

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Kevin Cassells (Casso) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 30th April 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1832>

### Tape 1

00:31 **So yeah. If you could give us that summary of your life, as we discussed, thanks Ken.**

Is that on now?

**Yep.**

Oh well. Yes, I was born in Williamstown, I went, I met my mother there, she was waiting for me, in Douglas Parade, Williamstown. And then we lived in Spotswood for a while, my father was a butcher, and we lived there for a while, and then we shifted around when the Depression came. I went to the Spotswood State School, and then I went to a, because of my mother, Catholic,

01:00 I went to the Yarraville Catholic School. Then we shifted up to Melbourne because Dad got fired from the butcher there, because getting onto the Depression, I think, it was 1930, we shifted up to Melbourne, at Glen Iris, we lived there for a while with my cousin. Then Dad got a job in North Carlton in a butcher shop, and we shifted from Glen Iris to Amiss Street, North Carlton. We were there a while,

01:30 and then Dad got offered a job in Lygon Street, Carlton in a butcher shop, and we shifted down there, and we were there from 1932 to 1955. And I was helping Dad in the butcher shop, and I got a call up in November '41, because I never joined up, I was a bit young. Dad wanted me to help in the butcher shop, and we went to,

02:00 I went to school from down there, I went to St Brigid's at North Carlton, a Catholic school, used to walk there, it's only a mile and a half, walk home again. Nowadays, you walk, you drive. Also the, I did all my studying there, and then I went to the Christian Brothers School down in Abbotsford, in Nickerson Street, Abbotsford. Then Dad wanted me to be in the butcher shop with

02:30 him, and I was there for a while. Then the war came, and I went into the army, down to Victoria Street in Melbourne, on the corner of Ferry Street, I think it is, the 6th Regiment. And I was taken down to Balcombe camp for about a month, and they put needles into you down there, and the bloke in front of me said, "You'll pass out," I was that thin. You'll see by that photograph there. And

03:00 course he passed out when he seen the needle going into me. And we were there about two or three weeks, we got sent up to Seymour where we got out, and we went to a camp in Trawell, cause we went into the engineers. Course I was a butcher by trade, but I went into the engineers as sapper, and I met this chap, Jack Sandry, who I had lunch with yesterday, him, him and his wife,

03:30 we had the place in Park, in Roeville, it's on the corner Studd, Studd Road and what road, Waverley Road, I think, I can't remember. Anyhow, he met us at the station, we went there and then the army was told we had to move up to Hume Camp. And we walked up to Hume Camp, only about

04:00 200 miles, but that's it, we got to Hume Camp, we were there about a month. I was able to go, I've always been interested in ballroom dancing, I used to play piano, but mother said I couldn't pay, for your mother, for your piano and your ballroom dancing, so I cut out the piano. I liked the ballroom dancing, went in a few comps before the war, never won them but had a good time. I danced in one, and a chap

04:30 that I danced again, died yesterday, Charlie Foley, yeah, so we'll probably go to his funeral next week. Then we went to, while we were in Hume, went to the dances in Hume. Of course, you couldn't wear hobnail shoes, so I got my shoes from Melbourne sent up, you'd slip and break your bloody neck. Then we got shifted up to Casino

05:00 by train, Casino's in northern New South Wales, we were there about three months, and at the time we were working, like building bridges and different things. And one day, a truck was sent out, we were in the bush and we were doing this bridge, and they sent out a truck to bring us home, back for tea. I went to get in the back of the truck, and here's a bloody big carpet snake laying in the back of the truck. I said, "I'm not getting in, I'll walk behind you." Anyhow, it was

- 05:30 all right, no worries. We went to dances, we went to Byron Bay, because we were there two weeks and we went to a dance in Bangalow, had to walk there, it was 10 miles, but then we walked home after the dance. Then we went from there up to Caboolture, where we were there about two or three months. From Caboolture, then we came down to Brisbane and went up to, what's the name of the place, Atherton,
- 06:00 Queensland where we built a hospital, the 2/2nd AGH [Australian General Hospital]. And while I was there, I slipped on a rock and went down and split my leg, my ankle open, down here, my foot open, spent two weeks in hospital with an open foot, they put about four stitches in it. Then we came back and we had 14 days' leave in Melbourne, de-embarkation leave. But on the way down,
- 06:30 we got stopped in Mackay because there was a big flood, and it rained and rained and rained, they wouldn't let the trains go over the bridge. Cause us being engineers, we said, "We'll fix the bridge," or the other way round. And we came down, and we only had 10 days leave, then we went up to Yeerongpilly, in, oh there we go again. Went up to Yeerongpilly in Queensland, where we had to
- 07:00 anoint our clothes, all the, down the edges here like that and on the bottom, with an ointment that would keep off the dreaded tick. Now a tick goes from about Casino upwards, and also in New Guinea and that stops the tick getting into you and killing you, it's the bug that's mainly up in the Ramu Valley. So we left Brisbane on the 10th of March 1943,
- 07:30 we arrived, we went up to New Guinea, no con [convoy], just a ship on its own, Katoomba, and when we got up, it had no escort, and they didn't worry about Japanese submarines, oh why worry, we're only a ship carrying troops. It was the 15th Infantry Brigade we went up with, when we arrived in Moresby, we were carried,
- 08:00 camped opposite Murray Barracks, which is still there, I think, it's M-U-R-R-A-Y Barracks. We were there for a while, we went up to, we did a lot of jobs around. I was a sapper, you know, no, I wasn't a Sap, I was a sapper. And we got sent out to a job out in Bura Bardar, which is about 15 miles northwest of
- 08:30 Port Moresby, and whilst I was out there I had my 21st birthday. So the cook went out and his helper went out, and they shot two wild pigs, so that night we had wild pigs for, beautiful roast pork and paw paw. That was our greenage, but of course we were in bed by 7am, pm, otherwise you'd get picked up by the mosquitoes and put in. And then,
- 09:00 the ack-ack [anti-aircraft gunfire], which was on the other side of the hill, we were blowing it out, they started to open up, and we didn't know they were there. And of course, we had to change our underpants. But then we, we left there and we went back, we never did finish our road, I tell you, put a road through a swamp, you're joking. So anyway we went back and we built a bridge, a dam, at the 2/2nd AGH,
- 09:30 which was a water dam, and I found out yesterday from Jack Sandry, that that dam is still being used in Port Moresby at this hospital. Anyhow we were there for, we built this dam, and while I was there I got a boil underneath the skin on my leg, and I was put into hospital, and I was 102 degrees temperature, and I was in hospital two weeks. Then I went,
- 10:00 we got flown up, we went up to Port, Ruder Falls, which was a beautiful place, and while we were there, we built our own concert party. And I danced with this chap by the name of Teddy Sharp, who is now deceased, and we did a jitterbug act, you know. I also did another act of Take It Off, Take It Off during the war, and you take your clothes off, and when...and then they said,
- 10:30 "Oh the nurses told the officers that we were very good, we should go to the convalescent home and let them tape us." And we said, "Oh yeah, all right, okay," but we followed the Gladys Moncrieff Show. I never knew all the rotten tomatoes and the oranges, not tomatoes, where did they get tomatoes, and the eggs, where did they get eggs from. Eggs came from everywhere, we were bloody awful.
- 11:00 But our blokes even had a couple of swigs, I don't drink, they had a couple of swigs before going on. Anyway we put our show on, and we put that show on in the Ramu Valley, we put it on there for the troops up there. I mean we worked through the day. And then, I was batman too, for an officer, but they, when I got up to Ramu Valley, a chap by the name of Pat Morgan, he was a loot, come from, where did he come from?
- 11:30 Uralla, I think it was, and he was a very good loot and they would follow him anywhere. But anyhow, we were up in the Ramu Valley for a while, camped on Mene River, and then one morning, all of a sudden, three geos [geographers] come in. One come up the centre of Ramu Valley, one come up the river and one come up the Finisterre Ranges, strafed our place. And we went and pulled Dick Trainer out of bed, and he said, "What's those holes in my there?" we said, "They're bullet holes."
- 12:00 Well he then, he went and changed his pants. Then we went from there, we got transferred up to the other side of the Finisterre Ranges, where we went to a mainstream bend, which was a Japanese war cemetery, and we were underneath, sleeping on top of the Japanese war cemetery, which is in our book Mad Mick's Mob. And of course in those days you got strafed and you got different things, and I

- 12:30 did smoke a couple of times, you know, just a couple of puffs, I didn't like smoking but I had a few of puffs now and again, with one of the boys. And then we went, in the mainstream, we were there for a while, building a road from Guys Post to Mainstream Bend, which never got, well it did get finished, but there were so many obstacles that you had to cover, you know. So then we left there, we got told to move, and most of the unit went
- 13:00 back to Saidor and the coast, and we had to march from where we were up to Bogajim. From there on, we went, we were picked up by barge, we went to Madang. Then we went to Negada which is where we camped in a coconut plantation, when you walked out, if you didn't look you got a hit with a coconut. Because the Yanks and the, our blokes used to strafe, you know, and all these coconut plantations were strafed.
- 13:30 Our troops went to Karkar, put a landing in Karkar Island, when they got there, only the natives helped them. Then we came home on leave for 43 days, and so I went and watched my beloved Fitzroy knock off Richmond for the grand final. My father was a manager of the reserves who knocked off Collingwood reserves, the week before at the showground. So anyhow, I went there and took a couple of the blokes in with me, we went to see the football
- 14:00 match, you had to walk home because there was train, tram strike on, the trains and buses were full, that was in 1944. Then we got sent home, like we were home for 43 days, then we were sent up to, we went to Watsonia, we had to march through the city, which the 15th Brigade did - march through the city. Then we went up to Kapooka, which is an
- 14:30 Engineer Training Camp up there. And we were there two weeks and we had an assault course, that at least killed one person in a week, or one person in a day, it was a bad assault. But I was lucky, I was able to put three slabs of TNT [trinitrotoluene - highly explosive crystalline compound] on the branch of a tree, light them and go for your bloody life, otherwise you're dead, Fred. From there, Kapooka we went into Wagga, the dances and that.
- 15:00 Then we came back to Kapooka, we went up to Yeerongpilly and we thought, "What are we going to Yeerongpilly for?" Of course, we had to anoint our clothes with all this stuff, so we boarded this Katoomba, the ship, which took us up to Port Moresby. Port Moresby too, we were there for quite a while, we all went to different areas, you know, so it was quite good. We went up the Ramu Valley, two platoons went to
- 15:30 Wau, W-A-U, we went to Ramu Valley, then two platoon joined us, we did all this. What am I talking about, I'm going over what I've done before, why didn't you get me? Then we come home, when we come home on leave, we went to Townsville, and while we were in Townsville, we got sent to Bougainville. We were in Bougainville seven, 14
- 16:00 months, and we were in New Guinea 17 months. We're building bridges and we, we built a bridge in Bougainville, it was a 136 feet long, it was a Bailey Bridge by design, it was an Australian panel bridge, but the design is the Bailey Bridge from England. I got to be careful where to put my bloody hands here, I'll tell you that. And then we went to, we were there for 14 months, and we, we were the first engineers
- 16:30 to hand-to-hand fighting with the Japanese. And while we were there, we were on the Buin Road, we built the Buin Road, and we made it from a single Jeep track, to a three-chain highway, all sand and grill, you know. While we were on the Toko Beach, I went swimming one day with a few of my mates, and I'm sitting having a wave, and I look underneath and there's no wave there, I got
- 17:00 dumped. And all gravel, all the sand over here, so the doctor said, "A week, no swimming." Of course, 94 degrees humidity up there, it was terrible, no swimming. And General Blamey came up one day, and we had to wear togs, and of course, in those days, you never wore togs, you went nude. And all the natives, they, they wouldn't go nude, they'd cover themselves up, but,
- 17:30 we were there. Then we went to Moresby, then the war finished later on, August the 15th 1945. We were in Moresby, we came up from the front line to build a camp in Moresby and then we were all going home. The ones who were married were going home, like Jack Sandry, the bloke here yesterday, he came home early, but he's copped everything though. Anyhow,
- 18:00 while we were there, I got transferred to the 7th Army Troops, while I was there, one of the chaps was going home before Christmas. He said, "I've got a Jeep." I said, "What do you use a Jeep for?" He said, "Running around with." He said, "You don't drink beer," I said, "No." He said, "Well, look, next time you get your beer supply, two bottles of beer, you can have a Jeep," so I had a Jeep. I had a Jeep for about three months until the provos [Provosts - Military Police] got
- 18:30 hold of it, and the provos took me Jeep off me. Of course we took it up to their headquarters and another chap that was alongside, we put a tent up in the jungle, put our Jeeps each side of that, so we had to take them back, I won't say what we did to the Jeeps before we took them back. And I was driving a tip truck up there. And when we'd go to the pictures at night, I drove a D-8 truck,
- 19:00 tractor, which we took into, a load later on the back, so all the boys put their sheets and everything on the back, so we went to the pictures, I saw a lot of musical pictures, I loved music. And we'd come home on leave, another 43 days leave, and then we were sent up to, I was sent up to Bonegilla where I was, had

19:30 work out a band and a tip truck, I had to pick up five Italian prisoners of war. The guards sitting in the front with me, the prisoners of war in the back, they could have got out and gone, gone bush, but they were getting treated well. And I left the army in September the 27th, 1946. Is that, how am I going?

**Yep. Just a bit about what your job was after the war?**

I was working

20:00 for my father, then I met June down at the Trocadero, no, no, sorry, met June at Coconut Grove, and we were engaged, we got. Come in June (do you want a drink?). No, not just yet, I will be in a minute. (Where's the other man gone?). He's gone. In May, on my birthday, the 13th of May, and we were married October 18th that year, and we've been married 57 years this October the 18th.

20:30 I was a butcher for so long, working in different, I worked with my father but he wasn't giving me too much money, so I had to, you know, I had a wife to look after, and then I went. I worked there for a while, then I worked for RJ Gilbertson, the big butchers out at Moonee Ponds, and I was there about seven years. I put on the, oh, something out there.

21:00 Then I got, while I was there, I was talking to a bloke up in Lygon Street, Carlton where we lived, where my Dad had a butcher shop. And while I was there, this Warren Jobson come down and we went out to his place, we got pally with him, him and his wife. We went out to his place, he lived out at North Balwyn, he said, "Why don't you come out and work, did you ever do radio?" Which I said, "Yes, I did a bit of radio in Port Moresby before,"

21:30 and he said, "Well come out and I'll give you a six month trial." I was there 20 years, putting car stereos, car radios in. Car radios first then stereos, and I used to do all the fitting for Collins Motors, Calais Faulkner, I spent all day there, but see I wasn't a repairer, I was a car radio fitter. I did MW Motors, Preston Motors, you name which motors, I went out, even drove out, he'd pay me

22:00 a mileage and also a wage too. So I was there 20 years, then I got retrenched because I wasn't a repairer. I was a good fitter, in fact, actually Astra offered me a job, but I couldn't go and work for another firm after working for Jobson for so long. I did quite a lot of things there, I looked after all these record departments, I used to go on the way in from, we lived in

22:30 Bulleen, and I used to go from Bulleen into the Carlton. And I'd go into record places before, and picking up records and, I used to meet all these band leaders, cause I got so interested in music, I met Count Basie. The first one was Bill Haley, then oh, oh yes, Louis Armstrong, which I've got a photograph there, of him,

23:00 with his autograph and everything on. Excuse me, excuse me. I've got Benny Goodman, you name it, I got all autographs which I've now given to a young chap who lives in Los Angeles, I gave him last Christmas, and that book would be worth three to four hundred dollars, cause I spent a lot of money, money and time, getting photographs, we event went to America in

23:30 1978, and I took the book with me and got a few autographs. And the book is, from an exercise book that big to that big, collecting autographs. I got different, I ran a dance even in Bougainville, when the war finished, I ran a dance for the, our boys, and oh, we got different things. But since then I got retrenched and I've been out of a job,

24:00 I've done one car radio fitting since 1978, no 1977, that's when I got re-, and I've only done one. But my father died in 19-, oh, he was 85 when he died in 1975, and he left me the Lygon Street Butcher Shop, which the chap that was running it, being an Italian, he wanted to buy it.

24:30 But he only wanted it probate price, but I wouldn't give him the probate price, but he finished up buying it. And I lived in Dromana, you name it, we've shifted 10 times since we were married. We're here now, when we go out, it'll be in a box.

**That's great, that's all we need.**

Yeah.

**Just before we begin, I would suggest that your autograph book is worth thousands, not three hundred bucks.**

Well, I tried Christie's Motor Auction.

**Really.**

Yeah.

25:00 They didn't want to do it.

**Really?**

They didn't want to touch it, no.

**Oh it's...The Benny Goodman alone and the Armstrong would be a couple of grand.**

Oh yeah, well. I've even got, what's his name, the jazz pianist, cause I've got all those tapes there of jazz.

**Ah well, we'll remember later, we'd better get back to work. So that was fantastic, and now we'll go right back to the beginning, and if you could tell us about your**

25:30 **mother and father, and growing up in that family?**

Well, my Dad was a butcher, Mum was a housewife, and when we were at, there, I went to school one day to Spotswood State School, and when I was walking down the street, I noticed these blokes tarring the road, you know. And in those days they'd put tar and then screenings down, and I walked up and I said, "What's all this?" and they said, "Be careful of that rake." Well I stepped back on the rake, the rake

26:00 hit me on the back of the head and I fell in the tar. I had to go home and Mum had to get all the tar off me before I'd go back to school. That's...

**Family life growing up.**

Yeah, family life growing up. Then I met a few blokes like Jack, he played for Carlton, he was a big ruckman, he was, he was in the greengrocer's opposite, big, oh can't think of it,

26:30 bloody nuisance, isn't it? Anyhow, I, then we went to live out at Glen Iris with my cousin Brian Lang, he's still alive, he was in the army, he was up in Darwin during the war. We used to walk to the Catholic church in Glen Iris, and that was about two miles, and we had to walk, then walk home after school.

27:00 Then we shifted up to, from there, when Dad got that job of Angelsons up in North Carlton in Nicholson Street, we shifted up to Amiss Street. Was it Amiss Street? No, that wasn't Amiss Street, I think it was, no, Canning, I can't think of it now. Anyhow, we were up there for a while, and we shifted down to Lygon Street, that was with Mum and Dad. Mum was very good to me, Dad was very interested, after he finished work, he was at the

27:30 Fitzroy Football Club. Of course, when he came out from Glasgow he was only about six or seven months old, and he lived in St Georges Road, North Fitzroy, and he lived just near the Fitzroy Football Ground, that's how he got interested in Fitzroy. But he was a butcher on the corner of Way Street and St Georges Road, there was a butcher shop there, and he used to work there. But I don't know, I, my mother was very good to me,

28:00 and I enjoyed being with her, but then she died in 1949, she had a cerebral haemorrhage and she died very early, she would only have been about 52 I think. And then Dad died in 1975, and he was 85. So they were very good, very good parents. I was a little bit, being the only son, you know, Oh we,

28:30 we had a daughter too, Joan, she was born in, there was 13 years between Joan and myself. And then one of my mates that I lived at ballroom dancing, he lived in Drummond Street, he took her one day, and he's down near St Georges church and Ropedown Street in Carlton, and she fell out of her pram. That's it, she died. And

29:00 he then joined the family, he was my best man at our wedding, and he joined the wedding, and he kept there a lot. Oh well, these things happen I suppose. And I also had a sister before I was born, stillborn, I can't remember her name, that'd be before 1922. That ring,

29:30 that was my mother's engagement ring of 1918. I've had a, I've had it on then, when my mother died, she had willed her ring to go to her sister, who lived in, she was a schoolteacher, never, never married, but she gave me the ring for my 60th birthday, I'll be 82 next month.

30:00 **When you were growing up, how big a role did the empire play in that?**

How do you mean the empire?

**The English empire and Australia being part of the empire, was that a big part of your life growing up?**

Oh, I suppose it was, mainly when I went into the army it was part of your life, cause I never went in beforehand. Jack Sandry was telling me yesterday, he went in, got there and joined the engineers. But

30:30 no, I was mainly interested in ballroom dancing, I was crook if I, you know, "Why can't I go ballroom dancing?" One of my mates I danced against died yesterday, I forget his, sent his son a card. No, I just liked ballroom dancing. And when I finished work at night, I would teach in the city, we, we learnt dancing at Betty Lee's in Harrow Court, in

31:00 Melbourne, in Connell Street. We, I just loved dancing, and I still love dancing, but I can't dance, I haven't got ants in my pants, I've got troubles here, in the way of, they seize up a bit, you know. And I go to see a vascular surgeon twice a year, he hasn't done nothing yet, but he says just keep walking, so we do walking. I've got a

31:30 stick, I went and bought a stick, I didn't charge the Veteran Affairs for it, 28 bucks. So I've just been happy with life, I've enjoyed, my wife and I haven't got any family. She had a big operation in 1955, I think it was, she was in the Melbourne Hospital for a month.

**What do you recall about growing up during the Depression?**

32:00 Well I was going to school most of the time, I was at St Brigid's School in Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy. My aunt, grandmother lived in an apartment on top of the San Remo Ballroom in those days, was the - here we go again, it was the Adelphi Theatre, it used to be the Adelphi Theatre, my grandmother used to live there, and I used to go across and have lunch with her

32:30 during the Depression. When I left there, I used to meet up with this Arthur Scaloon, who lived in Kenny Street, North Carlton, what's that street I lived in? Anyhow we used to go bike riding a lot, we'd go swimming down at Middle Park, we'd drive down to Middle Park, or Albert Park on the beach there, go swimming. We used to go to the city baths, did a lot of swimming there. We'd got to Albert Park beach,

33:00 ride from Carlton down to Albert Park and back again, silly buggers. What else did we do? Oh, we used to ride, ride down to Yarra Falls and, which is Dudley Park. Used to ride our bikes along there, then one day a bloke got the idea of tying a rope around our waist, tie it onto the bike, get up the top there near the Boulevard, and run down and go for a swim,

33:30 took the rope with you, otherwise you'd lose the bike. Bikes in those days were dear, my father bought my bike for me when I was 13 year old, it was made by a chap down in Lygon Street, Carlton, it was a very good bike, and I had that bike right up until about, oh when, I reckon 13, oh, when I come, when I got married, I had it right up until I was about married.

34:00 And I got married when I was 25, so that's 12 years, but I had about, I used to ride from Carlton to Coburg, to visit June, then ride home again, silly bugger. But anyhow, that's beside the point.

**Did, what were you eating during the Depression?**

Well my father was a butcher, and we were quite okay, we had a lot of corned beef and, him being a Scotsman,

34:30 we were, we were well looked after, my father provided well, he was a good father, in those days. Mum did everything right, when June came into the family, she was, had to use the, what's those things for cooking with, oh god...And she has used one now, and when, when she put the corned beef in it,

35:00 she didn't tighten it down properly, and corned beef was all over the roof, it blew up, I forget what it is, I'm sorry.

