

Australians at War Film Archive

Frederick From - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **We'll start off with this overview as we talked about before, so I'll get you to, as you did for me before, where you were born, where you grew up and continuing on from there?**

I was born on 30th May 1917 in a Brisbane hospital, a military hospital I think, and my father left for France seven days after I was born.

01:00 He lost his arm in France and when he came back he lived close to the hospital so he could have his arm dressed. When that was finished we went and lived on a little farm at Elimbah. That wasn't a very productive farm so we moved to Lowood on to another one, and I spent most of my life there. The school was the Lowood State School. When I left that - I had a very happy time there. When I left that I spent two years at Ipswich Grammar School,

01:30 again very happy. Because of finances I came back to the farm for a year and they offered me free education and board at Ipswich Grammar School so I went back there and did my senior there. After that I came back on to the farm, because we only had a small farm, we bought property and that's where we are living now. Then I worked

02:00 in the cane fields for part of the year, and when I came back the war had started while I was there. My father was a lieutenant colonel in charge of the 2/14th Light Horse, so he was called up early and I had to come home. I couldn't join up because there was no workmen left on the farm. So in May 1940 I joined the army and

02:30 put in to the 7th Division cavalry. I spent about six months training at Redbank and from there we embarked on the [Queen] Mary and from there we went to Trincomalee and then to Colombo and then to Palestine at Derna. From there I went to a tank school in Egypt and the rest of the unit came there too. And one afternoon we were pulled out and taken to collect

03:00 every type of equipment you could think of for an army at the workshops there. We didn't finish until after daylight, and we thought we would have a sleep then, but no, they picked us up and took us to wharf and there we were put on a ship, the Warsaw, and on that we travelled to Cyprus and we spent three or four months in Cyprus. And then we went on a destroyer to Haifa and the war was over in Syria and we were part of the

03:30 7th Division. We thought we missed the war. We travelled all over Syria, lots of jobs - came back to Palestine, embarked on the Mendoza, back to Colombo, spent a couple of weeks waiting there to see what was happening. Then we came back on the Orcades to Sandy Creek in South Australia, stayed there a while and then we went by train up to Tenterfield and from there to

04:00 all the Queensland positions and finally to New Guinea. From New Guinea we were (UNCLEAR) 'drome for a while and from there flown over the range to Sanananda. We spent about six weeks there then we came back to the [Atherton] Tablelands and from there I was sent to an officers' school, which I didn't pass.

04:30 And while I was there - between times they wanted recruits for the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force], so I applied and joined the RAAF and I spent a good deal of time training in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and finished up at Sale. I was commissioned off course there and discharged. So I saw no service with the air force. Then I went back to the farm for four years about,

05:00 and in 1950 they called for volunteers for Korea and I joined up and spent 12 months in action in Korea, came back to Australia, applied to get out to go to university, got married the same year and I managed to get a degree a Masters [degree] at the university in Agriculture. Then I did research work there for quite a while.

05:30 Then I pulled out and came out on the land. That's about it.

That was excellent, very well done. I'll go right back to the beginning. You mentioned your

father went to war. Tell me about his involvement in World War I?

Well he had gone through the Danish officers' school, and he came out here and they wouldn't accept him. He came out before the war, and they wouldn't accept him because he was an alien.

06:00 So a colonel advised him to say he was born in Canada and - born of Canadian parents and raised by a Danish family. So they accepted him then. He very quickly got a commission. He was in Australia training troops, and he didn't really like that because he was at heart a professional soldier. By protesting they sent him off, and they sent him off to - He got married in about

06:30 1916, and they sent him off just after I was born. Later on he farmed, and when they started to enlist troops again, he enlisted in the 2/14th and worked up to be colonel and he served in the army in Townsville, and after that time he came back to the land and was very happy there. He spent all his recreational time fishing. Even on Heron Island or Toucan Bay or something like that.

07:00 **Tell me about his injury?**

Beg your pardon?

Tell me about the injury he got during World War I?

I don't know a great deal about it. He got a bullet cord and the story was told that a German soldier threw a grenade at him and hit him in the upper arm, and he had a lot of shrapnel wounds in his leg and upper arm. He laid out for a long time, but he was taken

07:30 in and they didn't amputate his arm straight away but they tried to save it, but they had to amputate it. Now he's a very good athlete, particularly good athlete, and he was training the raiding parties in France and he was a top boxer and quite a good footballer and a very good gymnast. And an example of his skill was when he was with the Light Horse he was a horseman with only one arm, and they have an

08:00 exercise in the Light Horse where you gallop on a horse up to a peg and spear it with your sword and pull it out of the ground. He could do it as well as anybody else, and it was pretty interesting to see him gallop away with his one arm, with the sleeve of his one arm flying in the air. With this peg above his head, and practically everybody knows it and talks about it. But he was an outstanding athlete.

And what are your early memories of your

08:30 **father?**

Very physically interested man, very interested in army matters, very keen to be a free man on the land. Just loved being on the land, and he was a very considerate and very loyal family man. He was very self centred, and he enthralled

09:00 people with his conversation, but he never talked about anything but himself. But he was really a - he had a name.

What would he tell you as a child about World War I?

I lived in awe of World War I, because all of his friends were all World War I, and we saw many of them, and we had a lot of

09:30 World War I men in the district. And some of the early settlers were soldiers from the British Army and had fought in Korea and in a mutiny and so we grew up - even though it was a German district and the majority of the population were German. I happened to grow up pretty much in awe of campaigns.

What was this awe like, was it a promoted war?

10:00 No they talked of it as professional soldiers, just as a dentist would talk about dentistry or a doctor would talk about medicine. They related the incidents and they mostly talked about the amusing part. They would talk about it as professional soldiers, even though many of them weren't.

Well what sort of an impression of war did you build from this?

Probably

10:30 it was a - that men who went to war and survived, were - they never said this - were people apart. They had a fatalism and they didn't fear death. Even in civilian life, I was surprised at how fatalistic they were. I was always surprised at how they could line up and thousands would be

11:00 killed. And be really worried about it and come back and discuss it. That's the unfortunate thing about war; it's only the survivors who talk about it. No, it was a profession. They didn't hate the Germans, they didn't hate anybody - they were just too professional.

Was there ever any animosity growing up in a German

11:30 **community?**

Not really. There was a conflict, no there was a separation. When the first school was set up in Lowood

there were 11 pupils and I think 10 of them couldn't speak English. But nowadays the population is very harmonious. And one of the things that made them very harmonious is the bowls clubs - they all play bowls together. But in those days there was a difference. And yet

12:00 we were equally friendly with either Germans or anybody. Most of the town people and the early settlers were of Anglo-Celtic origin. But they still had very strong friendships with the Germans. In the First World War, it was very unfortunate they overdid the internment and caused a certain amount of bitterness, but they got over that fairly quickly. Second World War they were more sensible.

12:30 The local policemen were asked to intern someone he said, "No, he's a good citizen I wouldn't go near him." I felt that in my district it was much more sensible. Now my father spoke about four languages, some fluently, some not. And in the early part of the war he went round with the Federal Police

13:00 interrogating people they thought might be troublesome and he was very useful there, because they might come to offend somebody and not know what he was - a policeman might get abusive or something - and he could calm down and say who he was and who was a good man and that. And he was very proud of that afterwards. I think through him a lot of people they might have interned didn't.

13:30 All my school friends practically, except the doctor's son or the bank manager's son, were all of German origin.

And growing up in what you call in awe of war...?

Just in my family, and the family association, not the district.

How do you think this affected your decision to join

14:00 **up when...?**

I knew I had to go. No, I didn't have to go, I knew that I would go - it was part of my culture. But it didn't make any difference. I didn't enthusiastically go or anything. I just went because it was part of my culture.

Well tell me about this you knew you had to go?

It was just the way we lived. That was just what we were. They were our principles. We

14:30 went to war; you went to war. There is an interesting thing about that. My grandfather fought in the 1864 war between Denmark and Germany, and he was a volunteer, and it was unheard of volunteers in Denmark. When we went back to visit Denmark one of the questions they asked me, "Why did you volunteer? Your grandfather volunteered." So them, they didn't have the culture of volunteering.

What was it you were fighting for when you volunteered?

I was fighting because my country

15:00 was fighting. See when they asked me swear it an oath, I thought it was very unnecessary - I was an Australian and therefore I didn't have to swear an oath.

Well how did you feel that Australia was fighting for the empire?

Because my family were empire oriented, we were part of the empire. We were all very proud to be part of the empire. It mightn't be understandable today, but everybody, some

15:30 of the Germans that came out here, came to live in Queen Victoria's country.

What did the empire represent to you?

See you are making it too complicated, too sophisticated. It was just - we just belonged to the empire and we were very proud to belong to the empire, and I still wouldn't mind belonging to a good empire. I,

16:00 we didn't analyse anything.

Well tell me about when you heard that World War II had broken out?

I didn't have to hear it, we all expected it. I didn't want to go really because it was interfering with the things I wanted to do. And I think that many people were like that. But again it was part of my tradition, and I certainly -

16:30 See Denmark was very anti German, of course, and I suppose a bit of that rubbed off on me. But that wasn't why I went. There was a little bit of adventure in it, I must admit. But why I went again, it was part of the culture. It was part of the empire and I was part of the empire, and why should other people fight for me?

During your years of growing up, how much of your Danish

17:00 **heritage was taught to you in your life?**

Never taught to me. I don't think people teach inheritance, but I have always - my grandmother wrote

to my father until she died in 1940, and so I know the Danish village life very well because she discussed the village, or town life it was there. But that's a thing you have without knowing it. you see. It's like having

17:30 blue eyes or something else, you just don't question it much. But I did know even though I have often said, even though I was bilingual up until one stage, and I knew all my Danish ancestors and relations. I was always Australian again because I would have known more about the Tower of London than I knew about Amalienborg Castle

18:00 or even Kronborg Castle. But I would have known about the - I had the Australian history and the British history. And of course in those days, in the early days, we considered ourselves part of it. Even all my Danish ancestors in Australia, they were all dyed in the wool Australians and part of the empire. My family for a while called Britain

18:30 home. So it's something that people can't understand today, but I might be a little bit different, in that with my ancestry and the other second and third generation Australians.

You mentioned that when the war first began you had to come back to the farm because your father had...?

Yes he was in the army and

19:00 we couldn't leave the farm.

How did you get out of that in 1940?

We decided that wasn't important. My brother was older than that and he joined up.

What process did you have to go through to join up?

Just go down to Brisbane and join up.

Did you have any particular sort of reason why you wanted to be part of the army as opposed to other forces?

Yes my whole tradition was army. I didn't have any interest in the

19:30 air force or navy.

And, you went into the - After joining the army, how was your allocation...?

They more less... I knew where I was going before, because my father was a cavalryman and they had formed a cavalry unit, and I went into that one of the happiest things I ever did actually. Very

20:00 likeable group of men.

Tell me about the role of the cavalry?

Well I have never filled the role. It was supposed to be probing troops out in front of the main army but I never - we never really filled that role. We trained in that role, we never filled it. When we were used at all we were used as infantry.

20:30 **Was there much, I guess during training or anything, I guess teething problems with the fact that cavalry was no longer using horses and...?**

No they had all been - most of the people that joined the unit I joined had been in the Light Horse, but you must remember in those days farmers were becoming mechanised and a lot of country people and cars were pretty common. No I don't think they - some of them were nostalgic

21:00 about the horses, but some of them didn't want to take horses into battle you see, so they - no I don't think it's any transition worries at all.

While you were in Australia did you have any interaction with your father in terms of...?

Not in army matters, no. When I went on leave I sometimes saw him, but he was up at Townsville for a while so I didn't see him. After I came back from the Middle East I visited him during that time.

21:30 **What were some of the basic things that you were taught during your cavalry training?**

Like all armies, to salute, you know, drill, but you also did map reading and tactics, because I was a wireless operator and morse code and all the usual stuff and machine gun shooting and rifle shooting.

22:00 Pretty normal sort of stuff.

And how were you introduced to any of the mechanised elements?

We had tanks and carriers - they were pretty useless, but we had them. They were cast off tanks from somewhere and you could have opened them with a tin opener, but still they were training techniques.

Were you taught to drive them?

Everybody's taught to drive them. Everybody's taught to do every

22:30 job.

But how hard is it to drive a tank?

Very easy, probably easier than a motor car. It hasn't a will of its own. It goes where you tell it. But of course if it's not properly maintained you can have brakes that grip and clutches that slip, and tracks that fall off, and all the rest of it. Whatever jobs in those days, putting on the tracks was one of the more difficult ones.

How was that done?

23:00 You slipped a track and run a track on again and put it on again. But I think most of them liked the newness and the interest of being in a mechanised vehicle, and they also wore a beret and the fops [?] in the unit liked that.

Can you just describe, I guess, just the driving the

23:30 **console in a tank and how it's...?**

You drove it - tanks drove - they steered with a clutch to begin with, and if you are going downhill you had to do reverse steering because one wheel would run away on you, you see, but then you come back on to brakes. You had first clutches then brakes. I wasn't a driver. But that's what happened. They weren't very impressive, I think, tanks. They have been used for

24:00 tribal war. I don't know what they were used for, but they weren't very impressive. They were all right for training.

And what was the...?

We had Bren gun carriers too. They were useless.

Why were they useless?

Well, they were open on top. You sat more or less half out of the carrier, they didn't really give the protection and they tended at times to use them for jobs they

24:30 shouldn't have been used for. Again, they were patrolling cars. But if you haven't got anything, they had to do.

How cohesive was your unit in terms of what sort of bonds of friendship were formed?

Really it was one of the happiest groups. I have always been in happy groups, but it's one of the happiest groups I have ever been in. A lot of them were country men, but a big percentage were

25:00 town people. We got on very well and we were together for a very long time without casualties and of course the friendship lasts right till today, not many left now, but they lasted right till today. No, I have had a very good group of people. But really everybody was my friend there. I had people I saw more of than others. In the army if you belonged

25:30 to... Your group is really 100 men, your company or squadron. Well you know everyone in that well, but you mightn't know the others very well because you don't come into contact with them as much. You eat with the one lot and you sleep with the one lot and everything that you do is with that group. And you know them all very, very well. You like 90% of them.

26:00 And the 10%, you put up with them and they put up with you. A lot of give and take.

How did you become a wireless operator?

Just told me I was a wireless operator. I didn't really care what I was. I wasn't a very good wireless operator. I had hearing problems. I didn't know it then. I never got a very high... I qualified but that's about it. We had

26:30 people who could do 25 words a minute and I could do about 12. But very rare to have anyone who could do 25 - we only had a couple.

How fluent were you with the Morse code alphabet?

Good enough for what we were supposed to do. I wouldn't have liked to have to converse with the navy.

27:00 **And what kind of portable equipment did you have as a wireless operator?**

Look I can't remember the names of them, but we had both verbal and - I can't remember the names, but we had both, yes. I was never really interested very much in that, no I can't remember the names of them.

So tell me

- 27:30 **about when you got your orders that you would be leaving Australia and where did you think you would be heading?**
- We all expected to go to the Middle East. I don't know why, but traditionally the Australian army went to the Middle East. None of the 8th Division went to Singapore at the same time, just about they were at Redbank with us. No I think we all expected...
- 28:00 We knew we wouldn't be going to France, more or less. Yes I think we all expected. It was - being a cavalry unit they had big interests there because their fathers had been Light Horsemen who had fought at Gallipoli or Mesopotamia and they had this tradition with their family stories, and all the leave
- 28:30 stories.
- Did your father have any stories to tell you when you told him that you would be going overseas?**
- Did he what?
- Did he have any stories to tell you when you told him you would be going overseas?**
- He wasn't in the Light Horse, he was in France. And but I had an uncle who was in Gallipoli, and also in France, and claimed he was the - he never, he went right through the war and came home and served his time,
- 29:00 he was never scratched the whole time he was there. He came out of shell holes where he was the only man who came out of them. He didn't serve in Mesopotamia, but he was with the Light Horse. 5th Light Horse.
- And how did you leave Australia?**
- On the Mary, Queen Mary. That was very interesting. We got on in Sydney. I don't remember, it was around about Christmas,
- 29:30 Boxing Day we left, and it was an enormous ship we never thought we would travel on it. And we got on there and we thought we would be able to be up top and have a cabin or something. We kept going down and down and down, until we got to E Deck Aft. That was pretty well down in the bilges, and there was only one deck below us and that was F Deck, and it had men on it. They had a swimming pool - we didn't.
- 30:00 We slept in hammocks. It was ventilated, and I was lucky I got under a ventilator. And a lot of the detail on the Mary I have forgotten, but one thing I do remember very well, I was a corporal then, and I was in charge of a group to go and wash the crockery in the captain's pantry. We went in there, I think there was myself and either there was three or four others, and
- 30:30 we got in there and they showed us a big washing machine, you could put 20,000 plates in a day, and they pointed to it and explained how it was used, and I went with the other four up to work it and chief steward said me, "No, corporal, you can't work that. The men must work this." So anyway they did it and it was a terrible job, big
- 31:00 steaming thing and the plates burned your fingers half the time. I felt dreadful. One fellow who was just about 40, he had a heart and we didn't know it then, he had to go out and sit in the corridor. And I felt quite bad and this sort of stopped me any time I wanted to help them. So he took me away to have lunch and I had a five course meal. And I ended up with - And he was a very interesting man, he was the chief steward
- 31:30 and he was pointing out that he was making a great sacrifice for the war. He wasn't complaining or anything, but when he was on the Mary before, a young fellow who wanted to sit beside a girl had come slipped him £2 or £3 so - or if a woman wanted to sit beside another influential woman, she would slip him a bribe too. He was not complaining at all, he was a very straight man,
- 32:00 about 5'7", immaculately dressed, I thought he was the captain at first. He had a very strong accent so I knew he wasn't - And we sat there and had this very happy meal and I ended up with what we now call neapolitan ice cream, I had never really seen it before, and he explained to me that on the ship they carried enough turkeys for two years, they carried enough American ice cream for two years. They
- 32:30 always carried American ice cream because they didn't like the English ice cream and remember in those days it tended to be gritty, where the American ice cream is very smooth. I learnt - it was my first introduction to a professional army. It was the rigidity of the army, but - Another thing I remember that was quite interesting, we pulled in Fremantle and stayed there for a while,
- 33:00 and we were all playing medicine ball on the top of the deck and most of the time - In the beginning it was fun, but they got pretty sick of it after a while. In the end the wretched ball landed in the sea, and we all rushed over to have a look at it, leaned over. And there was a boat there loading vegetables, probably for the captain's pantry, anyway it was for the officers' mess.
- 33:30 Anyway this boat was about a 20 footer, and when the medicine ball dropped in the water, one of the crew jumped overboard and I remember his long dark hair, not like today, but and he swam over to the

medicine ball and leisurely swam back to the boat and threw it back on board, splashed in the water for a while and then climbed back on the boat. And just as he climbed back

34:00 a big shark - the biggest I have ever seen in my life - came up just where he had been. Everybody on board admitted they had never seen a shark as big as it; it looked like a 20 footer. And we called out to him and he saw it and he waved. But that's the biggest shark I have ever seen.

What other sorts of things did they...?

They played all sorts of sports, they played -

34:30 They had athletics, I took part in the athletics, I was the best sprinter in Queensland, but when the New South Welshmen came long way back, I got two, must have been seconds in something, I don't know what it is now. And they played sports, we did boxing, I think we won the boxing. We won the tug of war. My friend from Buna, Selwyn Miller, was

35:00 a very good boxer, exceptionally good, and looked unbeatable, but he stood back, a thing he never ever - But he stood back the other fella looked so terribly battered, and the other fella as a last effort swung an uppercut and hit Selwyn under the jaw. Selwyn fell on his head and split his head. He had to get it sewn up. And the sequel to that is that we were lining up at the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] one day for Selwyn to get his stitches out

35:30 and Selwyn got a bit impatient and said, "Come on, you take them out." I said, "I am not taking them out." Anyway he went along and sat himself down on something, and we gave him his nail scissors and I took his stitches out.

How do you take someone's stitches out?

No bother, you just have to snip them and pull them out.

Did he have any complications?

He did have complications later, but not from the stitches,

36:00 but I think he had a slight concussion or something later. Something came back on him for a short time later. He recovered from it all right.

Were there any sort of I guess informal games?

No, mostly training, exercise or games, like tunnel ball or volley ball all this sort of stuff. And I think

36:30 they were they main organised games. They had a canteen on it at first and I don't like wet ships. I drank enough in my time. But I don't like wet ships, they get too unruly. They had one on the Mary and it was a real mess. It was so bad they closed it after a couple of days, and it was the best thing they ever did. They also had a lot of gambling, and two of our chaps set up a

37:00 Crown & Anchor board, that was a one from the First World War, it was Barry Reynolds out on the bounds and McEwan but they lost all the... But of course when they were silly with the alcohol - they were shearing everybody's heads and all that, they were running an anchor board in the middle of this, but they didn't get their heads shorn. But they

37:30 lost all their money so that was the end of that.

How does Crown & Anchor work?

I don't know, I have no idea. I haven't the faintest idea.

What was the general sort of atmosphere like on the ship?

Good, pretty happy. You had a fair bit of spare time, you could wander around the decks and look at things.

38:00 When we got somewhere in the middle of the Indian Ocean we ran into a rain squall. Two of my friends and I were walking around the deck and this rain squall came, and we had been watching the ships around us, there were five ships, and a cruiser and when this rain squall hit the Mary started to vibrate and when the rain squall was over there was no other ships in sight. She

38:30 just pulled over the horizon - of course she could do 33 knots or some speed like that. And that was the last we saw of any of the ships. And we had no idea where we were going, had no idea, all sorts of guesses. We had been working out our direction, we knew we were going north, and suddenly when we arrived at Trincomalee, and nobody knew what Trincomalee or where it was

39:00 and we went into the Trincomalee harbour, narrow entrance, I think you could have thrown a stone to land on each side, and she pulled up in a beautiful harbour, a bit like Meridian harbour in North Queensland. And all sorts of small ships, in fact they looked like a duck with a lot of ducklings, they were so small. The next morning it was... There were very few buildings there; they can't have had much staff

- 39:30 there. Well just about the next morning or soon after, they pulled up another ship beside us open to the side of the Mary and we went on to the other ship, and this was the Lancashire. It was a Bibby Line one. It was made up as a troopship and I think it carried troops from Africa to various places. And we got on that and that was
- 40:00 was the thing that remains most vividly in people's minds - it stank! We went round to Colombo then and stayed at Colombo for a while.

