

Australians at War Film Archive

Richard Windshuttle (Dick) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1922>

Tape 1

00:35 **So Dick if we could just start out today with a very brief summary of your life?**

Born in 1929 in Five Dock [New South Wales] and earliest memories of course, I didn't know, I was in the depression, I didn't know we were poor but we were

01:00 to the point where we seemed to shift around a bit. Mum and Dad walked out of their house at Yagoona even though a moratorium had been declared on paying the principle of the loan back. My uncle was a fellow named George Parker who won a silver in the Olympics in Amsterdam in 1920 he had a house in Manly, he'd talked to my mother about sharing the house or taking over the house

01:30 and I remember the figure that Mum told me that if they shifted out of the house, and even though public transport might have been involved because of the location my father's truck, he was a truck driver, lorry driver at Circular Quay she saved a grand amount of about two and threepence, or some similar piddly [small] amount.

02:00 The, I do know that things were pretty tough, in retrospect of course I realise they were very, very tough. Started school at Manly West, the very first school and I remember a spell we had when my father was carting coal out of Burragorang Valley, because I can remember getting a ride on the pit ponies pulling the skips out from the coal mine. We lived in a log cabin down there for about six months at the

02:30 height of the depression. Came back to Manly, from Manly West we came down to live in Fairy Bower [part of Manly] in number 8 Maureen Parade and during the course of the time we shifted from 8 Maureen Parade to 2 Maureen Parade to 1 Maureen Parade in Fairy Bower. These were idyllic years of course

03:00 cause it was a wonderful palace to be bought up as a kid with the rock pool about fifty yards away and the surf club about a few hundred yards in the other direction. Do you want me to go through the whole life business early or just up to what period?

All the way through, so just really brief, so

03:30 **then we move there?**

Yeh I'm sort of skipping a bit.

No you're doing well, we just want to cut to the chase here and zip all the way through to where we are now as quickly as we can then we'll go back and trawl through all the detail?

Okay fine. During that period of course as I got older, oh first of all I went to Manly Primary School from Manly Primary School they had what they called the QC, a Qualifying Certificate

04:00 and there were no high schools on the Northern Beaches, the nearest one was North Sydney Boy's High and about oh, must have been half a dozen of us were selected to go to Sydney Boy's High, and I was at Sydney Boy's High from 1941 to 1945. About 1943 I joined the, I was playing kids junior football in a team

04:30 and a Manly Lifesaving Club blokes were recruiting because they had no members left, all their members had gone to the war. And so they came to us and they said, "If we provide your jumpers and socks will you all join the surf club". Well that wasn't too hard for me to do, so I came associated with the surf club. And it was during those years of course, during the war years that

05:00 we became part of an army encampment because Fairy Bower was sealed off virtually as an army encampment. In 1940, early post war years I had a lot to do with surfing competitions, reasonably successfully, then in 1948 I met my wife at a

05:30 surf club dance, 1950 we were married at St Matthews in Manly and housing was impossible, it was the

years of key money [an extortionate charge by real estate agents on prospective tenants seeking housing] and so about 1953 it was, yeh I was offered a job in New Guinea with a house provided so I couldn't get there quick enough and we went to live in New Guinea for six years.

- 06:00 During the course of that time I was an agent for an overseas shipping company based in Hong Kong and they seconded me to Hong Kong for a year, on an exchange of staff scheme and we lived in Hong Kong and Japan for a year. Then in 1955 came back to New Guinea we had a couple of kids born
- 06:30 while we were in New Guinea. 1959 back to Australia then there were the periods when the kids were growing up, we had enough money saved cause we were in a tax free zone in those days in New Guinea and we get a little bit of ground at Allambie Heights. We built our first house, the kids were growing up and we had, oh one little thing that I've forgot, my
- 07:00 wife had had lot of trouble trying to have babies with several misses and in 1953 of course, which was one of the prompts to go to New Guinea, my wife had a stillborn baby which was pretty devastating for her of course and for me. In any case the kids grew up in Allambie Heights, from there we shifted to a bigger house as I improved my job
- 07:30 prospects to Frenchs Forest, from there to Narrabeen. And in all I think we lived in the Manly-Warringah area for about fifty odd years. We then, we had a caravan on site at The Entrance on the Central Coast and it was a natural progression to come in this direction when our kids
- 08:00 reached young adult age and we built on the Central Coast. I had a couple of heart problems and a heart attack and by-passes and I had a son who was quite prominent footballer and he went onto Tweed Heads to get that last bit of country money out of it. He talked us into going to Tweed
- 08:30 Heads and we built a home there. We lived there for about six years but I had more heart problems, my daughter said you should come back and be a bit nearer to us, daughters seem to worry about fathers more than sons do and so not being able to afford to get back into Manly-Warringah once you leave it we settled on the Central Coast and where we still live now.
- 09:00 I don't think there's a lot more in that period of time that outlines it. Were now both well and truly retired, we're both in our mid seventies, we enjoy the old age pension where we have a little bit of income that doesn't affect that and we now reside

09:30 where we're sitting right now.

Which is beautiful Avoca?

Avoca Beach of course yeh, and do a fair bit of fishing, have become involved in lawn bowls which is where my wife is this moment and life's pretty good, overcome most of the health problems, had a spell with prostrate cancer and a couple of months of radiation and like a cat with nine lives I seem to be

10:00 carrying off reasonably well. That's about the guts of our life to this date.

Good on you Dick that's a very good summary, thanks for that. Alright now we can go all the way back to the beginning again and get the nitty gritty from you. So you were born in Five Dock is that correct?

Yeh.

And the year was?

1929.

Can, what

10:30 **are your earliest memories, where were you living when mum had you?**

It was in that area, my grandmother lived in Leichhardt and I had uncles, there all sportsman, everyone the whole family has been sport mad and including of course the uncle that went to the games. My first memories are

11:00 of when we were in Manly virtually.

When did the family move to the Manly area first?

Well it was only, we were a breakaway, all of the, most of the Windshuttle's lived on the other side of the harbour, as we used to call them very rudely in the surf club the 'westies', or the 'southies'.

11:30 And when Mum was induced to shift to Manly by my uncle George and she found that was the best move, cause Mum was always the manager in my parent's household. My first memories were virtually of Manly and I'm not sure whether we went to Burragorang Valley from Manly and back to Manly or whether it was Burragorang first and then Manly.

12:00 Well were talking nearly sixty years ago of course.

Sure?

But as I say we lived in Griffiths Street in Manly and I had a taste of school in Burragorang Valley, I think I was allowed to accompany my brother and that was a bare foot walk through the bush to a sort of a one teacher school. I

- 12:30 don't recall what happened at school at Manly West but I do remember Blue Mountains holidays with a family called the Herringers who were, of whom Frank quite a famous tennis player. And, but then life really blossomed when we went down to live at Fairy Bower and I must
- 13:00 of been about four or five years of age at that time and we lived there for about twenty years. So the very early days are hazy, I do remember some humour excerpt, that one of the companies that my father's trucking company carried for was Playfairs and the meat used to be packed in those
- 13:30 days in cheese cloth. And I remember my mother joking about it that my pyjamas were stamped "prime pork" on the backside, so those were, that's an idea of the times how tough they were in those depression years. Not a lot that I can recall about living not
- 14:00 at Fairy Bower, but to us it was an absolute dream, as I say we had the rock pool a stone's throw away and we had an absolute, everyone of the places we lived, number eight, number two, number one were absolute beachfront onto Fairy Bower Beach. Which unfortunately is now non existent because they put a bit of medium rise flats in, and I've seen it
- 14:30 happen over the years in many places and it just washed the whole beach away, it's just rock, complete rock where in fact that beach was level with the base of the sea wall and there was a beach about twenty five metres in depth from the sea wall to the water's edge. People just don't realise what was there because it's all gone.
- 15:00 When we, number eight I remember a family the Simmonds, George was quite prominent in the Salvation Army as a young bloke and we had a magnificent playground, like we had the whole of North Head and the bush and what was, what we called "the Cards" which was the Cardinal's Palace, alias the training college for the Catholic Priests [St Patrick's College, Manly]. So we
- 15:30 had that to roam all over, the whole of North Head. Great fishing, like before professional fishing became as professional as it is today. It was not uncommon to see Fairy Bower Bay actually teeming with schools of salmon or mullet, trevally, all sorts of fish in there so it was
- 16:00 an idyllic childhood, the young childhood. Oh a memory just flashed through, we had a blue cattle dog of course his name was Bluey and he died there. And I'm not quite sure why we shifted from number eight to number two but the owners of those properties was, I think his name was Charles not James
- 16:30 Gourlay and he was the former major of Manly. His son was James and we were friends, we were the same age and the actual flats at number two and number one overlapped the promenade which is probably lost in memory in time, but the front verandas overlapped, were the actual rooftops over the promenade, you had to walk
- 17:00 underneath them to walk through. The uprights and the pylons for the front veranda actually went down the outside of the small sea wall there. There was a block of flats on the corner which is now a outdoor café, what do they call them where they sit outside and have morning tea etc,
- 17:30 and that was owned by a bloke named Bradick who was the president of the Fisherman's Association. And Bradick's flats are still there today but of course they've turned it into flash café down the bottom of it. Next door to it, it was a very big open paddock and there was a family, a Mrs
- 18:00 and I don't know her married name now but a fellow named Jack Pratt who died at a young age, he had some congenital problem with his heart or something. But there was a big paddock and at the back of that paddock was a big, and I think it was originally a dance floor and her maiden name was Lorenze. And the Lorenzes had shops and tea rooms
- 18:30 and I suspect that the places that we were living in number one and number two they had been shops on the ground floor at least with upstairs flats for residences. That big paddock had the back of it, it went from a, the first memory I had there was a workshop underneath, my father used to fiddle with cars with Jack Pratt too, but that was a, that turned into a gymnasium.
- 19:00 But before that it was a wax works, there was a fellow named Cole, we used to call him 'old king' of course but there was a wax works as a show as you walked around Fairy Bower and people used to go to the wax works. But there was this very large paddock where blokes stored their, there were no outboards in those days, their pulling boats, they were all rowing boats and there was several boats stored in there.
- 19:30 And then after that and in more recent times it was turned into a gymnasium run by a fellow named Phil McKeon. But it's where George Barnes and Tommy Burns [boxers], all those blokes trained at a later stage. And the difference that that beach made being washed away in those days our problem was when you got a big sea and it jumped that sea

20:00 wall, which is what it was there for, it bought sand up. And I can remember the Council blokes having to shovel anything up to twelve inches deep of sand off the promenade back onto the beach, rather than these days it being washed completely away.

Did the seas ever threaten your actual house when you were down there on number one?

We used to get

20:30 spray, sea spray up there and the, as I said I think it was telling you before one of the things my father had to do was actually cast off the beach, stand up on the sea wall, pass the tip of the rod up to the window, we'd haul it in the window and set the check on it, to catch a fish, the only thing that used to beat would be all the

21:00 larrikins coming home from the pictures and grab the line and run with it. You swore you had a fish and there'd be young blokes down the beach laughing at you, I do remember that happening.

Was it a popular spot for the public to go fishing?

Yeh there were, oh the rocks were, the rocks were, you see there were no outboards. And I can remember the Mortons were, the first

21:30 fisherman there were the Sly brothers who were quite famous and as kids they seem to concentrate on garfish. I don't know whether you know what a professional net, how it works, it's a huge big net and there's a pocket on the end which can be detached with the fish in it. Well garfish being long and skinny they'll slip through the mesh pretty easy if you're not careful. I can remember as kids the

22:00 Sly's pulling the nets up the beach we'd run behind, there'd be a few garfish drop out and we'd grab them and run. And we could usually outrun him because he had big plates of meat, bare feet, if he ever caught us he'd have lifted us over the moon with these feet. But you could buy a saucepan of garfish for two shillings. And then we'd have whitebait, whitebait would run

22:30 and I can recall Mum on the beach and we'd run in with a bucket, the old galvanised bucket, scoop a bucket full of whitebait, come back and put it through the colander into a boiler and back for another scoop. And when that happened, things were still tough right up till war time, Mum would then strain it from all the salt water, cover it

23:00 with, just cover it with vinegar and we all had to take a turn on the potato masher. And the only problem with that is we'd be having sardines on toast, fish cakes for tea, for days after you know, but it was all good tucker so it stuck to us. I can also recall Mum giving us some stale bread and there was a little skiff that wasn't ours but we were allowed to use it.

23:30 We'd go out into the bay there and brother and I would just chew the bread up and use that for bait, no lead, cast over and get a mile, if the trevally were running, get a mile of trevally. And then with the old clothes basket around the street sell the fish for our pocket money. It was a hamlet, Manly was a village, Fairy Bower was a hamlet, that sort of describes it as it was, it was a

24:00 beaut place to live.

What sort of a line were you putting the bread onto, what was it made of?

They were old gut lines and you just reminded me of something else. I remember Dad, he'd fish with, fish for blackfish off the rocks, before they sort of tidied up the sewer situation there was a little sewer came out at, just over the hill from Shelly Beach, it wasn't

24:30 too good on the nose when we got a nor'easter, it used to soil the beach. But I can remember and of course it was absolutely tremendously hard to get but the cast they used, because with blackfish it's very fine line fishing, Silko which was made in Japan of all things, so it had to have come in before pre war. And

25:00 they'd use this cast, get about a metre of it and attach it to the main line which was usually gut, and they weren't cord lines, no they were gut lines. And then because it was so expensive and so hard to get that fish with about three inches long, that was a belting thing if we ever touched that Silko or touched the old man's

25:30 fishing gear. But I do recall having to take his dinner over to him on Sunday's, and this was in war time, because he was working six days a week, he tried to get into the army and twice his boss reefed him out again because he was in a protected industry and they had the Havilland carting contract. And he was bit of an expert on cranes and heavy lift stuff and there were no,

26:00 all the cranes were mobile mostly in those days and I can remember the big table check plate, because Mum insisted that he always got fed properly, dirty big baked dinner and I had to take it over onto the rocks to him. And I was allowed to fish with his rod while he had his dinner and I caught my blackfish, my first blackfish when I was eight fishing off the rocks there, that way. With what they called an

26:30 old greenheart rod, before split cane even, it was solid timber. Because there was so many drummer around in those days, and drummer to any fisherman they will tell you they only know one speed flat out

and full bore, and they dive straight under a rock. So they pull the rod down and these things didn't have a lot of recovery so he's greenheart rod used to have a permanent bend

27:00 in it like that.

Dick when you fished did you have your own rod or were you just, you just had the gut line on a spool?

On a hand, yeh just on a spool. I recall seeing blokes row, those Morton boys, they'd have made the champion rowers. And two blokes rowing in a rowing boat and their timing was perfect, and they would go right outside rowing the boat

27:30 they'd obviously pick their seas so they wouldn't get cleaned up, and I recall seeing these blokes, their timing was so perfect to watch and they'd row right outside. They'd get a lot of squire and small snapper and stuff like this.

Would many people actually go to Fairy Bower to bath, to swim or was it mainly fishing?

Oh no that was a favourite

28:00 picnic spot. Immediately below our window was a huge big shelter shed, it would have been oh thirty foot long, it was only just two uprights of about six by six hard wood timber with an iron roof. And there wasn't much in the way of picnic tables or chairs but Shelley Beach, which was the next beach round and immediately inside of

28:30 what they now call the Winkie Pot or Bluefish Point. But it was a favourite walk and picnic spot and it also had a real reputation of being a lover's lane, blokes take their girls around there, that's where it got it's reputation from, Fairy Bower. But some of the things that happened while we were living there,

29:00 1937 I would have been eight years of age, a boy who lived in the back street from us was taken by a shark, and they never even got so much as a fingernail back from him. His name was David Patton and his mother used to, immediately after this I guess, I can remember her being on the beach in front of us crying.

29:30 **And that attack was witnessed was it?**

I only came upon the scene when there was blood in the water, I had taken, there's two ways you can get round to Fairy Bower, you can come round the promenade at the front which was the most useful way we walked or you can go up some steps immediately behind the old surf club that used to be there, below a block of flats, which are still there called, 'Beramble', and walk down

30:00 Barrett Street and come in the back of our place. And I happen to have taken the back way home that day and I stood at the top and must have been within half an hour of the attack or something, David was with a bloke names Benny Redfern who became very strong friend of mine in later years. And there was still some stained, blood stains in the water, I know I had

30:30 nightmares for a while after.

Was it generally acknowledged that you were taking a risk swimming around that area?

Well there was no shark netting in those days and there weren't, well you didn't get a shark attack every week, you know once every few years. But in later years I became friendly with a fellow named Laurie O'Toole who was a beach inspector in Dee Why, and he got an award for this, he had

31:00 a tug of war, he had the bloke under the shoulders and the shark had the bloke by the bottom half, this is prior to that 1937 episode. But there was a fisherman named Dummy, we called him Dumb because he was deaf and dumb, but he was a spotter for the professional fisherman, and I'm still capable of doing it believe it or not,

31:30 being able to see school fish near the surface etc. And Dummy was given the assignment of trying to catch this shark, immediately after the attack, and the spot they picked to catch the shark was right under our bedroom window. And there he was using a cord line, whopping big thick line, and they either had an ox

32:00 heart or an ox liver or something and they rowed this out with four gallon drums and set it out and caught a, what to me was gigantic, was about from memory was a fourteen foot bronze whaler, about, image a four or five metre shark to a boy of about eight. And they caught this shark and they opened it up and there were bird remains in it but there was no such thing as DNA

32:30 or trying to find out whether they were human remains or not. And David Patton he was in high school I was in primary, let's say he was twelve or thirteen and this is some say, week ten days after the event. Anyhow the surf club blokes then ran a piece of fish, and I just told you about this big shelter shed that was right under our window, they ran a line of hessian right around the shelter shed,

33:00 put the shark in there and were charging threepence or something to see the shark. Crowds flocked there, well that was great for them but after a few days was it on the nose and I can remember the old man going crook. Anyway they towed the shark out to sea and dropped the carcass.

So were you doing much swimming from then on?

Well it never entered our heads,

- 33:30 oh we had the rock pool, by then I'm starting to catch waves and everything. I don't think it made an impression because years later I had a couple of run-ins with sharks at various times. I recall one occasion to when my brother and I caught one,
- 34:00 you'll recall I was talking about the pockets on nets, I can remember truck loads of salmon, I'm talking in the tonnes and trucks coming and going nearly all night, huge hauls. There was a crowd, after the Sly's there was a group of professional fisherman that they had two or three posts, they had one out at Pittwater, they
- 34:30 certainly had one right on Shelley Beach...I don't know whether this is post war or pre war. But it was when fish were plentiful so it's probably pre war and what they were doing, because they had so many fish and they wanted to keep reusing the same net they'd attach the pocket, tie it off, separate it and let it float
- 35:00 float freely on the beach, then put another pocket on the net and cast the net again, row the net around again. So there were a couple of these pockets of fish floating there and I can remember these blokes standing in the boat jabbing sharks, like school sharks with an oar to keep them off their fish in the pockets. So my brother and I, it must have been a rope out of a rowing boat I think, we got this
- 35:30 and I don't, I think we must of owned it but we had a shark net about a foot long on the galvanised wire that used to be on the long clothes line and we got a live salmon, just put the hook through once and we could only just barely wind it up, that could of only thrown it about ten or fifteen feet and bang, shark took it straight away. And he and I on the end of this rope and then the
- 36:00 professional fisherman came over to and we pulled it out and it was about, I suppose it would have been a good six footer, or eight footer, you know I don't know what sort of shark it was, probably a whaler or one of the common shark. And I remember the fisherman the pro's saying, "Now keep away from it, forget the hook". There just as dangerous on the ground if you get your hand near it they'd bite it off jumping around on the sand. And
- 36:30 then they hit it over the head with an oar and that was the end of that. But episodes like that we had a real adventurous childhood around there.

Fantastic, Dick could we talk a bit about your dad, now he had a driving business, can you tell us about that?

Yeh he didn't have the business he was an employee. I doubt if he had much education

- 37:00 at all, he left school as soon as he could, he had a tough upbringing. I've got a cousin that lives just near us here and he tells me stories that his father, was pretty rough on him and my father's father was very rough on him. The old man didn't spare the rod when we were young if we misbehaved.
- 37:30 And they, he started work with a fellow named Wall and they were bought by Chambers and there's been take overs, I think it went to Brambles [trucking company] and then someone else and someone else and so it's gone on. But he had one very good qualification he got this, and I've still got it, the crane drivers licence and he was a bit of an
- 38:00 expert on heavy lift work. He ultimately become, they used to have what they called the outrider, he used to be able to have to fight because the outrider was the bloke that chased the other blokes out of the pub and kept them at work. And in those days no cargo shifted by road, that was unheard of, where Darling Harbour is and all those places they were all small ships. My first job was in shipping
- 38:30 and that, even intra-state, if you were on the far north coast went by sea. So the truck drivers used to, they'd call and say, "The ship XYX is receiving cargo" they'd join what they called the rank and all these truck drivers would be queued in the street down say in one of the waterfront road, say Day Street or something like that, waiting to be called up to unload what they had on the back
- 39:00 as cargo for the ship. So if they had a bit of a wait they'd head for the pub, Dad's job was to sort them out, sort his drivers out. Then they shifted and they were right where the old Water Police used to be, right under the northern pylon of the Harbour Bridge which is where that, remember me saying that Mum said she could save two and threepence, well he could get off the ferry and he was there at work. But he saw during
- 39:30 the depression more than one suicide off the bridge, splattered on the road where they jumped off the bridge, I remember him telling me that. It was, he was a hard man but a very fair man, the last of the war years when he really started to relax a bit and get
- 40:00 some enjoyment out of life and the poor old cow he retired one day at sixty five and he pegged out a couple of months later, he got a bad form of diabetes later. But he in later years was more of a mate than a father. In 1948 we ran third

- 40:30 in the Australian double surf ski championship and we could never work out who the captain was, he reckon he was the captain because he paid for the ski, but I was the experienced surfer and I was on the back so I reckon I was the captain. And for years after I held it over his head, they actually lost surf boats that night that went into Fairy Bower because they'd run the surf carnival so late that it got dark and they had car lights on the thing, trying to account for everyone.
- 41:00 A mountainous sea and we got bowled going out, all I saw was the old bald head he went sailing over the top of my head when we hit the back sugar doodle at one stage. And we got back on and were running a sort of fast finishing eleventh, and were going round the boys and I saw this mountainous wave and we hadn't even straightened up. And I didn't let him know cause he had his back, you've got your back to I, but I was on the back and I
- 41:30 said, "Just straighten up, straighten up", and he said, I remember him saying, "Your mad you young bugger". And I pushed us onto this wave and I cleaned everyone else up and we only missed out on wining the championship by a whisker. But, so I used to hold it over his head later, "Oh you were going to dingo that wave weren't you?"

Dick we'll just pause at this moment cause we're...

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Dick you said your dad also specialised in some sort of crane driving jobs as well?**

Yes I can recall there's a family photo of him, one of the flyers was black and the name of the plane was the Comet and it was the England to Australia air race or something and they had to tow this plane through the streets of Sydney, somehow or rather. And I can

- 01:00 recall the old man was given the job, it was extremely valuable, the plane, and I remember he had the job to do that. But he was, there weren't many blokes that could handle heavy lifts in those days. So he was a specialist in that field.