**That's all right. Your father being a butcher, did he have a lot of people coming to his door and asking for handouts?**

Oh, not that much. All we got in the doorway, the doorway being a bit deep, it went back about, say six feet, yeah, no it wouldn't have been, three feet,

35:30 you get a lot of drunks. Because each side, there was one on the next corner up, there was a pot, a plonk, and there was a hotel. And they used to drink in the doorway, so the police wouldn't see them. Well, when we, June and I used to go out of a night time, we'd go to the pictures, we'd walk into town cause it was only what, a mile, walk into town and walk home again. Even one morning,

36:00 I was home, I got leave into Melbourne, you had to be, catch the 10 to seven train out to Watsonia. And I only got up at six, had breakfast and run down the station from Lygon Street and Gratton Street, down to Princess Bridge Station out to, otherwise you'd go on the A4, ackwilly [AWL - Absent Without Leave]. But no these, did a lot of walking through Melbourne, said hello to all the

36:30 cops and everything like that. My Dad was Senior JP [Justice of the Peace] in Carlton, he was a JP. I remember during the war, I was home on leave from New Guinea and Dad said, it was about 2am in the morning. He said, "Son, would you come down and be a witness," we'd got this chap come in, he'd tried to commit suicide by jumping off the Yarra Bridge into the Yarra. I said, "Oh all right, Dad," it was the Swan Street Bridge.

37:00 We go down, there's a cop standing there, and a cop standing there, there's a doctor behind our butcher block, and they've got the prisoner there. And the cop said, Dad said to the cop, "What'd he do?" He said, "Well he went to jump off the, went to jump into the Yarra, we fished him out, took him to Melbourne Hospital," which was then on the corner of Lonsdale Street and Swanson Street, "And then he grabbed a bottle of Lysol, and drank it," then the doctor

37:30 pumped him out. So Dad said, "All right, put him in Royal Park til Monday morning, you'll come up before a big magistrate," and when the policeman had taken the prisoner out, the doctor was still there, and Dad says, "I thought it was quite funny, doc," and he says, "What do you mean?" He said, "He called you a butcher," and he said, "I am a butcher." In those days, but the doctor wasn't too happy, I don't know the doctor's

38:00 name, I wouldn't have a clue, but yeah, those were the days.

**What role did religion play in your upbringing?**

Being a Roman Catholic, I went to churches. We had a padre by the name of English, padre English, he was very good, he was a Catholic priest. He finished up he had the church down in Mordialloc, after the war, but he's since now passed on.

38:30 There was also another minister was there, a Presbyterian, and he finished up being the bishop of Perth, forget his name though. And he started up the Brotherhood of St Laurence here in Melbourne, after the war and he was very good. I went to visit him in Perth, we went over there with a caravan, and I went to visit him there, he was in the Bishop's

39:00 Parlour over there, I was very welcomed and all that, but I went on my own, my wife didn't go. That was in 19, right after a grand final, cause Dad got me tickets to every grand final, him being Fitzroy, you know. But I've been a, when, when Dad died, the then-president of the Fitzroy Past Players, asked me to be their secretary,

39:30 and I was secretary for 10 years. And I'm now a life member of Fitzroy Brisbane, Fitzroy Past Players, and I'm also a life member of the Fitzroy Brisbane Past Players, and I'm now the, since 1992, I'm a patron of the Fitzroy Brisbane Past Players.

**So you actually played professional football?**

No, no, I was, secretary for about 10 years.

**Oh, okay.**

And when I was secretary, secretary, the presidents

40:00 of the other clubs, even Albie Panham that played for Collingwood, he said he never got a 50th wedding anniversary from Collingwood card, from, their card, but he got one from Fitzroy. Kevin James. So, and I'm still, I've been since 1992, I've been patron of the Fitzroy Football. And now Billy, they, they have two patrons, in case one dies, and

40:30 that'd be me, I'm 82, I haven't got long to go I suppose, you never know your luck in a big city, do you? And, what's his name, Billy Steven, ex-coach of Fitzroy, he played for Fitzroy. I had one game when I was younger, I went on the field, they carried me off.

**Well, I'll just have to stop there.**

## Tape 2

00:31 **Okay, so were you a regular churchgoer, every Sunday?**

No, no, didn't like church. Because what happened, when you were in the army, the Presbyterian minister would come around, and the Catholic priest would come around. And say you were up in New Guinea or Bougainville or somewhere like that, they.

**Just stop for a sec. So were you a regular**

01:00 **churchgoer?**

No, I wasn't a regular churchgoer. Only when I was in Carlton, I used to go to church, oh no, I went to church mainly at St Brigid's, which is about a mile and a half away, that's about all. You don't mind me eating, do you?

**No, no, that's all right.**

No, I wasn't a regular churchgoer, I just had, didn't have time on my hands, I suppose, I should have been, but. But the

01:30 ministers and preachers were very good when they come to us, in Pissar [?], where we were camped, you know. Can't tell you much about church, though. Are you a churchgoer?

**No, we're just...**

You haven't got time.

**It's good to know about those times and what was happening.**

Yeah.

**As the war in Europe, as Hitler's rise came about, in the**

02:00 **early '30s and so on, what did you know about that?**

Well, the main thing I knew about that, we'd been to a dance, and when we came home, we were sitting

in Lygon Street, Carlton, and news came through the British, they were at war with Hitler's crowd. So we went down the paper shop, we got, they bought out a paper that war had been declared, and we would be in it. And we used to, we got our

02:30 papers and we would walk up, say Canning Street, Lygon Street, Nicholson Street, selling papers. Of course they were about, I forget how much they were, thruppence each, thruppence, yeah. We'd sell them for thruppence, you'd get more than thruppence, because people would come out and give you a shilling, oh you'd make money, a big deal in those days. And we'd sell those papers, that's in 1939,

03:00 wasn't it, yeah.

**And what were you reading about what was happening?**

Oh I didn't, I wasn't interested in football much in those days. I was, I went to see cricket, I went to see Keith Miller play, that's after the war of course. But no, I just loved the dancing, of course you can see by there, Dance Masters of Australia, we're honorary members,

03:30 see we never turned professional, we're still amateurs. We never danced in a comp together, June and I, but we've given a demonstration, and we go up to Merino, to my nephews place up there, give a demonstration of, when the cha-cha first come out and all different things, we'd go to different place and give demonstrations. But we kept in touch with a chap by the name of Arch and Marje Watson, who are professional dancers.

04:00 Arch runs a school in, and we go down to, we're going down to the Stanford Hotel on Sunday for lunch, Arch and Marje come out from, what's the name of the place, they come out from Hawthorn and we come from Berwick, down to there. We were there yesterday and Jack and Maureen Sandry, who was a sergeant in our mob. So, he was interested in dancing too, his grandson danced in comps.

04:30 We'd go to comps in Shepparton, we'd, we'd work after the war, you know. Yesterday, the chap I danced against at the Palais dance, wasn't June in those days, before the war, I danced with this girl, Doreen Murphy, she come from Albert Park. And we danced down there, and we come second to this Charlie Foley, and he died yesterday. Now Charlie would be about 85, I think.

05:00 I haven't had a look in the paper today, but we sent his son Dennis a card, he should get it today. So I just loved dancing, and also that the, I had this book that I bought in, corner Kay Street and Rathdown Street. Oh I found out where I lived, in Station Street in North Carlton, now I've found it. And

05:30 I had, I bought this little black book about that thick, which is now about that thick, it's two lots of books. And I collected autographs and photographs of orchestra leaders, and their orchestras. And I got, Isador Goodman, who led the orchestra at the Capitol Theatre in Swanson Street, I got his autograph. I got,

06:00 different orchestras throughout Melbourne, I got George Trevair, who was a Sydneyite, he was playing at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne. I got the Regent Theatre in Collins Street Orchestra, I got the whole, a chap by the name of Ned Tyrrell was the conductor. I met Bob Lyon down the dugout, and when we went to Atherton, Bob Lyon and

06:30 his band would come up and play at the dances on Saturday night, and have the Yank, the Americans were up there, and planes and everything like that. They would send off their planes from Atherton, across to New Guinea.

**Before World War II, were you, did you know anyone who was involved in World War I, or what did you know about World War I?**

My father was a sergeant butcher in World War I.

07:00 He was camped, he was stationed at Broadmeadows, he was a sergeant butcher up there. That's all I knew of anyone in World War I. Of course, you meet a lot of people who were in World War I, and he met my mother, she was living in Carlton. Her, her family had a hotel in the Cardigan, Cardigan Street, which is right next to the Cardigan Street School, and the Cardigan Street

07:30 and Farraday Street. And he met my mother, and they got married.

**Did he talk about his wartime experiences?**

No he didn't, he wasn't in wartime, he didn't go out of Australia, Dad, he was mainly a butcher at Broadmeadows.

**Okay. And so what was his role then in World War I, he would prepare the meat, and then what, and?**

He'd prepare the meat, and then he'd have the rest of the day off. Or he might do training, I don't know. He never did talk about it.

08:00 **So it was more him being involved with training the troops in Australia?**

Yeah, yeah.



**And preparing their food for them and so on?**

Yeah, yeah. Preparing their food, that's right.

**Did you ever ask or anything, you weren't interested?**

No, I wasn't interested because I didn't think there'd be any more wars, you know. Excuse me. Yeah, I,

08:30 I wasn't interested in what Dad did, and he never talked about it, he wasn't, he never went overseas or anything like that, he just stayed home. That's probably why he never got a Gold Card like we carry now. Even Archie Watson, he went, he got sent up to Kapooka, he was a sergeant, teach them how to, teaching us how to delouse bombs, and mines

09:00 and things like that. He was supposed to go to Milne Bay and they cancelled at the last minute, he didn't get out of Australia, of course, he doesn't get the Gold Card.

**What about in the general community, was it, did they talk about World War I or what happened or...?**

No, no, no, no. In Lygon Street, Carlton where I spent most of my life, no, they were just talking about Fitzroy and Carlton, they got Carlton up at Princess Park, and Fitzroy at

09:30 there. And they had Collingwood, we hated going by tram down to Collingwood, in those days they had the cable tram going down Junction Street, or Algin Street then Junction Street. But then they got rid of them, I think the only cable tram I've been on since then, is San Francisco.

**So when Hitler was causing**

10:00 **trouble, do you remember the day war was declared?**

Yes, December the 7th, 1941, yep. That was against the Yanks because we were bought, here I go again, we were bought into it too, so...

**You mean against the English, and...?**

Against the whole world, I think, mainly, Japan bought into it. I remember we were up in Ramu Valley,

10:30 and we used to see these fighter bombers would come around, we were in the Menda River in the Ramu Valley, we were camped there doing road working. And you could see all these bombers come up, B-25s, which are Americans, and also a Vultee Vengeance which was a dive bomber, and they'd come up and they'd do this Shaggy Ridge, which was a, on the Finisterre Ranges,

11:00 running up the side of Ramu Valley. And they used to, talking about what happened during the...

**When war started and it was declared, and what were your first thoughts about what was happening?**

Well, I thought the Americans would, you know, would clear it all up, because they were so, they wanted to do everything cause they helped in Europe, and then they come back to Melbourne,

11:30 or come back to Australia and came out here and took our girls. And I thought the, once the Yanks come in, it'd be over in two seconds, but it took five years.

**But when the war first started in 1939, the Americans weren't involved at all?**

No, they didn't come in until '41, December the 7th.

**So what were your initial thoughts?**

Well that's what I thought, when the Yanks come into it.

**Oh, you thought the Yanks would**

12:00 **be involved in the end.**

The Yanks, well if the Yanks ever come into it, because they were fighting over in Europe, when they came back here, and they had to fight here. Got on quite well with them, went to a lot of shows up in Port Moresby with them, especially the dark boys, you know. They'd, you'd be in the camp, they'd be going to see Stormy Weather was a show that had Count Basie in it, and different shows like that. And where,

12:30 went out and said, "Get a ride," you know, because we didn't have the equipment they had, they had very good equipment. Because up in Finschhafen in New Guinea, they built two-lane highways like we have here. We didn't have two-lane highways, we had one lane, you had to get over to let another bloke pass. They were very good, they had very good equipment.

**In between war being declared, and you being called up...**

Yes.

**in that time, did**

13:00 **society life change, did the community change or what happened day to day?**

Everything, I was a butcher, I used to ride my bike out, say up two miles up the road and deliver meat to customers, ride my bike all the time. My Dad had a Buick Silver Anniversary, a 1932 Silver Anniversary Buick, he used to use that, but that ate too much petrol being a six cylinder.

13:30 So he, when I was away in New Guinea, he quit that car and he bought a Standard 10, a utility, because it was too big for him. But of course I remember Dad would send me over to the market to get a pig, and I'd got to the pig markets on the corner of Flemington Road and Elizabeth Street. I'd go to the pig market,

14:00 get a pig, put it on my shoulder in a hessian bag, ride back up Rattan Street. Or he would say, send me to the Metropolitan Meat Market to get a lamb, they'd put a hessian bag on it, which you couldn't do it nowadays, they'd shoot you. And you'd ride up Rattan Street to the butcher shop in Lygon Street. Yeah.

**What did your parents think about World War II when it just started?**

Oh much the same as everyone else

14:30 was. It's a bad thing, they didn't think a war would ever come. Mum wasn't, she loved going to the races, she loved pictures, because Mum and I used to go to the pictures before I even went into ballroom dancing. She would go to pictures and it was quite good. But no, I don't know,

15:00 I'm not much of an artist, am I? I've got to have another drink.

**Yeah, no worries.**

Thank god I'm not drinking beer, because I used to trade my beer for soft drinks.

**Really? So take us through every detail about when you got called up and that experience?**

Yeah, we went down to, as I said, I went with this Arthur Scaloon, he...

15:30 **Let's start even before that, when you got that letter in the mail and it said you were required.**

Yeah, that was in November.

**Let's start right at the beginning and give us as much detail as you can.**

I got called up, I had to go down to the 6th Infantry Regiment, on the corner of Ferry Street and Victoria Street in Melbourne. They'd go down there and they would take you through what you had to do and everything like that. They'd send you a letter of when you had to go back there, what you were,

16:00 that was in November, was '41. So we were going to get, we got called up before the war, before the Yanks come into it, so they were in November '41, I think it was the 23rd or something like that. That'd be on my certificate, I've still got that somewhere. And then I got, we went to, in December, February the 27th,

16:30 1942, we went down to Ferry Street, Arthur and I, and we shoved down to Balcombe for two, two or three weeks, where you got needles and all different things against typhoid and all that. And then we got shoved out to Seymour, so we spent a couple of weeks there doing training on bridging over the Goulburn River, and walking over hills, going

17:00 rifle shooting, I used to cry, definitely I cried when I fired a rifle. I thought the sharpness of the shot would ring in my ears, you know. And I even claimed to one of our staff sergeants, Bill Orford, he only died last month, Bill, lived down in Warrnambool. And I, he said, "You'll get over it, son, you'll get that much shooting, you'll get over it," so

17:30 he was quite harmful. But even during the war, I carried a, in Bougainville, I carried a Bren, an Owen gun, and they were very good.

**Were you worried when you got called up, or...?**

Well I suppose, I was worried but inside me I was happy really, cause I was going dancing seven nights a week. Seven nights, dancing, ballroom dancing. I taught, say

18:00 Thursday afternoon, Dad let me off, and I'd go down and teach at Betty Lee's studio down in Howie Court, Melbourne, I'd teach ballroom dancing to ladies. Because 3AW [radio station] had a class run by, this Alan Grant who was a very good ballroom dancer, he was the big boss down there, and I'd teach ballroom dancing. But then Alan went over to the Western Desert, he joined, went over and joined the 6th Divvy [Division], and he got a lot of shrapnel

18:30 in his legs. But he's since gone, Alan.

**So, so you were happy to be called up?**

Really yes, because, the only trouble you've got is to get up at bloody six o'clock in the morning, sleep on palliasses with no bloody beds, oh, not like the Yanks, they had, they had beds. Cause we had, we never had those until we got to New, Bougainville, I think, yeah.

19:00 So, no I was really happy to go into the army, and I thought it would strengthen me to what I was, because I was only a skinny runt. And I didn't like taking my clothes off, and June would even tell you now, that I would, if I wore shorts my legs were that thin, you'd wonder how I stood up. So, yeah, so.

19:30 **What did your parents think about you being called up?**

Well Dad was a bit crook on it, because I used to help him in the butcher shop. I won't tell you that part.

**Why not?**

No, no, he went to a certain MP who was my uncle, and my uncle said, "Leave 50 quid on the end of the table, and I'll get your son out of the army." Dad walked out, he said, "I would never work for you again,"

20:00 because he's a Labor man, Dad, always has been, and helped the Labor Government get into power and all this, and all that rubbish. No, I won't mention names.

**Don't mention names, but so...**

He was my, he was me uncle. No, "If you leave 50 quid there Jim, I'll get him out," he said. "No way am I going to leave 50 quid, I'll let my son go right through the war, good luck to him,"

20:30 that's all. But I was at camp in Bonegilla, not Bog-, at Hume in New South Wales, that's where we camped. So I had two, two weeks leave, no pay, I know, it's on my list.

**Before then, just step by step, you got called up, you went in and then you went to the place in for a physical and so on. What was**

21:00 **the experience of being with all those other guys, going in there, not knowing what was happening, and...?**

Oh they said, "You're going to have needles," with a big bloke in front of me, and a big bloke behind me. And they said, "Well, when you go in, you'll pass out at the sight of the needles." Who passed out? The blokes in front and behind. I had the needles put in, they bloody hurt, I tell you what. I hope they, I think they used the one needle and just wiped it. They,

21:30 they may not have, but I don't know where they'd get all the needles, because all the troops went through down there at Balcombe. Oh here we go again, you'll shoot me, I haven't got a gun, you won't find a gun in this place. No, we've, we've enjoyed life, that's it. I always enjoy life, I think life's the most precious thing in the world.

**So in that physical, was it a bit daunting?**

22:00 Yes, it was a, you come out of your hut, I've got a photograph there of the hut I was in, we had all our photos taken, and we, I'm in the photograph there, I think it was the 1st of March, 1942. And we had our needles put in, and it was a Sunday, thank god. And you put all these needles in, and I don't

22:30 think we ever got needles again after that, they lasted through the five years, six years.

**Do you know what the needles were for?**

Yeah, stop you getting typhoid, different diseases you know, you're going into a new country, and country we had never been in before. In fact, I'd never been out of Melbourne, I don't think I'd been out of Melbourne - no, I hadn't. Holidays yes, holidays I used to go up to

23:00 Woomargama, which is just about 40 miles in those days, north of Albury, I used to go up there for my holidays, my aunty's place up there, on my father's side. But no, I'd never been any further than that. And we knew that we were going into different areas, and we might be in an area where this tack, or different things, you might catch it.

23:30 I think the only thing I caught was bloody boils, the change in food, yeah, you copped these boils. The change of air, different things, you know.

**What about when you first got your uniform and put that on, what was that experience?**

Oh christ almighty. Bag, they said, "Well you're tall, you're about six foot aren't you?" I said, "Yeah.", "Well

24:00 these will fit you." They just wrap them up and give them to you. They give you blankets when I came back from New Guinea. No, when the war was finished, I come back and I got sent up to Bonegilla, you go into the Q [Quartermaster] store, you say you're a new member, you know, "You're in the transport company, are you? Okay, here's six blankets." I say, "Six blankets!" They say, "You'll need your overcoat, too."

24:30 Bloody freezing it was up there. We'd just come out of 94 degrees humidity into freezing cold four degrees, terrible it was. But I suppose you got through it, you lived through it. That's when...

**How early on in the joining up process did you start to meet friends and make friends and so on?**

Oh, what in the,

25:00 in the army when we got to Casino, we had a chap there by the name of Ray Mills was in our tent. Something came up and I said something, and then he went whack, I copped it right in the chin. And we had those Yankee tents, which is these, they were quite good, they seat about eight, 10 people. And he copped me right, I said the wrong thing. Well after the war, when I saw secretary of the association, we formed an association

25:30 on the 13th of November 1945 at Torokina, 7.30pm. Never forget it. And I've been on the committee since 1955, and I've never been off, still on the committee. I've got a life member over here on the wall, right against the table, that's life member in 1951. I was the second life member

26:00 to get a, one of them, and I've been a life member of the. I also organised a trip to Canberra in 1979 for the long weekend in June, Queen's Birthday. And we went up by, in our cars and that, I took my car up in 1979, it was only a year old, still got it. It's up to

26:30 600, no, 406,000 kilometres and it's in the garage. We went up and stayed in motels and that, and I organised with one of our lieutenants was up there, Jack Bickel, he had his legs broken by a landing craft up in Bougainville, snapped his legs off but he's still got them. And he lives up in Canberra up there,

27:00 Griffith I think he lives in. Anyhow, I organised this trip and we came from everywhere, they came from Queensland, Melbourne and went up there, I came back via Merimbula, I think it was, yeah. But no.

**So after you got the injections, you went and, how did they organise into what battalion or how did they organise you?**

You went into your tents. You went, you were in huts,

27:30 down at Balcombe they had huts, which were very good. You were only there two weeks, and you went on night walks over the falls at Balcombe. And a few other things, you went swimming down the Mount Martha, which was quite a good pool, quite a good, yeah, very good pool, yeah it's Port Phillip Bay. Yeah, what else?

**Tell us everything you can remember?**

Oh jeepers creepers,

28:00 you're going back, you weren't even bloody born, what are you talking about. No, we had about two weeks down there.

**What would you, what would you be doing in those two weeks?**

Well you'd go on map reading throughout the hills, they'd send a platoon out, you'd go out like that. I remember something too, Jack Sandry told me yesterday, that

28:30 he went with a Lieutenant Colonel Tek, Col Tesch, now Colin was a, he lives in Queensland. And him and Jack went up past our camp in Kankiro [?] Sandakan, the other side of Finisterre Ranges, and they went towards Bogajim. And they went on a recce [reconnoitre] to see how they could, we had to build a road, so the troops could go up that far. They got into Bogajim, looked around, walked out of Bogajim, it was supposed to be

29:00 full of Japs, and walked back home again. But then the 58/59th Battalion, which we were attached at times to, they sent a patrol in, the patrol never came back. The patrol was about eight or nine men, they never came back, unless they boarded a ship to come back to Melbourne. Stupid. No.

**How did you like the training when you started getting into it?**

Oh, it was quite good,

29:30 the getting up of a morning was bad, you know. You're not used to getting up at 5am and going, especially in say New Guinea and Bougainville. Bougainville was the main place where we did a bit of fighting, we'd get sent out on patrols and things like that. And you'd have to be up at 5am, have a stand-to til 6am. And you'd get into your hole that you dug for yourself, the bottom of your two-man tent,

30:00 and your mate alongside you, he'd get in the hole too, then you'd stand-to for an hour, then you'd go and have breakfast. Cause the Japs might rush you, and what we'd done the night before, we, Arthur used his bulldozer and crushed down a bit of jungle, and we'd come around with spikes and but barbed wire around. About foot off the ground, so the Japanese would run through, they'd trip over it, or get caught up in it.