Tape 2

- 00:35 We pulled into Colombo harbour and hooked on to a buoy, they gave us one day's leave, and as soon as we got ashore the first thing I went to see was the cinnamon bark tree. I had heard about the cinnamon bark tree all my life and they had one in the
- 01:00 botanical gardens there. We went to see all the things, the Galle Face Hotel, but that was officers only, so we didn't do anything; we had a meal. The wives of the dependants in Colombo were hosting a lot of the soldiers, and there was one case and they were Sinhalese chauffeurs, and there is a story told
- 01:30 about two of the soldiers, they spoke good English, but the Australians educated them a bit further, and this woman was driving along with the chauffeur and showing the sights and everything, and there were Sinhalese riding bicycles all over the place. And she said to her driver, John, "Who are these people here?" and the chauffeur said, "Lady, they are black bicycling bastards."
- 02:00 And that's a story that lasted pretty well. The only catastrophe Colombo was that somebody came out of a door and threw a glass of acid into one of the fellow's faces, put him out of action. Well we went back on to the Lancashire. It was a fairly interesting trip. Now we are down on the water level and we could see the porpoises and the flying fish all around us.
- 02:30 And the meals were dreadful, they didn't have much money so they couldn't buy much from the canteen. The only thing that was really edible were the duck eggs. And they were tainted too, everything was tainted. One night they put on beer, and it was McEwan's beer and like everybody else I bought a dixie full and
- 03:00 tried to drink it but couldn't drink it and poured it over the side. And great flares of phosphorescence came out of the water. I don't know whether it was the beer or just normal. It was a good enough ship, very small. And we didn't sleep on our hammocks. We always slept on deck with one blanket, and first thing in the morning... On this they had a, supposed you would call it an Alaskan crew but it was an Asian crew,
- 03:30 little fellows, all little fellows, and first thing in the morning, we all sleeping happily there before daylight, and they came down with big hoses to wash the deck, and they would say, "Water come, water come, water come." And most people would get their blankets wet before they could snatch them up out of the way. They had a big fat cook down there and a lot of
- 04:00 supervisors. A couple of Caucasian cooks, supervising a lot of Asian I suppose cook's assistants. And our fellows used to slip in sometimes and pinch something, or perhaps just look at it. And one day McEwan went down there and he came up - he was white. And Hayden McMasters was beside him and he said to Hayden, "You know what they have got down there, Hayden?" "No." And
- 04:30 McEwan said, "You know that big fat cook, well he's dead and they got him on a bench down there." So they must have been keeping him for an autopsy or something. Eventually we arrived in the southern side of the thing, and we were looking ashore and we could see a few palm trees and a camels going past and we'd had enough of the sea and we wanted to go ashore. They
- 05:00 pulled out all the boats, and I suppose they thought the men needed exercise, they pulled out the boats and everybody was to get in them, and of course we thought we were going ashore. Everybody volunteered to get in the boats, but when we got within about 300 yards of the shore the officer turned them around and then they had mock races, and they weren't very enthusiastic races. And the next place we came to was the
- 05:30 Bitter Lakes, and there we were put into a train. Dusty. And we got a bit of a... It's at night, and we got a bit of an idea what the place might be like. And we went to Dimra and we were put off at Dimra in the dark and set up a camp there. And it was interesting there. It was the orange season and we were told at first that we had to dip our oranges in copper sulphate
- 06:00 solution but that didn't last long - they didn't dip the oranges there for long. They were delicious oranges. They had beds made out of latticework of date palm things. We used those but they collapsed so they were discarded. We slept on the ground. We did a fair bit of training there, drill and
- 06:30 night exercises. And after a while we had been there for a while I was sent to a tank gunnery school in Egypt. And this tank... This was very interesting for me because it was run by the British Army, permanent army, and they had messes for every ranks. I think they had a lance corporals' mess, they

had a corporals' mess, a sergeants' mess, and we in the unit hardly had any messes except for the general mess. I remember when we got they didn't work

- 07:00 very hard. We only worked about two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. We had plenty of time to go on leave in Cairo and we got to know Cairo very well. We used to go in there at night and have a meal at a place called the Little Corner of France, delicious meal and cost practically nothing. And we went to visit all the things, the Mosque of Mohammad Ali and went to see where Moses was found, all
- 07:30 sorts of things. We went to a Coptic monastery and this was new to me completely. And generally we went to the cabarets at night, they were a bit uninteresting, but we found one that was much more intimate. Where you got to know the girls and sat with them and bought them
- 08:00 drinks and that. But we didn't realise that they didn't drink alcohol, they had a coloured drink. So we found this out and one of our fellas was pretty full one night, and we felt they must have dosed his drink, so we went back and this time we moved all the drinks around, so the girls had to drink the alcohol and they got a little bit tipsy. And they came with their mothers - they weren't prostitutes -
- 08:30 they came with... Their mothers were chaperones but they kept out of sight. And when we came back the next time, one of the girls had bruises on her arm and we said to her, "Why have you got those bruises on your arm?" and she said, "I got drunk my mother beat me." So it wasn't quite what she thought it was. At the tank gunnery school we did the normal tank
- 09:00 structure and mechanism and firing on the ranges and very little drill. We played one game of football against an English, one game of ruby union against an English team they had very good sports grounds, they had marvellous showers, very good place. The only trouble was they had a lot of bugs, and bugs don't bite me or they don't like me
- 09:30 anyway. And where you slept you had iron beds with biscuits on them, square things that fitted together to make a mattress, but I didn't realise it because it because I don't show any signs of bugs. But you could go down to the quartermaster's store and borrow a torch, the thing that you heat,
- 10:00 anyway, bring it up and burn your beds all over the ironwork on your bed and that kills the bugs, but they were still in the biscuits. I found out the difference between the British Army and the Australian Army. As I was a corporal I had my turn of seeing that the barracks were cleaned out, so as I was Australian they said, "Right, you fellows had
- 10:30 better clean out the barracks." And that would be an order in Australia. I came back to help them but nothing was started, so I said again, I went off and one of the English corporals pulled me aside and he said, "Hey, if you don't give them a time to do it they won't do it." So I said, "Have the barracks cleaned out in 10 minutes." They did it all right. But it was quite a different attitude from the Australian Army.
- 11:00 **What kind of things were you learning at the tank gunnery school?**
- Well you learnt first of all the tank, how it operated, spent a lot of time on the hydraulics system that rotated the turret, spent a lot of time on the recoil mechanism and a bit of
- 11:30 time on tactics and then we did exercises in the tank. Did a lot of work on the machine guns. They didn't have - we were used to Vickers, but they had BSAs, I think it was a combination of a British and a Czechoslovakian gun. They were very good they were air cooled not water cooled, and we fired them and
- 12:00 we went out on the range, I have photos of this, we went out on the range and fired the two pounder. Of course we had a two pounder and the Germans had about an 88 mm. Really was pretty ineffectual. Their tanks were very old and out of date. But the best they had, they were very experienced tank gunners, they had been right through the desert, very likeable fellows. I met one fellow, I met him when I was in Korea. I didn't meet him. I knew he was
- 12:30 there but I couldn't get over to see him. But suddenly I withdrew from the school and we went back to the school, and went back to Hellway [?] and that's where the unit was, and that's where I told about going on the ship. One morning as I said before, we pulled out, and we had to get all this equipment together and put it together and then we went down to the wharf
- 13:00 to get on this ship to get on the... It was a real rust bucket if ever I saw one. I think they pulled it out of retirement. It was interesting when we got on it. It had had a woman engineer and we had never seen a woman engineer before. She gave most of the orders on the ship, it seemed. They put a meal on. But when we were on the wharf all the soldiers were coming out of Greece
- 13:30 and on the wharf they had big piles of all sorts of food that you rarely saw, like mushroom soup and that sort of thing, and of course our fellows souvenired a lot of that. And when they got on the ship they didn't go for the bully beef meal - they had all this extra food with them. And this ship was really an old ship and it wandered along. And I didn't see this, but I am told it did happen, a
- 14:00 submarine surfaced and said, "Who are you and where are you going?" and one of the fellas on the deck sang out, "We're going to buggery." So the submarine sailed off. It must have realised that it was an

- Australian boat. We went to Famagusta in Cyprus – a very nice looking place. We were at a very big
- 14:30 old town there with about 100 ft stone walls. That I might mention later. And we disembarked and were given leave that night. Before we went out on leave the colonel said to us, “You must be very careful here, they have a drink called cognac and it’s real firewater. Most of us can’t drink it.” And he said,
- 15:00 “The prostitutes here are all 100% VD [venereal disease].” So the boys said to him, they are pretty keen on their colonel and they took a lot of notice, but they went to town and they each in turn tasted this cognac but it tasted like water, but it was real firewater. But luckily Chris Jensen and Archie Shillen and I went down to have a look at the residential quarter and it was
- 15:30 one of the most delightful places I have seen, the houses with rose gardens. But the interesting thing about it nearly every backyard had two or three windmills in it, and it’s windmills like we have in Australia. And they must have close underground water, but not a rapid supply. Anyway we went... They must have heard some bad tales about
- 16:00 Australian soldiers because wherever we went the girls rushed inside and almost pulled the gates off. So we got embarrassed and had to leave the place. So when we got back, the boys were pretty much under the weather and we had to get them back to... We had to get trucks to get them back, but there weren’t many of us that were fully sober. And that night a very unhappy lot, very ashamed of themselves. The colonel
- 16:30 lined them up in the morning. He said, “The less said about last night the better.” But there was no damage, they didn’t upset anybody. And after that the Cypriots could see no wrong with the Australians, Australians could do no wrong. And they...

What had they been drinking?

Only cognac, but it seemed innocuous.

- 17:00 And one thing I remember while I am at Famagusta. On Famagusta they had a cabaret, either the Argentina or the Arizona, I have forgotten, but it was another one called the other name. And down in that they had the three best looking hostesses I have seen. The story was they were Hungarians that had
- 17:30 come to Cyprus or escaped from Hungary and came to Cyprus. The rumour was that they were spies. They probably weren’t but I don’t know. But it really was a sophisticated little cabaret and after it we did go back again. But the thing was so notable that these very good looking sophisticated women were serving in this place. Very well dressed.
- 18:00 I remember one experience there were some commandos on the island too, and one of them was a bit full and he came down the concrete stairs that led down, he tripped about halfway down and crashed onto his head on the ground and the blood was running over the floor. And Nina I think was her name came up and I went to turn her aside and she pushed me aside and had a good look as it walked away. And the next day we had
- 18:30 to go to Nicosia, close to Nicosia. And it was like a pilgrimage – our tanks were hot and dry and the tanks were overheating and we were stopping all the way to keep the tanks going. But eventually we got into Nicosia and we got to a place I think called Aklangia [?] in the blue gum grove, and we were settled in there and we
- 19:00 stayed there all the time we were in Cyprus. We did have duties in other places and we weren’t to go out in the day time because of surveillance. And we realised we were put there because Crete had fallen and we were a bluff force to give the impression we had big forces there because they equipped us with a troop of battle buggies, we
- 19:30 had a troop of tanks I was with a troop of tanks, and a troop of Bren gun carriers. They had commando troops they took around in Cypriot buses, and had machine gunners, and they had photographed all of these. I am getting ahead of myself. They photographed all these and put them in the paper like the Pix, you probably don’t know what the Pix is, but it was a pictorial paper and they published it all around the Mediterranean, to give the impression that we had massive
- 20:00 forces in Cyprus. Whereas there were 400 of us there. And to further take the bluff, we had leave every three days, one was night leave, and the first day we would go to Nicosia, the capital, and we mightn’t wear berets. The next day we would go out on one of the seaside resorts and they were delightful, you could swim out 800 yards the water was shallow, you couldn’t have had a
- 20:30 more delightful place. The Cypriots would follow us with ice cream and had an ice cream they made of a mixture of goats’ and sheep’s milk. And they would come up and set up around us, and we would go and go swimming and all the rest of it. And then the next we might go to Nicosia with our felt hats on, and the third time we would go to Nicosia we would wear steel
- 21:00 hats, and we kept doing this to keep up a bluff. In between we would train pretty solidly; we had other duties. I had one duty there plane spotting. They sent us out on to a hill, we had little troves on the top because we had nothing to do for three days. We had carry our water up in kerosene tins, and our food, pretty steep little hills. We would sit there and we

- 21:30 were collected by... And we saw planes coming and we had to report their distance and height and direction. But we never saw them because the island was under a complete haze. A troop of Hurricanes, I suppose it was a troop, I have forgotten how many, they had one white wing and one black wing, because they were used in the night
- 22:00 fighting in Europe. The Italians used to come over about 33,000 feet and of course the Hurricanes couldn't get up near them, but as soon as they scrambled they got - by that time the Italians would be well gone. They did drop a few bombs, they dropped one in an old building near the wharf where they
- 22:30 stored things, and it dropped into the building, it was thick stone walls and all it did was blow the roof off. The Italians were really too high to do any damage. We had a good friend in the Hurricanes group or whatever it was, squadron or flight. And we used to... Barney Handersidon, who used to visit us, and every time we would scramble we'd
- 23:00 go, "Go on Barney, Go on Barney," and Barney would never - he just didn't have the capabilities to do it. We spent a very happy time in Cyprus, they were marvellous population, Greek - we had hardly anything to do with the Turks, it was a Greek population, very like any other western population. The only thing where they differed in some ways was that
- 23:30 no girl could be married without a dowry, she had to have a dowry before she could marry. And in our camp we had a woman doing our washing, and Calamira was her name, and she had a boyfriend and he had come back from America, gone to America and made money and come back, and he looked as if he was in his middle 40s. And they were to get married, but first of all Calamira had to get a
- 24:00 dowry. So she was doing our washing so she could get money to get a dowry. They didn't invite us to evenings I will call them. We would go up there and sit around the room, and they introduced you to someone. They had cognac in little glasses, everyone got a cognac, and they would say, "This is my fiancée, Calamira.
- 24:30 A toast to Calamira!" And then, "This is my grandmother, so and so and so," and, "A toast to her!" And of course you are in a building, sitting there bright light and eventually we decided we had. We were out of bounds really, we decided we had better get home. We get outside and its all boulders like cobbled streets, and we could hardly stand up. So they would get their pack mules out and
- 25:00 load us on the pack mules and they all had power lanterns, and they would take us down the hillside like a biblical procession. And we said, "No, no, we'd have go get back into camp." When we were out on tank exercises sometimes we'd be invited into their coffee house. Only the men were allowed in the coffee house. Only the women did the work and the men did
- 25:30 most of the talking. And we'd go in there and they were terribly well informed. One example, we were having coffee and we complimented them on their coffee and they said, "Do you drink coffee in Australia?" And we had a fellow there by the name of Bill Sykes, very nice fellow, and he said, "Yes, but we drink it with chicory." And he said, "What is chicory?" And Bill didn't know what chicory was
- 26:00 but he made a guess and said, "It's the leaf of a plant." So they got down and the next thing, "No, no, it's the root of a plant." So we were pretty careful after that. But anyway, we were very well received. They were quite unlike the Muslim populations we had been with. When you went on the road, they would throw you grapes and things like that.
- 26:30 They would have big parties in the town. I remember one party we went to where they had a tomato fight with us when they finished, so it was quite a relaxed population. Except in marriage - no girl could go out without a chaperone. And there was a beautiful girl in the English residence there, they had set up a Garrison Club or a Sari Club. You could
- 27:00 go and have cake and coffee or whatnot. And they had a girl there I think her name was Mina, or something like that. Anyhow, the boys really got a crush on her and they would go there to get cake, but I don't think she took any notice of the boys. But she was betrothed to a doctor and they had been betrothed from birth. And I am told they weren't to be married for another three or four years, but I am told that she married before we left. So I don't know what
- 27:30 the mechanism behind it was.

Was there any talk about the potential of a landing or an attack by the Germans or any likelihood of that?

In the army you don't talk about those things. I mean you do plan for them, but it never comes into the conversation. Officially we realised we were bluffed. Just imagine if they put in 10,000 paratroopers how long you would last. And...

- 28:00 But no. That's an interesting thing. Nobody every worried about the future, just the immediate. No-one went round worrying about the Germans coming. I would never have given it a thought. But it was planned. But as for general conversation, it was not a topic of conversation.

Well tell us about the physical planning.

28:30 **Were there defences built? Tell us about the, not the talk, but what kind of exercises did you do? What kind of defences?**

Well if we had been there we would have had to do a sort of griller thing, and that's what we did. That's why we moved all over the island to become familiar with it. That was the defences of it, being able to move rapidly to

29:00 a place, suppose you got a small invasion, and be able to get there quickly.

Were there trenches built? What kind of defences built?

No, practically none. You would have been more of a hindrance than a help with a trench, you would have been sitting in a way where you shouldn't be. They did bomb the aerodrome a bit and the Free French strafed it. Syria started that. The

29:30 Free French strafed the aerodrome. Where we were we never saw a shot fired. But apprehension is not a thing the army goes in for much.

Was there ever a feeling of vulnerability of having only 400 men on this island?

Not talked about, but it was realised. No. You had a job to do and that's what you did.

30:00 I'll tell you later of other times about when people might have been worried in hindsight, but they weren't.

So tell us about your time there all up. Why did you have to leave Cyprus after three months?

It wasn't that it was realised... You see the Syrian war, we were supposed to be in the Syrian war, but it was over. But it was real... They put other British

30:30 soldiers there in our place, many more but I don't know how many. But the reason for leaving was just that we were going back to our division. But the leaving was very interesting. We were put on trucks and taken somewhere - you never know where you are going with the army - we ended up on the wharf, we only had our pistols, so we knew we weren't going to war anywhere, and our equipment, and

31:00 we were sitting there knowing that we were going somewhere, probably going by boat and we were lying there bored to tears. Barney Hand, the fellow I mentioned before, had a gramophone and he only had one record and that was 'Somewhere in France with You'. And they got bored and they played, and as soon as it finished, they put it back on and played again and it went all night.

31:30 Then suddenly we saw something. It was dark. We saw something slide in beside the wharf and the next thing we knew an officer from the ship called out, "You are in the navy now, get on board." So we all rushed to get on board and we got on to the Havoc. Now the Havoc was a destroyer but a very well known one. It

32:00 had performed in Narvik and Matapan, I think, and when we got on we were so crowded you could hardly... And we were all pretty ready for sleep then. Some slept on deck and got sprayed all over them. I was downstairs and the only place I could get was against the bulkhead somewhere with my shoulders on the floor and my legs straight up the wall. I slept there most of the night. In the middle of the night,

32:30 sailors came round with hot chocolate for us and it was the most delicious chocolate I have ever had. Partly because it was cold but by jove it was good. The first thing they asked us, "Aye lad, are you going to Tobruk?" because one thing they didn't want to do was that Tobruk run because they had done it many times and it was a pretty dangerous one. "No," we said, "we don't know where we are going but we are not going to war."

33:00 So they took us off and we landed at Haifa. And Haifa was the most beautiful town we had seen in the Middle East. It was right up the side of a cliff, mostly stone houses with cantilever rooves. And they took us up there and they put us in a house and gave us a meal. The most delicious meal we'd had for a while. It was fresh bread, and butter and bully beef. And on the island of Cyprus we'd been on English rations for a while and particularly English

33:30 margarine, and it was like cheese when it was cold and olive oil when it was warm. So we really enjoyed that meal. We only stayed there one night and the next morning, Archie, Cliff and I - Cliff was my cousin and Archie was another friend - decided we would have a look at the place, we had a while. So we walked up some stairs, there must have been 400 stairs, right to the top of the hill. And

34:00 there we found there was a German colony, I know nothing about it more than that, but they published a German newspaper and they spoke in German. We couldn't stay too long, we couldn't find out too much, so we walked back down, and when you walked back down you could almost look straight down on the destroyer, a most delightful sight. And the town was

34:30 quite spectacular with all these stone buildings with cantilever rooves and just enough greenery around them to make the place attractive. It was by far the most pleasant place in the Middle East.

What was the story with the Germans?

I know nothing about it I am ashamed to say, I have also been going to find out about it but I think they might have been pre First World War, and I don't think they were anything to do with the Jewish

35:00 migration. I don't know why. It's a good mystery I should look into.

What about the people there? Were they there?

They were all there, they were sitting round tables drinking coffee or something. They had notices up in German.

Do you know if they were interned or...?

No, no, no. If the papers hadn't have been in German or the

35:30 notices hadn't have been in German, we wouldn't have known. Oh well, they didn't leave us long there, we went off the next morning to up along the coast road and we could see the signs of damages along the way. The Free French soldiers who had surrendered were all encamped along the road. There were flags all decked all along the side of the road, must

36:00 have been their unit flags or something. Two of the silly wretches on the truck I was in pinched two of the flags and waved them back at them like that and they thought they were being matey, you know. Found out later that they had insulted the whole French army. But the diplomats got to it and handled it, but they would have shot those two if they could have. The next place we stopped...

How would they have insulted them?

You see

36:30 they sullied their flag. That was their flag and you had taken liberties with it. We never knew anything about it for a long. We went straight through there. I don't think we stopped at Beirut. No, we went straight through there to Tripoli and we were camped in an orchard that had scraggly trees in it,

37:00 and it had a stone wall round it and prickly pear in it, and there wasn't much soil to be seen, it was little sharp stones on the ground. And they brought in the water cart and we all had a bath. And had our meal. I went over to talk to Selwyn Miller and I only had a towel on and I sat down on the ground and I suddenly felt a pain in my buttocks

37:30 and wondered about what it was, and I thought it was a sharp stone and so I moved over a bit and it didn't go. So I stood up and Selwyn's eyes opened and I looked back and here were two black scorpions hanging from my buttocks through the towel! And Selwyn knocked them off and jumped on them, and they all thought they were fatal and almost all gathered round to watch me die. But I went and lay on the towel. They

38:00 didn't really hurt much at all.

