiful life in the country, you know. And we lived well, we a lot of stuff, we grew all our own veggies [vegetables] type thing and we always had plenty.
- 02:00 I think Mum used to make the homemade bread, we had plenty of bread and the home butter and we used to actually live off the land more or less. But you know, we had a really good life and really enjoyed it. Well, I went to - I think I started school, I think at five. I went to the Moore State School, and I done all me school there, I stayed there for - I left school at 14.
- 02:30 I think when I left we had five in my class, three boys and two girls. So it was only a very small, small school. Small town. The town itself, I think it had a - well it did have a pub, but the pub burnt down. Had to finish that part of it. I think had a store, a garage, a café sort of a store type of thing, a police station and that was about it. That was our town.
- 03:00 We've got the widest street in Queensland though, it's a street about 200 yards wide. And it's just up the middle is all open ground but no, it's a lovely little town, lovely little place and I really enjoyed me life there. And I stayed on the farm until I turned 17 and the meantime my brother, he's older than me and the war started. And my brother joined up and
- 03:30 he went away. He went to Singapore in 1941, I think, and I turned 17 about then, and of course then I said, "Well, I better go where he is." So I said, "I'm going to join the navy." So I decided to join the navy and I got all the papers, but I struck a hitch because Mum and Dad wouldn't sign the papers. At that time, we hadn't heard from my brother, whether he was
- 04:00 alive, dead or what. Didn't know anything about it. And they wouldn't sign. And I kept pestering them all the time, you know, anyhow one night I just overheard Mum and Dad talking and they said, "Well I suppose if he wants to go, we may as well let him go." You know. So next day I gets the papers out and sign them. Anyhow I sent them away. And they sent back and I had to have a medical. I think I had the medical first. Yeah, I had to - our nearest doctor was in
- 04:30 Esk, which was 30 mile away, and I think we had to go down there, I don't think he come to the town. Anyhow I had a medical, passed that all right. So then they wrote back, I had to have an education exam, they wanted to know the name of a teacher or of member of the religion or something that put me through you know. So I give them the schoolteacher and they sent it up. I passed that. They wrote back and said, "Okay.
- 05:00 When we need you, we'll write." So I waited and waited and waited and waited. No word came. Nothing came. In the meantime, a recruitment mob come round to - they used to go round from town to town recruiting and they come into Moore so I went in to see them. And I told them, I said, "Oh I'm waiting for a call up from the navy." They said, "Well if you want to get in quickly," he said, "is to join here and
- 05:30 when you get to the exhibition ground in Brisbane, they'll take you and you'll be in the navy, see." So way to go, so I'll be doing that. I got to the exhibition ground and I said to the fella about it and he said, "Sorry, boy" he said, "You're in the army now." So anyhow I went down to the naval depot in Alice Street and told them, they said, "Okay, when you get to your unit, just write to us and tell us your address and when we want you, we'll give you a call." So I done that.

06:00 I got a - acknowledged the letter and I shifted the - I went to Tenterfield, me first camp was Tenterfield, I went to Greta from there - I sent them me address again, they acknowledged that and after that. Anyhow, in the meantime, they shifted the age to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] to 18, so I said, "Ah well, better than the army, don't want to be in the navy anyhow." So because you had to get your parents' permission, so I sent the papers home and they signed them.

06:30 And so I joined in February and I think in May I was in the AIF and I never heard another word from the navy until 1947, I was in Nambour and I get this envelope back about that thick, Naval department, I said, "Hey, I've got me call-up, look." They sent all me papers back, that's the last I heard. So that's how I come to join the army. But that was

07:00 well my early life, that's how it all started.

Righto, well we'll go back. What is your very first memory of childhood?

Me first memory? My first memory would be - well certainly be on the farm, no doubt about that. I suppose getting milk from the cows I suppose. But the way we had it, it was a good childhood,

07:30 cos I had my sister was only just older than me and you know there was sort of - grew up sort of with them and that'd be, I don't know, me first memory, actually it's a long time ago. But yeah, I suppose, you're brought up on a farm, you've got dogs and pigs and dogs and cats and calves and everything and all that type of thing. And

08:00 you've got pets type of thing. I suppose that's about the early life, I suppose.

So what was dad like?

Oh he was a nice old fella, I'd make about four of him I suppose. But no, he was a real good hardworking, you know, real farmer you know and real hard worker, he looked after us

08:30 so well and I had good parents. Real good parents, yeah.

Had he always done dairying?

Always dairying. Yeah. Always dairying. And of course, as I got a bit older, of course then went to school and of course the milking was my job of course was to get the cows in. So winter or summer up before dark, you know, in the dark, have the cows all in ready to milk them by daylight. Milk them and then off to school. Come back from school and milk them again and

09:00 that was my job always to get the cows in. But I used to do a little bit of scheming here and there of a night time and I'd say, "Oh, I might go and see if I can get some fish for tea." You know, so to get out of the milking, I'd go and dig some worms, go over to the creek and come home with a fish. All only to get out of milking them. But yeah, we milked just over 100 cows, you know. And later on we had the milking machines, that wasn't too bad. The old days,

09:30 all by hand and we had no power, nothing like that.

How many cows would you milk in a session on your own?

Oh gee, you could - look, just depends, if you was fair dinkum and wasn't bludging on it, oh you'd probably milk about 20 I suppose, 20.

So that was your dad, you, your brother?

Me sisters, Dad used to work on the farm a lot. When I got

10:00 older, that was my job. When I left school and he'd work on the farm and all the kids, Mum and the kids would do the milking, you know. And we had, there was six males and we'd, you know, away we'd go. You get through them. You get through them. It took time. Wasn't hard work.

And were there little things that you'd do to pass the time while you were doing it?

No, you'd just - on the cow and you'd go for

10:30 your life really. You get a rhythm up, you know. Away you'd go. I remember once, later on, a neighbour, they all went away on a holiday and left this one bloke there to look after everything, I went over to help him. And they had about, I think they had about 80, and just the two of us, by hand. These were milked by hand, and we just get there and I know at the finish we had one in particular

11:00 was always tough to milk, you know. You'd have to really work it to get the milk out. It was always the last one to go through. And be watching one. One who would get the toughest. The things you'd do to get out of it. But little things like that come back to you in time, you know.

Where did your dad sell all the milk to?

Well the cream was sent to the factory which was the Esk Butter Factory, and

11:30 the milk was all fed to the pigs, we had a lot of pigs too see. And skim milk went to the pigs and cream

went to the factory. We didn't sell milk only as milk, it was all butter, you know.

And did you do your own stuff with the milk for yourself? Like make your own butter?

Oh yeah, we made all our own butter, oh yeah. At first we used to have the old billy can. That's a big syrup can, you used to buy your syrup in it. It was about that round and about that high, we used to put it in that and we'd shake

12:00 it out. And after that we had a churn, we just churned, but it's hard to – when you hear them go, “drop, drop, drop,” you're very lucky cos the butter was made.

How long would that take?

Oh it could take a while. You get this button and away you'd go. And then you'd stop for a while to go this way and then you hear, “plop, plop.” Oh thank God.

When you get tired do you pass to your brother or your sister?

Well if there's anybody there. If nobody was there, you'd have to just keep on going. We – that was pretty obvious

12:30 to that, you did a lot of butter and of course there was a lot of – especially going to school. Take your lunches, you know. Used a lot of butter.

And what was mum like?

Oh Mum was good. She was a real old darling, yeah. Very good. Yeah they were both really good, you know. Both good hard workers and, no they were really, really good. They looked after us extra well.

13:00 **So what sort of food would mum cook?**

Well, we had a terrible lot of corned meat. We use to kill our own but we used to kill with the neighbour and we used to take half each. Cos we hadn't – there was no refrigerators or anything, it was the first three or four days, you'd live it up on steak and

13:30 a roast, but from there on, all gone. We had a big barrel of – sort of about four foot high about three foot across I suppose and it was filled with brine and I think about every second day you'd have another piece of corned meat out of the thing. We lived out of a lot of corned meat. And of course, we always had plenty of vegies. We had our own potatoes and our own sweet potatoes and all that type of thing, you know. So we always – and beans we had our own – grew,

14:00 we had a sort of a garden around the house, which had all the you know, cabbages and beans in it. Tomatoes and you know all that type of stuff. So we grew most of our vegies.

So did you notice the impact of The Depression?

Well oh yeah. It didn't actually hit us so much because we had our own food and that. It didn't hit like, it was all around you though. You know, the prices were nothing,

14:30 you know, you were making nothing out of the – I don't know how some people lived in town, that type of thing. We used to have the, we used to call them the swaggies, swagmen, they used to come around and they'd want to do a bit of work, so we'd get someone, they'd do a bit of fencing. And some of them worked for just tucker and a little bit of money, you know, and you'd get your fencing done while they do it. Things like ringbarking and of course, used to do a lot of ringbarking then, now of course, ringbarking is out now.

15:00 You mustn't kill the trees now. In those days, you had to, otherwise you had no land. But they used to help there. Oh yes, it was all around you, oh yeah.

So besides milking the cows, what other chores did you have to do round the house?

Well after I left school, and I done the farm work then and I'd stay on the farm, like ploughing and that until it was dark, cos they'd do the milking, I didn't have to do it any more. So I'd stay on the farm til I couldn't see any more. And then you'd come home

15:30 and you'd have your tea and over to the barn on the chaff, cut the chaff for the horses the next day. Then go home to bed. It was a lot of long hard work. But hard work never hurt nobody.

Where were you in amongst your brothers and sisters?

I was the second youngest. My brother was the oldest, and they had three girls and then me,

16:00 and then my other sister was an afterthought. I'm right in the middle, I'm nine years younger than me brother and I'm nine years older than me sister.

So how did that work out, being in the middle?

Well, actually I'm the bottom of five, you know, in a row type of thing, and then nine years after, had a sister. So I was the youngest of five, more or less, and I think when I joined the army, my sister was

16:30 I think she was eight or just round eight or just turned nine, yeah. And well, she thought I was a real hero then, you know.

So being the youngest for so long, did that mean that you'd be looked after?

Well, I suppose I was in a way, yeah, I suppose I was in a way, yeah. For while anyhow.

And did you have any pets?

Oh we had two cattle dogs,

17:00 was always a cat around the place, you know, they were always there. Always had dogs, you've got to have dogs on a farm.

And riding horses?

Oh I loved my, I was a pretty good rider, I thought, I used to do a bit of buckjump riding and that, and bullock riding.

How did that come about?

Oh just something that you was learnt and brought up to. You used to break in your own horses and all that, you know. All that.

You'd go out and catch your own horses?

No, you'd reared your own and then

17:30 when it, oh about two year old, two and a half you'd mount them and ride them and that was it.

And were there rodeos and things like that on?

Oh yeah. We all used to join them. I used to love riding horses. They didn't buck, we'd make them buck.

How do you do that?

Put a pack rope on them. That

18:00 makes them buck.

And what about local shows and things like that?

Yeah, to do all the shows and things like that we used to do a bit of riding. And of course in those days, we used to have the shows, Stanthorpe show, used to go around with Stan Gill was a - I knew Stan Gill cos I was in the army with him and he pitched a show to Nambour one day. This was after I come out of the army, and I hadn't been on a horse for a long time. And he come into the pub one day, and

18:30 he said, "How ya going?" He said, "I've got a show registered." He said, "You're a local here now?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Yeah well you better ride one of my horses tonight." I said, "Oh yeah." He said, "I'll have the local boys to ride him." I said, "No, I'm finished with that type of business." He said, "Ah bull, come on." I said, "Okay, as long as you give me a nice quiet one." Anyhow, it never eventuated, because he said, "I'll give the nod when to come in." Whatever happened, the power cut out and never

19:00 came on again and the show was cancelled, and I was glad, because, I'd had quite a few beers too.

You weren't the one that pulled the power were you?

No. But the (UNCLEAR)

So apart from working on the farm, you must have got up to a lot of good stuff.

Oh a lot of good fun. The place next door, they had a pretty big property and we used to have - well more or less, the rodeo there

19:30 well, every second Sunday anyhow. And people would bring a horse along if they thought it could go a bit, so you reckoned couldn't ride it and things like that and another one would bring one and they had a big red bull, and they used to have it in the Toogoolawah show. Oh it was an enormous thing and I'd never ever seen it ridden. No one could ever ride it. But every second Sunday, somebody'd try to, you know. One Sunday, I'll never forget, one Sunday, this young bloke come, he said, "Oh that bull." He said, "Anybody could ride that thing."

20:00 I said, "This fella will get a surprise when he hops on." He's the only fella that ever rode it. The bull never bucked one buck. He just hopped on him, he just sort of went like that a couple of times, and just trotted around the ring, never - he must have said, "I've had enough, no more." He's the only bloke that ever rode it, yeah. But that used to - every second Sunday we used to - they'd all come, oh about a dozen or so be there and some of them'd bring a horse, they reckoned you couldn't ride, so

20:30 you'd try and ride it. You'd get thrown sometimes, you'd ride it sometimes. Had a lot of fun. We made our own fun, you know. Little country towns, you've got to make your own fun.

What about shooting?

Well, I never done it on the range, only on the farm. I done a lot of rifle shooting on the farm. Had a lot of dingoes there and you had to. I used to carry the rifle every time I went out with your mustering or whatever you were doing. For dingoes mainly you know.

- 21:00 And that was worth money too. The council used to give you, I think it was ten bob, I think. For the – you'd have to cut a strip down the back and tail and take it in, you get ten bob. Crows, you used to get a shilling for crows. And that was good money we thought.

What sort of rifle did you have?

I had a 32/20. Little, like the one the Rifleman used to use on the TV [television]. That one, little action underneath the –

- 21:30 good rifle. Oh yeah, beaut. But the only thing, ammunition was very scarce, because you had to have a permit, you had to write in and get a permit to get your ammunition and you had to make sure that you didn't waste it then, you know.

And who taught you how to shoot?

Oh you just taught yourself, you know. But well, I think probably one of me first Father Christmas presents was an air rifle, I think. So you know, we always had a rifle on the farm. We actually had a rifle and a shotgun on the farm. But

- 22:00 lots of snakes and that around up there, you know. All great fun though, I enjoyed it. But after the war of course, no. Wasn't for me. I didn't want to go back to it. I did for a little while, but not for long.

What about swimming and that sort of thing?

Well, plenty of – in the creeks there we had a couple of good holes, because have a swim in, you couldn't break no record in them or anything like that but you could always have a dip in them you know. You always learn to swim in them.

- 22:30 And we had a big dam but it was a lot of mud in that and if you went in you had to swim right across because you couldn't stop in the middle. You'd get bogged and wouldn't get out.

Did you go yabbing in there?

Yabbing in the creeks, plenty of yabbies in the creeks, used to get the stones up to get the yabbies, yeah. Good ones too, take them home and boil them up. Oh yeah. Oh we had lots of fun.

And you mentioned Christmas before, what were Christmases like?

Well, Christmas was always very good, we used to go to the Toogoolawah for Christmas Eve, I remember.

- 23:00 We had a little old 1926 Chev [Chevrolet], a real old – the old 26 Chev. We used to go down to Toogoolawah for Christmas Eve. And we used to have lots of fun with crackers [fireworks] and throw downs [firework thrown on the ground with explosive effect] and we used to walk down the street, I seen the girls and that when we're walking along, we used to throw that thing down, and throw downs they call them. Throw it right behind them. That's when we were very young.

- 23:30 We always went down there for Christmas Eve, yeah, that was 20 mile away but that was the nearest town, you know.

Did you have a special feed on Christmas Day?

Oh yeah, always, well, we had turkey sometimes but always chicken and that, cos we had our own WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s on the farm of course. You sort of had everything on the farm for everything, you know. Farm sort of produced everything. And the bloke just up the road, he was two mile away, but they had ducks and that and you know, you get a duck

- 24:00 off them and have a duck and all that sort of thing. We did well; we really ate well.

What about Guy Fawkes Day? Did you celebrate that?

Yeah, we used to have cracker nights, yeah. We always had cracker nights, that'd be Guy Fawkes, yeah. That's right. We used to always have crackers and we used to have a heap of them Tom Thumbs [small explosive firework] you know. Used to have them because there were a lot for a little money. And I remember we used to have rockets and that, we used to put them in kerosene tins and let them go.

- 24:30 Oh yes. Brings back a bit of memories.

Would that be at home, or would that be in Toogoolawah?

No, at home. Have that at home.

Dad wasn't worried you'd stir the cows up?

Oh the cows yeah, no they were way out in the paddock. No worry. There was no worry about fire because we never had – I don't know why houses burn down today because you know, we always had

fires at home but they used to never get near the house. I don't know how those fires get near a house. We had no long dry grass round our place.

25:00 **What was your family home like?**

Oh it was a big old place, it's one, two, what, three bedrooms and the kitchen was as big as this house of course. And the kitchen was more or less a house on its own. And then there was a little landing into the house. But the kitchen would be as - yeah, nearly as big as a house. Two big tables in it and you had a big old wood stove and plenty of room. Oh yes.

25:30 **Besides your dad, were there any other people that were employed by your father?**

No, no. Only us.

Child slave labour, ay?

Child slave labour, yes. Yeah.

And what about uncles and aunties and things like that, were there any around the region?

Not close. I had an uncle in Kingaroy, Dad's brother was in Kingaroy; he had a peanut farm there. One was in Prostons, one of Dad's brothers at Prostons; he had a farm there. The

26:00 rest were in Brisbane, or one in Rockhampton, Dodson, no Bundaberg, Bundaberg yeah. One sister in Bundaberg, yeah sister in Bundaberg, yeah, that's about it, yeah.

Did your dad have any military service?

No, he was young for the first war and of course he was - as I said, he had a couple of sons to go on his war yeah.

26:30 **What about any of the uncles or anything like that?**

Yeah, well Mum had three brothers in the first war, yeah. They all come home too.

Did you ever hear any tales from those uncles?

No I didn't. They lived in Laidley and when I was a young fella we sort of didn't get across there much, you know. Some of them used to come across to our place but we never seemed to get over to there. But no I never heard much about the war.

27:00 But yes, she had three brothers, they all come home. I think one of them put their age up to go, which a lot of them did.

What do you remember of primary school?

Well, primary school was only small. It was only a small, little school. Well like all kids, we used to play up a little bit. Of course, every time you played up there, you used to get six straps. Sometimes six on each hand.

27:30 But in those days, you couldn't go home and tell your father, that way, if you did, you'd get six more. Not like today, you tell your father today what's happened and he'd say something to the teacher I think today. Those days you just didn't go home and tell them because you'd get some more. But oh no, it was - we used to play cricket, cricket and football and tennis. And of course, marbles, everyone played marbles.

How far was school from home?

Four mile

28:00 We used to ride to school.

On a horse?

Horse, yeah.

How many people did that?

They all done that, there was a - well when I was young I had I think, there was three sisters going with me I think, and we all rode, and then there was another family further out, they had four, and three of them I think were school, we used to always sort of meet up at our place and another family,

28:30 oh, about seven of us used to ride in together, ride home together. Racing all the way, flat out, trying to beat one another. We had a lot of fun.

Was there a stable at school?

Had a big yard where we used to let the horses go, little shed to put the saddles in and that. Just a big yard, just like a little paddock, you know, that they could eat and water in it.

What sort of things did you learn at primary school?

Just the ordinary, just

- 29:00 maths and all that type of thing. I think algebra was one I know. We used to do a lot of cheating you know. We used to have, in those days, we used to have cards, with the sums on them. And of course, they'd - had a pack of cards about - I don't know, might be 20, 30, 40 cards on that, cards about that long, that wide. And they had all different sums on them, you know.
- 29:30 Well we had, well our class then we had five, well we had five cards, which we knew them backwards and we used to just change the cards around from day to day. And we knew them all five. We didn't have to study to learn, but the old teacher didn't worry much. And of course, when we got older we just - that's when I had my first smoke, at school. We used to buy a packet of Cooees [cigarettes] they used to call them. I think
- 30:00 it used to cost sixpence a packet for about 15 or something in it. They were cheap and nasty, but we had a couple of big bean trees grew about 40 or 50 yards from the school ground, with tennis courts in between it, and we used to go round and rake all the leaves up. And the teachers thought we were doing a wonderful job raking the leaves up but we only raking the leaves up when we used to light them
- 30:30 to burn them. So we're sitting there and he come out on the verandah, yeah, we're studying away, we're smoking away and the fires going and he can't see us smoking, because of the fire. Make believe we - oh you know. Used to cheat a bit.

And it was a one-teacher school there?

One teacher school, yeah.

What was the teacher like?

He was a good teacher, yeah, we had one bloke, what was his name, Gould I think, Nock came after. Yeah, both good fellas,

- 31:00 yeah, good fellas. Oh they'd give you the cuts [strap] all right. But you done something wrong, you'd know it.

Where did the teacher live in town?

He was in the school house, the school house right along side. The school house used to be the school years ago, when they first built, and then they built the other school and the teacher then lived in the old school. That's the way it all turned out I think, yeah.

Tell us about the town itself.

Well, the town's only

- 31:30 a small town. There was a mill in the town earlier - it's gone now of course too. There was a mill there; that was the main source of work in the town, was the mill. And as I said, there was a post office and a store, which was together combined, and a garage, there was a baker and a butcher, yeah. Baker and a butcher, cos my brother had the butcher shop when he come back from the war. And a baker and a butcher and another shop, which was a sort of a
- 32:00 grocery, café shop type of thing, and a hotel. The hotel burnt down eventually and of course a hall. Dances every Saturday night there. And we had to have the balls on Friday night, because there was - there's certain people in the town, like a few a bit religious and there was Methodists they were a bit hard on the - as a matter of fact they didn't even go for dancing.
- 32:30 Because I can remember, my three sisters used to teach Sunday School. And then of course they used to go to the dances. And anyhow, one of the chiefs there in the church said to Mum one day, she said, "They will have to knock off going to the dances if they want to teach Sunday School." And Mum says, "What?" she said, "Well, in that case, they won't be coming to Sunday School."
- 33:00 Cos Mum used to go and take them to the dances, you know. She said, "Cos we're going to the dances." And the dance, the balls was always Friday night for that reason, you wasn't allowed to dance after midnight on Sunday night, because of Sunday the next day, see. But Friday night you could go till two or three o'clock. Cos they used to dance at midnight then have supper and then dance for about an hour or so and go home. So all the balls on Friday night, and the ordinary dances on Saturday night.
- 33:30 Well if there wasn't one in Moore, there was one in Colinton, which I think it was four miles further down but Colinton was a town that had a shop and a hall and that was it, there was no other, nothing else in the town at all, not even a house. But that hall was always packed every night there was a dance on. And then further down again about another four mile was Harlin, which also had a dance, so there was always a dance to go to somewhere. Every Saturday night and of course we always went, you know.
- 34:00 And then the pictures, they used to bring the pictures here. Paget's Picture Show they used to call it. Paget's. And he used to come I think once a fortnight I think and just set it up in the hall and show the pictures, all the Tom Mix pictures [American screen cowboy character] and all that type of thing, cowboys and Indians and all that old pictures we used to see. Dad and Dave, Dad and Dave days they

were.

Do you remember how much it would cost to see a film?

I can't remember now. It wasn't much, I know that.

- 34:30 You dealt in pennies in those days you know. I think a stamp was only a penny. What are they, 50 cents now, 50 pennies. I know it wasn't very much anyhow, I know that, it was of course you couldn't afford very much because, well my brother before the war, he went down to
- 35:00 another farm about halfway into town, and he went to work for him and he got ten bob a week, keep, for his wages, so you couldn't get – think of it here, you couldn't get much for ten bob. But of course, you got a fair bit for ten bob.

So would the family go on holidays or anything like that? Day trips?

No, no. We used to – oh we'd go up to Kingaroy now and then and go and visit, things like that. Go for a week. Of course someone would always stay home. Always had to have someone at home.

- 35:30 I can only remember having one holiday and that was when I was pretty young, I went to Woody Point. So I remember them saying, they reckon I did, I don't know whether I did or not, they said, when I got to Woody Point, I said, "Gee look at that big dam out there." I don't know whether I said it, they reckoned I did. But I was just amazed, you know, everything, I was only a little fella. When I came down the army, I didn't even know where Queensland was, so
- 36:00 it was only 100 mile away but we never got down there. But on a farm, you know, you play football and then you go and milk the cows.

So when you get home after a day at school, milking the cows, and mum serves up tea, what would happen then?

Oh well, we had a wireless. You'd listen to the wireless. In those days what used to be on? Dad and Dave was one, of course the news was paramount.

- 36:30 Until the news was finished nothing happened and Dad and Dave would come on and Greenbottle was another one, all those shows, of course you'd stop and you'd listen to them cos you'd listen to them every night. And then I used to get a lot of those cowboy books and I used to read those cowboy books. I'd go to bed with a lantern cos we had no light, no power. No fridges
- 37:00 or anything like that.

So your bedroom, would you be in there with your brother?

No, I used to sleep – we had a verandah, I used to sleep out on the verandah. And well, my brother, he's like he's nine years older than me and I of course got older, he went working out, he went down to work with some other bloke you see. And I can't just try and think where he used to sleep.

- 37:30 I know my sisters used to sleep in the two bedrooms, I slept out on the verandah; I liked it out there. It was an open verandah; we had a hessian around here with the bed, when it used to get a bad storm sometimes you'd get wet. I used to sleep out there, read with a bloody lantern. That's why me eyes are no good.

So how far through school did you go?

I went to seventh grade, I moved

- 38:00 to 14. I went to rural school after that; that was in Toogoolawah, 20 mile away. We used to go down by the railway, the old 'tin air'. We used to go down by rail motor. I think it was just every Tuesday, I don't think it was every Tuesday, I think it might have been every second Tuesday. Every second Tuesday I think it was, yeah. I think. And we used to learn, I done a lot of leatherwork there because I was more interested in leather because I could do, I made all the
- 38:30 bridles and all that for the farm, you know, all the reins and bridles and harness. All that. I done woodwork, I done a couple of – I think I done a glory box for two of me sisters and I said, "I'm not doing another one for the third. I've done two." So I done a big chest of drawers for them; I done three of them. And then I done tinwork too. I done a lot of soldering things like that. I done mostly leatherwork. I used to take a lot of leather home from
- 39:00 there and then eventually I used to try and tan me own leather. You get a kangaroo, kangaroo hide and I'd tan it. Get the wattle bark, boil her up. It's a bit of a knack in it, but it used to tan all right. And whips, we used to have to make your own whips you know. Used to make them out of greenhide but just – kill our beef, we used to keep the skin and cure it and cut it and we used
- 39:30 to make harness out of it for horses and that as well for the whips. Always had a whip, you know, cos we had to have whips.

What was Toogoolawah like?

Toogoolawah was a small country town, I think it had a couple of pubs, so it was a bit bigger than a little town but it was – it had two or three cafes and

40:00 I think there was a doctor there too. There was a doctor I'm sure. Had a courthouse there too, because if anything happened, we'd have to go down there. Cos we had a couple of bad ones up there, one bloke shot his wife and two sons one day up there and in Moore. That was headlines.

And would mum go into Toogoolawah to do the big shop?

Well, we'd go down, not very often, but every now and then we'd go when we had to, you know,

40:30 to get something. Cos you couldn't they had – what did they used to call them? Shops there. Oh I forget now, what they called them then. But you used to be able to buy clothes and all that type of thing and come down there, used to go down there a lot. But that was only every now and then, yeah. Cos after we got rid of the old 26 Chev and we bought an Oldsmobile, big red Oldsmobile, we thought we were Lord Mayor then. She used to sail along but no road, no bitumen, just a cow track between Warranty Hill and Moore; you were a rough old road all the way.

Tape 2

00:31 **With the dances that you used to go to, who taught you to dance?**

Oh I think probably me sisters, I think, cos they were all good dancers, you know. I think, yeah, they used to teach me at home. But then you'd soon pick them up. All those old time dances they were pretty easy to do.

What were the dances that you used to do?

Oh, the old Gypsy Tap, Barn Dance, the Gypsy Tap, the Quick Step,

01:00 the schottische [a slow polka dance], what else we used to do? Waltz of course, the old time, waltz and what's the other waltz they'd – oh I forget now, I just can't think of it.

01:30 **What was the music at the dances?**

Well, the band used to come from Toogoolawah, and I think we had one played the piano, we had the drums and we often had sometimes a violin. I think that was, mostly – other times, you'd have different things, you might have a mouth organ, you know.

02:00 And sometimes... But there was always, like a piano and drums and mostly a violin, music used to be. They were good – good music, good to dance to. Oh yeah, the old dances, they were extra good.

What sort of clothes did you wear to the dances?

Oh just ordinary clothes. Like you'd go out to town in down here, now.

02:30 Nobody – well you didn't wear a suit – it was too hot to wear a suit because the barn – the dances were at tin sheds, you know, only a tin roof and it was pretty hot in summer. So you'd – you know, you had to have just ordinary clothes on. You know. So. But they were good floors though, good floors.

What about work clothes when you were on the farm? What were your work clothes?

Oh well, they were...

03:00 we didn't have the jeans like they have now. Well they were work clothes, which were just ordinary I suppose, cotton trousers I suppose. Some of the old timers used to wear the old flannel shirts. They reckoned they were cooler than the other shirts. I could never see how they could be. Flannel shirt in the middle of summer. But they reckoned it was cooler but I don't know. Dad used to wear one himself. My father. But I could never,

03:30 never come at the old flannel shirts, no. But just ordinary work clothes they were. Just like, you'd get the King Gee work clothes today, pretty similar to that I think, from memory. And of course the old riding pants, of course we used to have, you know the legs and of course you used to wear the leggings and the spurs of course, everything like that.

What sort of boots did you wear?

Well, exactly almost the same as army boots, the old

04:00 blucher boot they called it. And for riding of course you had riding boots, because you couldn't ride that, of course the stirrups – your feet'd get caught in the stirrups, if something happened, you'd come off the horse and you'd get dragged on the horse, if your boot gets caught. I nearly did one day. I was a bit lucky, the stirrup pulled out of the saddle otherwise I'd still be going round the paddock.

Were there many accidents on the farms around there?

Plenty

04:30 of accidents but no bad ones. I only can remember having one, it was Toogoolawah Show morning too and we had it planned, there was about four of us, we were going to ride to the poddy calves we used to call them, the young bulls, in the show. And I was getting the cows in and for milking in the morning and you know, stupid of course but we had a fair sort of a hill where they're coming down and cos I'm chasing them down

05:00 and it's still dark and as I said, the show's in June so imagine it's a frosty morning, that's very cold. And I'm going full gallop down the bloody hill chasing the cows, trying to get them in early, you know, cos you got to get down for the show, and the horse fell and rolled on me. And I can remember lying there for about a half an hour, me back - I couldn't move. And finally I had to walk home, I couldn't get back on the horse, but I went to the show that day,

05:30 and the worst day I ever spent in me life. And you know, the shows where they have a whatever rail coming all along to divide a place off, well all me sisters and that they'd hop under the rail, I'd have to walk all the way around. I couldn't even bend to get under. The worst day I've spent in me life, that day. But me back came good after that. I'll never forget that day though. No riding for me that day. You had accidents like that though.

If there were accidents, where

06:00 **was the nearest medical help?**

Well, the nearest doctor was either Kilcoy or Toogoolawah and they're both about 20 mile. Long way.

Were there every any serious accidents on any of the other farms around you?

Oh, there would have been. No doubt there would have been. I can't recall that we had a real

06:30 bad one. Had plenty of them but you know, you'd get thrown off a horse, lots of times, cos you're riding round after cattle full gallop and stumps and logs and everything you've gotta come down every now and then. You get straight up and back on the horse and away you go, you know. But I can't remember any real bad ones. Not that I can remember.

So when you were a kid, growing up in Moore, who would you have said your heroes were?

My heroes?

07:00 My heroes. Well, I suppose, I followed the cricket a lot and I suppose my hero, I know it was because Mum used to go crook at me, Don Bradman. And my Mum used to say, "If I hear that name mentioned again." Cos I used to say about Don Bradman, this and that, you know. So he was the greatest. And Mum used to get sick of it.

07:30 "If I hear that name mentioned again", she said. Yeah, he was a hero with me, Don Bradman, when I was a kid. I don't know any heroes around the town I can really say were heroes. But we all played like, well we played football but we only had one team, we had 13 players and one bloke couldn't play, bad luck, we only had 12.

08:00 Only us 13 players in the team. Course that was big days when we played cricket, or football. We used to play with the Kilcoy, Jimna, Toogoolawah, Black Butt, but of course we only just had the team of 13 and we were sort of pushing it every time we played, but we enjoyed it.

Was that a school team?

No, that was after I left school. Oh, we played at school too, oh yeah.

08:30 We played football at school. Football and cricket were our main two games at school, and we played a lot of tennis. But football and cricket were the main two.

When you were saying earlier that in The Depression when the swaggies would come by and sometimes you'd get them to do a bit of ringbarking, what was the process for that?

The process?

How do you actually do ringbarking?

Well to ringbark the trees actually. He gets an axe and you chop the trees, around

09:00 in through the bark, just into the sap. And you cut it all the way around, and then put another chop about that far below it, and that piece of bark comes out. That's why it's call ringbarking, you make what's a ring around the tree and that tree dies see cos you cut the sap off. And when - well if it's a good tree, and you've got fencing, you'll use that tree for fence posts. You'll split it up, you'll have wedges, they call wedges, and

09:30 an axe and one of those big sledgehammers and you put these in and you split your post with the wedges. And cut them into posts and you do your fencing, you use your fencing. But ringbarking you're

just killing the tree, in other words.