**What was training like**

30:30 **at Seymour?**

Training at Seymour was mainly marching and drilling. We had a sergeant major and a regimental sergeant major. The sergeant major was very good, a chap by the name of Fred Sigmont who is now deceased, and we had a regimental serge, sergeant major, who was a real posh, and you know, he really got into you,

31:00 you do a lot there. Then we went shooting, you went out on a rifle range and shooting. And by the way, where we were camped at, the chap that owns that land now, has built a, sort of a memorial there, and we can go and have a look at it now, which is very good, if we ever go that way out, up the, up. We went last, no the second weekend in April,

31:30 June and I went up to Benalla, because one of my army mate's wives turned 60. We spent two hours there with them, then went up to Rutherglen to a ballroom dancer who's got a church up there, bought a church and turned it into a four bedroom home. Beautiful. And so I went to this Col Hancock, he saved my life on Bougainville once. I

32:00 was about to walk in his tent, because in those days we were testing Maurie booby traps. And as I went to walk in the tent, Col yelled out, "Casso, stop," he called me Cass in the army. "Casso, stop coming in." I said, "Why?" he said, "there's a booby trap there." So that's how he knew me, he saved my life then. But I might have copped an arm or a leg or something like that.

**When you were in Australia and**

32:30 **were still going through your training and so on?**

Yeah.

**Did you know where you were going to be sent?**

Never, they took you there. Only when we were going up to Port Moresby, we knew we were going to New Guinea, that's all. Didn't know what part of New Guinea, or where.

**So that being the case...**

You don't write letters home, you weren't allowed to mention where you're going, where you'll be. Because if the Japanese got a hold of your letter, they'd know the 15th Field Company

33:00 would be in, Murray Barracks, opposite Murray Barracks. I mean one day there, we had, we built a Chinaman, now you know what a Chinaman is, don't you? A Chinaman's a big framework where they have a bulldozer push earth into a tip truck down below, got some photographs there. And Spike Minogue drove the bulldozer, he never, never drove many bulldozers,

33:30 he finished up driving the dozer into the tractor, into the truck, over, had to get a crane to pull it out.

**In Australia, did you go into the Engineering Division, or...?**

I got, I got attached, told I was going to be put into the engineering. Is that any, I said, "Look, I'm going to go into the army, so what's, what group." He said, "You're going in as a butcher," I never did butchering, remember, in the army.

34:00 I never, they had butchers there, that did the work. The only time I did butchering for the army was when we left Townsville, going into Bougainville, we went on a Liberty ship. And of a morning, say, of 10pm at night, I'd go down below and work with the American butchers. And when we finished that, we'd have steak and eggs for breakfast. So I

34:30 was right for breakfast, see, because we only got two meals a day. And I'd work every night with the American butchers, on the Fairall [?], was that, the Liberty ship Fairall, I think it was. So, that's the only time I did butchering, and yet I was a butcher.

**Were you happy you weren't doing butchering in the army?**

Oh no, I was quite happy doing what I was doing. I did a bit of batman work, like, I cut this

35:00 a boil underneath the knee, and they said, "Well you're in charge of the officers' mess now." I said, "Oh, thank you very much." Seeing you were a butcher, you'd do that. So one night, a major there, they were in Port Moresby and I had to go round to Number 3 Platoon Headquarters' cookhouse, was thrown out because we got a new sergeant cook by the name of Jim Hudson, who's now not with the unit, because he was a bit of a bugger. And he put the

35:30 around the hills, on a hillside like that, and round the hill, he took over Number 3 Platoon cookhouse, which was run by, oh what's his name, anyhow, beside the point. And I had to carry the plates from there, round to the officers' mess. And the, as I'm about to go out the door carrying the plates, I heard, "Cassells," and I said, "Yes, Sir, what's the trouble?" He said, "These, this meat is cold." I said, "Well

36:00 don't blame me." He said, "What, you've only got to come from headquarters kitchen," I said, "Number 3 Platoon kitchen, Sir." And he said, "What do you mean 'Number 3 Platoon'?" I said, "The sergeant

cook for Number 3 Platoon was better than the headquarters." He called out, "Hudson," he never called them by their name, and then he said, "Who's in charge?" I said, "Ken Green," and that was the captain. So

36:30 they got hauled before there, and then next morning, Sergeant Hudson come into the cookhouse, into my, excuse me, come into the officers' mess. And he went around and went, "Dust around the edges of the window." I said, "God, they're on a dusty spot, how do you expect dust to get there," you know. Oh dear.

**How, how did they actually teach you to be an engineer, and what was that process?**

Oh, look, you get all different,

37:00 you learn how to delouse mines, you go along and you use a bayonet, prod around like that, and you get a mine, so you get underneath and pull the mine out, and carefully take the plug out of it, so it wouldn't go off and all that. You did all different things. When you were out, we did, where was it, in Bougainville, I had to go

37:30 down about. Oh no, before we got to Bougainville, we were on the Dinmore River at Ipswich and we were learning to put a bridge, bridge across on pontoons. And one day, a little landing craft come in and had an outboard motor on it, and it pulled into a pontoon. And the chap at the back, with a chap at the front, he was holding the boat onto the bridge,

38:00 and the back part started to move out, and the bloke's handing me the outboard motor. Well it got a bit heavy, he let go, I let go, it went down. The major came down, he said, "Cassells," I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Down and pick the motor, outboard motor up." I said, "What?" I said, "That's about 40 feet down there." He said, "Down there on your A, on an A4 [charge]." So we got two boat hooks, took it down below and

38:30 they put them down, and I plugged my nose up, I put ear plugs into my ears, took a deep breath and went down about 20 feet. You could motor boats from up and down the Dinmore River. I come back up, I said, "I can't find it, Sir," he said, "Well probe around with a stick," because it was very muddy, you know, Dinmore River. So we probed around, anyway, we pulled out the bloody motor and saved me going on an A4. But that's how you

39:00 learnt those things, you know. I was up the top of the bridge, and they'd throw you up a bolt, you'd take the bolt or the nut, they'd have the nut already on the bolt, and you had to, sort of put in the bridge and then tighten it up. So you learnt bridging in that way.

**I think previously you mentioned that there was a death in training or something?**

Oh that was at Kapooka, yeah, that was a, that happened, not only

39:30 with out unit, none of our unit blokes copped it, it was mainly different units had gone through at Kapooka Training camp, which is still here, by the way.

**Where's Kapooka?**

Near Wagga, yeah. This side of Wagga, be about, it's on the fringe of Wagga, but that happened a lot.

**What were the circumstances of...?**

I would not know. They had an assault course there, you've got to go through this assault course,

40:00 which I never went over, cause I was told to make a sort of a, the troops were going over, explosives were, bombs were falling down. So they told me to put three slabs of TNT on a bow of a tree, light them and go for your bloody life. Because the troops going through, thought they were having explosive tape thrown at them and things like that.

40:30 So I never went on the assault course, thank goodness.

**Right, we'll stop there.**

## Tape 3

00:31 We had to march up the Hume Highway, we didn't go through Seymour, we bypassed that. We got on the road, we got up to, we were marching up and we camped on the side of the highway, because in those days it was only one lane, two lanes but not double highway. And we were marching up, we'd have sleepover night on the ground, and

01:00 ground sheets, and you'd sleep on the ground there, and next morning you'd get up, and you'd come for roll call. And one chap by the name of Hope Briggs walked up to a lieutenant by the name of Ian Cameron, and Ian was, they called him 'Two Gun Cameron' because he liked wearing two guns, two revolvers. And Hope went up to him, and said, "Where can I go for a hard hit?"

- 01:30 And of course the sergeant went him, a bloke by the name of Dinny Roberts, he come from Warrnambool, he had a go at him, and said, "You go to loft, go to your company sergeant before you go to a lieutenant, who then goes to a lieutenant?" Anyhow, before we marched up to Wangaratta, where we marched through the Tambour, we slept that night on the Wangaratta Racecourse, and when you sleep at,
- 02:00 that's bloody hard wood, those seats are very hard, I tell you. Then we marched through Wangaratta where they gave, you know, they chaired us as we marched through. When we got to Beechworth, we had, we had lunch there a couple of weeks ago. When we got to Beechworth, we went to, going through the town, the ladies would hand out apples to you, because they have a lot of apples up there. And when we were marching out of Beechworth, the sergeants up ahead
- 02:30 kept making loud noises from their behinds. And we used to have to break camp to go that way, so that the smell would go through. And then we camped outside the Beechworth Prison, and then we marched up and we went to Hume camp, over the Hume Weir and around into Hume Camp, which was waiting for us, we were there for about two or
- 03:00 three weeks. We went out on night times, we'd got out into the hills on different duties, we'd do this and we'd do that. "Is he asleep?", "No." And we'd, you'd do bivouacs, you know, you go out on a bivouac, and you'd go out to this area here, and you'd sleep on the side of a hill. And this Sig [signaller] Winray one night, he rolled down the bloody hill in his, someone pulled the. What they did was,
- 03:30 cut down a sapling, and put it between two trees, and then sleep on that, so, so you wouldn't roll down the hill. Someone pulled it out one night, and he rolled down the hill and it upset the camp. But anyhow, that's beside the point. Then we, I got, I mentioned to Myles [interviewer] that... By the way, that's not Miles Davis by the way; he was a trumpeter. He hasn't got a trumpet. And we went all the way
- 04:00 down to, I got leave down to Melbourne, which I've mentioned to Myles. And I got leave without pay, but my father was trying to get me out of the army. Anyhow, we went up to Casino, and we were at Casino about two months, I suppose, we used to go to dances in the, in Casino itself. Bloody thing.

#### **Defensive reaction.**

- 04:30 Hey. Anyhow, my job, we went to different dances there, we did training around the Casino area, like we went to Kyogle, which is just out from Casino, we had to build bridges there and do the road up. Making different things, I had to do, say making culverts and, so that the water would come off the road into a culvert,
- 05:00 culvert would then go, where we'd build a little bridge. In those days, you didn't use bridge, you used 44 gallon drums, and you cut the ends out, and you put them, joined them together. And you say, put four across a road, that's the culvert. We went to a dance one night, and then they come out and said one of our trucks had over-rolled, coming out a little, what do, it's a carrier, ammunition
- 05:30 carrier, it's a four-wheel drive truck, not a four wheel, four wheels. And this, Herbey Agnew and myself, we had to put grey coats on, rifles at the slope there, and go and stand guard all night, so no-one would knock off the truck. Then we went back to camp at Casino, and then from Casino we were sent down to Byron Bay for two weeks, that was beautiful.
- 06:00 Get up every morning and into the bay for a swim, then to go to the dance at Bangalow, which was 10 miles away, walk. Go to the dance, walk home, back to camp. That was a good night's work. Then we, from Bangalow, from Byron Bay back to Casino, then we boarded a train which took us up to Atherton.
- 06:30 Now Atherton is up in the tablelands, and we were camped at Tolga, T-O-L-G-A, where we were building a hospital, for troops that were coming back from New Guinea. Because Bougainville in those days, we, we knew nothing about that. Troops were coming back from New Guinea and going into the hospital there, and we were building the hospital because the boys, the carpenters were very good. Because the nurses would come up and say, "Would you build me a little table,"
- 07:00 and all that, you know, they did things for the nurses, I don't know what they got in return for it but I never got it. Anyhow, we were there, there was a bottomless lake up there, and I used to go swimming across this lake. And I went onto a ledge where we sat and was a waterfall, and I'm sitting under this waterfall, and they said, "Oh listen, we're going to the dance tonight." I said, "Oh okay," it was a Saturday by the way, and they used to
- 07:30 have a dance in Atherton, and I got pally with a young lady up there. Anyhow, I got up off the ledge, went to dive in and I gashed my foot, from there to there, blood everywhere. So when I got out of the water, I felt like faint, I was going to faint. So two blokes come over and grabbed me, and of course the only way you could get out, you had to go over there and climb,
- 08:00 it was about, oh 50 feet drop, go up there. But what they did was, they threw a rope down to me, put it round my waist and took me across, and then they pulled me up the cliff, and I went to the hospital where they put acqu, acriflavine, it's a yellow medicine, and you put your foot in it, that knocks you, nearly knocked out. The doctor come round and said, "Keep,

- 08:30 keep your head down, you know, you'll come out of it." So I was two weeks in hospital, the hospital we were fixing up. And then we got leave, "You're going overseas," they didn't tell us, "We're having de-embarkation leave, come back to Melbourne." Well, we got in a train at Cairns, back to Melbourne, and I, on the way back, the River Fitzroy had flooded,
- 09:00 and they reckoned the bridge was unsafe. And us being engineers, "Oh we'll fix it for you.", "No, you can't touch it, it has to be civilian doing it." While we were in that station, we were shunted up there, the Sunlander came in which was going up to Cairns from Brisbane, and an American train come in, and we had a rain. We in, when we were in Caboolture,
- 09:30 we had a race between different blokes there, and we had this chap by the name of Eddie Boland, we called him the 'Mediac Flyer', he came from Mediac, which is up, going up to Mildura. And we used to rub him down with rifle oil and make him fit, and he used to, we called him our fastest runner. And even their slowest could runner could beat him. But anyhow,
- 10:00 we got a lot of fun out of him, and we made a lot of money out of those Yanks, too. Lucky we got off that bloody Mackay railway station, they were going to kill us, the Yanks.

**What did they, what did they, how did they react?**

Well, what happened was, we had the race going up there, and a friend of mine Jack Dwyer, who was a staff sergeant, he lived at Moe, he's now passed away of course. He came, he was the fastest runner, because he used to do our,

- 10:30 in racing, we had in it, the brigade had a sports day, he was our runner. And they would start about 10 paces behind Medi, and what they'd do is, he would run through a train, the other train along there, like the Yanks train, he'd run through the train as it was taking a while, then Mediac would win. And everyone was backing Jack Dwyer, the Yanks, "God, he's a fast guy," you know, when they see him running up the
- 11:00 station, they see the Mediac Flyer could hardly move. Well we've kept that up, when we had our reunions after the war, until Eddie died, oh when did he die, about 60 I think, I've got it all over there. And he never ran in that, we used to hold it in the Victoria Palace in Collins Street, Melbourne. But oh look, we had a lot of fun.
- 11:30 But oh, I think we ran it once up in New Guinea and Eddie was put in charge of the latrines cause he wasn't much good for anything, I'm sorry to say this, but I got on well with him, you know, but oh poor Eddie, yeah. Anyhow we...

**So you were talking about the Yanks, their reaction?**

Oh crikey, we never seen them after that, we just got on a train, and came down,

- 12:00 I think the next stop was Bundaberg, I think. But no, they, they, I suppose they took it with a grain of salt, you know, they've got to be had now and again. But no, we didn't, the only time we met Yanks again, was in Port Moresby. We were...

**What did you think about the Yanks, there was a lot of controversy about the Americans?**

Well, we were, we were sent out to a, we were 15 miles west

- 12:30 of Moresby, we were doing the road working. And then we got sent to a camp about four or five miles from where we were camped, our number one platoon, and there was eight of us went out, lived in a tent, eight of us. And we had to pull the side of a mountain out, and that side of a mountain had to go into the swamp where we had to build a road across, which never did get finished. But it was all exercise, you know,
- 13:00 you're learning how to do things in tough areas. And we were, that was on my 21st birthday in 1943, the 13th of May. And what happened was a sergeant cook by the name of Joe Ball who had a butcher shop in Fairfield, Victoria, he's now passed on. And Joe and his sidekick went out and
- 13:30 shot two wild pigs, came back and roasted them. So the eight of us had roast pork that night, for vegies, we had steamed paw paw. Now we had no vegies, and he might have got a couple of potatoes from somewhere, I don't know where he got them. So we had roast pork, and then after that they decided to play cards, and they played a card, card game called 'Slippery Sam',
- 14:00 don't ask me how to play it, I wouldn't have a clue, takes your money though. Of course, we were only getting two bob a day, two bob a day for fight for your country. And because we were overseas, we got an extra two bob, big deal. And, oh, what am I doing, what am I doing?

**I'm not sure.**

Well if you're not sure, how can I be sure?

**I remember, let's get back**

- 14:30 **to the Atherton Tablelands.**



Oh I'm gone from there, I'm at bloody New Guinea.

**Yeah, that's, that's what I'm not sure, I've noticed we quantum leaped.**

Oh were did we get out of that. Atherton Tablelands, well we...

**Tell us about the jungle, did you have jungle training then?**

Well there was jungle there, yeah.

**Tell us about the training.**

No, we didn't do jungle training there, we did working on the 2/2nd AGH, or it might have been the 2/1 AGH, one of them anyhow. Look at the size of that boot.

15:00 2nd, yeah, we worked on the hospital, so we didn't do jungle training. Anyone that did jungle training went to a place down near Surfers Paradise, I can't think of the name of it now, they did jungle training. We were engineers, engineers didn't do any fighting until you go to New, to Bougainville. Because we were the only engineers that did hand-to-hand fighting.

15:30 **Speaking of hand to hand...**

Hand to hand fighting with the Japanese, we were the only group of engineers, we were told that, and it was put in the book.

**Which we'll discuss later, of course. At about this time, how did you see the progress, or lack of progress in the war, what did you see was happening?**

Oh, we had, we had a book called The Guinea Guide that

16:00 came to us at Moresby, I've got one copy outside.

**No, I mean before you got to Port Moresby, when you were in Queensland, how did you see the war?**

I can say, and listen to the wireless, there was no TV in those days, you listen to the news and that's all. It might come out on a piece of paper and shoved up on the noticeboard, how different the war's going and everything like that.

16:30 No, you were just interested in what you were doing, if you didn't, you'd do the wrong thing, you might kill yourself, never know your luck in a big city, do you? No, that's about. I believe Carl, you had Carl Frankey at this? As I said, he's our secretary, I was secretary for 30 years after the war, after the,

17:00 in fact I was the first secretary that took them back to Canberra in 1979, never been back since. And then we got this video come out, it was taken on an 8mm, we had it converted to video. Anyhow.

**Now where were we, Atherton.**

Yeah.

**This was a big job for you?**

Oh yeah, it was a big job for us, yeah.

**What kind of duties did this demand?**

Hey?

**What kind of**

17:30 **training and duties did it demand?**

You're on building the Atherton, the hospitals, you know. Did I do anything there? I did things, but I can't remember what I did. You're building tents, putting tents up, not, big American tents and English tents, they had tents sent back from the Western Desert. And

18:00 we were putting them up for the hospital. The boys were building different things for the nurses, fraternizing with then nurses, some of them. Because the nurses were lieutenants, we were only saps, sappers.

**Saps?**

Saps.

**Saps with the nurses.**

Saps with...

**You say fraternizing with the nurses, what do you refer to?**

Oh, just, you couldn't fraternize,

18:30 you were a sapper, unless you were an officer, you couldn't take a nurse, because they were lieutenants, lieutenants.

**You couldn't take one?**

You couldn't fraternize with a nurse. You could go for a nurse as a nurse, but we didn't. No, we didn't take the nurses, we. The only time where you meet the nurses if you went to Atherton, you went to dances, and they were in the dance. And the girls in the dance and that.

19:00 Yeah.

**How did the nurses view the other rank?**

Well they were the same way, they were told by their commanding officer, they couldn't fraternise with an officer, or a sapper or a gunner, or a driver and things like that.

**Does it mean, fraternise, do you mean socialise?**

Yes.

**Off hours?**

Off hours, yes.

**That's ridiculous, sounds a bit harsh, doesn't it?**

Oh no, I suppose so, there was so many,

19:30 we were 250 strong, how can you get 250 in one? Don't answer that question.

**I won't answer that. I'm not sure if it's happened. So, you had leave at this time as well?**

Oh you get leave, you get, you get night leave, you get leave to go into Atherton and spend, say, and then a truck

20:00 would take you into Atherton, our trucks, you'd have to be home by midnight or 01:00 hours. How we going? Yeah, Yeah. When we.

**You'd get paid leave?**

Oh, you'd get paid leave, yeah, yeah, you'd get paid leave. We went to, where were we, when we were in Caboolture, which is about 30 miles north

20:30 of Brisbane, we were camped there, about five of our blokes went into Brisbane without leave. And they were told that the major would come back from where he was, he'd been out surveying the area and he was going to put on a snap parade. And the blokes come back, and one bloke was a bit late getting back, Jeff Matthews, and Jeff now

21:00 lives down Geelong way. And this officer, he come up before the, he said, "You left your army unit to go and fraternise into Brisbane without leave," and he said, "You've got to do so much time in the guard house," we had a guard house built. Two guards would be put on charge there of a night time.

21:30 No, that's not him, no, that's another one. And if the guards didn't do what I tell them, they would have to do it too. And he had a, he had to haul a length of railway line, railway line about three feet long, tied to the back of his neck, with his arms round the back, and barbed wire running down his back.

22:00 And he had to haul that around the camp, the stockade. And he wasn't, if the troops, if your guards didn't do it, then the guards would have to do it themselves. And he, that's what he believed in, to make his, his unit, a tough unit. And of course, I reckon it's been done later on. And you know, when we went to New Guinea, that officer,

22:30 that major, never walked out on deck, unless he was accompanied by two lieutenants cause he might never have got to Port Moresby. It did happen, going across the Western Desert, a few officers or sergeants were thrown overboard, and that would be called 'inaction' and things like that.

**AIF [Australian Imperial Force], on the way to Africa?**

Yes.

**Yeah, I've heard stories about that.**

Oh well, you hear stories.

23:00 Well that, of course it could be all furphies [rumours], you know. A furphy is a lie of things like that, but no, these things happen I suppose. But Mick would never, oh Mad Mick we called him. That's why the books called Mad Mick's Mob. Mick, he was mad all right, I tell you what, the things he done to the different companies that come into the engineers to go out

23:30 and do this. Because when you, where, a sapper could go and order a lieutenant of infantry and his

men, to do what he's doing, cause he's in charge of you, a lieutenant, which I never did, I wasn't bloody brainy enough. But no, these things happen I suppose.

24:00 What are we doing now?

**When you went to Melbourne on leave, there must have been a huge American presence building up there?**

Oh yes, yes, yes, well I didn't have a girlfriend, I had a couple of girlfriends, one in Casino, one in Caboolture, one in Atherton, about five in Melbourne, yeah, what about it?

**That's more than a couple?**

All right more than a couple.

**A few dozen.**

Oh no, you have a different girlfriend. Girlfriends,

24:30 you're not engaged to them or anything like that, not the same.

**Just casual relationships?**

Casual, good, good question, yeah. And what else?

**So you went to Melbourne to visit your family etcetera, yeah, the American presence in Melbourne was quite huge.**

Oh yeah, quite huge.