Did any side effects happen at all?

No, nothing. I must have been lucky enough to get the non-toxic ones. And there's a story here I'll tell, and it's only a story, and I have no verification of it, but the story goes that one of the soldiers in my troop who bought the favours of a girl for a tin of bully beef and got two eggs change.

38:30 That's the story that stayed in the unit, but I don't know if it is true.

How would you hear a story like this?

Well everybody believed it. But I am not too sure. From there we travelled up the coast for, I don't know how long, and we camped on the top of a hill at a place called Benias [?]. We were camped there.

39:00 They had a place about as big as three tennis courts and we were all camped round that, and it was all rocky too, and that was a Druid village too I was told, those sort of things aren't too accurate because it was hearsay and you lived on hearsay and rumour in the army. It was a Druid's village and we had a cookhouse there and when we cooked... After we finished you scraped your plates and

39:30 washed them, and they used to have a... They had a boy there, only describe as an idiot, but they stood him where they scraped their plates and he had a billy in his hand and everybody scraped their tins into his billy, pretty upset everybody pretty much. The cook was a bit sadistic and he used to throw and the kids would all hang round

40:00 to get something, and we would mostly give them something. But Paddy would smear mustard on bread and throw it up just to watch them, because it wouldn't worry them because all their spices were far hotter than the mustard. It would just be a strange spice to them. They didn't even react to it.

00:38 **I'll just continue on from where Kiernan [interviewer] left off?**

We did a lot of exercise from there as we do everywhere we go. One day we went out in the tanks and we came to a mount

01:00 with an enormous castle on it. I didn't know what it was, but we drove up to it in the tank and left somebody in the tank and a couple of us got out, and it happened to be the Chevalier, and I didn't know that. I only found out since. We walked into it and when we got in there, we found an enormous chamber, it was apparently an old parade ground for the crusaders.

01:30 I reckoned they could have marched and drilled 1,000 men in there. And the interesting thing to us then they had seven or eight or nine or 10 pedestals side by side and these were a running stream and this apparently was their sewerage system. We don't know where that stream came out or what it fed or what it does, but if I had known it was the Chevalier and know as much as I do now, I would have inspected it

02:00 very closely. I noted it on the TV [television] the other night.

Well what was the general sort of work that you were doing in this area?

All the time we were training, patrolling the towns. We had leave to the town and of course we had pickets go out, and everybody served their turn

02:30 on this thing. We mainly used it to look after our own men. We didn't do any duties really there, we were just passing, we were just a presence, we didn't have any precise duty there that I know of. We were just a presence. We didn't stay there long, we moved from there up to Latakia. Now Latakia was quite a big place, and it was on the sea

03:00 and not far from the north of Syria, and we stayed there for quite a long time. And we were camped, and we were only on a pint of water a day, but of course we had tea, we bathed and drank and all that, but we had tea, and if you went out at night of course you had alcohol. But that's not much good for your thirst. We didn't do a lot of training in Latakia itself, you always train, you always do something.

03:30 There was one interesting little episode we had there, one morning we were shaving I think it was and we heard the chatter of a lot of women coming along, it sounded like half a dozen, slowly a group came up to us there was a big man that came up to us in the usual nightgown outfit, good paunch, walking along with a stick in his

04:00 hand like that. And he was with these seven women. And he came up to an olive tree and he beat the olive tree very vigorously with this stick, and the women would rush in and pick up the olives. And he would stand back and watch them pick up the olives. And there is an interesting side to that, it looked just like a rooster going around with a lot of hens who were scratching at wheat, you know. The most interesting thing that happened to us in Latakia

04:30 was being posted out to where we did duties, I mean strategic duties, out to a place called Cassab [?]. Well Cassab was a little enclave that had been cut into the Turkish border after the First World War. The story we were told, and we all go on rumour, the story we were told was that when the First World War broke out, the Americans... On the way

05:00 in we passed a big cathedral-like place with no windows and no doors in it. Very big. We were told that the Americans built that before the First World War, but when the war started, the First World War started, the Armenians rushed in to it. They said 1200 but of course we don't know how many. And the Turks came down and shot them all in the church. That's the story we were

05:30 told.

Why didn't it have any windows or doors?

Because nobody had ever gone into the church after that, I presume. Well this was a very delightful place, we went up and we were billeted in a monastery, and the monastery was - it was very steep up to there - the monastery was on the side of a hill looking over a valley, a valley with all little

06:00 holdings with sheep and goats and the timber. And down below we had a courtyard of course, and we had big wide stone stairs where we walked out. Our breakfast wasn't that good because they were rationing us on the countryside then, and they were serving, stringy

06:30 goat, uncastrated, and you could smell it when you came down the stairs. I always ate, I never failed to eat anything, but a lot of people would go back up the stairs and we had a good cook, the one I mentioned before standing there, and he was a good cook, really a first class cook, and he had to serve this stuff, and he would stand there and he would say, "Come on, get into it, it's good for you." But a lot of people...

07:00 We had a parade every morning on this place. We were having a pretty good time patrolling around the place and that. But the French set in up beside us and they started having retreat every afternoon where they pulled their flag down and went through the usual drill. And our major got the idea that we should do that too, and we probably did it better than they did. But it wasn't terribly popular.

What were the main

07:30 kind of strategic duties that you were...?

Mostly patrolling and that's the only duty you have, your presence, and you patrol there and the presence. And you train all day; for instance, part of the training was gas training and in the gas training we had a very nice fellow, John Howard, in charge, and he...

08:00 What they did was put you in the gas chamber full of teargas with a gasmask on and you were made to take it off in the chamber, and that's to indicate how much better it is with the mask on. And then he used to ask questions, and one of the questions he used to ask was, "What are the names of the gases?" Now we had a lot of older pretty whimsical

08:30 practical jokers in the unit, and one of these was a very good friend. And John got to him and he said, "Now what are the names of the three gases?" And I think, I have forgotten what they were, but we'll say that he said, "Phosgene, Arsine and Esdene." Now Esdene was John's girlfriend in Australia, and that would be the end of the lesson.

09:00 They would sit there and talk about Australia and John would say, "Pity she's not here to share this with me." So that was the end of that gas list. And then our latrines consisted of a set of holes with a... enclosed by hessian, with hessian between the officers and the men. I don't

09:30 know why, but still. They were 10 feet deep because it was believed the flies couldn't burrow up higher than 10 feet. And they couldn't come up through the dirt more than 10 feet deep. So, we had a cook there, and a cook's offsider, and a territory madman as we called him, and it was his job to delouse them, and how he deloused them, he brought down a bucket of petrol

10:00 and poured it down each one and threw a match in and the flames would shoot up about 10 feet. I often wondered what would happen if it had caught anybody there. He would give a leer when he went back to the cookhouse because he had to cook there.

10:30 And the patrols that you went on...?

No, they only contacted the Turkish border posts and around the countryside. Patrols just prove that the country is clear.

And what was the formation you would take on a patrol?

It would be very small - it might be a corporal and four men. Mainly training in a place like that where you have a presence. See they trained the wireless officers and the mechanics and vice versa. There was not much drill or rifle drill or anything like that; it was mostly technical training. For example, this gas

11:00 stuff. The delightful thing about Cassab was, even though the food was so poor, the village up the side of the hill put on dinner at night and it was usually fried chicken and chips and it was very good, and we would go up there and we would have this meal at night. Some people only ate that. After we were finished,

11:30 off duty. And in the room all the people would come in, many people from the village, and some of them could speak English because there was a habit there of going to America and making a lot of money, which would be a lot of money in Syria in those days, and coming back and setting up and more or less retiring. And they would come in and we would have conversations with all of them, and some would come in - they were paralysed, they would come in. Anyway we would have this meal, and

12:00 talk all night. One night the meal was so good we decided we would have another one. So we asked could we have another one, and all of a sudden we heard squawking up on the hill, and after about three quarters of an hour we got another meal. It was so tough we could hardly eat it - they'd killed the hen just before we ate it. Yes, I can't sort of say - one of my - some of the men was sent back to Australia to join

12:30 the armoured division. Quite a lot were sent back - luckily I wasn't. From there we moved to Aleppo. Aleppo was a big town and a very Muslim town. We were billeted in German barracks, I suppose Germans from the First World War. And the winter was coming on now, and you could look out over Aleppo. I never

13:00 went into Aleppo as much as I did the other towns. It was a very interesting town all the same. And we went on patrols there. I can give you more detail on these patrols. They... We were there for... We had our Christmas dinner there and they had this silly idea of the officers serving the men for Christmas.

13:30 I mean I don't go for that sort of stuff and it's quite a tradition in the Australian Army. And each time we had a guard, a full squadron guard, about 100 men went on guard in batches of 30 in three shifts. And when we were in these barracks we had a lot of political prisoners there. Some

14:00 political prisoners, some were important and some weren't important. And one very interesting man was a man, I think he was a Yugoslav. Anyway they had flown their planes down to Cairo to stop the

Germans getting them and he was trying to find his way back to his family in (UNCLEAR) and they caught him in Aleppo. And they treated him pretty well, and they put him in

- 14:30 with us, and all these people had their meals with us, except for one, they had one out in the back room, and nobody was allowed to go to him. But I had a special duty and I went to him one day, and he was a big fat man dressed in Arab clothes, not terribly fat, and anyway I went in there and they brought interrogators in regularly,
- 15:00 British officers they happened to be, and I went in and he must have thought I was an interrogator, because he immediately took his headdress and wrapped it around his eyes, and he said to me, "Spoken in French." Because I wasn't supposed to speak to him or anything, and I just nodded to him and went out then. They say that they were shot later. I have no idea whether it's true,
- 15:30 but you live on rumours. And the snow set in then. Now before then we went out on patrol across the Euphrates. The idea again was to clear and do all that sort of stuff. And we had to cross the Euphrates and the Euphrates was the most spectacular river,
- 16:00 it must have been at least 800 yards wide. And probably an average of six feet deep and running at eight knots. And to get across - no way of driving a truck across. They had ferries there. Now the ferry was a big punt, just like an ordinary, just like a punt with all the camels and cattle across on it. And it had runners along the side where we could drive the truck on. So we drove the truck onto it
- 16:30 and they made us take the tarp off so it wouldn't blow downstream. And they poled it across and we got off the other side and we set of to see the gazelles in the desert and all the rest of it and the villages. We drove down along the Euphrates, and we went through one little tributary and we broke a half shaft,
- 17:00 we were bogged in the tributary so we had to stay there, wireless back to headquarters that we were there, so we had to camp there. And of course we had been told that when the French patrols went
- 17:30 out there, the Arabs crept up on them and cut their throats at night and all this. We had always got on all right with the Arabs, so we, four of us, how we did our guard, we had power lanterns of course, all of us got in the back of the truck and played bridge for the first half of the night.
- 18:00 And then we were up pretty well, we could see out. Then we would get to bed and the next guards would come out one after the other. How we slept there, it was pretty cold, we spread a tarp on the ground, put four blankets on the tarp, four of us got in and slept on those four blankets and put another four blankets over the top of us and pulled another tarp over the top of us. We were as cosy as you like. And we would wake up in the morning and if you threw a stone out and it tinkled
- 18:30 on the ice it was time to stay there. We always got up of course. When you get out, first of all when we got out, people on guard had boiled up and a brew on for everybody. And sitting on the ridges, these little low ridges around us, were about 50 Arabs and they all waved to us when we woke up.
- 19:00 We got to know them pretty well. None of them could speak English and my French was pretty poor. And I think I was the only one who had any. But we managed to have a very happy time together. They were a mixed lot. Some that looked like the classic Arab Bedouin, but the rest were just like the normal Arabs we all saw.
- 19:30 Anyway in the end we got a bright idea. Ted... When went through the village, I should have told you this before, I'll digress here. It was goodbye turkeys, I think they were turkeys, might have been geese. You could buy them and the way you would buy them, you would stop at the place and negotiate for them, usually with a tin of bully beef or something. And then the boys of the village would catch our
- 20:00 turkey - you would point out the ones you wanted. They would all take off and of course they would catch the last one. Which wouldn't be the youngest. So we cooked these there, and how we cooked them, we had unlimited petrol and we'd cook by pouring the petrol in the sand and
- 20:30 lighting the container with the sand and put your dixie on top with the turkey in it. And Ted was usually our cook. He wasn't a cook in the army but he was a cook when he was a civilian. And to get back to the Arabs, after we had been there a day and a half, we decided to pull this car out, pull it out of the water.
- 21:00 And so we had this rope on it and decided to use all these Arabs to pull it out so he lined them up along the rope and told them what to do and then started like a tug of war, but they all pulled in different directions and they all laughed so much that they didn't even shift it. We had two or three goes, so we discussed and we decided we needed camels. So Ted was trying to tell these people we needed camels. Now Ted was a tall ginger-haired
- 21:30 fellow and he got down on his hands and knees and went through all the actions of a camel squatting. And trying to tell the Arabs that we wanted camels to pull it out. The Arabs thought this was the greatest vaudeville they had ever seen, they roared with laughter. We
- 22:00 were worried because we weren't hearing from headquarters so we got a message through that there were troops at Vuni [?], we should contact them but we had no way except walking. It was bright moonlight and Jackie James, who was in charge of the platoon, decided two people ought to go and find this Vuni at night. So Ted followed

- 22:30 me... Or we were elected. We wouldn't dare take arms because they were no use to us, but I carried a pistol in my pocket. What I would have done with it, I don't know. We went along a wadi with yellow sand, and we got a long way and we could see a sort of rise in the flat country. Turned out of the wadi and walked towards
- 23:00 it and we only got about 200 yards towards it and we were surrounded by a pack of big dogs, and barking and rushing around. And the next thing we saw from this village was a line of power lanterns, everybody had power lanterns, coming towards us, you know. And we came up and lined up opposite were all these Arabs from the village.
- 23:30 And of course they were probably the people we saw during the day. They were beautifully dressed. They had the finest of clothes on, all nightgown type clothes, you know. We had a long conversation and we kept saying, "Vuni." We had no idea where Vuni was. They chased the dogs away and we had a great talk and nobody
- 24:00 understanding anybody and we decided this was enough we had better go back. So we got back and dropped down into our wadi and we knew Vuni was maybe down there. And I said to Ted, "What are we going to do?" He said, "Bugger it, we are going to the truck." Then we couldn't make up our mind which way to go back.
- 24:30 Ted wanted to go... I could read the stars pretty well by then, and Ted wanted to go one way and I wanted to go the other, but luckily in the moonlight I could see the tracks where we had come from. Tracked ourselves back to the truck. That was about the end of that. There was an interesting situation there too, we had a fellow called Bobby Vostoff, he was one of these men who do anything, he was very good at everything but not a very successful person in life because he didn't have the drive. But he was really
- 25:00 marvellous. He could play a gum leaf, he would stand outside the embassy and play a gum leaf until they all came out to hear him. Anyway he was sent off to patrol up and down the ravine with someone else, and he put a rifle on his shoulder and off he went and he came to water, he had two Arabs with him as guides, and he came to water, he gave his rifle to one guy and hopped on the
- 25:30 other guide's back and he carried him across the creek. People have been horrified that he let go of his rifle, took his rifle back and off he went. Then anyway from there we went back to the barracks and we were very pleased to get back there. Do you want me to keep on these patrols? All right, the next patrol we did was a standing patrol at Jarabulus, now Jarabulus was on the Turkish border on the
- 26:00 Euphrates. We were told again, this was where the camel trains came across the Euphrates. We had a small group down on the Euphrates checking the camel trains across. And our job was to be a presence in the town. Now across the border on the high ground, was supposed to be two battalions or regiments of Turks, well armed. There were 20 of us
- 26:30 and we really only had nothing but our pistols and rifles. But we settled in there very happily. Sidney was the lieutenant. And Sheik Harmoudy, who I had something to do with the pillars of Lawrence's book, he used to visit Sid every morning and bring his Arab. Now Arabs were not supposed to drink, but he would bring him up and he would be
- 27:00 so full by the time he went home at midday he could hardly work. Very influential and I think Siddie was relieved when we got moved. He could speak English. We went down... On duty more or less all day and just before dark we would, you know, and Archie and Cliff and I again went down to the town,
- 27:30 and the town was a pretty impressive town it had a sunken area in the centre of it with a fountain, where everybody used to gather, and we went up to this fountain and an Arab boy, about 5'8" with very broad shoulders and very well dressed, came up to us and introduced himself to us and told us that there was a show on at night. He must have had a few words of English, but anyway we found out there was a show on at night, so we decided we would
- 28:00 go. He invited he had a lot of hangers on - he was the big boy of the district. We decided to go and when we got inside and sat down it was a mixture of Arabs and Syrian soldiers, and on the stage in front of us they had three musicians with stringed instruments. I can't remember what the instruments were. I didn't know, that's not correct, I didn't know what they were. And
- 28:30 Archie was a very neatly dressed impressive looking fellow and this Arab boy took to him. I suppose the boy was 16. We all sat there and we could converse a bit with them. And he was sitting there with a pocket knife, a soft bladed knife, and he bent it like this you see, and these three people were strumming a
- 29:00 few tunes out, broke the point off it and flicked it up on the stage, and the piece of steel hit one of the men in the eye, and Archie roused at him. So after a while the performers came in. The first one was a woman probably in her 40s, not showing her youth not quite as well as she did,
- 29:30 and she put on an act, and when she finished her act she went through the audience collecting money and they took all sorts of liberties with her. Then they had another woman like that the same, and then they had a very attractive looking girl, she was pretty good, I think she would have been in her middle 20s. And she put on a good show, and she had to go through the same routine, but

30:00 a Syrian sergeant major escorted her through and saw her on her way. I think she had been ordered to do by the commandant of the area, because she was to have coffee with him later on.

What kind of a show would they put on?

Just singing. No acrobatics, just singing. When this girl came near us, Archie... See, we gave them a small coin each time they came

30:30 through. When this girl came, the good looking girl came, Archie took a coin out of his pocket, oh no, no, didn't want anybody to steal his thunder, he didn't give her anything, he was too embarrassed. And but while we sitting there for all this there, I missed a bit, while we were sitting through all of this, he was sitting there like he was bored,

31:00 and he opened his coat and he took out something just like a, set up like a cut throat razor. It was a long dagger, like a stiletto, it had a needle point, and showed it to Archie like this and looked around rather serious and put it away. When this girl came round...

31:30 Where we got the idea he was so influential, when he threw this bit of steel up at the fellow, a soldier, a Syrian soldier, quite a big fellow too, stood up and abused him about it, and called him Arab dog. Stood up straight up in front of him and the fellow just withered and sat down, so he might have been the

32:00 sheik's son or anybody. It was a pretty boring show all round, except for one of our fellows who was over there, another territory mad man. He'd been drinking on and off with two Arabs and here he was in a break in the program he was trying to hang him with the rope they had round his neck. We managed to quiet him

32:30 down. On the way home, our friend Abdul left us, and we thought we would like a cup of coffee and we looked for a place but they were all closed. So we went up to a door, there was a light on and somebody very courteously opened it. Invited us in. We went in and we sat down and we realised we had come in to three businessmen who had been having

33:00 coffee together after work and we were really intruding, but they were terribly nice to us and they could speak a bit of broken French and so could I. But we managed to get on all right and they offered us a drink of course, and then they offered us some food, and they had copper, thin copper plates over heaters, and in these they were heating little gobbets of mutton or goat or something, and they offered us one

33:30 and it was delicious. Hot! I have never tasted - just about burnt your mouth out! And we would take a sip of our coffee and that didn't stop it much. We never really said anything but we made polite movements to one another. And we left and went home. And rushed to the tap. From there we went back

34:00 to the German barracks. Do you want to hear more about this?

Well how long did you spend in Syria or in the general area?

Don't know, probably six weeks. There's one other little patrol that might be interesting from a historical point of view actually. We did one patrol out...

34:30 Must have been south of Aleppo. We went past Homs and Hamah, not far from Homs and Hamah, we weren't very popular at Homs and Hamah. And we were in a big truck, and on our way home we came to a big red soil area, and this big red soil area had an enormous vineyard on it, it was enormous, it was a community vineyard. And we

35:00 had to drive through it, and it had been raining and it was pretty slippery, and we were worried about knocking the grape vines. Anyway we came out the end on the flat. And here were a lot of pigs, never seen so many pigs, there were pigs everywhere! And the women, not unlike the Arab dress, but heavily painted with rouge, not veiled and

35:30 lips and everything was painted, but it was like red paint. And they welcomed us there and it was on a little mound. And I have often wondered how a Christian - it was a Christian village - often how a Christian village could survive in the midst of all this Arab area, but they did. We couldn't stay there, they offered us things, but it was getting late.

36:00 But another patrol went there later, a foot patrol, and they went to the village and they were invited to stay the night and they stayed the night, and their eiderdowns were so marvellous that they bought a lot of eiderdowns and took them back to camp. But when they got them back to camp they were so full of lice they had to burn the eiderdowns and delouse themselves. So we were lucky there.

And where did you head after you spent the six weeks

36:30 **in this area?**

I am not understanding you, sorry.

You mentioned you were based sort of doing patrols in this area for about six weeks...?

Well we went back to Palestine. I went to an unarmed combat school from there, some of them went to... We had leave. I went to an unarmed combat school. We did another

- 37:00 patrol with only a few of us on. Some of us had leave to Damascus to buy Christmas presents to send home. And when we came back we got special leave there, and Damascus is a fascinating place, with all its bazaars and if you had any biblical knowledge there was a street called 'Straight' - it was so crooked a snake could creep up it. The
- 37:30 eye of the needle, and of course most of the biblical quotation are incorrect, because they talk of the eye of the needle whereas the eye - they talk about the eye of the needle, it's really the eye of the needle because that was a little gate on the one side of Damascus was so small that the camels couldn't come in if the raiders came. And that was the eye of the needle at the end of the street
- 38:00 called 'Straight', and that's true. They had bazaars there and they had goldsmiths and silversmiths and carpets merchants and everything you could think of. They had a thing there like the old... They used to call them iced delights or something, but they are gelatine, not ice cream, and they were... We had one each but we shouldn't have because we were pretty careful about our intake.
- 38:30 I was so worried that I went back to the French camp canteen and had three whiskys, but that was the effect. But in this big canteen, the French one, there were about four or five officers there, they looked like typical blond English officers. When they picked up their caps and came past us and they were talking French. You would have thought they were just typical
- 39:00 English officers. So not all French are dark.