- 01:30 **And you said that discipline at home could be fairly harsh?**

Yes it was when we were kids, it relaxed a bit as we got a bit older of course. But I recall we, he was great of self defence etc and I recall when I was going to Sydney Boys' High School in later times that both my brother and I were sent to Jack Dunleavy.

- 02:00 Jack Dunleavy was the middle weight champion of Australia and they had a gymnasium in George Street and we had to learn to be the last of the straight backs and how to handle it, and reasonably successfully.

If you did get into strife at home with your dad what was a typical punishment?

Well when we were little, I can remember the old razor strop

- 02:30 where they used to sharpen the cut throat razors on, and I didn't fancy that. But when he was working so terribly long hours in the war years, I don't know how long, but I was always in bed when he got home. And I can remember him screaming at Mum sometimes cause she had to keep his tea hot, he'd say, "This is bloody boiling hot I can't eat

- 03:00 it". Well it must have been nine, ten o'clock at night and it would wake me up, and he was doing that six days a week. I don't know if he got paid overtime, hope he did.

Now what about your mum she was the manager at home?

Yes she ran the household and there was no question about that and handled the money. And she was the driving force when it came to us to go to, my brother went to Sydney High as well,

- 03:30 the old man said, "Waste of money on sending them to school over there". Because there was fares, they were discounted fares I think even in those days, but there was one pound ten shillings, thirty bob for books for start, then there had to be a school uniform. It was lucky we did have, we'd gone to Dunleavy because I can recall on one occasion, Mum used to go

- 04:00 to all the sales to get college greys [uniforms] etc. And they were going cheap and we must of still be in short trousers I think, but they had those plus fours, you know the things you tuck in your socks. She bought home these grey plus fours, cause she was a very good sewer, didn't have a chance to fix them and we had to wear them to school. We had a few fights that day we didn't loose many but we were a bit scared when we got home.

- 04:30 So Mum took to chopping to the plus fours immediately that night and sat up and sewed them, fixed it up.

That's a cruel thing to do to send your kid to school with knickerbockers?

Oh, yeh that's what they were called yes.

That's where the boxing lessons came in handy was it?

Extremely handy. No they used to be, Mum ran the whole show and

05:00 also war time she held the old man together because he wouldn't have been getting much nourishment. She'd sit up all hours of the night to make sure he got a hot dinner and all that sort of thing.

Explain to me again, what was the deal with your mum and dad moving out of the house and into your uncle's house, how was that all worked out?

The uncle George,

05:30 he was the original member of the Manly Lifesaving Club, he's the first name of the honour role of Olympians, still on the wall at the surf club. And I think she was his favourite sister cause she was a fiery sort of women and uncle George was a bit of a larrikin, he and, if you can imagine, I didn't work it out for a long, long while,

06:00 the 1920 Olympic being just two years after the Great War, and I've tried to get a book on it, I've had a look at it and there was only the two of them. Frank Beaurepaire [famous Australian Olympic swimmer] got a bronze medal and he got a silver and because we fete our Olympians so much, and there was never much fuss about it. But I do recall a fellow named Eddy Beaves who knew my uncle, and one of his trains, the tram

06:30 used to come from Spit Bridge wind around the edge of Seaforth, Manly Wharf and there was another tram, he'd change trams there. Actually as I recall I think he used to have to walk across the Spit Bridge, tram stopped and he picked up another one on the other side. But then it went out to Narrabeen, and one of his training walks was to race, he reckon he could beat the tram to Narrabeen. But as you know the extravagant walk where they wobble their backside these,

07:00 with the walking style, some bloke would gig him from the side yard, well just a second, bang down would go the bloke and he'd resume his walk. He was renowned for being fairly handy at other things other than just walking and he was a wild bloke and a good looking bloke and he had all sorts of lady trouble in later life. But he was the one, I think Mum was his favourite sister and he could see that she was battling. By this time my brother and I as babies

07:30 and he organised for her, he said, "Your wasting your time trying to pay your house off in Yagoona" and thank the lord we finished up as Manly and not Bankstown boys.

So the whole family moved off to Fairy Bower?

Yeh I can remember granddad, and you might be interested in this because it goes right back to the heart of Manly early days. He used to come and visit of course, after

08:00 my grandmother died and he'd take us, I can remember he taught us how to collect bottles. Cause bottles in those days all had a deposit on them. So the old man's bringing granddad's ashes home, after he died and if he'd had a good week, which meant he got a full weeks work, and were talking about the days when he was on the waterfront a lot with the trucks and the Hungry Mile, [term given by wharfies to the stretch of wharves in Sussex Street, Darling Harbour where they queued for work loading and unloading ships] and he described it to me. All of the

08:30 jobs in those days were casual pickups, no one had a permit, not the wharfies not the coal-lumpers or anyone. And they'd be at a wool store and they'd say, "There's ten jobs over at Goldsborough Mort" [huge wool exporting store, Pyrmont] say, and they would actually go into a marathon run. And of course the bloke that got there first was obvious who was the fittest, so he got first shot at the job. Anyhow Dad must have had a good week, and if he had a good week he'd allow himself a few beers on Friday night.

09:00 So he's bringing granddad's ashes home on the ferry to Manly, and you won't want to know he's dropped the ashes and one bounce and into the water. So the deckhand said, "Oh gees mate I hope that wasn't valuable", he said, "No it was only me father-in-law" he said. Anyhow he must have been messing himself to face Mum when he got home. But I recall the family story years later, she laughed

09:30 she said, "Oh well he wanted to be buried at sea". But our roots are very deep in Manly and that's how deep. Oh no he was a really top bloke, he had a very, very rough life, but he had a few real good years when he followed my brother and I into the surf club.

You mentioned that before off camera, why did he follow your brother and you into the surf club?

10:00 Well as I said our whole football team joined the surf club and I joined and the captain of the football team was a very famous bloke and my father, Lionel Watts is his name and he was the founder of the House with No Steps. He's well, he's renowned and deserved every bit of it. It was the first time I'd run into a severe illness with a mate and he got polio,

10:30 it was just after we'd been playing football together for a year or two. And he disappeared off the scene

and he had a very strong wife and he just went on from there, he was a very brave bloke. But blokes started to come back from the war, or going to the war and I'm fourteen or fifteen and enrolled in the surf club. My brother's fifteen, was fifteen months older he died just a few months back,

11:00 and there was a lot of rivalry. These blokes came back after giving up several years of their life, all those beers they didn't have in the desert they were going to make sure they caught up on. And the surf club was their main recreation and despite area. And they also loved the fact, we won the premiership in the kids football and they loved the fact that we'd

11:30 sort of kept the surf club going. And they used to take a sort of a, smother us with kindness. I can remember the booze being breathed all over me and these blokes being pretty wild. So my father took the attitude that if we're in the surf club: "We'll I'd better keep an eye on them." So he joined the surf club at forty plus,

12:00 might have been forty, forty one years of age and he did his bronze medallion in his early forties, say forty two or something like that. And threw himself whole heartedly into and it was to keep an eye on the two of us. And from there he went right through and held a lot of positions, official positions in the club and finished up as the deputy president there at one stage.

12:30 **What other stories did he tell you about trying to get work during those really tough years round the waterfront?**

He, about the spare, like one thing I do remember myself around the rocks at Fairy Bower blokes would set up little camps, they were camped in amongst,

13:00 under the rocks, a couple of sheets of galvanised iron or a bit of canvas and this sort of thing. And around Dobroyd Point there was a whole series of camps around there, round past Forty Baskets Beach and Reef Beach. And the old man because he was such a good hard worker I don't recall him ever being home a whole week or not having work. So it didn't sheet

13:30 home to us as much as other people that, where blokes just couldn't get a job, and I think the fact he was such a good driver, a mechanic and had this crane drivers licence as well, he was mostly in work. But I'll never forget blokes fighting one another to get to the head of the queue for a job on the wharves and he said

14:00 they were a hungry mob, having to race a marathon to try and get to the next job, it was a loss of dignity, just impossible to imagine for the poor cows. But no he, we came through the Depression pretty good and then once the war broke out it sort of mopped up all of the unemployed and they went into the services. And,

14:30 but things were still tough really right up to war time, but not for us we were around Fairy Bower getting buckets of whitebait out, and I don't remember it being tough we lived high in the hog and had a great boyhood.

But it sounds like, when your dad would leave the house on a Monday morning you wouldn't know how many days work he was going to get by the end of the week, is it?

Oh absolutely but

15:00 he, I think I was too young to know if he was home, but I don't remember him being home much at all. I do remember the war time though, bloody charcoal burners on the trucks because sometimes we'd go to, have to go to the depot where the trucks were and I

15:30 remember going to work with him one time. And they used to have to light these charcoal burners on the side of the truck, and they'd build up gas overnight and the bloke would be lighting it and whoopa, just about blow your head back. I can remember the old charcoal burners on the side of the trucks.

What were they for?

They were the fuel, charcoal burners, I'm sure they were,

16:00 I think they were the fuel, they were big things mounted on the side of the trucks. You'd have to look that up, they were either the fuel or to warm the trucks up, they might of switched to fuel after but I can remember the charcoal burners very clearly, and a little chimney on the bloody things. And by then he'd become the foreman and was

16:30 dishing out the jobs etc to the other drivers. And both my uncles worked there, he got them both jobs there.

The blokes that were sleeping in humpies and stuff around the beaches there, what sort of guys were they?

They weren't dead-beats, I don't think there was anywhere else to go, but they could at least get a feed of fish. But then coming around the streets, and I can remember this at Manly West

17:00 and at Fairy Bower, blokes come round with a big basket, "Fisho, fisho", you could buy fresh fish at your front doorstep. There were plenty of blokes trying to sell their fish walking around the streets. And

they'd also cut a few saplings, and closed props, because all the clothes lines were those long ones and they propped them up with a sapling with a fork on the end of it, and blokes selling clothes props around the street, hustlers everywhere

17:30 trying to get just enough money together. They, I just think the circumstances were almost forced upon them and they couldn't marry, they couldn't take on responsibilities because they had no money. I don't remember ever seeing food parcels handed out or anything like that, we never had to do that at our place.

18:00 But there were, I do remember thousand of blokes with the backside out of their trousers.

Were you warned about mixing with them, or talking to them as kids?

No but the only ones we were warned about, I was talking about the fisherman, was the 'Dagoes', I hope I don't offend anyone saying

18:30 that because it was what we used to call them. One of my best mates that I bowl with is an Italian so it's sort of not meant to be derogatory. They all had the half cabin launches and they normally fished and meshed and netting in the harbour. But they'd come in and crash on Sly's and the Wilson's territory, and they'd come and camp in Shelley Beach and they'd camp on the side of the hill. I can remember them going up to their camp,

19:00 the first time I'd ever tasted octopus, oh they loved octopus that was a real delicacy, I'd never tasted it before, but the way they cooked it, it was very chewy but it was pretty good. And they would stay for several days and drag the guts out of the ocean, which the blokes that were local didn't fancy too much. But and I can

19:30 remember of course the milk bars, there was never an Italian milk bar proprietor they were all Greeks and we've just seen a whole batch of Greek flags from the recent Soccer World Cup, they all had the Greek flag inter crossed with the Union Jack or the Australian flag on the front of the milk bar to say, "Hey I'm with you digger". There's one of our best friends later on in the surf club, in the last of the war years

20:00 post war years with a fellow named Nick Samios who had the Bluebird Milk Bar on Manly Wharf and he'd been an amateur wrestler in the, I'm drifting into immediate post war years. But in the surf club we put up a full boxing ring and they used to have wrestles and my brother and I used to, if it was inter club stuff we boxed at Bondi,

20:30 and Bondi would come over and box against us. And who else, and the last of the straight backs, and the old man had us, he would wrestle, he took on wrestling, oh no he was a pretty amazing sort of a bloke.

So what sort of, the Italian who were fishing where did they actually live?

I suppose they

21:00 all lived in Leichhardt, they still do. They actually camped and slept there, they stayed for several days, camped in the scrub on the side of Fairy Bower, it's a misnomer, it's proper name is Cabbage Tree Point, it's currently know thanks to our surf board riding fraternity as Winkie Pot, because there's a fair bit of that going on up there, on Fairy Bower. It's

21:30 commonly known as Bluefish Point but to the original people, those that were there in the early days of Fairy Bower it's known as the Horse's Head. And there was a perfect outline of a seahorse rock right on the end of the point at Fairy Bower, so to all of us local that was the Horse's Head. And of course they blew the rock off in the end when they started to put these gun

22:00 emplacements in, in early war years etc. But Horses' Head is just a local name, its proper name is Cabbage Tree Point.

And what were you warned about the Italians?

Oh I wasn't warned, I was allowed free reign pretty well, we couldn't come to much harm around there. We could swim like fishes,

22:30 when I got to school there's a photo there of me, I had a couple of combined high school swimming records when I was at Sydney High. And it all comes from the time, we just spent so much time in the water. My brother actually trapped rabbits up in, well you've heard me talk about the Cardinal's Palace in North Head, he trapped rabbits there. So

23:00 it was a different scene that no longer exists, that particular part, it was a little hamlet, a fishing hamlet, probably describes Fairy Bower better than anything, and a picnic, a lovely picnic spot.

Yeh you keep describing it as a hamlet, how much did you have to do with neighbours and what sort of community sense was there?

Great, terrific, we

23:30 all knew one another, we all looked out for one another. No one ever went without a feed of fish if they

wanted one. There was a family called Cowlshaw and they were there for years, there were the Lorenzes and Min married this fellow Pratt and then he died and then she married, and he was introduced to her by my Mum and Dad. Jack Fitzgerald who was the

- 24:00 secretary of the Lifesaving Club, and the other daughter Helen she married the fellow that was the sergeant major of the Artillery School on North Head, or the artillery it wasn't a school, well it was still a school but on the artillery set up at North Head. So I don't think, and all the boys, I can remember raiding the fruit orchards, up at the Card's
- 24:30 we used to call it the Card's Palace [St Patrick's College] and they had fruit orchards and there were a team of larrikins, of whom I was one, we could raid the fruit orchards there. Curtis owned the little blue bus which ran from Manly Wharf up to Manly Hospital and around to Bow Street, that was the transport service. And I remember getting a wallop from that though, he used to park the bus
- 25:00 at the foot of Little Bow Street and probably go and have his breakfast or late morning tea, or brunch or something. And we'd sometimes jump on the bus and play in there, and I found a purse, I think it's the only time I ever stole in my life because I'll never forget it. I found a purse on the floor of the bus and there was ten shillings inside so Richard thought he had ten bob and, but
- 25:30 he was half honest and half the other way and was stupid enough to hand the purse in, minus the ten bob. Well when Mum tracked it down holy dooley did I get a wallop out of that, I learnt not to steal.

What happened to the ten bob?

I think that was returned, the ten bob was returned to the lady that had the purse.

So the lesson was to be totally honest or totally corrupt

- 26:00 **not half way?**

That's right, don't get caught, no it sunk in I think I've been pretty fair dinkum all my life.

What sort of fruit trees did they have up at the Cards?

I know, I remember apples and I think I remember oranges to. And,

- 26:30 but I remember they had sandstone walls and some of them, and there still there, I'm pretty sure that applies in this instance because I know there's some still there and I might be getting confused, had broken glass on the top of the fence. So if you had to run you had to run round and jump the gate.
- 27:00 **It sounds like just from you talking about the fishing and so on that you seemed to remember there being a lot more marine life in the harbour in those days compared to now?**
- Oh absolutely, absolutely the professional fishing was still done by people from shore, I don't think there was any such thing as a trawler, the nearest to it was the Italians that had these half
- 27:30 cabin launches. And usually they worked in tandem, two of them together. But there was no deep sea fishing and netting and all that sort of thing, so fish were just plentiful, absolutely plentiful.
- 28:00 **Alright I forgotten what we were talking about, fishing and marine life in the harbour?**
- That's right I can remember catching green eels which were, oh you threw them away. But the rocks on what I'll call the Horses' Head, we'd get a dirty big cord line, a big chunk of kunjivoi [a sea squirt] and you'd get green eels within two minutes
- 28:30 of lowering it down there, you'd get green eels. And I remember one stuck on my brother's finger, and this is a lesson to for everyone that might be listening, if you ever get a crab or a fish or something that grabs you don't lift you hand out and say, "What am I going to do" and try and prise it off. Shove your hand straight back in the ocean and let it go and it will swim away. And that's what a crab will do, when I learnt to catch crabs, which you do by running your hand under a crevice, and we used to use crabs for
- 29:00 bait for bream and drummer and stuff like that, occasionally one would fasten on to you. Well the first thing you do is, ohhhh, well put your hand straight back into the pool and the crab will let go and say, "Well I'm out of here". So you learn valuable lessons in many things.

I know from myself fishing in the harbour you've got to work pretty hard these days to get something decent out of there but it sounds like you guys were spoilt for

- 29:30 **choice?**

Yeh well you can't see it but on there there's a photo which is only current, recent of blackfishing here at the Rip Bridge [Central Coast] and the photo shows you, a mate of mine old Berty and I'm netting one blackfish for him, I've got one fish in the net and I've got my rod with another fish waiting to get his out so I can net mine. So there's blackfish

- 30:00 have been the speciality every since I was a kid and we've never, and it always amazes me when they

say there's no fish left, they net heaps of blackfish, they net heaps of mullet and you hear people say, "Oh there no good to eat". They just have no idea how to treat them, if their kept alive and their all bled and all cleaned etc while their jumping and their guts gets out while

30:30 they're fresh you don't get the oiliness, their one of the best eating fish. I , oh in later years when I had four kids at school I used to sell my fish in the pub cause I'd hand Mum the whole wages cheque, and I'd sell bream before I'd sell blackfish, my kids have been reared on them. And there's still a mile of them around and mullet by they tend to just sell the mullet for

31:00 fertiliser I think, just sell the lot to Japan, but the old mullet if he's handled right he's a beautiful fish to eat.

When you were a child in those years before the war how much swimming and body surfing and so on did you do?

Not less than daily and many times, twice a day

31:30 oh for long periods of time. And we might go over to the rock pool after school and be there for couple of hours and then have to get called in for tea. Or get round the beach and the old woollen costume, I remember it and then get a bit of sand in that woollen costume and get chafed to blazes and we're walking home like this with bowed legs to

32:00 keep the chafe away. No we lived in the water, virtually lived in the water. I can remember spearing sand crabs, I had well what would be a broom handle with metal two pronged fork and Fairy Bower Beach used to have a heap of sand crabs there and I can remember doing this, trail a bit of meat on a bit of string and the old sand crab would come up and we'd have

32:30 crabs, seafood laid on. But I jibbed a bit when I think back on getting that whitebait, oh cause it would last and trying to think up news ways to make it tasty and new forms to cook it in.

So sometimes you got a bit sick of that unrelenting fish diet?

Oh yeh, have sardine sandwiches and then come

33:00 home to fish cakes, but of course it was all real good food so it was pretty good. But they were the days when the milkman used to come around and sell the bulk milk, had a tap on the back of the cart and occasionally we'd get a ride up with them with the horse. And Mum was always good, had an infinity, was always kind to people and they all, there was two milkmen used to stop at our

33:30 house every morning, that's when they took their break and had their cup of tea with us and sometimes they'd sling Mum a jar of cream or something like that. Cause I can remember when the, in the war years, a little bit later on, young soldiers only nineteen, cause their only four years older than me, five years older than me and she made a big pot

34:00 of stew or something she'd send some down for the bloke on the machine gun emplacement, this sort of thing. No she was a provider and always made sure that we had full bellies.

But it also sounds like she didn't tolerate your hanging around the house of a day?

Oh no out, and sport, sport mad, if your active and your out you can't come to much harm I don't suppose.

34:30 And it's sort of been carried on right through the family because all my kids, it's gone from my grandfather to my father, parents to myself, my brother and our families are all sports mad. No hanging around the house that was absolutely, out. I remember though she used to, cause in those days you had to scrub the floors and this sort of things,

35:00 she'd give us a few chores to do. And it was in the days of the old copper, you'd have the fire under the copper and the stick to lift the clothes out, and sometimes she gave us a few chores to do which we had to do. But generally speaking no, as long as we were swimming or out being active it wasn't a problem.

35:30 **Between the seasons of summer and winter how would Fairy Bower change in who was there and what they were doing?**

Only less people, much less people, we loved the winter because as I said before there was a little sewer just right on Fairy Bower, stink pipes still there I think, you can still see the outlet. But I think it was a overflow thing, when a nor'easter blew our beach used to get stinking

36:00 rotten and it was untreated to just quietly. So when the winter came we had the westerlies and the offshore winds which would clear the ocean out and also clear the people out because we tended to feel we were being invaded a bit in the summer months. And we'd have it to ourselves then, also the fishing seemed to get better.

36:30 certainly the blackfish and the rock fishing got better. But we still all swam through it, my mother used to swim like a fish, there was a rock pool but sometimes the rock pool got a bit soupy. And we all used to do it, we'd dive off the outer corner of the pool and swim the beach, and we lived on the other end of the beach so you could get out and go inside.

- 37:00 Well when my mother died, this is a little anecdote, I had her ashes scattered off the rock pool, my father's were scattered out of a surf boat and my mother's were scattered off the corner of the rock pool. And for the ceremony we were walking around, the whole families there, got a little granddaughter who's now an adult and I was trying to explain the spiritual significance of putting
- 37:30 Mum's ashes in there. And I said, "Well nanna used to swim up and down there all the time and swim up the beach and back" so I said, "We're putting her ashes in there, it was one of her favourite places" I said, "Now she'll be able to swim up and down all for ever and ever". And the little one said, "Well won't her arms get tired pop?" which I thought was priceless.

It does sound like your

- 38:00 **family had a really spiritual connection with that part of the harbour?**

Yeh.

What about indoor entertainment like movies and stuff, what did mum think of that?

'No way Hose', Saturdays, as soon as we were old enough, I don't know I might have been ten or something, all the other kids were given a zac [sixpence] to go to the pictures, not us, we were put into the swimming club. We joined the swimming club and we had

- 38:30 to race very Saturday afternoon, that was, we never saw a movie, not until I was an adult, that was you played sport on Saturday afternoons and that was that. And the first thing as soon as you got home, how'd you go. And so, but like all swimming clubs operate they were handicap races and we

- 39:00 with all the swimming we did, we were pretty good at it, I'd have to say that without being egotistical.

It's sounds like the ultimate bronzed Aussie lifestyle?

It probably developed into that although we probably didn't think about that, when you get a big head when you get to be a young man it probably, I probably thought about that, but it was just good fun. And

- 39:30 I don't think I missed going to the movies, I suppose I got a bit jealous of kids sometimes when they were going to a movie or something like that. But I remember even in my days it was still the buzz for the swimming and that's where the first real episode for the war happened for me, while I was still a junior there.