**What were the differences between the Americans you met in Melbourne, and in Queensland, New South Wales?**

Well the Americans you meet up there, I didn't meet any Americans in New South Wales, mainly in

25:00 Queensland, mainly up at Atherton, because they had, they had the bombers going off, and they were, the air force. No, they were very good up there. In fact, there was a Bob Lyon, was a Canadian orchestra leader, he was playing in the Melbourne Dugout. And he came up with his band up to Atherton, and I'd met him a couple of times, but I'd never spoke to him or anything like that. But I knew

25:30 his band, you know, a few of the A, there was a, what was his name, Rankin, Les Rankin, no, oh anyhow, he's a tenor sax player. And I knew him, you know, from being Melbourne, cause I used to go round the dances and pick up these autographs. Doug Rankin. And he was a good tenor sax, and he would come up, and they'd play of a night time in the Atherton Hall.

26:00 And they were very good, that Bob Lyons was a very good Canadian orchestra leader. But he played at the Palais de Dance in St Kilda about 1939. In fact, I danced with a competition, he was the leader of the band. Do you want a drink?

**No, no, I'm fine thank you. Tell me something, was, was empire important to you, the concept of an empire?**

26:30 Empire?

**Yes. The British empire, that is?**

The what? What is he getting at me?

**Was that an important...?**

The British empire?

**Yes.**

Oh yes, I suppose it was.

**In that you were fighting for it?**

Well that's, yes. you were fighting for the British empire.

**Or Australia?**

Yeah, mainly Australia, you're thinking of Australia, not British empire. What did they do, they sent no-one out, they send Spitfires out. Now Spitfires

27:00 are no good out in Darwin, they were no good, it's too bloody hot. Spitfires are terrible. In my idea, I'm only a sapper, but no, I don't know. Right. No, no, they did their bit, they had their, they sent their warships out here and different things and that, they, they had

27:30 a fight on their hands back in England, and they, they copped it bad. We were lucky, we were only

bombed here a couple of times, but I mean if we didn't serve to fight our own country, you'd be walking around with slant eyes now.

**That's if somebody choose to marry you, an oriental person?**

What was that, I...?

28:00 **Maybe if my parents chose to marry someone oriental, that might be the case. So let's get to North, oh North, New Guinea, I was going to say North Korea for a second.**

Oh, cut it out.

**New Guinea, tell us about your voyage, from, where did you depart?**

From Port, from Brisbane.

**From Brisbane, okay. Do you remember the day you were departing?**

Yes, 10th of March 1943. We left the Brisbane

28:30 River, went out of there, we went up past, we didn't pull in anywhere. And there was no, no support, like a naval destroyer or anything like that, no, we were just on our own. They said there was sightings of Japanese submarines, somewhere, somewhere, probably just left Tokyo. And anyhow we went up without any escort whatsoever. Got to Port Moresby, down the side of the ship,

29:00 unloaded, into trucks, out to Murray Barracks.

**Okay, just, just pause for a second. On the voyage, how long did it actually take?**

About four days.

**The SS Katoomba, was it?**

Yes.

**Can you describe the ship to us?**

Well you slept in a hammock, hanging from the top, outside, only the officers were inside. And the troops slept in a hammock, and if you didn't get in a hammock

29:30 properly, you'd fall over, you'd come out, you know how hammocks go from side to side. And when you slept overnight on them, next morning you had to roll your hammock up, put it back up top, so that the seaman come and wash the decks, you know, the decks of the ship, because they had their duty to do, too. They were very good. But no,

30:00 I don't remember much about the sea voyage, I wasn't sick for once. Cause the last time I got sick from a sea voyage was when my mother took me to Sydney before the war. And I got off the ship and onto a tram, and the tram conductor has never forgotten me, because I, all over the tram, erked [vomited] all over the tram, so.

**The sea voyage also.**

Beg your pardon?

**The sea voyage**

30:30 **also made you a little bit?**

Yes, I think that a little on those, going over, say to Taronga Zoo, things like that.

**How long did the voyage take?**

Hey?

**How long was the voyage?**

About four to five days.

**From Brisbane to Port Moresby? Was there many...**

I think, I could be wrong, because from Brisbane, you had to go passed through Townsville, passed Thursday Island, and keep going, and hope that no Japanese submarines spotted you.

31:00 **Was there much tension?**

I imagine there would be tension, a lot of troops would be unhappy being sent away from Australia, they would have liked to stay in Australia lot of them might not, they were looking forward to more adventure. They didn't know what they were heading into. All I knew, I was heading to New Guinea.

**What about you, were you looking for**

31:30 **more adventure?**

No, I was looking to keep myself alive, if possible. We learnt how to delouse booby traps when we were in Port Moresby, opposite Murray Barracks, we learnt this. And then one day they said there's a raid on, and about 100 airplanes came over, Japs. And one of our lieutenants,

32:00 "Run to your trenches." He was too bloody late, we were in them. And that didn't do us any good, and we were learning how to delouse booby traps you know. But yeah, run to your trenches, yeah, we were there, underneath in a trench, we had to dig the trenches too. Cause we're not like the Yanks, they had a trench digger.

**A trench digger?**

32:30 Yeah.

**What do you mean a trench digger?**

Oh they had these machines that dig trenches, you know, and dig things, but we had to use pick and shovel.

**They had, what crane sort of things?**

Well we had pick and shovel, a pick and a shovel. A shovel's what you mainly use in the engineers.

**All right, so you guys were authentic diggers.**

Yeah, we did, then you'd use a spade and things like that, to go down about six feet,

33:00 not six, you wouldn't go down six feet, gee, you'd go down about four feet, it's only when, if you go down six feet when you build the latrines.

**This raid by the Japanese...**

Beg your pardon? Yes, the raid, 100 planes and of course...

**Over Port Moresby?**

Over Port Moresby. And you'd think to yourself, "How many bloody planes would be going to Germany?" They sent a thousand over,

33:30 we only can see a hundred up there, and that was a bloody lot. But anyhow, they, but they passed and they didn't come down too much. Because when a plane leaves Moresby, only up to Finschhafen or up to the Ramu Valley, it has to go through this gap. And the gap is big mountains that come in like this. And many a plane has crashed going through that gap. One,

34:00 one we were in, sort of dropped about 50 feet, and when we were landing at Ramu Valley, we had to jump another plane because it busted a tyre. Well after we got off and changed our underpants, we were fright, scared to death. But those Yank pilots, they knew how to bloody well fly planes, they were very good. Not to say our, our

34:30 Australian pilots were very good too, but I don't know.

**So, what was your first impression of Port Moresby?**

What a dump this was, what are we fighting to save this place for. We could see it was mainly at Burns Philp, they were a company that was throughout the islands and throughout Melbourne, Burns Philp was a,

35:00 they bought a lot of stuff into New Guinea, from different countries throughout the world, Burns Philp company, I think they're still going in Melbourne somewhere. May not be, I don't know.

**Yep. Can you tell us what New Guinea, Port Moresby actually looked like?**

Well you can't see it, you'd have to see it from the air, really.

35:30 Just looking at it, it's just like. Excuse. Going into, it's just like say you come into Melbourne, or say you go down to Port, Rosebud, you can't see much of Rosebud from a ship, you'd have to go in and find out yourself, it's just a bustling port,

36:00 that brings people to go into the area, that's about all, I think. Port Moresby, and then roads lead out going to different areas, alongside our camp we had Lightnings. Lightnings are American twin-engines, they had a twin tail coming back, and they were on the other side. And when they come in after a raid, they'd roll,

36:30 do the victory roll, you know, they might have shot down a couple of Japanese. Hello, what's going on. He's all right. I thought he'd gone to sleep. Anyhow.

**So you were outside camp, outside Seven Mile Drome?**

No, we weren't that far out, we were about five mile, five miles out.

**Five miles, near Seven Mile Drome?**

Yeah. What do you mean, Seven Mile Drome, where did you get that from? I never mentioned that.

37:00 **No, I've heard that before.**

Have you? The only time I went to Seven Miles, I went to hospital, I had a, underneath here, I had an abscess, and I went to the 2/9th AGH, they had to lance it, you know. I was there two weeks, I can't remember the two weeks. But they come, they bought, they sent an ambulance to pick me up, me and a couple of other blokes from other companies. And they took me out, I tell you what, the road

37:30 was that bloody rough, by the time I got there it had lanced itself. But on me records over there, I was there a couple of weeks, you can't take...

**What was the climate like there?**

96 degrees humidity. Because I know, I've been back to Bali, I know that's...

**So how, how did the Aussies cope there?**

Well everyone coped, they just wore shorts,

38:00 your slouch hat, shorts and a shirt, and you'd come out with boots on like you've got on there, gee, look at those. They're not boots, they're flying boats. And yeah, they just wore what they usually wear, carry a rifle. If you didn't carry a rifle, well, it was the only thing that was going to save you, isn't it. Had .303 rifles from the First World War,

38:30 were handed up to us. In fact, they still use them, I suppose. Excuse me. Yeah.

**So climate was quite tough?**

Very hot, very hot, hot, hot and humid. Well even now, I can't go back to Queensland because I had cirrhosis of the liver, I don't drink beer but I copped cirrhosis of the liver. Every time I go back to Queensland,

39:00 in 1984, I came home from Queensland, we drove up, and I had yellow jaundice, because the area up there, was very bad. For me, I don't know, it might be personally for me.

**So you're not tropically fit, so to speak?**

Well, I suppose not. But I'd been to Cairns in the car a couple of times, I went in 1966, and also went in

39:30 1978.

**Was heat, heat exhaustion a problem in New Guinea?**

Beg your pardon.

**Heat exhaustion?**

Oh it could be, yes, you took salt tablets that helped you. I never liked them, they were bloody awful, but they helped you, I never took that many of them.

**What were the conditions like in your camp, where you were stationed in Port Moresby?**

We all had

40:00 tents and you slept on the ground, because we weren't the Yanks, they slept on stretchers. The only time we got stretchers, was when we went to Bougainville, we had stretchers, unless you went into action. If you went into action, you didn't have stretcher, all you had was your ground sheet on the ground, and dig about that low down, say about a foot or 18 inches, dig a

40:30 trench for yourself, that's for you to lay on, put a two-man tent over the top, that's where you sleep the night. And while you're laying down there on that ground, if any bullets went across, they don't touch you're underneath the 18 inches down, unless you had a big fat tummy, you might get your tummy blown off. Bad luck to that. And then you'd be about six foot long, and at the end of your bed,

41:00 you had a trench, which you got into. That's where you fought from, to get a, say you had to go on duty at 5am in the morning. And then you've got to wait, you wait about an hour, because the Japs might attack at that time.

**okay, we'll have to stop on that note, because we've run out of tape.**

Oh good luck.

## Tape 4

00:30 New Guinea.

**New Guinea. okay, so we're talking about Port Moresby. How many raids did you face by the Japanese planes, air force?**

Oh three or four, at night, mainly, yeah. I think there was one day raid, but mainly they came at night,

01:00 about 11am, 11pm, or something like that. And they'd raid and the ack-ack guns would fire from all around the place, they had them everywhere, they were mounted everywhere. And none of us got hurt or anything like that. Here I go again. We'd go to the, you'd go the pictures, you know, you'd be sitting amongst the Yanks and their nurses, the pictures would be on,

01:30 and they'd say, "Air raid," and the Yanks would run for cover, and all the Australians would go down and take their seats and still watch the pictures, we didn't give a bugger how many planes came over and bombed us, like that. But that's the way things go. I went up, I got shifted up to Ramu, no, I went, shifted up to, when we were in Negada I had to come down to Moresby to go to a school. When I got down to Moresby,

02:00 you have to go from Moresby, it was on my 22nd birthday, I got sent down to Madang, which is a capital up there, they reckon it's a beautiful place now. Got sent down to Madang, and I got a Corvette which took me from Madang to Finschhafen, and on the Corvette, I was 22, and they gave me a cake and

02:30 everything, the sailors, the Australian sailors, they were very good, we slept on deck overnight. Came down to Finschhafen, and I was in a camp there, waiting to go to Port Moresby, can only go by plane across New Guinea. And as we, I got friendly with Americans, I'd go to, I was there a couple of nights, had to get up early in the morning to go out to the aerodrome, half the time

03:00 it was pouring rain, so they'd take you everywhere. And I got friendly with the Americans, because I was interested in music, big bands, and they were quite happy at that, and I went and spoke to them and all that. I got down to Moresby and the school had been cancelled, so I went and seen a chap at Murray Barracks, a sergeant that, I knew him,

03:30 and he put me on light duties, but I had to get up every morning before going back up to Finschhafen. And the light duties was cleaning the toilets, as soon as I'd cleaned the toilets, I was free for the rest of the day. But you can't do much without a car or anything up there, you've got to rely on the army transport that was going into Moresby or travelling anywhere. But no, it was

04:00 quite good. Enjoyed, then I'd go back, when I got back to the unit, they said we're shifting in a month's time, I said, "Thank God I come back quick." And we got on a, I can't think of the name of the ship, I think it was a Javanese ship, that came, took us from Madang into Milne Bay. Oh by the way, I had a Colt .45 revolver,

04:30 that I was able to pick up, and when we got down there, they reckoned that anyone who was carrying rifles or any souvenirs, they would be confiscated and we would lose them. So I sold it for five pounds, which is 10 bucks nowadays, so I didn't bring a revolver home with me, I bought me home. We come out, we got into, when we were in Milne Bay, there was a Yankee ship alongside us, so I sold,

05:00 sold the Colt .45 to them, it was only a six shooter. A lot of boys did sell things, you know, because they didn't want to take them home and then the authorities would take them off it. So we came into Townsville, and as I got off the ship, one lady said, "Were you a prisoner of war?" I was that thin. Because up in New, when the Japanese used to attack us, I'd hide, hide behind a thin sapper,

05:30 you wouldn't see me, I was that thin. Believe it if you not, or believe it or not. Anyhow when we got off the ship, the ladies fed us up on all this fruit and that was lovely, they were very good to us, the ladies of Townsville. And then we came down to Sydney by train, and a lot of them went to New South Wales, and then we came down to Melbourne. And we left the park,

06:00 I rang my father up, and he come and picked me up in his car, and we went to, I went home to Carlton, to Lygon Street, where we had the butcher shop there, and I was there for 43 days, very good, enjoyed it very much. Then we had to march through Melbourne, which was very good, we were well received by the Melbourne people, and then.

06:30 **You had to march. Now sorry, I'm...**

In full uniform.

**What year was this?**

1944, October.

**'44, October.**

15th Brigade marched through Melbourne, the streets of Melbourne.

**I think, okay. There's, there's actually a few more questions I want to ask you about New Guinea before we get to Australia.**

Yeah.

**Was that,**

07:00 **you got hospitalised for a boil on the knee?**

Yeah, yeah.

**How did you get that?**

Don't ask me, you ask the chap up above. God. One of those things that happen. I had boils in, when I first went into the army, I copped a lot of boils. And I copped this, in fact, there it is there.

07:30 See that's, see that, that's it, they cut it open, they took a lot of puss out.

**Was it the climate?**

Oh, could have been, I don't, I don't know how it happened, but boils are. And even after the war, I've been around to the Berwick Hospital and had three sebaceous cysts taken off my back. Yeah, the Berwick Hospital, and they're all part of, they go through your life.

08:00 **How did you find the hospital and the staff?**

Hospitals are very good, very good, they.

**In New Guinea, that is.**

Oh yes, very good. They, 2/9, 2/2, you name it, I've been there. But no, they were very good the staff, the nurses were very good. You know, you never thought there was a war on, or anything like that, they were very good. No, I'm not going against them.

08:30 **What sort of medication did they administer?**

Oh you name it, they had it. Only trouble is you, if I'm waiting for this operation on the knee, they put you on a trolley, they put you in the corridor, and you sat behind the bloke in front, they bloke in front, just like they have nowadays, there's no difference, it hasn't changed in years. But, it's one of things. I mean, what else do you want?

09:00 **So you spent a bit of time in hospital?**

Oh I reckon, I was in hospital, when we were at Bonegilla or Hume Camp, I was two weeks there, two weeks in Atherton, two weeks in Port Moresby.

**So once you got out of the hospital, you were put on light duties?**

Light duties.

**What did that mean?**

Well, like you'd be put in charge of a mess, or you might be

09:30 helping in a mess officers' mess, or you might be put onto the kitchen, but they're usually pretty heavy duties sometimes. But I was put on light duties because I was a, I don't know, they put me on light duties, they put me in charge of officers' mess.

**Officers' mess.**

Yeah.

**Tell us about that?**

Oh, I told Woolly about, not Woolly, Myles, isn't it.

10:00 Also in.

**Yeah, you were saying about the officers' mess duties.**

Yeah, I was put in charge of the officers' mess.

**What did that, what sort of duties?**

Well you had to get, feed the men meals, and look after the officers' mess, see it was clean. And of course, at Port Moresby, the roads are made of gravel and all that, and they dust, so we don't have bitumen like we've got here, and they have all dust everywhere. And

10:30 you had to clean and keep it clean. But I wasn't that very good, because the sergeant cook said, "Your, your officers' mess, your mess is very dirty." And I told him where to go and how to get there, then I got



put on an A4, which means I go up before the officers and get charged. And I wasn't too happy in that. And the sergeant cook came around the next day after I went,

11:00 and I got returned to lines, back to the lines, I was in number one platoon, and they were out at this place about 15 miles, north west of Port Moresby. And I was put out there for, under hard duties, because I got over my knee, and then it was quite good.

**So what, so you had to like, give them food?**

What?

**You had to deliver their food,**

11:30 **the officers?**

The officers yeah, you bring it from the, from the kitchens, around to their mess, so they can sit down. The officers had it sweet [easy]. I mean they had worked to get there, they went to school and everything like that, and learnt how to be an officer, and then during the day, they'd probably take the whole platoon out and show them what to do and everything. And look at them, see that the sergeant's doing right, and sergeant's seeing that the corporal's doing right, the corporal's seeing that us sappers are doing right.

12:00 And they've all had that knowledge before hand, we haven't, and we were told what to do.

**Were they, were they, were they sticklers with the food?**

No, no, no, you know.

**Did they complain about it?**

When you come to think of it, we had good sergeants, good corporals and good officers. They all had names, we gave them nicknames, but I suppose there's Billy Witwar, we used to call

12:30 him Woof-Woof, and oh, different names they had. But they had a sergeants' mess, but only sergeants were allowed to go into. And then the rest of them, corporals and that, ate down with us in a mess. We were all, at Moresby, we, they had a booby trap, we were taught how to get rid of booby traps,

13:00 you know, because the Japanese did a lot of booby traps like, did you mention that they turned a chap over and underneath was a bomb. You know, they used to do that. Even booby trap their own personal, so that if we come along looking for souvenirs, you turn a body over, you're gone too.

**Have you seen that happen?**

No, no. Well that could only be a furphy, like as they say,

13:30 it's not true. But there were stories going around, you hear all about this, but no, I've never seen it happen. But, oh, was is Shorty Fraser was one chap with us when we were on Bougainville, and he was in charge of a bunch of ANGAU [Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit], they were Australian national guards.

**Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit?**

Yeah, they are,

14:00 and they, he had about four or five ANGAUs, natives, helping him, clear this. And one of the ANGAU natives seen this string, he said, "Don't touch the string." What happened, he pulled it, they buried Shorty Fraser. So that's, you know, they booby trap everything. You might go along, you see a mine, you've got to delouse the mine. You use a bayonet to flick

14:30 around, we don't have a mine things, you know, walk around with batteries, where do you get batteries up there. Anyhow, they had mine things going around, looking for, looking for batteries. Who's that, don't come in, anyone there?

**No, I think it's the wind.**

The wind, the wind, it's winter here. No there, lots of things happen. As I said, Shorty got killed.

15:00 We lost about five or six. Doug Baxton, a corporal, who we liked very much, who were up in the Ramu Valley, and he comes around at night and he says to this chap, "Doug, you're on, you're on duty," and Doug's cleaning his rifle, and he had a bullet in the breech and it went off. And Doug Baxton got killed straight away.

15:30 **You were present then?**

No, I wasn't present, this is only hearsay, but I know, it did. I know the bloke, he lives up in Toowoomba, but...

**The one who was holding the gun at the time?**

Yeah, yeah, he was the son of a military policeman in the army, but things had happened, I imagined

he'd be laying in bed, alongside his wife Gwen, and he'd say,

16:00 "Gee, you know, things that happen," but these things happen, it's part of war. Terrible.

**And did you do any patrolling in New Guinea at all?**

No, I was lucky, lucky bugger, wasn't I. When I was batman in Bougainville to a chap by the name of Keith Hunstman, and Keith's still alive, he lives over in Croydon isn't it, somewhere like that.

16:30 And do you remember Huntsman, oh you wouldn't remember it, there was a Huntsman's Hats, right alongside, in Flinders Street, alongside, right alongside the station.

**Yes.**

His father used to run that, Huntsman's Hats. Anyhow Keith, I was batman, and I said, "I'm getting fed up with this batman business," he said, "Well can you get someone else to take your place." I said, "Yeah, all right," I went around through the unit, like a platoon, I got this Jack Weichart, so he took the part of batman. What happened? Jack Weichart got killed.

17:00 We were up near the Levi River, southern Bougainville, and he was sitting on the side of the bulldozer, one of our bulldozers, and a Jap gun opened up, and killed five of our blokes, and Jack Weichart was one of the. Now that could have been me, it was just one of those things that happened. But yes, I was sorry about Jack, but that, this is how it works.

17:30 You either get it or you don't get it, and I didn't get it. I mean, you either. Carl Frankey and myself, Carl lives out at Panta, no Pant, no he lives at Smith's Gully, this is out on the way to St Andrews. And we'd come through the jungle, well 58/59th Battalion, a company of them, and we had three tanks and bulldozer. And Arthur Scaloon

18:00 who has passed on, Arthur was driving our bulldozer, TD-14, and we come out on Buon Road, out of a, come through a Japanese garden, out onto the Buon Road, and Arthur was sitting on his bulldozer here and the tank went out, but there were three tanks, and a tank went out into the middle of the road. And Carl and I walk up, Carl had a Bren

18:30 gun and I had an Owen gun, we walk up and we're standing there talking, and all of a sudden, we're on the other side of the tank, and this machine gun opened up just below, this Japanese machine gun, they were called Woodpeckers in those days. Wasn't a bird, it was a machine gun, but it did spit out, it spit out bullets. So Carl and I dived into the galley on the side. Well then come along a bomb disposal

19:00 bloke, later on after we got rid of the Japanese, a bomb disposal bloke come along, and said, "Casso and Carl, get out of the bloody there, that's full of bloody bombs, you're sitting on bombs." I could, the Japanese had, you know, set them off, you know, set them off. So after we changed our underwear, we got out of there very quick.

**That was on Bougainville?**

That was in southern

19:30 Bougainville, on the, on the Buon Road.

**We'll have to leave that til later there, because there's a question.**

We're back in New Guinea, now, are we?

**Yeah, we're still in New Guinea.**

Oh Merry Christmas and to you too.

**Hey. You're getting me confused here, Kevin. Did you do any road, road extension work or anything like that in New Guinea?**

No, I did, yeah I did a bit, but you use a shovel. What you do, you shovel the stuff up like that into a barrow, into a truck, I think, things like that.