And what news were you hearing about what was going on in Australia at the time?

We got letters, we got letters every week. The mail was very, very good. So we knew what was going on. Whether they knew what was going on, we don't know.

Tape 4

- 00:39 I was going to talk about an unarmed combat school I went to because it has relevance later. When we were in Aleppo, we were doing all sorts of gunnery exercises and they had
- 01:00 sent the... This is a bit of a deviation. They had sent some of the infantry sergeants away to get training on anti-tank bombs, grenades. And they sent one of these sergeants over to train us on it. So we went out to train up and they had all sorts of - and I will just talk about one, like a thermos flask that had a lead weight on one end and a tape
- 01:30 that went round it like that. And the tin that went in and stopped the pin from hitting the detonator. Now he told us that you took that off and you threw it and when it hit the tank and the firing pin struck the detonator, and it went off. What he didn't know was you weren't supposed to take the tape off, you were supposed to throw it and the lead weight on the end
- 02:00 unwound the tape and by the time it hit the tank and it went off. So it was no wonder that none of us were killed because from the shock from throwing it from your hand should have set the detonator off. That's digressing. And I was going to tell you about this unarmed combat school. While we were in Aleppo we were having arguments about rate of reaction. I always claimed
- 02:30 that if a man was facing you with a revolver and you move first he couldn't fire the revolver and I used to demonstrate it. Because of the lag in the reflexes and the lag in the response of your eyes, he didn't have a hope of pulling that trigger unless he moved first, but if you moved first he couldn't fire that trigger, he wouldn't have time. Sometimes you had to hit the side of course. So they had seen me do this and they found out they had an unarmed combat school in Palestine
- 03:00 so they sent me down to it. All the sergeants practically from the 7th Division were there, they were a very successful school. But I will leave it at that, I went back to the unit and we decided to... We didn't...

Why will you leave it at that?

I will tell you later. It has a link to something. We came back to Palestine and Barber Wallis told us we were going back to

- 03:30 Australia. We had no idea where we were going, actually we were supposed to be going to Derna, I think. And we were taken from there down to Port Said and we spent a couple of nights at Port Said and we only had Palestinian money, we had no Egyptian money. The cookhouse consisted of two little Pommy cooks with a great big boiler they threw bully beef into. And it never got boiled.
- 04:00 They ladled it out to a group as they came through. By the time it was pretty watery, by the time we got down the bottom, but they kept throwing bully beef into it anyway. But nobody could buy anything at the canteen because we had Palestinian money, so it was a pretty hungry time. And it was cold there

and the big fella from Queensland and I found a way of keeping a bit warm and we had

04:30 a blanket each, we put one blanket on the sandstone. And we got on it and we pressed our backs together and put the other blanket over us. I got the benefit of that because I was only a small fella and he was a great big fella and I had this great broad back to push up against. I was warm. Then they decided we would move from there and were marched about three miles down to the wharf and there were fellas that had bowerbirded everything, and one

05:00 fella I remember particularly, Clifty Reason, had a petrol heater, and he carried a tin of kerosene in one hand and a container for that in the other hand. And it was heavy enough with all your gear on your back, but anyway walked down and on to the ship, another terrible ship, the Mendoza, it looked a terrible looking ship. We marched on to the

05:30 Mendoza, part of the unit was there, many of the truck went on the Sophocles or some other ship. We went on with the docks operating group, and they were the group put together to work on the wharves where there were no wharfies or in case the wharfies played up. And they

06:00 had been called in from all the other units and that's not a good way to form a unit, because a lot of the units get rid of the men they don't want. And a lot of the disgruntled men leave it, but these lot turned out all right. And when we were the main occupants of the ship. Our fellows had always been very army minded and didn't mind people being promoted over them or didn't mind...

06:30 This other lot were a lot more individualistic lot and they had all sorts of imaginative complaints and some of our blokes started to get it too. Now on this ship, there were no... Even though they trained all these unarmed combat commandos I was the only unarmed combat commander. When they found I was there I had the job of training all these people in unarmed combat. I wasn't too keen on that. I wasn't that

07:00 confident. But I really learnt a lot on that ship and I spent most of my time on that ship doing unarmed training.

Well give us some of the techniques that you learned?

Oh taking a pistol out of a man's hand and taking a rifle out of a man's hand. All sorts of things, they were all emergency ones, they were all... You didn't go out and attach an unarmed man with a rifle. It was if you were caught in an emergency how would you cope with it.

What would you do if you were close to a

07:30 **man pointing a rifle at you?**

Well one technique was to move it to the right and then over to the left and frisk it out of his hands. That's the basic principle. There were many techniques but that's for a rifle.

What's the basic principles you were learning behind this?

I don't think anybody knew what you were doing, but you were going with him so he resisted you slightly and then you went in the opposite direction.

08:00 **And who were the instructors in Palestine?**

They had an officer in charge; his name was Court, and there were a number of NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] from the various divisions, one I can remember was Cus Kelly. They weren't all that marvellous but it was an English invention, but they were good enough.

08:30 They themselves were more or less amateurs. They did say in the end I turned out better... I had an awful lot of an experience. I turned out a lot better shows than they had seen anywhere else. But it just shows you that if it's forced on you do more and more.

Where did they hold this um...?

At one of the camps in Palestine, I have forgotten which one.

How extensive was it and

09:00 **how long were you there?**

Maybe a fortnight, I don't know the time precisely. I don't remember those sorts of things.

Okay, so you were on this boat going to?

Oh yes, it was - this boat - just deal with me in unarmed combat and apprehension of - and of course there was always plenty of people trying to take the rind out of you,

09:30 I got more thumps on the elbow than you could imagine. But I learnt to cope in time.

Did anyone get kind of angry or...?

No, no because they were pretty apprehensive - they don't know how much you know. Not that I knew

much. They are not too sure whether they will end up on their back or something. You get the occasional cocky one. Big fellows bit cocky and that.

- 10:00 Most of them go with you, most of them want to learn, most of them aren't any bother. I wasn't that good an instructor, I had to learn along the way. We had a very funny experience on this Mendoza. The fellows when they were coming on the ship managed to hijack a carton of beer from the Canadians, and the Canadians let them do it of course, and
- 10:30 a lot of them brought beer on, and they thought, "What are we going to do with it? How are we going to hide it?" So they gave all the details to the assistant in the pantry and these fellows managed to get on to the sergeant and took this stuff down to the pantry. And they kept it down in the pantry. The detailer who cut up the meat and prepared the
- 11:00 meals and that so if they wanted a beer they just brought a carcass up and they brought a couple of bottles up. I didn't know about it at the time, they were all good mates, but the only ones that got access to it were the Pommy sailors who were in the know. And the Bill Jensen was acting as temporary acting sergeant major. And he knew they had it somewhere and he never did find it. Although they were all good mates
- 11:30 he said, "I'll get you someday." That comes up later too. Then they all disliked the Mendoza. I didn't mind the Mendoza, it was all right. Except with the unarmed combat. Then we went to Colombo again, and in Colombo we were anchored to a buoy again, and there must have been maybe a couple of hundred ships and of course we got our day of leave. And the boys made a great
- 12:00 fuss of this actor. Here they had someone they knew and if anyone tried to knife them they had someone who could take the knife away from them, but luckily nobody tried and I didn't use force or anything. And I got an extra day's leave because I had been in charge of the guard, you see. And while we were there, I think it was the Belfast ran into in the wharf and damaged itself, and I don't know what that
- 12:30 captain had to answer. And they were loading coal there from lighters, it was very interesting to see, there was a technique they had a ladder up the side or stairway really, up the side to the bunkers where they were going to load it into. And on the bottom step were two, I suppose Sinhalese and they reached out, someone was
- 13:00 bagging the coal, and they reached out, each one grabbing it by the ear and jerking it up on to the next level, and instantaneously the next couple jerked it up and jerked up and it went up continuously, and pretty effortlessly except for the first two. But they loaded it quickly. While we were in the harbour there was nowhere to get rid of the excreta or anything, from all these people in the harbour, all the boys used to swim in the harbour. And
- 13:30 they swam over to the breakwater one time and they met a New Zealand ship and the sailors told them they had the duty of diving and thriving through some of Australia's [UNCLEAR] from the wharf in Singapore, that's the first time we knew there was a catastrophe looming in Singapore. And you would see
- 14:00 the fellows swimming round in between and squeeze a solid excreta around that. But no illness, no sicknesses there, so the salt water must have been a fairly good antiseptic or disinfectant. And suddenly we were taken out of the harbour. I know we were transferred to the ship the Orcades, beautiful ship.

Just before that, was there much talk of where you were heading?

No,

- 14:30 this is what I am telling you, the soldiers themselves, I don't know what the senior officers talked about, but the soldiers themselves just accept the situation at the time, there's not much forward looking. I was going to bring that up too. And there were planes flying over us out to sea. If the Japanese had got to Colombo they would have had a terrific harvest. There might have been 150 ships there for I know, I don't know how many there
- 15:00 were there. No nobody worried about it. I'll give you another interesting instance too, because we were certainly vulnerable at that time. So we transferred to the Orcades, it was a marvellous ship. Took us out, the cruiser escorted us part of the way, and I believe they send you on your own now, but I didn't see that. But we
- 15:30 plunged down almost to the South Pole and up again to South Australia where we camped at Sandy Creek. We hadn't been there a day, we were under tight security and everything, when all the wives arrived. And set up in Gawler and how they found out I don't know where it was leaked from. They followed us to wherever we went while we were in Australia.
- 16:00 And Sandy Creek was noted for its rabbits. And the surprising thing I found, we had marvellous meals there and I couldn't eat them all. So we must have been on light rations in the Middle East and I must have shrunk my stomach. But I just couldn't eat all the meals.

What was it like to be back in Australia after all this time?

Oh very good. Very normal. Again. I will go into more

- 16:30 of that later. I had one unfortunate experience then I was the unarmed combat instructor there, I had also been the unarmed instructor on the Orcades. Because I was the unarmed combat instructor they made me the drill instructor. And I knew bugger all about drill. But anyway I walked it up, and one afternoon we were on...
- 17:00 All of us had our exercises, and we had a PT, physical training exercise for about 20 minutes before we broke off. They got leave most nights to Gawler after they had stayed for their meal. And one afternoon we... There was no water in the showers and we had these fellas down on their backs waving their feet round in the dust and they
- 17:30 got up, when we went on again they got up and found there was no water in the showers. And they were filthy and they were going on leave and I was pretty unpopular for quite a while. Then they decided to shift us and they entrained us. And if you wanted
- 18:00 to pay \$1,000 you couldn't get a trip as good as this one. They entrained us and very slow moving train, there was plenty of room, nothing to do and we travelled through all the country towns in Australia practically, and every time the population came out to... We were not the only ones that went up...
- 18:30 Came out they would give us cakes and biscuits and whatnot and we did this all the way up through New South Wales. And finally stopped at Tenterfield. We had a sort of temporary camp at Tenterfield and then we were brought down to Landsborough. And I was on the... They sent an advance party down and I was on the tent
- 19:00 building gang that went down with it, and we got down there not long before dark and nothing to do immediately, and all the fellas weren't supposed to go on leave but they did, because their wives and loved ones and everything. But the brigadier, who didn't like our unit very much, made a quick inspection and caught all the ones there, and of course the colonel had to charge them.
- 19:30 And they ran a book on what charges they'd have, and there was one very nice fellow there quite religious and good living, and they ran this book as if it was a race course, and at the bottom they put his name and they said, "This aged gelding is uncertain." But some of them have got field punishment - they have got all sorts of things.
- 20:00 But it wasn't any stigma. So we put the tents up. And the rest came up. And then we trained very heavily as infantry. Routine exercise part each week. 30 miles a day plus your 30-pound pack plus your rifle for three days running. We also did lots of patrols through swampy country
- 20:30 along the coast. And we stayed at several places, Landsborough, Mapleton, and then I went to a gunnery school at Caloundra on the Dickie Beach. And we worked pretty hard there, but we weren't limited on leave. We used to go to
- 21:00 Brisbane. I didn't go to Brisbane. I didn't go on leave much except to go home. They used to go to Brisbane and come back home on the train at night. The engine drivers were for a while, very cooperative, slowed down at certain places so they could hop off. All the wives were there, they seemed to arrive ahead of us they seemed to know where we were going. Near Caloundra and very close to the camp. It was a pretty happy
- 21:30 time except they worked pretty hard. Bit uncertain because they knew they would be going to New Guinea before long. They decided to move the 7th Division to New Guinea. And our trucks - we were the last to go - our trucks were loaded, brought the men into ship to embark them, and some funny things happened there. They tell a story - and of course this is second hand - they tell us a story
- 22:00 that they loaded and Blamey arrived - must go ahead now - they had all been promised leave, home leave, before they went and they didn't get it. And Blamey arrived on the wharf to see his boys off, and one fella from the top yelled out, "You fat brothel bashing bastard! What about our leave?"
- 22:30 I don't know whether he got his own back. Then we went.

Tell us also too were you learning any new techniques or...?

Oh yes, I didn't mention we did amphibious training too. Oh yes, we were using more all round defence was the - we had all the skills - all round defence was the main

- 23:00 motive that you didn't worry only about your front, you concentrated on all round defence, and I think that was the big thing. There was also a discussion on close fighting and all of this, but I think the thing that came out once we came back to Australia was this idea of being outflanked. More so than I have seen before.

And what about the actual conditions of

- 23:30 **New Guinea? Where you were talking and learning about...?**

Yes, did have survival training or what foods you might eat if you were isolated. Of course we had pill training for malaria, etc. Generally speaking, the training was much the same except for this emphasis

on jungle warfare.

24:00 We walked through plenty of swamps and plenty of... I never really... See the principles of warfare are very much the same everywhere. The actual principles it's based on the fire and movement and all the rest of it. Here and everywhere except if they are adapted. Even fire and movement is the biggest thing in the army.

24:30 Anyway...

Sorry, you also mentioned landing craft exercises?

Oh yes, we went from Terrible Point across to Bribe Island, Bribe Island is it? Yes, didn't matter whether you attacked Bribe Island. And some people got caught in bogs and I remember one fellow would have gone out of sight probably if a sailor hadn't put an oar between his legs and he sat on it. But that was fairly strenuous. And

25:00 you see land and be given a compass, beam direction you had to follow and put a perimeter or something. You also learnt a fair bit on perimeter defence too.

What kind of things about perimeter defence?

Oh just how you set up your lines of fire. How you did - what -

25:30 how you put up your guards.

What kind of news were you hearing about how the war was going with Japan and what was happening?

I think we had the same as everybody else in Australia, we didn't get anything extra. We got situation reports, but I don't think they were any different from anything else.

26:00 I don't remember we had any special thing. You live within your unit a fair bit in the army, just as you live within a little town before we got the wireless and all the rest of it. I got on this ship to New Guinea, and that was probably the best trip I ever had. We went on an Australian

26:30 boat and I can't remember the name, but it's not the Kanimbla. But is a strip boat for the moment. By this time I was a sergeant, because there had never been much promotion before because we had no casualties. They promoted a lot of our sergeants into infantry units and Militia units, so we had vacancies, so I as well as many others became a sergeant. So I travelled

27:00 up on this ship as a sergeant and that meant we had a special mess, the first time I had been a special mess, and we had a cabin to share, three of us shared. I didn't like that quite so much because I was used to lying on the deck and getting mixed up in all the philosophical discussions on the deck - this was a bit more limited. But the meals were a bit better and better served.

27:30 We had a rest room on the top deck and that was delightful. Any time we had off we got in that and of course it was a dry ship, and a dry ship is good. We got up there and played bridge and drank Schweppes ginger ale. And I have liked Schweppes ginger ale ever since. We looked out over the sea. We had a very admirable

28:00 ship's commander, he was a First World War soldier with a good sense of humour. One day we were pulled up. We were travelling along somewhere and he said, "You are now three miles from land." And we looked out and, "Below you." But he always came out with some little quip like that. And again I was the combat instructor. And drill instructor.

28:30 I didn't do much unarmed combat, I did drill. And the people seemed to enjoy this trip, they didn't mind their drill, they didn't seem to mind anything. They seemed to be happy because now they were part of the active army you see. Likely to see action and felt that they were - well a feeling of worth while. We had a boxing - there was no rule for any athletics, but they had a boxing

29:00 competition on the way up. Eventually we arrived up near Magnetic Island and anchored there, and whereas in Colombo harbour everybody dived in and swam, nobody swam up there, I don't know whether all of a sudden they were afraid of sharks or not. But here's a time when I am going to explain the fatalism. Now were out there on our own, no protection, the Japanese ships probably

29:30 wandering all round the place and nobody probably gave them a thought. Nobody thought... That surprised me a bit because there you were in a very vulnerable position. But there's no discussion on it, no talk about it, nobody mentioned it. Eventually we were pulled out from there and we went up into the [Port] Moresby Harbour and that was a bit impressive to everybody because it's a very...

30:00 It seemed very pretty as you go, Moresby was a light green and everything. We landed in Moresby and much to our surprise it was a dry area. Just a dry town. We were tucked out to Ward's Drome where our role there was to protect Ward's Drome. We spent a lot of our time hiding grenades in the hills in case an invasion came over the range and we had to

30:30 combat. We found Moresby very interesting, there were brumbies running all over it and the same little

white wallabies that you see at Burketown there too. The Yanks used to go out on shooting expeditions. We did lots of patrolling there up and down the Malotte River. I will tell a story that nobody believes. We had mosquito nets and when we got into them...

31:00 And at one stage on the Malotte River the mosquitoes were really bad. I got into my mosquito net and it was quite right - there were no mosquitoes in it. And after about an hour or so it was full of mosquitoes - they were small enough to get through the mesh. Now I got outside and there were no mosquitoes outside. Now nobody would believe that - I must have trapped them all inside the net.

31:30 We walked... The Negro troops were working there, and I remember passing one Negro one and he was leaning on his shovel, and one of the fellows said, "What about a bit of work, Rastus?" and Rastus said, "Yes, but just a little bit." We used to go to the picture theatres there. They were very good pictures, I have forgotten what they were about. They had... Interesting about the picture

32:00 theatres, on the screen they used to put Churchill and Roosevelt. Then switch it off. And the whole audience would stand up and call out, "We want Joe, we want Joe." And somebody - of course all the officers had enough of a sense of humour to ignore all that. That was really worth seeing. One night we went to a sing-sing,

32:30 and that was when all the natives from the work gangs came in and put a sing-sing on. That was pretty good, you saw the range of New Guinea natives there. Some big men with hooked nose, and dainty men, quite a lot. The Kewise seemed to be the dominant group. I don't know where the others came from. But the others seemed to dodge them pretty much. But they all put their act on and it was

33:00 the interesting thing was to see all the different types.

How did you get along with all the different types?

We didn't have anything to do with them, not at that stage, we had nothing to do with the indigenous population at that stage. The Beaufighters were on Ward's Drome and they went out regularly strafing. Then we were moved up to the Koitake rubber plantations,

33:30 and up there we kept on the training pretty solidly. We were supposed to anticipate the Nadzab drop. We were supposed to drop on the Nadzab to secure it. Other units coming in, but this fell through, I think the war was bigger than they thought it was, and weren't moving as fast as they did. But we trained and did

34:00 patrols all through the heavy jungle country up there. We went out one night on a three day patrol where we off on a big perimeter with all the details, a big perimeter a battalion perimeter and the message came that we had to return, we were wanted, we were going to be sent to the front. So back we came to... Where did we organise? We organised

34:30 down on the plain again. So they equipped us, we were pretty well worn out, we were up night equipping them and giving them things. Two of our fellows who didn't really like one another had a fight, and it was - normally they stop a fight immediately, but everybody was so bored and lethargic they let them fight. Those two fellows were the first killed. Then they

35:00 took us to Ward's Drome. I think it was Ward's Drome, loaded us into DC3s and flew us over to Popenetta. We were standing on Ward's Drome, sweat was dripping off us, and when we flew over the range, we were just about frozen, and we landed at Popenetta and started sweating again. It was only about half an hour I suppose. And from there were given one rest day

35:30 and we were told we were going in the next day. And we had a swim in the river and a wash up and general business. That night we had not heavy guards, but guards around us, and the next morning we went out. The colonel and the patrol had been down to reconnoitre the area we were going to and he came back and told us that we had one place

36:00 we had to crawl through while the machine gun fire and this made everybody wonder a bit. And when we went in... The next morning we set off. A Squadron went through first, and to get across like that they had to get down and crawl, or work your way across, there must have been 40 yards or more. Now I adapted my equipment

36:30 and I had an American belt that I thought was light, just what I needed. When I started to crawl across this ground on my belly, my belt was coming undone and I couldn't get up to pull it up and I used to just about crawl out of my pants, and I had to pull them up again, and I couldn't hold them shut with my hands because I had to crawl and hold a rifle too, but anyway we got across.

How many of you were there?

There would have been about 400.

37:00 I don't the exact number but that's about the size of a unit.

And what was the role you were to play in this?