- 40:00 **We'll get onto that in a minute, cause this tapes just about to run out, so I'll just ask you a couple of quick questions. You weren't allowed to go to the movies so what was a treat for you boys?**

Gee that's a good question, oh we'd have a bit of pocket money, you know we could buy a

- 40:30 lolly or an ice cream or something after swimming. The, I don't think we needed any, the whole lifestyle was a treat, swim when we wanted to and the only thing to dodge. Mum was very, she drummed it into the both of us, you can see by those photos we,

- 41:00 and without being egotistical we weren't bad looking kids, as we got older Mum drummed into us, "Oh them girls they're bad news, oh you go to the movies and they all start kissing in the back row", she drummed it into us, I was terrified of females for years. Until I found out what it was all about.

I'll stop you there Dick cause that tapes...

Tape 3

- 00:30 **Dick can you tell us a bit more about Fairy Bower's status as lovers' lane?**

Yes it was renowned for it, even internationally I think because, especially when the serviceman came because that's where they all headed with their girls. But as far as I was concerned it was a place, if I,

- 01:00 as I got older and I had a girlfriend I had to get past my place and get back past it when I took her home if I was going to Fairy Bower. But not it was renowned as, whether its reputation was worse than it really was I don't know. But it was a fairly secluded spot and once it got that reputation

- 01:30 it never lost it, it became a glossed I think.

Was that a reputation for both day and night?

Only day time, no day and night until war time but then no one could get round there, it was absolutely out of bounds from back at oh South Steyne

- 02:00 for anyone but residents later on, it was shut off completely.

So the idea would be you'd just take your girl down there for a little bit of a picnic and a little bit of a cuddle?

That was the general idea, or if you got really lucky you might even improve on that.

So it wasn't beyond the question that you might sort of walk around a certain

02:30 **rock and find a little bit of action going on between a happy couple?**

Absolutely not and when the nor'easter blew all of those rubber things that washed up on Fairy Bower beach weren't thrown off ships I don't think.

So did you learn from a young age what they were?

Yeh I was told never to touch them or I'll be, I'd have me hands chopped off. Yeh no I got plenty

03:00 of sex instruction in the, especially when I joined the surf club.

And did you ever end up walking somewhere and interrupting a couple having some pleasure?

On rare occasions yes, I think on a couple of occasions that happened.

And took a few notes?

Oh it, that was the only thing

03:30 that Mum and Dad were concerned about us running wild a bit but that was mostly weekends when couples were around there.

So tell me about primary school?

From Manly West to Burragorang Valley for about six months, but really started in Manly proper.

That six months that you weren't in Manly that's when dad was doing the mining?

That's when

04:00 he was doing the carting of the coal out of Burragorang, yeh.

And you would have been how old?

I guess I must have been four because I think that I wasn't suppose to be going to school but because my brother was and it was such a little village down there that I was allowed to go and sit and listen. And I'm guessing that was the situation.

So you came back to Manly?

Yep.

How did you find

04:30 **school there?**

Oh good it was, we had good teachers, very good teachers, oh I'd better.....

Dick we were talking about primary school?

Yeh I enjoyed it, a couple of things I do remember, in those days for street crossings on the corner they had what they called the street patrol

05:00 and they had a cane with a red flag on it and I was a member of that group. I remember marbles was the big go in those days and then the smarties they had a board with little holes drilled in it. This was the first numbers game and you got an extra marble if you went through one or three if it had three,

05:30 but you got three marbles if you went through the three. But it was, apparently we were fairly successful because we finished up getting the, my brother and I the QC, which is the qualifying certificate which got you to a selective high school. But we living in Fairy Bower we just used to walk, I don't,

06:00 I think I used to go to school bare foot for a while, for quite a long while. And don't have any, oh I remember old Hodgey he used to spit on the chalk and things like that, most kids have memories like that. But there was a Mr Rooney who was a special teacher to all the boys

06:30 and he was terribly popular and he died, he was a very, very heavy smoker, that stands out in my mind and he had a heart attack and died while I was there. I remember an ice block shop just down from the school, cause the school was right next to the Manly, the Far West Scheme [Stewart House, a residential school for children from remote areas] and there was an ice block shop down the end of the road used to make these

07:00 fruit ice blocks, and that was a special treat when I had the money for one of them. The, I'm just trying

to think what else comes to mind about it. I remember being called out in front of the class when it was birthday time and...

- 07:30 No I recall being called out in front of the class, birthdays were always celebrated. The, I don't recall lessons ever being very hard, I think we sort of skated through.

Were there any particular subjects that you enjoyed more than others?

I really don't remember, I, yes I do I loved geography, I've always had itchy feet which is why we've

- 08:00 done a bit of travelling, and I do remember loving geography, and that carried through into high school to. I remember a boy named John Small who had some affliction which I think we used to think it was water on the brain, and he had this huge big head and some of the kids called him 'big head' and a couple of us stepping into say, "Don't call him that". And I remember

- 08:30 Coopers was the biggest store in Manly and I remember the boy Cooper was there to.

Would that be when you started playing football in primary school?

I think we used to kick a ball around, see I left there when I was eleven, no I don't recall that.

- 09:00 No I don't recall playing football then. The, but I remember up in the Cardinal's Palace, when we're talking about that, the training ground for the priests, they had a football ground up there and we used to go up there and they'd be playing games of football. I think they used to play Waverley College and others and we'd act as ball boys and things like that. So that was where I guess the football might of started. But

- 09:30 with all the swimming, I do recall yeh, yeh I was one of the hot shot swimmers there, amongst the kids. I don't recall the school championships and school stuff like that, only because we swam every day, it was just natural, swimming was like breakfast. So no I don't recall a lot about sport, I do remember we used to

- 10:00 be sent to watch the intermediate high school, that's where they used to finish, which is now I think they call it grade, oh about grade ten in these days and going to their athletic carnivals and watching them. Not a strong recollection apart from this other thing, I know some of my school mates,

- 10:30 and I mentioned one bloke because he was in the street patrol business where we used to stop the kids and stop the cars, they gave us some authority. I think he's still acting as a judge now, although his in retirement, and he was one of my mates was Don Stewart, whose head of the National Crime Authority in Canberra there for many years. And who I have seen

- 11:00 on rare occasions, once or twice since. But there is a photo of primary school of he and I and a number of other blokes that I still see. On next Saturday, what's today, no next Wednesday, yeh tomorrow I'm playing with a bloke, in bowls,

- 11:30 named Ron Pim and he was a primary school student that I hadn't seen for oh nearly sixty years and he bobbed up here at our bowling club just recently. So it's mostly fellows that I remember are still alive that take my memories back.

Was there any other sport apart from the swimming that you can recall?

No I don't,

- 12:00 it's a period that's a bit of a blank with me. The, no it wasn't a period that really stuck out in my mind, I remember the bare foot department and the walking to and from school. No

- 12:30 really there's not a lot there that I could dig up or remember.

So you ended up from there being selected into Sydney High, so you must have been a reasonable sort of student, a decent sort of a scholar were you?

Oh I had to be in those days apparently because there was an IQ test and a fairly extensive test done and there were

- 13:00 about half a dozen of us from Manly Primary that went onto Sydney High. And the other blokes then had to go to Manly Intermediate High and at the third year, or year ten as I think they call it now, then they would proceed to North Sydney High for the last two years, if they decided to go through and do their HSC [Higher School Certificate]. So yeh that was, that's when there was the family blues of course about money

- 13:30 and the costs. And then I nearly blew it all in that first year by diving in the drink.

Well we'll get that story from you in a little while Dick. But in the meantime I just wanted to know whether the family was religious?

We were, yes, hold on I'll rephrase that

- 14:00 my brother and I were made to go to Sunday school and then to confirmation at the old St Matthew's in Manly and the old Reverend Ebbs, God rest his soul he was a bit of a Tartar and he had the wind up me. And anyhow we went
- 14:30 through and I think it was either twelve, confirmed at twelve in those days, at twelve years of age, and we were both confirmed. I never saw Mum and Dad in church, it was do as I say not do as I do, and it wasn't until having been through the surf club and being a bit of a connoisseur of good sorts and having three daughters of my own that were all
- 15:00 good sorts that I decided I wanted them imbued with some spiritual consciousness, that I became a Christian myself. And currently I work for a group called Samaritan. But that was sort of the religious life, and a bloke named Alan Packten, when we were living in Frenchs Forest in later years, when the girls were, and
- 15:30 I promised, oh I remember how it happened. This is jumping post war to 1951 when we married.
- That's fine?**
- Religious bigotry was at its zenith, oh how could I forget this and old Father Mack in Manly he in fact harassed my wife's parents and this may
- 16:00 sound strange but we eloped in a taxi truck. We won the grand final in rugby on the, must have been the 18th September, which was a Saturday, and we were married on a Wednesday. And I had a fellow named Noel Walpole who had a taxi truck, he was former surf world champion of Australia, and Nula as we called him, picked up my wife and all her belongings
- 16:30 and we left notes for her parents. And when they learned after a while, Christmas following that I wasn't a two-headed monster and I looked like being a good sort of a husband etc we finished up very, very close to my wife's parents. So we married in St Matthews where I was confirmed and fairly quite thing, with the reception around Fairy Bower of course,
- 17:00 on the, we had a huge big front veranda. But fairly quietly of the possibility of interruption and some sort of problems arising.
- Did your involvement in the church as a boy lead to socialising with the kids that you'd go to Sunday school with?**
- Never, no I got the confirmation and then I ran,
- 17:30 and never went near a church myself for many, many years. And this turned us off a bit, because the only thing I objected to was signing the kids up in advance, the children we might have had. So I remember sitting for two or three hours, was waiting to see a Monsignor somewhere out at Woollahra, and when we did get to see him
- 18:00 after waiting for several hours he abused me, stealing one of the flowers of the church. So that sort of put the kibosh on, I wouldn't have minded getting married, some of the other rules they had in those days, of course it's a lot more tolerant now.
- So were talking about the Catholic church?**
- Yeh, yeh.
- And what about the idea**
- 18:30 **of being loyal to the Empire and the mother land and being patriotic, was that something that was drummed into you as a boy?**
- Very much so, there was always the raising of the flag, we always sang, I think we sang the national anthem before we went into school in primary school. That was very much so the go, very, very much.
- And is that something that you**
- 19:00 **sort of put up with because you had to or was that something that you felt quite genuine about?**
- I felt very genuine about the Empire and the Royal Family and the whole bit. We should all try and contribute when the time came.
- What about the Great War, were**
- 19:30 **you told anything about the First World War while you were at primary school or instance, or from mum and dad?**
- Not a lot, my uncle was involved but my father was too young of course. No not a great deal except about the horrific losses which I don't remember whether I got it after or since, but I
- 20:00 take great pleasure in history, and in modern history, which is why I'm here today. And I just wish that our own youth and our kids were being brought up to date with some of these depression history stories

and the most recent world war and they may appreciate their parents

20:30 a bit more, listen and be a little more appreciative of what life's all about.

So you moved onto Sydney Boys High School, when the news first came through to the family that you'd been selected what was, how was that news received by mum and dad?

Mum

21:00 jubilation, the old man this will break the bank, in a word that's how it was received. And I was too young to be going there really because it carried through, the average school into high school is a much older age, I was eleven

21:30 when I first went to Sydney High School, which meant I was turning sixteen in the middle of the year of the HSC. It would have been, somewhere along the line I should of repeated a year, actually the war years, well there's only way to say it, bugged my education and any sort of career opportunities that I might have had. That's nobody's fault and it's partly my own because I,

22:00 other blokes took their opportunities and finished up with good academic records and in good positions. But they were a year older and they weren't living in an army encampment either so to a degree it didn't, messed me around a fair bit. But these days we're riding high

22:30 on the hog and we're 'as happy as Larry'.

We'll talk a lot more about that impact a little further down the track Dick, because I think it's very important, very significant. Now you started at High School in which year?

In 1st year in 1941, I was at Sydney High from 1941 to 1945.

Just before we go further there, what's

23:00 **your, what's the first time that you recall that you had a feeling, and idea you heard someone say something, about the fact that war was close?**

I don't remember any of that pre Hitler stuff or the Jewish persecution or anything, which I've only learnt about of course in later years. I don't know when this happened,

23:30 but the war really landed on my doorstep when I was a junior in the swimming club and a boy named John Erwin, he was only a couple of years older than me. I might have been, he must of enlisted at a younger age or something but he was in the navy and he was lost on HMAS Australia, that was the first time a death, a war time death, he was, I used to swim against him,

24:00 I couldn't quite believe that he wasn't there, that he'd been lost on the Perth. In number two Marine Parade at Fairy Bower was a family named Govers lived. Jack senior was a petty officer on the Perth and Jack junior was my best mate, we were inseparable as kids, we swam together, we did everything together.

24:30 I don't know what year that was either but these were the real things that impacted on me and he lost his father on the Perth. Now we're probably talking up to 43 or 44, right out of sequence, but I don't recall a lot before that. Cause it wasn't until, life was still a bowl of roses in say 1940,

25:00 I've got a QC I'm going to Sydney High School, 1941 I start there. But then as the war got closer that's when I started to, like all the windows were taped, there was some sort of glutinous substance used to be painted all over the panes of the glass, they were all taped up. And the next thing their digging slit trenches in the school and

25:30 it wasn't long after that to travel to Sydney High at Moore Park from Manly was a experience in itself.

Did the family have a radio?

Yes we had a radio yeh, I don't ever recall listening to it very much though, I really don't. There had to be a radio, of course there was radio, I don't remember hearing though

26:00 or listening to it, we were too busy with other pursuits. It's strange you mention that because I can't recall hearing the radio, or did we have one

No problem. Was there any newspapers in the house?

I never ever saw one, I

26:30 never ever saw one.

When the war had started would mum and dad ever discuss it around the dinner table or anything like that?

Well once it started my father was almost immediately, I do remember him trying to enlist and Mum saying, "You're nuts, you're in a protected industry stay where you are" sort of business. That was the only war time sort of conversations that I ever heard.

- 27:00 And he did enlist despite everything at one stage and I think he lasted about three days and they found him and duck him out again. But that was, I think that's probably the only discussion that I can recall about the sort of 40 path. Wait I do remember
- 27:30 when Poland was invaded and Britain became involved and we declared war and then we started, somewhere or other, I don't know where the news was coming from, me being aware of the success Hitler was having in Europe. Poland and, I don't know whether it was discussed in front of me, whether I heard it or where, but I don't have a strong memory of it other than
- 28:00 people around me started to get worried, adults.
- And what impact did that have on you?**
- A little bit of fear, I'd have to say a bit of fear that it might get to us. And almost immediately all the signs went up in the milk bars, "I'm
- 28:30 a Greek or I'm a....." those sort of things started to happen almost immediately, people identifying their origin if they weren't in the forces, the evil forces as we'll call them. So no that started to happen almost immediately.
- Did you start to see blokes in uniform around the place?**
- 29:00 Yeh a few, a few. As I said we were out of the main stream, we were out at 'Hicksville' at Fairy Bower, we were tucked away in a quite corner at that stage of the game.
- Would you go over to the city often?**
- I went everyday, had to, to get to school.
- With the family to shop**
- 29:30 **or anything like that, was there a necessity for that?**
- Oh no we didn't, we still didn't have any money for shopping in town other than looking for school clothes. Yeh I recall being taken to town for that, but other than that I don't recall going to town much at all. We were, and it carried right through into working years and everything, "Seven mile from Sydney and a million miles from
- 30:00 care" [an advertising slogan used to promote Manly to tourists] and blow the rest of the world, we were sweet.
- So when did Fairy Bower become an army encampment?**
- Oh 1942 I think, 1942 it all started, I forget what, it was long before they bombed Rose Bay, when a
- 30:30 couple of shells fell short that sort of thing. [Sydney was shelled by Japanese submarines 31 May 1942] I don't recall much happening in that first years of school other than being made aware and being reminded daily of the war because of the windows. And I don't think they'd started air raid drill even in 1941, may of
- 31:00 and we all had stations to go to and then go to the slit trench and all had assigned places.
- How often, when that did start, the drill did start how often would you have to do that?**
- From memory at least weekly.....yeh was it weekly.
- How did you young blokes treat the drill?**
- Oh
- 31:30 it was a big laugh, it was a break from study, you beauty.
- And did the trenches come in handy for other uses?**
- Oh some of the blokes, the kids that used to sneak a smoke would get in there, but they caught because they had little air vents in and you could see the smoke coming out the top.
- So before Fairy Bower became**
- 32:00 **the encampment how long would it take for you and your brother to travel to school, and what was the process?**
- Oh fifteen minutes walk to the ferry, thirty minutes in the ferry, what are we up to forty five, fifty minutes, if you got a tram immediately it would be oh a good twenty minutes to half an hour out to Moore Park. And then it stopped out where the current showground
- 32:30 is now and only a five minutes walk over to the school. What are we up to, fifteen, fifty, oh say half an hour anyhow, eighty, ninety minutes each way, morning and night. And the, but of course when we come

away on Friday night and we used to get giggled about, cause there were a lot of Eastern Suburbs boys at Sydney High, cause all the

33:00 those that qualified for elective high school from the Eastern Suburbs had a great closer access to Sydney High than blokes from Manly. We were the outpost sort of business and they used to gig me about Manly, seven miles from Sydney, and I'd say, "Well when I go home I got away every weekend". But it was a fairly hefty sort of

33:30 travel impost.

Was it a bit of a drag for you as a young lad having to trek such a distance each day?

Well sometimes, I can remember quite often to I can remember this to, doing our homework on the ferry cause you had thirty five minutes to do it in. And so sometimes you'd do a bit of school work in transit, you couldn't do it in the tram cause they shook too much, but on the ferry we'd quite

34:00 often get books out and do a bit of work on the ferry.

I believe one day you had a little bit of an incident with your globite case?

Oh my goodness it was a floater.

Can you take us through that?

Yeh I don't mind, one of the things we used to do, clever dicks, we'd get up on the side of the ferry,

34:30 stand on the side rail of the ferry and as it pulled in jump off, what we were in a hurry for I'll never know, but that was the go. Those that weren't doing it would sometimes grab your ankle and horse around behind you. And on this particular day the ferry's pulled in, it's close I've got about a three inch step to step on and someone starts messing with me ankle and horsing around with me ankle and I've turned back and

35:00 in that few seconds the ferry had drifted out about a couple of feet, I stepped off thinking I only had three inches of step and went straight in the drink, in the old school uniform. And it flashed through my head immediately, I thought the old man will kill me, I wasn't frightened of water or swimming in clothes or anything like that, that was a piece of cake. And the school books floated off so I'm all for going in after them, like the people pulled me out by the scruff of the neck.

35:30 And I'm saying, "I'm going after that suitcase, my old man" he said, "Your not going anywhere near that water". And so I thought what can I do, I'm so terrified of what the old man will do and I ran from Manly Wharf, and when I think back on what I did I think no wonder I'm good at sport and was in good nick, I ran from Manly Wharf around to where the old Manly baths used to be, before they got knocked down in that storm, which would be, oh it would have to be three quarters of a mile.

36:00 And there was Stewart's Boat Shed there and Jimmy Stewart I knew fairly well, and I played football with Jim later. And I told the story, I blurted all this out, anyhow they loaned me a rowing boat free of charge, I had no money. And I rowed the rowing boat back across the length of the East Esplanade round past where the amusement piers, we used to call it, where the big Ferris wheel was, in under the wharf. The old globite

36:30 she's hanging on by a whisker, about three inches of the corner of the suitcase was floating, I thought, 'I'm not dead yet'. So pulled the suitcase out and the water ran out and I drained the water out, put it back in, rowed the boat back over. By this time my brothers off the ferry and he's gone home and he's shelving me, he said, "Oh Dicky fell in the water, all his books are floated away". So I got the old globite and I walked home to Fairy Bower,

37:00 well Mum being a very practical women I can remember the old oven, it had the old kookaburra with a snake hanging out, it was the early cooker, and she's opened the suitcase and got all the books out, whiffled them out, shook the water out, laid all the leaves out and put them in the oven on the low heat. They finished up very crinkly but they finished up dry. Anyhow naturally with about six of us going over there the word spread like wildfire,

37:30 by the time I got to school the next day half the school knows and didn't I get some chiacking about that. And anyhow the main event was I'm waiting at home, and by this time Dad's working all sorts of hours at night etc. and I'm sweating it out in bed and I'm too terrified to go to sleep. And I thought, 'Oh he's going to kill me' oh gee, and I'm waiting for him to come home and I'm listening and he comes home

38:00 and she tells him. And I must admit the first thing he asks is how I was, she said, "He's alright he swam and he got the bag and this, done this that and the other" and he said, "How are the books?", cause he had his mind still on that one pound ten shillings. And she said, "No we'll get by their all dried out and everything". Anyhow and I think I detected a cackle, and I thought,

38:30 'I'm saved, I'm saved' and I heard him come up so I shut my eyes that tight if he'd have had a good look he would of said, "He's foxing". But anyhow it all died down after that. But at school it got a fair bit of giggling from all the other blokes and it went away.

And the books were useable?

And the books were useable, very crinkly and very,

39:00 but they were legible, and I pity the poor bugger, cause you handed them in and then re-hired them for the next year once they came through. But anyhow that's water under the bridge now.

Literally?

Yeh.

How did you feel about going to Sydney High, was it a school you enjoyed?

Yeh I did until third year, which is

39:30 year ten, cause there was no way would study. And I was never studious, never read books, too busy, action first, never sat around to read a book. So I wasn't a student at all in the sense, because of all the swimming I

40:00 was very successful in school swimming and combined high school swimming. And Sydney High School started to win the champion school and swimming, which endeared me to the headmaster in a lot of the administration because I was winning a lot of races and you gathered points from the number of races and the school was decided on the school that got the greatest number of points.

40:30 So the old headmaster took a bit of a personal interest and it was just a shame, I felt that I'd let him down, because in retrospect he was absolutely right. Up until year ten in those days I could handle it without study, and I've got a school certificate that say so, with a number of A's and B's and everything. But of course at that, from that point forward

41:00 you need to absorb the modern methods of maths, if you didn't and you didn't get the basics right you were lost from thereafter, and that's what happened to me. And then I got into the first grade football team, first fifteen and then you were one of the blokes which the coat-tuggers chased and I was in the water polo team,

41:30 the swimming, the football, oh yeh and they had a magnificent gymnasium at Sydney High.....

Dick we'll just pause there cause we're out of tape and we'll.....

Tape 4

00:31 **At school when you were at Sydney High did the boys talk a lot about the war and follow it?**

Well school cadets was pretty crash hot but I never ever joined it. But as, largely because there was so much sport there to, in addition to the swimming and the water polo and the football there was this magnificent

01:00 gymnasium and the bloke that ran it was a fellow named Atkinson and he was either a captain, retired from the British Army, but he always wore a army uniform with all of his gear up. And he started this oh tumbling and rolling, believe it or not with this gut of mine I used to be able to throw a summersault, a running summersault etc. And he had these gymnasium classes and

01:30 we would do, make pyramids, go up about three or four stories and high. And I recall we put a show on in the great hall at Sydney High, which was a pretty big hall and all the parents and everyone were there. And we did all these tumbling acts, put on a full gymnasium display. And then there was a bit of boxing and

02:00 bouts between the boys, which we always seemed to not get too knocked about in. But there was a lot of activity, but almost all of my activity was aimed at sport. And I took in normal lessons except music, yeh Johnny Daybraughn, Frenchman, music, and it got to the stage where he,

02:30 the class you'd come to do the music and he'd say, "Windshuttle, out". I've never been, oh my wife and I we danced a lot and still can, we learnt to jitterbug and that sort of thing, and we like big band music from the 50's and 60's etc, you know 40's, 50's, 60's. But tone deaf, I did not have the slightest interest in music.

03:00 And so he used to order me out just so as he could get a bit of peace in the class.

While you were at high school there was there every occasions when maybe old boys or something had been at the war had come back and talk about it, at assemblies or anything?

No really, I don't recall that happening at all, no.

Fair enough, obviously cadets wasn't something that interested you?

Well

- 03:30 it was but it meant another uniform and I think some of the costs were, I had to be careful of costs and I think some of the costs were sheeted home to the cadets. And I think a lot of the stuff was provided but it involved more after hours time, with the amount of travel we did and the amount of sport involved there,
- 04:00 it was probably impractical. I think it was sensible enough to realise it was impractical to try and do it.
- What sort of sacrifice did your parents make then to have you boys at school?**
- Well like, I don't know what it cost them in fares. I know what it cost me when I had four kids in high school at the one stage and how
- 04:30 it keep me poor on a sales rep wage and later on a sales manager's wage. So what it did to Mum and Dad I don't know, but I would have to guess it would put a dirty big hole in their income and I can only guess at that.
- And well I suppose also the money you weren't earning because you were at school, that otherwise you could of contributed?**
- Exactly.
- 05:00 **I'd like to talk now about some of the defences that got constructed around your part of Sydney Harbour, when the Japanese became involved in the war. What sort of fortifications or defences can you recall?**
- Well the first thing I recall is the boom net which ran from about Vacluse to Middle Head. And that slowed down travel to and from Sydney High, even further
- 05:30 because, and especially after the Japs became a bit active, having to pull up at the boom gate and wait until there was, they were sure. And I'm not sure how they checked it, and then let you through and closed the gate behind you.
- How was that done?**
- The ferry used to come to a halt and sort of short of the gate, and then I guess it got some sort of signal and
- 06:00 through it went. I'm not, other than the slit trenches and the other stuff over on the Sydney side and in the school ground, I'm not very familiar with, but I did know what happened at North Head and Fairy Bower and East Esplanade, the whole of the eastern hill became cut off, virtually from the rest of Manly because Darley Road goes straight through to
- 06:30 North Head Barracks and the artillery up there. But what happened, the first signs of it were all of the gunnery practice, I can recall little, I suppose Tiger Moths towing a wind sock behind it and gun fire, practicing on that. And even prior to the war in 39, yeh I can remember now the artillery having artillery practice
- 07:00 sometimes, and I can remember seeing towed behind a boat like a huge big square frame. And so they had artillery practice and I'm practically certain I can remember seeing invisible sight, big spouts of water coming up around this thing. So the artillery had started to practice. There was aerial practice on these wind socks and this
- 07:30 was before we became, that part of Manly became fortified. So most of it was coming from North Head, but you know when the guns went the place shook a bit, our windows would rattle. And what else, so the first year or two of the war that were the first signs that things were getting a bit fair dinkum
- 08:00 and then from thereon in it got a lot worse. But to understand you need to topography of the place, Sydney Heads I guess they thought they didn't need to worry too much about entry into Sydney Heads. You had Middle Head fairly heavily fortified direct opposite, you had North Head and South Head. For a landing to take place I guess they figured it was going to take place outside. The only two non surfing
- 08:30 beaches outside Sydney Heads to my knowledge, from memory, were Fairy Bower beach and Shelley Beach. And the must have been their thinking to because retrospectively I can recognise what the thinking was. But so they really went for an encampment in that area, so progressively
- 09:00 more and more armaments came in and more and more gunnery practice, more and more troops in and around our house etc, you know, to the point that we had a machine gun emplacement from here to the corner of this room away.
- So only three or four metres?**
- Oh about
- 09:30 maybe ten metres, cause it happen to be a good high spot. And then as I say they blew the Horses Head of what they call Bluefish Point or Winkie Pot and put heavy gun emplacements all across the top of Fairy Bower Headland, which is this Bluefish Point and big pill boxes and all that sort of thing. And

- 10:00 then just right where the older surf club, there's three surf clubs they've been through, and old wooden one then a brick one then a modern one now. They chopped down the very first Norfolk Pine and put a gun emplacement in there, a machine gun emplacement and that Norfolk Pine stump had a brass plaque on it and it's sacrilege, where it's gone God only knows. But that was a gun emplacement
- 10:30 and from that point on she was, it was very heavily armed, there were three roll barb wire all the way there and then back along the beach, the whole of Manly Beach was barb-wired off. And I had a little bit to do with it later because I joined the surf club but there was a gate in the barb wire if anyone wanted to swim, and they opened the gate and they let you in and that stayed open
- 11:00 during the daylight hours I think. But it was only room with, say twenty feet of it, and then that went back in place of a night for sure. But it was from there in it was, no describing it any other way other than an army encampment, from oh.....pretty well from Ashburner Street in Manly right around. And I didn't
- 11:30 spend a lot of time on the other side but I would have thought they'd probably, I don't now whether they cut off Little Manly. See inside the Heads there's some non-surf beaches, I don't know whether they said, "We'll we've got the Heads covered" and I don't recall seeing stuff over on the Harbour side. But we became friendly with these young soldiers, I don't know whether they were conscripts or old diggers
- 12:00 or what. But as I say occasionally Mum would, if she had a big feed on she'd give some to the young blokes at the machine gun nests. And they weren't fooling because they'd have a little test fire now and then to make sure it wasn't jammed, and it would give you the jumps a bit.

So immediately near your residence in Fairy Bower what sort of facilities were there, what

12:30 defences?

Oh there were tank traps right under our window, right across Fairy Bower Beach, and I'm not sure which year this came in 42 or, it was when the Japs started to really make progress they put a boom net right across Shelley Beach. Now it's a terrible thing to say but there wouldn't be one or two of us alive that remember that being there. And it was like the

- 13:00 same sort of construction as the Sydney Harbour one except only much smaller thing. But steel cable and horses running right across Shelley Beach, there was no way you could block Fairy Bower Beach off so it copped the tank traps. And there is one there to this day, right below where our window used to be, but as I say the whole beach has gone now, it's about twenty foot down, and
- 13:30 there's evidence that the beach was up level with the bottom of the sea wall in those days. There's about three feet or four feet of the top of the tank trap being jack hammered off, what they'd done is taken it down below the level of the sand because they couldn't get it out again. And it's, there's still one there right to this day.

Can you describe how those tank traps were built and constructed?

Oh well they were pyramids of solid concrete, pyramids of

- 14:00 solid concrete and there must have been oh Fairy Bower Beach thirty of them, you know right along the beach, not enough space for anything to get between them, what I would imagine a tank the space they'd take up. And they weren't, I think they were set hard up,
- 14:30 I'm just trying to remember if they were set hard up against the little sea wall or a bit away from it, no I think they were set up hard against the little sea wall which is about three foot high. And then on top of the sea wall itself there was rolls of barb wire, you know taking it up another few feet higher. But there were, oh let me think, probably one.....
- 15:00 two, three, there were three probably machine gun posts. There was one back at the start of the Promenade and there was all rolled barb wire around, because the Promenade walk around the front of the surf club in those days overhung the beach, it was about ten feet up above the beach. So it only had barb wire on it, round through past where the shark tower
- 15:30 used to be. But on the point, a little point where you turned to corner to go south round the Promenade there used to be a pumping station, cause there was a hot salt water baths years ago at the back of the surf club. That was taken over and that was a gun emplacement, there was another one, the one just near our place and there was another one, yeh I think there might have been three or four machine gun posts.
- 16:00 Then there was the anti-aircraft guns which were mostly based on Bluefish Point itself, they were mostly based there and there were heavy guns in pill boxes, obviously pointing out sea. I don't know what the numbers of men were there and I can't, this is a funny thing, why it would come to mind I don't know.
- 16:30 The, I can remember, can't remember seeing any toilets, or as we call them porta loo's these days, for all these blokes. No whether they were, they weren't intense on Fairy Bower Beach because they've got a big sea it got washed away anyhow. They certainly weren't camped in the surf club after 1943

- 17:00 but I do remember trucks spewing hundreds of blokes out of the back. And my guess is, and this can be they were either camped at the back of Shelley Beach which was all bush, a lot more bushy than it is now, and they were camped on the Headland manning the guns from there. And they came around to man the machine guns because there was no doubt they were there night and day. Or whether they were sleeping at North Head Barracks and trucking them
- 17:30 down at the change of watch, I can't tell you that but it was certainly crawling with soldiers and guns.
- You said that you couldn't see any toilet facilities there, did all this increased presence make a mess of the area?**
- Only all the barb wire and tank traps and stuff like that.
- 18:00 And they were there to protect us so I didn't think of it as a mess.
- How much did all these defences impede your leisure activities on the beaches?**
- Oh fairly heavily because you had the gate to get through to have a swim at the surf club. We still had the rock pool we could get to. The main thing is, because I didn't have nearly as much leisure time because travel time
- 18:30 had actually increased to get to and from Sydney High School.
- How much do you reckon that boom added onto the journey?**
- Oh anything from five minutes to an hour, depending on whether there'd been a scare, there'd only have to be the slight noise they'd pick up on that sonar or whatever they had and you'd sometimes we sat there for half an hour. Oh and we were getting the blackout to, no lights, they just had running lights for the ferry, she'd go bong and all your lights would go on. And we were living in total blackout around there,
- 19:00 lights out of a night, you show and light and you had someone running up saying, "Hey put that bloody light out". So we were virtually in a blackout for a shortage period, it might have been a year, but at the height of it. So it impeded quite a bit
- 19:30 on easy access but we thought it was a huge adventure of course. And number, yeh the lady that lived below us was Mrs Harvey, she fell in the barbed wire, that caused some excitement, her daughter Benita incidentally used to run the kids hour on the ABC. But poor old Mrs Harvey fell in the wire one night and there
- 20:00 was a hell of a kerfuffle over that, because with no street lights and no lights and barb wire. And like when I got into the school football team we'd have to travel from Moore Park back out to Centennial Park, to McKay Oval for training. And then I'd be coming home and it would be well and truly in the winter this of course, cause it's football, well and truly in the night and you used to have to
- 20:30 hug the right hand side of the Promenade and take your line off the flowers, the border of the flowers because if you went close to the left hand side they had all these spikes sticking up with the barb wire attached to them. So you sort of hugged the right hand and you always cleared your throat and made sure you let them know who was coming because there were armed sentries.
- 21:00 **Mrs Harvey I take it got out of the barbed wire okay?**
- Yes, she got out of the barb wire, but that was the only one I remember ever having an accident with the barb wire.
- So it sounds like when you talk about blackouts and walking home in the dark, it did affect your lifestyle in some way all of this?**
- Oh entirely different, it was totally different, it really started to come home to roost then. And of course,
- 21:30 and I must of started to read papers or buy papers on the ferry or something because they started to publish casualty lists and, I remember seeing those. And of course when the Japs did penetrate Sydney Harbour, that's when it really hit the fan, everyone just bailed out of Fairy Bower. In retrospect I think that had it
- 22:00 got any worse they would have evacuated us and made us leave. It was down to about say ten families, I'm guessing, left in Fairy Bower, I think they'd of said, "Right oh you've got to go".
- What do you remember of the Jap attack on Sydney Harbour?**
- Bit of humour here, I remember the shelling again and oh of course that was another thing, bloody search lights,
- 22:30 search lights sweeping us, sweeping the beaches, not necessarily up in the sky. And that night of course the search lights and gun fire and all sorts of funny things happening. And the old man, one of his recreations he had a half size billiard table in the back room. So Mum my brother and I, the old man wasn't home he hadn't got home, this is at night,

23:00 and we, so we sat under the billiard table. I don't know if it would of saved us from anything, perhaps the roof falling in or something, so we were under the billiard table. And the, but then immediately after there was a huge out flux of people leaving Manly and the seaside and lot of people went to the country. Manly itself became half

23:30 empty, but Fairy Bower became nearly fully empty.

So that night what idea did you have of what was going on?

Well no one really knew until the next day, or a day or so later, but I'll tell you what it was a circus trying to get through the boom down across Sydney Harbour after that, it was a real circus. And cause we'd

24:00 on average would then get held up oh I'd say for twenty minutes anyhow because one of the Jap subs [submarines] had come in under the Manly ferry, so they were checking every ferry in and out. And travel time drifted out to two hours each way or something, it was really a ridiculous situation.

What could you hear on that night huddled under

24:30 **the pool table?**

Oh gun fire, plenty of gun fire and search lights and, I think we got first hand information off the blokes that were on the machine guns and the blokes down, I think we knew before anyone else. They were told what was going on, I suppose they'd have to alert them to be

25:00 on their toes. So I think we probably got fairly early information on what it was all about. And cause to me I was looking at a bloke who was on the machine gun, he was just four, five years older than me self, it wasn't as if I was looking at an old man or anything. And I suppose they could look at me as their little brother,

25:30 brother a couple of years younger than them or something.

What fears did you have on a night like that?

I don't recall, I don't recall being afraid, I'm sure I would but I don't, I suppose it's a bit like it's never going to happen to me,

26:00 till it's happening and you've had a hell of a fright. You know the first time a bloke fired a gun at you you'd wake up. Actually life had become more idyllic because we had the place to ourselves. But you had then, for the old man to fish a pass to be able to go over onto the rocks to fish and everything. Then there was written passes, you know to get in and out. I don't recall having

26:30 one but I know the old man had to have one cause he always came home at night. I don't ever remember having a pass but I think, but I used to identify myself as I got near them, to the sentries I'd say, "One of the Windshuttle's here". Then you'd go up and have a yarn with the bloke and be allowed down, through.

The day after the attack you mentioned

27:00 **as Manly boys you guy's were a bit of a curiosity at Sydney Boy's High, did they have lots of questions for you boys, the other students?**

Oh they all wanted to know what went on down our neck of the woods, cause a lot of them as I said came from the Eastern Suburbs. So they'd had shells sailing over them, I was anxious to find out what happened to them as much as they were anxious to find out what happened to us.

Must have been a big debriefing at school that day with the boys?

A lot of gossip

27:30 and a lot exchange of news on that day yeh definitely I remember that, we were all, "Where were you?" and we were that sort of thing went on, very much so.

I'm sure that some of the fellows had fought the Japs off single handily?

Yeh I don't recall, we were all excited rather than afraid, as I recall.

As kids at that stage of the war when you thought

28:00 **about the Japs what images did you have, what beliefs did you have?**

Now I don't know whether this comes from a year or two later or at that time. But I know I came to a realisation soon after, if not then, that I regarded them as barbarians,

28:30 and I'm not sure that I didn't hear stories from the blokes in the surf club, a year or so later, or whether propaganda was pretty rife and it was laid on pretty heavy from outside as well. So I'm not sure that I picked it up there or picked it up a year or so later, which I knew was fair dinkum then cause I saw the proof of it,

29:00 first hand from club mates in the surf club.

So you didn't have a high opinion of the Japs?

No but strangely enough at the same time I didn't have a high opinion of the Yanks either, you should of heard what the Aussies were saying about them to. Nothing like what they said about the Japs but you know pinching their sheilas. I can remember what the name for Circular Quay was

29:30 to this day, they Yanks they called it Circular Quay, I can remember a lot of the sayings. These blokes became my mentors and they'd say "Septic Tanks" for Yanks and Circular Quay and they were taking them off and giggling them of course, cause they didn't have a deener [a shilling] in their pocket and the Yanks had good money.

What do you recall of the American presence in the Harbour, once the Japs got involved in the war?

30:00 Oh it was, and they were everywhere and still, the ferries were still running to Manly on a restricted basis, so you started to see Yank sailors and soldiers and they were always beautifully dressed. I remember their uniforms were a million percent better than ours in terms of appearance. And just the, Manly was

30:30 a favourite sort of break out for a weekend or a day out, so there was a mile of serviceman in and through Manly, as in Sydney.

What about, obviously you had a pretty birds-eye view of the Harbour there, what

31:00 **sort of shipping activity could you notice in the Harbour?**

I can't tell you, loose lips sink ships. I can remember this slogan, no there was miles of war ships in the Harbour of course and the, that was one of the sayings plastered all over the ferries, 'Loose lips sink ships'. Cause we lived in Manly and we knew where all the ships were and what ships were in and what ships were out,

31:30 and we were warned about talking about anything. That's why there's no photographs of those days, they'd run you in for taking a photograph in any of the fortified areas, especially where I lived. So, but we were very heavily warned, and at school to about not talking about what's to be, think before we spoke about

32:00 what was in the Harbour, what was not in the Harbour, where we might of seen something. We were very, constantly reminded not to talk about it.

And did you take those warnings seriously?

Very seriously, very seriously.

Manly being a kind of a holiday or picnic area for Sydney people, were there a lot of serviceman from Australia and America?

32:30 Yeh a lot of people came to Manly for the day out. You probably need to be reminded there weren't no petrol, there was not too many cars on the road because there was severe rationing, public transport was very limited, and I'll deal with this later in the surf club days to, so that you had about three options. You could catch the train to Cronulla, the tram

33:00 to Bondi or the ferry to Manly. And never mind about the Northern Beaches, no one got past Manly because of the restricted transport. So because of this, this is where the concentrations were, of people trying to get a bit of recreation and pleasure. That's what caused it, the limited availability of transport.

So was it crowded along the Manly

33:30 **strip there?**

Yeh during the war year's yes, you couldn't get down to the beach for a swim or anything, although there weren't that many swimmers until the tide change a bit, a little bit later on in the war. But there was a lot of people just came over you know, there weren't the takeaways there is in Manly now, but seemed to come for picnics and everything.

Yeh well that brings me to a question

34:00 **in those days along the Corso there of Manly, what sort of shops and business were there that catered for business?**

If you can picture a country town ten years ago, you'd see Manly. On the, what do they call it, the eastern side I can practically name them up the Corso. And the biggest store in Manly was William Cooper and Sons

34:30 where my wife worked in the corsetry department, and it was like the big old country store, not groceries, not anything else it was clothing. Bennett's Clothing Store was there, there was Nucklerace,

the grocers with the sawdust all over the floor and the big sides of bacon hanging up, which they'd cut it off and put it on the old thing.

35:00 It was a typical country town by the seaside, that was Manly in those days and what a lovely place.

And what about pubs or places to eat, that sort of thing?

Well since they sort of didn't interest me in those days I really can't say, but I think all the pubs were there, the Hotel Manly. I don't think the Ivanhoe had been

35:30 built, I knew them all later. And the Brighton and the Steyne, there were about four or five pubs in Manly, again typical country town by the sea.

And what about things like amusements and so forth for visitors?

Well there was the amusement pier and as you can see these photos on the wall here, that Manly pool was there then,

36:00 so you could swim there freely, and big slippery dips and all sorts of things there. But the amusement pier had a Ferris wheel on it and these sorts of things. And I'm not sure they operated during wartime, I'm just trying to think now. There was so much austerity introduced because they all needed fuel to run, they wouldn't have been allowed to run, the Ferris wheel or the dodgem cars or those sort of things. Although the dodgem cars ran on electricity I think.

36:30 So there would have been some sort of restriction there but there wasn't that much other than just the natural beauty of the place. The other thing that was there that would have been of interest to a foreign power was the gas works in Manly, there was a gas works at Little Manly and colliers used to pull into the wharf there and discharge coal for the gas works. Where they were making gas, you know the big gas balls and

37:00 gasometers that they store it in, there was one there that would have been a prime target there to. And another one the gas ball at Manly West probably, there was another one there had a big gas ball, didn't have a gas maker, but it must have been part of the gas system to distribute it. No there wasn't that much entertainment other than the beauty of picnics

37:30 and, I think soft drink was still plentiful. And I'm just trying to think, no there wasn't a lot of, I don't think people really were looking for that in those days.

When I was a kid a treat in an outing to Manly was fish and chips and an ice cream, was that sort of thing available then?

Not so much, I think there was still a big

38:00 seafood place in Manly Wharf, it's been there for a hundred years, it used to be called Scot's. Not as much, well nothing like it, about five percent of what is there now. It was a, no I think a bottle of soft drink and carry your own picnic lunch was more the style then.

What sort of things would people take for a picnic

38:30 **in those days?**

Oh usually sandwiches and that sort of gear and remember seeing the paper plates and the soft drink. Because before I started at Sydney I was one of the bottle collectors, cause they all had a refund thing on them.

And in those days were all those bloody awful flocks of scavenging seagulls around?

Yes and they were worse, they were more

39:00 dangerous then than they are now. A lot of people think a silver seagull looks beautiful, there was a little sewer as I said at Manly, for a bloke that's fished off the rocks and fished near those sewers you wouldn't let a silver seagull near your sandwich or a bit of food. When I see them hand feeding them there I think oh here goes a dose of hepatitis or something if their not careful. They are a very, very, well they're a scavenger and so a lot of people

39:30 don't realise, they look pretty but they should be keeping them at arms length.

What would people wear to go swimming in those days as far as costumes?

Well I can remember what I wore with Jackie Govers, a woollen full length costume that used to, had a skirt on it and used to chaff like crazy when you got a bit of sand in it. They were much more

40:00 demure, I'll put it that way. But strangely around at the swimming club, and I think this is still in war years, yeh cause I lost interest in the swimming club about 44, 45, they had these cotton racing Speedos. And the poor girls, never mind a wet t-shirt contest they hid nothing,

40:30 and the girls used to have to wear these Speedos. I think a lot of them used to wear a towel around their waist until they got on the starting blocks, they revealed everything. And a lot of the, you'll still see in

the old photos, blokes used to wear V's under them or C's sometimes, not on the outside that had all gone by years before, a lot of blokes used to wear a pair of V's under them, because the old Speedo cotton costume, there was

41:00 nothing hidden.

Good on you...

Tape 5

00:32 **So just start off, yeh you were going to tell us about war bonds?**

Yeh why it comes to mind it was one of my best memories and best sort of, well I thought at the time achievements. They had war bond rallies and it was still in the days when swimming was a bit of a spectator

01:00 sport. And they had a war bond rally at Manly baths, and they had all of the hot-shot swimmers of the day and I was in a team, I'll never forget with Robin Biddulph who was the current Australian champion and Noel Ryan who was the, had been to the Olympics and everything, and I was the brat in the team. And I'll never forget Robin Biddulph who was about twenty stone,

01:30 the starting blocks on one end of Manly baths, or were the old Manly Baths, but the other end was a high deck. So the one starting at the other end of the fifty five yards, not fifty metres in those days, had to dive from the top. And I had to follow Biddulph, stepped up and he dived in and he sprayed the lot of us with his twenty stone as he hit the water. But I had a little pennant for years and I don't know where it got to, oh dear I'd have loved to have kept it, had a lot

02:00 of, quite famous swimming names on it.

So there was a decent crowd there?

Ah, in the thousands, big war bond rally and this sort of thing.

Can you explain how the war bond rally worked?

Well they had a, it was a carnival, it was pretty heavily advertised. But I think it was a bit like government bonds these

02:30 days, they carried interest and they matured and they wanted people to buy them cause they needed money. And I don't think it went directly to serviceman or anything like that, I think it was, I'm not sure. I, the reason why like it comes to mind my very first job was in, which was January

03:00 46, just after the war was as a customs shipping clerk, a junior at a shipping company, H.C. Sleight it was. But I recall, never mind worrying about balance of payments because there was no money in the country and I used to have to lodge the import licence applications, cause they were importing petroleum for Golden Fleece Oil. And their allocation or,

03:30 allocation of dollars I guess was based on a percentage of the last five years of imports prior to the war, or something. There was some formula which was used. So presumably they were trying to raise money for the government, that's the only thing I can put it to, I don't think it was sort of a donation to service personnel at all.

And were they quite common

04:00 **the rallies, the war bond rallies?**

They weren't common but they were usually pretty big events. But this one was definitely a clear cut war bond rally, I remember that very well.

They could take the form of sporting events and also entertainment days?

They could of yes, yeh now you mention it I think they did as well.

Did you ever go to one of the entertainment days?

No that was in a theatre,

04:30 outdoors or nothing.

Was there much, was there many sort of, would you strike advertisements for war bond on bill posters or in newspapers, all that sort of thing?

Oh yes, yes definitely, and I think that was the main source of fund raising. Of course I had no money to invest, I can only

05:00 tell you what I saw, but that one particularly I remember as a war bond rally. And I think they had

people set up to sign people up.

Do you recall seeing much propaganda around the place, trying to get people signed up for the services. You know once again billboards or in newspapers or on the radio, or that sort of thing?

Oh there was plenty of billboards, there the main things I

05:30 saw, 'Your country needs you' and a bloke pointing his finger, those sorts of things they were quite common place.

Were they having an impact on you as a young bloke, were you thinking that you'd be over there involved if you were old enough?

Yes and I tried to join the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces [in Japan] at the end of the war, when I turned eighteen, which would have been 1948 and

06:00 of course you had to have your parent's consent, and the old man, I'm eighteen by this time and fixing up with all the girls and I was helping to coach the ladies' march-past team in Newtown and getting in enough trouble there. Cause the stories were filtering home from Japan about how accommodating the girls were over there and he said, "You're not going anywhere", so that was the end of that.

Why do you think you were interested in joining the Occupation Forces?

Well I felt as if,

06:30 and I still feel this way, as if I hadn't done enough. Cause I saw blokes that come back that were smashed up mentally and physically in the surf club, where they used to take their recreation and leave. And as they started to come back and oh blokes that were,

07:00 even physically they'd come out okay were. I remember we nicknamed, and it was a terrible name, Magoo, and a lot of them got stuck on the grog and never got on it again. A fellow named Bubble Stewart he became an alcoholic and he was a tremendous athlete before he went away. And the poor old Magoo he died, I think from too much booze, ultimately and probably indirectly some years later.

07:30 So it was just the feeling, Anzac Day or any ex-services day I go nowhere near, nowhere at all, and when I see all these young blokes playing two up at the bowling club, I could spew. I think "You blokes don't know what you are, what you are associating yourself with and you don't deserve to be here, as I don't deserve to be there."

08:00 So I feel fairly strongly about that, anything to do with Anzac Day or ex-serviceman, they were the blokes that made the sacrifices, I've earned no right at all to join in their activities.

So when did you, tell us again how you became to be involved in Manly Surf Club and when that took place?

08:30 Well I first joined the surf club in 1943, probably the winter of 1943 because as I said they took on, bought our whole football team. And they were appealing for members, in the schools as well, but not where I was in Sydney High School. The, because the surf club had been practically

09:00 denuded of every senior active member. Some of those records out there of, annual reports of surf clubs shows the membership dropped from two or three hundred down to seventy three. And these were blokes that either had a physical impairment or were in protected industries. Now there weren't that many in protected industries and when they whacked us kids, and we joined the surf club they whacked us through the drills

09:30 and the awards that fast our feet didn't hit the ground. And I read one record out of the surf club there where the probationary, as they called us, were not to swim in the belt on, and we had to wear white arm bands, that's absolute Cause I could swim a bit I was swimming in the belt when I was about fourteen or fifteen. The, so that's garbage, but that depended on

10:00 if you were a good swimmer they used you. And of course being at that age I wanted to be the lifesaving hero and all that sort of caper. So I was quite happy to jump in the belt when I got the opportunity. But no they whacked us through out, at that time it was the qualifying certificate and as probationary and then you got your bronze medallion as you progressed, which I think it got in 1944,

10:30 maybe the next year or the year after, I forget now. But we were doing patrols oh gee, because we lived at Fairy Bower if they were short they'd come and get you. But we loved being there anyhow, shove a cap on our head and show off a bit, so we were doing patrols, oh I think every weekend virtually.

Had you taken an interest in surf clubs prior to

11:00 **the football team being approached, had you considered that as something you wanted to get involved in?**

Only longer term, of our family, the whole family became involved as a result of that, of joining at too young a age, as I said the old man wanted to keep an eye on my brother and I. And later my mother was

the president of the ladies committee, the whole family became embroiled.

What was the normal age that you would

11:30 join the surf club prior to the war?

Well you could join any time from about fourteen years on, but you were not to be active, even as a junior member until you were sixteen. By the time I was aged sixteen I'd pulled me first drowned victim out of the surf and finished up in the Coroner's Court up in The Rocks at sixteen. And again I had the heeby-geebies

12:00 for a while after, cause a bloke that's been on the grog all day and been in the ocean for a couple of hours ain't a pretty sight when you lay him out on the beach. So it was what needed to be done at the time. And if you were capable swimmer, as a matter of fact some of the older blokes on my patrol they'd say, "Here you do the swim for us will you?" When they weren't suppose to be saying that at all.

12:30 So you were thrown straight into the training quick smart?

Oh immediately.

Did you enjoy the training?

Loved every minute of it, loved every minute of it, not because I thought I was making any special war effort or anything, that didn't come into it. It was, oh I suppose showing off,

13:00 been a bit of a lair and being in there early as a kid, you know.

So you went through with your football team, were there any other young blokes coming through training at the same time with you?

Oh yes.

How many do you reckon were going through with you?

I think out of a rugby union team of about fifteen there was probably about eighteen players had been, there'd have been a dozen of us went through at that time. And they were whacking them through in droves, you know kids to try and fill the gaps.

13:30 And it wasn't until about 1944, the first blokes might have been discharged, but during those years they started to come home wounded and crook and that sort of thing, that's when I sheeted home.

So did you start doing patrols before you finished your intermediate or after you'd finished it?

No 44 I started doing patrols, but then you did them as a probationary,

14:00 but I just said it was below about swimming in the belt, cause I was regarded as one of the gun swimmers of the kids. And so, even if you didn't use a belt you could pull someone out of a hole or make a contribution.

So how many blokes would you be doing a patrol with typically?

In the, it was a matter of how many were available

14:30 early on, but toward the end of the war when things improved and the pressure came off, people everywhere were sort of looking for recreation and relief and that's when it started to get to the stage, because of the limited transport, you recall me saying Cronulla by train, Bondi by tram or Manly by ferry, crowds started to get up and up. And they

15:00 were massive, we might have thirty thousand on the beach, well six people can't look after thirty thousand people. And that wasn't, that's not an exaggeration, say 1946 thirty thousand people was quite common. And so then the patrols then swelled to the size of, anything up to fifteen and by then there was a patrol captain and a number two, I'm now getting to the stage where I'm seventeen, eighteen and I was say 2IC [second in command] to an ex-serviceman who was the patrol captain.

15:30 And you would look after one end of the beach, you couldn't put two flags close together and expect people to be climb over one another's shoulders. So the area might run, oh twice as big as what they put out now, two or three times cause there's more people spread, probably more people going to the surf but their spread over twenty six beaches from Manly to Palm Beach. But

16:00 they were all on Manly Beach and it was a sort of a rude saying we used to have, but you could tell when a ferry come in, they'd say, "Here's another five hundred of the great unwashed". But that was only, not meant to be a rude saying. And there'd be a rip say in the middle of those people, well then you'd put a couple of blokes there and you'd virtually split the crowd in two. And there's all sort of techniques they used in those days

16:30 that should be effective today, and this is one of the things, if they set me off I start to hammer with, the surf blokes is a rescue preventive. And that is preventative lifesaving versus recover lifesaving. Now these days they can blow up your nostrils, roll your eyeballs and bring you back to life, but why let the

bloke get into trouble in the first place. So it was beach management

17:00 and I learnt that from some real good old hands, and beach management was the key to success, cause we didn't lose any people.

In the early days when you started patrolling and the war was obviously in full effect, give us an idea of how many blokes would be involved in a patrol then and how many, say it was, what would a big day on the beach, how many people would you expect on a good

17:30 **weekend in the middle of the war?**

Oh in the middle of the war no you'd drop back...oh if I had to pluck a figure out of the air say five thousand or something like that. No one was moving around too much at all, no you wouldn't have that many there. It was towards the tail end of the war and immediately after that we used to get swamped.

With the smaller group and when you were just starting

18:00 **how many blokes typically on patrol do you reckon?**

Probably eight, that's as many as you could get together, cause in those days, and that's another thing they don't do these days. The patrol started at 6am or six thirty in the morning and then there was an overlapping half hour in the middle of the day, you were suppose to go to twelve thirty but you went to one. So you were rostered to one o'clock from about half past six to one o'clock, but the other

18:30 patrol was rostered by half past twelve to 6pm. So you had a half hour overlap so there was always someone there. These days they start at about nine o'clock in the morning and go and knock off at five, she's a nine-to-five job, and lifeguards are generally in charge of the beaches. Where in those days.....were there any lifeguards, there were at the tail end of the war and immediately after the war cause all the ex-serviceman

19:00 were lined up to take the job as a beach inspector. They weren't called lifeguards then they were called beach inspectors. And so it went from about eight but then it was nearly double that number when the blokes came available towards the end of the war and we had thirty thousand on the beach.

Since techniques to save people, procedures have changed these days you've been talking about you being the one in the belt, it's probably a good time

19:30 **just to sort of go through the whole procedure as it was then when you were saving someone, the use of the belt and the reel and how many blokes were involved and how you'd go about bringing someone in?**

Yeh generally speaking if someone really got into trouble badly you'd probably send a bloke without the belt to hold them up first. And then the beltman would

20:00 swim the belt out to them, you could always pull two people back, one hanging on the feet of the beltman and one holding the patient. The first linesman was the most important man of the lot, because if he pulled you under waves or you didn't signal to something, they were dangerous bloody things. Oh gee in retrospect they were dangerous bloody things.

So to the uninitiated your belt was attached to this rope?

20:30 Yeh.

That went to a reel on the beach?

Yeh, yeh one of the carnival events in those days was what they called the alarm reel. And that was virtually a belt race and blokes faced back to the water and stood about six paces in front of the reel, they'd fire a gun and you ran up and grabbed the reel ran the reel down towards the waters edge. And the patient

21:00 he went on ahead and they had a surf boat sitting behind the boys and he would raise the colour of the bloke, oh first of all the patient would raise his arm. So then the beltman would go and then the boat behind the boys would give the result of who finished first. Then they retrieved that bloke, but that was separate from what they called R&R which was 'Rescue and Resuscitation', which was also based on precise drill,

21:30 drilling. That's marching on and marching off and a resuscitation. But the resuscitation names went through from Holger-Nelson [a manual resuscitation technique], which was based on expelling water from a person, it went to the 'eve rocker' which was a see-saw. If you can imagine a teeter, a triangular centre piece and a stretcher

22:00 across it, with two chocks to hold it in place, you strap the patient onto you and you went up and down with this eve rocker. It was all based on expelling water. Then from that they went from the eve rocker to...I think they went back to Holger-Nelson and I think that sort of hung on there for some time. And it wasn't until relative recent times

22:30 that they realised what they've got to do to get the heart beating again, the water will come out

naturally. But, and in any case if you lay a person down hill, the main thing is to first of all clear their mouth, make sure they haven't swallowed their tongue, there's no seaweed or any gear in there, that's the first thing you do and you go from there. But the patrol itself was a,

- 23:00 generally speaking you placed blokes, cause I was a number two on a patrol at a very young age, you place blokes and then to keep them interested you'd rotate them. You'd shift a bloke that might have been on the southern flag and bring him back, cause they had these low platforms, they were like a Chinese carry chair, but about six or eight foot high, and this
- 23:30 especially applied when the crowds started to get really thick and up 45, 46. So there was a bloke sitting up in the middle of the beach but raised about, they had just like a ladder thing you climbed up, six or eight feet above the heads of the crowd. The crowds got that thick that you couldn't find a reel, so they had markers, they were poles with a circular disc on the top painted in red and yellow dug into the sand beside the reel. Cause if you went looking for
- 24:00 a reel there's bodies everywhere, and all these sorts of things of being completely superseded now. But it was all very interesting.

Well lets go back to a typical rescued, you were explaining that you'd go out in the belt after the first bloke went out just to make initial contact with the person in distress?

Yep.

You mentioned the first linesman being a crucial person

- 24:30 **at that stage when it came to bringing you in with the rope. How many other linesman were involved and who else was involved as far as attending the reel and that sort of thing?**

Well there was no showy drill involved, that was the first thing. One of the other things that happened all the time, and any old beltman will tell you this, there's this, never a straight line between the first linesman and the patient with the belt. You've always got a sideway sweep so you finished up with

- 25:00 a belly in your line and you felt you were being, it was trying to stand you up cause it sank. And it would have a dirty belly in the line and you were wanting to go over there and it's trying to pulling you that way. It was the hardest yakka, and the way you used to train to swim in the belt is half fill a four gallon drum go round to the big pool at Manly and tow it up and down, tow a drum behind yourself, that was how you learnt to swim. But where it was so vital, there were
- 25:30 two blokes, both lifesavers, both drowned at carnivals in full sight of the whole of the lifesaving, the cream of the lifesaving group. One at North Cronulla, bloke I knew very, very well, I was at school with his brother, and it was in school time to, so either just after the war. He was Sid Perryman and John his brother I went to school with and his father was the bank manager at
- 26:00 Cronulla and he got drowned at Cronulla. This is where this first lineman bit comes in. And the other fellow was a boy named Fletcher, he was in Freshwater Surf Club and he got drowned at either Collaroy or Dee Why. But in both cases their beaches were an offshore bombora, get a huge sea and you get the bull kelp comes in, bull kelp gets over the line and as their pulling back it comes down the, straight down the line and they finished up with a hundred weight of bull kelp behind your back.
- 26:30 And if that first linesman is not awake, the blokes still got to be able to get, stay adrift and get up again, if you loose sight of that beltman you don't keep pulling. But these blokes were drowned in the belt, and it was then that they got an overlap belt with a pin through it so you could let it go, and I've had first hand experience at pulling that pin. But as I say dangerous bloody things, they've been superseded
- 27:00 and they've got beaut rescue boards with hand holds all around and everything now.

So in a bare minimum situation and your bringing someone in, you'd just have one lineman, or a couple of lineman?

It wouldn't matter, if there was only one lineman, if you had eight patrol blokes you had four at one end and four, four was usually the minimum cause you had a bloke that sort of held the patient up, bloke on the belt, bloke on the line and a bloke on the reel paying you out.

- 27:30 And that was enough cause there was no drill involved, it wouldn't matter if you paid it over your head or threw it out, the main thing was to, as far as possible minimise the amount of drag that the belt bloke had to pull from slack and bellows in the belt, in the line.

So you'd get the patient to shore?

Yep.

And what was the procedure from there?

- 28:00 If they were walking and everything was okay it was, "See you later, thanks dear, ta ta", and that happened most of the time. I mean see you didn't let people get to the stage where they were drowning if you could avoid it. And the way that I got involved with the bloke that got drowned was we were finishing the patrol and it was about six o'clock, knock off time. One of the jobs you had to do, especially

if it was a Saturday night, and I'm darn near sure it was a Saturday night, is you

- 28:30 hosed the surf club out and cleaned it up for the next oncoming club members, for the next day. A fellow named Gordon Davis and myself were cleaning up and this little English bloke, he was off one of the 'Strath' boats, there was a team of boats called 'Strath' something [P&O's five O-class liners with 'Strath' names, that joined the Orient line between 1931 and 1938]. And they'd had a big afternoon on the beer up at the Pacific Hotel, the old Pacific Hotel, directly opposite that they think,
- 29:00 and jumped over, gone down on the beach and gone for a swim and one bloke lost sight of his mate, it wasn't a big sea or anything. Anyhow this bloke's turned up at the surf club and said, "Hey lad I can't find me mate". So we got, we had a double ski and we got the double ski out and paddled along the beach to about where the pipes are at Manly Beach now and saw him on the bottom. And I looked at Gordon and he said, "Well you're the swimmer".
- 29:30 So I got him up, I was only, I mightn't of turned sixteen, yeh I would have had to have turned, it must have been 1946 because I'd only just started at HSC and then in those days the old Pacific they had resident guests. It was the old waiter in the lounge always had a bow tie and a cumber bun on, the old style
- 30:00 and one of them was the captain of the Queen Mary, Bisset [Sir James Bisset], he stayed there and one of the other fellows was Dr Dunn, who was a prominent doctor in Manly. So he came over on the beach and pronounced him dead, we worked on him but all we were doing was pumping up beer and salt water. Anyhow I was required to go to the Coroners Court in George Street North, which is now 'The Rocks'. And I had the wind up because I had to take a day off work
- 30:30 but there was a certain amount of heroics attached to it and all that bullshit. So work paid me and I nearly fainted on the way out the bloke said, "Here's your witnesses expenses", I got a few quid for witness expenses. I thought I'll go looking for the Pommy sailors in future. But no there was another bloke drowned later on right down on the beach. But one of the main things
- 31:00 we had to we used to have the casualty room manned all the time, because there were still spikes from barb wire during and immediately after the war, that had been buried by incoming sand etc and people run either into the barb wire on a little wave, high tide or being opened up with one of these spikes, one of the stakes left there.

So during the war did

- 31:30 **you often have to actually resuscitation anyone or was it normally just bringing them in and they were okay?**

Rarely if ever did we have to resuscitation people cause it had been drummed into us, see they had us as kids and they got it right, they said, "Don't wait". You'll see blokes, don't try to be a hero so that you can run out with the belt and save someone when their half drowning. If you've got beach management, we had whistles and some of the techniques we'd use would,

- 32:00 they wouldn't use today I don't think because there's one or two or three life guards and the patrols are pretty easy. But if we were in a situation and we had a lot of people we might stand a bloke out in the water, say there's a sandbank and channel in between, but there was a sideways sweep, we'd stand a bloke on the sandbank with a belt on so that there was a line there. And as people got tripped down they'd feel the rope, bingo they got either pull themselves in, but they'd know to go back. But of course you've got people with
- 32:30 whistles whistling saying, "Get back between the flags". So I repeat prevention, preventative lifesaving versus recovery lifesaving, beach management is one of the skills that I think that's suffered, I see it here, I see it on any beach on any day. A simple thing that would bring it home to people, high tide,
- 33:00 so the flags are set say twenty feet back from the water line, low tide that water lines gone down thirty yards, shift the flags down. And you'll see them now they'll set the flag and they'll be there for the day, bring the flags down. So you review your beach situation as it happens, but that was basic, what I just said there was basic common sense, but there the sort of things that were drummed into us.

- 33:30 **During the war were you getting many foreigners getting down to the beach and were they a bit of a hazard?**

I don't think I ever struck one, that wasn't, most of the incoming people that might of come were English. If there were refugees I think they were mostly English, the ones that I ran into.

- 34:00 **You didn't get Americans down on the beach not really knowing what to do?**

No I don't think I do, I don't remember that happening, no I don't remember that at all much. No.

So what sort of blokes would be leading the patrols during the war?

Well they were quite often, they were always older blokes of course. And I have to say, cause this is

- 34:30 probably a bit of big headiness on my part, but because they weren't good swimmers in many cases, cause they were blokes that were in protected industry, and I think they extended, to join the surf club

you had to be able to swim a quarter of a mile, four hundred and forty yards in eight minutes I think it was and I think they extended it to nine or something. They eased up on the requirement to join and because these blokes

35:00 weren't hot swimmers and some of them used me, and I loved it to jump in that belt and be a lair. I didn't always have a great deal of respect for them, come forward a year or so and blokes come home who had been beaten and belted and you know a bloke so bright yellow with Atebrin [an anti-malarial tablet given to soldiers in New Guinea, turned the skin yellow], really shocked me.

35:30 And blokes that had been wounded and stuff like that, and quite often they wanted to resume their life in the surf club. And I might have had one of these blokes, I can remember one bloke, oh he'd be gone now, but his name was Jack Abbott, and coming on patrol on a Sunday morning I thought, 'Whoo I can smell a brewery'. But Jack knew his onions and I respected him and

36:00 our boat captain was a captain in the army and he knew about beach management and he knew about discipline and I listened, cause I'd get a beating behind if I didn't.

So what was the,

36:30 **how were lifesavers perceived back in the days when you joined, by the public?**

I think it was a, not a mysterious organisation but an organisation that was fairly selective and you were highly regarded. Generally speaking we were highly regarded.

37:00 That was the case, it was tarnished a little bit by some of the blokes, and I have to say this even though its about ex-serviceman, it tarnished a little bit by the blokes coming back and making whoopee a bit to much. And this affecting the public, you know they would have to see blokes have an all-nighter at the surf club dance and then sort of still be there in the morning and that sort of thing.

37:30 But that very quickly died down, as blokes settled down again, they were just trying to play catch ups. But generally speaking, you didn't just walk into a surf club, it was made fairly easy during war time, but you had to comply to all of the rules, but then we were well respected. People

38:00 did what you told them to, you know if you blew a whistle and said, "Shift", they shifted. And these days they give you one finger salute. No generally people were very respectful of the surf movement.

And there was something heroic about being a lifesaving, as you were alluding to earlier particularly as a young bloke?

Well I thought there was

38:30 I had my head in the clouds.

Did the girls like lifesavers?

Oh yeh.

Did that pay off for you?

Yes I got myself in enough strife to say yeh.

When did you discover girls?

Oh well the first time I discovered them was when I was going to Sydney High School. I got a crush on a girl, all the Fort Street High School

39:00 girls used to travel on the ferry, there weren't many Sydney High School girls, only two or three of them, they wore a brown uniform. But I had a crush on a girl that went to Fort Street, oh 1944 so I had to be what...fourteen or fifteen. But then we didn't mix much socially and I wasn't a social organiser, I wasn't allowed to go to the movies and that sort of thing

39:30 still. So it wasn't until I joined the surf club and there were surf club dances and once you started to, once I joined the junior R&R and be in the competitive group and a bit of football and that sort of thing, there was always girls, seemed to be there.

So it sounds like you felt pretty good about being a part of the surf club, did that feel like a niche for you?

I would have to say yeh,

40:00 yeh all my friends were there, I didn't have a friend outside the surf club. I didn't have that many mates at school because we were sort of isolated a bit at Manly, cause there weren't that many Manly boys there. The only blokes we had were this John Perryman I spoke about at Cronulla and a fellow named Ron Pickering who came from Bondi, I'm at Manly and we used to on school holidays all go to one another's place and spend

40:30 at night at one another's place or a day or something. But outside of that once I joined the surf club in 1943 that was where all my mates were.

Tape 6

00:31 **Dick lets talk about the sort of competitive edge of lifesaving, what sort of role did carnivals play in your early years in the surf club?**

Well they were every Saturday, starting the, every Saturday was in the summer was a carnival. They were suspended, no

01:00 they kept going, they kept going and at 1944 I think they started again. And it was on the back of a truck, which was a dangerous thing to do, on the back of a truck, by this time my father had joined, transport, who provided the truck, free driver, Dad drove the truck. And you whack the surf boat up on the back and the blokes would

01:30 stand around the edge of the surf boat, hang onto the surf boat, the truck had sides in it roped in, and they wouldn't let you do it these days of course. And away you'd go to the surf carnival. And they, I hadn't started to have a beer or anything at that stage so, but a lot of the blokes make it a bit of a carnival atmosphere after. I recall, if you want to hear a funny story,

02:00 and this is, you know how flash the Manly Pacific Hotel is now, what'd they call it, the Novotel or Holiday Magic or some nonsense. Well it used to be the big old pub, as I said there were a couple of old residents there. And a fellow named Leo Crumb who later became president of the surf club at Manly, and myself and there used to be a three way carnival, Queenscliff, North Steyne and Manly. And a lot of funny episodes

02:30 but this is one of the funniest I thought. And we decided we'd walk up, he said, "There's much hanging to it" cause it wasn't a big point score carnival or anything, it was one of the social sort of gatherings, he said, "We'll carry the reel along". So we got the reel him and I and we're carrying it along from Manly to Queenscliff. And I must of started to drink at this stage, I might have been about seventeen or something, and he said, "Do you feel like a beer?" he said, "There's nothing much there, don't worry about it". And he was much older than I

03:00 and I said, "Okay". So we got to go into the Pacific and there's a big glass panel as you walked into two big long bars and as we go in the few blokes that are in the bar there all down on the ground and reaching up for their beer from the ground level. And the next thing, whoop between our heads on the glass panel as we came inside, we left the reel on the footpath outside and it was a condom full of beer. This is how rough it was

03:30 the barmaids were all full and their filling them with beer and having a beer fight across the saloon bar at the Pacific. So it wasn't always as salubrious as it is now. So anyhow we carried on.

Would you ever go further a field than those three beaches around in your area?

Newcastle was a very big carnival, always had a big carnival, always anchored the pilot steamer off

04:00 and when did I join the boat crew, oh it was a couple of years after the war. But our captain was a captain in the army a fellow named Frank Davis and he made men out of us, us boys with his discipline and the amount of training that we did. And where else used to go.....oh in 1945 I think we, there's an award for services rendered

04:30 or whatever, they called it an instructional tour which went to Burleigh Heads [Queensland]. And my brother, myself and one other fellow named Don Riddington were the juniors in it and the seniors were very good. And we actually stayed in Burleigh Heads Surf Club, all the clubs up there had accommodation, they didn't have bars and poker machines like they've got now. And Bill McLean who would captain the Wallabies [Australian Rugby Union team]

05:00 to England in 38 or 39 had to come home again without playing a game, he was the captain at Burleigh Heads. Big Bill was our host and we stayed there and I think that's 1945, I'm sure it was, or 46 at the very latest because after that I became a senior anyhow. And the way it operated the blokes would go out for a day out and a drive, and

05:30 driving and they'd stop at some little pub and they were the days they put the wooden keg up on the bar, and us juniors. So I had my first beer with my father, my father was on the trip and we were allowed say two beers, all right you boys, f..... off and on your way. And that was out quota and they said, "Go and get lost". So we were looked after by senior blokes that had their heads on, screwed on right. So it was a real fraternity.

06:00 **And having had a fairly tight childhood as far as money goes these were all places you would never seen before?**

Oh never in a million years no. And one fellow on the trip, Laurie O'Toole had been captain, or a senior official at Ballina so on the way back we went back by bus. We came up by train, which was a circus in itself, to Brisbane and we had a civic reception in Brisbane Town Hall just quietly to, with the Lord

Mayor.

06:30 And these were the first of times when things were starting to get moving again and there was social movement accepting the surf clubs. And we got back to Ballina and oh course we were treated royally thanks to this Laurie O'Toole. And he was the bloke that had the tug-o-war with the fellow that was in the shark's mouth when he was a lifeguard. Oh what a wild man and

07:00 typical Irishman, a fireman.

So what sort of events would happen in carnivals of those days?

About half as many as they run today, but they still had a few novelty events like pillow fight and stuff like that. But there was surf races, belt races, R&R was the premier event, whoever one the senior R&R became the premier club for that year. Rescue and resuscitation,

07:30 which was built on drill and recovery, patient recovery.

Can you tell me how that event worked, like what were the steps?

Yeh well you run, it was very, very tightly controlled drill and there was six in a team and you marched on in height order. And a bloke came along, one of the SLSA [Surf Life Saving Association] officials and he had a little bag with numbers in, one was the

08:00 patient, two was the belt, three I think was the first linesman, yeh he was the first linesman, four I think was the reelman and five and six were the second and third linesman. And he'd hold up the bag and sometimes they fed them in, as they put the things in the bag for him to shake they come out six, five, four, three, two, one. Well I was a bit shorter than the other blokes, I'm invariably want to swim and they'd say, "Oh shit" pardon me, "I

08:30 hope I don't cop a swim today". And as sure as eggs you'd draw the one or the two which was the patient swim or the belt swim. You were then, you were spaced back about four paces behind the reel, you then took one pace forward in order of draw from the bag. So number one they called, this was all done to orders barked through a megaphone. One would step forward, and if he started at six he would take sideway paces, step into

09:00 the one position, two and so on down to six. And you were then in position to start and they'd stand you at ease, no they wouldn't that came next. They'd then say lay the belt and that was a drill in itself, the reelman would step out, the beltman would go out, he had to raise his arm at a right angle like that, take the belt, oh it was patients go.

09:30 That's right the patients swimming out by this time and he had to take about four or five paces down in front of the reel, step across, turn round, all done to drill, lay the belt and then resume his position. When the patient reached the buoy he'd raise his arm and you'd snap to attention and it turned into an alarm reel event then. Not so much to see who got there first, cause drill was important, when he reached the buoys he took the patient

10:00 and the line and we pulled him back in. Then had to turn the patient over as if he was dead and march up the beach, lay him down and the other blokes resumed their position, and number three, the first linesman was the resuscitator to. He took up position and applied the Holger-Nelson resuscitation for a period of time, and it had to be exactly to timing.

10:30 When they, it was all finished, after a period of time he would pull that patient to his feet and they'd march with drill back into the line and then they'd march off, and that was the R&R event. But that was the thing that carried the premier club for surf lifesaving in those days.

So what was it judged on?

Drill, mostly drill but if you happen to let that patient slip or

11:00 anything like that there was big marks off for patient handling, that was one of the big area where people used to lose a lot of points. And then the resuscitation itself had to be done just precisely, so it's a matter of finding the lower rib with your little fingers and you ran your hands over and follow the rib line and finish up just under the shoulder blades, all those sort of things. Thumbs had to be in line and oh, no there's heaps to it, too much to tell.

11:30 **It sounds like all these movements were quite sort of formalised in almost like a military sense?**

They were exactly, exactly, that's what it was it was.

So to be in the team for the club at this, how prestigious was it?

Oh it was the P, you hit the big time when you got in there. When I hit the juniors they shoved me in

12:00 the seniors cause they couldn't rustle up enough teams for R&R and they didn't have enough seniors to field an R&R and I was in the senior R&R when I was, had to be sixteen. And there were, I can remember the blokes, all the blokes, Sketier Blith, he was a half back for Randwick incidentally, and

Laurie O'Toole I mentioned, a fellow named Jackie Brickwater.

12:30 These blokes were all my peers, I looked up to blokes like Nambigen who was an absolute tremendous man in the surf, you know take waves ninety storey high sort of business, and Noel Ryan, these were all the blokes I admired not so much footballer or anyone else, but these were the blokes who were my heroes as a kid as I was growing up.

13:00 **And just can you roughly explain to us, is it the Holger-Nelson?**

Holger-Nelson.

What did that involve?

It was counting, doing pumping out fluid in five second cycles and I remember the drill, one and two and three and four and five. And that was from leaving your heels completing the pressure and

13:30 returning to the heels in five seconds.

So it was just trying to kind of press it out of the lungs?

Yes and the idea was to ingest air as they came off, and of course it wasn't very successful really.

Was the patient on his back or his face?

Oh face down, face down. The first thing they did when they laid the patient was to clear the mouth, there was a whole procedure to go through.

And what about the surf boat races, were they important?

14:00 Yeh loved the old surf boat, I in 1943 when I was at Sydney High School I bought a surfboard and it's nothing like the surfboards you know about today, it was solid wood, solid redwood board. With all of the records in history I've got about board riding and these current blokes have built it into a cult, they forgot the war years. And

14:30 there was a whole team of us boys had solid boards, solid wooden boards, oh there must have been ten or eight of us that had these boards. And one of them was a carpenter a fellow named Peter Moore, he was an apprentice carpenter, he was the first bloke that chiselled out a couple of slots put a fin on it. Because when you came down a wave they had a square tail on them, like if you drop a penny in water it zigzag's down, that's how you come down a wave so your feet are going like this coming down a wave, unless you set them

15:00 into a corner where you'd run at forty five degrees to the wave. And then you were edge on and you didn't zigzag then. Having done that, this development, that would probably be from pushing that solid board around for about two or three years, because as it went along, and I would never take it out of the water which was silly, it became more water logged, I'd finish up to push this board was a

15:30 real effort. And it really bugged up my swimming, up to that stage, I don't know it bugged a couple of my combined high school records and I was one of the gun swimmers in the juniors in the surf club. The, I know, I might as well tell you, there was only one GPS [Greater Public Schools] championship, they suspended all the, a lot of the carnivals and everything

16:00 and activity during war time but they had one carnival, Grammar School, Sydney Grammar ran a carnival at Manly baths and it was called the GPS carnival and they invited other schools, other GPS schools to compete. And I was the sole competitor, there was a special, it was the championship of the GPS, there was

16:30 one hundred and ten yard race. And I was excused from school to go and race in it and Jazz Killop was our headmaster, very, very fine man, he was an ace. And he took a hell of an interest in me and the swimming and everything, so there were two from Sydney High there versus bloody war cries going up from all these schools, and there's him and me. Anyhow Harry Hay was coaching the favourite, he was the local Olympic

17:00 coach and all that sort of thing of the day. But he also had a soft spot for Manly boys and the favourite we could see, it was a set up now the Grammar boys were the red hot favourite for the one hundred and ten yards. And Harry Hay came up to me and he said, "Go like the clappers the first fifty five and get home the best way you can" he said, "This bloke will drop his bundle if you get in front of him". He's coaching, the other blokes parents are paying Harry Hay to coach him. But Harry's giving me a bit

17:30 of a tip before we start, so that's what I did and I won that race. So the old headmaster he was, oh, because Sydney High was regarded as the poor cousin of all the GPS schools, cause the only one you don't have to pay to go for, other than thirty bob for books. And so the school assembly and all that followed. But the old surf board she put pay to my swimming abilities, I just developed and became

18:00 so muscular in the shoulders. So the bloke who was in charge of the surf boats had returned from the war, a fellow named Frank Davis, and he was a captain in the army, he said, "Look you're not going to make a fist of this R&R and swimming caper anymore" and strength was important cause the surf boat in those days was a life boat, when they said surf boat it was a surf boat, the ones these days are racing

shells. You wouldn't,

18:30 well they can be if there well, providing you've got your best crew in them, use them as a rescue thing. But the old lifeboat you could actually put four or five blokes in, everyone had to take a turn to know how to row anyhow. They, and we were in a mass rescue and we had twenty, thirty people all hanging on the edge of the surf boat, keeping them afloat, which is all you had to do. They had buoyancy tanks in the bow and the stern and they had a little reel with a belt in under

19:00 the bow seat. They were life boats, so he said to me, "You want to get into this rowing caper and everything". And it was, that was 1946 and we missed by a whisker and got a silver in the national title in 1947 in the junior boat. So from thereon I progressed and we finished up we won a national senior title a couple of years later.

So the boats in your day

19:30 **were still used to haul people out of the water?**

They were lifesaving equipment, it's a bit of a dummy run these days, the sponsors get their name on a surf boat, which is now televised in some of the top carnivals anyhow. But you see them skidding all over the ocean and doing sugar doodles and that sort of thing, these were stable they wouldn't sink, that was their claim to fame. And if you had a really well trained good crew you could

20:00 use them as a lifesaving tool and it wouldn't matter if you got into broken water and they sank. You could still keep people up, tell them to hang on and eventually if you, waves will wash you in, there not running out there running in. There's been a huge change in surf movement, surf lifesaving, really big changes.

I'd like to ask you a bit more about the social aspects of the club,

20:30 **particularly with those soldiers either on leave or coming home at the end of the war, what sort of things were going on?**

Yeh well they ran, used to run dances back at the surf club, and I was a bit young to get too involved at that stage, but some of the blokes, naturally were trying to catch up on two or three lost years. Our surf club loaned itself to

21:00 social life, cause there was a small ballroom. I think the first social event I went to and you booked a table, and you could book the casualty room or the gear room, there'd be a keg in the boat shed and everyone had their parties, and when the music started they'd come up from the boat shed and the gear room and the casualty room. And there were table set out around the edges, some of them were

21:30 pretty well organised, but some of the ex service blokes would go overboard and when the dance finished they were there the next morning sort of business. And being just tail end of the war and starting into it, I'm only sixteen or seventeen, but I knew a lot of the young pretty girls around the place. And at seventeen I was called up to play reserve grade I think in rugby union

22:00 and half the team was ex-serviceman, when I say ex-serviceman they might have been twenty one, they were only four years older than me, probably went away at eighteen or nineteen. So, and it's the old team thing, I was invited to join them for a drink and everything, which is where the old man joined to keep an eye on proceedings. But I also, I think,

22:30 I suspect that part of the attraction was that I knew most of the young sorts around the place at that time to.

Were you a bit of a pants man [ladies' man] Dick?

My missus, do I have to answer that on the grounds that I might incriminate myself. Mum will kill me but I'd guess I'd have to answer yes.

You did alright?

Yeh, there was one bloke named Mort Cancel and his nickname was Pants, he was the

23:00 champion and they reckon I was his apprentice.....oh we were on the social life.

Yeh so young ladies were definitely part of your surf club social experience?

Yeh well the, as the social life livened up we had to have dancing partners so girls used to come to the dances, that's where I met my wife in 1948. The, and

23:30 then there was a lady's march-past team in training, some of the clubs had ladies march-past teams. And there weren't, I don't remember seeing a bad sort amongst them.

Maybe you just didn't have a discriminating eye?

Well I don't know, they all looked pretty good to me, they look even better these days.

I take it there were no actual female lifesavers

24:00 **in those days?**

No, oh no no way.

In what ways, during the war years, what was would the club try to support it's men who were overseas?

Oh they, its in those club reports I've got out there everyone of them, and it might sound like a small amount of money, I think they got fifty cents or a, not fifty cents, five shillings or

24:30 and a food parcel, and a letter every month from the surf club. And they had a fellow named George Riddington who was the grandfather of the current iron man bloke [Craig Riddington], that still knocks about, he was the organiser of this and between patrols he had us kids packing food parcels at times. But there was a ladies committee and then at Christmas time they sent them a really

25:00 super duper deal. They were terribly conscious of their ex-serviceman and the support for them in the surf club, tremendously supportive. And most of the ex-serviceman that left the surf club returned to the surf club to resume their activity when they were discharged, or if they had leave or something like that. The place was generally fairly

25:30 inhabited by ex-serviceman, serviceman, not ex-serviceman sorry, from about 1944 onwards.

What sorts of things would you put in those food parcels?

Oh there was chocolates and fruit cake and stuff that they could easily eat without having to heat it. Old George said they'd be getting bully beef and biscuits, so nowhere near that.

26:00 But I think there might have even been small tins of ham or something like that amongst it, from memory.

It sounds like you younger members really formed the backbone of it, in those years, in all the things you did and were volunteered for?

Without being modest I'd have to say we made a hell of a contribution. There was a team of us of about twenty juniors,

26:30 we used to give a lot of lip and take the 'mickey' [to tease someone] out of some of the seniors at times. But, and I'm sure the seniors appreciated it, I'm equally sure that the serviceman as they came in on leave or anything, they really made a fuss of us, they went out of their way to make a fuss of us, that's my experience.

27:00 They were really delighted that there was a team of kids coming through and never once did I hear them talk about their war experiences, not once. And most of us kept tight lipped and were told to keep our mouth shut and not ask. But never once did I hear one of them talk about their war experiences. But not the ex-serviceman

27:30 some of the seniors that stayed behind we'd take the mickey out of them. And one of our favourite little acts was you could climb up through the shower recess onto the roof and there was a blue line you could sunbake behind the blue line in the raw. So we'd get a mate, he'd hand us up a four gallon drum full of water, crawl across and the roof and whoska, and if you were laying there in the sun sweating cop a four gallon drum of cold water, and oh stuff

28:00 like that we used to play on the seniors.

We touched on it a little bit before earlier on, but what, the serviceman that were there on leave or coming home what did they tell you about the Americans?

Well I used to overhear them talk and that, they'd be talking amongst themselves, oh the 'septic tanks' [Americans] said he'd meet his Sheila at Circular

28:30 Quay. They weren't terribly impressed. I do recall reading later, and I don't know whether it was later, when I say recall reading later that some of these blokes in New Guinea, and I do recall in reading this later that the Yanks had sort of blamed Blamey [General Sir Thomas Blamey] or some of our blokes for when they'd actually been quite heroic,

29:00 that they hadn't been heroic. And that they were the weak link or something, and oh that went down like a, off like a lead balloon. And, but what shocked me was the state of some of the blokes. Because they're in their bare feet and a costume getting a bit of sun and they'd be rotten with tinea, we used to,

29:30 that was where I learnt to dry my feet between toes and everything and powder. They'd be rotten with tinea and emaciated and if they'd had dysentery and all that sort of thing. Blokes yellow as a guinea, I've never seen a brighter yellow in me life, with Atebrin. And so that's when it really started to hit home that what they'd being doing for us.

30:00 **As a young man there did you think that you were going to have to go off to war eventually?**

It had started to change by the time I was into the second half of 1944, 45, the Japs had been beaten at

the Battle of Midway by then [June 1942], some of the pressure was coming off and there were a few blokes being discharged. I didn't think about it because I was couple of years away from the age

30:30 anyhow. So really hadn't given it much thought except to say that I was terribly impressed by what these blokes had been put through to protect us.

Was there a bit of hero worship on your part?

Oh yeh.

We talked earlier about the defences that were on the beach at what

31:00 **point did they start getting removed?**

I think it was oh probably late 44, I can't really pin it down to time.

But it was definitely while the war was still on?

Yeh it might have been 45 even, when they thought well there's no chance of them coming back the other way and they started to get them off the beaches and sort of clean the place up a bit.

31:30 And also all of the guns sort of went and sort of the army left and there were just sort of token surveillance I think up on Bluefish Point, I think they left a few blokes there right up til the end.

I guess we've concentrated a little bit on the surfing aspect here,

32:00 **but rugby was also a really big part of your life wasn't it?**

That's where I first started to mix on level terms with ex-serviceman. In the surf club they were on that level, I was on this level, they were really protective of us kids in many ways. And for instance beer was scarce

32:30 and they all knew where the beer was going to be and what time, it would be on at one pub and they'd say, "Well they've got to turn it on at the other pub" and they'd all leave that pub and go to the other one etc. And the fellow that had the Steyne Hotel, was a member of the surf club, had a little, what they called a cellarets [?], and they were always welcome out the back there, they could always get a drink there, all the surf club blokes, surf club ex-serviceman that is. And, but with rugby that was short

33:00 of players, really short of players, so I'm playing on the juniors I think in 1947 but what age am I, I turned sixteen in the middle of 1945.....seventeen, it was 1947 I know I hadn't turned eighteen, I would have turned eighteen, yeh I would have turned eighteen in the middle of 47. But I got called up to reserve grade to play with Manly, incidentally Mossop [Rex Mossop, Rugby international and football commentator] had already been called up

33:30 and had been shoved in the first grade side at about seventeen.

You're talking Rex Mossop?

Yeh. So, and we'd played juniors against one another, he's a little bit older than me I think Mossop. Anyway there the reserve grade team consisted of more ex-serviceman than non ex-serviceman, ex-serviceman and a few of us kids. But because it's a team

34:00 thing when you come off the ground, as you would well know in a dressing shed atmosphere, there's a beer for them and that sort of thing. And by this time I'd had first beer with my Dad and everything, I was allowed to have a beer. I was treated as an equal by them. And I have to say always pulled my weight on the field so they were treating me as an equal. And a lot of these blokes were

34:30 on the same plane of friendliness, whereas in the surf club there was a, they kept a little bit to themselves altogether, even after patrols or things like that. It couldn't happen in the rugby cause you all went in the dressing shed to get changed at the end of the game and your all the one team anyhow. So that was

35:00 the difference that I noted when I played rugby with them. And the other thing was of course, I reckon they I used to call them 'Hara-kiri Kids' [hara-kiri, Japanese ritual suicide], because I guess after a couple of years and that in the war they'd been knocked off, I reckon they were fearless scouts. And they threw themselves into their football, the only trouble we had with us kids that were all jumping out of our skins, fit, trying to keep them off the booze and get them fit and keep them fit,

35:30 I reckon we'd say, you're doing your work sort of business.

What was the relative difference then in society between rugby union and rugby league, why were you a rugby union player for example?

This is a silly answer but it's the true answer, it was the natural thing to do. The three surf clubs, Queenscliff, North Steyne and Manly, fed Manly

36:00 rugby union club with players. The, you played for your district, you all had to be residentially qualified, you were playing for your suburb, it was loyalty to your mates, to your suburb. Cause there was no

money, it cost us money to play in those days. So it was a traditional thing to do, that's the right

36:30 word, selection of right word. It was traditionally the, what happened with how Manly Rugby Union Club was supported by the three surf clubs on Manly Beach. From Freshwater out where Jack Monroe, who was the secretary of Freshwater Surf Club, was also secretary of the junior league, and it's no coincidence that Manly-Warringah's colours are maroon and white are also Freshwater Surf Clubs colours. And so from there out

37:00 there was a lot of junior league, Narrabeen, Curl Curl, they all had teams. But from Queenscliff back junior rugby union was the go, it was as if they drew a line at the Queenscliff lagoon.

So it had nothing to do with social class or status, it was just geography?

It was just geography, tradition more than anything, tradition more than anything, where it came from or how long it had been in place we'll never know. And

37:30 the, we just gravitated from the Sabres as we called ourselves playing in all black for the Manly Life Saving Club straight to the blue of Manly. That's what happened as kids in 43 they said, "We'll give you your jumpers and your socks". We always used to run raffles and scrape up money and half the time put in money ourselves to buy them, they said, "We'll outfit you but you've all got to join the surf club". And we

38:00 overnight one seasoned finished and we were known as the Federals, lead by this Lionel Watts on telly, we became the Manly Sabres, the Sabres are well know is sub district and junior rugby. And overnight we became the Sabres and from thereon in we were looked after by the lifesaving club.

How big a sort of match attendance would you get in those days for a first grade rugby union game?

38:30 Not a lot, you might get, a good crowd was say five thousand or something like that. As you would probably know being a rugby man yourself it's a participator sport not a spectator sport, it has become a spectator sport but it was a participator sport. About four grades, everyone got a game and it was a

39:00 oh the social life was out of this world. There was no licensed clubs but there was an old scout hall behind Manly dressing sheds and we used to call that area the 'privy' [toilet] , I don't know why but the privy was the, I recall I had a game of bowls at Manly Club, which is right beside Manly oval, just recently. But the old privy, an unlined fibro shack

39:30 beer was virtually non existent, we had a working party and one of my best mates, who was older than me, was an ex-air force bloke who had flown during the war and he was on it and he had an old bull nose Morris car. And we used to have to provide the refreshments for Saturday night after the game. Mudgee Mud and Lithgow.... [nicknames for bottled beer] there

40:00 was a beer made in Lithgow and if we bought enough of it from, there was a wine and spirit store where the tow track is just behind the Opera House now, we got a dozen or two of New South Wales beer, cause it was all finding it's way to, I think it was the nightclub bloke, the Italian nightclub bloke, oh there was a big stewing, there was black market in beer going left, right and centre. But we got a dozen or two of local beer which of course the working

40:30 party had priority on. And I can recall we'd all go and have our share and have a feed and come back after and little three piece band, which we paid for through charging two bob at the door, or five bob at the door. And you bought your bottle of beer and took that back and gave them glasses and everything. And we got more enjoyment out of that then these

41:00 kids these day will ever know.

I'll stop you there mate cause.....

Tape 7

00:32 **Just before we move on Dick I wanted to get a few more details about just how Manly was fenced in during the war and the process you would be involved in of opening up the gate to start a patrol in the morning?**

I don't think we opened the gate, I think we got the soldiers

01:00 to open the gate and then it had to go back late in the afternoon of course. So I think we went to them and got them to do it, bear in mind we had a machine gun nest just beside the surf club so it wasn't hard to find a soldier to do it. So that's how that worked.

Were there many gates or just one gate to get in?

There was only one gate, one gate at each

01:30 surf club as I recall, but I can only remember the one at Manly. And I suppose it would have been oh about five metres across and was like an ordinary stake gate that they have on farms, you take it back and you can put it back.

So that would open at about, just before six when you started the patrol?

Oh, no, no that was later on, no it would be in those years we

02:00 probably had restricted hours I'd say. It would probably be restricted hours, I wouldn't have thought the soldiers would appreciate being woken up at six o'clock to shift the gate. I think it was probably opened the first time someone came for a swim, which might have been seven or eight o'clock or something.

And do you recall when it would be closed again?

Towards,

02:30 in winter towards night fall but again depending on who was in the water, if everyone was out of the water at four o'clock well then the gate was closed again.

How high do you reckon the fence was?

Oh the height of a man six feet, say two metres. It was, as I recall it was the three rolls of wire mounted on a spindle,

03:00 which was the way they handled the gate, that's if I remember correctly.

Would people try and climb over the fence?

Oh no they wouldn't have dared, no way.

Too dangerous?

Too dangerous but apart from that the army was everywhere they would have stopped them.

You mentioned earlier that in later years there would be injuries

03:30 **from old spikes and bits of barb wire in the surf?**

Yep.

Were people getting injuries from the fence itself during the war?

Bare in mind I didn't get this lifesaving award and very heavily involved in patrols until about 44, which was toward the end of it, the other is more vision

04:00 as I was walking round home and back. But it was well within wave distance on a high tide, someone could catch a wave and run into it head first, but then in 44 I remember there was, the stakes still left in the ground, that was where, I think I've even stood on one myself and cut my foot on it. There were bits and pieces bobbing up for ages after.

04:30 **So how far from the water line would the fence be there?**

Well of course that depends on the tide.

At say high tide?

At high tide and again it would depend on how much sand was on the beach, but it would be at high tide with a fairly deep start from the edge oh two metres, it was down towards the

05:00 waters edge more and I'm sure there was a second line back on the Promenade as well, a second line of barb wire.

How many soldiers were normally stationed around Manly during that time would you say, on the beach?

This will be a guess, an intelligent guess and that's all it can be.

Sure?

There'd be several hundred in Fairy Bower

05:30 for a start, because they were walking around and pacing and sentries and that sort of thing, there'd be several hundred in Fairy Bower I'd have to say. In Manly itself, you're not including the artillery up the top because that was fully manned.

Well give us an idea of both?

Well I wouldn't know what the artillery carried but I'd say there'd be five hundred to a thousand men at various times, not at various times most of the time,

06:00 spread throughout Manly and the eastern hill. The eastern hill was the part that was very vulnerable

because it lead to the artillery on North Head and it also had those beaches that I talk about at Fairy Bower and Shelley Beach in that eastern hill part and that is probably from East Esplanade, well it's so short that we used to wheel the surf boat across on a billy cart type of arrangement and drop it in at East Esplanade, you only had to carry it the length of

06:30 Ashburner Street and your in the Harbour. So you're in a Peninsula which is only oh wouldn't be half a mile, about six hundred yards from beach to beach and that was the, that sort of stopped Manly going into the area and it sealed off North Head. I don't know what they did coming down from North Head

07:00 there weren't many cars but Darley Road climbs like that up to Manly Hospital, I don't know what they did over on the other side.

Would your patrols only be on the weekends?

Yeh and public holidays, yes.

Would there be much swimming going on mid week at Manly Beach?

I think they might of suspended the beach inspectors in war time.

07:30 Not a lot, as I say, I think I said about five thousand maximum at weekends until the beach started to be cleared of all the debris.

So relative to the surf club where were the guns set up at Manly Beach?

The surf club had a sunbaking area and it had a, oh an arch but a square arch, overlooking the

08:00 Promenade, they walked underneath. And we could walk out there and watch the girls walk through underneath. Immediately below there was the machine gun nest, five metres.

And how many guns would have been in that nest?

Only one, only one there'd be several blokes sort of usually sitting around it.

And that would be a constant thing over the weekend, it would always be maned?

It was there

08:30 for twelve, eighteen months or something and occasionally they'd fire them just to check that the gun was still working. Who was I talking to the other day and they said he remember seeing the, fired a gun off, and they must have been right back almost to the Corso cause he said, now who was I talking to, he said he remember them firing a gun off, he'd walked down the Corso. And he said they had a trial shoot

09:00 just out across the water. So where the end of the encampment was I'm not really sure, it was definitely designed to cut the eastern hill off from Manly and any residents that were in there just had to fend for themselves the best way they could.

Did the soldiers around

09:30 **Manly Beach build up a bit of a relationship with the blokes in the surf club?**

No, no, the answer would have to be no, largely because the seniors left in the surf club were non serviceman either because of essential industries, and I always think there was a, with the ex-serviceman coming back, and I did detect this certain amount of

10:00 not derision but I detected that there was a lack of understanding of the blokes in essential industries that didn't get to the war from the blokes that came home from the war. So no there was no, there wasn't a lot between the army, and they were bit of kids anyhow.

You said earlier that

10:30 **at the end of the war you felt compelled to join the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan because you felt you hadn't made enough of a contribution to Australia's war effort. So your contribution was involvement in the surf club, taking over from the blokes who had to go off to fight and putting together the parcels that were sent over. Did you end up doing any other bits and pieces**

11:00 **that was sort of towards the war effort?**

Not that I can think of, perhaps at school I think we messed around buying, they had some sort of not cave ins but fall ins and slit trenches, I remember having to go down with the slit trench at one stage and we shovelled a bit of gear out of that. I don't think we even had to dig them even though I thought before that I did, I don't think, you'd never have done it kids, they would have had to have mechanised gear to do it

11:30 cause they were pretty expansive. No and the other thing about it is I wasn't thinking of it as a contribution I was enjoying every minute of it. I wasn't conscious that I was making a contribution at all. But I'm aware now that I'm probably the spokesman for a lot of juniors who were

12:00 in the surf club and the lack of appreciation of what went on then by members of the public and people today. And that's not to go looking for a thank you it's to keep the record straight and complete the full history of it and not leave that part out.

I'm about to start talking about

12:30 **the end of the war and move into that era, but before I do I just wondered whether anything sprang to mind that was an important thing for you during the war time that we haven't spoken about yet. Is there any area that we haven't touched on that you'd like to talk about?**

The....it's hard to

13:00 expand on the shock and the...realisation what a bastard of a thing war is when I saw some of these blokes coming back. I don't know if I've mentioned a bloke named Curly Bligh, but Curly was discharge early, a lot of them got jobs on the beaches as beach inspectors. But a lot

13:30 of them they looked to us, say I'm a kid but I've now got a, I'm a qualified lifesaver and I'm on the beach and I've had a couple of years and I'm as fit as a Malley [bull] you know, fit as a trout and jumping out of me skin. And I'm sort of starting to direct other blokes as a number two on a patrol etc. and some

14:00 of these blokes tended to accept guidance about the surf etc. from kids like us. They hadn't ever been good swimmers themselves, they'd been members of the surf club and everything. But the thing that struck me about Curly he'd obviously been blown up and on this particular day I nearly chucked a willy [fit]. He had lumps all over him and bits and pieces and he had shrapnel and a bit,

14:30 he nicked a bit on his hand or somewhere and dropped it in the, I can see the kidney dish now, in the casualty room, he went tickle, tickle and a bit of shrapnel came out of him. And things like that that I thought you poor bugger, he died at a relatively young age from some sort of kidney complaint, his kidneys were shot or something. And one of the blokes came back,

15:00 he couldn't of been a POW [prisoner of war] cause he wouldn't have been allowed out, because it wasn't the end of the war. And here's me and I admired big strong men and husky blokes and surf champions and things like that, and this poor bugger was a physical wreck, there was no other way to describe him. But he'd been a big man, but I thought dear oh me.

15:30 So that part of it really sheeted home to me then what these blokes had done for them and I was never, whilst they had experiences in common with other ex-serviceman and withdrew to drink a bit of booze and sort of share experiences amongst themselves. They never ever talked down to me,

16:00 they never, they appeared to say, without saying it, thanks for holding the joint together while we weren't here. I don't know whether, it was just a sense that I had. They were quite attentive to our, what we'd been doing and almost as much as I was attentive to what they'd been doing. So

16:30 there was a real mutual respect that is very hard to put into words.

So obviously when you started to mix with these blokes that's when the war took on a whole new meaning for you?

Oh absolutely, absolutely and then for a while it got worse as more of them came back. And then the blokes that had done very well, had kept themselves fit and that sort of thing and hadn't been wounded or injured

17:00 or traumatised too much, came back and then they started to strengthen the surf club then. And three blokes come to mind, and every one of them was a captain to, Frank Davis who was a captain, a fellow named Phil Smith who for a while was the president of the rugby club and a fellow named Freddie Wentworth. And each one of them, even though I was years younger than them, cause they were

17:30 older men, they weren't the young infantry man blokes, they were older man, they, I became quite friendly with every one of them for a variety of reasons that I can't put my finger on now. But, and Davo who was our boat captain from about the end of the war and immediately after when I got into one of his boat crews, he had the greatest respect for us.

18:00 And I had the greatest respect for him, I'll never forget one night I met a bloke in town I think on the way home from training, we used to train on the Harbour. And I'd had a couple of beers and he said to me, "You've had a couple of beers" he was ready to challenge me. And it was a bit of a stand off and I don't know who would of won, I'm younger, by this time about seventeen and

18:30 he's older but he was a hard man but a tremendous leader, a real leader, and he knocked us all into shape and we won a boat title out of it.

Of those blokes that did come back to the surf club, or that you mixed with in general, how common was it amongst them whether they'd been physically injured or not for them

19:00 **to have some sort of obvious mental consequence of what they'd been through?**

I'd probably exaggerate this because to me young, fit and being jumping out of your skin was important,

I thought they all drank like they had hollow legs. I thought they all did that, that was a natural thing to do. In fact some of them got hooked

19:30 and...generally speaking it was party time for about a year for a lot of these blokes. Then the blokes settled down and got on with their lives. Many of them who had been single married, Frank Davis was one, this Freddie Wentworth I'm talking about married a girl who had been in

20:00 the ladies march past, some of the older girls. So it seemed to take a year before they found their feet again, but some never did. And without any disrespect I couldn't quite follow, until later as an older bloke myself, appreciate that they had about a year to exorcise all their devils out of them

20:30 and the grog was one way of doing it and playing catch ups.

Was all that celebration and then the ongoing tendency to drink heavily say through that first year of returning, was that perceived at the time within the club something that could be problematic and needed to be watched to make sure that it didn't get out of hand or was it just accepted that that's something

21:00 **that had to go on?**

That was accepted that they had to get it out of their systems and in any case they wouldn't have coped anymore regimentation, this was throw off restraint and we've been regimented enough, I don't think there would have been a bloke game enough to try and stop them at that stage. Even when I started work in 1946 a bloke at work I worked with he'd go missing for two or three hours and I'd have to pick up on some of the work that he might of done, even though I was the kid around the place.

21:30 And they used to meet at various pubs in town, even when they got back to work, so it took a while to, and there was I suppose if you slept in a tent with a bloke for a couple of years you had a special rapport and a lot of them weren't allowed to let that end at the end of the war. You know analysing it at this age about then,

22:00 about what was happening then I can see that now.

Observing that special close connection those blokes had was that something that you were ever envious of that they had that amazing bond?

Yes, yes. I was never used in that way because when it suited them I was part of the team, and it took a while to understand

22:30 that they were, same at seventeen playing rugby, that they also had a section of their life that I couldn't of understood. And they had special mates and bonds with blokes they'd been in the services with that needed to be attended to as well. I don't think I was ever, I was never ever jealous or anything like that, but

23:00 the, it used to give you the, annoy me a bit, I never ever felt used not in that sense. But your buddy mates one minute in the rugby and then something was on which was for serviceman. But it did teach me there was a special, I suppose sacrifice they'd

23:30 made which was exclusive to them, which is why to this day I would never intrude on an ex-serviceman's only gathering, like that's their day.

In years following that was it considered that the ex-serviceman say in the surf club in one situation and in the rugby situation,

24:00 **were they perceived as being a cut above blokes that didn't have that experience?**

Through my eyes yes, through my eyes yes. Some of the blokes in the surf club who were in essential industries who were on patrols etc. I don't think they were ever challenged

24:30 or talk down to by the ex-serviceman, but I just formed the opinion that some of them looked pretty okay to me but they might have been doing very essential work. And I didn't quite get onto that, or get a grasp of that.

When did you start to sense that the war was about to end and that

25:00 **we had the better of the Japanese?**

When all the debris started to be cleared and that bloody barb wire was taken away so we could go and have a swim anywhere we wanted and have as many waves as we wanted, whenever we wanted. And when we could move freely around Fairy Bower, it sort of, it wasn't, what do they call it,

25:30 Victory in the Pacific Day or anything like that it was visible signs that the pressure was coming off.

Was there a change in atmosphere, in mood around your suburb?

Oh yes, yeh people started to come back to live in Fairy Bower and people started to live back at the seaside and then a year of partying going on at the surf club.

- 26:00 And also that year we were doing the same things as we did when the servicemen weren't there, because they weren't always terribly reliable to be on time for patrol, they didn't want to be regimented or anything, they weren't always, and they weren't always physically jumping out of their skin
- 26:30 which is why, I had a terrible admiration for muscular blokes, in good nick etc. And a lot of them couldn't be and they were knocking their bodies around a bit in my eyes when they came back. So that sort of business of doing the patrols, whilst my patrol captain was usually an ex-serviceman who might have had
- 27:00 a big night out, I carried the can half the time.

Can you recall what happened for you the day the Japanese surrendered?

Yeh I think I came straight home, they let us out of school of course and then I caught the tram into the Sydney. It was all hullabaloo and everywhere sort of business, but nothing special happened to me, I came home.

- 27:30 The, as far as I was concerned the war had changed a year ahead of that anyhow but no a huge impact but there was no T.V. and no visible sign of it other than in the flesh.

And you didn't feel like sort of partaking in the hullabaloo

- 28:00 **yourself?**

Well I was only a kid, I'd just turned sixteen I think, 1945 yeh I turned sixteen in June so I wasn't, 45, yeh turned sixteen in June. So dancing in the streets or anything wasn't my go and so I got home, I think I might of went to the surf club, something like that.

- 28:30 **Was there any celebration within the family?**

Not that I recall, not that I recall. However our place became a centre of social activity for ex-serviceman

- 29:00 during 45 and 46. By this time my father's in the surf club, he's the head of the house committee doing the maintenance all around through the surf club, Mum's now come in the ladies committee, and there's a book out that you'll probably never ever see, but there's two of them out ones called 'Hero's of the surf' and the other ones called, 'Gladiators' written by Kenny, Grant Kenny. And you'll find a reference to our family in the

- 29:30 40's section, the late 40's, it lists all the surf championships and everything that accrued in the family and all that sort of thing. But our house became a major centre for surf club friends, almost all ex-serviceman and in those days you could buy a five gallon keg, if there was nothing else on, there's be a five on at the Windshuttle's you know.

- 30:00 And this Freddie Wentworth that I mentioned and Curly and a lot of these blokes and Mum would make a huge big pot of bloody mince on toast for them or something and there'd be a party on which would run into the night. But almost, seventy five percent of the blokes that were there would have been recently discharged or just out of the services.

- 30:30 So our house became a sort of a hub of entertainment for them to and I don't know how that came about, I'm not sure if you asked me how that came about I wouldn't know. But there were that many romances started at our place, Freddie Wentworth and his wife, fellow named Jack Fitzgerald, oh there's a few of them started from our house. And

- 31:00 there was always a turn on Saturday night, we'll we'd be out by this time, were sixteen or seventeen, I've got a little Charlie in tow and, or be somewhere and that continued in the 40's through to about, oh I don't know nearly up to 1950. But there was a hell of a lot of ex-serviceman amongst them.

- 31:30 **So 1945 was your last year of school wasn't it?**

Yep.

You mentioned earlier that you thought the war being on had significant impact on your secondary education, can you explain that a little further?

Yep, I was a year too young to be where I was, that was the first thing. But secondly and I wasn't game to miss the opportunity to get to Sydney High,

- 32:00 the second thing was the huge amount of travel, and the third thing was, and I've got a school report out there which says exactly that. The enormous concentration of sport, now if you take say three to four hours travel out and then me having a swim or a surf

- 32:30 or doing some active exercise there's not a hell of a lot of time left for study. Now I really shouldn't excuse myself on those grounds cause there's other blokes did well and I have to say the old boys union have no understanding of any bloke that went to Sydney High School not being a academic or a captain of industry. And they drove me nuts for years

33:00 to participate with the old boys union, but the average reunion dinner was say fifty bucks, got to stay in a motel cause you can't drive if you've had a few drinks, your looking at a couple of hundred dollars, not in our league, not in my league. And so I just ignored it and they kept sending letters and letters and letters and it's beyond their understanding that someone should be, a bloke from Sydney High School a failure, never, impossible. And

33:30 I suppose I'd have to say in my own defence I got married at twenty one and I retired to become a husband and father even though I'd been a reprobate immediately prior.

In that time just before you did finish school did you ever have any ambitions, any dreams of what you wanted to do with your life?

Yeh I wanted to be a physical education teacher,

34:00 sport and exercise, but I needed an academic qualification to get that and I failed it and there were no second chances, when the headmaster said, "Repeat a year? Repeat nothing, get him to work". So even that was, I finished up I picked my own job and the, Mum

34:30 lined me up with a junior clerk's job, I'll never forget poor old Wunderlichs and one of the jobs was to be the tea boy. And there was a bloke he used to do the tea tray and he was a big fat kid, no harm it might have been glandular, but he dropped the tray with the cups and the saucers and everything and he said, "He did it, he did it". I nearly flattened him on the spot, I thought, 'I'm out of here', I never went back and I went and picked my own job as a junior shipping and customs clerk.

35:00 Which because of manpower restrictions, which you may or may not have heard about, after I joined as a shipping, junior shipping clerk, no way you could change your job without registering with manpower. The Manpower Department told you where you worked and when you wanted to change your job to had to get approval to do it. And I was lucky cause I got a real thorough training in it and that got me to New Guinea and all these other jobs in

35:30 various, later on.

How did you come to choose that job?

Out of the newspaper, I saw shipping, and it obviously had some interesting things and they, the very first day I think to really get a kids interest I was down having a look at a ship and I thought "Oh this is for me." On the waterfront and the adventurous sort of job it was, it was a ripper. It was ideal for what

36:00 sort of a character I might have been, and I finished up, you've got to have a customs agent's licence and all those sorts of things later on. But one thing I did have, and we've talked about bloody charcoal burners and austerity and import licensing. I used to have to buy the ship's stores of a requisition, the chief engineer would put a requisition in

36:30 which usually went to a couple of ships' chandlers that we used to deal with, Paul and Graham Copson's and then all the dry stores. And I had, each ship had its own ration book, there was tea, coffee, butter, all those things were still rationed and very soon they could see I was a bit of a bright kid,

37:00 I was doing jobs far, that a far older person should have been doing. And then the two ships they had, which is another thing about Australia to, were the James Cook and the Matthew Flinders, they used to have one called the Abel Tasman and they were taking hard wood logs to New Zealand and loading on the north coast of New South Wales and brining pine back. That was before we planted all those

37:30 pine forests that you find out Bathurst way etc. So from the point of view of being reminded that war time was still on here we were and the surplus of some of these ration books, would go round the staff, used to have to take the staff's orders to, we never went short of anything in our house.

So you were organising the rations for the H. C. Sleight Line is that right?

Yeh HCS

38:00 Coast as they call themselves yeh.

And that, who owned that company?

H C Sleight Limited was....

Were they affiliated with Golden Fleece?

They owned the Golden Fleece brand, yep and they had a oil terminal in Cooks River, known as Sheas Creek and tankers would come into Botany Bay

38:30 and then they'd hook up, there's pipelines run out into the centre of Botany Bay hooked up to buoys out there, hook up a pipeline and pump straight through. I can remember on one occasion getting out there, Botany Bay can get a pretty rough spot and I couldn't get off the tanker, I had to stay on board overnight, so Mum and Dad nearly had a fit, I was only a kid still. But that was the sort of beaut job I had and I'm learning all the time.

39:00 **When you were doing the rationing were there any sort of items that were requested that you**

couldn't provide at all, were there any typical items that you just couldn't get at that stage?

I don't recall, they had a butcher, I don't remember handling coupons for meat now you mention it, but of course the

- 39:30 reason they always had butter left over they were trading in New Zealand and they had things that still very scarce in Australia were plentiful in New Zealand, so there was always miles of coupons left over and we used to have a division up amongst the staff and take orders from the staff. And I'd place the orders, a place crowd called Downton & Dyers [grocers] down in The Rocks where it is now,
- 40:00 they were the supplier, I didn't select the supplies the boss did that, I just processed the orders and those sort of things. But amongst other thing I learnt to enter and clear a ship, I don't know whether you know about those sort of things? When they leave a port from the last port they leave from overseas, which New Zealand was, they have a customs seal and that seals a bundle of papers which usually includes a health certificate, a manifest of cargo,
- 40:30 a manifest of passengers if any, a stores list, all the documentation that goes with the ship. That seal is broken by the customs bloke at this end, and I learnt how to enter a ship, to enter a ship you had to present the last ports documents, and I used to have to fill in a certain amount of paperwork myself, and you had to pay duty on stores consumed
- 41:00 in Australian waters, there were sort of you know fair bit of nutting out to be done to handle it. And I was doing this at a, years younger than a bloke normally does it.

How long was that rationing in place after the war, when did it finally finish?

I think it went for a couple of years, a year or two. Certainly the import

- 41:30 licensing went for a long while because amongst other things they paid, duty was paid, I used to pass a warehouse entry to put all of the petroleum drums, or all the oil which was coming in, in drums, forty four gallon drums.

Dick I'll just have to get you to pause there mate.....

Tape 8

- 00:33 **Dick just continue on with what you were saying, I think it was about fuel booking in and that?**

Yeh well when the drums of oil came in I used to have to put them into a warehouse under bond until they wanted to use them, they you'd pay the import duty as you pulled them out of bond. But I can remember they paid duty on the rating, you know there's an SAE 30, 40, 50

- 01:00 and they were all different. And I had to provide a sample to prove that it was that particular type of oil, because the duty rate varied with everyone of them. I can remember having to go and draw samples from a forty four gallon drum, and you're doing it on your own, forty four gallon of drum of oil is no mean feat to tip and then drain into a bottle as a sample for the customs bloke. He would never offer to give me a hand, I can
- 01:30 remember having to get a wharfie and saying, "If I give you ten bob mate will you give me a lift with this" and get samples of the oil. The, this continued on for a long while, I think a year or two after the war. But it was a hell of a good training ground for me in customs and shipping, which lead to a better job in later life.

- 02:00 **You mentioned that there was a fair bit of padding of the rations for ships for staff of the company you worked for?**

Yeh it was as I say they were trading, these ships were trading in New Zealand, it was only Australian based and registered ships that had ration books. Of course over in New Zealand they weren't short of lamb, they weren't short of butter, tea was pretty tough, tea what

- 02:30 else.....anyhow whatever it was if there was a surplus in the ration book I'd report to the boss and he'd say, he'd let the staff know and they'd come and tell me, could I get a pound of tea. And even then I think there was some coupons left over at the end of it.

What other sorts of, as you got a little bit older and moved in towards your married life, what other sorts of shortages affected society in

- 03:00 **Australia?**

Oh bloody housing, oh gee you couldn't get a house for love nor money. See building materials were, to get building materials to build a house, and the ex-serviceman all wanted to build a house, but you couldn't get building materials. And of course this was when a lot of that asbestos was used, cause it was going on the navy ship and there was a fair bit of fibro round,

03:30 but asbestos fibro. But, our first forte in house hunting was a garage with a, paying I don't know what it was, what the rent was but there was just nothing available. And it was quite common, key money was the word, you paid

04:00 key money, a hundred pounds or a couple of hundred pounds to an estate agent he'd find you a place to live, and I didn't have a hundred, I didn't have two bob to rub together, which is how we come to live in New Guinea in 1953 when I was offered a job with a house provided.

So it was pretty much the system that you had to bribe a real estate agent in those days?

Oh yes, part of the norm, part of the norm. There was a fair bit of black marketeering

04:30 going on, I'm just trying to think of that, Romano, there was a big, beer coming out of the brewery and suddenly taking a right turn and finishing up at Romano's [Nightclub]. There was an enormous amount of black marketeering and the bloke that they finally caught up with, he was in the Cross, oh what's his name, hell of a lot of black marketeering done with booze, packet booze in particular.

05:00 And a bit of corruption around, because it was a time of shortages and there will always be a crim of someone that can see a quid in it for them.

It would have been around about this time as well that your rugby union days finished and you got seduced over to rugby league?

Oh that was

05:30 1952 but I hadn't, oh I suppose 1947 to 52, I had about five of the best years that I'll ever think about and remember, some of the best memories I'll ever had. If I had my time over I would never have gone to league, but two hundred quid, I got a hundred pound signing on fee and a players payments with a minimum guarantee

06:00 of two hundred quid. And Manly had only been going a few years and I was a sucker for flattery, so bloke said, "Oh come and you'll fit in nicely to the Manly league side" and all that sort of thing. And I could see two hundred quid on the end of it, so I went and I went too easily and I didn't value the good times and the friendships in rugby union highly

06:30 enough, that about sums it up.

And how did you settle into league then when you made that jump?

They made you very welcome, everything was, there was nothing, everything went smoothly, I played mostly in the reserve grade, but I had a few first grade games. And they had a pretty good team in those years to, 1952 and

07:00 that was when Wally O'Connell was the captain coach. And they were all Manly-Warringah blokes and it didn't really matter so much but it was oh less social, less after the game mixing with blokes and things like that. More

07:30 it wasn't more, it wasn't stricter or anything like that, but there wasn't the social contact with it that I'd had in union. And also I suppose to be perfectly honest with myself I was regarded as bit of a leading light with the union, I was just a club bloke with the league side. So to

08:00 be perfectly honest I suppose I missed being, having people patting you on the back, so if I've got to be really honest with myself.

You played breakaway in union so what did you play when you got to league and there aren't any breakaways?

I played second row, no there was a fellow that was in a car crash and fractured his

08:30 skull and I went into the second row in the first grade team on some very good players, some, couple of blokes that finished up internationals, Wally O'Connell was playing five eight, a fellow named Jackie Hobbs and Gordon Willoughby and these blokes were very good players. And we got beaten, the very first game, there was a lot of big time stuff in it, the very first, no I

09:00 think it was the second first grade game I played, it was on the cricket ground, it was the days when they'd get about fifty thousand there. And we played St George on the cricket ground and I had to go and be interviewed by Tiger Black on 2KY [radio station] in the morning and lunch at the leagues club. And then I couldn't get over bloody old cold showers back at Brookvale Oval and they've got nice big baths in the cricket ground, I thought, 'How long's this been going on'. But those, that doesn't pay the rent,

09:30 those sort of things.

Mind you two hundred pounds would have been a big sum in those days for you?

Oh my oath.

Early married life?

Oh my oath yeh, cause I was twenty one when we got married and I've told you the story I had to wait till the grand final was played and got married on the Wednesday. It was, it's all water under the bridge now but it's,

10:00 there happy memories, there's some sad ones, some good ones, like in any other life.

What do you think of the state of rugby league today?

I despair for it, and I don't think anything will change, I think the system of, whether you could

10:30 ever wed the two together or not I don't know but I don't think there's anything like, and this is why I admire the Newcastle League team there very proud Novocastrians and to play for your club or your town or your city or whatever it is, when you are a resident there. And with the residential qualification your heart's

11:00 more in it. But these fellows appear to be cold, calculating, not only in having to look after themselves, having to get the best deal they can for themselves, but cold and calculating in mowing one another down on the football field. I read from time to time where blokes within a team are blueing with one another, that would be

11:30 virtually unheard of, and even in the league days, where the residential qualification was still in place. We used to have to put a bloke up at our house who always got magnificently fed by my mother, and when it came round later that they learnt where the billets were, the hands would shoot up to come to our place at Fairy Bower of course.

How was it that you came to end up living in New Guinea?

12:00 A combination of things. We had a stillborn baby on 5th June 1953 and that was a loss to you as far as football was concerned to me because my wife had had a couple of misses before that and we got right through the business and to have stillborn baby. She was just about, what I called scattered aces after that happened. And we decided, and then the doctor said, "You may never have kids".

12:30 Never be able to have kids. So we thought we might work and travel the world. About this time because I'd been working with as a custom and shipping bloke still with the wine and spirit merchants that owned a couple of full time bonds, I'd come in contact with some island agents. And because of my shipping background they'd accepted an agency for a Chinese shipping company, but didn't have any shipping blokes,

13:00 they had stores and could provide a lot of inward cargo for the shipping company. And there was a house and transport and house servant and the whole bit went with it. So we tucked our ears back and went there and Marie went to work and after three months she was three months pregnant again. And then we had three kids, pretty well on top of one another.

Whereabouts were you in New Guinea?

Mostly in Lae and one street back from the war cemetery which made a very big impression, it's a beautiful war cemetery in Lae, or was in those days anyhow. And we were in Thirteenth Street or Huon Road as it was called and Fourteenth Street was the road that lead into the Lae war cemetery. A very sobering experience in itself, I heard a lot more war stories then about

14:00 Nadzab and the Markham Valley and learnt a bit about some of the locations where a lot of this action took place. And there was miles of scrap left around, whole fork lifts with a counter weight, a steel counter weight on them. And I recall on one job I had to do when they charter, or part charter a ship you

14:30 have to get an estimated stowage factor. What you might have as a hundred tonnes of weight which would take a hundred cubic tonnes, which is forty cubic feet on a ship. But when you disturb it after being laying in the scrub for a few years by the time you put it into the ship the forty cubic tonnes become seventy or eighty cubic tonnes. So the stowage factor is two to one in that case cause you're going to take up twice as much space.

15:00 I remember being, I had to go to Finschhafen in a small plane with scrap merchant named Pollard who would part chartered one of the ships for which I was agent. Give an estimate of stowage factor, I saw pyramids of barb wire, oh probably forty foot high, whole fork lifts, most of the planes, the better metals had been got out of

15:30 their aeroplanes etc. And I'll never forget we stepped into a hut where we were sort of going to use the base headquarters and because of the white ants went straight through the floor and hit the ground underneath. But the, you could only make a guess, and intelligent guess as to how much space in the ship. And you could measure across the base of the square of the mountain of barb wire, and the way I worked it out was I said,

16:00 "That's a cube". Instead of being a cone I'll call it a cube because when it gets loose and won't have settled, that's what's probably going to happen when it gets into a ship and it's disturbed. But there was

mountain of stuff and they made quite a lot of money out of scrap, scrap blokes were still working up there.

Do you know if it was Aussie stuff or Yankee stuff?

I think the Aussies were in Finschhafen but I would have thought

- 16:30 one of the main suppliers would have been the Yanks, for equipment. I'm not aware where that would come from Matt.

Okay what was a town like Lae like in those days of the early 50's?

Still a lot of houses made out of sack-sack , now sack-sack in a nutshell is

- 17:00 tar paper. All flyscreened etc, but there were still a lot of old houses around, of that vintage, all of the new part, and I was in the new weatherboard cottage and there was lower Lae and the upper level at Lae and the lower level was stinking hot and mosquito ridden. And the top part was a couple of degrees cooler
- 17:30 but it was a beautiful town. And we had some lovely years there because when we lobbed there was, a whole group lobbed about the same time and finished up all the women got pregnant and we used to have, only just go to one another houses for parties. But there was two or three good clubs in Lae and it was probably some of the best years of our lives. And we had our kids there,
- 18:00 seven and six pence each they cost to be born up there and tax free zone.

Being up there in New Guinea the climate and the terrain and so on it must of given you an appreciation of what your surf club guys had been through?

Oh and how, from Lae from the, either the Lae club itself or the RSL [Returned Services League] you look up at mountains which are about oh eight thousand you know feet high, there just

- 18:30 across the Huon Gulf on the other side of the Markham River. When I first went up there part of the deal was Bulolo Gold Dredging was bringing the old gold dredges out, as scrap and they'd built a bit plywood mill up there, using the clinky pine up there. So I was canvassing to sell freight space in these ships. And the first time I had to go up there the
- 19:00 transport was a fifteen hundredweight utility and they've got a dirty big bumper bar and your right up high and you had to get onto a landing barge to cross the mouth of the Markham River, which before it was bridged. And I'll never forget we went down and the run down onto the thing and we hit bottom and nearly went through the windscreen. And then you went across on the landing barge and you went up this goat track of a road with these huge Foden trucks bringing the stuff down and you'd
- 19:30 squeeze past one another with a drop of several thousand feet down a ravine. No she was, and Nazdab and the Markham Valley itself, which is where a lot of Australians were, you really, and the kunai grass, it grows to about ten feet tall. I remember I dodged a dog one day, took off in the kunai and in the old dodgem Foden utilities [?]
- 20:00 you sit up like Jackie, about ten feet in the air and I was in a sea of green, I thought well I come over from the left hand side I'll keep steering to the left and broke out on the road farther up. And there's all these natives passing up and down and I broke out of the grass. The poor old natives they nearly died of fright. But oh no they had, must have had to put up with this, it's not funny.

You continued a bit of football

- 20:30 **in New Guinea?**

Yeh well of course anyone with great experience in Sydney was the prize win and there was great rivalry between Papua and New Guinea. Very largely stemming from the fact that the Papuan natives were far more advanced and better educated, better jobs, better everything than the New Guinea blokes, and they called the New Guinea blokes kanakas, and kanakas hated the Papuans because they looked down

- 21:00 on them. So when it came to football team and there was a fellow named John Stubbs who was probably one of the biggest builders and construction blokes in New Guinea and he was my promoter. He said, "How about taking on this football team?". So there were blokes from the bank, the Commonwealth Department of Works, Qantas, Qantas was flying in and out of there. And we had a football team and
- 21:30 there was a competition within Lae, within Rabaul but then Madang only had one team, Bulolo had one team, Goroka only had one team and so we played and I think we won the competition, the inter- town competition against Madang. And they asked me to be captain-coach of New Guinea's team. I said, "Well get them in Lae for a week beforehand" I said, "Give us a go". And they hadn't beaten Papua for a hundred years and
- 22:00 we beat them. And so I'll never forget this, and Stubby said, "Can I have a bet on them?" and I said, "Fairly safe but I wouldn't go berserk" I said, "Unless there crash hot over there" I said, "We've got about a good reserve grade side here together". Anyhow we did them and Stubbs made a heap of

money on them and the New Guinea natives, I'll never forget it cause I've had gravel rashes from playing on North Sydney Oval when,

- 22:30 the end of the season when you'd had a dry winter like we've had and you loose a fair bit of skin. But this had been built over a base of coral years before, and steadily by erosion, it was the hardest ground, I've never had so much skin off me knees, both hips, elbow, I was, you'd sworn I'd been thrown out of a car. And I'll never forget this, and all the natives
- 23:00 rushed onto the ground and of course the New Guinea blokes, the kanakas, did they give it, I thought there was going to be a riot, there was about thirty thousand natives there, only a couple of thousand Europeans or something. And you've seen them in Scandinavia they throw a bloke in the air, their throwing me in the air and I'm messing me self, I thought, 'There's going to be a riot here'. Anyhow the wives had all come over and we're staying in the
- 23:30 Papua Pub or whatever it was, Parker Hills are where the Department of Works was and they had a beaut social club up there and that's where the turn was after. Anyway we come home and I can't sleep, I'm sticking to the sheet and everything and I said to me roommate, "Psst are you awake?" he said, "Oh gees isn't this bloody awful" I said, "Yeh" I said, "I think I could handle enough drink". So about three or four of the blokes we snuck out, the women still had, wouldn't have woken up even to this day,
- 24:00 we went back up to Parker Hill and partied on and danced on and still got in before morning. But I couldn't sleep anyhow because I was just skinned, virtually skinned. They were tremendous days and there there was a lot of, we were playing rugby league, it was a tremendously close knit group that we formed.

I asked you about comparing league these days and I guess an obvious question is how do you compare

- 24:30 **the surf lifesaving game these days to what it was when you started out?**

A million percent improved except in the one area, the equipment's terrific, oh rubber duckies they're great. When, I must have been in me 40's, when we come back from New Guinea it had to be, Manly

- 25:00 has some trustees and membership had fallen away again for some unknown reason but it was badly controlled and they weren't happy with the captain that was in charge there. And some of the trustee came to me and said, "Look this committee's got to be turned upside down" like many other charities they got bequests so Manly could be a pretty wealthy surf club, so can a lot of other surf clubs, "They said would you come in and take a year or two as captain of the club?". So I came back into it
- 25:30 which was a stupid thing to do in retrospect, cause I'm trying to run young blokes and their all saying, "Up your hind leg". And the, in any case that was when I first run into, and they had jet boats in those days and to get us to be back, I got all the active reserve blokes back, to come back and, you go from active to
- 26:00 to active reserve to long serving, as you can see I'm long serving. So we got all the active reserve blokes back so when someone said, "Up your hind leg" we'd have a judiciary meeting every Sunday morning and say, "You missed a patrol, you missed a patrol, see you later". And it was very hard to enforce because the locks and the security of the surf club a lot of them that suited them, they'd still use the surf club during the week and still not do patrol anyhow. I went round all the schools and had a talk to them
- 26:30 there and we got a lot of new members and one of whom incidentally is that Scottwood whose little girl was hurt in that accident, when they hit the kindergarten. Anyhow we sort of made some progress but it's the first time I'd run into some of the new methods and I thought oh what a, and this particular afternoon, and I could see it looming,
- 27:00 I could see it sticking out a mile. There was going to be a rescue and this old stupid and a couple of other blokes... I forget who was there, anyway there was a jet rescue boat at Shelley Beach we could use. I said, "Whatever you do with that foam", I didn't know how to use it, I said, "Call him up and tell him to get here because by the time he gets here were going to be in big trouble". Sure enough that's what happened and that's when I realised the
- 27:30 value of all the new equipment. Rubber duckies they're fabulous, the new rescue boards are great, I think they've over done the surf boat thing a bit but since my son still sweeps one I'd better keep quite about that, I think they've gone away from rescue equipment to much. And sponsors are still getting tax deductions for lifesaving equipment and they ain't lifesaving equipment anymore. But, and the only
- 28:00 criticism I have is the dominant person running the beach these days is the life guard in those war years and immediate post war year, they made us, Manly Council made us all park rangers, we must of saved them thousands because they gave us the authority of park rangers, we were quite capable of ordering someone of the beach. And the lifeguards
- 28:30 were ex-serviceman, they always had first choice on jobs, most of them barely fit, so that the patrol captain, and I was number two on patrol, and we ran the beach not the lifeguards. Well now the lifeguards run the beaches and the surf clubs actually assist the lifeguards at weekends and busy times. The equipments a mile better but somewhere along the line they've, I think there's too much emphasis

on

29:00 recovery lifesaving and not enough on beach management or preventative lifesaving. That's my summation of what I see now. It's an area I think needs attention.

And what do you think about females as lifesavers?

They're not wearing cotton Speedos anymore. They're

29:30 just as good looking, their beaut kids and I think it's a good idea they still have a good social life, down at Manly they do anyhow and they do some real good things at Manly with the nippers etc. They've got kids clubs and camps and stuff like that to encourage these kids to go through and join the surf club, some of the older girls help run those. No their really good hands, they've got a really good top committee

30:00 and top president and administration there. And I can only talk about Manly really, but they do a lot more community work than ever we were required to do and there was no such thing as nippers in those days.

Amongst you and your surf club piers of that generation, is skin cancer been an issue as you got older?

Well not

30:30 for me but I'm sure it would have been for many other blokes. There were, one fellow who's dead now had problems, a lot of skin problems, he was fair to gingery bloke. And the, but it wasn't, that was never an issue because it wasn't on, they wouldn't have known if they had melanomas they were too young to know anyhow. But

31:00 I was, my nick name was Sooty because I'd just go black and blacker. But I just give you an example of how Manly was in those old days there was a fellow named Doug Beckham and he had not only fair hair but yellowy hair, oh he was a giant of a man, terrific swimmer, shoulders this wide, good footballer. And he'd, you'd be going out along the side of the Corso and this exchange would

31:30 place across the Corso. And he'd yell out, "Hello you black bastard" and I'd yell back, "Yeh and how are you Custard Head", that was the sort of rapport, he was older than I was, but there were a lot of men that I could admire, both ex-serviceman and other blokes. And I tend to think kids don't have enough heroes to

32:00 look up to, blokes that do manly things.

You've spoken a couple of times about feeling like, or being worried about intruding on gathering of ex-serviceman and it's not your right, what do you think about the increasing popularity of Anzac Day amongst the younger generation?

Well it can't be anything but good because it comes out

32:30 of respect for what happened. They're the ones that have read the history books and have got the history of it right. The ones that I cannot cop, at our bowling club on Anzac Day the two up game in the afternoon, which sort of originates as the troops original game. And heaps of money around, there wouldn't be half a dozen ex-serviceman in the room, they've taken over and that

33:00 that I find, well it's unacceptable to me but I think it's worse than that, I think it's a despoliation of what it was all about. I just happen to be one of those fortunate blokes, career came on when I was in New Guinea, by this time I had a couple of kids, so that passed by. And Vietnam I was too old for anyhow, but I just happen to have been in the slot

33:30 all the way of, almost use the word avoiding, I would haven't avoided it for a million quid. But even Korea mates that are my age that did enlist and two of them came back and one bloke was half screwy and he had a beautiful personality before he went. And then he hit the grog and lord knows what and

34:00 he went right off the rails and he was a terrific bloke. I've seen him within the last couple of years, he seems to have his act together again now but gee that knocked me, I suppose the Chows [Chinese] blowing trumpets and charging at you wouldn't be too, put you in too good a mood either. But even that one, so war from mind is a

34:30 frightful thing.

Alright we're coming towards the end now, just wanted to ask you a last question given as we've discussed today that the archives going to be around for quite a long time. Is there any sort of message you'd like to leave for future Australians about your life or what you think about the service, surf lifesaving, anything you want to say, now's the time to come up with it?

Yeh, well I guess that I sometimes

35:00 get a bit disappointed in youth, I was reared on sport, I reared my kids on sport and they never went near a drug, one of them confessions was she had a bit of a go at the marijuana once and she said, "No"

she said, "Oh it made me cough". And once she started to lose, keep her respiration up she soon gave that away because that affected her

- 35:30 sport. I hear this, and I hear it here on the Central Coast, "We don't have enough to do." Now there's a mile of fish out there, there's a surf club down here, there's a football oval over there, there's netball coming out your eyes and ears. So I don't think it's availability of sport during the day but one of the difference is is the social life, say in a
- 36:00 surf club, or in those rugby days. There was no such thing as a licensed club, you, the social life of those things which was for free and for nothing, and we had a place to go and we had an arrangement. If Manly had a dance on we told North Steyne and Queenscliff had a dance on we wouldn't put one on we'd all got to Queenscliff. There was a safe social
- 36:30 dance and outing for us young people and unfortunately due to invasions of hooligans etc. it all had to be stopped. Now there, I serve a mile of them in the bowling club, is that their source of evening entertainment and socialising together is to go to a pub or a club.
- 37:00 And being a couple of old jitterbugs and dances from way back in the surf club, I just think that some attention should be given to creating social life, a good social life for young people. And they could create that themselves,
- 37:30 for some years as a junior and an early senior in the surf club I helped to run the dances and come and tip the old kerosene soaked sawdust on the floor for the dance that night and sweep it up to give it a good polish and a good slide. And I don't know if it's the lack of sport but I hear this repeated, we don't have enough to do and I just don't quite follow it, I just don't understand
- 38:00 and the only part I do understand is their entertainment other than sport. And that probably needs attention, and the other things is that kids read your history books and get a better appreciation of the people that have made the country safe for you.

Alright Dick thanks very much mate.

Good on you.