20:00 Only for a while, maybe a couple of days. It's strong isn't it, I might put my glasses on.

**Actually, we can dim it.**

Oh don't worry.

**Now you did some road extension work on the Boro Bardo Road?**

That's right, B-O-R-O.

**Yeah.**

You know it do you, yeah. Have you been there?

**I haven't been there.**

Oh bad luck.

**I'm afraid.**

20:30 The Boro Bardo Road is a road that comes from say Port Moresby, goes around the back of camps and that, and comes out. Oh no, not the Boro Bardo Road, that one, that was a different one. And we were doing work on there, and of course, when they sent out a cup of tea for you, afternoon tea, by the time it gets to you, it's cold. And the ladle, instead of it laying down in the, you know, as it comes out, it's standing up

21:00 straight, it's that bloody hard. But anyhow, that's beside. Another thing is, we were there the night the Liberator was taking off, and blew off, blew up.

**Where, from Port Moresby?**

Yeah from, not Ward's Drome, what's the other drome, can't think of it now. And as it was taking off, it blew up, and the next day, the

21:30 Americans don't muck around, they just come out and, they knew who was there, and this bloke had planted a bomb on the plane, and about 160 of our soldiers. Oh, here we go again. Sixty of our soldiers were killed, and they were going up to Ramu Valley, to fight the Japanese. And they belonged to the 17th Brigade.

**Was that the one that crashed landed, the famous one?**

No, it didn't get, that wasn't, that was

22:00 before taking off, it was only taxiing from there to go to the main drome, drome to take off, terrible. And of course.

**How far were you away from that?**

We were in our tents about half a kilometre.

**Can you remember hearing the crash?**

Terrible.

**What was your role in this?**

Oh we just had to run forward and try and help people out of the plane.

22:30 Of course we were having sleep overnight, because you know, we had nothing to do, we were only maintaining the roads there.

**Road maintenance sounds like a very strenuous, strenuous job.**

Oh it is, yeah, what you've got to do is keep the roads and also keep the gutters.

**The gutters?**

The gutters, yeah, you know. You use

23:00 a shovel, cause a shovel is a main engineers' weapon, you used that all the time. But that Carl Frankey he was up further, up in New Guinea, he was in Wau, and he had to go from Wau to Salamoia. And he had to make a road around a hillside, he had a pick and shovel. The, the Yanks would come to make a road with a bulldozer, cause they never had

23:30 those.

**So the Aussies didn't have many bulldozers.**

No, no. Pick and shovel.

**Would this be taken, would these roads be made through the jungle?**

Mainly through the jungle, and then around cliffs and that. They'd come to a cliff, oh I don't know, I've got a photo of it somewhere, terrible. It's hard making, because a lot of these roads were built, there was gold mining up at Bulolo,

24:00 and also different places up there in New Guinea. And our blokes found, oh lots of things. And we had good mechanics on cars, we had a chap named Georgie Watts, he could fix anything Georgie, but he's now gone, he's been gone about four years. He's over in Springvale, poor bugger, anyhow. But that's getting me down that is. No wonder these actors

24:30 and actresses are so bad, these lights on them. No there's lots of things happen up there.

**Did they have to chop down the trees with axes, they didn't have chainsaws?**

Yes, we, no we used axes, we didn't have, chainsaws, what were they, when did they come out. No, we

had to use axes and just cut the trees down, then take all the sides of the trees off them, and split them. That makes them, when they open up like that

25:00 then you'd, you'd lay two along side of each other, that makes yourself a road. Even up in, where was this, up in the Ramu Valley, we were on the main stream bend, and we, we made our Pat Morgan, our lieut, he got the idea that when the troops were going forward, they had to go down this steep ravine and go up the other side. So he got a couple of his sappers to cut down trees and make

25:30 a bridge across and therefore, they didn't have to use their strength going down and up, they'd use a bridge so they could walk across.

**Was there any native labour in the road, making roads?**

They did help make a road we put up, we put up a ridge, we put nine hair pin bends in the road, we had native labour there, they were very good. The only

26:00 trouble is when you're going to blow a tree or something like that, you'd yell out, "Fire on," you couldn't see a labour, a native, he was gone, they knew what explosives were like. We used TNT and all that, they were gone like a two bob watch. You wouldn't know what a two bob watch is?

**You better tell us then?**

Yeah, I've got one over there, inside, a two bob watch. Yeah, that's only a saying,

26:30 don't worry about that. Am I on this?

**Yes.**

Oh God, they'll say he's a bloody liar too. Oh dear.

**Yes, what sort of a role would the natives have, I mean?**

The natives they carry things, you know. I mean I had a beret, a beret with a 15th Field Company badge on the top, and I got up a tree,

27:00 because they, we were putting telephone lines through. When I got up, I put my hat there on a stump, when I come down, it was gone, the stump was there, but my beret had gone. But a Ki, Kiai, K-I, K-I-A-I, they'd gone through and of course one of them, bye-bye hat. But these things happen. Then you go to, to

27:30 the queue store, and the staff sergeant says, "Where's your hat?" I said, "Ask the last native that went past." Then it cost you, I don't know how much, 12 and six, I don't know.

**Buy another, you had to buy one from the army?**

Oh yeah, they didn't give you nothing, one for nothing, what are you thinking, you're talking about the army, mate. I don't know if I bought it or not, I might be lying, you can't prove it.

28:00 **I don't, I don't really want to.**

Oh, I'll be glad when this is finished.

**Well, we haven't got long to go.**

Well Merry Christmas to you too.

**So you left, you were, yeah, you left Murray Barracks.**

Murray Barracks.

**Yeah.**

Yeah, where did we go from

28:30 Murray Barracks, we went around to Pom Pom Park, see different names that were up there, Pom Pom Park, that's where that Liberator blew up, Pom Pom Park. See I'm getting stuff coming back to me now.

**Pom Pom Park.**

Yeah.

**What did you do there?**

Oh we were building roads and helped to maintain the roads, that they were in good nick, when the troops that were going to be staged there,

29:00 before they got onto a plane to take them up north. They would go up to Naz, Nadzab, or they would go to Lae or Salamoa, not Salamoa, Lae, Lae's a big town now they tell me, up there. I know Smitherens the butchers from Carlton, had a business up there. That's post-war. But I haven't been back, a lot of the blokes went back to New. In fact that Graham Barnett

29:30 you met up in Ballarat, he's been back, they went back to New Guinea, I didn't want to go.

**Why's that?**

Oh, memories stay there. You don't want, you know, and I was busy at the time, I think I was secretary of the Fitzroy Past Players Association and I had enough to do back here. I did go, did go with Kevin Wright that just

30:00 died last year, he was a Fitzroy footballer and he was a very good one, and he passed away. And him and his wife Joan, and June and I went to Bali and up through the Straits, to Singapore and then over to different players, Surabaya, Jakarta, we stopped in different places in the ship. And he was very good, very funny boy, Kevin Wright, good footballer, very

30:30 good, in Fitzroy would have been about 1951 he started, I think. And when he retired, he worked for Boral Bricks, in Boral Bricks he was a very good salesman, and he did that well each year, they sent him on a trip, him and his wife. And he asked June and I if we'd like to go, we said, "We're doing nothing, we'll go." So we went up to Bali, spent four nights up there,

31:00 and then we went to, June and I went to New Zealand, we've been to America, West Coast. We've been to Tasmania and we've been across the waters to Phillip Island. Don't you know where Phillip Island is?

**Yeah, we're going too far into the future, I'm afraid, at this stage. Is, when you were in Pom Pom Park, this is New Guinea,**

31:30 **not Phillip Island.**

Right-o, I know.

**Where, when you were in Pom Pom Park, is this the...?**

We weren't camped there.

**You weren't**

Our camp was back at Murray Barracks. If we'd have a camp out one night, we'd sleep in a tent, eight of us, on the floor, watch out for centipedes, snakes, you name it.

**What else? Mosquitoes?**

Oh mosquitoes, well they'd lift you up and put you in your, in your tent and put the net over you,

32:00 they were that bloody big.

**How big, honestly would the mosquitoes be?**

Oh about that big.

**To the camera.**

About that big, they were big, I'm not kidding you. They had beautiful butterflies up at Arena Falls, gorgeous, just like in Atherton, Cairns, they have beautiful butterflies up there. Of course, it's all part of, getting up into the tropics, see.

**Was this where you met American servicemen, at all?**

32:30 America? Yeah.

**The Americans were up there?**

Yeah, they were at, they had an aerodrome at Mareeba, M-A-R-E-E-B-A, I think it is, Mareeba. You'll get me mixed up here. And the Yanks used to fly off from there, over to New Guinea, which is not very far, be lucky if it's what, Atherton, I reckon it's about 300 miles. They'd go on trips to there,

33:00 and around the islands, and then come back and land, they had Liberators, the Liberator, that's the Flying Fortress, isn't it. Do you remember that? No, you're too young.

**The B-24 Liberator?**

Yeah, the B-24. We had the B-19, I think.

**Yeah, I was there.**

Hey, you're lying. He's worse than you, Myles. Yeah. What else?

33:30 **So the Americans you met there?**

Yeah, Americans there, also in Atherton.

**Did you meet any Negro soldiers?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Tell us about them?**

Oh well, one night we were at Port Moresby, we were camped out about, oh five miles west of Port Moresby. And we were going to see this picture, Stormy Weather. And these Yankee boongs came down, in this big, how many drive, they used to have about 18

34:00 forward, 18 forwards and reverse. And a truck come down that had all these Yank, Yankee boongs in it, and we said, "Can we get, are you going to Stormy Weather?" They said, "Yes." So we go there, we were on a hill, the side of a hill. We were about 150 yards from the film, but what they had, they had a Yankee stage show on first. And they had these Yankee boongs come out, some dressed as women, some are

34:30 men, and they put on a jitterbug act and all that. And they, they had this big orchestra, I never got down to one anyhow. They put on a show first and then they showed the picture, Stormy Weather. And that hillside would be covered by about 2,000 troops, Americans, Australians. Then you'd have to go out and hitch a ride back home again, otherwise walk. Oh, we had a good night, yeah, a very good night. But then the

35:00 Yanks would come up, and they'd say, "Before the show starts, we don't want the Australians yelling out 'slugs', or something else like that, that causes our troops to go back to their tents and get out of the way. If you want to come here and enjoy our pictures, keep quiet."

**And were you kept quiet?**

Oh well, yeah. Don't bring that up against

35:30 me. But those things happened, that's part of military life, I think. No, they were very good the Yanks, I got on quite well with them.

**What sort of conditions did the Yanks live, live with?**

They had the beds, we had the floor. We had the floor, and they had beds. But see, they had marvellous clothes, we had

36:00 terrible clothes. Not terrible, they were warm, but one day we were at, this Jimmy Davie who lived over in East Malvern, he and I cut out long pants down to shorts, because it was that damn hot and we were sweltering. So we and a few other blokes, there was five of us, we cut our long pants down to shorts. The major, went up

36:30 before the major, we got fined five quid and seven days' detention in the barracks, we weren't allowed to go anywhere. So five quid now, that's 10, 10 bucks. So we were fined five quid and seven days detention. sapper Cassells and sapper Davie, it's in the book, it's in, Mad Mick's Mob. And Mad Mick would never walk out on a ship, unless he was flanked by two

37:00 officers, cause he might never have got back to Australia.

**Because people wanted to kill him? Are you fair dinkum?**

Not me, people would, don't pull me into it. It's like a lot of the ships went across the Western Desert, they left Perth, but they never got there. And that's truth, I think. But no, it's terrible.

37:30 Yes, he would never walk out on deck, he wouldn't.

**What about in PNG [Papua New Guinea], were there people who wanted to bump him off?**

Not that I know of. See a major has got his own place to live in, and you wouldn't see him, he might be with another group, a platoon was sent out to Boro Barda, you might be out there for what, three or four weeks. And then you wouldn't,

38:00 we did see the major, he came out once, he caught us napping, because we didn't have shaves, you were supposed to have a shave every day. And the major came out, and we, "Hello sapper, got a hard face there, where did that come from?" You were supposed to shave every morning. But we didn't, we had a corporal who was very good, Billy, Billy was a very good corporal, and he lived up, he lived in Melbourne but then when he got married, he went to live up at

38:30 Niagara Park, which is up in Gosford area.

**So he, he inherited this name Mad Mick?**

Well we did. What happened after the war, we were calling him Mad Mick all the time, so we went to see his wife, he had died, and we were going to put out this book. And I supplied most of the photographs in that Mad Mick book. And,

39:00 we got the okay from her to call it, Mad Mick's Mob, they thought it was a very good idea to put out a book, so we called it, Mad Mick's Mob. He used to go, he would go into headquarters at different places like the brigade headquarters, with a, with a stick of gelignite in his hand, "I want this done, I want that

done," if they didn't do anything, he'd light it and walk out.

39:30 They'd have time to put it out and all things like that, but this is what we believed would happen, because he, he was a good CO [Commanding Officer], and when it came to our unit, we had a captain in charge at, in Hume camp at Albury, we had a Captain Lobb, he was a very good, like Jack, John Lobb was very good. A lot of blokes went out of Sydney, into Melbourne, and the first blokes

40:00 that come back, got fined 10 bob. In the afternoon, Mick took over, Mad Mick, and he fined them five quid in seven days, detention. Was a different style of men, but after the war, I was speaking to Mick, and I, you know, Jim Meedham is name is, would you

40:30 do that again, because he had learned at the Queensland, Queenscliff Barracks, so I mean, he said, "That's what I learnt and that's what I did, I'll do it again." How are we going?

**Good, we'll have to change tape now.**

## Tape 5

00:31 **So we're rolling. Tell us about your, what, everything you know about hand-to-hand combat and what you saw?**

Well, I never did any hand-to-hand combat, though I did in Bougainville mainly, I was with the boys walking on the Buon Road, and we had to look out everywhere to see what was

01:00 happening, the Japanese might have had a gun concealed, say a hundred metres away, in those days it was a hundred yards. They could have concealed guns back that far, and that's the only time I did any type of work like that. And you're walking along the road with it, three tanks and a bulldozer, and then we'd come to a park, come to a spot of the jungle, and so we'd make camp here tonight

01:30 on say on the El Garada [?] River, which we put a bridge across it, we've got a photograph there of it, the bridge going across the El Garada River. And I'm not kidding, you were scared because you never knew any minute you might get fired on. I mean, we were troops advancing forward on the enemy. And they could have pop us off, as quick as a

02:00 wick. That's all, we, I, Arthur got the bulldozer out and went around through the trees with the bulldozer, and the blade down, smashed all the trees down, and little saplings and things like that. We went around with a pegs, put them in the ground, put barbed wire in the pegs. So that if the Japanese attacked us during the night,

02:30 they would trip over the barbed wire, and that was like. One of our blokes down at the Periada [?] River, where we put this big bridge across, and him and his mate were asleep and they heard this noise. And they went, got out into their trench, and they looked around and all they see is this white flapping around, so they opened up with everything, rifles, submachine guns, you name it, they opened up. And next morning, they found his pants,

03:00 hanging, his underpants were hanging on the line, shredded, with bullets right through them. So all these different stores come to mind, you know. But we, I don't know.

**What did the others talk about, the hand-to-hand combat and what happened to them?**

Well the engineers didn't go, they did hand to hand, but they

03:30 never said anything about it, to themselves, they kept it to themselves. You see, we had a reunion Anzac Eve, the 23rd of, down at Clayton RSL [Returned and Services League], only 12 members turned up. Now out of 250, plus reinforcements, that's not many.

**Can we just stop for a second. So they wouldn't talk much about it?**

No, you don't talk much about it,

04:00 a lot of the blokes don't talk about it. That's why a lot of the chaps don't come and join our, they like to come down now. A chap just died in February, Lenny Jordan, he was a corporal, and as a matter of fact I've got a photograph of him in the book. And he never joined, you know, he never joined the RSL. Another one just died recently up in Marrickville, up in New South Wales, he never joined the RSL. He didn't

04:30 like talking about it, he served his time in the army, come back and spent time with the family, so that's the way things go. But...

**Can you take us through how difficult it was to build bridges and to work in those conditions?**

Well you're building, you were digging holes and you had to go. I, once on the Dinmore River, we had an assault boat,

05:00 and on the back of the assault boat was a outboard motor, did I say that? You haven't heard that.

**Keep going.**

And the outboard motor, and we were on this bridge, we're building a bridge going across the Dinmore River. And while you're building it there, the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] would fly their planes up and down the Dinmore River, and you'd get fired on, and you'd have to cling on, sitting on top of a, it was a big girder, and sitting up the top there,

05:30 putting bolts in it. And then I, then I came down and one of the blokes said, "Grab the dinghy, grab the outboard motor." And one blokes holding the dinghy at the front, and I'm holding the outboard motor with a bloke at the back of the little boat, and he said, "I can't hold it." And I said, "What do you think, I can't bloody hold it either," so we dropped it. Down it went to the Dinmore River, 40 feet down,

06:00 on the side, it gets sloped. A major came along and seen it happen, "Cassells, down and get it." So I plugged me nose, put stuff in me ears, cotton wool, if anything you got there, and down I would go. I only went half way down those boat hooks, and come up, "Can't find it, Sir, couldn't see a thing," well you couldn't, it's all dark, murky, you know. So then they,

06:30 we rummage around with the boat hooks, up come the outboard motor covered in mud. So we cleaned it, put it back in the store, and the major said, "You're lucky, you could have been on an A4," you know, and would have got fined 160 quid for an outboard motor, 300 quid, I don't know what they were worth, wouldn't have a clue. But these things do happen. And that's like, you walk out on the road, and you get hit by a car,

07:00 same thing, you drive your car, you get hit.

**When you're building the bridges and so on, what was your actual role in those procedures?**

Well I'd be a labourer, even when we were up in Port Moresby, I had to cart around a big wheelbarrow that takes concrete. They pour the concrete, they, they had these machines that you wind up, and the concrete comes out, and they put it in your

07:30 wheelbarrow, and then you go over, and a bloke puts a rope around you, cause you had to go down a ramp, a board going down like that, to where they were building the, putting this concrete down, to fill the base of the dam you're building, alongside a hospital. By the way, that dam's still there in Port Moresby I have been told. And so you were a labourer, mainly,

08:00 and you, if the chap wants this and wants that, you go and get it for him, you take it back to him, because he's not allowed to leave that spot. You might be given a shovel and be told to clean that, like they do in the roads here, out here now, you've got to clean this up. Because the driver or the operator of the machine, he doesn't go and clean it up. I mean, you're a labourer, you do that work, to clean it up.

**08:30 What did you think about the work you were doing?**

I thought it was all helping the war. So, oh you do, otherwise you get an A4, you go up before the major, "Why weren't you helping the war effort along," boom, seven days behind, confined to barracks, things like that.

09:00 No, I only kept going, otherwise I'd be going, they might take you out and shoot you, they wouldn't do that, they needed the troops.

**Would you have liked to go to a different, a different area of the army, or were you happy with the engineers?**

I was quite happy with the unit. In fact, when I went to Moresby to that school, then I got the sergeant

09:30 at Murray Barracks to keep me there for about three or four days, I still had to be up at 4am in the morning, because they drive you out to the airport, and then the plane wasn't going, because it couldn't get through the gap. When you're going through the Gap, out from Moresby, it would be about what, 100, 200 mile out, the plane would sometimes drop a hundred feet, because the turbulence up there, you know.

10:00 So you had to get up every night, go out the drome in the morning, then you'd come back because the plane wasn't going, because it was too wet. Once we got to Finschhafen, you couldn't even see the strip, you had to come back to Moresby, about 300 mile away. Couldn't see the strip, couldn't land. And they don't, the Yanks don't try, if they can't land they can't land, they go back to Moresby and enjoy themselves. Cause the fighting is a long way away.

10:30 But no, it's quite interesting at times, you know. Excuse me. Yeah, what else?

**Ramu Valley, everything about that?**

Well, that's called the Valley of Death. Now the death is a tick, and also there's a lot of high cane grass, you had to be careful going through, you could slit your leg, leg open, you know. Supposed to have a lot of spiders,



- 11:00 lot of snakes and things like that up there, I never did see a snake, not up there. We got sent up there in about May 1944, and when we were landing the plane in front busted a tyre. And it slewed around like that, and of course, as we're landing, that plane's sitting like that, we're landing like this, so the pilot did a jump,
- 11:30 as if he's jumping the fence. And we got out, we were quite happy. Dumpu was a strip, I have got a, I took it off video, a Channel 2 show once, I don't know where it is now, I lent it to someone and he's lent it to someone else, anyway, oh don't worry. And it was all just mud, like we got dozers, and they, and dozers in
- 12:00 those days were broken up in pieces and taken up by plane, and put together there. Because we had, when we were at, we were building a road from Guy's Post to Mainstream Bend, we used D2 dozers, Caterpillar D2 dozer, only a small dozer, so we used them. And they could go quite well in a plane,
- 12:30 in those Douglas DC3s, yeah.

**Was it amazing to see things like that, these huge machines being taken?**

Oh yes, yes, get this machine out there. The only things you'd get up there is Jeeps, Jeeps did everything but they got a couple of three tonners that come up, come up from the Markham Valley, and Nadzab, they come up on roads that the engineers of other groups built. And not only engineers, you would have

- 13:00 the pioneers in the battalions, like 57/60th, the 58/59th, the 24th Battalion that were attached to us, they had pioneers to work on their businesses, you know, they clear this and clear that for them. Because the battalion was about, I think it was about 3,000 in a battalion. And you take a battalion that's, we got in our brigade we got,
- 13:30 the brigade headquarters, the signallers, the engineers, the ambulance, field ambulance, 58/59th, 57/60th battalions, the 24th Battalions, there was about 10 companies, that join up, make up a division, and we were in the third division. And the third division had three companies in a division, so that's the
- 14:00 third division. The third division were in New, Bougainville, no they were in Port Moresby, up in the Ramu Valley, they were up at Madang, Alexschhafen, the Garda and all those places up there. We've got a photo there of a Frank Taylor, he was one of our lieuts, no, was one of our captains, he's on the road at Garda, there's a photo in the book there. Boy,
- 14:30 he was, it was mud, mud about that thick, bulldozer and, we fixed that up. We were camped in a coconut plantation, of course every night you walked out of your tent, otherwise you'd have a coconut hit you on the head.

**Did you eat and drink the coconuts?**

They were mainly shot to pieces, because the bombers

- 15:00 from Melbourne, from Moresby would come over and strafe, because the Japanese were there at the time. The Garda was a nice camp, we, when we left the Garda, we went by barge down to, down to, what's the name of the place, Madang, where we boarded a boat to bring us home, to go on leave. We'd been there 17 months
- 15:30 in New Guinea, it's a long time.