I am going to tell you that now. And when we got across there, there was an American formation at a

- place called Huggins. They had been there a long time. And the Japs had them pretty well thinned down. And from what I could gather, our information was very little down the road and we
- 37:30 would be able to brush them aside and go through to the coast. The thing was probably to get on the coast and swipe the barges, but that's in hindsight and I don't really know - but anyway we went straight down the centre. A squadron went in first. And they got a fair way down the road. We were told there were only small parties there. And they came to a Jap position and they attacked it, now there would have been about 100 of them.
- 38:00 And in that position was 3000 Japs, a big number of them were killed - we were on the spot. Now I came down with the second lot, we came and the whole thing was pulled up the, there were Japs in perimeters all along the road there. And we were pinned down there for a while and we were only 10 yards from Japs but it was so thick you couldn't
- 38:30 see them. And we were lying on the ground there, and Toby Baker, who I knew very well, his tin hat flew off his head and came back beside me and it had a hole through it. It turned out a bullet had gone through his hat without hitting him. I gave him back his hat and Dickie Staff said to me, "Why are you pulling at my haversack?" A bullet had gone through that while he was lying on the ground. And the little fellow, I saw him
- 39:00 two days ago, Freddie Beale, had to stand up for something, and a bullet hit him, he had a steel mirror in his pocket it turned, and to this day he's got this steel mirror with a bullet through it. Quite few got shot through the steel hat. Anyhow we were there for a fair while and they sent Cliff Jensen, who's a corporal in charge, sent
- 39:30 my cousin out to see if he could move out to the left, but he couldn't because the first man out was shot. There was a machine gun sitting right there. So then they decided part of B Company had gone through on the tail of A Squadron, and knew they were down there and I was pretty well in charge then. "What are you going to do? Are you going to go
- 40:00 back?" And I said, "I am not going back. I will come back tomorrow and see if I can catch up with the squadron." So we came to a road and there was a machine gun trained on that road, we knew that but we had to get across that road. So they said, "What are you going to do?" "What we are going to do is take one step into the middle of the road and dive into the bush on the other side." I had to go first. I took one step into the middle of the road and dived into hole and with my tin hat on,
- 40:30 and hit a log with my tin hat on straight on the top of my head. My neck seemed to concertina and I saw stars everywhere.

Tape 5

00:36 **Just the story you were telling under fire?**

- Oh yes well, the others managed without being fired on, but one fellow I saw cross had machine gun bullets land all round his feet, it was a wonder they didn't hit him. When
- 01:00 they got across there, I found a track leading down - I knew we would dig in about four o'clock in the afternoon. So as long as I could the group down to there we would be all right. I followed down there was a track there, they had been dropping rounds, some of the must have been down there dropping rounds, you could see where the track went pretty clearly. And off to my left I saw two of our chaps kneeling beside the road
- 01:30 and looking across the road and I wondered what it was, it was about 15 yards off the next track so I went up to them, and I said, "What's on here?" And they said, "Oh, there are some Japs creeping up the other side of the road." So I picked up my rifle, but I realised that I would only hit one person if I fired. So I took a grenade, and to make sure it was only a few yards across, when you pull a pin out of a grenade it has got four seconds to go off. So I pulled a grenade
- 02:00 out, and let the lever go and counted two and then threw it. So the grenade wasn't in the air much, and it hit the ground and suddenly I heard somebody, "Don't throw anymore grenades." I had thrown it on to my own men. Saved their lives actually.
- Why is that?**
- I'll tell you later. They - I said to them, "Now rush across the road," and they rushed across the road, many of them dripping
- 02:30 blood, two limping, and it turned out later that - see they were crawling back and they would have crawled into a Jap perimeter. One fellow, the grenade had lobbed beside his feet, but you wouldn't believe it because only two seconds from when I threw it, he threw it back and put his feet to it. I don't know how he did it. Another fellow, Doug Bogle, was dripping blood from his forehead but none of them were badly hurt, luckily.

- 03:00 So they joined in with us and we crawled down back to where - not crawled, walked down to where I knew there was a perimeter. And as I was walking along I felt a bang of air on my face, a Jap had fired at me and missed me and I got the belt of the air as it went passed. Dad had always told me from the First World War, "If somebody misses you when they fired at you, don't run because they will know that they missed you." So I walked
- 03:30 on just as could and I came suddenly round the corner and here was one of my own troops, lying on the ground with a Bren gun pointed straight at my chest. I said, "Righto, Titch, I have got a lot more coming in behind." Titch Brennan. So we went in there and found that all the ones that hadn't been killed in attacking the Japs and the first part of my troop had dug in and it was a fairly
- 04:00 tight perimeter, and that had been a Jap ammunition dump. Well we stayed that day. The Japs were climbing trees to shoot into the perimeter, but we had a very good marksman, Jackie James, in the perimeter he shot most of them out of the trees, so after that they never climbed the trees again. And we dug in for the night, it was pretty close to dark. And during the
- 04:30 night the whole perimeter burst in to fire, nothing my side. No firing rounds. I don't think there was anything on the other side, we never found any dead men in the morning, but it stopped after a while. We had a pretty peaceful night. We stayed in that position for quite a while, I can't remember the precise number of days. You used to send little patrols out. They sent me on a patrol to see where a big
- 05:00 perimeter was and I had - two men round behind it. I got out to follow the track down and we could see into the perimeter and there was nobody there. We threw a couple of grenades in but nobody came out. And when I got back that afternoon they asked me what was there and I told them. So they decided they would attack it the next morning. But they didn't include me in the attack. They did include Chips Brennan - he got killed. And they
- 05:30 attacked it but the Japs had occupied it by then, and they didn't take it, they had quite a lot of casualties, quite a few were killed. Then after that we were cut off. No contact with anybody except for my wireless. They got this ammunition, and then a group one section under Bill Morgan, no, Sam Houghton,
- 06:00 who was in charge, they found their way down to us, and how they found us by we fired a couple of rounds with a Bren gun and with pocket knives and that they cut their way through the jungle, and in the meantime... I have left something out. They had another attack on the other side of the perimeter, they didn't have anybody killed, but they had two people shot through the chest. And they lay on the...
- 06:30 They were put on the stretcher beside me, and we were there for quite a while. And then we - when this other group got in we had to carry the wounded out. I don't know how many we had, maybe half a dozen or more. And Cliff Jensen and I, who was a short man like me, had the job of carrying one of them out. It's the hardest work I have ever done. And we made up improvised stretchers carried them out
- 07:00 through the mud, and we got them out there on Christmas Day, I never remember the time exactly. Anyway, we had a best meal for a long - we had no food in this perimeter - best meal for a long time, I can remember what it consisted of - it consisted of army biscuits and honey and rice pudding. And I can always remember that meal. And then we went back to the perimeter. Later we were told that the Yanks were going
- 07:30 to relieve us and we had to go out and dig pits for them. And they came down to relieve us and we went back to Suppurta I think it was, and we dug in facing the Japs there, we were only about - really in places we were only about five yards from them. And the one particular place I know we were about five yards, and while we were there - we were pretty well down in numbers by now, while
- 08:00 we were there they decided to see if there were any Japs on the Amboga River. So a patrol was set up, Siddie Williams from Queensland was the lieutenant in charge, and I was the sergeant second in command, and we went out - we had two engineers with us, two signallers with us and two New Guinea natives as guides more or less. They were very
- 08:30 interesting these natives, when we came to a place that was uncertain they would stand up and smell it and smell if there were any Japs there. They could easily smell the Japs there - they had a very distinctive smell. We went out to a place where a Militia battalion was holding a post, and we spent a night there, we made - it rained there till about four o'clock, so we made our little improvised shelters.
- 09:00 And next morning it was decided that we would run a patrol out to Amboga River, and I took that one. And we went through a neglected coffee plantation out to the Amboga River, and we were very carefully crossed that. And the one thing that interested me about those days was that there must have been crocodiles in all those rivers, but we never thought of it. We crossed the Amboga River.
- 09:30 Crossed the river and turned left and came to a village, quite a big village there. And we hadn't had much fresh food for a while and there were fresh coconuts there so the boys got stuck into the coconuts. I felt they didn't watch security well enough, but after a while we got them out of that. And we started down the road to see if there were any Japs on the coast. We got down about 150 yards
- 10:00 or so, and we heard some chattering coming up the road, we didn't know who it was so we slid back into the grass. And suddenly a big - a New Guinea native with a spear over his shoulder and an old and

a young wife and some children came up into the middle and they were chattering away. And we all stood up and you could see the whites of their eyes. We

- 10:30 talked to them for a while, we used up our time, so we had to go back. And when we got back to the river, we crossed over, a very well preserved native came out, a young man with a white tea towel over his head. I think he might have belonged to some mission, he spoke English quite well, but we kept him with us while we were in that area because we didn't know who he was.
- 11:00 Made him come back a fair way with us. And we went back to the place, and spent another night there, we moved over to Ghana [?] to do something at Ghana, and that was something - that was a dreadful place, they were all blown up and torn to pieces. A lot of Australians had been killed there in futile attacks. They told a story of one - they had one sniper they just couldn't get, he
- 11:30 killed man after man. They eventually got him. From there we went back by jeep on a corduroy road, I don't know whether you have seen a corduroy road, they are logs about that size with a gap about that size in the thing like this, and your tin hat would shake down on your nose all the time. We got back there and there was a Salvation Army tent there giving out coffee and biscuits and we went in and got one, but they didn't give one to the natives, so
- 12:00 Bert Elliott, he was a very good type of man and was disgusted, so he went and got two cups of coffee. I don't think that the Salvation Army man liked it much. He wasn't going to carry up coffee. He carried all that up on his back. It was only for very select people. Australian soldiers. We went and we... There I saw Wootton.
- 12:30 Now Wootton was in charge of the 7th Division. No, he was in charge of the 18th Brigade, he was a brigadier, and we heard him talking to one of the people and one of the officers from the companies was ringing back, and I heard him say, "No, tell your men there's only a little bit of water between you and the enemy, and you learnt amphibious training in Queensland,
- 13:00 and tell them that that marvellous leave land called Australia will be there when they finish the job." And he was a big fat man, everybody else had to wear long sleeved shirts and he was a very big fat man really, with no shirt on and shorts and everybody else had to wear shirts. And we came back to our position, and the stretcher went passed me
- 13:30 and I didn't know, but later they told me, "That's Cliff, your cousin." He had been accidentally shot at night and had seven and was hit by seven Owen gun rounds. He survived because of the marvellous treatment with him. One man picked him up and ran out with him, and we had a very good medical orderly there who looked after him all night. He just
- 14:00 died recently. Then, speaking about another - in the hut was a friend of mine there was an artist in the hut there painting a war scene. I don't know who he was. One of my friends was lying there looking pretty dirty, he had been shot through the chest, but he was a miner. So they didn't send him out. He had to wait his turn. Which is fair enough. And because I was going back to my position I came across some natives digging out
- 14:30 bodies. Must have been a grave commissioner or somebody, and they were disgusted. They were doing it for the Americans. How disgusting! Dig out dead body, dig out dead body! And the Yanks were standing back, saying, "Go on, dig it out." That sticks vividly in my mind.

What were they doing with the bodies?

Oh, they were transferring them to a cemetery somewhere.

- 15:00 I don't now actually, I don't know those details.

What sort of things did you see the war artist painting?

He was painting a scene, I think it was of a wounded man and a man standing beside him. He hadn't finished it, but that was the impression I was getting.

And was the wounded man your friend?

No, no, he was just anybody.

- 15:30 And that was the stage when they were taking war photos of war actions from behind the line. And they got back to the unit or company, squadron headquarters. They said, "You are now going down, you are going to be commander of C Squadron." Now C Squadron usually has 100 men, but I think it might have had six men, so I went down and I will show you the photo of this too. I went down
- 16:00 there and we were dug in opposite the Japanese. I reckoned we were only five yards away from them. You couldn't dig in, your water was only on the surface so you built up on it. And you slept in water all night. But I was only there one night. I was only there one night and while I was away on this patrol the 2/12th Battalion was attacked and couldn't move the Japanese. There
- 16:30 were two tanks there and both of them were shot up. They were there when I came back and they had had very heavy casualties the day before. And the order came in that we were to attack this position

and I thought we would walk out into a hail of bullets and not many people would come out of it, but when we came out the Japs had gone, they had vanished, they had been ordered out, they had vanished, tried to escape up the coast.

17:00 So after that we went on with general duties, there was still Japs fighting and I had the job of escorting Vasey he was the general of the 7th Division, a very spectacular man, a very popular man too, to take him down to one of these infantry companies, which was fighting trying to take a Jap position. And when I first met him he was a tall thin, man and when I got

17:30 up to him the first thing he said to me, "You are coming with me, sergeant." And I said, "Yes," and he said "Have you got this itch?" and I said, "No, I haven't got an itch sir." He said, "It's driving me mad," and he started scratching. So we went down along this road and I don't know which road it was, and there were dead Japanese bodies all the way and the corduroy road was all covered in blood, and in water up to our waist and we got down to a sort of little island and

18:00 there was a company there, or part of what was left of a company, I think it was the 2/12th, they were set off a few shots every now and then, the colonel, general, got there and talked to the captain in charge and I just stood back and suddenly there a burst of fire came, and everybody including the general, slapped themselves on the air. Bruce and I roused on them, "Look,

18:30 those troops are up in the trees. You shouldn't have to..." And I looked round and here was the general on the ground. He said, "All right sergeant, let's go back." He was a great fellow to work with. Then that's about the last job I had. And we were told we had to go down and capture a village where the Japs were going in and

19:00 staying at night, but that was a rumour so we didn't do that. So there were about 60 of us left out of the 400. Mostly sickness and that, quite a lot of casualties.

What's the feeling like to have a unit so decimated, with quite a lot of casualties? Was the effect on the morale...?

No effect on the morale, I couldn't see any effect on the morale,

19:30 it just seemed to be normal, things just went on normally. If you had been under very stressful conditions - but we weren't then, it was over. They pulled up and - yes we had a final parade where we sat down for it anyway, where Vasey came along and thanked us. Then we

20:00 had to walk out, I don't know what it was, 11 miles to Dobodura and people were pretty weak. Anyway we walked out. One fellow, Haig McMaster, he had so much tinea that he had to walk outside in a mosquito net. And one of the most interesting people there - and he's dead so he won't mind me telling this story - was Dennis Minahan. He became a commercial artist later, and he was

20:30 a pretty sensitive sort of a person and always had sore feet on marches and everything. He went right through the campaign without a brick. And when we were going out on the - some of them got - they were jeeps that came passed us - nobody wanted to finish the place on the jeep. And Dennis said, "Well I am finished all this," and he hopped on the jeep and left on the jeep. They flew us back from Popenetta, and

21:00 they climbed up - we had to get up the mountain side to Donadabu, which was a rest camp. We spent, oh I don't know how long in the rest camp, but it was a very good, we had everything. I had one tricky little event, by that time I was the most senior NCO in the unit, and I was acting sergeant major. And there's nothing to do, and we had

21:30 camps in one place and Moses was our colonel by then, he was the director of management and he used to say, "The men need exercise." And he came down and Morgan was the lieutenant and the message came down to Morgan "Would he join the colonel for exercise?" and Morgan said, "I have been ordered to rest

22:00 and that's what I am going to do. I won't march anywhere until I march on a boat to go home." They said - there's a fellow in the unit, Russ McMillan, who had got a brass bugle from one of the Japs in one of the attacks, and I just as a joke said, "The colonel sent me down to tell you that as you have a brass bugle you should blow

22:30 reveille every morning." And McMillan said, "The Boy Scout bastards, that's all they can think of." I didn't say anything and he went on for hours in the tent. So I can't let this go on, so I went down and said, "Look Mac, I just made up that story."

Was he practising reveille?

No, he wasn't. He just took it as a souvenir. So Moses

23:00 knew he had, it you know. So Moses came down to the tents to see how they were and he said, "I would like someone to go with me for a walk to..." And McMillan, to get back at me, said, "See Sergeant From? He's keen on exercise. I am sure he'll go with you." So Moses came to me and he said, "Sergeant, I want someone to walk with. Would you go with me?" And of course pride beat me, I had a throbbing head and pride wouldn't let me, so I didn't say

23:30 no, so I went with him. He wasn't a very good walker, luckily. He walked a bit and climbed a few hills and came back, and I went down when it was over and lay on the bed to recover. They flew him out to hospital the next day. He hadn't been there long enough to realise that malaria to take, it wasn't the walk,

24:00 it was just that malaria took him. We then came out, what did we come down on, I won't mention the name of the boat, I will just get it mixed up. We went on they were a very sick group went on. When we went up they were very boisterous, vigorous, happy looking lot, couldn't have seen a fitter group of men, but here now they were all staggering round, practically. Lost two stone in weight.

What was the feeling like

24:30 **to be leaving, heading back to Australia?**

Well everybody was pretty sick, they were looking forward to getting back to their families and their wives, they weren't ecstatic and that, they were a bit too sick for that. But they were terribly relieved to be getting back, especially when so many were wounded and that. And it was hot, there was a cyclone on, again I had to share

25:00 a cabin, but the air was so sticky you were better off on deck. And when we went to meals to the sergeants' mess, where there would be 20 or 30 there were only about three at the meal it was so rough. I used to go up on the deck early in the morning and sit in the middle and see the bow go up almost above your head and then go down again. The nearest I have ever been to seasick, I had one little spit of saliva over the side and I was right for the

25:30 rest of the day. They came to me and said they wanted some men for duties. I couldn't imagine any of them being fit enough to be on duty. Anyway, outside of the cyclone it was a pretty uneventful trip. We arrived back in Brisbane, we were re-equipped and sent on leave. And a very happy leave, everybody was happy. And after that leave we went to the Tablelands. I managed

26:00 to stay around Brisbane a long time doing odd jobs. I was pretty sick but I never retreated from malaria because I had a bottle of malaria pills, quinine pills of my own, and I managed to dose myself, I managed to get by with it. We went back to the Tablelands and I got dengue fever. And I was put - that was the worst thing I have had. I was put in hospital and great fits of

26:30 depression. And I got better and came back to the unit.

What were the fits of depression like?

Oh, just from the dengue, I have never had them in my life before or since.

How did it affect you?

Oh you kept seeing the futility of war and the inevitability of being killed and all this sort of stuff, rubbish I never ever worried about. I mean not in that way. It was like a black cloud.

27:00 Then I went back to the unit and they immediately sent me off. No, wait a minute. Before that I got leave down to see my father on the coast. Now we weren't supposed to go down to the coast. But we got leave and 2IC [Second in Command], because my father was down there he wrote me out a double leave pass which I could take down, and I went down and spent two days with him.

27:30 It was very good. His unit was right on the coast there.

Did you talk to him about some of the action that you had seen?

Not a lot - a bit - see even though I was only a sergeant I was in the officers' mess for a while and we talked about it a lot and they asked a lot of questions, but people really don't want to hear very much.

Could your father give you any advice or...?

Not for jungle

28:00 warfare, all his advice had been earlier in my life on how - not by directly being didactically but by how he handled certain situations. One of the useful things he told me in the early days was never refuse a job, because even though you think you can't do it, you'll find somebody else will get that job and won't do it as well as you would have

28:30 done it. But that was how my information from my father came out. All in discussing stories of battles or behaviour, not didactically at all. We went back to the Tablelands.

Why were you being sent to the Tablelands?

I think to go to a non malaria area. I am only guessing again, but I fancy that's the rumour.

29:00 And a tropical area. Anyway back to... Then they sent me to a school, officers' school at Woodside in South Australia, and I failed in that school.

Why did you fail?

I suppose I did very well in the first two courses, but the one I should have done well in I didn't do -

29:30 I did very badly, there's no doubt about that. But I think down there I developed a what do you call it, I developed septicaemia and I had swollen glands and I was pulled out in the middle of the course and spent some time in hospital in South Australia and went back and I had to wait for another course to do that last wing, and I didn't pass in it at all - it was no good.

What was that last wing

30:00 **about?**

Tactics and field work and that. Normally I wouldn't have failed, but I did.

Were you disappointed?

Not nearly as disappointed as my family were. I was surprised at that. I wasn't terribly disappointed. I was upset to break the sequence. I suppose I don't get that

30:30 disappointed, but I wasn't that disappointed. And then I came back and I messed around in Brisbane for a little while and then I went back to the holding camp and they posted me down to Glen Innes to do my initial training again. After I had left, it was quite interesting.

Why did you have to do initial training

31:00 **again?**

I was just part of the group. I didn't protest or anything. After that I went to Canungra. But in the meantime, I had seen that the air force wanted recruits so I went down and took the exam, took the test, although I had... When I joined the army first I had dreadful flu and I

31:30 went into the air force I had dreadful flu again, I never had it any other time. Except right when I enlisted so it must be just a different environment.

Why did you have any interest in the air force at all?

It was something new. I didn't want to - I was a bit disappointed I suppose in my unit being split up and not going back to the same men, and I

32:00 probably wanted to start again, see what it was like. And they did want recruits and I thought they did, they didn't, they didn't, no they didn't. I talk about this flu and this time I had dreadful flu. And there's one stage where you have got to hold the mercury up and hold it up for 60 seconds. But I held it up. Then I was sent to...

32:30 No, I was still in the army then. That was... After that stage I was still in the army and I went to Canungra. I had a slight malaria in Canungra and I went down to hospital in Canungra. I had a very good time there too. While I was there my transfer to the air force came through. So they sent me up to

33:00 Kingaroy to do an ITS, initial training school. That was more like a holiday than anything else. I was there for six months and played sport all the time. Academic wise it was no bother to me.

Were there any differences between the way the air force did their initial training than the army...?

Less physical. They thought it was very physical, but it wasn't. They give you a performance test and while I was in the

33:30 air force my performance went off and yet I played sport continuously. When I was down in Temora I played a game of basketball and a game of soccer and probably a game of rugby union in the afternoon, but my performance still went down. They tested you with push ups and press ups. Anyway a very happy time up at... More like a holiday than anything else.

34:00 Kingaroy is a very good little town. We got leave there one day a week. From there I was sent to Temora, an elementary pilot training school. And we trained as pilots but they didn't want pilots then. They had 95

34:30 trainees, students, there and I think they only passed five. So I didn't pass there. Then I went back and I spent some time in Bradfield Park and then I went to Toowoomba to a workshop, base workshop, base supply depot for the air force.

Well what was your reaction to being scrubbed as a pilot?