And would you do that to clear more land?

To clear the land, yeah, and to get rid of unwanted rubbish type of thing, you know. Cos you can't cut all the trees down, got to leave some. But most of them cut the lot down.

10:00 That's what they talk about today. They're all gone.

Apart from going to Sunday School, was church an important thing for the family?

Oh yes. Yeah, we always went to church. Mum went to church every Sunday. Yeah. Mum and Dad and of course we had to go along too. Actually I signed the pledge when I was nine: that I'd never drink. And Mum always held it against me too, said, "You've signed the pledge." I said, "Oh I was too young to know what I'm talking about."

10:30 I howled me eyes out, she reckoned, til I signed, it, she always held it up to me afterwards.

What was the pledge?

You don't drink alcohol, swear off drinking. This was a Methodist church and they were pretty hard, no drinking, you couldn't dance with women and all that. They were very, very strict. Cos I was a Methodist, brought up a Methodist, although I think I was christened Church of England but I was brought up a Methodist. And I signed

11:00 the pledge. But I've broken a lot of pledges since then.

I wonder what happened to that piece of paper?

I don't know, but Mum had it for a long time, I know. I don't know what happened to it now. Haven't seen it for -

Did you have special clothes for going to church?

Yeah, Sunday best, whatever the best clothes you had, you wore to Sunday. Yeah, Sunday best, they used to call it, Sunday best and that was it. Yeah.

What would your Sunday best be?

11:30 Oh I think, as I got older sort of, it was a tie, and white shirt, tie and well a pair of trousers, you mightn't had a suit. Cos the lads growing up to get a suit, you grow out of it, so you wouldn't - don't buy a suit, you know. But oh it was just good clothes, I don't know what they were actually now. Too long ago -

12:00 **Earlier you were talking about riding to school, between say seven kids how many horses would you take?**

Well, I did have a photo of four of us on a horse. Four kids on a horse, four of us. But we didn't - I'd ride to school with four, we'd double up, we'd often ride with two on a horse. But as you got older, of course just one and you know. But often two, double up two on a horse. But the kids out past us they

12:30 had little ponies. They had four little ponies all the same, all only little fellas, and they all had to ride one of these ponies each. But they had one disadvantage, we had other horses and they could never catch us cos their horses were too small.

Who was the disciplinarian at home, mum or dad?

Well, you listened to Mum but you done as Dad told you, cos Dad

13:00 could come out with the strap. Mum wouldn't. Mum would stick up for you. But, oh no, we never done bad things, that you had to get worried too much about. Not really, we done lots of funny, silly things, I suppose, but never, done anything bad, you know.

What were some of the funny, silly things, do you remember?

Oh, well, one of the

13:30 funny things, I always thought was the funniest thing I've ever seen, we went to a dance in Colinton one night and there was an old lady and her two daughters used to come to the dance, used to come in a sulky, horse and sulky. So anyway, I was only pretty young then anyhow, they went into the dance and we went outside and we got the horse and cart, or we didn't get the horse and cart,

14:00 I can't remember now whether we only took the horse. Anyhow we went up the road till we found the gate, so we went up took the horse into the gate, took her down the other side, put the shaft through the fence and then yoked the horse up to the sulky through the fence. When the dance finished, they come out together, the horse is one side of the fence and the sulky's on the other.

14:30 That's one of the funniest things I've ever seen, but they did see the joke about it. The only trouble was, we had to get the horse and take her all the way back and bring her all the way round again. So that

was one of the funniest things I thought I'd seen. Yet, there was nothing dangerous or anything, it was just a joke with an old lady and two girls.

Did you get in trouble?

No, no, they took it as a joke. They took it as just good fun.

What was the worst trouble you ever remember getting into as a kid?

- 15:00 The worst trouble. What would have been the worst trouble I got into. Can't think of anything real bad. We used to play up a lot but nothing bad. Oh I suppose, well not trouble, I suppose, but that's what I say, I don't drink wine.
- 15:30 I had my first drink of wine when I was 13 and that was me last. Because my Mum and Dad and my sisters they went to some turnout and I think there was three lads coming up from Moore to stay with me the night, you know. And they fetched a couple of bottles of plonk [cheap wine] out, see, don't know where they got it or how they got it but they fetched two bottles of plonk out anyhow.
- 16:00 And I said to them when they went, I said, "Don't worry about getting up in the morning." I said, "We'll do the milking for you and all that, we'll milk the cows and you can sleep in." You know. But we got onto this plonk, see, and I can remember we had a lantern out in the barn, I think the lantern was on the back of the wagon I think and up there and I started kicking goal with the lamp. Kicking the goal like a football. Kicked the lantern halfway across the
- 16:30 paddock. Anyhow, the next thing I can remember we woke up about eight o'clock in the morning, on hay, in the hay shed, on the hay, as sick as dogs. The milking was finished, and we were all that sick and we had to be - we're dry and there wasn't able to have a drink of water because they, "If you have a drink of water you'll get drunk again." You know. So we were dry and sick and sorry and my Mum must have knew because
- 17:00 we looked that bad but she never said anything. Anyhow we got out of the - went for a walk, I said, "We're going for a walk up the paddock." We never come back for the rest of the day I don't think. That was one of the worst things I can remember I ever done. But anyhow, that was my first and last, I never drank wine from that day to this. You go to a wedding I just pass it on to Phyllis, say, "You drink this." I couldn't stand the smell of it. Done me a good turn. But I can't think of anything bad things I've done
- 17:30 really. Oh at school once, we used to do our milk testing at school. Milk and cream testing, and it was as a lesson too apart from you could test your own cream and milk, you know. Cos they had a tester there, you see, and they taught you to do it. And they used to use methylated spirits in the thing that was part of the testing. And I used to - I had a jersey heifer at home and
- 18:00 we used to you know, she was pretty good too, very, very quiet and everything. And I always thought that she was the world champion, you know. And you could, you know, just walking the hills she'd just follow you round anywhere and all that type of thing. And you had to take some milk in to be tested, see. So I thought I was bloody up here or something, so I got the milk, had to take it in a bottle. Got the milk and then I got the - put the thing under the cream pan and
- 18:30 I pulled some of the cream in with it, see, give it a good test, see. Anyhow, we're out testing it and we said, it was only three or four in the class, three boys and two girls, in the class and three of us are down there. And we started talking about this metho [methylated spirits], I said, "They drink this metho. Oh we'll have a - see what it's like." So one of the
- 19:00 blokes have a go and spit it out but I was too silly. I had a mouthful and swallowed it and I thought I was going to die. I really did, oh me throat was on fire, it was terrible, I don't know how they drink it, you couldn't possibly drink the stuff, but they do. But I thought I was going to die with this damn thing and wasn't going to...the teacher smell it all over you. But anyhow when we tested the cream, I won the day with the cream. I had the good test.
- 19:30 But to this day, no one ever knew that I put cream in. Never, ever told anyone, there's the champion. But oh we had a lot of fun at school. There were five of us in the class and we used to go out the back and learn and play up and you know, we had a lot of fun at school, yeah, I enjoyed it.

Did you have a girlfriend?

No, I just, well we just...no girlfriends, I suppose, there was only two in the class and

- 20:00 none of them really good anyhow. No I didn't at school, no. I was too young and silly I think.

A lot of the women that we've spoken to have told us about their mum taking them aside to give them a bit of a talk about the birds and the bees, or an older sister doing it, did anyone do that with you?

I can't remember anybody ever doing that. No. No. Mum didn't, she probably did to my sisters, but not to me, no.

- 20:30 Dad never told me anything. I think they didn't want to because they probably thought we knew more than they did anyway. I think most kids do, don't they. But no, I can't remember ever, no.

When you went to rural school, did you still ride to school?

- 21:00 We used to ride into town and then we'd go down on the rail motor. Two little carriages, little diesel. Used to run from Yarraman to...used to run right through to Brisbane, you know it went to Brisbane. That was our only train service the old tin air, we used to call it.

So how far away was rural school?

It was down at Toogoolawah, 20 mile.

So it was a day trip?

A day trip,

- 21:30 oh yeah, we go down, I think we used to leave pretty early, cos it used to leave early then we'd go to the school and then we'd catch it back about three o'clock I think from memory, about that from my memory, yeah. We didn't pay on the train though we used to have a ticket, because we used to make our little ticket, that we used to put on our belt. We done that at the rural school and the ticket used to go in there. The government used to pay for the train; we didn't pay

- 22:00 anything for it. But I think it was every second Tuesday or pretty sure it wasn't every week. No every second week I think. Yeah well you had to ride into town, then get the train yeah.

So when the time came to leave rural school, did you have any thought that you would like to stay on or go and do further schooling?

No. No, just back to the farm.

- 22:30 Well, I was still working on the farm, I just used to have the Tuesdays off to go down there and apart from that, I used to make harness, that we needed down there too, things like that. Or I'd get leather down there to make stuff at home too, you know. I used to make all me own bridles and everything, there, saddle work and all that. I used to like doing it too.

So when you left rural school, you came back to work fulltime on the farm? Who else was working

- 23:00 **on the farm apart from you and dad?**

Well, my older sister got married. Oh Dave - this was - I'm ahead of meself. My three sisters were still there, yeah, my three older sisters. And of course then I had a younger sister, who would have been about five then, yeah. She would have been starting school, yeah. I broke a little pony in for her to ride to school. That was a funny

- 23:30 time too, when I broke that one in too. I got conned into that one too. It was a quiet pony cos my younger sister, she used to lead it around, play with it, quiet as a lamb, you know. So anyhow, when we come to break it in, I put a saddle on it, but you've got to mouth the horse, before you ride it because you can't guide them until you mouth them. By mouthing them, you put a bridle on

- 24:00 and you tie the stirrups underneath and then you tie the rein back to the stirrups with the head just slightly bent, so there's pressure on that mouth all the time. And that's what you call mouthing them and they get used to the bit in their mouth. You do that, they run around with that all day. And after that, when you get on, then you pull the rein, they'll come, pull the rein, till you do that, pulling the rein, there's nothing. They don't know what it's all about. So anyhow, my sisters, of course they said, "Come on, hop on and ride it." I said,

- 24:30 "Can't ride it, it hasn't been mouthed yet." They said, "Oh go on, it's quiet as a lamb, hop on it." So I hopped on it and the horse, only a pony, took off. And there was a barbed wire fence all the way round and it headed straight for the fence, you know, couldn't turn it, I pull, pull, not a - just as we got to the fence, I just pulled, pulled me leg up out and she just - the pony just turned like that, alongside the fence and luckily I had me leg pulled over the

- 25:00 horse otherwise the barbed wire. Straight down the fence and the little gate led into where the house is and the gate was open, through this gate, nearly tore me off with the gate. But I fell off and I said, "Never again." Mounting the horse. Little old quiet old pony. Well she rode that horse to school all her life. Little Don, she called it Don. These memories come back soon as you start talking about things, yeah.

So were you working on the farm when

- 25:30 **war broke out?**

I was working on the farm then, yeah.

Do you remember hearing about it?

Well, I remember the war. Yeah, well the war started because I know we used to listen to the news, it was seven o'clock news every night, everything stopped and I think there was news in the morning, I forget the time now. And we had to stop for that to see what the news was and I remember that with the

war being on, because it was all war news, you know.

26:00 And of course it got worse after, once me brother went in because we used to – the news was a very big thing – because we didn't know whether he was alive or dead or anything, you know. But yeah, I can't say I actually remember war being declared, probably should I suppose because I would have known, I was there. But

26:30 well I'd have been, no I'd have been about 15 then, when war was declared, yeah. But I just can't say I remember it but I would have known about it, you know but I can't sort of say I can remember it breaking out, though but.

Do you recall if there was much of a build up before the war?

Not that I can sort of recall.

27:00 Although there was, because like there's – he was into all those small countries first and they always thought that something might start but probably hoping it wouldn't, you know, because it's only when he went into Poland that they sort of said, "Enough's enough", you know, and declared war. But I can sort of remember that – the declaration of war but

27:30 can't remember a whole lot about it, you know. But from then on I can remember it all because it was very interesting because we had reason to, you know.

How long after the war started did you brother join up?

Well, he must have joined, he had a very low number, his number was 9336, so he was one of the pretty early ones. So I'd say he must have joined in about 1940,

28:00 I'd say. I can't just remember when he actually joined but I'd say that's probably about 1940, because of that number that he got, 9336. And I think he went away in '41, Singapore fell in '42 wasn't it. They were over there a few months before, so he went over there in '41.

With him being nearly

28:30 **10 years older than you, would he have talked about it with you, about him wanting to join up?**

No, he just came home one day and he said to Mum he said, "I'm..." Him and he had a mate, Bill Campbell his mate, and they were real mates all their lives, he said, "Bill and I are joining the army." And everybody, "You are?" "Yeah, we decided we're going to join up." So that's just how it happened, they just joined the army.

29:00 They both come back.

Do you remember your parents' reaction to him saying he was joining up?

I just can't remember that actually. It was probably different to when I said I'd like to join, when they said, "No, you're not. I got one son over there I don't want any more." But I can't just remember, apart

29:30 from, I can sort of half remember that, him saying, "We're joining the army." You know. Cos he wasn't at home then, I think he was working on the Black Butt Range Road at that time, I think, must have been working for the council or the government or whatever. And they were camped, they were camped on the job, you know. I remember him coming down and saying he was joining the army but I just sort of well only vaguely remember it anyhow,

30:00 you know, but I can't just remember how Mum reacted.

When he left, did you wish you were old enough to go too?

Well that's what I said, as soon as he left, I said to him then, I said, "I'll see you over there." He said, "Oh, we'll be home by Christmas." He said, "It'll be all over." I said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Anyhow, I'll see you over there somewhere." And that's when I started to want to join the navy, cos you couldn't join the army till you was 18, but you could join the navy at 17.

Was there a big goodbye, family goodbye for him?

30:30 Oh yeah, they had a big send off, oh yeah. In the town, everybody got a big send off. Oh yeah.

What did that involve?

Well, they took up a collection and it involved a... So they took up a collection, they used to get a fair

31:00 bit of dough, I know I did, and then they put in the money, that's one of the ones with the old number on it, and all the same, you know, just put it in a tunic pocket, just perfect fit for the fodder. I don't know whether they got it for that reason, but and they all got one of those and of course the big doing the big speeches and all that type of thing, and everyone that went, so I got the same thing. I remember

31:30 I think Bill Campbell got his – they both went together – I think he got his from Moore too, I think from memory.

And so the people in the town would take a collection.

Take a collection yeah. And it was all five pound notes and everything in there, so a fair bit of money they used to get. Oh yeah. Cos there wasn't many people in the town, you know, and there's not too many people would go joining the army type of thing.

- 32:00 There was very few that went from Moore. And I think a mate of mine, him and I, we both left together and we both got the same thing again, we got the wallet full and they said, "This is nothing, wait till you come home. That's the big one." And I come home from the war, was over, everybody forgot. Too late, it's over now.

At that time when your brother left, what was it that made you think you'd want to join the navy?

- 32:30 Well, you couldn't join the army, see. You could join the navy at 17. You couldn't join the army till you was 18. You couldn't join the AIF till you was 21 at that stage. And to get in, I said, "I'll join the navy." So you know, so I can go straight in. But they wouldn't sign the papers, that's what knocked that on the head anyhow, and I finished up in the army anyhow.

So before you were old enough to join up, what was that like not knowing

- 33:00 **where your brother was?**

Well, it wasn't very nice, no, because for a long time we hadn't heard a word, you know. We never heard a word about anything, we just knew that Singapore had fallen and for months nobody knew what had happened. Didn't know, you know, whether they were alive, dead or whatever, you know. Nobody knew and that was quite a long time. And that's why Mum and them said no way they'd sign my papers. You know because...

- 33:30 And I know every, that's when the news was very important, you know. They used to glue to that news to see what they could find out, you know. And I think, I can't remember now, how it happened. How they found out, they got word somehow, I think the old Eddie Burrow, I think, from the store, bloke had the store in town. I think he fetched it out.

- 34:00 I think from memory, to let us know that they were alive. And yeah I think he fetched it out, yeah from memory. I'm not sure. But after that of course, they knew that he was alive that the things sort of calmed down a little bit. It was always very worrying for a long time.

Were you getting word from him initially when he left?

I think to start we did, yeah, he was

- 34:30 writing letters yeah. Yeah, I'm pretty sure, yeah. I'm sure yeah.

Do you recall hearing about Darwin being bombed?

Oh yeah, I remember Darwin being bombed, yeah. I remember that. Where were then? When was that bombed?

1941?

- 35:00 No it'd be later than that.

1942.

Singapore fell 4th of February 1943, the day I joined the army.

- 35:30 4th of February '43.

When you heard about Singapore, did that make your feelings about wanting to join up more intense?

Oh yeah. Yeah. I thought, "I'll go over, get my big brother out".

Did you know that he was actually a prisoner of war at that time?

Well for that first period, nobody knew anything, see. Didn't know anything. And that was for quite a while.

- 36:00 And then they got word then that they were alive, prisoners of war and alive. I don't know how they found all that out. I don't know, but they got word anyhow that they were alive. I don't know where they found that out.

So when was the first time that you actually spoke to your parents about wanting to join up?

I hadn't long turned 17, I know. I hadn't long turned 17,

- 36:30 that would have - I think that would have been before Singapore fell, I think. Not sure. Not sure. But they wouldn't sign the papers then because she said, "I've got one son's gone." She didn't want two

over there, you know. And of course,

37:00 when they fell then that put the – she just, “No.” But then they decided later on they did find out he’s okay, that they’d sign the papers.

So what was it exactly that made you want to join up?

Oh young and silly I suppose. That’d be one of the things, but I think, my brother I think had a lot to do with it I think. When he left I said, “I’ll see you over there, mate.”

37:30 **What about when you found out that he was a POW [Prisoner of War], did that make you reconsider?**

What, when to join? Well, the more determined then. I still said, “I’ll go over and get him out.” And you know. Yeah. Trying to think.

38:00 Yeah. Can’t think of the times, you know. I’m not just sure, when did Singapore fall? ‘42, I know.

Can you talk us through the enlistment process?

38:30 Well, the enlistment process I had was, well I joined the navy, which they finally signed the papers and I joined, had the medicals and the education exam, passed and they wrote and said, “Okay we’ll call you when we want you.” And then they come round, enlistment mob come around the town, which they used to come around the enlistment people, and I went in to see them and told them I’d joined the navy and I wanted to get in, I thought they might be able to help

39:00 me get in. And that’s when they told me to join the army and when I got down to the exhibition ground, they’d have air force, navy, army there and they’d say, “Okay you go in the navy.” But that was all bull. When I got there, the bloke just said, “Well you’re in the army now.” So anyhow, I went down to Alice Street to the naval depot and they said, “When you get to training, just send us your address and we’ll let you know when we need you.” You know, that type of thing. So I did, I went

39:30 to, posted to Tenterfield training camp, sent me address. They wrote back, acknowledged it. We went from Tenterfield to Greta, I sent them the address again, they acknowledged it. No, that can’t be right, because I joined the AIF in May. They changed the law, that you could join the AIF at 18 must have been probably in April,

40:00 because I joined the AIF in May, yeah, 19th of May. And that was in Tenterfield, I know that was in Tenterfield, I thought I sent them the address from Greta, too. I don’t know. Not sure about that.

Were you disappointed when you got to Brisbane and you couldn’t swap into the navy?

Well I wasn’t disappointed, that much, because I was in the army anyhow, which I intended, that’s what I wanted to be

40:30 in the army, but I wanted to join the AIF. And but I was in the army, I said, “Well, I’m in the army.” So when they changed the age limit, I was happy as Larry, cos I just went straight up to the CO [Commanding Officer] and said, “I want to join the AIF.” He said, “You have to get your parents’ permission.” I said, “Yeah okay.” And sent it home and in May I joined the AIF. After that I didn’t want to go in the navy. I was where I was.

41:00 I’ll never forget too, one of the funny things, that happened.

Tape 3

00:31 **So they really tricked you, the army, they tricked you didn’t they?**

I don’t know, but yeah, yeah I think so. When I got down there, I see, well there’s certainly no way the navy or air force were there. Just the army. That’s it.

So how long did you have to wait before you got your final call-up to come into rookies?

01:00 When I first?

Yeah you got your, you signed up and then you had to keep sending your address to them and...?

Oh no, well that was straightaway. I think I was in exhibition ground only about four days, I think, just till they, you know, fixed everything up and give you all your clothes and everything like that and allocated to a training

01:30 regiment. You know, about four days. And mine was Tenterfield. And it was pretty cold down there too, oh boy. And from Tenterfield, I think the 4th of February I joined and then May I joined the AIF, that’s right the three months, about three months, yeah.

So in that time in the militia, what sort of basic training did they do for you there?

- 02:00 Exactly the same, we were doing the same, we were just route marches and all that type of thing, all that rookie stuff, you know. Real rookie stuff, just getting you used to it I think. And a lot of route marches every day and all the parades you go on and you get all the needles and all the needles there. And I remember when I got the one that for the cholera I think it is, was it, no tab one, tab two, cholera, forget what they are now. But the
- 02:30 one in the arm where it comes up on your arm. On the ninth day, it sort of skins over and that lets you know that it's taken and it's like a big scab on a sore, it is about that size and it was all right up you know. And your arm gets pretty sore and that night, there was a rodeo on in Tenterfield and mate and I went in and we'd had a few beers and he said, there was two horses, one called
- 03:00 "Halfpint," I never forget the names, and another called, "Quartpot." And he says, "Righto, you take Halfpint and I'll take Quartpot." "Ah no you won't." We weren't in that long in the army then and we were both used to riding then. "Okay." Anyhow I was going really well, till all of a sudden he turned around and he just ducked round the other way and I went threw me straight over onto the ropes.
- 03:30 And I was sitting down, it just took the top clean off as a whistle, oh wasn't it a mess. The next night I went to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] the next morning, he said, "What the hell have you been doing?" I thought, "I don't know." I said, "Just nothing, it just came off." I'll never forget that needle, but the old cholera needle you used to know when it was your turn when the bloke alongside of you fell over. You'd know your turn was next. But then before we went in, we got ours.
- 04:00 They changed the system and they give it to you in two lots. So you got one and then you got another one I think it was in six months time. You used to get half and half, but that was not quite so severe. But it was bad enough but it wasn't too bad really. But the first time, had it, down like ninepins, they reckon - my turn next, "When he falls over, you're next". They reckon everyone the same. So it must have been pretty severe.

I've even heard stories where they would use the

- 04:30 **same needle on the bloke.**

Yeah, yeah, oh yeah. And even, when he used to get the two needles, they'd put the needle in, take syringe off, leave it in put the syringe on for the other one and put it in with the same needle. And while they're doing this needle's going in and out and in and out, but I woke up quickly in the game. Everybody hang back, I was always first on the line, I said, "a sharp needle." See, the others are hanging back, hanging back, hanging back,

- 05:00 I said, "I'll go first, nice sharp needle to start with." But that's they used to use the two in the one needle, yeah. Pull the syringe off, put the other syringe on. And whack it in again. And of course, while they're putting the syringe on and off that needle's going in and out as like that. They were pretty rough some of them.

What was your first impression of army life?

Me first impression?. Well, the first impression I got was this.

- 05:30 For a start they issued you with all your clothes, everything, all your gear. Get two pair of this, two pair of boots, two pair, everything was in twos and so we was in tents at the exhibition ground and I had a cousin, lived at the Grange see and I thought, "I'll take all me gear out and get her to wash it all up", you know, "everything, towels, and everything up, put them through the washer" and I took them out. Anyhow when I came back, a pair of boots had gone
- 06:00 missing. So I go to the bloke next morning and say, "Had a pair of boots stolen." He said, "How the bloody hell do you get a pair of boots stolen?" I said, "I don't know; someone's taken them out of the tent." And he said, "Well, you'll have to pay for them." I said, "What're you talking about, pay for them?" I said, "I've got no money to pay for a pair of boots." And he said, "Well, you know what to do, don't you?" I said, "What?" He said, "Well, somebody took yours,
- 06:30 go and pinch somebody else's." So I said, "That's what you do in the army, eh?" I said, "You learn pretty quickly in this army." So I said, "That's a roundabout, everybody's pinching a pair of boots and eventually somebody's got to cough up with them." He says, "Up to you." But I can't remember, I don't know I never paid for them but I don't remember pinching another bloke's either. I don't know how I got them. But I'll never forget that, my first
- 07:00 lot I got. Only just got them that day and lost them that night. I thought, well that's the army for you, you know, pair of boots gone.

What sort of fieldcraft did you do at that stage?

Well, first of all, as I say, then it was just route marches and parades and PT [physical training] and all that - oh I don't know, silly stuff as it is. All the stuff that everybody hates doing. Because there's no future in it,

- 07:30 type of thing, you think there's no future in this. And it was silly stuff and all you've got there, the sergeant major yelling his head off and all the rest of it. I'll show you what the army is quickly in other words. It's discipline, you'll do as you're told or else. And they get into you very quickly; they put that into you. But that I can't - oh we done route marches of course, but - you know full day marches and things like that. But at Tenterfield
- 08:00 I can't remember doing anything else, till we got to Greta where we started more different types of training cos they put me in an artillery training regiment and then they started on the big guns at Greta and from there then you'd go out on live shoots and all that. Even that had its funny moments,
- 08:30 I suppose they were funny to me anyhow. But on a 25-pounder, there's six fellas, you know, there's a sergeant, there's the bloke that aims the gun, sights the gun up, there's two fellas that - one fella that opens the breech and the other fella puts the shell in, there's two fellas that bring the shells up because you're firing these pretty quickly. Bang, bang, bang, bang. Soon as
- 09:00 one shell's fired, and it's recoiling, this bloke opens it up while it's still coming back and as it's coming up they got the shell in for the next one. And another blokes got the rammer and ramming it in and the other bloke then puts the shell in and fire, see, do it pretty quickly. And there's six fellas, so anyhow, they train you on all the positions, you know. And all of us come for the day the live shoot's on. Everybody's waiting for this day. This day, fire the
- 09:30 big guns, all the young fellas. So anyway they got us up at bloody daylight, off we go up to the range at Singleton. So anyhow, we get up there I don't know why, but I'm the sergeant for the day. And that bloke's on the - he's doing the sighting and this bloke doing that. And away we go and anyhow, with
- 10:00 the troop there, there's four guns, and first of all, they sight, take a sighter, see. The first shell is a sighter to see where it lands. And then there's number, one, two, three, four, they're numbered off, and one - they might call on number one gun, to as the first off the rank type of thing, and this goes on and on and
- 10:30 they fire a round, and mucking about and we got there, I think we got up there about nine o'clock and it's nearly midday and we hadn't fired a shot yet, you know. Only young and we're getting a bit toey. Anyhow all of a sudden down comes the order, we're number, must have been number four gun I think, "Number four, so and so and so and so." And he's given the sight on the range and I said to the fellas, "We'll show 'em." You know, so they give the range then they
- 11:00 soon as the range on, the rope puts his hands on the trigger. Let him know everybody's right. And he just looks at the fellas that-a-way, and put the hand on, he's ready. Soon as he's done that, I yell out, "Fire!" "Who the bloody hell fired that gun?" See, you've got to wait for the order to fire, see. And didn't I cop it. Boy oh boy, oh boy. I waited all this time, to fire it. Anyway he had me on the coals.
- 11:30 He said to me next day, he said, "Do you realise that when you fired that gun, all our troops were on that line, ready to advance and that shell landed right in the middle of them." Well, I said, "It could've but it didn't." He said, "But it would have." He said, and then anyhow, he give me a big lecture, and he said to me at the end, he said, "Anybody..."
- 12:00 I said, "I made a mistake." I said - we'd waited all day, and we were very keyed up and I said, "We'll show these fellas how good we are", you know I said to him and I said, "I just wasn't thinking." He said, "Well, any man that hasn't made a mistake has never done anything" he said, "but don't do it again" in a big rough voice. Never forget that, had me first time ever fired a 25-pounder. And that's
- 12:30 last time I fired one too. I never fired one since. I've never, because I become a sig [signaller] after that, an OP [Observation Post] sig, never go near the guns again.

Did you just get shanghaied into artillery or did you...?

No, they put you there. Yeah, they put you there.

And you don't think that incident had anything to do with you going to sigs after that?

I don't know, well I actually asked, because you know, I didn't want to be mucking about

- 13:00 you know, I wanted a bit of adventure type of thing. And well one of the corporals there he said, about the sig, he said, "There's a sig course on." he said, "Why don't you do it?" I said, "Yeah, bloody oath I will." So I done it, it took a while, the Morse was a hard thing to learn, but once you get it, it's okay, but it takes a long time to get it. Anyhow it was okay.

Besides Morse, what else did you have to learn in sigs?

Oh well, wiring and all that type of thing, to use the switchboards and we had

- 13:30 to use switchboards too and the telephones, field telephones, the wireless you had to learn all that. You had to carry it, I carried a wireless pack on me back, a little 108 set it was about that high and about that square I suppose and about that wide. It was pretty heavy and that was besides all your gear and the other bloke had to - there was two of us, always two of us - and he'd carry a reel of wire, which always

14:00 run the wire out because otherwise the wireless wouldn't work in these places. And even with Morse, you couldn't work it in some places. And he had to string out wire where you could, you know. And you know, you had to learn all about the wireless sets and all that, it was pretty involved, but boy you picked it up pretty quickly, you know. And we became then what they call, OP sigs. There's artillery sigs with the guns and the OP sigs with the infantry.

14:30 And there was about ten of us or something and we had a captain and a lieutenant I think it was and about ten of us. And two of us with each you know, whoever wanted the artillery fire, you'd be with the team that was going ahead, and you'd be with the 27th Battalion for maybe two days, three days, and then you were with the commandos

15:00 for two or three days. Say they would blow, another battalion would move up and you'd just switch from battalion to battalion, you know, you'd be different battalion all the time. And you know, I never from the time I got there, I never seen the 2/5th Field Regiment again. I never, ever went back to them. I finally found out when I'd left there, I was transferred into the 2/25th Battalion.

15:30 That's where I finished up the 2/25th Battalion.

So all that while you thought you were still part of?

I still think - I didn't know until I got my records a couple of years ago now. My medical record, it was in there, that I'd actually been transferred into the 2/25th Battalion. I never knew I was in them, I knew I was there, but never knew I'd been transferred. Never, ever knew. Until I'd seen it in

16:00 there.

So how long was your sigs training?

From memory I think it might have been about six weeks or so.

And whereabouts was that?

We done it up on the [Atherton] Tablelands where we were. We done it in the unit actually. We were up at Kairi, yeah.

And how was it being at the sharp end of artillery?

Well, it was much better than being in the other place anyhow. You see a bit of different things.

16:30 It's better to be, I reckoned it's better to be where the action was, see where they were landing, as well as where they were firing from, you know. It was a lot of fun up there. It was dangerous I suppose, but.

So was that still in that time period where you're in CMF [Citizens' Military Force] doing training?

No, no, no. That came later, a fair bit later. We went down from Greta, we went

17:00 down to Bathurst, Mount Panorama, right in the middle of winter too and we camped up on Mount Panorama, we were there for two weeks. I remember we had nine blankets. We took five with us and they had four there for us. And it was ice. And we went there, for some school or other. I can't remember what the damn school was, but for a fortnight it was something to do with the guns. But I can't remember that we ever learnt anything there.

17:30 But I know the guns were down on the - we were camped up on the top of Mount Panorama, and the guns were down on the flat. We used to go down there and scrape the ice off them before we could get near them, you know. I remember that. But I can't remember what we done or what - it was a school of some sort but this day I couldn't tell you what the school was.

So what sort of time period are we looking at, you go in, you go to Tenterfield to do your CMF basic

18:00 **training, that's six weeks is it?**

Well, I don't know whether there's a time limit on that, or whether we just moved from there to Tenterfield or whether it was just a start to kick us off, I can't remember now. Might have been something getting kicked off.

So you did your basic training then your gun training?

At Greta.

And when did you actually go into the AIF?

In May. I was still at Tenterfield when I joined the AIF,

18:30 because I joined that in May. Well I know I done it up there because I went to the CO up there to get transferred over. And it only - only I got sent away to get the sign, came back, I think only a matter of about two days, and he called me up, swore me in about two days.

Did any other CMF blokes go across?

Oh there was some, but I was the only

19:00 one at that time. But oh yeah a few of them did, oh yeah.

In that time did you notice any of that choco thing, chocolate soldiers, and all that sort of thing?

Well, it was there, it was even after we - it's always been there. Always had choco, yeah, always had.

How did that make you feel when you were in the CMF?

Well, it didn't worry me too much because I was still sort of going into the navy, you know, it didn't really worry me, I wasn't happy about it, but

19:30 I said - see with the CMF, you could go overseas, but you could only fight in Commonwealth countries. You could go to New Guinea but you couldn't go to Borneo, you could go to Singapore, or you know any of those places. You could only go to Commonwealth countries but those places, like New Guinea and those places is probably they were the hardest fighting in the whole war and yet the CMF couldn't - they called them choccos.

20:00 And they've struck some of the hardest fighting too, you know. And they were all the militia there.

The instructors that you had during all this time, were they all veterans or...?

I think, well they had the older people, yeah, older, yeah, they were mostly veterans yeah. I don't know what they done,

20:30 **And you reckon the training was good?**

Oh yeah, the training was good, all the stuff's pretty tough, those route marches, you know, you go out for two or three days route marches at a time. You know. But oh, the toughest and hardest thing I've ever done in me life was Canungra.

When did you do that?

I done it - we done Tenterfield, went to Greta - I went in in February - and I think it was

21:00 the 1st of January, we left Greta and went up to Canungra, I done first of all. When you start Canungra, it's about a month's course. When you start, they put you through a lot of PT training, that's because it's a tough course and you've got to be fit, I tell you, you have to be fit. They put you through a lot of PT training and then they sort of get stuck into the fair dinkum stuff. Well I went about halfway through, and I got scarlet fever.

21:30 Or I got very, very crook anyhow one night and they put me into the hospital at Canungra, a little army hospital there. And the next day they took me down to Enoggera, the 88 here in Enoggera, with scarlet fever. And it turned out they didn't think it was scarlet fever at the finish but I was in the hospital about a fortnight or three weeks down here. And it's still on me medical history there as scarlet fever but I don't think it was. But anyway, they say it was.

22:00 Anyhow, when I went, the train that I took back to Canungra, when I got off the train, who's all waiting at the train? All the fellas I went there with, finished the course, catching the train to go, and didn't I cop some. "You'll be sorry." Boy oh boy, didn't I cop it. I thought, I was so cranky and everything, you know, I'd have been finished, going with them, if I hadn't got sick. But anyhow

22:30 when you started again, you'd have a fortnight's PT training before you started the course again and that was nearly as hard as the course, and then you started the course and boy oh boy, it is a tough course.

What sort of things were you doing?

Well, I tell you, a day was, the first thing at about daylight, blow a whistle, out of your tent, roll call, line up, roll call, back

23:00 into your tent. What come first? Into your tent. Back out, the whistle. Soon as you got back into your tent, oh that's right, yeah, into your tent, grab your shaving gear and washing, shaving gear in there and your towel. No baths or anything in the camp, the creek was about two miles from the camp and that was where you shaved and washed, the creek. You didn't walk down. You double, run, all the way.

23:30 You'd run down. You'd have your shave, have your wash in the creek, run all the way back. Back into your tent, whistle blow. Breakfast. Out you come for breakfast. Just back into your tent, away you go the whistle and then you started your day. Probably could be a route march till lunchtime, come back, get into your tent, whistle would blow. That bloke he must have blown that whistle a thousand times.

24:00 Everything was done by the whistle. And then in the afternoon, you had to have whatever you're doing, be lined up, come back. You'd have your tea. And after you'd get your tea and after tea, the whistle'd blow. And this is every day, and right, a march up to Mt Tambourine, not up the road, up the side. A

compass march, you learn how to march with a compass. And

- 24:30 a map you had to read like that. Get back about nine o'clock and that was your day and that was every day. Sunday was your day off. On Sunday was the same thing, whistle, roll call, whistle, down, double down for a shave and a wash, come back, breakfast, whistle, Church parade. You didn't go for church parade, you had to go and do PT. So you didn't want to go to church, you went to church. And then
- 25:00 by the time that's over, you'd be back in your tent and the whistle'd go for your lunch. And this is your day off. And for the rest, this was every day. And then they used to have the first march they used to do, they used to do an all day march. And in between that you do all these courses, you know and up hundred, all up under logs and over fences and over things and through things
- 25:30 and all that type of thing. You have a route march for one day. Then your next route march was for a two-day march, which you'd have to carry your rations and you sleep out on the ground, you know type of thing. And then they had courses there which is - one course they used to do you'd done this too in full gear, with live ammunition and they had
- 26:00 live ammunition, Bren guns on both sides of the course, firing live ammunition, almost taking your shirt off the front of you. And you had live rounds up and you kind of geed yourself because as you went along, targets would pop up, you'd shoot at them, you know, just pop up, back up and shoot. Start it off, they had floods of jelly in the creek and as you went through the creek, they let the jelly go.
- 26:30 And as soon as people would wake up and sit back a bit, they were right, they'd poke us through and go, they would wait for you and then they'd do it. And this it was so dangerous, you know. But what was dangerous, it was a pool of water, in the middle of this course, on the little bank with a track about that wide around both sides and fellas are walking there, one behind the other, with their finger on the trigger with a live round in. They've only got to trip and
- 27:00 bingo, you know, cos they had the things that pop up and another day and then they got a big wheel up there, they got a big tower, so you've got to get up the tower, got to get up off this tower, the bottom of the pool, with all your gear, only thing you don't take is your rifle because they reckon that many rifles down there, that they barred rifles. You got everything else, your full pack, everything. Jump off this tower and you got poles there, they reckon if you can't get out
- 27:30 they'd put the pole out to pull you, cos some blokes go under and don't come back up and then they've got to go looking for them. But the thing is, when you go in, you go straight down and of course, all the air in your pack, you come straight to the top. Course, immediately you sort of go straight back down again. Well, the course I was on, there was one bloke drowned, and two blokes killed with a two-inch mortar. Three killed on the one course. Now there must be - that wouldn't be the only course where that happened.
- 28:00 And to finish it all off, you have a five-day march, which you leave Canungra, and you carry all your rations, and bully beef and biscuits all that, carry everything with you, through Canungra, up that mountain, big mountain on the side, right round through O'Reilly's Guesthouse. And then from there, you cut your way back through the creek, back to Canungra, down through the creek, down all near Canungra, all the way through. That's five days. If you finish that,
- 28:30 you can go home. That's the finish of it.

Was it the hardest thing you've ever done before?

I left there, they told me too there, the 4th of April, 1944, I left Canungra.

How fit were you before you joined the army?

Oh I

- 29:00 was fit, I worked on the farm, I was pretty fit. Oh, fit, not fit from work but like, (UNCLEAR) that you wouldn't be fit because you've got to do things, but I was pretty fit when I went in.

How fit were you when you left Canungra?

I was that fit. I got out, it wasn't long before you back to normal, that was the trouble, you know, I went from Canungra to Sellheim, and I was there for three weeks, and all I done there was pick up papers. Never done a thing.

- 29:30 Just go into Charters Towers of a night time, come back, pick up papers. And from there I was drafted then to 2/5th Regiment.

You mentioned blokes that were killed on that course, considering they were training you for war, and the training being as realistic as possible, do you think that was reasonable?

I reckon it's stupid. Stupid. You don't need to kill - like, we had blokes killed on the Tableland, it was

- 30:00 an accident, it was a bad accident, of course but we had blokes killed up in the tablelands, but that was a different sort of a thing, but with this, like now that two-inch mortar, it hit a branch of a tree. Well that should never have happened. Not in training. They shouldn't be firing through trees. You might do it

when you have to, but not in training, no, should never have been done.

When those accidents happen, what

30:30 was the immediate reaction of the instructors there?

Well no one seemed to care. No one seemed to worry about it, thought it was one of those things, just happened.

No investigations or anything?

Well not that I heard of anyhow. Certainly didn't do any investigating that I heard of. Didn't ask me anything. But that should never have happened, especially with the mortar. They should not be firing a mortar through trees. An accident has to happen if that happens because

31:00 it's only got to hit something to go off, doesn't it? See, soon as you hit something, it's just gone, "bang!" Well, the branch there, 'bang' and these blokes copped it. The accident that happened up on the tablelands, that was a very, very bad accident. That was just before we went away actually. We were doing our final sort of training up there we were ready to go, you know. And we had

31:30 done a couple of big route marches and we were really got stuck into the fair dinkum training, like rifle and - I had an Owen gun - you had to have a lot of practice with an Owen gun, and we used to go nearly every day out to the range with the Owen gun, because you'd need it cos you've got to really learn to shoot the damn thing properly. And we had a lot of training, route marches and all that type of thing, and just towards the finish, they done a big

32:00 bivouac type of thing and the battalion went out on this bivouac and I was at that time, I was in the sigs then and I was OP sig then and I was up with them see, the officer and two of us. And they'd been having this practice all morning, what they were doing, they had the 25-pounders somewhere along the track somewhere, and they were firing just over their heads,

32:30 getting them used to advancing under fire, ready for the real thing. And they were landing, just in front of them. That worked, went off absolutely perfect, just as they went further they'd up 50 yards and 50 yards up and landing in front and it was actually really top class. So anyhow, it was getting late in the afternoon and on this day,

33:00 they used to fetch a hot meal up in the trucks, you know, for the hot meal. I think every second day or something they'd bring the hot meal up, the other day we'd just have the bully beef and biscuits and then they'd bring the hot meal. They just fetched the meal up and the blokes were lining up for it and they fetched the mail up with it, you know, any mail. And while they were doing that, the guns, were still carrying on but nothing to do with us, type of thing.

33:30 And with the 25-pounder, you've got a shell, which is separate to the projectile and the shell's separate. And in that shell, they put cordite, bags of cordite. They're the red bag and the yellow bag and I forget the colours but they're different charges for different ranges, see. The super charge, you have the three bags in and then when the range dropped down, you take a bag out and have two bags.

34:00 Well, they'd been firing on this - I think the super range, I think it was. Whichever way it was, it doesn't matter, but anyhow, firing on this range, where they had all the bags in. And of course, the blokes had them all the shells all ready, as they do in fair dinkum stuff. Ready to put in. When that was called off, type of thing and they were doing a different target altogether, the range

34:30 came down and everything but what happened, they didn't take the bag of cordite out of the bag. And you know where that shell landed? Right in the middle of that mess line. Eight blokes killed, I think it was 29 blokes wounded. That happened on the Atherton Tablelands.

Do you know when that was?

35:00 That would have been, about probably May, 1945. There was hell to pay, I tell you. There was hell to pay.

What did that do to the blokes' morale?

Oh didn't do much for it I can tell you. But like story, one bloke reckoned he had got a letter from - reading a letter as he's waiting in the line up and reckoned the shrapnel

35:30 went straight through the letter. And the story goes, whether it's true, it probably is I suppose, but one bloke dropped his dixies, he had the dixie you get your meal in, bent down to pick it up and the bloke in front of him had his head taken off. Eight blokes killed. Now I only found out about - I think it was last Anzac Day. Some of the - a Vietnam bloke I think it was, belongs to the Bardons RSL [Returned and Services League], I think he

36:00 was marching with us. And he said, when I started talking about it, he said, "That was the 2/5th Field Regiment." I said, "How do you know?" He said, "That story is still told to men today." I said, "I thought it was sort of thing that was over and done, finished with." "No, that is still part of training, today." So it's pretty well known.

36:30 **The other blokes there, they were all infantry guys?**

All infantry, yeah.

But technically are you still artillery?

Well, I still belonged to 2/5th Field Regiment.

Cos you were sig for the...

I was an OP sig for them.

So did blokes vent their anger on you, because you were an artillery bloke?

Oh no. No. There was a bit of anger, but it was a mistake, but the

37:00 well the sergeant should have seen that it was taken out. So you know, he should have, but who was to blame, really, the fella that supposed to have taken them out and put them in, really should. Something learned there that when you start a shoot, take them all out, empty them, you know. That's something learned I suppose, but so easy to happen. And that shell could have landed

37:30 anywhere on Atherton Tableland. Anywhere. It landed right on that bloody mess line. You remember that, Phyllis? You remember that, those blokes got killed up there? On the tablelands, when the shell landed in the...

So how long was it between Canungra and going out to the tablelands?

From Canungra I went to Sellheim for about a week, I don't know how long about a...not long.

38:00 And then they...that's where we were allocated out to units. And I went down to the 2/5th Field Regiment. And they were camped at Petrie, down here. So I come back to Petrie and they were camped down here for the sole reason they were having a march through Brisbane, one of these, you know, war bond march, for people to put money in. So the whole division, 15,000 marched through Brisbane. And they

38:30 were - the whole 7th Division was kept down there just for the march. As soon as that was over, away we went. But the whole division, marched through Brisbane.

How was that?

And I think we left - all come in, in trucks to - we started at Kelvin Grove up here about - they dropped us off there, and we marched right through town, right through around to the exhibition ground, they picked us up there took us round, took us home. Rifle and bayonet to slope all the way. The old arm was down here.

39:00 Yes, she was some march. Then as soon as that was over, up - we went straight up to the tablelands. Went from here to Cairns in a train, four days. Four days, sitting up in the train.

What was the troop train like?

Slow. They'd pull up the siding to let another train pass, you see, and the siding is the way from town, so you had to sit in the train. And that train that come past, it might be two hours coming, you know, but they had to wait for it to come past, and then

39:30 away we go. I think we got to the Burdekin River and of course, the Burdekin Bridge is down, it's washed away. So they unload us this side, load us onto the trucks, take us around and across, the other road bridge, round the other side and load us back on the train on the other side and away we go. And we went to Cairns then to Redlynch staging camp and from there we went off by trucks to up

40:00 to Gillies Highway, the one way. It's two way now I think, one way it goes straight down like that. Truck went over there too, army truck had a load on too, didn't it? Yes, but turned over there, coming down. Coming down, when we come down, the truck was - I hope this bloke can drive this truck.

40:30 It's a long way down there. Oh boy, scary. But it's a one way then and you get two hours down and then two hours up. So it's - but now it's two way.

Tape 4

00:32 **Now, I have to ask you about the story about the picture theatre in Atherton.**

Oh picture theatre in Atherton. Oh yeah. Me mate and I, we went into Atherton, we were camped at Kairi, near the Koala Club, might have heard Phyllis talking about this, the Koala Club, we weren't very far from there really and just round the corner. So we went into Atherton and you know, we had few beers, we thought we'd go to the pictures. So

- 01:00 in we go. Have a bit of a break off the beer, you know. We'd had enough. We go in and we see these four AWAS ground sheets on the seats, keeping their seats. I said, "Mate, we'll sit alongside of here we might do all right here." So anyhow, we sit there and the lights go out and these four girls come in, sitting there, picture's on. And it starts to rain. And right where we were sitting was where the roof leaked.
- 01:30 Right down, honestly, and it was pouring rain. And it was coming in. And of course, they had the ground sheet see. So I'm under the ground sheet, this girl is sitting in front of me, you know, keeping the rain off me. Anyhow, the lights come on, half time, I'm looking and, "Gee what have we got here?" This girl's sitting there. She had absolutely nothing going for her. Nothing at all.
- 02:00 Anyhow, I said to me mate, I said, "I think we'll go out and get a beer, eh?" He said, "Yeah, okay." Went out. I said, "I don't think we'll go back." Anyhow the story was, that I didn't know then, of course, Phyllis happened to be one of the four, see. But sitting up somewhere, I don't know whether she wanted to be next to us, but I don't know where, somewhere, she was with them anyhow. But after the army, I was up at Nambour
- 02:30 and Phyllis said to me, one day, somewhere there, Phyllis said, "I think I've seen you somewhere before." And I said, "Oh, I'm damned if I know." Talking about the army, might have - oh yeah, Atherton. "Oh yeah, I was up camped on the tablelands." And Atherton came up and the picture show came up for some reason or another. And then I said, "That's when it all came to life."
- 03:00 She was one of the four who was sitting in the picture show that night. I didn't know her until we met in Nambour. Funny story, but later on, years ago, after I got married here, this girl living in Darwin, she came down and she was the loveliest girl you could ever meet, but still had nothing going for her. Course, I never ever mentioned it.
- 03:30 But she was lovely girl though, really was, but nothing going for her. That was where I actually, I didn't see Phyllis, but she must have seen me, because she recognised me. I didn't look when I seen what was alongside of me, we didn't go back.

And you've never lived it down?

Never lived it down, no.

Was there much time for socialising when you were in Atherton?

- 04:00 Well, we did a bit at the Koala Club, we wasn't far from the Koala Club and you know, you could go down there for a drink and something to eat and they had dances there and things like that. And we were just around the corner, we could walk there, see. And they used to go to the dances there and all the girls used to go, we used to dance there. I probably seen Phyllis there once too. That might have been where she actually might have seen me. And not there, but it turned out she was at the other place anyhow. But, yeah, we used to go
- 04:30 there quite a lot. Yeah. Was funny how you meet girls though. This is, well not strange, but when we went from Tenterfield to Greta, a lot of the fellas done it, we used to write our name and everything on a piece of paper, and throw it out the train. We pulled in at, through Tamworth, and there were some girls on the train, waving to the troops and we just threw them out anyhow,
- 05:00 I was down at Greta about a couple of weeks, I suppose, I get this letter from this girl. Was from Tamworth. "Dear soldier." She's picked the note up see. Well she wrote and I wrote back, you know, cos it was good to get mail, you know, beautiful to get mail. And I wrote back and she wrote back and we wrote for quite a bit down there but the strange part of this was, this was the
- 05:30 real strange twist really, her name was Reid, Betty Reid, and a bloke actually in the same hut as me, about two beds from me, he's going home on leave, he got special leave to help with the shearing, see, cos the shearing was on and they had a shearing property. And he said to me, "I'm going back to Tamworth." Well, Bendemeer, this girl lived in Bendemeer, back
- 06:00 to Bendemeer. And I said, "Oh, I write to a girl in Bendemeer." He said, "Yeah?" I said, "Yeah, Betty Reid." "Betty Reid" he said, "That's my sister." Was his sister. How lucky it was, but I didn't say anything. You know, a fella's - I'm just joking and say something. "Yeah, my sister". Oh felt like a really gully with him after that
- 06:30 but anyhow we wrote to one another right throughout the war, right till the war finished, and I always said that I'd go and meet her, you know, one day but I never did and when the war finished, I thought, "Oh well, I best forget about it", you know. And I just stopped writing. But different times when we going past, it's not far out of Tamworth, Bendemeer, I always said I could run in and just say, "Hello." You know, because
- 07:00 her brother too, I knew her brother see, cos I was in the army with him. He was in everything, but yeah, she used to write, nearly every week I'd get a letter, you know. Gee it was good to get, cos letters is like gold, you know. And I used to get letters from me sisters and that but that was all I used to get, you know. And to get other letters was just magic.

Were there any

07:30 **other girls that you went on dates with in Atherton?**

No, no. We never left the camp. That was the only time we ever went to Atherton. The only part of the time we left there we went we had a weeks rest camp at Lake Eacham. Had a rest camp there, we went there for a week rest. Have a rest, they give us a rest there for a week, I don't think there was even any parades for a week. That was just - that was only yeah, just before we left to go away.

08:00 Before we left to go overseas.

At what point when you were in Atherton, did you get news that you would be sent overseas?

Well they don't tell you nothing, they just tell you that we're leaving, they didn't tell us where we were going. They just told, we were leaving and we're going down to Townsville, we knew that we were on the way. And we all went down, whole division moved down to

08:30 Oonoonba. Just outside of Townsville, big camp there. Big staging camp there. I think we were there about a week, I think. And they said, "Righto, we're off." And we were. They started to load everybody on. We went on the SS Anderson, the big Yankee [American] boat, 5000 of us, on the boat.

Before you got moved down near Townsville, had you

09:00 **noticed that training was getting more intense or more serious?**

Oh yeah, when we got on that big, where they got killed that was a sort of the winding up of it. We knew it was close. We knew we was going pretty soon, yeah, everybody knew.

All that while, what news were you getting through of what was going on in the war?

Oh well, you always knew how things were going otherwise, you know. Used to get all the news, yeah.

09:30 But most of it at that time was pretty all good news, because starting to get the upper hand then. They were all getting the upper hand then and the news was good, you know. But we knew and we went to Oonoonba and they all knew then that we were not too far; we leave from Oonoonba, didn't know what day, you know. They all went at different times you know, different boats and we went on

10:00 a big boat with 5000 on it and no escort. They reckoned an escort held them up, slowed them down, so no escort; we had one alarm on the way, fire in the galley. Away goes the alarm and these Yanks [Americans] they straight out onto the stairs - I was down three storeys down, three decks down - with machine guns

10:30 in case people panic. And they say if they had a come up, they'd shoot you. Because people panic; they think they're right down there and can't get out and they panic. So they come on this gangway with a machine gun. And you're down there, "What's going on? What's going on?" You know, the bells are ringing and then they put it over, "Fire in the galley but it's under control." Thank God for that. When they

11:00 go you don't know, it could be air raids or anything. But anyhow, little things like that, that happen.

Before you got sent overseas, had there been any more news on your brother?

Well, no, they were getting a bit of news through but none of it was really good. You know, but well, see we didn't know then what was going on. I know now, because they give us a talking to just after the war finished, that Singapore was our next step.

11:30 As I said, the 7th Division, that's why from Borneo they'd gone up, over and they were going to train the troops as commandos and put them into Singapore quietly, don't fire a shot unless you have to and try to get the prisoners all out that way. That was their next step if the war hadn't have finished. So I think if that had come to do, well I don't think my brother would have come home I don't think. They'd have

12:00 finished them I think.

Did you know exactly where he was?

Well as far as we knew he was Singapore. On the Thai-Burma Railway, but of course, he could have been shifted like others were. You wouldn't know, because I thought he could have been in Borneo, a lot were in Borneo, because after the war finished, when they started to come back through, they used to go down and check them. Check them all to see if he was there, but he was in Singapore. He beat me home by a long way.

12:30 I said, I was going to get him home. In a way I might have.

When you were in north Queensland doing your training, was there ever any feeling that the Japanese could invade up there?

Not really because we knew then that we had control of the sea. That Coral Sea battle that finished their navy off. We knew we had control of the sea and the

13:00 air was getting to be all ours, you know. We sort of knew they was on the run. It was just a matter of

cleaning them out. That was – I think everybody sort of knew that – see the next big step was going to be the 7th Division was going to Singapore, the 9th Division was going to Japan, the 6th Division was going to clean all the islands up and

- 13:30 that's what they had planned. So it wasn't far, the landing of Japan wasn't far away. But the 9th Division was going there, the glorious 9th Division. Getting all the kudos. The silent 7th Division were going to sneak in on their sandshoes, like they – the silent 7th they called us, the sandshoe brigade.

So when you left Australia, what were you thinking as to where you might be headed?

- 14:00 Well, we knew we were going to Morotai, that's where – we all went to Morotai so that was our place where we, everybody loaded up and convoy and everything and went from Morotai. We knew then that we were going to Borneo. But we didn't know the exact date I don't think. We didn't do any training or anything over there, we just more or less got ready, we had little parties,

- 14:30 the night before we had a big party. We had a little party actually it was just the ten of us and a captain and a lieutenant and they put a bit of a party on and just ten of us and those two and have a bit of a party before we went, you know. Then they started to load everything up and we knew everything was pretty close. 200 ships there was, you know. The largest convoy

- 15:00 of ships Australia ever had out. 200, 200 plus.

How long was the trip from Townsville to Morotai?

I think it took us five days. Five days I think. And they reckon they were fast so five days. Morotai, oh it's a rotten...oh you wouldn't go there in a fit. Oh, it'd be the real grubs of the earth, Morotai,

- 15:30 It rains and it's hot and it's right on the equator. It's a rotten place. We were only there a few days luckily.

What was the mood like on the ship going over?

Oh pretty good, yeah, pretty good. It was a Yankee boat though and the thing we didn't like was we only got two meals a day because they – there was 5000 on the boat and when we went on they give you a

- 16:00 tag card around your neck, when you went for a meal they ticked it off so you couldn't have more than one meal. And the meals, their meals, they had like a plate about that big, about that wide, with little places on it, you know, and all rubbish. Olives, I can't eat olives, on that little place, and something...all rubbish stuff, nothing that you could call good eating, you know. And stuff they evidently eat, the Yanks,

- 16:30 but you know, you just sort of couldn't take it, but I used to luckily, I didn't get seasick, but a lot of them did. A lot of them got very seasick because it was pretty rough, very sea sick and I used to get first on the line go through, come back, go through on the other bloke's card and back up again and I just pick out the best parts of each one, you know. I say, "You going up?" "No." "Give us your card."

- 17:00 And the good part of it too, you could get a carton of Yankee cigarettes for three dollars, wasn't dollars then it was three bob I think. Very bloody light anyhow and before lunch when you'd have a pack of cigarettes you'd sort of you know, smoke your own type of thing, everybody who didn't have a packet alongside of him, used to play cards, they had a carton alongside of him, you know.

- 17:30 That was it, "No, I'll have one of me own." We all had packets and cartons and things.

Before getting on that ship had you had any interaction with the Yankees?

No that was my first.

What did you think of them?

Well, really on the boat, apart from the meals, we had nothing to do with them. Only when they went out, when we had the alarm when they had the Yanks was on there with the machine guns, stopping you from going up. But they looked as if they meant business too. But no

- 18:00 we didn't really have any much to do with them really, at all. You just had your meal and back down to your bunk, you know. Down on the serving deck we were way down in the bottom. It was hot as Hades, you know.

Was there any beer on the ship?

Oh no. No beer. We had our last beer that night before Morotai and we never had another one at all till we were finished. That was our next beer.

Most blokes when you left Australia were they excited

- 18:30 **to be finally going overseas?**

I think so, yeah, I think so, cos a lot of them had been over before. See, a lot of them.

They had?

Oh yeah, been to New Guinea a lot of them the older ones there. Oh yeah.

How did the older guys treat you younger fellows?

Oh they treated us all right, yeah, they had a lot of experience, I had two brothers in law

19:00 over there but actually at that time, neither of them were brothers in law. But one of them lived on the next farm to me at home and he finished up in the 7th Division and the other brother in law, he was in the 2/25th Battalion. Actually I run into him up on the tablelands, went over and had a party at their place and on the home brew. And he had a very quick exit.

19:30 He hit the beach, about two hours I think, and was shot through the arm, sent home. He said to the bloke, "I've got a homer. I'm off, hooray!" He was shot through the arm. And he married my sister after he come home.

Did any of those guys that were sort of going over for their second active service overseas.

Oh a fair few, yeah.

20:00 Were they telling you about what they'd already experienced in New Guinea?

Yeah, you got a lot of knowledge off them, oh yeah. Quite a lot of them had been over and back. It was only actually your reinforcements that were joined the unit again, cos you know we were reinforcements. A lot of them had been over, been through New Guinea.

Did any of the stories that they told you about what they'd already been through stand out, for you?

Oh yeah, they did, they more or less let you know what to expect. A lot of

20:30 things that they tell you to do like, they say, well back home for instance when you're on guard, you say, "Who goes there?" They, "You don't open your mouth, you just pull the trigger". You know. Like things like that, cos they teach you on guard, "Halt, who goes there?" "Joe Blow." "Joe who?" By that time you're dead on the floor, you know. But they teach you that here, but they say over there, "No, you don't open your mouth, you just pull the trigger mate".

21:00 Might be a monkey but had a lot of monkeys there and a lot of monkeys get killed cos they make a noise and "Bang!"

Do you remember anything else that they told you?

No, just normal things. I suppose they didn't dwell on the bad parts, you know, because I suppose they didn't want to frighten you I suppose, like some people will probably tell you that they wasn't frightened but

21:30 I just simply say to them, "Mate you wasn't there." You wasn't frightened, you wasn't there. Everybody is. No doubt about that.

Were you frightened going over there or was it just once you were actually got into...?

No, only just before. Even when you're getting on the boats, when we're going to Borneo, you're not worried about it, you're not thinking about it, it's in the back of your mind, it's there I suppose, but not worried. But when you wake up in

22:00 the morning, and you can see the land there, you know in two hours time I think, nine o'clock we landed, two hours time, you're going to be there, then it starts to get you a little bit. Yeah. Just a little bit. The heebie-jeebies take over. That's when people say, "No, I wasn't frightened mate, I wasn't frightened." "But mate, you wasn't there." But you definitely

22:30 get the heebie-jeebies but as soon as you saw, that hit it.

Did you or any of the other guys that you saw, have any kind of good luck token or...?

Not that I know of. The only thing you had was the meat tags [identification disks] around your neck, dead meat tags as they call them. I still got mine there. Tin thing around your neck. If you get knocked over, they cut the bottom one off and throw it in with you. Send the

23:00 other one back.

How did you regard the Japanese?

Mongrels. I knew what they were like, that's the lot of thing that kept me going a bit, because you knew what they were doing. How they were treating the prisoners and that, you knew all this. No, I could never, ever take them, no.

What had you heard about them?

Well the atrocities things they were doing, the atrocities they were doing, like using blokes for bayonet practice and all that, which was fair dinkum.

23:30 You know, you could never like them. And after Ivan got home, he wrote to me and we were guarding the Japs [Japanese] you see, and he wrote me a letter and told me a few things, he said, "Yeah get a few of them so and sos for me." I said, "I'd like to mate, but I don't want to go to jail." You know.

How were you getting news of what the Japs had been up to?

I don't know how but, you know, the

24:00 service have a way of finding out all these things, you know what their spies, I suppose, things like that, that's the way they find out, you know, and people are there too that finish up getting away and escape and come back somewhere and they find out, you know, different ways that - they find out, but when you hear all these stories and

24:30 well that death march mentioned in North Borneo, where one bloke survived. Things like that. The rest were all killed, you know. What was that, about 500 of them? Bingo. No, they're no good. I done everything I could to upset them. The first lot we used to

25:00 build a compound to keep them in. And they had a big tower inside the compound with (UNCLEAR) inside and of course we had a Bren gun tower, we had a Bren gun and everything up there and that was one of the posts and I was on night time. And a bloke came over in the morning with a cup of coffee you know and boiling hot coffee,

25:30 and at night time you would have a smoke and throw it down, you know. And I was having this cup of boiling hot coffee, you know, and the Japs walked over and of course they were going, bow, bow, bow, bow all the way over. I thought, "You lot of so and sos." Bend down to pick up the cigarette, you know cup of hot coffee, bang, away! You rotten - nah couldn't cop them.

So when you got to Morotai

26:00 **did you know how long you were going to be there?**

I'm not sure when they told us the landing date. I'm not sure, now. I think we knew. Well we certainly knew fairly quickly because we started loading all the ships up, the landing ships. You know everything had to go on, all the gear. And there was

26:30 200 ships. Barges and landing crafts and big ships and little ships and navy ships and all types of things there. A lot of ships, 200.

Were you aware at the time that it was the biggest landing that...?

Well I didn't know it was the biggest landing, no. I knew it was big, but I didn't know it was the biggest. No.

27:00 Over 200 there was, yeah.

So what briefing were you given before you went to Borneo?

Well, we wasn't briefed much, it was only we knew what we had to do and we knew who was landing and where they were landing, and how they were going in. Like, they said a couple of battalions would land and one would stay on the boat as a back up in case they're needed somewhere,

27:30 someone's getting roughed around a bit and getting a lot of casualties or something and they're just as a back up. And you're told then and there where he is and where you're landing and where you're going to be in after you land and what you've got to do. And course, you can't start laying out sig wire because there's nothing to lay it to, so you just had your pack on your back

28:00 and you just go with your wireless. And until the guns get settled in and then of course the guns come ashore and then when they get settled in then you lay the line between them and the battalion. As you go, you just lay out more wire, you know, keep on going. But you know where everything is and what time and how - who's going now and who's going when and you know all that, yeah, you know all that. All

28:30 told. When the barge starts to go in, you know all right, this is it. Bingo.

So what were you told about where you were going to land?

Well, yeah, they tell you like, well they call everything's got a name, they call it, beaches, it's got army name. Like even the highway there, it had the highway was Vasey Highway, which was our major general in division command, he got killed in an aeroplane smash before we went and

29:00 Milford took over from him. Well Vasey Highway was called the one going up along the coast and Milford Highway was the one going inside. And they're all named with - those names - your own names type of thing, and of course the maps they all had like the rivers and all that, they're all called the Besar, not river. And you know where they are and where the airstrips were; there was no airstrips they were blown up. But

- 29:30 as soon as we landed, the engineers straight away they had the air strip working I think within well, on the second day. The airfield was back landing Spitfires on the second day. And it was blown to pieces by our own fellas. They blew the place to pieces. To go in there was something you – it was that you'd never probably ever see, because
- 30:00 they bombed the hell out of it. They bomb, bomb, bombed. The ships, we had big naval ships there, battleships and that, and they was letting them go as fast as they could land them, they were blowing up every... We said, "Well how could anybody be alive there?" And they'd blown all the oil pipes up because they had the big oil pipes about so big, running right along the coast and
- 30:30 the story was, that they were going to use that and set it alight, when we landed as a...and you know burn everybody up. That was the story, so they decided that to stop that, they had to blow the pipe up. So they settled on that pipe and they blew it up in a few places, cos Balikpapan that night, the first night, you could have read a paper all night, on the fire.
- 31:00 It was the brightest daylight you could ever get, all night. The biggest fire you've ever seen; the oil on fire. It was something out of this world. But that's how it happened, because if we hadn't have done that, they'd have set that oil alight as we landed. Would have been hell to pay, hell of a mess. So we blew it up first. And all that time, they're going in as – even as the ships were landing and they're still
- 31:30 shelling it and it wasn't until they actually landed that they stopped shelling. And they give it heaps; that saves a lot of casualties, oh boy. They learnt a lot, they blew it to bits. Blew everything to bits. All the houses were there, you couldn't find a house even get in of a night time, because they was all blown to pieces. Only huts they wasn't really a house, they were sort of like
- 32:00 bamboo sort of huts they were. But it was a town there, Balikpapan, was a town. But I never, ever got right into the town of Balikpapan itself, cos we landed this side and we went up the coast this way and the other brigade they went in down the Balikpapan way.

So as your ship was coming in, can you describe what you saw?

Well yes,

- 32:30 it was all just desolation, more or less. There was nothing left alive in the land at all, it was just no trees, everything was just wrecked. It was like – it was just blown to pieces. Absolutely blew it – cos they were bombing that for three weeks at least before, yeah, they blew the hell out of it for three or four weeks. Bombs you know.
- 33:00 Cos they had control of the air, you see. And they blew hell out of it and they never stopped till they actually landed. And even then the navy was sitting out there, they had all the time in the world because they had all their big guns and that cut into the mountains, you know tunnelled into the mountains, and they were pretty hard to get at, you know. And they had one particular big one, had a big six-inch one. And it had it on railway tracks and they'd run her out,
- 33:30 fire, run her back in. And you could actually see the shells landing right where it was, and you'd say, well that's the end of that fella, wouldn't want to know. Out she come, bang, bang. Navy, bang. This time. No, out she come again. They just run her back into the tunnel and out. And they got rid of that one, it was one of the 2/25th Battalion ones they took it up at nighttime, they manhandled it up
- 34:00 in front of the gun and at daylight, they got it by rope and sights, like buying a rifle with a 25 pounder, and blew the gun to pieces. The sergeant in charge got the DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and the poor old fellas got nothing.

When you came in for your landing, roughly what time of day was it?

Morning, we landed,

- 34:30 landing was nine o'clock in the morning. We got there, we were there at seven in the morning I think it was, seven and we actually landed at nine.

Can you talk me through the actual landing?

Well we was on a landing barge. See, some of the people was on the big ships, and they were loaded onto barges. But we were acting on a landing barge. Well the landing barge will take you in as far as it can. Then they just drop the front out

- 35:00 and then you go ashore, well sometimes they can't get right in, you might finish up in water up to here when you leave it, cos, you've got to go, can't go no further, so you've got to get into shore as quick as you can. Because that's when it's the worst, because when you come in, you're sitting ducks, see. You're there and you can't run nowhere, you can't hide nowhere, you're there. You can't get into a little trench or hide behind a tree, or anything like that, so you've got to get off as quick as you can. So as soon as it stopped
- 35:30 they dropped the plank, away you'd go. We do training and that, we done that at Cairns before we went. We done our barge training there, where we had to do the same thing, we had to – I finished up in water over me head in Cairns when we done the training cos they couldn't get the boat in. But you had to go. And I got in trouble cos I had a Bren gun and I dropped the Bren gun and I thought, "My life for the

Bren gun" and I thought, "If I'm dead the Bren gun's no good to me anyhow." And I got in trouble for losing it. Anyhow. But

36:00 they train you for that. Might have to go. Some boats, little ones, might go in further, but most of them you finish up in water up to here anyhow and then you just go ashore as quick as you can and find a spot till you get your bearings type of thing, and then away you go, everybody goes. They all got their job to do.

So on that day when you came into Balikpapan, how deep was the water?

Oh about that deep was,

36:30 where I went in.

And were the Japanese firing on you?

Well, we landed quietly because they was blowing the place that much to pieces, the navy were shelling it as we were landing, that's why I say, we landed with hardly much opposition, it wasn't until we got on shore and inland that we struck opposition, which was, that was the good part about it, like

37:00 before this they used to lose most of their men in the landing cos they're sitting ducks. In Gallipoli the same thing, in the landing they lose all their men, like that. So they learnt a lot of lessons.

That must have been a relief to have a relatively safe landing.

Well that's what it's all about. That's what the whole thing was about, that's why they shelled it and shelled it and while we were landing, they were still shelling it, it wasn't till we got ashore that they stopped. Once you get ashore and

37:30 you get a foothold, well there's little foxholes you can crawl into and start - if the shells coming or something like that till it's over, things like that. Till you get ashore, you've got nowhere to hide.

So when was the first time that you ran into the Japanese?

Well that was it. When we landed, we just went straight through. We didn't just land in and stop. They had targets, like what they wanted to take the first day and the second day and I think

38:00 the first day, I think we reached our third day target. The first day. So you know, we landed with hardly any opposition, but my brother was one of the unlucky ones, he was hit by a sniper. He was one of the unlucky ones; there were shots fired, but not a lot. This bloke was a sniper up in a tree. But my brother-in-law, he said, after he said, "That Jap lived one second after."

38:30 His mate, bang, got him. He said he lived one second. But funniest thing though, that shot actually killed my brother. Not then, but in later years, it didn't worry him that much, it hit a sinew, cut a sinew in there and in later life, his fingers all started to curl up and they took

39:00 the little finger off and then they took that finger off and they were all like that, they were all going. And they couldn't do anything about it. The only thing they could do was cut them off and they said eventually they'd all be gone. And he worried about it and he got on the grog and it finished up killing him, but years and years later though. Yeah, but he only, see he just hit the beach and he said, "I got a homer. I'm coming home." Cos he'd been away before, he'd been to

39:30 New Guinea.

What happened to you, the first time you got fired upon?

Well, the first fright I got, it was just after we'd landed, not long after. There was a - we filled in a bit of barren land, and there was two of us, just two sigs, together, like there was others around but we were just sort of together,

40:00 and a - it must have been a mortar shell I think it might have been, it landed fairly close, and there was a bit of a, wasn't a pothole, but there was a bit of a depression in the ground I had it but me mate beat me, he went in and I went in on top of him, right on top of him like this. But there was only the one landed, see but that was the first I got of,

40:30 getting a bit of a fright. This is what it's all about. I got a bigger fright later on from them monkeys I think. They were a damn nuisance. I remember one night, we were getting along pretty well by this time we'd gone quite a long way up the highway, and all the sigs,

41:00 I don't know how, we all come together but there was about six of us anyhow had bedded up together from different battalions we were come together. And there was a little hut on, just off the road a bit see. And I think it was one of the...I think he was a corporal, he said, "This'll do us, we can set up here." See.

Tape 5

00:31 So you come across the hut and the corporal...?

Yeah, he said, "This'll do us for the night." He said, "We'll set our gear up here." Which we did, we set everything up from - had no doors or windows in the place, they'd all been blown out. You know, been blown to pieces the hut. So anyhow, we're at just about dark, a fella comes - there was mob camped across the other side of the road, a couple of fellas come over and said, "Hey." He said, "They sent me over to tell you to come back inside the perimeter, you're outside the perimeter."

01:00 And we said, "What're you talking about, outside the perimeter?" He said, "The road's the perimeter." He said, "Commander said to come over and tell you to move back inside." And he said, and the corporal said, "Oh bugger it," he said, "we're all set up here. We'll be right." We were right all right, but it was the worst night I think I've ever put in. When it got dark, a lot of mud in there, you know. And I was - we had one bloke at the window, one at the door, a couple of blokes having a sleep, only you had a sleep for an

01:30 hour and then, you have a sleep for an hour and then on and off for an hour. All the time up there, you have an hour's sleep and an hour awake, you know. All the time. You have two blokes get together and have an hour each. And I sitting at the window and there was a big bright moonlight night and you're looking - and I see this bloke walking, not from the camp, up the other way. And it's walking, it's coming, and I was just about to pull the... and

02:00 it's back there again. The more I stared at it, the closer it come. It was a stump that hadn't moved, but the night and you watch it, you swear it's walking right up to you. Then everything else sort of settled down then your nerves are all a jingle, you're jangling because you're watching this and you almost shot but didn't. And I said, to the blokes, I said, "There' someone out there." You know just whispered to them. "Someone there, be careful."

02:30 And next thing you'd hear this rustle. Bloody monkeys. So they're - didn't know whether to - you didn't want to fight, didn't want to give your spot away unless you had to. But all night, it was the worst night, you could have ever fought, I reckon. And I tell you what, the only night we ever spent outside the perimeter, cos they said, as soon as he started, he said, "You fellas will be gone, cos we'll be shooting this way if anything happens, he said, "You'll have to move." He said, "Oh, we're here now, it'll be all right.

03:00 It'll be all right." Anyhow, but it was nerve racking, the monkeys were nerve racking. Happen all the time, the monkeys in the bush. More monkeys killed out there than the Japs I think. Cos you don't look, you hear a rustling, you shoot first and look after. But they were a nuisance those monkeys. But lot of funny things happened, a lot of strange things happened. Good things, happened, you know.

03:30 When you look back on them, they're funny, but -

Can you remember the first time you fired your rifle in anger?

Probably yeah, I suppose I probably can. I think the first time I fired was a monkey. I'm sure it was. I'm sure it was, yeah. Yeah, that was strange too, well that was a stupid thing too, really.

04:00 Our line went out, which they do, and when a line goes out in training you're supposed to have a section to go with you, but that never, ever happened, that's only training. So just the two of you, to go well if you had a rifle, an Owen gun, and you follow the line along until you found the break, see. Well all the time you think where they break is there's probably someone there, cut it and waiting for you. That goes through your mind,

04:30 because that happened every so often. But you had to, you'd give it a pull you know, till you'd - anything would move or anything like that, you know, and pull it a bit. And next thing, follow it along and here's this noise, you could hear it through the shrub. I said to me mates, I said, "Something in here, something in here." And a monkey. And of course by now everybody knows we're here now, but that was the first time, I think

05:00 fired me gun there. I had an Owen gun. See he only had to carry the ammunition for us. He carried ten magazines and he had 30 rounds in each, I think it holds 31, you put 30 and you put the extra one in at the finish but you can always carry 30. But you carry, I think it was 10, 12, must have been 12 and we had two of them.

05:30 We made our own up, like we put two together and a little bar across and had it welded on so we had one upside down and the other way up, you just pull one out and put it straight back on again, you know and you carried them in your pouch, you had 12 of them. And then you had extra in your gun, because like one magazine, one pull of the trigger and one magazine's gone. And if you're not careful, you waste all your ammunition's gone when you want it, you haven't got it. And also, you got to carry the damn stuff. You know. So you

06:00 got to be pretty careful, you get used to time to fire. It's impossible to fire one round, I reckon. I can never fire one round, because by the time, before you let the trigger go, there's at least two gone, you know, you can't be quick enough to stop the second one going, cos that's how quick they are. 30 are

gone in about three seconds, you know. And just, too late there's two gone. And you get pretty used to it but I liked the old Owen gun, oh terrific gun.

And I think you were saying they all

06:30 **have a bit of a mind of their own, do they?**

Oh they, as I say, we had a lot of practice on them because you gotta hold them down, that's why you see them in pictures and that, you see them sort of, with the stiff arm, because if you're that, like that, they're flying off like that. Same with the Bren gun, all the same, the Bren gun too. You fire that you've got to really push it down, you know, cos it just starts to...up she goes. Yeah. But we had a lot of practice on them,

07:00 a lot of rounds out of them.

So think back to that landing, what strikes you as the most powerful thing? Seeing the barrage going in before you landed, or the actual landing?

Well the barrage is something. You'd never, ever see again. It was really awesome. The barrages they put down was absolutely awesome and when - well from daylight, until after nine o'clock. And

07:30 it never let up. Never let up. It just - it stopped, it stopped when they hit the beach, you know, because they had to stop then. Or they might have lifted, might have been firing a bit further, bit further back but they probably had to stop then to let the guns cool off I suppose, because they must have been red hot. You know. Those guns get hot. And they'd have to give them a bit of a spell, I'd imagine.

And as you land and you're moving forward, what exactly are you doing?

Well the thing

08:00 you're doing is trying to get cover as quick as you can. You've got to get cover. Because you're on a plain where there's nothing, there's no trees, they're all blown away, there was nothing. And until you get to the hills, you've got no cover.

But you're still acting as a sig for the FO [Forward Observer]?

A sig, yeah. And you've got to get cover. Because where they go, you've got to go. See. Cos you've got to be there for them.

08:30 When they want artillery fire you've got to be there to send it back to the guns, you know.

So what information are you sending back to the guns?

Well, see what you have, there's two sigs and I think they call him an OP Ack [Observation Post Assistant (Ack = A)], he's a bloke with a bit more brain and he works things out, and an officer. And the officer, he has a map. They have all these maps, they've got to rely on the maps as being accurate too a lot, but most of them are. They're usually not too far out.

09:00 He has the map and he works out - he's got where the guns are placed, see, the guns are placed on his map here, see. Now, and he works out, we are now, here. See, now he and his OP Ack he works all these distances out and tell you, you rely a lot on the map, I tell you. He works all that out, and then when he - that's for distance - and then on the map, he's got to get the degrees, where the

09:30 guns are here and the target's over there, see. And so he got it worked out the angle, from the straight line there, over to there and the distance, he works all that out and when he got that out then everything, he just says to me, "Righto, the message, send to the gun, bloke on the gun." You give the bloke on the gun the message, then. You give him the range,

10:00 the degrees and everything else and as soon as you give it to him, the bloke on the gun, the layer, he puts the range on, and he works his degrees out, they got little levels, like a spirit level. And he puts the range on, then levels it all. And puts the gun up and levels that and as soon as he's ready he puts his hand on the thing, see. And then, the officer might say, "One round gunfire." So say, "Number one gun,

10:30 one round gunfire." You just pass that message back and they fire one round. You see where it lands. Okay it might land beautiful, so you say, "Okay, that's it." You might want '20 rounds gunfire'; that means 20 rounds as quick as they can let them go. Four guns, I think. So you send a message back. "1, 2, 3, 4. 20 rounds gunfire." So then they let them go, you find there's 80 rounds coming over as quick as they can get them.

11:00 That's the way they work and that's how it's all done.

So that basic role that you were doing with those guys, the FOs, that was as you advanced after the landing, you just continued in that role?

That go all the time, yeah. That's all the time. You never go back, you never see the guns again. I have never seen the 2/5th from the time I landed, haven't seen them since. I finished up with the 2/25th Battalion and then didn't go back to them

- 11:30 after, so I never seen them since. Actually not over there, I never seen them since. I just see them some of the fellas up there since, but never seen the unit as a unit. And that's the way you are these OP sigs, and the OP ack and the officers, that's their job, they're up with the battalion, that's doing the work wherever
- 12:00 it is, they're with them. The ones who want the fire, the gunfire, the 25-pounder fire.
- And you said that you were accomplishing your target objectives a lot quicker than what they anticipated, how far did you go before they said, "Okay"?**
- Well, no they had targets set where they wanted to be the first night and where they wanted to be the second night and so these are targets that they sort of set. Well, I think
- 12:30 the first night I think, the first day, well it might be the second day, they'd reached about their fourth day target, something like that it was. They advanced a lot quicker; they never actually struck the opposition properly until they got back into the hills. The Japs had left there because of the barrage that had been put down, they were, as you could understand, you could never understand how anybody could there. But they'd moved, because they had all their foxholes, all dug
- 13:00 months ago. All their guns in the hills, they had that all done. They were well dug in but that was it and they had places to fall back on. That's why they took a lot of digging out. But they advanced a lot quicker than they'd thought they would, but then of course, they struck a bit of opposition but the opposition was never really big time, you know.
- So how long was it that you were in this really**
- 13:30 **pumped up mode of doing the advance before you got to catch your breath and take a break?**
- Well, you don't sort of get your breath much because - the battalion do because another battalion will come up and take over, like as I said, they leave one on the boat, as a back up, well then he finally comes ashore then, when they've landed, properly and he might move up and another one move back and have a spell. But the
- 14:00 poor old sigs, they don't have a spell. The company, they do. See, I landed with the 27th Battalion and about the third day I was with the Cavalry Commandos, next I was with the 2/14th Battalion, then I was back with the 27th, and I went with the 27th right up along the highway I think, right up to the second aerodrome,
- 14:30 well yeah. And they finished up going right through to Sambodjalama and I went right through to Sambodjalama with them, because I stayed with them then.
- How did that affect you, going from one unit to another?**
- No, it don't affect you, no, you just do the same job. Like the officer commanding the battalion or the company or whatever it might be, you just say to the officer,
- 15:00 you say, "Oh it's getting a bit tough out there, how about we pour a few rounds into her, eh?" And they say, "Yeah." "Oh give her a good softening up mate, put about 50 rounds in there, eh? Soften them up before we go in." And then that's what they does, see.
- And how would you appraise the fall of shot that you were calling in?**
- How were they doing it? They're pretty good, they're pretty good,
- 15:30 they can nearly put it on a sixpence, you know. The only thing that I have against them is the maps are not just right but they seem to be able to adjust to that pretty quickly - that's why they always put those sighters [spotting round] in, like fire one round to see where it lands, you know. And they go from there then they might, if it lands wrong, they might say to the - the next call might be, "Up 50, minus three degrees", or something like that.
- 16:00 Wants it over a bit and up a bit. So you send that message back, they put that on the gun, fire one round. See, lands right. Then he come and says, "Righto, 20 rounds, gunfire." That's when they say that, that means they load and fire as quick as they can. Every time they load they got to resight because the gun jumps, you know and it might go back about that far. See, hell of a recoil on them.
- So how far through did you say you went?**
- 16:30 We went, finished up right up to Sambodjalama, which is all the way up the coast and when we got there, I think they knew that the war was finished then.
- Where were you when you heard the war had finished?**
- We were back at, we came back to Mangar airstrip, that's where we sort of settled down there and we made that our perimeter, because they said, we're not advancing any further, we're just now, setting a perimeter, and holding what we've got now. I think they knew
- 17:00 that the war was getting close to the end.

And that's where you were when you heard?

That's where we were when the war finished.

How did you hear?

Well, somebody come to me and said, "The war's over." I said, "Yeah, pull this one mate." He said, "No, fair dinkum." I said, "Yeah, yesterday was Sunday too, wasn't it?" For once it was right. Cos you always got rumours, you know, rumours flying - "Foo's been here," [drawing of man half looking over a wall], you know you see it written, up, "Foo's been here." Rumours.

17:30 And but yeah we went right up to Sambodjalama and had a lot of Japs out of there, but anyhow, they must have got word that the war was close to finishing because, they come back then and they come back to there and they already had a big perimeter there and I was on the bank of the river there at Mangar, the big river there, and you wouldn't read about it, the night the

18:00 war finished, I was on guard. And you wouldn't read about this either, the beer came out. Straight away, everybody had a beer but Jimmy Cross and a couple of his mates that were on guard. I got mine the next night. Sitting on the bank of the river with a Bren gun almost in the river. Cos the thing was, we knew it was all over but the Japs mightn't have. So we had to be careful for a long time.

18:30 **That must be a very strange feeling, to know in your own mind that the war's over but...?**

Everybody's saying, "We're going home, we're going home." I said, "Yeah, be home for Christmas." Home for Christmas, I was home the next Christmas. I couldn't get home.

So what sort of celebrating was done?

Well we only had beer, that was all we had and I think it was two bottles I think, might have been, yeah. That was our first beer since the one we had the night we left Morotai.

19:00 But they must have had it all there ready because they fetched it straight out.

What sort of beer was it?

Well, mostly we used to - it was Richmond Tiger, we had another name for it.

What was that?

Tiger's...you know. Richmond Tiger, Tiger's... And mostly that, which was rubbish and if you happened to get lucky enough to get a bottle of

19:30 Tasmanian beer.

Cascade?

Cascade, you're lucky enough to get that if you wanted to have a binge, you traded it for at least four or five Tiger, cos it was the real, you didn't get much of it. Never ever seen a XXXX [Queensland beer] all the time I was away, never ever had a XXXX beer. It was all Reschs [Sydney beer], or Richmond Tiger. All stuff from down south.

Too valuable.

Never seen a XXXX

20:00 anywhere.

So when did they start talking about getting you blokes home?

Well, first of all, the Japs started to roll in as prisoners, you know; they built a compound.

Do you know how they were informed that the war was over?

I don't know. I don't know how long before but we were pretty wary for quite a while because just that some of them might know and some mightn't know and get a bit cranky, know what they are religious type of people some of them

20:30 and don't like to be defeated and you don't know. So you had to be a bit careful.

Do you personally know of any contacts that happened after the war was officially over?

Not with them. The only contact that happened after the war was over was between the Dutch and the Indonesians up there. They got into it then. They wasn't satisfied with the war being over, so they thought they'd start one of their own. But yeah, they don't know how they - I suppose there was still our communications I suppose, but

21:00 they wouldn't have much line of communications cos we had them all. But they would have had some I suppose. Anyhow, they built a compound and they kept coming in, coming in, coming in and then they started then to do the trying to sort them out because I know I was - we was guarding them and

21:30 they come along one day and we had to line all the Japs up and these three or four big hob-nobs with red tape all over them and there was this Indian bloke with his scars all around the back of his neck. He had the head chopped off and he lived. (UNCLEAR village I was talking to it was saved) but you see the big scar, they tried to chop it off put it that way, lived. And we lined them up and he went looking. And he walked

22:00 up to each one and he looked, looked, looked. He looked, was looking, out of here. Looking along, walk along, you out of here. That's how they picked them out, the ones that done the atrocities and this went on quite a lot, you know, all the time.

And what would happen to those blokes?

They took them away, they'd be interrogated, they were taken away.

Were there personal reprisals against Japanese

22:30 **POWs?**

None that actually I seen. There were nearly some but I knew that actually, we at the time had a lieutenant that had just come up after the war. The war had finished and he came up after and he took charge of this, because he was going to up there, I suppose it was all over, and he was a real mongrel. We were drinking

23:00 black coffee with no sugar and stores come in, our stores come in, our stores come in for the Japs. There was three tins of sugar, taken over to the Jap camp; our camp, none. And three of us said, "Up this." So I said, "Over we go." And we took a tin each,

23:30 took some over. That lieutenant made us take them back or he'd have charged us. And boy, was he hated, we're drinking, hot- black coffee with no sugar and the Japs are getting sugar and milk. We had none.

What was the physical state of a lot of the Japanese that were coming in?

They was not good, a lot of them.

24:00 Pretty ragged mob they were. Some of them were all right but oh no, they were pretty, you could see they'd just lost the war. Oh yeah.

How did they behave?

There was heaps of them. Oh, they were so docile; they'd bow, it really sickened you. When they were walking up to you, they'd be 100 yards away and they'd start bowing. They'd do it a thousand times like it got to you, you know. Just all the time.

24:30 After a while it just was sickening really. It was shocking, you feel like saying, "Ah." You know.

And were the Australians spoken to as to how they were expected to treat the Japanese prisoners?

Well, I was never told how to treat them. But some of them might have but I was never actually told but we sort of knew that we couldn't do anything, and you know, we'd have shot one

25:00 we'd have been up for murder.

And this compound, where was it?

It was - they just found a patch of scrubland, and they've just put a barbed wire fence all the way round it, the Japs done all the work, they built their own compound and we just watched them do it. And they built one, they built another one, two up there, one down by the seaside again, and course there

25:30 was a lot of them come in there, hell of a lot came in. And we were guarding them and then the next thing, the Dutch bought all the Australian gear, all the artillery and guns and everything, they bought everything. The only thing they didn't buy was anything on lend lease, like the Bren guns were on lend lease from America, they couldn't sell them they just sent them home. Anything on lend lease they fetched home,

26:00 wireless sets, the Dutch bought the whole lot. And we had to teach them how to use it. I had to go up, I had about eight Dutch people and I had to show them how to use the wireless set. But you know what Dutch are like. They're pretty arrogant. One bloke could talk fair English, one bloke could talk a little bit, the others, none. And the second day, I went there, they're showing me how to do it.

26:30 They're doing it all wrong, it's all wrong, I said, "Listen fellas, I don't give a stuff whether you've learnt this or not." I said, "Doesn't worry me one little bit, hooray." And I left them, finished. But I think it was about, it wasn't very long after, only a couple of days after that, the firing started. The Indonesians and the Dutch got into it. And I said, "Well, the Dutch get out of here before they

27:00 start another war." They got straight into it because they hated one another, you know. Still do.

So where were you off to after that?

Well, I think it was Christmas, day before Christmas I think it was, from memory,

- 27:30 day before Christmas, the whole division left to come home. We all got on board, we were on a victory ship I think, yeah. Victory, well it wouldn't be all but a mixed lot of us anyhow. And first stop we pulled into Macassar and we went ashore that night and had a bit of a night out there. We went onto Ambon, we pulled in there. And they
- 28:00 wouldn't let us off the boat cos they reckoned we played up too much at Macassar and they wouldn't let us off. But, you know, you can't stop Australians from getting where he wants to go. A mate and I - mate from my hometown, he was in the 2/14th Battalion and he lived on the next farm from me at home - and I said, "We're going ashore." And he said, "Oh, we'll be in trouble." I said, "Ah, what's trouble?" I said, "The war's over." So anyhow, not
- 28:30 allowed to go, so they had a provo [Provosts - Military Police] on the wharf. And you know those big ropes they tie the ships up with they had one at the back and one at the front. When he went up there, down the rope down the back. "Hey, he's coming." "All right." He's down that end again. Anyhow we went ashore and I said, "Now when we go back on." I said, "Don't give your right name." I said, "because there'll be someone there." And he said,
- 29:00 "Yeah, all right." I said, oh forget me name, "Joe Blow." I knew a name from - I think I said from the 2/27th Battalion or something. This bloke, he give his right name. Next morning, he's called up. I never heard no more about it. I said, "You didn't give your right name, surely." He said, "Yeah." I said, "Silly mug. The war's over, the war's over, you shouldn't go doing that". But I don't know what happened to him anyhow but anyhow we left there and they said
- 29:30 over the loud speaker, came, "Next stop, Sydney." You beauty. Going home, we're out about two days and another call comes over, "Change of plans, we're calling in at Rabaul." We get to Rabaul, yours truly and me mate, two things, offloaded. I think that was New Year,
- 30:00 about New Year's Eve, roughly, offloaded. Anyhow we finished up we were in the 16th Battalion. And of course, there's heaps of Japs there and they had no boats to take them home. And we got to guard them until they get them home. Just get them home. And they're in a little place called Kokopo a fair way from the wharf, but we go round in trucks, we're guarding them there and we get crankier and crankier on the damn Japs because we couldn't
- 30:30 get home. And I was there for, oh quite a long time. Next thing, 16th Battalion is going home. Beauty. Jimmy Cross and another bloke, transferred to the 22nd Battalion. Over to the 22nd Battalion. We were over there. Anyhow, I went up to the CO about six times, I said, "Hey!" I said, "Listen I haven't been home for two years."
- 31:00 I said, "I had no leave before I left, my last leave, it wasn't only leave about a weekend while we was camped at Petrie." I said, "I haven't been home since then." He said, "You'll get home." I said, "Yeah, I'll get home, but when?" I said, "These blokes come up after the war." I said, "And they're going home, what about me and me mate." He said, "You'll get home." I came home, I left, arrived in Sydney on the 7th of July,
- 31:30 from New Year's Day till the 7th of July, I got home. Couldn't get home. See, I had no points cos you're single and no kids; if you had a wife and kids you'd had a lot of service, like the start, they all came home first see. But having no points, couldn't get home.
- And all this time you were guarding the Japanese prisoners, were you - did you see any of the interrogations that were going on with the war trials?**
- I didn't actually see the
- 32:00 interrogations, we only seen them as they took them out and took them away, you know. They had to go on behind closed doors I suppose, because they had to really tear into them, because some of them they're mongrels, oh yeah. After the war finished, just after, at Balikpapan, we had what's his name, Lord Louis Mountbatten, he was Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the Pacific. He came
- 32:30 there to give us a talk. And it was funny too, because they had all the officers, you know big time, all the real brass and they got us there on parade about three hours before he came, you know, and "right dress, right dress, all in line" and everything like that. We're standing there for about two hours. Next thing, along comes Mountbatten, and, "Right dress, blah, blah." And Mountbatten gets up and he said, "Close in boys." And the officers their lips dropped down there.
- 33:00 They were the first words he said. He said, "It's my fault you are still here." He said, "I was supposed to relieve you, I was supposed to bring some Indian troops or something, to relieve you fellas, but things got tied up a bit here and there", he said, so he said, "It's my fault you're still here." And he give us a bit of a talk to and he was a real down to earth fella, you know. And I sort of, all of us had time for him then. He was - and he was the one that told us, that the next operation was that we were going to Singapore
- 33:30 and 90 of us were going to Japan, they were going to land on Japan with the 9th Australian Division and the rest of them were Yanks of course. And the 6th Division was going to mop up all the islands. And that we were going to Singapore as commandos and go in, try and get rid of that, and stink them out

type of thing and only shoot if you had to and you know,

34:00 but, I'm glad, if that had happened, I don't think anyone would have come back.

What was your impression of Blamey?

Well, I never was wrapped in Blamey myself, I suppose because he was a big brass, I suppose. But I was sort of never wrapped in him. I suppose he was a good fella.

What about MacArthur?

Well, I just sort of didn't know much about MacArthur of course, but he talked loud -

34:30 put his actions with them most of the time, you know. He thought he was running the show and he probably did, he probably run it pretty well.

So how good was it to get home?

Oh, fantastic. I landed in Sydney on the 7th of July, in the middle of winter, like the clothes I've got on now. I had no jumper, not anything. All I had with me tropical clothes, like

35:00 wearing up there and that was freezing. I'm trying to get some clothes. And I said, "Where can we get some clothes?" "Been slowed up." I said, "Well, I've got to have clothes, I can't walk around in this." And then I finished up. When we left, we put all our clothes in the kit bag, all our gear, like our suits and that and anything that we had, put it in a kit bag and then they put it away. And we finally got it back, but the stuff was - we had

35:30 to throw it all out because it got wet. And anything that was sort of leather, crumpled up in your hand and everything was musty and you couldn't wear it. But anyway, finally, they give us a jumper and a pair of pants and a jumper, that's all we had, till the next day and they kitted us out then with all the new tunic and everything. I said, "How come we get a new tunic, I thought we were going to get discharged." But I picked up a brand new tunic to get discharged in.

How long did it take to

36:00 **demob [demobilise] you?**

I didn't get out till- I never got out until September.

So what did you do all the while?

I finished up at the ordnance depot at Banyo and I was living out at this time. Some people's place and going down there in the day and then coming home and I got very crook there. I got malaria there and I finished up in Greenslopes Hospital and round about four days they discharged me about four days after I come out of hospital.

36:30 I got malaria on - I had two years leave, due to me and they only give me 24 days. See. And I thought, never worry I'll be discharged anyhow. And anyhow I got malaria while I was on leave but I was up staying with me brother and he'd had malaria a thousand times, you know and he said, "Oh that's nothing," he said. I'd taken them all the time I was away. I'd taken one every day I was doing the right thing.

37:00 Course when I come home, I knocked off. I should have kept going for a while, evidently. I knocked off. And Ivan said, "Oh you could take a few Atebrin." He said, "And you'll be right, stay in bed." There was an army nurse, on leave, and she was a station mistress and she was on leave there and she used to come over and sort of looked after me and fix me up and anyhow when I went back I went back four days late, five days, I think it was. They docked me five days pay.

37:30 The only mark I got in me paperwork, right throughout, just before I got discharged, docked five days pay for being late. I said to him, "I was in bed with malaria." He said, "Did you go to a doctor?" I said, "There's no doctor there, the nearest doctor's twenty mile away." I said, "I had a nurse looking after me." He said, "You got to have a bit of proof about it." I said, "I didn't think of that." He said, "No, that's the trouble with you fellas, we got to think for you all the time, haven't we?" Oh jeez I felt like telling him to... Yeah. Docked five days

38:00 pay.

So what are your thoughts on Anzac Day?

Well, now to start I didn't worry about Anzac Day much but now I do, yeah, I march now every Anzac Day and I really think it's something. What gets me now in the last three or four, is the young people that are tied up with it now. The really young people too and you know, you march around and you see the young people there, you know, it really

38:30 really gives you a lift along, it really does.

So what's the most important thing that you could tell young people about the war?

Make sure there's not another one. Make sure there's no more. We don't want any more wars. You seen one, you don't want to see another one.

In what way do you look back on your war service?

I had a lot of good times; I think the good times outnumbered the bad times. Anyhow.

39:00 In my opinion, you know. I had a lot of fun and had a lot of mates and we made a lot of friends. I went to a bowls meeting about might be twelve months ago now, it was Greenslopes Hospital I think it was, and a bloke, Maruka, Maruka? A bloke come up to me and he said, "A fella there said he knows you." And I said, "Oh yeah." He come up and I didn't know him. He looked at me and I didn't know him.

39:30 He said, "February, 1943." February 1943. I said, "Tenterfield." He said, "Yeah." Yeah and you know I'd never seen him since Tenterfield, till that day. He knew me. But I'd only know this bloke, once he pointed it out to me. But I don't know how he got onto me, they must have been talking about me or something, I don't know. He said, "Yeah a bloke here, knows you."

40:00 Rod, was his name. I met him once, hitching up for a bowl here one day. People like that you've met and meet up again, it's just terrific.

When you think back on your war service, what is the one thing that stands out above all things for you?

The one thing that stands out? What would you say? There's a lot of highlights but

40:30 I think after all the training, I think I was just happy to get overseas. Everybody wanted to go and well, I had a brother over there too and I knew that we'd be going somewhere there, and I sort of, I really did want to, you know. I think I was quite happy about that. But

41:00 I don't know highlights, what's a highlight is. Everything's a highlight. Lots of good things come out of it. One thing that didn't come out of it, I suppose that we shouldn't have another war. Still want to go.

INTERVIEW ENDS