**What can you tell us about Nadzab, did you go there, what did you hear about it?**

No, no, it's only what I hear, hearsay. I got told by a chap by the name of Frank Curshow, who was a ruckman and captain for the Fitzroy Football Club in the '30s, he was at Nadzab, he was in the RAF [Royal Air Force]. But you no, you don't hear much about it, it's what you read in the books, that's all, I've

- 16:00 got books outside about what you hear. I wasn't at Nadzab, a couple of our blokes went from, went from Salamoia and they went up to Nad, Nadzab, but a lot of us. You try to get back to your unit if you're anywhere, you try to get back to your unit, otherwise you get bumped off and put in some other unit.

**So what was it like returning home after 17 months?**

Like

- 16:30 coming back to heaven, yeah. First, I think the second night I was home, my Dad was a JP at the Carlton Court, and he said, "Look son, will you come down and report this bloke that tried to jump off the Yarra Bridge, tried to commit suicide." So they picked him up, the police took him around to the Melbourne Hospital, in those days it was on the corner of Lonsdale and
- 17:00 Swanson Streets, Royal Melbourne Hospital. So put him in there, while he was in there, the doctor turned his back and he grabbed a bottle of Lysol and drank it. The doctor then put a pump into him, and they drained him. Then they bought him up to a sitting JP, my Dad was one in the area of Carlton, we were living in Lygon Street, Carlton. Anyhow, the cops bought him in,

- 17:30 one cop sat there and one cop sat there, there was two doors. And they put the culprit there, the poor bugger, and the doctor was over here against the bench where we had corned beef on. Dad was behind his bench, and I'm standing there as a witness, got out of bed, half asleep, like I am now. And Dad said, "And what
- 18:00 made you, try to, you know, to jump in there." And he said, oh different things had come about, you know, a prisoner would divulge and tell you what happened. And this, and the prisoner said, "I see you're a butcher," and Dad said, "Yes, I am a butcher." He said, "And he's a bloody butcher like you," and he pointed to the doctor. Cause the doctor was pumping him out of this Lysol out of him. And when they'd

- 18:30 all gone out, the doctor and Dad were talking, and Dad said, "I thought that was quite funny when the prisoner said you're a bloody butcher like me," he said, "I am a butcher." The doctor wasn't very happy.

**When you returned to your mother and father and you met up with them again, what were the emotions that were coming?**

Oh it's just like, they hug you, ask you different questions, "What's happened? What were you doing, Son? what's was this," and all that, it's just all

- 19:00 part of life, you know. I didn't sit down and talk to you about it, like I'm talking you, I've told you more than I've ever told them. That's what it's like.

**Do you find that strange?**

No, I suppose I don't find it strange. See a lot of people don't talk about war histories. Yeah, a lot of people don't talk about war histories, they like to keep it to themselves. I don't think I could

- 19:30 ever keep it to my own body. Bloody lights.

**Did they, when you returned, was it hard for them to understand what you'd been through?**

Yeah, yeah, they couldn't believe I went through all that. They said, "But you're so thin," and I said, "Well I never put any weight on, because the meals we got," was lovely to eat good food, and Dad being a butcher, we got good food. Though, what were they called, coupons, you buy,

- 20:00 you had to buy this and that. But no, of course they let me roam around everywhere, and I'd go into town, if you missed the bus, you'd walk in, about. Lygon Street, where we were, there was Gratton Street, Pallam, Queensbury, Victoria. Now you're in the city. What, four blocks.

**So what was Melbourne like back then?**

Oh, bustling city, you know, bustling city.

- 20:30 Always, I mean you could go walking down Swanson Street, and talk to a copper on that corner and that corner, any corner, they'd talk to you. Now you can't, unless you worked in the city. I don't know.

**When you say they talk to you, would they be friends, or just friendly?**

No, just people who'd pass in the street. I could talk, I could walk down Swanson Street,

- 21:00 from Bourke Street to Flinders Street, and speak to different police and talk to people, you could talk to people, nowadays you can't. Though, when say June and I go away, we talk to different people and say, "How are you?" and all that, "Where are you from?" and we say, "Australia," "Where in the hell's Australia?" That's what they say in America, they wouldn't know where Australia was, half the people don't.

**What about the infrastructure of Melbourne back then, how**

- 21:30 **would you compare it to the Melbourne today?**

Oh no, Melbourne today has gone ahead in leaps and bounds. See my Dad was a Melbourne city councillor for 15 years, that's the time when Sir Frank Beaurepaire was alive. He came to our butcher shop in Lygon Street, he'd come up in a taxi, he and Dad, and they went into our kitchen in Lygon Street, and we lived in a two storey in the

- 22:00 front, three storey in the back. And the little kitchen and Sir Frank Beaurepaire come in, and June come, and Dad got June out of bed, and me, "Would you talk to Frank Beaurepaire?" and we said, come down and talking to him. Cause you know who he is, Beaurepaire's Tyres. Anyhow, he had been mayor of, and he wanted to be mayor of Melbourne in 1956

- 22:30 when the Olympic Games were on. And he was a bit worried and he come home with Dad, and June said, "Go down and ask the driver if he'd like a cup of coffee," see she still gives cups of coffee to you, or anybody like that, she's very good, my wife. Anyhow, we go down, June, I went down and the driver said, "Oh no, I'm being looked after, don't worry, I'm getting paid as long as I sit down in a private taxi." And I come back, and Sir Frank

- 23:00 was worried about him, being lord mayor and all that. But he's the only Melbourne city councillor who

came to see, stay in Dad's place. And yet June had to get him a cup of coffee, she said, "What," I said, "Well you got some essence," coffee essence, used to come out of a little black bottle, you know. So she made that for him, he thought that was beautiful, he said, "When I go home, I go into the kitchen, the maid yells out 'who's there?',"

23:30 and he said, "You can't do anything, because I'm in her kitchen, no mucking around with her kitchen." So Frank was, he was a terrific guy Frank, by all appearances. And I got on very well with his son too, Ian, because being in the, in the, he was a Councillor Ian Beaurepaire and Dad introduced me to him. Because when I, sometimes I'd drive the car in,

24:00 you'd drive to Melbourne Town Hall, get on that part there, your car would move around, and then you'd park there. And I was in car radio at this, and Ian Beaurepaire had one of James Bonds' car, that, not a Maserati, whatever car it was. And he said, "Are you in car radio?" I said, "Yes." Hey.

**Aston Martin.**

Yeah that's it, Aston Martin. He said, "Well I'll come out," so he sent a driver,

24:30 bought the car out and put it in Lygon Street, and I said, "What's the trouble?" and he told me what the trouble was. So I opened the bonnet up, and I'm not kidding, in five minutes, there was about 20 people were looking at the engine. Oh, Aston Martin, belonged to Ian Beaurepaire, but he's now gone, and Dame, she's a beautiful lady his wife.

**How long were you back on leave for?**

Forty-three

25:00 days, both time, no first time from New Guinea.

**Did you come back mentally and physically exhausted?**

No, I was quite okay, you had a good rest on the, on the boat, the ship coming, you don't say boat, you say ship. Otherwise they'll fine you 10 bob. No, I had a good, quite good coming back to Australia, though we had a typhoon in the Coral Sea and the ship went up and down

25:30 like this and half the blokes would go from that side of the ship to that side of the ship, and go. That's when we came out of Milne Bay. But no, I got no inkling to go back.

**A year and, 17 months is a long time, isn't it?**

Oh it is a long time. You spend about three months in Port Moresby, then we went up to Aruna Falls, and we were about

26:00 three months, oh, it might be five months in the Ramu Valley, and alongside Shaggy Ridge, those B-25 bombers, oh, the Mitchells, they call them the Mitchells, the B-25s. And they used to come around like that, strafing and bombing, the Pimple, the Pimple was a track about that wide. And went over, we weren't near the Kokoda Trail, we were further, a long way further

26:30 up. When we were at the quarries down at Moresby and Aruna Falls, we'd be closer to the Kokoda Track, when we went up. Because the Japs got pushed back that far, they got pushed back to Salamoa and places like that. But.

**The B-52s were the American air force, correct?**

I beg your pardon?

**American air force, B-52s?**

No, but yeah, but then, they never come to New Guinea,

27:00 they came after the war. The B-52s, the B-19s.

**The B-19s is what?**

17s and 19s, I think. The 17s had tail guns, no 17 didn't have tail guns, the 19s had tail guns. And they reckoned they were about, if 50 bombers went up, and they came back, there's 50 tail gunners,

27:30 they'd come back with 20. They'd be blasted out of the sky.

**Did you see them drop their loads, or the impact that they had?**

No, no, I wasn't in a bomber, because we were in a biscuit bomber, and they used to, you know, put stuff out the back, and they deserved every two bob they, two bob a day, plus two being overseas,

28:00 that they threw out. Because they had to throw all the stuff out to the troops down below, either by parachute or just throw them out, packed up, they deserved everything they got, but they never got anything. Cause nowadays, oh, money nowadays, I bought that car in 1978, cost me \$9,960, today it's worth 25 grand, 32 grand, see, it's, the

28:30 worlds gone far ahead, I don't know.

**When they dropped the loads, do you how they targeted where they had to drop them?**

No, that's up the bombardier, he's in charge of that in a plane. And he then conveys it back to the pilot, says, "Keep the plane steady" and something like that, and he drops the load there. That, we had nothing to do with the air force, that's the air force, same with the navy.

29:00 The only time we were with the navy, when they conveyed us from one stop to another.

**But when you were on the ground, you received supplies from these guys, correct?**

Well, I didn't.

**You didn't personally.**

No.

**Okay. Just go back a little bit, on Port Moresby when you arrived there, what was its status, was it on a war footing, what, what was happening there?**

Yeah, wharf footing, wharf. You landed on the wharf, earlier ships had to unload out in the bay.

29:30 **But was, was it under attack still, was it being held?**

On no, no, it was taken by the troops that were there, there was a lot of troops there. What's that mob, Phillips, oh Philp is a second name, big company here, and they were at the, at the wharf there, they had the big building on the right hand side, as you get off the ship. But

30:00 Burns Philp, they were a big company, and, throughout Australia and different other places. And I don't know, we just landed and got put into trucks and driven out to camp, camp site. And we set up camp, got everything going and then the boys got allotted to different, one platoon went here, two platoon were put on a plane

30:30 heading up to Wau, and they went up to Wau. And three platoon, they were mainly around the camp doing jobs around the camp and that, and doing jobs around Murray Barracks and all that, and headquarters company were there. And had a Headquarters Company, and different platoons, One, Two and Three, or A, C and B; A, B and C, depends on what school you went to, yeah.

31:00 **How, how long was it before you were under fire, or got close to the action in New Guinea?**

Well we were under fire every time they had an air raid, that, that would be under fire, cause Moresby was sort of one big army, air force, navy place, they had that spot there. They had another one at Milne Bay, cause every time you'd land at

31:30 Milne Bay, at the mouth, it's like entering Port Phillip Bay, it takes you two hours to get up to the main part, such a big area. We went quite a few places around there. How we going? Good luck to you too.

**No, everything's all right. When you get there, how do actually move the equipment through that jungle?**

32:00 Well you use trucks and bulldozers, jeeps with trailers, if a Jeep gets, Jeep train gets bogged. We had a Jeep train with about, the Jeep was carting. No a bulldozer pulled, and it got, in Bougainville, it got that muddy, it rained over night and you got inches and inches, inches of rain, they need it here. And it rained every night,

32:30 and they had this bulldozer hauling about 12 to 14 trailers, loaded with goods, you know, supplies for troops up forward. And they say the infantry, or different infantry companies are up forward. And I remember in Bougainville, I was, we went up the 24th Battalion was a part of our group, and I was battling at the time with this Keith Huntsman. And we got, Keith got sent up,

33:00 I had to follow him, and while we were up at Slater's Knoll, this big knoll and the Japs attacked. But before that happened, a Jeep train went out, with guards, I think it was about eight to 10 guards, I imagine, I don't know for sure, I'm only going on hearsay. And when we come back, they bought the Jeep back, every guard and every driver

33:30 had their throats cut. Oh, I was there, we were at Slaters Knoll. And then that night, the night before, one of our members, our mates, Larry Bartlett, he went to see his brother who was in the 24th Battalion, he was a lieutenant, I think. And Larry

34:00 was going from that tent across to there, and he got hit by a hail of bullets, machine gun, that killed him, that's in our book there.

**How did people handle, you know, these deaths and so on?**

It's just a death, in war, it's just a death, it's part of war and if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, you're dead, Fred. No, you're Myles, aren't you? No, it's a

34:30 terrible thing. A war is a terrible thing to happen, you wouldn't like another one, oh I'm a bit old now, 82, 81.

**I don't think they'll call you up again.**

Fourteen days, 14 days time, I'll be 82 on the 13th of May.

**Congratulations.**

Yeah. June's younger. Hello June. (Still going).

**Yeah.**

(You won't be going til 7 o'clock, will you).

35:00 Hey?

**So, yeah, it's hard to.**

Measure wise, yeah.

**Yeah.**

It is, things that you think about, even Carl Frankey said, "Gee, I think I've never done," he said, "the things that come into your mind," and you can't beat your mind, that's the thing that's keeping you alive.

35:30 Yeah.

**Is it hard to keep the mind going, under those conditions, and keep with it, and healthy?**

I suppose you get scared at times. I mean, you'd go mad if you weren't scared. Because these things are sent for us to try, we tried them, we got through it, which is very good,

36:00 we came home, we had good treatment arriving back in Australia, the ladies were terrific in Townsville. But I don't know, war is a terrible thing, I'm glad I never went to Vietnam. I reckon that'd be bloody awful, because what those Vietnam people did, but that's beside the point.

**How, how did you get along with the natives and so on, did you have actual**

36:30 **conversations with them?**

I've had conversation, yeah, oh they're quite good, they. I mean the Yanks and they got there a long time before we got there. We got there in '42, '42, '43, now see the Aussies were there beforehand, 39th Battalion were there, and they got, they got in touch and talked a lot to the natives, and were sent here and all that, they,

37:00 they were, they're good, you know, but you might get a few bad natives, I mean. We were in Moresby, we were at that camp out on, outside, northwest of Moresby, we're building that road. A Yankee captain came along with his army nurse lieutenant, they were doing a bit of mucking up and round like that. And all of a sudden, an American boong

37:30 soldier come out of the bush, knocked the captain out and raped the nurse. Two days later, that boong was dead. They don't muck around, the Yanks.

**Did you feel they were on your side?**

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, you were all fighting for the one cause, freedom. Not the furniture people, freedom.

38:00 No, they were all fighting for the one cause. You're fighting as a, what would you say. You're fighting as a group trying to outwit the enemy, which we're all trying to help, we're all doing. And our blokes were at Salamoia and they couldn't understand how the Yanks were dropping ice cream

38:30 and hot pies to their troops, and we were eating bully beef and biscuits. And half the times, the natives got them, or the Japanese got them. Because where they dropped them, you know, it was only flying over and dropping them. They had a Yankee captain in the air force up there, he's driving this plane,

39:00 this DC-3, their Dakota and he's going across. And he kept hedge hopping, yeah, hedge hopping, he used to drop stuff to the troops, and they used to call him to hedge hop. Don't take me.

**How did the natives help your group itself?**

Oh we got natives to clear paths, you know, I,

39:30 if it's jungle, you got them to clear the path and take the earth away. See what we did, when we built roads, we had a lot of Ango natives clearing the road. And we'd clear them so that the sun was able to get in and dry out the gravel that you put on the road, cause the gravel came from the rivers, most of the time. Or you might get them from, on the beach,

40:00 things like that. Get gravel and bring it up, or you might blow a mountain aside, and take the gravel out of that mountain. Cause they had a mountain they called Smokey Joe, and when we arrived there in January 1943.

**Just hold that thought.**

## Tape 6

00:42 **Okay, we're recording now.**

Are we recording now?

**Yes.**

He's not, he's going to the toilet. We're recording.

**Yes, so, the New Guinea story you wanted to finish off?**

Oh, I can't remember, it goes in and out of my mind, so much.

01:00 Where were we?

**okay, we can come back to that. Lets, lets talk about Bougainville, tell us about the Bougainville story from your point of view, starting from when you were over there?**

Well we left, we left Townsville, on this Liberty ship which used to go so many miles so far, and then so many miles the other way, but we, we were treated well by the Yanks on the Liberty ship, I was a butcher with the,

01:30 they put me on board because I was a butcher. Yet that was the first time in three years they put me in as a butcher, so I went and helped the butchers on the ship, you don't call it a boat, otherwise you get fined. And you go on the ship and you go down in the hold, and cut up that beautiful Texas beef they had. And when you're finished, you cut it up for all the troops on board, which would be about 2500

02:00 troops, like they are different forward companies, different.

**Onboard this ship?**

On the ship, yes. They were getting carted from Townsville, Australia to Bougainville, and they were part of the 15th Brigade. Anyhow, I had to feed most of the chaps on the ship, I had to cut up their meat for them, they got stew most of the time, stew, good old fashioned stew. And if you don't like it, you can lump it.

02:30 But when I finished cutting up, the Yank, Yankee butchers would then ask me around to the kitchens, and say, "Would you like steak and eggs?" and you'd sit down and have a nice, big, thick Texas steak. Not Texas from Queensland, Texas from America, so that was very good, I had that for about three nights, that was very good. We went across the Coral Sea, onto Bougainville, where we had,

03:00 what was that stuff? Oh yes, when we arrived at Cape Torokina, the ship anchored out in the night, no escort to get across there, and the Yanks decided to show a film. So we all sat back and watched Victor Mature in Seven Days Leave, and all the blokes were saying, "Fee, we're just going to start seven days leave, aren't we?" They wanted seven days leave to go back home again. So,

03:30 next morning we unloaded off the side, down in ropes to get into your barge that was to take you into Torokina. And you had to be bloody careful getting back, you could get tangled up in those ropes coming off the side. So we get into the landing craft and we get taken into Torokina, then they take us to our company, and we'd set up camp.

04:00 And then you do different reccies [reconnaissances] around the area, you get taken here and you get taken there, and they told us this, this Mount Bagana, which was in, you could see the big mountain, it was smoking at the time, and they reckoned it was six years overdue when we arrived there. And we thought, 'Hope the bugger doesn't go up before we leave,' it didn't, but it did spout on the 15th of August, it did spout a few rocks and that.

04:30 But anyhow, we were there for a while, we used to go to the pictures of a night time, they had pictures everywhere. Got to Paddy's Field, now Paddy's Field had a big picture theatre there, open air picture of course. And we used to go there, you could buy this, you could buy that, you could buy anything there. Different people made things and the Yanks made things, because they sold them. See the Yanks were there before we got there,

05:00 and then we took over from the Yanks that they, so they could go from there up to, to the Philippines and raid the Philippines, and go to different places up there. But while we were there, we went to all these films and all that, and I bought a few things and sent them home to Mum and Mum, Dad didn't give a bugger what I sent. And we'd go to a lot of pictures together, pictures were bloody mad,

- 05:30 I've got a book outside tells you where I went every night in May. Different pictures we seen, and then. Then we got taken on trips down to say, round Cape Torokina, which is the main base of the Yanks had a couple of airfields there, and the RAF were. The New Zealand air force had Cortez, a Cortez, a single-engine plane
- 06:00 with wings that sort of come down like that and across like that, they were very good, they were very good on the Japs. We were there a while, and I think it was about May, I had to board a landing craft, we went down to a place called Toko, now Toko is getting down towards southern Bougainville. Now when you land at Toko, you've got to watch the waves that are coming in, because they were bloody big.
- 06:30 And you land there and you get off the barge, walk through the water, bad luck you haven't got socks on, you'd wash your socks as you're walking through. And then you go to a campsite, build up the campsite and get ready for what's going to happen. We never knew what was going to happen, you know, we didn't know what we were going into, but we were going down there to build a road, a Jeep road.
- 07:00 From Periada, no, where we were at the beachhead from Toko, and take it through, over the Periada Bridge, we did the Periada, oh what bridge, different bridge along, anyhow I've got it there, we must have built about six or seven bridges. In fact, the El Garada River, was the last bridge built by the engineers in the Second World War. Cause the war had finished,
- 07:30 and we just finished, put the finishing touches to the el Garada, it was a panel bridge. So we spent, we were there, we were there. When the war finished, where did I go then.

**Now hang on. We're, we're jumping huge here.**

Are we jumping, are we?

**Yeah. Which battalion were you attached to?**

15th Field, 15th Field Company.

08:00 **15th?**

Yeah, same as I was in New Guinea.

**Who was your CO, Mad Mick?**

Mad Mick, Major JG Needham, yeah. JG Needham.

**Now what role did the Cortezes play?**

The what?

**The New Zealand Cortez aircraft play?**

Cortez, they strafed, did strafing to, before we went into different places, they would strafe and

- 08:30 bomb, they had bombs underneath the planes, got a photograph over there, they were very good. Because they took over when the Yanks moved out, they moved in. So the New Zealanders were helping the strafing. See the Australian air force, I don't, I think we had little single-engine planes, they were spotters, they'd fly over so high up above, and look down to below where the Japanese gun replacements were.

- 09:00 In fact one of them came down once and started dropping bombs on the Japs, until they started firing, and then he took off.

**So it'd be on the tracks?**

Yes, on the Buon Road, Buon Road. See the Japanese built the Buon Road, but they didn't build any bridges, not that I know of, they never told me, I was only a sapper.

- 09:30 I wasn't even a corporal or sergeant or, I wasn't even any of them, a poor bloody sapper. But a sapper had the, to get from his CO, he could go to an infantry platoon and tell a lieutenant sergeant and his men, they were, they come underneath the sapper. Because he had power to do that. He knew what they, what had to be done, and tell them.

**Can you tell us what the Buon Road**

- 10:00 **actually looked like?**

You ever gone through a track in the city, have you ever gone out in the country, and seen a track, that's it.

**A small.**

No, no foliage, all the foliage comes over, and just a track.

**Can you fit a vehicle at all?**

Yeah.

**You can.**

Yeah, can put a vehicle there.

**Just a very narrow dirt road?**

I've got a photograph of it there, yeah. We put a bulldozer through it,

10:30 we got one of the 53rd Field Park Bulldozers, cause they had very big. We had, we had two D-14s, they had big D-8s and all that, and they could get around. They had good dozers, they had good equipment, and they were, they supplied you with equipment. No, they were very good. 53rd Field Park, they were part of the 15th Brigade. See the 15th Brigade as I

11:00 mentioned comprised of. Did I mention to you?

**Oh you mentioned it to one of us.**

Yes. They supplied us with three battalions and all attached groups like field companies, ambulance, signals, you name it, we had it. They were part of a division, a 3rd Australian Division.

**Now you're, you were attached to the 58/9th Battalion, weren't you?**

Yes, underneath an air sar [sergeant].