35:00 Disappointed, but again not badly disappointed, I was still aircrew and I was happy to be going to another category. I didn't know whether I would be then. Next thing - see I did fairly well academically so they - the next thing I knew I was sent to an air gunner's school at Sale and that was a - nothing strenuous like the army. But it was

35:30 exacting. I topped that course as far as I know. And I got commissioned on that course. They

- commissioned about two out of 40. Then I was sent back to Temora and I only played sport there. Then I went from Temora, I went back to Sale again. They had - there was East Sale and West Sale, one was a
- 36:00 depot really, people that returned from war actually, from there I was discharged. West Sale again I played sport.
- When did the end of the war come about?**
- Long time after that. No, wait a minute, no. All the war was over then, yes.
- During which period did the**
- 36:30 **war end?**
- The war had finished when I was discharged. I would have to look at my pay book to see when I was discharged.
- How did you hear about the end of the war?**
- That was all in the news. They had special celebrations. VE [Victory in Europe] Day.
- What did you do to celebrate?**
- Oh nothing much. Just went off and had a beer, I think.
- What was your reaction to the news that war was over?**
- Look I might be queer, but I really had no strong reaction for anything. Just wondering what I would do next.
- Were you disappointed you wouldn't get to fly with the air force?**
- Not really. I was disappointed I didn't fly, but not with the air force. I was disappointed that I didn't prove to be a good pilot. Mainly because I thought I would
- 37:00 fly afterwards. No, I can't say that I was strongly disappointed. I was upset that I didn't get it but disappointed... There is always something else ahead of you at that age, but not much ahead now but.
- Did you sort of at the point of where war was over catch**
- 37:30 **up with anyone who had served within the army?**
- Oh yes, I did that all the time, every friend I have had in life I have kept in contact with everybody. Primary school, secondary school, university. We haven't come to university yet, have we? Army, always kept in contact. Always had friends, always had contacts. It's as if you - when you meet them it's as if you had met them yesterday, too. Nothing to pick up.
- 38:00 **What were your feelings on being discharged from the air force?**
- I was pleased to be discharged. The war was over. I had no intention of staying in the services. I was a farmer at heart and all I thought about was going back and farming again. I didn't
- 38:30 have any ambitions. Most of the pilots had reasonable academic ability, or army, are aimed at university courses. The ones that didn't have academic ability tended to go for... Paper shops were very profitable then and it was hard work. I had a distant cousin he took up a paper shop and he did very well.
- 39:00 One of the best pilots down south, he took up a paper shop and did very well too. See when you are in the army you spend a lot of idle time sitting around fires and that and right from the beginning you plan what you are going to do with the after life. You think of your after life. Not like a professional army, you think of your after life and what you will do when you get out and the opportunities you missed and what you would like to do. When I
- 39:30 enlisted - I am going right back. When I enlisted in June 1940. I spent the first night there we had to go and get out palliasses filled, and I went down - most of them went to town to see their girlfriends or their families, but I had no one to go and see and I sat down on the palliasse and there was a fella beside me, and he was a banana farmer, very nice
- 40:00 fella, banana farmer, and we talked about - see I was a dairy farmer. We talked about farming all night, and he talked about his banana farming, which I knew nothing about, that one man could weed 10 acres of bananas, so when people talk about what they are interested in it becomes good. And he talked about what he was going to do after the war and how he had
- 40:30 taken a banana farm and what he would do with it. I never ever saw him again, I don't know what he did. That's the kind of thing you think about.

00:35 **Okay, yes.**

I went back on to the farm with my brother and father and mother. He had been discharged at the end of 1943 and we set up very happily to develop the farm which had been stopped in the middle of development and I just

01:00 lived in the district and by about 1948, because the place was too small, I left. And I hadn't told you before - when I was in New Guinea I had a certain amount of deferred pay coming. I wrote to my family and said to put it down on a property near where they were

01:30 living, and they did. They put it down on this property we are sitting on now. So we could work the two combined in the beginning in about 1938. About 1948 or so we parted, that place was too small. I came here more or less as a stop gap. I farmed here, ran a few cattle. And

02:00 they called for volunteers for the Korean War. I went down and joined on the 8th August, I was number seven in Queensland. I met a very interesting group of people there. Two people I have known before, Page, who had been in the anti tank in Syria, and Butch McKenzie had been in the 2/15th so I met on a trip around Queensland. When you are discharged they give you

02:30 a free train pass all around Queensland. So I took mine to go up to Normanton, across to Cloncurry, back down to Charleville and home. And the last coach link between... Oh anyway, that leads to Charleville. So we stopped at one place and a big man with a

03:00 bridle and saddle and saddle cloth climbed in and sat beside me, he was Butch McKenzie from the 2/15th and we had a great yarn. But he was the first man I met when I went into Yeronga to join up, and he was 400,001 and he was the first volunteer. He had become the first volunteer.

Why had you joined up?

03:30 Don't ask me that, but I have my suspicions why he joined up for a particular reason. But he had joined the permanent army.

I mean you. Why did you want to join up for Korea?

That's a hard one, I don't know myself, but single, I didn't really have any great prospects and I had this sort of army culture in me. I felt perhaps I had

04:00 shirked a bit in World War II. All sorts of reasons. You couldn't single out a reason. It was there to join. Anyway we left Yeronga and left by - it was very hard for me because I had to ring my parents and tell them I had joined. One of the hardest things I have done in my life. They were very good about it. My mother came down to see me off. I think she did a very heroic job.

04:30 And we went down to Sydney by train and out to Ingleburn, went through a few weeks' infantry training, fairly strenuous, we had a good time. We had leave to Sydney on the weekend, it wasn't too bad. Then we were flown to - then we were put on I think it was the Skymaster. And they flew us and stopped at Clark Field in

05:00 the Philippines, which is a big American base town. That was one of the more hectic times I had. We landed there and the governors and we had been given a dollar to spend there. And of course a dollar doesn't mean much to an American. So when we arrived there, we got there late in the afternoon, we got there and went to the PX [American canteen unit]. PX is their sort of canteen.

05:30 So we all walked down to spend our dollar and we didn't have to spend a penny. All these Yanks: "These Aussies are going to fight with my buddies in Korea," and they all filled our table with beer. There must have been 50 bottles of beer on our table and we had no hope of drinking them. I remember the beer, it was Slitz Beer that made Milwaukee famous. We were there at 10

06:00 o'clock and the MPs [Military Police] came to chase us out of the place because it closed at 10 o'clock, and in the usual Australian way we teased them a bit but they don't have much of a sense of humour. But when we got back to the barracks, all the soldiers from around the place had bought cases of whisky and goodness knows what and they were in the barracks there with us. We had no hope of drinking them. Many people tried. So we didn't

06:30 get to bed until daylight. The next morning we lined up to - oh, the engine had failed - one of the engines had failed on the plane and they had to send back to Australia or bring up from Australia another engine. So here we were with another day in Clark Field and we weren't really looking forward to it. So they gave us a girl guide and transport and they took us round

07:00 to show us things, and all we saw were swimming pools - it was pretty hot. They offered us a swimming pool, oh no we couldn't go into the swimming pool because they didn't have a life guard there. She arranged to get a life guard and this fella came down and sat in the chair at the end of the pool, and I didn't even know whether he could swim, but he didn't look too good. And while we were there we splashing around - there was a Filipino training the station team,

07:30 some team, it might have been a Filipino team. Anyway, he decided we would have a competition. So we

lined up and I was to swim in the competition, but Page wanted to swim badly, so he was my mate from the Second World War, so I let him swim. You wouldn't believe it! We would have probably won the contest if Page hadn't have sunk halfway - he couldn't finish the second lap. So they won

08:00 it. The Filipino coach skited about it. But we would have won if Page had finished his lap. We had some pretty fair swimmers there. From there we flew to Kure - the next morning they lined us up and engine trouble again, and we just stood there after a night out on all this whisky and all that, you can imagine what everybody looked like. It was hot, they put us on the plane

08:30 and we were on the plane for about an hour, this hot plane, and you could see a man's hand over the side, the sweat was just running of his fingers. So they took us off the plane again and fixed it up eventually and put us back on.

Tell us also about your impressions of the Philippines at the time?

Never saw anything of the Philippines, only Clark Field. It had a barbed wire fence around it - I never saw it - guarded by

09:00 Filipinos. And I believe they shot at anybody that went near the fence, so - the Huks [communist rebels] at that time must have been revolting or something, and the air force was strafing them out and about, and that's the only thing we saw. We saw nothing of the Philippines. We saw them coming back and that's quite interesting too. So they flew us - landed us in Japan, took us out to Kure

09:30 and there we were to train again. And it was funny, the barracks, pretty rough barracks, quite all right and all these - 30 year old - a lot of Australians behaved like a lot of kids you know, they'd be tipping one another's beds over and wrestling. Fighting and everything and the Japanese would come in to fix the lights

10:00 and it's a 110 volt system, but how they tested the lights if the light was out, they'd wrap the end of their finger and poke it up in the socket and if it flashed the line was all right but if it didn't flash there was something more wrong. We were a bit aghast at this but then they explained it was 110 volt system. And - we didn't have - I had been

10:30 allotted to the anti tank-platoon. There were no guns then, we just did physical training. Every morning we would run up the hills before breakfast and I hate this. And on the way you would meet the carts, they called them honey carts with Kure's excreta in big carts being carted out to fertilise the fields. And when you are panting up a hill the smell of this really upset the

11:00 men. Page always broke out for a drive every morning. Then you come down - they are very good in this way, you have meals, and it was all cooked by - they had Japanese servants in all the halls so you didn't have any work in that way. We didn't bother going on leave much. When we went out on the hills, we...

11:30 the big guns or some other exercise. And the young Japanese all come up to us and say, "Can we have discussion in English?" Most of them didn't want to be bothered, but we had a fella called Pat Lyn, so we delegated him as the English instructor. So whenever they came up Pat put them through their - not that Pat was that good, but he was good enough

12:00 in English. After we trained there for a while we were hearing that the war was really over in Korea. This is not borne up by official information, but we were hearing. And I heard that the war was nearly over because the aircraft had shot out nearly all the North Korean tanks either with rockets or napalm. And the boys were a bit keen to get over there before it was all

12:30 over. Then they had a big exercise and afterwards the message came through that the troops were fit to go to Korea, so...

Were there any more interesting aspects to the training in Japan?

The trouble with me is I am used to army training. I will tell you one interesting aspect.

13:00 In their last exercise they sent out the trucks to get the soldiers back in a hurry, and the colonel sent out the order, "Bring the trucks back. They are going to Korea. They have to walk home." I will tell you a funny story. No it's gone.

13:30 We had a lot more times in Japan that was more interesting. It's just like being in Australia except that you had Japanese people there around you.

What were your impressions at this stage of Japan?

We all had an antagonism to anything Japanese at that stage. Plenty of fellows that we joined up with from B Company that were married to Japanese women. But generally speaking, for the first time we were in Japan, we had a

14:00 sort of contempt and a contempt for the Japanese and I must admit that, and later we became quite friendly with them. At that stage and I will give you an example later.

What was your impression of the Japanese people?

Very small. Very willing to learn. Very keen to learn.

14:30 Very friendly and civil. Only once in all Japan did I see anything belligerent from a Japanese.

Were you doing any drill at this stage?

Oh yes, you did your drill all the time. You had your morning parades. You had your gun drill, that was quite strenuous, you might spend a couple of hours on gun drill and that was quite strenuous. Digging in your guns.

15:00 That's all what you might call ritual stuff.

Were you conducting any of these like when you were a drill sergeant?

No, no, no. That was all forgotten. See I had a commission in the air force and I joined as a private, and I was a private for the early part. But when they got the guns and split them up they made me a gun sergeant and then I had to organise gun drill

15:30 on my own particular gun. But we were under a lieutenant called Paddy Outridge. He's still alive; he lives up in Maryborough now. Yes we did all the ritual things. I don't remember doing any rifle shooting on Japan, we might have, I don't remember, but we were

16:00 anti-tank gunners and we had the 17 pounder. We never fired them in Japan.

And you mentioned that there was talk about the war being almost over, so what did you expect to find once you got to Korea?

We thought that it was more or less been mopped up. That was before MacArthur put his (UNCLEAR) on landing when it collapsed. But according to the air force the fight was nearly over. The Yanks had been

16:30 pushed into a tight - this is not official, but I heard in Japan - that the Yanks had been pushed into a tight corner and they set up their meat grinder, which they called it, and that was their heavy artillery. It was a very constricted front and didn't have to do any hand-to-hand fighting. That's not official, that's not what you read all the time, that's what happened.

Tell us

17:00 **about leaving Japan to go?**

Yes well that was - down we went to the wharf, loaded on to the ship with all our gear. And that thing that interested me there was that there were a lot of dependants, married people, in Japan, both Japanese and Caucasian. And they had them segregated on the wharf, and this really upset the B Company men.

17:30 That's the first time I saw any racial... Didn't worry us. We really didn't care what they did because we didn't really consider the Japanese as people at that stage. When the ship left the wharf, just as you could see the water, the whole battalion broke out in the battalion anthem. Do you know what it is? Well I will tell you. "We're a pack of bastards,

18:00 bastards are we, we come from Aussie, the arsehole of what they call the universe. We're a pack of bastards, we'd sooner fuck than fight for liberty." That's the anthem. Sounded marvellous as the ship pulled out, you couldn't hear the words but it sounded marvellous. We had this trip to Pusan and the fellows

18:30 on the boat were not to take any alcohol on an Australian ship but people would slip bottles of beer in their toolbox or something. So quite a few little parties on the deck. When we got to Pusan they had a welcoming party down on the - we got pulled in there - down on the wharf was an American band, Negro band

19:00 in working dress and a very natty I think Filipino band, but very good uniforms, and a row of Korean girls. Now the Yanks played all sorts of music and they shuffled around the place. The other band played very formally but very well. And then suddenly the gangplank went down and our officers marched off. The CO [Commanding Officer] wasn't there but the 2IC led them.

19:30 These girls moved up each with a bouquet in their hands you could see the embarrassed look. Anyhow the 2IC missed his bouquet, but each of the others got a bouquet and I suppose one of the diggers at the end got the last one. Of course the boys thought this was marvellous. And after that again something happened and they played the national anthem, ours and then theirs. Then the

20:00 boys broke out in the anthem when it was all over. Ringing out over Pusan, it really sounded good. Nobody worried much about the words. But it really sounded marvellous. Then they put us on dusty trains again, just like Palestine and took us up to I think it was Taegu, put us off there and spent the night and told us the

20:30 usual tail of the guerrillas in the hills and likely to attack and be very careful and all that. We must have

- spent two days there and Page and I decided we would go and have a look at the countryside. We went out on to a little knoll and it seemed to be moving. So we went to have a look at it. It was absolutely covered with snakes, thriving snakes! And Page was very skilful with anything he did. He could take a
- 21:00 snake up by the tail and crack its head off, you see. And he did about four of these and I didn't really like it much, and so we went back to camp. And then we started to travel north. I can only speak of what we did, we didn't do the same as the rifle company. We travelled up by truck very slowly. All the refugees were coming back; they were pretty dirty. And there were old people
- 21:30 and young people and kids, plenty more refugees later. The most interesting case was a man carrying his mother or grandmother. He was about nearly 40, very strongly built man, not tall of course. He had an A frame on their back that they carried everything on. He had about two thirds of a bag of
- 22:00 rice on that A frame and on top of that A frame his mother or grandmother or whoever it was sitting with a head going like this all the time. And he would carry her for about 200 yards or less, veins standing out on his neck and he would put her down. We were travelling along so slowly we could watch him for quite a while. He did this, he would rest for a while and pick her up. I don't know how far he had to go.
- 22:30 But they were very sturdy people. Don't really - we were going up the peninsula we found the - saw all the earthworks for irrigation and they were pretty interesting. The Japanese I think had organised them, but they picked up water up the river
- 23:00 and brought it down in an aqueduct with bridges over the gullies and use it further down on the higher slopes. It was a bit surprising to see how sophisticated that water system was. Wasn't much cultivation, the war had gone right through it. We stopped all the way. Korea was a place of low river flats, and hills about 500 ft and some much higher. And every night we
- 23:30 stopped. We had to go up - we climbed up on the top of these hills because you always take the high country and dig in. And sometimes there was mostly granite down about a foot, so you couldn't dig too far,
- 24:00 and spend the night there and go on again. We didn't have any action they sent up. The rifle companies did, but I don't know much about that. Really, I can't detail the places that we got to. We got into North Korea, went past... Once we got into North Korea, all the towns we passed through there were crowds in the streets and they were pulling down all the
- 24:30 old statues and posters on the walls and stamping on them. And bashing up what must have been the old officials. This was happening in all the towns. And eventually we just about caught up with the action. And we went past Berin Yang [?] and then we saw... That was when the
- 25:00 C Company put in their attack on what they called the apple orchard. That was probably the best stunt in the show. They caught the North Koreans on the hop and kept them running and they rescued an American parachute troop. You can
- 25:30 read all this better than I can tell it to you, but I am telling you because it has a relevance later.

What was your position at the apple orchard?

We were just following on there, and our trucks were just moving troops backwards and forwards. I was there just at the end of the apple orchard, and one of the things I remember, the tanks were going up with the troops,

- 26:00 there were a lot of dead Koreans, they were North Koreans very young looking men. I remember the tank - one lying in the middle of the road, a tank had driven over him, and he was quite whole each side of the tank track, quite whole and fresh looking and everything, and his body where the tank had gone over him wouldn't have been thicker than a sheet of paper. It was the most amazing thing I have seen.
- 26:30 They had - we didn't have much to do until that - we travelled up - this is all written up, I am only giving you our part of it. We went up to where we had to fight on the Broken Bridge where we had nothing to do with it, they shot out two tanks with a bazooka. On the flats there we had a dug in position on the
- 27:00 flats and we only had one casualty - the man beside me was shot in the chest. That was the unfortunate part of the campaign, where they had already driven the Chinese off the ridges. Held their positions, the rifle company, and the colonel ordered them to withdraw 1,000 yards that night. I was with Paddy Attridge, the lieutenant, and he said, "The order has just come up to withdraw 1,000 yards," and I said,
- 27:30 "Take no notice of it. They don't withdraw men in contact with the enemy." 1,000 yards, and he came back and said, "No, it's right." He said, "We have to go back." So we went back 1,000 yards, and early in the morning - most of my mates, all of my mates were A Company with rifle company - they were down on the flat and they had been pulled out of their positions where they had held the Chinese off and everything. And
- 28:00 they were terribly upset. About six or seven of the fellas I joined up with there. So next morning the

brigadier sacked the colonel and ordered the troops back into the hills where they had been before. But luckily the Chinese had vanished. They had gone back again.

What had happened? Why had this order come in then?

Pardon?

Why had this order come in to go back 1,000 yards?

Nobody knows, just a

28:30 tactical error. I wouldn't like... Can we leave this out? An inexperienced colonel, I think. I don't think his staff supported him as much as they should have the more experienced ones. But I don't think we should publicise that. Yes, that was Pakch'on, Broken Bridge.

29:00 We did get up as far as Chongju. I was there for that battle, and I took my hat off to the fellas that took it on. They advanced about I don't know five or 600 yards at least uphill and took the position. And on the way up they were pitched with North Koreans in and covered with branches,

29:30 but they got rid of most of those, but one of my mates from Brisbane, Murray Ogden, pulled the branches off and the fellow shot him when he pulled the branches off. He died. They got up to the top of the hill and took the position, and they had practically run out of ammunition. One fellow lost his lost his (UNCLEAR) standing there with a mortar bomb in his hand. It was a very good thing. I had very little again

30:00 except retreating. The retreat happened suddenly, like Toby... One of the Yanks came up, I think it was the 1st Cav [Cavalry] they called themselves, they came up the road and had banners everywhere, "Never fear, the 1st Cav have been here," and this sort of thing all the way. And I was standing with Toby Millwood, who was an ex 9th Division soldier and had been in Tobruk. I said to Toby, "Looks as if the war's over."

30:30 Toby said, "If I was in the Benghazi Harriers, I bet you they would come back." And then the Chinese came in and the whole thing collapsed. I think at one stage we might have been 24 miles ahead of the front. But we pulled in there and that's the first time we fired our guns, we tested them, we fired over about 1,000 yards of paddy fields.

31:00 Enormous paddy fields they were. And in that village we adopted a Korean. His name was - we called him - he couldn't speak English so we called him Kelly. He used to come down to the fire first thing in the morning where we had it and hawk and spit on the fire and rub his hands and leer at everybody. I think he was pretty unpopular in the village because one day he brought down the hat they wear, I can probably show you that later, and threw it in the fire. So I think he

31:30 might have got the head man's hat and threw it in the fire. But that was the last we saw of him.

What would you say to each other about Kelly?

Oh nothing. These are just an interesting thing, a bit of novelty in life. No, we Australians are not the least bit racist. That's the most noticeable thing about the Australians.

32:00 Or at least the Australian soldiers, they don't have - they get on terribly on well with native - we'll call them natives, native only means born in their country, yes, before long you'll find they have mates there and the kids are around him. And we gradually dropped down, I have forgotten all lot of what happened, we guarded rivers and

32:30 we had one interesting stunt and that was Ta Dong. We were told the Argylls [Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders] had to be protected as they came back across the river so they sent the whole battalion across the river, anti-tank guns and all, and when we came to the river, it was only a narrow river, but it had a bridge over it, a bridge you would have thought the Boy Scouts had built on a Saturday afternoon, but it was

33:00 properly built. It was hardly wider than the trucks and we drove on to the rickety looking bridge, the truck was weighing about six tonne and three tonne gun behind it. We didn't think we'd get over it. Went up into the hills, set up all the defensive positions. Dug the guns in and the American Bostons came over and started flying over us.

33:30 And one of the guns down below had a sergeant called Harry Gleeson in charge of it, and he had walked over to get orders from somewhere and he was back to his gun, and this Boston came round and dived at him. They let go of the napalm, the napalm landed but didn't go off, and Harry was going across the paddock like this and he got back to his gun all right. And another Boston flew over and dropped a streamer

34:00 and when they read the message it was - the hill opposing us was covered with Chinese. So instead of strafing us they started strafing the Chinese. We stayed there all that night, and that's the first time snow fell. And most of the boys had never seen snow fall. During the night it started to fall softly and everybody's blankets started to get white, and then the message came that we were to get out.

34:30 Oh, down in the village there was a big village there, we could hear the pigs squealing and the hens

squawking and we knew the Chinese quartermaster was in there getting rations, and that was between us and the bridge. So we hoped they had the bridge well protected. Anyhow the message came very early in the morning. That we were to withdraw the guns first. We didn't want the Chinese to get the guns if anything happened. So we pulled out as

- 35:00 quietly as we could, crept down the hill, through the village, all burning and tied up everywhere, packhorses, beautiful packhorses and mules. Tied up - and we gradually got through the village and crossed the bridge everything okay. We had seven men to guard each gun. But after we pulled up on top of the hill, and the headquarters
- 35:30 was up there, and the rifle company started to send out, and the colonel came up to one of our trucks that I happened to be sitting in and said, "There's a mortar truck stuck down the bottom of the hill near the river. Can you get it out?" I was with a very good driver, Gordon Wells from New South Wales, he was an excellent driver, and he said, "Yes, we can do it."
- 36:00 We went and we got down on the flat and here was this mortar truck and Captain Mess, who was the pioneer officer, was about to blow the bridge and he said - while we were there we watched the thing, and he set fire and the bridge - actually the bridge 50 ft in the air intact and then went into tiny bits.
- 36:30 The best blow up I have ever seen. We had some - the snow had turned to ice and most of the trucks couldn't climb. And there were three Yank tanks there to protect the pioneer platoon, and we hooked on to this mortar truck, it was a truck that been captured from the Chinese, it was like a two-wheel drive 1930 truck. And we hooked on to it and started
- 37:00 off but we couldn't - we had chains on it but we couldn't find the hill. And the tanks were there and I hopped out and asked one of the tanks to give us a start. And he wouldn't give us a start. So he passed us and he cracked up all the ice, and Gordon Wells was a marvellous driver got on to this cracked ice, and we followed him up to the top of the hill. And we got out. I found out that truck was full of mortar bombs,
- 37:30 and if they had mortared it from across the creek it would have been a fair blow. Anyway we got over there, and the unit was getting together to move off and they had captured some North Korean winter gear and they had all sorts of clothing, quilted tunics.
- 38:00 They had one thing that took my eye and that was felt shoes. Now when you have rubber soles on your shoes you fall over all the time on the ice. So I got these felt shoes and swapped them. I didn't throw my rubber soled ones away, luckily, I swapped them, and they were marvellous. I hadn't been so comfortable for ages. But it thawed a couple of days and later the soles fell off, so I had to go back to my old boots. Anyway we pulled away down south again.
- 38:30 Eventually, we ended up on what we called D line - I don't know what other people called it - and we stayed there for quite a while. I think we were retraining American troops and it was said, if it was correct, and they said, "Bug out," and that started out a move and they would take off. So it was said, it might be true, but they were fined \$50 if they ever said, "Bug out."
- 39:00 Anyway, they performed pretty well after that. While we were there we did little patrols, and the infantry did little patrols, the rifle company did big patrols. Our platoon was in the line - we did patrols. And we went out one day and the ground was frozen, frozen at night and wet in the day time, and we had to go out through all sorts of paddy fields and your feet were frozen.
- 39:30 And we came to one village and we investigated it and there was nothing in it, but when we got into it we found there was a group there with their gear on the ground, civilians. We went and cleared all the rooms. I went in to clear one, threw the door open, and as I looked in there was a girl there, oh when I say a girl, maybe 19 or 20 or something. And she stood up just as if she stood up from a chamber pot and dropped her dress.
- 40:00 They could have shot me I was so shocked, they could have shot me, my reflexes wouldn't have worked. She just smiled at me. And I didn't know what to do with her, so I told Paddy Attridge to go and see - that was a new lieutenant thing, that was Ted Beecroft.

Tape 7

- 00:35 **We'll just go back a little bit, you talked to Kiernan a bit about the battle of the apple orchard, but I wonder if you could describe a little bit more about when you arrived what you saw?**

I saw nothing but troops. It was over when I arrived

- 01:00 there and I don't really have many more recollections about that.

What was the general area that the battle had been fought in? What did that look like?

It was a big paddy field. The village where I went to and there was a paddy field beside it. And they were attacked through the paddy field because the North Korean soldiers were hiding in some of the -

what we would call stooks,

01:30 I suppose, and they managed to kick these aside and drive the North Koreans out. It was Dennis ran that show, and he ran that excellently. He was an excellent officer, he got them rolling and he kept them rolling. We had - I think we only had four wounded in that show, I don't know the figures, but it was very low in casualties there. And

02:00 having rescued the parachute troop, it was very much in our favour, because later they were in charge of the brewery in Pyongyang and if ever we sent a truck in we could always get a jerry can of beer or something from them. A thanks for pulling them out of trouble.

As you came in after the battle,

02:30 **did you sort of having any work to do cleaning up or...?**

Not there no. Nothing to do there in cleaning up or anything. It was there - and it was written up and I had nothing to do with it - it was there they captured 400 Koreans. They came in, I don't know the details of that, they came in thinking we were Russians, I think.

03:00 **Also you were speaking before about the battle of the broken bridge, can the same thing there describe...?**

Well you see again, I wasn't in the actual battle, I was there I was supporting troops, but the details are all written up.

But can you describe what you saw?

I only saw it from the distance. I saw that. But we were on the plane, so I

03:30 didn't actually see much of the battle at the broken bridge.

Did you go in to the area around the battle of the broken bridge?

No, we never went near it. We went on, I think we must have gone up to Chongju after that. No, we withdrew there, and went steadily back down south.

Were you involved at all in Chongju?

04:00 Only standing watching my mates go up. I think we were to support but we didn't do anything.

And you just finished that tape telling Kiernan about different sorts of patrols in villages?

Again, I am not involved in the rifle company patrols, but they did some patrols right up to Inch'on, and further up, and had quite a lot of contact with the Chinese.

04:30 They are all well written up and I wasn't involved in those.

But how about what you were involved in?

Patrols, as the one I told you of, and I haven't finished that one.

Well maybe you could?

Right, well when we got back that night without any serious effects, it was dark and everybody had frozen feet.

05:00 And Ted Beecroft who was our lieutenant. We had a few embers burning there and he kicked it together so we could warm our feet. Benny O'Dowd, who was the company commander, yelled out, "Put out that fire!" And Ted Beecroft didn't sound respectful, but he said, "Yes sir." Ted - Benny O'Dowd had him over and

05:30 lectured him, we all went off to bed with wet feet. I am just making the point of the frozen feet. I got into my sleeping bag and I had never had cold feet in my life, but I couldn't warm my feet. And I had heard that in the First World War the men who didn't wear socks managed their feet much better than those that did. So I thought I would try this, so I took one boot off and one sock off

06:00 and put the boot back again, and that foot warmed up and the other one wouldn't. So I took the other boot off and took the sock off and put the boot back on and it warmed up, but you were sleeping inside your sleeping bag boots and all. And that foot warmed up too, so after that for the whole winter I never wore socks. Equal to that we never had any rest periods. We'd start them and they'd call us out again. But we had a short rest period

06:30 where we had a debate and all sorts of things, and a parade. And the colonel decided to have a foot inspection, and he called on the anti-tank platoon. Now it seems strange to me that he called on the anti-tank platoon. I think the talk had got around that there had been a few sore feet. I am only guessing, but anyway many people hadn't washed their feet for four or five weeks you see, so we all rushed over the hut to find a receptacle to wash out feet so they would be

07:00 presentable, and they had an inspection of all the feet and they stayed a little bit longer at mine but

there was nothing wrong with mine. I had a bit of a spot on one, and the CO pointed to that with his stick and no, they were very good and he went on. Even though I might be fooling myself, I think they had that inspection to see my feet. We had another little episode there, we never had a bath, and unless we got to a

07:30 village or something, and we didn't get to a village much. And there was a stench from the pits, you know, when you went round to wake them at night. It was pretty dreadful. And Toby came to me one day, and said, "What say we go and have a bath?" I said, "Where are you going to get a bath?" "Oh," he said, "there's a big boiler in the house down there." It had been wrecked for wood. So we went down there and there was a big container down there, and a man could fit into it, so we heated it up until it was nice and warm. Toby

08:00 had a big bar of soap and we climbed in and we both soaped ourselves up and cleaned ourselves up and really - brought fresh clothes, really pretty good. Got out and forgot how the cold took us. We could hardly bear the cold. He was a tall thin fella and he could hardly bear the cold and he shivered like anything and so did I. When we went to pick up sticks and that we had to put them against our body.

08:30 Before that I had noticed if you ran your fingers down your arm, you roll up layers of lanoline almost a millimetre thick, and after this bath we had no lanoline, and I am again surmising that we - the lanoline was a big help in keeping us warm, but Toby said, "No more baths until after the winter."

09:00 We warmed up after a couple of days.

Can you describe the kind of areas you were sleeping in?

Yes, we were sleeping on a little low ridge with very short undergrowth all over it. It was a sandy ridge and we were just part of a D line. I think the Chinese logistics wouldn't allow them to get down

09:30 to us. And by that time we built up and they didn't have a hope. In spite of all the talk about the Chinese after that point, never really had a hope.

What were the kinds of defences around where you were sleeping?

Oh, the Americans had long range artillery posts, but of course I didn't see them.

How about just immediately was there barbed wire?

No, we had no barbed wire. We did have later but

10:00 not there, later on but not here. The Americans set up a system where they infrared their lights. There was a whole front in a sort of a twilight. But that was later. I don't think they had them down here.

At what point at this

10:30 **time where you wounded?**

Well it must have been before April 1952. I don't know where we had Christmas. I can't remember the date. I would have to look it up.

Well just before we talk about that, did you have any leave while you were there?

No leave. Later on they brought in a system where if you had five months I think it was you got three days' leave and after eight months you got three weeks' leave. Either way round

11:00 probably, after five months you got three weeks and after eight months you got three days. I didn't take my early leave, I just took the second one.

What sort of things were you doing before you took that leave, after the...?

Just being army in action.

Well describe some of that for me?

You have the usual duties, as they say they patrolled,

11:30 it's a bit hard everybody did their job. There were times you did nothing in the day time if you were there. We didn't do any exercises beyond the patrols that I can remember there. It seems as if we did nothing, but the days were always full. The rations to be distributed and latrines to be dug and all sorts of jobs go on.

Can you walk me through what a typical

12:00 **day would be like?**

Stand to first thing in the morning, breakfast, detail people to various jobs that have to be done. Go on a patrol earlier if you had to. Just a lot of housekeeping jobs to be done. We didn't do any actual training, new

12:30 techniques or anything like that. It was really a good time for soldiers because they don't bother you

that much. A lot of the war is a bit of a haze to me now. We used to go - I spent a bit of time talking to some of my mates down in another company, so I must have had a bit of time off. We used to go and tell

13:00 them that when this would be over the Yanks would be so grateful that they would take the whole battalion to San Francisco, all the rubbish they would say, but they just loved it. I would go down there and fantasise with them.

Did you ever have American rations to eat?

Yes, they were very good. I liked the American rations, the way they were set up the six in one.

13:30 I think they all liked them pretty well. In the six in one, you got I think three, we'll call them meat tins, three dessert tins, we usually had two packets of cigarettes, sweets, some fruit at some times, but that was the main part of them. I didn't smoke so

14:00 I gave my cigarettes away. We got a rum ration occasionally, which I never saw in World War II. A rum ration occasionally, when we started off I had the job of distributing seven rum rations to my gun, but none of them drank rum so I got all the seven rations and could store them a bit. But as the time went on they all started to drink it so I just got my own ration.

14:30 Again, most of them didn't smoke, but getting these good American cigarettes, Lucky Strike, Chesterfield and all the rest of it, they all smoked in the end. I didn't smoke. They didn't all smoke but the majority of them smoked. My biggest problem with the quartermaster at D line was getting socks for the men.

15:00 For some reason, socks were in short supply. Nearly every day I was going over to get socks for them. But I thought our clothing was good. We had long johns and a singlet and they were apparently made in America of a special wool. I thought they were cotton until very recently and I found out they were wool. We had windcheater pants and a pile jacket and we had a

15:30 windcheater coat. Now most of them didn't wear the coat - I didn't wear the coat - but you wore the pile jacket and it was very warm. We did have gloves, most of them wore gloves, but I didn't wear gloves. They did have a hat with ear flaps. That was a dreadful thing because they made you deaf and you couldn't hear. I wore a felt hat all the time. Others did. The flaps were a real nuisance if you wanted to talk to anybody.

16:00 Yes a lot of the details I should have remembered. I remember personal ones a lot.

When you were on that line, would you do any sorts of exercises with the men on the guns?

We didn't have any guns, we were infantry. We didn't have guns on that line. I think we were so far away from the Chinese that we didn't - I don't think the Chinese had any tanks, although we took them all the time.

16:30 We always had them but we didn't have them on D line. Just straight infantry, part of the line.

You mentioned these lights that the Americans set up?

That was later on I saw them, I don't think they had them on D line. If they did I didn't notice them. But they infiltrated these lights across the front so you had a continuous twilight. That's where I was. You could always tell when the

17:00 Chinese had broken through because the American artillery had opened up. When the - I'd have the job, see when I was second in charge of the platoon, I had the job of waking them all and getting them out. I used to come down and say, "The thrill now divine the mortal lions..."

17:30 Anyway one I used to use was a double sound of, "The thundering drum, cries arm, the foe they come, they come." I would go to each pit and I would say this, and I would hear them say, "Listen to the stupid bastard."

18:00 But as soon as we heard the artillery starting up, the American artillery, they'd all get restless and know they - and you could bet within 20 minutes a half an hour, an order would come round to move out.

How would you describe the relationship that you

18:30 **had with the men?**

Oh, one to one it was just, just - even though you were always fully in command, it was a - quite a personal relation - democratic relationship. But you still - officers always had complete control and sergeants had complete control. Anybody ever thought of backing up on a

19:00 sergeant - I don't think they even thought of it. You always called the officers 'sir'. I always did anyway. No, if I gave an order it was always carried out.

Did you feel a sense of responsibility to the men beneath you?

Oh yes, you have that all the time because that's drummed into you. That they come first, that's

drummed in all the time. They must be looked after first, you come second.

19:30 **Would any of them ever come to you for advice or...?**

Oh yes, quite often. Because you - without any conceit you come a bit of a father figure. I don't know whether I like telling this story, well I won't mention any names. It's a good example. One stage one of the men was talking about his wife going to have a baby

20:00 and that, and it went on for quite a while, and I was a bit worried, the timing didn't seem quite right, and in the end he got a letter from his padre that his wife was pregnant to another man, you see. So I had to handle it. He came to me for advice. I said, "Well you'll tell nobody else about it, I won't tell anybody and I will go down and see CO and see if we can get you back to

20:30 Australia." So I went down to the CO and down to the adjutant and arranged to get him back to Australia, he said, "What'll I do for you?" "Oh, send me some films." So when he got back he sent me about half a dozen rolls of film. He was a very good fellow. Another example I had was a case where the American tanks were badly shot up, they went out and didn't put out

21:00 guards and the Chinese wiped the whole lot of them out. And they brought them back and they were frozen stiff and they brought them back in big trucks, piled up like fire wood. The tanks we put into holding position in case the Chinese wanted more and they got lots of letters from the tanks that the men had got from their wives in Germany or somewhere. And there was one letter from a

21:30 wife who was begging her husband to consider how he loved her at one time and why had he neglected her and all this. The boys got the wrong slant on this, and they said, "She's a loose woman." I said, "Bugger you, she's his wife." I said, "You want to burn that letter, she's his wife." But that's the kind of thing.

22:00 They do lean on you at times, no more than usual of course, but they do lean on you.

What do they know more than you about?

Anything. Everything. They were a good lot. You do silly things yourself of course.

What kind of things?

22:30 Oh you get things done that should have probably not been done, you make mistakes, everybody does. Everybody had a regret in their army career, that if they had done something, somebody's life might have been saved or something and they didn't do it. I haven't met really a soldier yet, that hasn't had that.

What's your regret?

I wouldn't talk about mine, but that's a...

23:00 That is a right through it. I regretted that I didn't get a fellow properly cared for when I was doing a job, things like that. I had a friend of mine who I am quite sure did the right thing, but feels quite sure he should have stayed longer in an aeroplane when he got out and - everybody would have that. Nobody is perfect, nobody does the right thing all the time.

23:30 **How do you deal with that sort of regret?**

Oh you forget about it. If you can't forget about it you become a case. You just have to wipe it out.

Did you find Korea more of a situation where you had more responsibility than...?

No, I didn't have more responsibility really. Oh yes I did later - but no

24:00 I - very like the first war, different kind of people. When I joined the first one they were mostly country people, mostly ex Light Horse people. This lot was a complete cross-section. Probably mostly urban people. I think they would be.

24:30 I have been closely associated with them up to this day. They are thinning out a bit now.

How long did you spend on the D line?

Again I can't tell you but it would be some weeks. I would have to go to official stuff, because I don't think anybody would tell you - it's all written up so I can't tell you.

Where did you head after that?

25:00 They did a steady push up the perimeter. I better go up close to Kap'nyong, because a lot of this is on my sequence is not right, it's events without a sequence. But I can go up to the battle of Kap'nyong, which is of interest to most people. The troops had been - the rifle companies had been

25:30 fighting in the mountains, doing very good work for sometime, and they were pretty fatigued, not that they showed it much. They decided we would have a rest time, and they took us into a beautiful valley, with trees in it cock pheasants growing in the hills, and tiger lilies just starting to come out in the

- spring and they had prepared big feasts for us and they were going
- 26:00 to have plenty of alcohol. They even put in bathing tents so you could go and get a shower. You never have to make an Australian have a bath if it is not freezing. And they even had guards onto make sure some of the troops didn't bathe there from other races. You had to have guards on to keep the Australians out, because if there's a bath on they'd have it,
- 26:30 you see. This is all set up and we were going to have a ceremony with the Turks. The boys had been looking forward to this all the time, a ceremony with the Turks on Anzac Day. And everybody's looking forward to this big ceremony with the Turks, and all of a sudden in the afternoon the guns started, and the order came out
- 27:00 and we had to move out. They took us down onto trucks, and I can't tell you what happened to the rifle companies, but I was taken down to the village at Kap' Yong, and given a position to set up on we had two guns with us. We didn't now what was happening but we had heard that the South Koreans had collapsed and the Chinese were moving through. So we dug in. We had
- 27:30 a pretty good site. We thought we had the middle section on the left, we had the Koreans on the right and headquarters behind us and we had a steep little gully in front of us. It was a pretty good position. After a while we could hear noises on the roads, and people running, and this flap flap, and they were crying all the time,
- 28:00 hubba, hubba, hubba, and this was the South Koreans running down the road. There were tanks over there. Speaking English in the tanks, but these South Koreans had broken down. We knew what was happening and the South Korean group over there, I thought I would go over and see what was happening. So I said to Toby, who - I was in charge of the platoon then -
- 28:30 I said to Toby, "I'll go over and see what was happening." So I went over there, and there were South Korean officers running around with pistols in their hands trying to stop this mob. But it was like Niagara Falls - you couldn't stop it. One group standing there, looking fairly stable. I said to Toby, "I'll go over to this mob they look as if they might be okay." So I went over to someone and said, "This
- 29:00 Australian. Who are you?" They looked at me pretty queerly, they suddenly realised I had a different uniform. They thought I was Chinese. I just waved my hand and said to Toby, "Come on, we'll go back there or we'll be fighting a war on our own tonight." So we went back to the perimeter and made sure everybody was well dug in. Before we knew what happened this group started firing on us.
- 29:30 And then of course we knew there was a battle on. Our fellas started firing back, and the colonel rang me up and said, "Don't panic down there sergeant." And I said, "Well we are being fired on. I think they are Chinese and we are treating them as Chinese." And then I heard go past his telephone, round sounds. And that's the last thing I heard. I never heard another thing on the telephone all night after that.
- 30:00 But they got completely surrounded and had to pull out. We had a very secure position - we had a lot of troops and a lot of machine guns. Went through the night. I wasn't in the front line there, I was in the centre, dug in the centre with a couple of others. I took a message somewhere once, just exactly the same as New Guinea, I felt a
- 30:30 bash of air on my face, and missed me - it was fired at my head. I call out to Toby, "Don't go through that area, there's a sniper lined up on it." And for some reason Toby walked through it, and of course the sniper had shot him through the body. We told a couple of fellas to keep the sniper's head down and I scuttled in and pulled him under a
- 31:00 tank. Now one of my regrets we talked about is I should have made sure he had - I thought he was handling himself. I should have made sure he had medical treatment. We had no medics with us. And that's one of the things.

What happened to him?

He died. I'll tell you more about him as time goes on.

31:30 I am just wondering how it affects a small group of men when someone dies?