11:30 We had a bloke with us by the name of Jack Pimm, P-I-M-M, in fact he marched Anzac Day with the 58/59th, he was a lieutenant, and he got the Military Cross, and he's an ex-Collingwood full forward, Jack Pimm. In fact I used to see him, he walked, when I worked in Lygon Street, Carlton, he would walk past our place every morning, because he worked at the Country Roads Board,

12:00 up in, the corner of Princess Street and Lygon Street, Carlton. And Jack Pimm was at the, in fact he was at the, what's his name, Eddie Maguire show, last, not last night, the night before. And I got on well with Jack Pimm, he was a nice fellow, even though he was a Collingwood footballer.

12:30 **So when you were attached to the 58/9th Battalion, what sort of duties did you have to do?**

Well we had to stand out the front of the battalion, and bash down a different area, that Arthur Scaloon was coming through with his bulldozer, and bashing down trees, so the tanks could come through and the infantry were behind them. And we were stuck out the bloody front, so Arthur Scaloon driving the bulldozer

13:00 says, "Oh bugger this," he'd say, "Kevin, what are we, how far are they behind," I'd said, "God, we've got the three tanks then the Infantry." The infantry was supposed to be up front, they were supposed to be scouts. So he said, "Well, I'm sitting here like a silly bugger driving a bulldozer and the tanks are covered in with armoured plating, I'm just sitting in a..." So he stops, he says, "I'm going on strike." And Bill Orford our staff sergeant

13:30 come up, and said, "What's wrong Artie, what are you stopping for?" He said, "I'm not going any further Bill, no, no, I've had that, I'm sitting up here like a silly bugger, and tanks are covered behind me, who's supposed to be in front?" He said, "We've got no guards out, only us silly sappers, there was about eight of us." He said, "They're only saps, sappers, they..." And we could have been knocked off just like that. A sniper could have been up the street,

14:00 up the tree. He said, "I didn't, all I could do is lift my blade up, and cover me that way." So anyhow, Bill Orford got in touch with the lieutenant, or the chap in charge, captain in charge of the 58th, and they put scouts out the front. And Arthur then went on, bashing down trees and we went through a market garden, where the Japanese had had this market garden, and we went

14:30 on and hit the Buon Road, and Arthur stopped and went on a side so the tank could go onto the road. And it faced towards which way we were going, so what we did, we did a flanking move around, came in and cut the Buon Road there, and the Japanese that were caught in between there and there, we were going that way, because going down towards Buon, which was right down the other

15:00 tip of the island. And we got out there, and I got out with Carl Frankey who lives out at Smith's Gully, which is near St Andrews, and Carl's got a Bren gun and I've got an Owen gun. We got out, and we said, "Oh this is terrific, this is the Buon Road." Next minute, a Woodpecker opens up, down in the ditch, go around to it like that, the Japanese had a Woodpecker there,

15:30 and start firing bullets. So Carl and I dive into the, like a ditch on the side of the road, we dived into there, get out of the way of bullets. But after they got rid of the Japanese, the Woodpecker gun, the tank got rid of them, he had a one pounder sticking out the front, so he fired that, killed the Japs. Bill, Bill Woodward who was bomb disposal,

16:00 he lives down at Hastings, by the way, he was a lieut, he come up, and he says, "Hey Casso, what are you doing in there?" I said, "I'm getting out of the way of those Japs," he said, "You and Carl are sitting on bloody live bombs, get out you silly buggers, they might blow up on you." That's beside the point. So we got out and then the tanks went forward, we went down this, like this creek,



- 16:30 and that's when Arthur got his dozer, cleared it and we put logs across, like saplings across so that the tanks could go across there the swift flowing creek, and the logs would bind together and the tank would be able to go across, and not get caught, a lot of them got stuck in mud, you know. So then we go down and, we stopped the one night on that side of the road, and then the Japs start shelling us.
- 17:00 They had these long tonnes, about a six inch gun, and they start shelling us, so. I was with Billy Downs and Jack Phibbs, Billy Downs was a corporal, I said to Arthur, "Can I get underneath the dozer?" and he said, "Yep." So we got underneath his blade in there. And Bill Orford the staff sergeant come along, so we're all huddled in there, and next minute,
- 17:30 a bloody bomb landed, oh, about from here to Myles away, thank god it was a dud, otherwise I wouldn't be sitting here telling you. It was a dud, they, if they fired over about 20 shells, at least five of them got through, the rest of them were duds. They had a lot of dud ammunition.

**Why's that?**

Don't ask me, go and ask the Japanese.

- 18:00 I might have been, when they were come out from Japan, they come out by freighter and things like that. But anyhow, it was a dud, so, so after I've got my wits back again. The next morning we had breakfast, and then we went, further down we went to the el Garada River, and that's the last bridge we built. And I was back in the lines, of course, by then.

- 18:30 **So you camped at the el Garada river?**

We camped at the el Garada River.

**So what sort of defensive preparations did you take?**

Defence?

**Yeah?**

Well we put, well Arthur went around with his bulldozer, we walked around in front, prodding the ground with our bayonets, to see there was no mines around. He came around with the bulldozer, cut down the saplings and things like that. Hello you. And he went around,

- 19:00 and made a perimeter around the camp, the whole camp of the infantry, the tanks and our bulldozer. When we finished that, we put stakes in the ground and put barbed wire around, so that if the Japanese ran forward, they'd trip over it. And we put tins, we got some old tins, where we got them from, god only knows. We put them around and they'd make rattle, you know, and things like that.
- 19:30 Oh, and then we had to dig a trench, and our tent, we had two-man tents. The two-man tent is just a fly-by that comes up like that, you crawl in. But you couldn't lay on top of the ground, so we had to dig down say about a foot and a half, that would cover your body. When you lay down, if any bullets were fired, they'd go across you. We had brains us bloody engineers, no doubt about it.
- 20:00 Then at the end of your pit, the end where you lay down, there's a, you've got a pit, and that means, during the night you might called on for guard duty. And you and your mate would go down and sit in the pit, for say two hours, looking out in the dark, nothing. Which is a terrifying, because you don't know if the Japs are going to, you know, go for you. So the, that got by, and
- 20:30 next morning we'd have breakfast, and of course, all the dishes you washed in, dirty, murky water and I reckon that's where I got cirrhosis of the liver. Anyhow, beside the point. We go on further, we come to the 57/60th Camp, there's a big camp there. And they had been there for a couple of days, and they had it all set up and everything. And the front tank was about to go over a hill,
- 21:00 and as he goes over the hill, the top of the hill gave way, and the tank went down and hit a Bangalore torpedo, which was underneath. A Bangalore torpedo is a long narrow strip that was say, packed with explosives and put a fuse on it, when the tank hits that, up goes the tank.
- The tank was totally destroyed?**
- Tank, yes, and the driver was destroyed.
- 21:30 The driver's sitting down the front of the tank, chap by the name of Dew, D, D-W, Trooper, Dew, and that tank, that second tank behind him, he lives behind here, Charles Blanks, lives just up in the next row of houses, units. So, anyway, we got into that camp overnight, and the Japanese marines attacked
- 22:00 us, and they were about, big blokes they were, cause all Japanese are small. And they, they attacked us at night, attacked the, cause we were all right, we were in the middle of the camp, we were the engineers, we didn't, the infantry took charge of that. The next morning, we're going to go forward, and as the first tank was going to go round a bend like that, the Japs had another gun, on the side of a hillside, that they

- 22:30 rolled out, fired at the first tank, of course, killing the driver, cause he's in the front, and burning all the other blokes, they would have died, because they got burnt. The flames that came out of the shell as it hit the tank. And then this, our spotter plane went over and spotted the gun and deloused the gun with hand grenades.
- 23:00 And we got sent back to headquarters, 15th Field Company, and we got relieved by another group of engineers. We got sent back to Toko Camp, which was on the Puarada Estuary, where the Puarada River come out, they had this big camp down there on the beach. It was, we got six days relaxation on the beach.

**How far was the battle from there?**

- 23:30 Oh about 10 miles, in those days it was miles. So that was Bougainville. And then the war finished.

**Oh hang on.**

"Oh hang on," he said.

**You were pretty quick to get to the war's end.**

Wouldn't you be?

**Well we need to get the explanation. So basically once you were sent back to there.**

We then went back.

**To Toko.**

- 24:00 To join the Field Company.

**Okay, so after Toko, you went back and joined the Field Company?**

Yeah, finished up building bridges and that.

**Where?**

In Boug-, southern Bougainville, you didn't do much, you know, just clean around. I was one day, I was cleaning a gutter, I had my spade, my shovel, which I've got one outside the same size, I've always kept one and matty. I was cleaning a side, so that if any

- 24:30 Jeeps come along or anything like that, they went over corduroy [split logs lain across dirt tracks to improve traction], they might get a bit loose and if it rains, the water would then go into the guttering and go away. A Jap come up behind me, he's holding a rifle, and he had a poker [bayonet] in front of him, "Surrender." But after I changed my underpants, no, it happens.

- 25:00 I surrendered. And I got two infantrymen, they come along, they took him away, yeah.

**How, how was he treated?**

Hey?

**How was he treated?**

They're all treated marvellous, no, they, not like our blokes, our blokes treated the Japanese very good. And.

**He wasn't treated roughly or anything?**

No, no, no. They just ask him questions and different things, cause that's got nothing to do with me, intelligence

- 25:30 do that, but I'm just a sapper doing his duty, cleaning up.

**What did this Japanese soldier look like, was he a marine?**

No he wasn't a marine, just an ordinary Japanese soldier. Cause when we were at Slater's Gold, going back a bit, we had to dig a hole to bury Japanese. We built, put 136 Japanese in that hole.

- 26:00 And we covered up with, with a bulldozer, so that's terrible isn't it?

**Did you feel sympathy for the Japanese?**

Yes, yes, you would feel that way, yeah. We went there, we went down there, we were talking to dozer operators, and there was two of my, my unit, I don't know where my officer was, he went bush. And our corporal,

- 26:30 Postal Orderly, he come up, he said, "I've got some mail for you blokes," I said, "Oh good." He says, "Is there any Japanese, is there any souvenirs up there?" and we said, "Oh yeah, just go up to the top of the hill, you'll be right." And he went up to the top of the hill to go and have a look, and he came back as white as that. He said, "You buggers you sent me up there, why didn't you tell me," we said, "You

wanted to see souvenirs." He come back,

27:00 what had happened, when he got up there, an infantry man was taking Japanese off the barbed wire, he got caught on it, he was pulling him off. And he said, "Give us a hand, digger, will you?" he said, "I had to give him a hand, I couldn't say I was bloody scared." By the time he come back and hit the roof with us, and when we got back to Victoria, he took his wife on a trip. So they flew across from here to Tassie [Tasmania] and the plane crashed

27:30 on the shores of Tassie, and killed everyone onboard it. That's how life is. A chap by the name of Tommy Lane. No, they, we built this, we dug that open and they built all the, bought all these Japanese there. And our tanks came in, of course, their tanks were so small, our tanks were a big Matilda and they had small tanks.

28:00 **They used tanks at Bougainville, the Japanese?**

Yeah, they had tanks there. But I don't know if they run out of fuel or anything, but.

**Were they formidable, the tanks?**

Hey?

**Were the tanks formidable?**

In what way do you mean that?

**Well, I mean, were they effective?**

Yeah they were effective, when they were using them. But then, there's a photograph in there, of how much ammunition they had down at southern Bougainville,

28:30 down at Buon. And oh, they had tonnes of stuff. They could have, they, I think there was about 15 to 20000 Japanese on Bougainville, when we come in with 5000. Five thousand troops. Cause we'd not only in southern Bougainville, they were in middle Bougainville, and they were

29:00 up top, they, they were going towards Mount Bagana, oh different places. We were only one group, and I think there were three groups of Australians fighting the Japanese in Bougainville. But I'm not sure, because I wasn't high up in the commanding, like the majors and the generals and all these big blokes, I'm only a little sapper down below. Oh gees.

29:30 **About that battle before, where the tank group, in a night was attacked by the Japanese?**

Oh that was.

**By the marines, Japanese marines?**

That was the 57th, we didn't know, we didn't see them, we heard them.

**How did you hear them?**

You saw the fighting, the rifles and the machine guns, exchanging everything. And then after that happened, is that how it happened, yeah.

30:00 The chap that took my job as a batman, he went up towards the Mivo River, which was further on, after that happened, and he was on the bull, one of our bulldozers. And the Japanese had a concealed gun in the side, and as they come up, it fired and killed five of our, four of our blokes. And that Jack Weichart that took my job, he was one of the five blokes, he come from Sydney,

30:30 he lived in Jack, Weichart his name was W-E-I-C-H-A-R-T, yeah. So.

**You said a concealed gun?**

Yeah, well that they. Hey?

**A Woodpecker?**

No, no, no. A 16, a six inch large gun, and what they did, they had it on wheels, would go, run back. They had it on runways, wheels built into the side of a mountain

31:00 or something like that. All right, getting old.

**Were you ever involved in any?**

Fighting to fighting with Japanese?

**Yeah.**

No.

**Hand-to-hand combat?**

No, no hand to hand, no. In fact, I don't think I ever fired, I might have fired a gun, but other people were firing

31:30 guns and I fired, that's all.

**What's a Long Tom?**

Long Tom is a big, it's a six inch barrel, gun, which has got a long, long tom and it sends out shells. You see them on a barrel ship, they've got these big guns on the side, you're looking at one of them. Oh bugger you.

32:00 Yeah, Long Tom, that's what they call a Long Tom.

**Have you ever seen Japanese marines?**

Pardon.

**Have you actually seen them?**

Only after the war. When they were rounded up and bought onto Gloucester Park, Gloucester Park, in Torokina. They were rounded up and brought up, marched up, and

32:30 they bought into, we had to, sort of look at them from the outside. Because that's where Victoria played New South Wales in a football match, when war was finished. Had a football, Aussie Rules, no, wait a minute, sorry I'm wrong, Victoria played Western Australia, because we had a sergeant in our group, he was a West Australia, yeah, he played in that side.

**What was the difference between New Guinea and Bougainville**

33:00 **in terms of climate?**

New, New Guinea was very muddy, very hilly, mountains, things like that. Bougainville was more of a, that, that could be turned into a marvellous resort, you know, like they've got nowadays all these beautiful new resorts that are opening up, in Fiji and that, that's where Bougainville could be like that. It's more cleaner in Bougainville. Two of our troops got,

33:30 they went out looking for timber, they got lost, it took them two days to get back to camp. Yeah, one of them is still alive, he lives up in Queensland. But no, Bougainville is a lot cleaner island than New Guinea. New Guinea's they say, is a jungle and its.

34:00 I don't think I, never seen any alligators like that, or crocodiles like that in Bougainville, but I don't know if, I don't know if they were up in New Guinea. They could be, not that I know of, the only ones I've seen are up the Daintree River, up in Queensland.

**The Buon Road, is that where most of the fighting took place, along the Buon Road?**

Because we were trying to build a road, to enable trucks to come through with supplies on.

34:30 And we were trying to build the Buon Road down, at that, truck transports, you know. When we were at, tell you how the transports are, when we were at Caboolture in Queensland, that's in 1943, word came that we had to get up and move out of camp. Now we got a few trucks, so we had to get trucks from the

35:00 AGT, Australian General Transport, to come and help us shift. And while doing this, we had a vault underneath, and in the vault, we had all our dynamite and gelignite stuck in it. And as we got down to the, we had to, we had a hole there, which was a shaft, and then we dug underneath, and dug a room out

35:30 underneath the ground. And we had to go and stack it with dynamite. And then we had four pipes come up out of the ground, which was air, air vents, we had to plug them up and set off the dynamite. And we'd bring the, bring the leads out and put them on a plunger, and the Major would tell us to go out and tell everyone in the area, that we were going to blow our place. And the Australian General Transport guys were drinking

36:00 at a bar, some of our blokes down. And so the Major said, "Are you ready?" and we said, "Yeah." This Billy Downes and myself. So we pushed the plunger down, and the Australian General Transport said, "We're not moving you bloody engineers any more, you buggers, you'll blow us up." That's the way it goes. So you got all these different companies that were in the army.

**What was the**

36:30 **cooperation like between the forces?**

Very good, very good.

**Well give us an example of your own unit and yourself? With the infantry, with the supply units?**

Yeah well the infantry, we got on well with the infantry. The one time is, say when we were marching

along the, along Bougainville, we wanted infantry there, and we wouldn't move until they put them in. But the infantry came and helped.

**Why do you think the**

37:00 **infantry didn't actually move forward as scouts?**

Beg your pardon?

**Why do you think they didn't move forward as scouts?**

Well they, someone, their officers might have been new in the area and they didn't think of that at the time, that's an oversight, you know. I don't know, gee you're asking a lot of questions, aren't you?

**I've got more for you.**

Yeah.

37:30 Yeah, you see, the infantry were very good, we always got on well together. And especially when you're, you're team played, say the 58/59th had a football team, the 57/60th and the 24th, we all played in different, in the groups.

**Were bulldozers ever used in operations?**

Yeah, yeah.

**How?**

For cutting, as I mentioned, foliage, cutting down trees,

38:00 well that book there shows you a bulldozer. And we were also able to get a grader, and we used a grader and a tractor would have to pull the grader, say a D-4, R-4 tractor, would pull a grader along. Because in those days you didn't have power graders, just had a grader, a bloke stand up the end, a chap by the name of Bill Alsop, come from Camperdown. Because he worked for the council down there, before the war.

38:30 Him and his brother Charlie, Charlie was a dozer operator, they've both gone now of course. But they were very good on dozers, they were very good. And they taught a lot of our blokes, you know, quite a few of our blokes learnt dozers and tractors and things like that.

**What about to fight against the Japanese, were the bulldozers ever used?**

No, not, not us, no, no. We were only maintaining roads,

39:00 so that. Hey?

**Yeah, go on, that's all right.**

We were only maintaining roads so that the tractors could get through, and also maintaining line, if tractors became bogged, they put a bulldozer there to pull it out, and they might put the bulldozer to a tree in front, wrap a rope around, not a rope but a steel rope, and then pull on its,

39:30 getting old I think. And then we'd pull towards the tree, at the same time as pulling the tractor out of mud, and things like that. There's a photograph in one of those photos there.

**How far, how far were you actually behind the infantry, when you were building the roads as the column moved?**

Oh well we'd be two mile, about two mile. The infantry were always,

40:00 they were in front but the commandos were in front of them. One night we were down the beach, we'd finished our work, we went down to visit some boys in hospital. And there was a base hospital there, we were in there, and this Japanese, this Australian commando come along, and was talking to his mate in bed. He says, "Oh, one of our guys went out, he was," they were making

40:30 a cup of, making our dinners, our lunches and things like that. And he said, "All of a sudden, a bullet went past his head." And he thought, "Now where the bloody hell did that come from." And he looked around and he seen a sniper. So he got his knife, went down on his belly, and went round one mile like that, in a circle behind the Japanese and killed him. Now that's commando work, you don't get many

41:00 Australians do that. The commandos were, did all their work behind lines, behind enemy lines.

**Were Japanese snipers a problem?**

Oh yeah, a very big problem, oh yeah.

**Did you encounter them?**

Hey? Never encountered them, thank goodness. I mightn't be here, I might be a ghost talking to you.

Never know your luck in the big city of Melbourne. No, no they weren't.

**They were a constant concern,**

41:30 **were they?**

They were a constant, yeah, yeah, they were up in trees and everything. Oh.

**Did the Aussies ever go up on trees and sniper the Japanese?**

Oh no, the Aussies would go up in trees. We had a Georgie Watts with us, he was a corporal. He was a, he used to shim up trees like he had leg irons on, you know. He'd shim up the trees, as a scout, and some of the...

## Tape 7

00:32 **Finish off about Georgie Watts and the snipers?**

They, they.

**Sounds like a rock and roll band.**

Yeah, it does, doesn't it.

**Georgie Watts.**

Yeah, no, Georgie. He was a, he used to climb up trees, he had these leg irons. And this artillery officer wanted him to go up the tree, he said, "I'm not going up there, I might get shot at," you know. So Georgie said, "I'll get up," and Georgie goes up the tree in these irons he's got on the sides,

01:00 and when he comes down, he can always push them in the side and that stops him falling down the tree. He is spotting for the artillery, don't know who the artillery officer was at the time, but yes, he did a lot of jobs like that. And he was very good, he was a good mechanic, motor mechanic. I mean, once they went into Salamoa and he and a couple of, an officer and a couple of other blokes, and they went to Salamoa and they seen this

01:30 old truck. And they said, "Gee," George said, "I'll try and get that going," so he tinkered away with the machine, they got the old truck going, it belonged to the Japanese, filled it with petrol, there was a petrol tank nearby, start driving around Bogajim with a truck, van, could have blown up on you. But no, he was very good Georgie Watts, he got the mention, no, the BEM, British Empire Medal, yeah, for what he did.

02:00 **Do you know as a sniper, did he take a count of how many hits he got?**

I wouldn't have a clue, because we never had snipers in our unit. Our unit was mainly maintaining roads and doing different camps and all this. We let the infantry do all that, because that's their job, see.

**How would your**

02:30 **unit be protected by the Infantry?**

By guards around it, I wouldn't have a clue. We got three officers left in Victoria, there's Keith Huntsman lives in Blackburn, Charlie Taylor, no not Charlie Taylor, Frank Taylor lives in Mentorn,

03:00 and the other one lives in Essendon, what's his name, Charlie Hill, but they don't want to do this, they reckon, they don't want to do what we're doing to you now. Frank.

**Why?**

Hey?

**Why's that?**

I don't know, that's their business, they keep it to themselves and that's their business. What they want to do, let them do it. But

03:30 in fact when Huntsman come to us, we thought, "Oh, who are these juniors? Where did they come from?" You know, they came to us on Bougainville. We were a couple of officers light, and we had Charlie Hill and Keith Huntsman, "Gee they're only bloody kids, officers." We said, "Oh god," but they worked, they proved themselves, don't worry about that, they went into action and proved themselves, in the places we went into, they were very good. In fact, I only seen

04:00 Keith last Friday week at Anzac Day, that's only last Friday, isn't it, Sunday wasn't it. Yes, so.

**How often were the guys protecting you called into action?**

They guys protecting?

**The guys in the infantry around you?**

Oh, they'd get an order from a chap would pass it on to that chap, you tell the next bloke, pull out, things

04:30 like that. I've got a pain here.

**Are you all right, or...?**

I'd better go to a physiotherapist, I think.

**You've had it for a while?**

Yeah.

**Yep.**

Every now and again it gives you a tinge, you know.

**Oh right, probably a pinched nerve or something.**

Oh it could be, I don't think I've got any nerves left.

**From the war?**

That's right, you name it, you said it, yeah.

**Was it very nerve-wracking? The war?**

Oh, terrible,

05:00 you would never want to, I mean, I think we were lucky where we were, and not in Germany where they copped it back, or the Western Desert, you know. Terrible, wars are terrible. Well you imagine how the cowboys and Indians got on. They were, they had enough of it I think, bumped each other off. No, wars are terrible,

05:30 let there be no more wars. But that's the way things go, and you're living through the prime of your life, and you haven't got a war to go to.

**Do you remember the day the war finished?**

Yep. I was in Torokina, no, wait a minute, yeah. We got sent back to Torokina from the front line, and

06:00 we were kicked, fixing up the camp and everything like that, because we were being relieved, the unit was being relieved. And all of a sudden it came through on April the, August the 15th, 1945, the war's over. Well that Mount Begana, that big smokey old Joe they called it, it decided to spit fire, rocks and all, it was a fair way away from us. And also

06:30 the night after, a lot of the unit came back to ours, when we were at Torokina and this Jacky, what was his name. Can't think of this bloke, he started going around. Of course, when they come back from the frontline to the unit, they got beer given to them, a lot of them, a couple of bottles of beer, one bloke goes troppo [crazy], he goes around, he want to kill every bugger in the camp.

07:00 And he came into a chap by name of Fay Phibbs, Jack Phibbs, he still lives up in Sydney. Fay was a very good friend of mine, he came in, lift up the net, sleeping, you know, the net, put his rifle in and said, "No, you're not him," and walked out. Jack went as white as death, he said, "Strike me!" He was running around. So, next day, I think they got him out of the unit very quick, he went home very quick to Concord,

07:30 back in Sydney. But oh, he had a war, he wanted to kill everyone. Didn't matter when they were yellow or white, he couldn't have been a Footscray supporter, could he?

**Were there a lot of guys like him around?**

I imagine there would be, I've never seen many more, no, never seen many more. No, there was a lot of guys around.

**When the war finished,**

08:00 **was there a worry that the Japanese didn't know it had finished?**

A lot of Japanese didn't know, they were still on the island, I think, 20 years after it finished. There was word. In fact, when I, when I went to join car radio, one of our mechanics joined up the group that was going over to, up above Torokina was here, what was the name of the place up above,

08:30 where the mines were? And he went over as a, oh something, I can't think of what he went over as, and he got, he was supposed to fix up the tracks that come back. They thought he was an electrical engineer, but he was only an electrical Mechanic, he used to fit car radios with me. And he was very

good, Frankie Farrugia his name was,

09:00 and he went over to Bougainville, he got very good raises, too, no tax. But he was only over there about eight or nine months, but he came back to Australia and opened up his own garage out at Reservoir, it depends what school you went to, Reservoir or Reservoir. I went to a Catholic school.

**So it was?**

Yes.

**What name was it?**

Reservoir.

**Reservoir.**

09:30 But no, he went back to Bougainville. And in fact one of our, a couple of our, Carl Hancock who lives up at Benalla and he went back to Bougainville, in the land army and all that. Like to help, get things going and everything like that. And Carl Frankey, who

10:00 lives out at Smith's Gully near Penton Hills, he went back to Bougainville, I don't know whether he went to Bougainville or New Guinea. They went in because they were part of the land army here in Melbourne. I didn't want to go back. Oh also another chap by the name of Murray Landon. Murray Landon, when the unit broke up, the points, getting sent back to Australia, if you had high pointage, you could have been married during the war,

10:30 you got high points. And the low pointers stayed on Bougainville, the high pointers got sent back to Melbourne. And Murray Landon met this girl in Lismore when we were at Casino, for Lismore for a while, and he met this girl and he married this girl. And Murray was a dozer operator, so when we got out from the 15/3rd Company, we went to the 7th Army Troop where we served for a while, and then

11:00 the 7th Army Troop were coming home, 7th Army Troop knocked us off the 24th Met Equipment company, now we had to get rid of all the equipment off the island, off Bougainville. So we went out and dug holes for the bulldozer and we took these beautiful sets of screwdrivers,

11:30 you know, anything to do with bolts and nuts and everything like that in boxes, in beautiful boxes. We went out and dug holes, plonked them in, then filled them over. They went out and they dug holes and put food in them, imagine after we'd gone, the natives would dig them up, and they would, they'd have a bloody ball. But and then, Jeeps were being put onto

12:00 landing craft, taken out about three miles from Torokina and dumped, brand new Jeeps.

**Why was that?**

Australia weren't going to pay for the, from America. America wanted so much money for the equipment left on the island. We were moving equipment, the company I was with, we were moving equipment down to the River Fitzroy, was a ship from Geelong, and it was going to

12:30 take all the equipment there, Sydney, which would be carted to Canberra. But they tell me the River Fitzroy is still floating around somewhere. But we, we got in quite well, we took that. I drove a, there was a Japanese carrier, it was a, what was it, a, it used to pull the guns, these big long toms,

13:00 they had this Japanese carrier, it seated about six people. Well I drove that from our camp down to a wharf, so it would be loaded onto, and I lost my beautiful pen my mother gave me, it was a fountain pen.

**You took it to war with you?**

Oh yeah, I used it when I wrote back to Mum, oh yeah, took the ink and all, took a bottle of ink, last me all that time. But anyhow, if you didn't have it, you'd

13:30 get your mother to send it up to you anyway. You'd write home, and she'd just send it to where, say I was still in Queensland, then Queensland would send it on to where you are. Cause she wasn't to know where we were, had to keep all of that under control and all of that.

**With the Japanese not knowing the war was over, did do they do leaflet drops, or?**

Yeah they did we got a, I've got a photo in there, they had a Beaufighter would fly over with big markings

14:00 underneath the wings, and drop leaflets in, and if you come forward and surrender, you'll be treated okay, which they did. They, they didn't get, not like a lot of our guys, look at those guys in Singapore and that, you know, were taken down to the beach and beheaded, or shot, and just left laying on the beach, beaches. No, our blokes never did that. No I stick up for our guys.

14:30 Oh dear.

**Do you find it strange that the Japanese would believe it?**



The funny part about it, June and I went to, and three of our ballroom dancing friends, Margy Watson, Vera Watson her sister, we went to America in 1980. And when we came back from America, we called in at Honolulu, we had four nights there. And one of the nights, one of the days, June and I, we didn't, Marge and them didn't go with us,

15:00 June and I got on a vessel, we went down and had a look at Pearl Harbour, they took you right around it, which was very good, very interesting. And there were Japanese young people on the ground, on the, and they never knew nothing about it. Nothing about the war, because their Japanese fathers and mothers did not tell them. So the Japanese young people of nowadays didn't know what was happening.

15:30 I suppose that's the way life goes in Japan also, I've got no inkling to go to Japan. I could have gone to Japan on occupation, Occupational Forces, I didn't want to go, I said I had enough of the Japanese up there. No you, so you come around these big trees, they've got these big roots coming down like that. And the Japanese used to put holes in the root, something to put their rifles through you

16:00 and shoot you as you come along. But don't worry, I reckon our guys did the same thing later on. But we found many a Japanese dead in that hole, could have been rotting. As the stream flows.

**Very bad smell.**

Oh it stank, stinking. They'd live in holes, they would live in holes. And they'd live there

16:30 until someone came over, and they would blast them, as they went over, they'd shoot them in the, in the back, you would never know they were there. Don't tell me, I mean, you taking it now, look at all the transistors that are coming out, all this equipment that is coming out that comes from Japan, fostered by America, isn't it? So I mean, they're not dills. I hope this doesn't get shown, shown to any Japanese people.

17:00 **Oh you've said they're not dills, that's a good thing.**

Yeah.

**Did, did you see any Japanese POWs [Prisoners of War]?**

Yeah, quite a few, yeah, yep. And I seen plenty, Italians, when I got back to, I got sent from Melbourne, after my second leave, I got sent from Melbourne up to Bonegilla and I was camped there with the General Transport Group

17:30 because I didn't have enough points to get out. Of a morning I had to get up, go out to the bulk where we had our trucks and that, pick my tipper up, go down to the Italian prisoner of war pound, pick up five Italians and a guard. You know where the guard sat next to me in the truck. The Italians were in the back of the truck,

18:00 they could have got out and gone. They never. So I would drive from Bandiana to Chiltern where all the mines, the gold mines and that, pick up gravel. Then I'd drive back, the guard would stay with the prisoners of war, I drove back to Bandiana, unload my gravel, my tip truck and they'd have a bloke there to spread it out. Then I'd go back to the pit, pull up and get another load, I used to do two loads a day.

18:30 And then in the afternoon, I'd probably get leave to go into Albury that night, and for me to go to Albury, I had to load the truck myself, the Japanese were out, the Italians were out shooting rabbits. They'd go out, and they used to cook them beautiful, they'd get butter from somewhere, I don't know where, they'd usually give you money and get butter from the canteen. And they'd cook this rabbit and it was simply beautiful, simply. But oh, they were terrific,

19:00 you know, they never wanted to get away because the war was finished, as soon as they served their time in the internment camp, they'd get sent back to Italy or stay in Australia, I don't know, that's up to them.

**Is your eye bothering you a lot, on the left?**

Getting tired.

**We've got, will you be all right another 20 minutes, and then?**

Oh well, if I can endure, endure war for five years, I can endure that for 20 minutes.

**Okay. With the Japanese**

19:30 **POWs, can you describe them for us?**

Oh no, I couldn't, I wasn't that close. They got taken by troops and by military provos, or the MPs, they got just taken by our camp, we were working on the camp, getting our tents ready and all that, and all that. No, I didn't have anything to do with the Japanese.

**What did you see of them, did you see them in passing or...?**

Just the one that came up behind me,

20:00 and had this note, "Surrender," he had a rifle, and as I said, nearly shit myself. He could have stabbed you in the back, but then, that's bygones.

**What did you, what did you do once he said, "I'm going to surrender?"**

Well you just put him in charge of MPs, there'd

20:30 be infantry soldiers nearby, and you'd hand him over to the infantry, they'd were there to hand him over to the military police, you wouldn't see them again.

**Did he understand English?**

No, I don't think he understood English, he had this note. He must have been able to understand English, how would he have been able to hold a note up with 'surrender' on it. 'I surrender'.

**Was it all, was it also written in Japanese?**

I'm not too sure.

21:00 I didn't know how to read Japanese, so how would I know.

**If there was the characters there?**

I wouldn't know. I can show you that on there, but...

**One second. Yeah. So this Japanese guy you saw, was he in good health, or how did he look when he surrendered to you?**

Oh very thin, I was thin myself, so what's the difference. No he was very thin, he was only small, cause Japanese

21:30 marines were tall, I don't know where they got them from, cause nowadays you see, the Japanese are all small aren't they? How do you know, you've never been there.

**I've seen pictures, and...**

You've seen pictures.

**I've seen books.**

Yeah, you've seen books.

**Yeah, did he, was he nervous, or distraught, or...?**

I wouldn't have a clue.

**He wasn't shaking in his boots?**

No, he wasn't shaking, he just had his rifle, he handed

22:00 the rifle to me, and I handed him over to the Infantry, and they took him away and I went back on my work, cleaning up the sides of the guttering there, and I said, "Thank god he's gone, I could have been shot in the back." And of course, our blokes, a lot of our blokes had to stay behind down in South Bougainville, and they had to come back, and they were attacked coming back, because the Japanese didn't think the war was over.

22:30 **Were there a lot of these Japanese coming out of the woodwork and surrendering?**

I wouldn't know, wouldn't know. I come back to Torokina, I got out of the lot of it. The only time I seen the Japanese is when they came, I got a photograph there, walked past the camps, under Gloucester Park. And that's where Gracie Fields came and sang on Christmas Eve, she sang Ave Maria, beautiful, beautiful.

23:00 Yeah, she came and sang Ave Maria.

**One last thing on the prisoner, how did the MPs treat him when you handed him over?**

Don't ask me, ask them. I wouldn't have a clue.

**But when you said, "Here he is," they just took him?**

The just take him by the arm, one each side of him, just take him away.

**Quite friendly.**

Oh yes, the war's over.

**All right, tell us all about these concerts, that?**

What?

**Like the one with**

23:30 **the Ave Maria and...?**

Well; they had all these concerts in Port Moresby, they had this, I got a photo, a brochure there of it. The Americans and the Australians formed a concert party, I don't know if you remember Sid Heylon, do you? Yes, he was in it, he used to live, he was a South Melbourne supporter, he used to live at Albert Park. Sid Heylon and a couple of other blokes were in it, and they joined, they had

24:00 this big concert party. The orchestra that they had, was led by an Australian, a Victorian, and he had a mixture of Australians and Americans in the orchestra. They had this big show that I went to in Port Moresby, and it was very good. And also, we had a concert party in our place, we, we were 15/4th Company, so we had 15 members.

24:30 We were all amateurs, never went on a stage, we had stuff sent up from Melbourne, and this is during the war of course. We put a, we built our own stage up in, top of Ramu Falls, and we put on shows in convalescence, we got, I've never seen so many bloody rotten oranges and rotten apples and that, they threw it at us.

25:00 They said, "Drink some of this," what they called it, betel juice before going on. I said, "Well I don't drink," so I just went on and did my act with this Teddy Sharp, we used to go out into the jungle, I had one of those HMV [His Master's Voice] record players, which the major let us load it onto trucks, and it had a case about that big, and I had 12 records in it, 78 records. And I'd

25:30 play it on the HMV record player, wind it up and that's. We used to do a jive act, I'd to come from that side, he'd come from that side on the stage, we'd come together and do a jive act together. And we'd play this record of Glenn Miller's called Rag, Rag Cutter's Swing, I've still got it, it's on a tape somewhere, I play it out there. We went to a lot of concert parties like that, went to the big one, when

26:00 Stormy Weather was released in New Guinea in 1943. I told you about that, they were on a hillside and that, we got taken there by the American boong trucks. It was marvellous. And then, what about the war finished.

**When the war finished, I was about to ask you.**

Yeah.

**Was it, you had to stay in the army for a while, didn't you?**

I stayed in the army until September '46.

**And let's just take it a bit stage by stage,**

26:30 **war was declared over, where were you moved to, and what was your next assignment?**

What, when the war finished.

**The war's finished, and then they sent you directly to...?**

We came back from Torokina to Sydney,

**Yep.**

In a ship. From Sydney we came down here to Melbourne, if you had enough points you got, got put out of the army. If you didn't have enough points, you had to go up to Bonegilla, different

27:00 areas.

**Firstly, how do you rack up these points?**

Well, don't ask me. They've got officers and they've got clerks and everything that do it, and they work it out. If you were married before you went in the army, you got so many points. A lot of the boys got married when they came home from New Guinea, because they had 43 days leave, they might have taken a couple of extra days leave, to be with their wives.

27:30 They got extra points, and they came home, they got pushed out of the army say in November, they left Bougainville in November, to come back to Australia. Because we didn't have enough points to get out, we had to stay on the island and help clean up the island. Which I went to a 24th Mech Equipment Company to clean up the island, move all the equipment, so go. One day.

28:00 Is that. Starting to come apart there. One day I went up to, we took a was it TNT, no it was Dina-T Low Loader, we put a bulldozer in the back with a trailer. We went down to this place, about 10 kms from Torokina, went up a hill, unloaded the trailer and the dozer, went up a hill,

28:30 and come back with a load, load full, trailer full of paw paws, which we had that night. We had boiled paw paw, which was beautiful, because we didn't have green vegetables, see. We had to load, take all the equipment we could find, and put it onto the River Fitzroy, and as I mentioned this gun carrier, I've got a photograph of her there. There was a

29:00 Japanese gun carrier seat about six men, and would hold a long tom or something like that. And I drove that down to the wharf to the loading on the River Fitzroy – bye-bye. And that went back to Canberra, it could be anywhere now.

**How did you feel when you didn't have enough points to be discharged?**

Oh well, it's just take it in your stride, just back luck that we went there, you know. We, we weren't ready

29:30 for it and we couldn't do much about it, you just take it as it, as it happens, you're still in the army, you've got to do as the army says.

**Did you want to stay in the army?**

No.

**Why not?**

I didn't, I wanted to get back to my ballroom dancing. See, June and I never turned professionals, we've always been amateurs. And the Dance Masters of Australia,

30:00 gave us each of those in 1991, I think they gave us, or 1992.

**Was there any other big reasons why you didn't want to stay in the army?**

Oh I don't know, you just wanted to get out, you had so much of it. You know, I mean, a lot of people, we know quite a few of them who did stay in, but I didn't.

**So when, where did they send you to after you didn't have enough points and you're still there?**

Oh, I got sent to

30:30 Bonegilla and I served my time out as I said, driving a tip truck, a Ford tip truck down to Chiltern, loaded it up, go back and do the roads in Bandiana, get weekend leave, go down to Melbourne, come back again. Weekend leave into Albury, go down to Melbourne, come back.

**Albury?**

Yeah.

**How far a drive is Albury from Melbourne?**

Oh, Albury's 200 miles, isn't it. And Bandiana

31:00 would be about 190 miles.

**About four hours?**

It'd be a four, four-hour trip, yeah, but I used to come down by train. I love the trip on the train, because the train they had was the, what's that, Express, they called it. It came from Sydney, no it came from Albury to Melbourne, it was a blue train. And oh, we used to sit and have breakfast in the morning, and beautiful apple pie and cream,

31:30 or ice cream. Because we never had ice cream in New Guinea and Bougainville, it was beautiful. Oh, I don't know, I ran a dance in Bougainville once after the war had finished. I had the other ranks, they had a club, I've got a photograph there, and in the club, we had the big high walls, only started there, there was nothing underneath. We had this dance floor, so I ran a dance for our unit, they knew I liked dancing and that. So I ran this dance,

32:00 and I had, had to get nurses which I got from the hospital, had to supply transport, which we got from our transport lines, I had to get guys to go and dance with the girls, and I had my shoes there which was good. Not these shoes, I had dance shoes, just an ordinary shoe really. And we'd get all these guys and we'd, we'd go, and we'd hire an orchestra and I knew Frank Coghlan and his Band, cause they were playing in the Boomerang's Concert

32:30 Party. And I used to cart them around in trucks, and cart them everywhere to different shows, I pitched. And Frank Coghlan and his band played there, didn't cost anyone anything. But I used to sell glasses of lemonade, which I made up myself, put it in the fridge and then take it there, and I'd sell it for thruppence a glass. Thruppence a glass is three pennies, yeah.

33:00 **So you served your time on the island of...?**

Bougainville.

**No, after? When you came back to Melbourne, they sent you to another?**

Bonegilla.

**Bonegilla. You served your time there making roads and so on, then where did you move to?**

Melbourne, out.

**They discharged you. How did it feel to be finally discharged?**

It just seemed a relief, I think. You're going into, they tell you everything, they send you to, you learn all

33:30 about what you're going to do in civilian life. And what, I was going into butchering with my father, but that didn't last too long, because I was going to get married. I got a job in another butcher shop, and I got fired from that, and then you know, life was a bit different. Oh, where I worked in those days, I worked for, in East Ivanhoe, I worked in a butcher there, and I had to

34:00 learn to ride a motorbike. So they gave me an Indian, Indian motorbike, not a Harley Davidson, an Indian, the same thing. And I had to go for my licence, so I had to ride from East Ivanhoe to the Motor Registration branch in Bathurst Street, Carlton. And you leave there at that time, drive, I had a sidecar on the side, and you drive in, and you had to obey by the rules, in a certain time it took you from East Ivanhoe, you didn't have a licence

34:30 when you got there, and went through the rigmarole that the police put you through, you got a licence, and you'd drive back again. And that's how I used to, I used to roam around East Ivanhoe and Ivanhoe and Heidelberg carting meat to different customers. Even went to French Kyzone [?] in Burke Road.

**Would you keep it refrigerated somehow?**

No, no, it would be just wrapped up in paper, white paper we had in those days, not newspaper, a lot of butcher shops

35:00 used newspaper in those days, but ours were wrapped in white paper with our name on the top. And we had sliding drawers which go into the box that we had, which was a, oh from about there to about here long, and we used to three, two sliding drawers and you'd pack all your, yeah.

**When you were discharged, were there a lot of people like you in that they had to keep working in the army for a number of years?**

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

35:30 You got discharged at Royal Park, there was a camp there and I went through Royal Park when my father became a Melbourne city councillor.

**What's that mean?**

Some of those places, really, were humming and stinky. Yeah. You know, you'd go around canvassing for your father.

36:00 He was a Melbourne city councillor as a councillor for 15 years. From 1950 to 1970.

**Did you find it hard to adjust to civilian life when you returned?**

I suppose yes I did, I suppose you found it hard to get into ways of civilian life, yeah. I always lived in the

36:30 back of Lygon Street, Carlton. Excuse me. Yeah, you did find it hard, but I think you felt free and you were, you could do things by yourself and not worry about anyone else. Of course you had your father, of course at that age, I was 25. Mum and Dad, I mean when I went away I was 19,

37:00 yeah, 20 that's right. When I left, I was away five years.

**So through all those years, how did you change?**

Well you might have got used to army life, that's getting up early in the morning, doing exercise and all that, which I never did before the war. It's a different life, I think for young people, I think they ought to go and join the army.

37:30 Of if they can get a lot of these kids going around, you know, lounging around and doing needles and all that, I think that's terrible, but that's part of life, isn't it. They might take drugs, I've never taken drugs. The only drugs I take are the three tablets of a morning which make me tired, and this bloody thing up here's making me tired. I tell you, when you go, I'm going for a lay down, I

38:00 tell you that.

**You can sleep in tomorrow.**

We got a new electric blanket yesterday, we went down to Kevin Sheedy's and got a new electric blanket, it was queen size, and I slept gorgeous last night. And we also bought two new pillows, because we had a masseur coming in at one stage and she said if you use these rubber pillows, Dunlop rubber pillows, you buy them at Myers, but you can get them at Adairs, and it cost us \$109 each, and they're beautiful, don't know why,

38:30 I didn't think of it earlier. And I, and June said I don't, that in bed.

**Did you have nightmares or anything about the war, or dreams about the war, or anything like that?**

Yeah, a couple, yeah, a couple. As I said, we weren't, the chap next door was with the Scotty, he was a Scot but with the British army,

39:00 and when he went off one of those landing craft on a Normandy beach, he disappeared in the water. Two big guys landed and pulled him up, he's a short bloke, you know. And I've got a book inside that shows the, about the Normandy. One of my ballroom dancing friends, she lives in Adelaide, Dotty, when they went over to, over to England, she seen this, and she said, "Kevin will like that,"

39:30 and she bought it back, it was a commemorative medal, it was about the two-day landings in Normandy and it's very good.

**How good was the first dance you went to after you were discharged?**

Marvellous, I could still dance, so I, cause I didn't have those bloody big boots. But no, it was good, I went down the Trocadero, I think for the first night. But then I got shoved up to Bonegilla.

**But after that, and**

40:00 **out of the army?**

That'd be September, so October I went to all the different dances, and I met all the different friends that I did have. Saw the different people I knew, and a lot of them had been in the forces, you know, either the army or the navy or the army, the air force.

**I'll have to stop you there Kevin, because we've got a minute left.**

Yeah.

**And what we do in this minute is**

40:30 **it's your time, if you want to say anything to the people viewing this tape, or whatever you want to say.**

Well if you don't believe me, just join the army and you will see.

**Is that it?**

Yes, and I've enjoyed being with you, and thank you very much.

**Thank you very much, Kevin, great day, well done, you got through it.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**