He didn't die then, he died later. I'll come to that, I'll answer your question. It's a job, people don't realise that it's just like mowing a lawn or anything, it's a job, and you are completely absorbed in what you

32:00 are doing. You certainly go to a lot of bother to look after your mates and get them in places, but most men feel they are immortal. It's like boxing, if you think that before boxing or even sprinting 100 yards, you're a tatter of nerves, but once you get in there, that all goes. You are in a job and you don't

32:30 worry about fear or anything else. But that holds for all of them. But when you feel great fear in the army is when they come to you and say, "Righto boys, we are going to have a go at this place in the morning." That's when you feel fear, because you have got plenty of time to think about it. There's a story about the desert, a fella I knew was in the 6th Division, Bing Crosby his name was, and he was training

- 33:00 recruits when I was down there, and he used to say, "Hey sarge, what's it like the first time you are going to go into action?" And Bing said I'll tell you, he said, "I was there and the lieutenant came up to me and said we are going to have a go at the place, Bing." And Bing said, "I never said a word. I couldn't." That's when you are nervous. While the fight's on you are not nervous.
- 33:30 Well I would say 90% are not, it's just the same as boxing, or running a 100 yard race. You are too absorbed. And I think you have got to protect that mechanism going on. Anyway we'll get on with the battle. Well we had the Chinese attack quite a few times, but they
- 34:00 had a hopeless case. And in the mid - during the night South Korean soldiers were infiltrating, coming back through us. Now we had no way of knowing if they were South Korean or Chinese, but we had picked up previously, as a batman, not that he did any batman, a South Korean, and he travelled with us in the car, and all he ever did was when we stopped and he would get out and we would have a four gallon tin of
- 34:30 tea, he would have cooked up a brew. So we called him Char [tea] and he served his purpose this night. I think he was dodging conscription, but he served his purpose this night because he could tell whether they were Chinese or Koreans when you called out to them. So he could... Well we dug all these Koreans in with us and they performed quite well that night.
- 35:00 Yes, and when the... Wee we thought we were good, we had the middle section up on the hill, we lost the Koreans but that was all right, the mortar platoon was down on the forward, and we thought we were pretty all right, we didn't know what happened to headquarters, we had a feeling it had gone. And early in the morning we looked it had brightened up, we looked out and
- 35:30 here were three men coming from where the middle section was and Johnny Coulson stepped out and I said, "Don't shoot them Johnny. They are Middlesex." And they looked just like English soldiers too. And Johnny stepped up and yelled out, "Are you Middlesex?" Dropped his rifle, and they all raced back over the top. So then there was a cairn of rocks on top the hill, not very
- 36:00 high, a cairn of rocks and a fella tried sniping into the perimeter, a Chinaman, and of course we started sniping back. We never hit him or anything but he never hit any of us - he was too rattled. After a while we fired a shot and threw a tin hat down the hill, and he stepped back and he waved the wash out to us with a big stick. And that means you have missed altogether. And then the tanks came
- 36:30 up, and they had a very badly damaged man in the tanks they took him out so they could get him out. They left and we were pretty contented there, so then I thought, "I had better find out what's happening. I will go down to the mortar platoon." So I start off to down to the mortar platoon and half way I met their lieutenant, Bill Bennett, he became Chief of the Defence Force eventually.
- 37:00 He didn't look as tidy then as he did later. I said to him, "I want a stretcher I want to get a wounded man out." Bill said, "You don't. You have got to get out. It's all over." So we had to hook up the guns and get everybody out. These Koreans were a bit of a problem. We had nowhere to put them, but they climbed up on the trucks and sat on them, so we took them out with us too. And
- 37:30 we sent the platoon off and I told them to weave Toby through the whole platoon and get him back to the hospital, which they did. They came under a bit of fire at one end. But he died - he had lost too much blood. We were last, we had one truck and the driver didn't want to drive it, and I said he would
- 38:00 have to stay with it if he didn't drive it, so it had been shot through the petrol tank but he did drive it. He had a gun behind it so I took that gun off and put it behind the jeep. And we followed on the end of the thrall and the tanks were there and they really did all the defensive fire. As we got along the road a fair way and we were stopping and starting, we came to a camp, and all the tents
- 38:30 were there. The tents and all the equipment was there but no men. It was like the Mary Celeste. We found out that it was the supporting mortar group that had left. They had time, they ripped off and souvenired all sorts of things. I couldn't do that, of course. And but they souvenired me a down sleeping bag - the best thing I ever had.
- 39:00 They got out and got on all right. Page and I were in the jeep at the back, and three Chinamen ran out to stop us but when we fired at them they ran back into cover. We had a big steep hill to go up and we wondered if the jeep would pull it up, but it pulled it up without any trouble. That's the only time we used the anti-tank guns. We had trouble with the pillbox somewhere or
- 39:30 dugout or something and we brought in the anti-tank gun and knocked it out. So that's the only time we ever used the anti-tank...

Tape 8

- 00:39 **What was the aftermath of that battle?**

I only really spoke about the preliminary part which I took part in. And this is all written up much better than I would tell it with other people involved in it.

- 01:00 After we were pulled out the CO took tanks up to take ammunition to the forward companies. They had been under very heavy attack and they had very heavy casualties. They were even napalmed once by mistake. They came out at night, of the following day I have been speaking about. We withdrew back to our lines which were quite well consolidated then.
- 01:30 But that's better told by somebody who was there. I wasn't involved there.
- It's best to tell what you saw, yeah?**
- It's a bit hazy from then on, but not long after that we went over to... The Gloucesters were overrun. And we went over to their position. I don't know why we went over there because we didn't stay there,
- 02:00 but there was a bit of a mess there, people buried all over the roads and the gutters. The next place I can remember really well was being on the Imjin River. We moved to the Imjin River and we put up defences there. I think the Chinese were on the other side of the Imjin River, and we put barbed wire and I have got photos of the barb all along the front of the place. And we
- 02:30 sent patrols down to no-man's-land. Somebody sent some down every night. The Australian Army was particularly thorough in its patrolling. And it's probably the most important thing they would do. We didn't do many exercises there, they had sports there, they were going to have a swimming carnival and I was to take part in that but I was going on leave.
- 03:00 From there I decided to take, I must have been there more than eight months, I must have been 10 months. I decided to take my leave to Japan. Do you want to hear about my leave in Japan? Well, one day I was to go down and taken back to Seoul to go on leave, and we arrived out at the airport for a DC3, and who would be
- 03:30 there but Butch McHenry, who I mentioned earlier. We went on leave together. So we arrived, we landed in Japan, we were looking pretty scruffy so we had to have new clothes and Butch was a big man, big paunch too, big strong man, and I was my 5'6" and we went into the quartermaster store, and of course all the uniforms were for 6' men. And I had to roll my sleeves up and my pants sleeves up
- 04:00 and practically put them round my waist twice, but then we were fit to go on leave, new boots and everything. So Butch decided we would go and have a meal, and he had a friend called Pug Humphries, and he said, "Pug had a band for his meal in Japan and I am going to have one." So we found a little sort of pokey café and we got into that and we bought a beer
- 04:30 and started a meal. Pug says, "I have got to have a band," I mean Butch said, "Pug had a band I have got to have a band, so I have got to have a band." So eventually they found him a fiddler, and the fiddler played while he had his meal. And Butch said to me, "Humphries had a band, I have got one too." It's all a joke, you know. And we were sitting there talking quite harmlessly talking to one another. All of a sudden
- 05:00 a corporal and three American policeman came up and slapped his baton on his hand like that. And of course Butch would sooner fight than eat, and he started teasing them, he started taunting them, and I kicked him under the table because if we got into a row, we would be sent straight back to Korea and that's the end of your leave. It didn't worry Butch. If he had a good fight, that would do him. So anyway
- 05:30 they must have rung up our MPs and they came and collected us, and took us back to the barracks. But they thought the Americans had overreacted and there were no repercussions. And then the next night, that was the end of that night, and the next night we went out and they had beer halls all over Tokyo and they were very good. I think they served very light beer. They must have because there were no arguments and no fights
- 06:00 and everybody sat there and talked all day, and they were big tankards of beer. And that's where everybody met in the day time and at night they met in the cabarets or whatever they call them, in the Middle East people call them cabarets. And I found I couldn't drink beer. I just couldn't drink it, and it would hurt me to drink it. The Yanks were there with us and drinking rum and
- 06:30 coca cola. And that was pretty dear, it was five shillings a nip and that was a fair bit. My mean soul balked at it a bit. Anyway I drank rum and coca cola all night. And not that I had that much, I went home to bed, and in the morning I got up and went to the toilet and I thought, "That's funny!" And I stood up and I looked down and I had passed
- 07:00 about a cup full of worms. Long ones about seven inches long, more than about a cup full. When we were on the hills with the fellows coming up with bloodshot eyes and paunchy looking bellies, I used to say, "You fellas are wormy. I have wormed plenty of poddy calves and you look just like them." I didn't think I was like that. Anyway after that I could drink beer, no bother at all. Not that any of us drank that much, but we...
- 07:30 Convivial sort of beer. The next night I went to a - I suppose you'd call it a beer hall, and sat down there with a group of Americans and Australians and chatted, and one of the fellas in my platoon was on leave

too, and he came up and I he was muttering about me, he was a good friend of mine. And the Yanks thought there was a fight brewing. They all left.

- 08:00 So I told him to leave, and he left, and he looked back and grinned back at me. That was - we - there was a band there playing, and it was either playing 'Goodnight Irene', or 'Tennessee Waltz'. And they played them ad nauseum. And one of our fellas took exception to this and he wanted them to play the
- 08:30 'Anniversary Waltz', and they had never heard of it of course, and he went over and he put a great act on the stage, and he came back and he said, "They're stupid, they can't play the anniversary waltz." I went out to the toilet, and as I went out I saw a Frenchman at the bar there, and he had a beret on and everything, he was obviously a Frenchman. And one of our younger soldiers went past and pinched him on the buttocks, only just friendly, he didn't mean anything sexual at all. And the Frenchman turned round and took off his
- 09:00 beret and belted the Australian across the face and said, "I am Robert. I am no woman." And this poor Aussie was so embarrassed, he was spluttering and trying to say something, good little fellow too. And I went over to try and calm it down. And a Pommy sergeant came over, he was an
- 09:30 Irishman, "That fucking froggie, belting him." And I put my hand on his shoulder, and he said, "Don't push me, Aussie." I could see I was going to be in a fight. Anyway, the fellow slipped away and the Frenchman is still standing there on his own saying, "I am Robert." And we all got home happily. We went home that night
- 10:00 and stopped at a little café, and in this café we sat down for a meal, and we had chicken and something, and I didn't think it was chicken because the bones weren't the right shape. And I happened to muse aloud, "I don't think this is chicken. I think it's guinea pig or something." Of course all the rest got stuck into me. They went home then. We didn't spend all our times in beer halls.
- 10:30 Once I was there, the Americans told me there was a Japanese review on or something, anyway I thought I would go and see it. It was Japanese girls doing the leg show, but much more restrained than the American one. It was pretty boring really. After it was over, I was sitting not far from two American service girls, and one of
- 11:00 them handed her program over to me and it said, "It's in American." And the woman in front of me said, "Oh, she means English." Anyway we left that. I used to go through the Ginza, it was very interesting, it had articulated wooden toys.
- 11:30 I have never seen so many. I think the Yanks must have been sending them home to their children. But one thing took my eye, they had a jade rectangle, about that size with three inlaid diamonds, with a few sprigs. This took my eye and I went in several times to look at. And the Jap said, "I see you like it," and I said, "Yes, how much
- 12:00 is it?" "£400." Well that was a year's wages. I am a bit sorry I didn't buy it. Then the highlight of that trip was a visit to Kuana that was a very top hotel, and probably the best hotel in Japan. We went there and I think it cost us £1/10/- to stay there, to supplement our wages. I think I had a five course meal
- 12:30 everywhere and a string quartet. They had everything you could think of, they had a big golf course there, a very big golf course, and the fella said to me, "How about coming out for a game of golf today?" I said, "Oh no." I had never played golf in my life. They said, "Come along," and I went along. They could hire clubs. I went up there and I
- 13:00 got on the green. They gave me a caddy - you are not supposed to pay them - a girl about 16 - we all gave her two shillings each. And I found I could hit the ball, and with this caddy I was as good as they were. She would say, "Put your foot back and do something else," and 'bang', I would drive as far as they would down the green. But if she wasn't there I would have stayed in the rough. So I got - we played about
- 13:30 six hours a day, you know, from when we played. And that's the only time I played golf. Another event we had...

We maybe had better return to Korea because this is getting near the end? So tell us about returning to Korea.

I can do that. That's easy. We were on this ridge along the top

- 14:00 and we had it was a pretty regular event, we went down every day to build a barbed wire fence, went down for rations, up again, and that's why the fellas were looking pretty weedy, and that's where they had this twilight zone in front of the front lines, and you could see the anything in it.
- 14:30 And I don't know the... Oh yes, one day an Asian came up, wearing a white suit, white clothes, broad brimmed hat on, as a barber, and he cut hair all round on the - everywhere, practically everybody got their hair cut. So he cut the hair of the fellas where I was, and
- 15:00 I got a bit suspicious, and I called a couple of fellas up and I said, "Take him up down to headquarters and have him vetted." Oh, big smiles, he was a big handsome fella. But I believe he was a spy. But that's

the only eventful thing - I had to go somewhere, it was just ordinary routine frontline stuff.

What about

15:30 **Ta Dong?**

No, I talked about that.

Um, so tell us about the time you were wounded then?

This is coming up. We were moved to a new position and in this position we were preparing to go out and set up a position. We were told to tempt the Chinese to attack us. And my platoon was split up that time, there was no men replaced the commander,

16:00 I was pretty much at a loose end. And I was walking down to the village and suddenly I found myself in the gutter. There was a big group, I found out some refugees, and I was going along and I was blown into the gutter. I wasn't hurt, I got up I had a piece of steel in my arm, blood was running down my hand, it didn't inconvenience me in any way.

16:30 And these Koreans were taken back to a field dressing station, and they had Korean doctors there, and I was taken back to and there was a couple of Canadians. There was a big lot blown up, and later I found, I met one of the Canadians again, what they did. I wasn't very keen to go out and the doctor gave me a penicillin

17:00 needle and I went to the Norwegian hospital and that was - I got a good reception there because of my Scandinavian ancestry. But I was only there about a day. And then they sent me to Yongdong Po to an American hospital, terribly grubby, I was surprised at it. And it was a real cosmopolitan place, they had every race in there, I think they had

17:30 I think they must have been some Horn of Africa troops, they were Ethiopians mainly. They were terribly suspicious and they wouldn't lie under the chalkboard on the side - it was an old high school. It was an assembly line run, two doctors would come round and give you two penicillin needles and the next one -

18:00 they had I suppose social workers you would call them, girls that had and say the same phrase at every bed. They had someone else who would come round and give you lollies. But there was no baths available or anything like that. The only way I could get a clean up was a tap out of the wall somewhere. I went down for breakfast one morning, and I thought this would be good, but it was boiled meat. With all the ketchups.

18:30 But then I heard a rumour that because of the work they were amputating limbs, and I had a bit of a hole up here, so I thought, "I will get myself out of here." So I got moved on and they sent me to a Canadian hospital, and here I went through the same routine - two needles a day, I think it was four needles a day, and they shipped me out to Kure to the hospital there. That had been a

19:00 British colony, the Commonwealth, I think it was now an Australian one. In no time they had me in the operating theatre and my arm cleaned up and sewed up. The difference between it and the other place - you got out of your bed and stood to attention while the matron came round, and she was pretty caustic. And then, probably the highlight of my whole time, overseas they sent me to a convalescent camp, and there you could hire a

19:30 a sailing boat for about \$1.10, again I think it was, no £1 10. And they had everything laid on, it was wholly owned in Japan, and we would hire a sailing boat and go out all day, and meet the Japanese fishermen and exchange gifts with them and come back at night and have a big dance at night. And then, that's the interesting thing about that place, there

20:00 was a Canadian, he had been there a few days before me and he had been blown up with the same bomb, and they said they would remove 16 feet of his intestine, but he was there before I was. So it shows you that it was a difficult one, not a simple one.

Well tell us what your memories were of that blast and what happened?

Nothing, I just found myself in the gutter. It blew me straight off the road. I still don't know whether I

20:30 got a bit of steel in my arm or whether I got a piece of bone from somebody else, because when I went up recently for DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs], they couldn't find any steel there. They said they didn't get the steel out, and the other people said they didn't whether they did or not, so I don't know.

And were there others killed in the same blast?

Yes. A lot of casualties in that blast. It couldn't have been a big shell, but it certainly did a lot of damage.

21:00 **Was it fired from the Chinese or the North Koreans?**

Yes, it was a stray shot coming in. It was about the only one I heard of.

Did you ever think about how close you came then?

No, I never thought of it.

Well how bad was your shoulder all up, how painful was it?

Nothing, I could have stayed in. But I was more interested in getting the penicillin needles than anything else. I should have stayed in probably. I was

21:30 partly - I felt the war was over and I was partly interested in seeing these hospitals too, so it was - I regret a bit I didn't stay in.

Why is that?

Well they had another big - the best action they had at Maryang San and I missed that, and I only missed that by about a couple of weeks. And that's when all the fellas I joined with, that's when my time was up. I came

22:00 back. I had better finish this. I came back to the headquarters and they wanted me for training. I wouldn't have been any good at it anyway, but they wanted me for training, but I had made it known that I wanted to come back to Australia and do a university course. But luckily I had the officer, the platoon commander there, he forced me and they decided to send me back. And why I am going on with that, when I was

22:30 coming back on the plane, and I spent one night in Manila, the most corrupt place I have ever been to, and I have been to some corrupt places. We used to go for a walk around the streets, and there would be - for the first part of this walk would be three female prostitutes following, next part there would be three male prostitutes, and in between time, there would be a taxi roving beside you offering you a lift. I will tell you why they had the

23:00 taxi, because they played a game of high alive, one of the most skilful games I have seen, and we weren't along to watch that, and bet in that and some of the bets you win a taxi, and that's why there were so many taxis. And it was a skilful game. Also, the players had a routine. They started in Spain, moved to Mexico and then to the Philippines as they aged,

23:30 but that mightn't be true.

What was it like to return to Australia after...?

It's just another event, I didn't have any dramatic things in my life. It was just another event, I was going back to Australia.

What about being away from - especially as you could have possibly been killed.

24:00 **Getting away from danger in a way?**

You don't think of that, you think of all your mates, and something interesting happening, and you are not there. You don't think of yourself as anything. You don't think you are vulnerable, you don't think you are vulnerable, you just don't think of it. When you think of the First World War soldiers, how some of them almost relished

24:30 their frontline fighting, that must have been dreadful. No, they are just a sequence of events.

Well how did you settle back yourself?

Just another sequence. I came back to Brisbane, managed to get my discharge, managed to talk my wife

25:00 into marrying me. Enrolled for a university course and that was it.

Had you met your wife before you went to Korea or...?

Yes, but not for long. Maybe a year, Jessie, two years.

Had you kept in regular contact during the Korean service?

I think we might have written two letters.

25:30 I think the intention was all on my part.

And did you have any problems settling back into civilian life at all?

It was different. I was different. But I realised that I was a bit more abrupt with people than I had before, a bit less considerate. I can't remember anything.

26:00 I didn't have any big transition. I had transition, but I think that was more caused by events.

Why do you think you were more abrupt with people?

I just got what I saw in the First World War soldiers. I saw it in fatalities. I saw it in...

26:30 I just felt people weren't as important as I once thought they were. And I was also tied to my

companionship. Twelve months is a long time to be closely associated people and working closely with them, 24 hours a day.

Well how is that, not getting used to being with your mates like every day?

But you see I had lived a different life before and I was going back to the

27:00 same life again, so you don't have much adjustment to make.

What about, did you have any problems with bad dreams or bad memories?

No, I never had enough bad events to give me that.

One question about your Korean service that's quite way back, but did you have any kind of thought of the effect of Colonel Green's death?

27:30 Yes, we were all terribly disappointed. Not an emotional one, but we all felt a great loss when he went because he was really idolised. We had a great feeling of loss, but not a great emotional one. It wasn't as if he was a father figure to be with. But he was a very good soldier and everybody realised he was a very good soldier, and

28:00 thought of him as a very good man too. We almost thought - he was a professional soldier, we almost thought of him as a very competent soldier, but I didn't think he was a dyed in the wool professional soldier. It's - the ordinary man, my father was different, he sort of created an aura, but the ordinary soldier

28:30 likes he colonel, he admires him, but he stands up very readily to a change of senior officer, or even a change of junior officer, but after all it's a change of system. Many tales I haven't told you.

I will just ask some general questions then. Over your service time and your service

29:00 **years, what do you think are some of the most important lessons that you learned from being in war?**

The lessons are, well it tests you and tells you about yourself. I probably got more lessons from my non army life than from my

29:30 army life. You would really have to ask others that. I don't know. I did learn a bit about method and order because the army is very good at method and order. I suppose I became more systematic from my army career. I don't think

30:00 myself that I had any emotional change. I don't think it has made much more impression on me today than my university life or my secondary school life or my private life. I just don't know.

And looking back at those times too during war, what do you think your best memory is, or your best memories?

The best memory was the little

30:30 trip from Brisbane to Moresby, it was just a straight pleasant trip memory. A lot of good companions I had been with for a long time. I had very pleasant surroundings. I mean primitive but good. I had good exercise. I was held in good repute. I held everybody else in good repute too. No that was

31:00 the highlight of my army life. I had many happy times in the army, many places I liked, but that was almost idyllic for me.

But on the flip side, what was the worst memory for you?

31:30 I couldn't really say that. I am flat out trying to think what is the worst memory. I really can't answer that one.

Being amongst situations where people die, how do you learn to cope with that?

I think I said that before. You are in a job, you are busy,

32:00 you... Any regrets I felt after. I feel... See, my cousin I was very close to, grown up with and everything, I didn't know he was wounded and he went past and I never saw he was wounded. But I had very many close friends that were killed. But at that time the shock wasn't as great as you expect it to be. You have many regrets later, missing later,

32:30 but at the time you are in a job.

Speaking of which, do you feel a part of the Anzac tradition?

Yes, but I felt that before I joined the army. As I said to you before, my mother had a brother and seven cousins in the First World War, and my father was in it, and all my friends in the district were First World War soldiers.

33:00 So I do have a culture of the Anzac tradition.

Is the day important to you, Anzac Day?

I think it's very good. I think it brings people together and I think it helps to unite the country. The media fought it after the war you know; they fought to get rid of it. For some strange reason they never succeeded. The actual population

33:30 was what kept Anzac Day going. Look at the people going to the marches; there are more and more every year. I don't really understand it, but you would be foolish to go against it now. I don't know whether it can be an icon but it is. It's the same as Kap'yong, the main battle in Korea. There are bigger battles than that, actually, but that's the one that's enshrined to

34:00 depict Korea, partly because the unit got an American citation. And it really depicts Korea. There is nothing wrong with Anzac Day being the day that they focus on. It's no greater... It's not nearly as bad as the war in France. And probably wasn't... People talk of it as a defeat. It wasn't a defeat. It was small. In the end they did win, but there were withdrawals all over the place. But they weren't

34:30 captured and driven into the sea or anything like that. It was a tactical withdrawal. I am not standing up for Anzac Day, but there is nothing wrong with having Anzac Day as an icon if it can be an icon.

We are coming right to the end of the tape so I will just finish up with do you have any last words you would like to put on the record about your service?

Nothing that... I found

35:00 that it was very satisfying. I enjoyed most of it. I met many, many good companions that I highly regard and I made many, many good companions that I disapproved of. The one thing I learnt: a man's foibles don't really count. You don't have friends because they are worthless, you don't have virtuous and you don't have friends because they are honest, for some

35:30 reason you just have friends. And you learnt from the army.

Great, that was a great way to end it. Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS