

Australians at War Film Archive

Kenneth Aylward (Lofty) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1982>

Tape 1

00:40 **Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up?**

I was born in Hurstville on Anzac Day in 1924. My Father was a government printer, my Mum was a housewife. I had a brother about seventeen months older than me and later on we had a sister,

01:00 she's deceased now but she was a fine pianist. My Mother was a good cellist she used to play at the Hotel Sydney down in the Haymarket area. I can't remember much about my youth but my parents used to take me to a place called Gerry Valley on the NSW coast, middle south coast I s'pose, and there I learnt to fish. Going out and catching and digging in the sand for pippies [shellfish] which make a nice soup and

01:30 what else did we get up to. I caught my first whiting, it was that long I s'pose, nearly half as long as me you know. I had a, or my Father had a black retriever and it was my dog, it used to look after me. Made sure I didn't go in the surf and that sort of thing.

Where did you go to school Ken?

Initially in Hurstville, at a primary sort of school and then things got a bit tough

02:00 so we moved to Red Street in Sydney. It didn't look so far from where Dad lived. We lived in this rented and old, we used to run away and sleep in the old stables.

What was the school like?

Well the school at Hurstville was very populous, there must've been a thousand kids in it so I was very, as a youngster I wasn't much rapt in sport at that stage.

02:30 There was a couple of incidents around there. I had to deliver a message to an Italian lady at the bottom of our street and she said, "Here is a hot day habits glass," and she offered me something that turned out to be vino [wine] I think because I woke up dangling my feet in the Georges River which was pretty well known in those times for tiger sharks. And when I came home a bit late Mum said, "Where have you been?" Or words to that effect. And I said, "I don't know, I woke up in Georges River, my feet in it. She went over and abused this Italian lady, "Giving my son wine to drink!"

03:00 **How old would you have been then?**

A little bit five I think or something. I could've died and nobody known the difference.

And what about high school, did you go to high school?

Not there. We were still, I went to primary school, Fort Street Primary up near the Harbour Bridge in Sydney. From there I went to Glebe Tech.

Had the Harbour Bridge been built when you were...?

No I watched it being built.

03:30 I used to, I walked, saw JT Lang [NSW Premier] , I saw the other bloke on the horseback [Captain Francis De Groot] cut it with his sword and I saw JT Lang snip it with the scissors and there were lots of people, you couldn't move on it. I also saw the Georges River Bridge open and they handed out peter, peanut paste which I can't stand any more. It makes me violently ill. I ate that much of it and I can't stand it today.

Do you remember your Father going to war?

Oh no, he went in the fourteen to eighteen war [First World War] and I wasn't around until six or seven years later.

What do you, did he ever talk to you about his experiences?

Yes, he had a, because I was born on Anzac Day and he'd been a sergeant in some unit in, I think it might've been artillery in, he twinned up and he went to the 13th Battalion, Black Watch Battalion

04:30 in Sydney. Well it became the Black Watch later on. And his drill hall was just up where I finally lived in the tenements in the slum areas of Sydney. But when he joined up he was in infantry and he went overseas to England and to France and then after he was a sergeant when he got his discharge in 1919. That was about ten days after his Mother died,; he never used to speak about her much.

05:00 She was a Danish woman, so that's where the Unback in my surname, Kenneth Unback Aylward, the Unback is Danish. I used to think they were Vikings but they were makers of swords and daggers and things.

And what sort of things did he say about his experiences in England?

He didn't like to talk about it but he showed me photographs of the places he'd been to and how he was going home to England, not home but going to England to do a course to make

05:30 him a lieutenant. And as he was walking back through the sloppy mud he saw an Englishman, a lieutenant bashing the daylight out of a horse and he knocked him down and shot the horse. So, never to rise above the rank of sergeant.

And what sort of, do you remember what the photos were like?

Well they were quite good, I only wish I had some of mine left. Yes he used to keep them in a precious little box with his meddles,

06:00 which I didn't get. He sent me, my people divorced about 1936 I think and his paramour or his girlfriend, second wife, didn't like me very much. I didn't like her much either and she said, "I would never get his ribbons or his medals." And I didn't get anything.

And how did you feel about that?

Nasty.

06:30 **Why did your Mum and Dad divorce?**

Well my Father's brother, uncle, well met up with a lass in Sydney, North Sydney somewhere and he said, "Dad, come out and, come over with us and we'll introduce you to another girl," and that's the way it went.

Did you live with your Mum or your Dad?

I stayed with my Mother, all the children did. She needed the support, she wasn't getting much from Dad. Still

07:00 it was the Depression years, you wouldn't expect she would anyway but. We were nearly out of it in 1936 but not quite. I don't think Australia really got out of the Depression until about 1940.

So you were a single parent family in the Depression, that must've been hard.

Yes, well the things I used to do to - after school I used to go to the local butcher shop and when he closed at about five o'clock I'd scrub down the blocks of cement, rake through the, not cement, wooden blocks that they used to

07:30 chop the meat on, save all the scraps of meat. Scrape through the sawdust they had on the floor and salvage anything I found out of that. That was my bait when I went fishing under the Harbour Bridge. In those days you could catch leather jackets [type of fish] , about that long [indicates] . All you had to do was cut their throat, make them bleed a bit then skin them, they were beautiful eating.

How many of those would you need to keep your family going?

As many as you could get. We ran a boat, of course those days we didn't have refrigeration it was an ice-box.

08:00 A big copper [large vessel for boiling clothes] out the back to boil up everything. And our yard wasn't as big as that, it was about twelve foot square.

What sort of things did you do for fun growing up?

Well because we had a copper and you had to buy wood, it was hard to come by, I'd go out to where the fellows were working on the roads. In Sydney in those days they had blocks of wood under the tar. Then of course they'd pull it up and they'd throw it all

08:30 to one side and I'd take the billy-cart I'd created and quickly pick up all those, then drive it home really quickly. Chop it up and fuel the copper. There was the fish we caught. My brother used to, he had a job as a messenger boy before I ever left the school system. He would fish hook, he'd supply the lines and he and I'd fish for taylor [type of fish] . I don't know if you've ever heard of

09:00 those in Sydney. A fish which is maybe about that long, very thick and very tasty. And you don't put any

bait on it, you'd get a toothbrush, a white handled toothbrush and a bit of silver paper and lots and lots of hooks and hurl it out in the water. And as soon as it hit the water the fish would be into it.

Did you see your Father much after the divorce?

He'd come around occasionally, especially around Anzac Day. Always wanted me to come over and live with him and the

09:30 second wife but I wasn't in that. He died later on when I, I got leave from the army to fly to Sydney and he, at Hurstville it was, he was living in a house there then and it was a war service place that he'd got after the war.

What did you do on Anzac Day

10:00 **together with your Father?**

I'd stand in the crowd and wave to him and yell out. His name was William so I'd call out "Bill" or "Dad" and everybody would look around because everybody was named Bill in those days. Or everybody was a Dad I s'pose. I can remember marching in an Anzac Day down Martin Place in bare feet when the Depression was happening. I used to be friendly with a girl, her Father was a watchman at the Government House in Sydney, at the Governor

10:30 General's house, not the Governor, the Governor of NSW and he was the watchman there. She was a very nice looking bird.

How old were you when you were dating her?

About eleven or twelve I s'pose. Trying to date her. I used to make paper aeroplanes, get up on the Harbour Bridge on the pylon and throw them and of course it never went across there but it had the (billy-do UNCLEAR) written on it, the message would be written on the wings of the plane but it never quite made it across Circular Quay.

You used to fly aeroplanes...

11:00 Paper aeroplanes.

With her name written on it?

The only time I'd get to see her if I walked the dog. We had an Alsatian, a big black Alsatian and because that yard was so small I used to walk it across the Harbour Bridge and back every night. Until somebody gave it a strychnine bait.

What happened?

Gave it a strychnine bait, it died in agony. And, because it barked I s'pose if anybody came near the house, it would challenge anybody that came to the front door.

11:30 And they didn't like that I s'pose.

Did you play much on the bridge?

I climbed it, climbed over the top arch when I was about ten I think, with my brother. We went on the ocean side or the eastern side of the bridge and the hardest part was getting around the crane. And going up was wonderful, you could see everywhere and hang on to the rails, but doing down you could see the people on the, walking below and the

12:00 little itty bitty [tiny] cars down there. And the trams and the trains that used to go across.

So did you get scared up there?

Only coming down. I only did it for a dare. Somebody said, "I bet you're not game enough." And I said, "Well you come with me and we'll, you'll prove how good it is." So several of us went up there. Then we got on the other side and down and everybody was very sizeably and out of the blue [by surprise], I don't know where they came from but anyway, several big footed coppers [policemen], lumpers or whatever you'd like to call them,

12:30 booted our backsides all back down the side. And we were in tears of course. And we all knew that not far away was the Argyle Stairs and I don't think the police knew about them, I think they probably came from North Sydney but anyway, I suppose about here to the RSL [returned and services league] gap and we were off. We got down the stairs and, "Come back here you little so and sos'." We just scattered.

What did your Mum do to try and survive in that time?

She couldn't do much

13:00 looking after three kids but later on she took a job at Dymocks [bookstore] in George Street in Sydney. She was well read, what's the word for it, she was educated. She'd been a very fine cellist too I used to, I used to have a pretty good sort of a voice when I was a young fella and I could sing to the notes she played on the cello. Ran beautifully, and my sister played the piano and my brother played the mouth organ but he wasn't so

- 13:30 good at it. But we'd have a sing-a-long every Sunday. We invited, during the war we invited a fellow from I think Dad met him and brought him down home, he was coming down for Anzac Day celebrations. He always came down to see me for some reason or other. Anyway, because I had his Mother's surname, Armack was his Mother's name
- 14:00 but he never had a picture of her anywhere. I never saw what she looked like until about six months ago when a relative sent me a copy of my grandmother.

I'm sorry, is that the photo that you saw recently? Your grandmother.

- 14:30 Yeah, Dad did talk about his, he never had any pictures of her or anything else, he never spoke about her. I think he was so broken hearted that she'd died ten days before he came home and he didn't want the memory back, risen, raised again.

What sort of Father was he to you?

When I was young, quite good. Very supportive. Mum was the champion, she wouldn't let anybody ever smack her young son, me at any rate.

- 15:00 Memories are coming back now.

What was Sydney like at that time, the city?

There weren't many people, not many men in the town because it was Depression years, the ones I can remember, except when Anzac Day or something special came up. They would try to come back for Christmas but they were looking for work and there was no place in the city except in the slum areas out near the Haymarket area where

- 15:30 the markets were, there was plenty down there. There's a good story. I was walking up York Street, when we living down at the Dawes Point area. Dawes Point was named after the, there used to be a Lieutenant Dawes in charge of the Captain Cook's mob, the Governor Phillip's crew, he was a lieutenant in charge of the, what did they call it the police, the army type characters, when the Rum Rebellion and all that sort of thing? [The New South Wales Corps.] Anyway, the soldiers

- 16:00 anyway he had a barracks there and that was named after him, Dawes Point, D.A.W.E.S. And that's where the Sydney Bridge goes across to Milsons. Now they call it Millers Point. Now that Darling Harbour's moved in there's not much left of Millers Point so it has the Argyle Place and a few other memorable places, old houses. They call it there was a

- 16:30 baker's shop on the corner, a fellow that made the flour and things, that's why they called it Millers Point. Lots of pubs around there. I could walk to a pub, any pub, most people, where I lived, five minutes it would take me to reach about fifteen pubs. Not in the same five minutes but it didn't take long to walk to them. Hero of Waterloo [pub] was just across the road.

What happened with your school, did you stay at school for very long?

When I went to high school

- 17:00 the Headmaster came in with a special demand that we, our final part of the exam was to write an essay on something in the future. So I talked about 3000AD to write the space of my history and everybody lived in a big cocoon. Separate like there was another group

- 17:30 about 200 miles away and they had a similar construction and it was sunk 200 feet into the soil so that nothing could get in and the people didn't live past the age of 50. They were put down and their bodies were put back into the soil to make things rich for those who did survive. And I had to, I'd been demonstrating that this was me in the story, I had learned to grow beans counter-clockwise, normally they grow clockwise, but if you grow them

- 18:00 anti-clockwise you get twenty-five percent more beans. True by the way, true that is. And I got called up in front of the class and was told, "It was a load of rubbish." And I said that, "It was true except, the base story is true, it was only to support the growing of beans. And it was supposed to be," I was quite emphatic, "It was supposed to be fiction after all, Sir." I got six cuts for being cheeky and that decided me I didn't want to stay back at school any more. So I left and that's

- 18:30 why I became a messenger boy for about five bob [shillings] a week which... Don't compare the five bob back in the those days with the wages you get today. Like for instance my Father's house would've been worth about eight hundred pounds which is say fourteen hundred dollars if you want to use that, but the same house today would cost you about half a million or more. Especially in Sydney.

What did you like about being a messenger?

- 19:00 I hated it. I loathed it. I had wanted to be an archaeologist and find out where the Australian Aborigines had come from, because there used to be pygmies in South Australia, well I thought so anyhow. I liked to read a lot of that sort of stuff, but you lose the urge to study that any further when you, there's no chance of you getting out to become involved.

So how long did you stay in that job?

19:30 About eight months then I picked up a job as a storeman polishing glass. Then they couldn't get any more supplies because the ships weren't running, they wouldn't carry plates and crockery and stuff out to Australia because they couldn't get any more supplies out from England. Then I got a job as a storeman in a tractor firm and I had to face up, there were forty blokes in a line to get a job and

20:00 I was one of the lucky ones because I claimed I still lived in Bridge Street next door sort of. I used to have to walk all the way back to Dawes Point in the evenings and the mornings. If they saw me on the way they'd say, "Where are you going?" "I'm going to do some fishing." Anyway I got that job and I was there until the army called me up.

What did you do in that job?

I was a storeman, I used to,

20:30 if an order came in for parts for Fords and tractors, I can't remember all the things that they had but there was a machine that the blades would point out that way. Auto-scythe, I've only seen one since that day or those days. I used to work between Bridge St and Pymont somewhere.

21:00 And what did you like about that job?

I was doing something that I liked to think that was to do with the earth. I didn't think much of the Fords and tractors because they couldn't climb up a ramp on to the back of a truck, but they sold lots of them to the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] . Dead loss, they used to tow a kite around the drome but they wouldn't do much good trying to pull them out of a hole.

What did you think of war when you were growing up?

Well my brother

21:30 had gone away and that left me the male in the family I s'pose. Things were getting better and the job was paying a bit more but things were still tight and I still used to go fishing. I was the supplier of tucker [food] , quite good at it too.

How old were you when your brother went away?

He was about seventeen months older than I was

22:00 so about the tender age of 16 plus I s'pose. He didn't write too often. Because of the censorship he couldn't write, he couldn't send any pictures. Anything we sent up there had to be censorship too so you couldn't tell any bad stories. That's when I said, "Oh well," I said to my Mother, "I'll join the police force." I had an uncle in the police force he used to be at the, in the Water Police. He was the fellow that used

22:30 to come around and I used to go around, I'd see a bloke jump off the bridge and I'd run around to the Water Police Station which was four hundred yards I s'pose away and I said, "There's another one jumped Uncle Willy." And he'd say, "Right-oh thankyou," and away they'd go and pick up the body.

How many people did you see jump?

About four I think. Three and a boy, one was a, a hat came down the big, top hat came down in a big circle following the bloke that jumped. He broke every bone in his body.

23:00 He hit flat instead of feet first or head first, he was like a mash, he landed on his belly I s'pose, broke every bone in his body. It's like water is hard if you jump in that way, if you've ever done a belly-flop into a pool you'll know where it's at.

And what happened to him?

I don't know. I s'pose they picked him up and took him home.

Was he dead though?

Oh he was dead when he hit because he broke every bone. He was flattened. I went around another time to tell me Uncle about it

23:30 and I said, "Can I ride in your boat? Can I come out in it?" "No, cheeky little blighter." I never went back after that. Never got out in the boat. Anyway when I went to, along to Woolloomooloo to join the Police Force as a Cadet I was underweight. I was skinny of course, now that I eat food and I don't smoke any more I've got a fat gut. Anyway they told me to go away, I passed every other

24:00 qualification required except I wasn't, my weight ratio was bad. I was about ten pound underweight and they said, "Go and have a feed of bananas." I said, "It's not worth it, I couldn't eat ten pound of bananas." Couldn't buy them anyway, couldn't afford it. Anyway they stuck around and joined the RAAF and they said, "Right, when will you be eighteen? We'll call you?" But the army jumped in first they said, "The RAAF was second because it was the last of, the junior service and the army had precedence."

24:30 So I became a soldier and they sent me to the showgrounds in Sydney to be kitted out and from there they put us on a troop train. There was another couple of blokes in the same area who were going out too, so I had companionship. That was an Alfie Kerr; anyway that's another part of the story. He, we sat in Blayney in the troop train for about six hours waiting for anybody else, I don't know if anybody else...

25:00 You were in Orange. Do you, you come from the Orange area? Oh well Blayney's not too far away, near Dubbo, got that's the coldest place I've ever been in my life and I've been in Japan when it snowed over there. But Blayney, the winds come from all directions at once. And you know the hot boxes they put in trains, not worth a crummet [useless].

What did they do when they kitted you out? What sort of stuff did they give you?

Well if it looked like it fit you, you wore it. Well I had big feet anyway. I have badly

25:30 shaped feet, deformed feet in some respects. My Father used to make me wear shoes with points over my toes, like dancing shoes I s'pose and I used to get hidings when I kicked them off. He'd make me wear them and eventually to save being belted every day I put these shoes on. And the army said, "Medically you're unfit because your feet, all your toes go everywhere." And I said, "I walk

26:00 across the Harbour Bridge with my dog every night, over and back." They said, "Get out of it." I said, "I'll take you for a walk any time you like, I'll walk you out to the ground." And he said, "Right-oh, sign it. You're in." Probably looked in this ear, said, "Right, there's daylight, pass him." See there was a, why did I leave off there? Blayney, went to Dubbo. But the kitting we wear, we got, wore what they called the giggle jacket. It was

26:30 a, khaki, a very sloppy fit which allowed you to wear singlet, woollen singlet, shirt, jumper all underneath this thing and keep warm because it was cold in Dubbo. We were sleeping eight men to a tent on floorboards which you had to carry from a stack somewhere. And you'd get a palliasse which was about a seven foot mattress type of thing you'd stuff with straw,

27:00 which would very quickly be pounded up into very small bits of grass which all made a mess all over the place. You had to clean your tent lines and make your bed before you went on parade in the morning.

What did you like about it?

Food. Two eggs and a big slab of bacon for breakfast. Porridge and then of course you'd only get, only had tea, you had an enamel mug which took about I s'pose 250mls a day.

27:30 You could have black tea with sugar or white tea with milk but you didn't get sugar with your milk. My habit in those days was black tea but I'd learnt to drink that when I'd go away to help my Father up in a shearing shed in the pre-service days and I was not smart enough to be a roustabout throwing tar and throwing the wool

28:00 up on the wharves, so they put me as an off-side to the cook and I didn't mind that at all. My Father told me when I was a young fella, a motto I should stick by and it was, "If you're not doing what you like, like what you're doing and you can do anything." True. I didn't like school, I wanted to be that, I wanted to go and dig in the caves in South Australia for those pygmies, but anyway it was too late for that.

What did your Dad think about you joining the army?

28:30 He wanted me in. I had to get, he was a sergeant, I had to get higher rank than he had so I had to work my way up. The fact that I only got to warrant officer because I was unfit for overseas service following a certain incident where I was told that I had to play sport and I was 21 days couldn't walk after two navy blokes gave me the treatment.

What did they do?

29:00 Well I had to play basketball, a game I, the Americans played it. Because I served with the Americans I had to, I had to know all about basketball and I said, "I haven't got a clue on it." They said, "Well anyway you're in the team, your job is to stop the ball coming in that net back there." I said, "I've got no trouble, I could jump up and throw that out." And I could. Anyway the naval guest ship, the naval ships had pulled in and they said they were going to play basketball and the army would be their foe I s'pose. Opposition.

29:30 And they weren't scoring anything because I was knocking the ball out before it went into the net and next time I was going up to knock the ball out two blokes trod on me left foot. One foot on either side and I'd be about two feet off the ground before I woke up and found my left foot was still down there and it tore the ligaments in this leg. I couldn't put a shoe on, I couldn't even stand up to sock them. I couldn't, they gave me crutches but I'd fall over every now and again, I was a bit unbalanced.

30:00 **That would've been painful.**

And that was the result, I was never to be posted overseas so I didn't get that career, I didn't get to...

That would've been much later on was it? That was much later on after the war?

Yeah but I'd volunteer to go to these things but it was the thumbs down [negative] for me. But anyway,

in Dubbo, we'll go back to that one if you don't mind. I had a friend who'd been my school

30:30 mate for a long time and he said he didn't like the army, he was going to switch over to the navy and he could because it was a senior service. And we used to correspond by letter. He was posted, he didn't say so but he was posted to a destroyer in convoy duty and I got a letter from his Mother to say that she'd been notified that he'd been promoted to a, he was a good shot too, we were both good shots. We had a challenge one night when we went to the Sydney showgrounds who'd get the best

31:00 score with a twenty-two. Anyway he'd been posted to operate a pom-pom gun, anti-aircraft type machine gun, a decent sort of a shell. And the destroyer got a call urgently to go back and inspect a submarine, suspected submarines in the water and they full speed ahead and did a hard port turn and took his gun station all the operators, five operators, the bloaters and the,

31:30 took the whole lot, the crew and the gun to the bottom. Strapped in they couldn't get out of it. So that was the end of Alf Kerr. I tried to make contact with her when I got leave and offer my sympathies, but the whole family had moved out with no, address unknown sort of thing. He was a good friend, a good mate.

How did you respond to that information?

Well I couldn't do much about it.

32:00 **Was it upsetting?**

Yeah. Especially, he was one of the seven who climbed over the Harbour Bridge. He was, we were devils and things, school mates.

Was that the first casualty of war that you knew about?

Personal sort of contact. Anyway the, later on, I only stayed in that CMF [Citizens Military Force] Unit for about five months I think it was

32:30 then I got discharged.

Did you, before we leave the CME, do you remember exactly where you were when the war broke out?

I was walking up Pitt Street

33:00 past the Lyceum Theatre in Sydney and a fellow, a bloke, it might've been, I forget the name of the paper but, "War's Declared!" Of course we all knew it was coming. The radio was, oh that's a good one, I'll tell you about that. My Father had a, not my Father, my brother that's right, somebody had a wireless that operated by battery,

33:30 because when we lived in Sydney, the Dawes Point area, they changed the power, went off gas lamps and things. I forget what year it was, went onto electricity but it was DC [direct current] power, 240DC coming in from control of the trains etcetera that went over across the bridge. There was a big powerhouse at the end of Trinity Avenue, so anything you had in the house had to be 240 volt DC.

34:00 Which is good stuff by the way, if you get a shock from DC it throws you away. Alternating current you've got now grabs it, so you can't let it go and that's why you die. Though of course if you get thrown away at 50 mile an hour into the wall it hurts. Anyway the...

What sort of things did you hear on the radio that your Father had?

Not, I can't remember who it was. My Mother never took another bloke on until much later

34:30 in life. Probably about 50 I think when she took another one on. Anyway...

When war broke out. Do you remember how you responded to the news when war broke out?

Not very much. It didn't really affect Australia until about a year later because our troops only went overseas to fight, they didn't, there was nothing

35:00 it wasn't until Japan entered in December 1941 wasn't it, about that time, a bit earlier than that but America done the big stoush in December and they came into the war. There was a lot of blackouts and things like that which was rather peculiar up in New Guinea. We didn't worry about blackouts, you'd have lights burning all over the place, search lights and everything. Only at night-time when you'd have darkness. And housing, we lived in

35:30 tents so there was no, didn't worry about curtains or anything. But in Sydney we had to put black, either paint the inside of the glass with black or put black curtains on so no light could shine through. You had to switch off the hall light before you'd open the door, the front door.

Do you remember how you felt about your brother leaving?

"Good on him. I'm going to join him soon. Anything to get out of Sydney".

36:00 I didn't like it much.

Why?

I couldn't realise the ambitions I wanted and it would be better to get away. I didn't like that twelve foot square back yard, I wanted more space. And the army, the experience I'd had with the army was exhilarating, it was good. Run up and down mountains, carry somebody else's rifle if he fell by the wayside.

Is that what you did

36:30 **at Wagga?**

I didn't get to Wagga.

Where you first did your CMF training, what sort of things did you do? Dubbo.

We lived in tentage, we'd rise at six o'clock in the morning, stand out and have our names called, go back and do all the ablutions, washing and shaving and make up your bunk and lay your gear out in the prescribed manner. Make sure your boots were nice and clean.

37:00 You were only going to tramp through the mud so I don't know what they wanted them clean for, but anyway. At assembly we learned to march and throw the rifle around, some of us had rifles some didn't.

Had you ever used a rifle before?

At my Father's. I must admit my Father taught me how to shoot. I was a good shot. The army at one stage sent me to be a sniper, to train a bit but I couldn't lay still, I just couldn't get comfortable. "Aylward, you've moved again.

37:30 If you move twice more..." You're only allowed to move once or something, or three times, that's right. So I missed out on that, sent back to unit. But yes, my mate Alf Kerr, we'd go back to the showgrounds and have, didn't I tell you about that? We were good shots. I could split a .22 on a knife blade at 25 yards two shots out of three and win money on it.

38:00 I forgot tell you in my youth, my younger days, when my family before things got tight we used to go to a place called Gerry Valley on the NSW Central Coast and we'd camp every Christmas. That was good fun.

What sort of things did you do?

I've told some stories via the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission] in Townsville when it used to be here about some of those particular days, how I'd

38:30 my brother and I went out and did some fishing and we crossed a bit of a shallow dip in the water and went out and stood on a sandbar. We were catching brim and we'd break their heads and throw them back on the shore until suddenly the water was up around our knees. And we were, and the ditch between us and the shore had a fin travelling up and down it. So my brother said, my Mother had made some little dilly bags [small bag] and put our bait and stuff in so we didn't have to

39:00 go back to shore and he said, "Give me your bait bag." So we, he went to down towards the inlet area and he took both bags and hurled them around and threw them into the water and the shark went back to where they landed and we went across the water to shore. My brother swam, I was dry. He said, "How come you're so dry?" I said, "I must've walked on water." I was pretty scared, I'd say that might've been the reason. I don't know, but he was

39:30 amazed how I was dry and he used to make comments about it, everybody thought he was a liar. Walk on water, rose above my station.

What sort of things did you hear about your brother's training in the RAAF?

He was telling me about, he went to Canada to train to be a pilot and he crash landed three times. He didn't like to talk about it too much but they said, "Right, after this you're an air-frame fitter."

40:00 That's about all he told me. Except he went into a Beaufighter Squadron and they were a very popular light bomber. They were the ones that could drop a bomb on a target between houses and hit that one particular house. They did something like that in Germany, or France was it? There was a fellow who was a, he knew a lot about the French or the Underground and he was being questioned by the Gestapo [German Secret Police] and

40:30 they decided to take him out otherwise he'd give the secrets. That was the house that was being investigated, that was the only house that was damaged. They dropped a 250 pound bomb on it out of the Beaufighters. They used to fly low. My brother used to tell me that story. My sister was, she used to think, "If you'd been a pilot, you'd have been up there too." But he had the luck of the Irish, he mightn't have got up there.

Tape 2

00:30 **About the training you were doing.**

Well the 303 rifle, I don't know whether you've held one of those they're quite heavy. They weigh about ten pound and then you put a bayonet on the end of it, that puts about, makes it. I'm a good shot with a 303, I used to be. I could, used to be a, in Darwin I was entered for the Queen's Medal shoot a couple of years running. But I couldn't, I

01:00 refused to go back on the third year because the fellow who was airing the rifles, the captain, he used to beat me on a couple of shots. But he was the fellow who was preparing the rifles and he used to adjust the rifles to his sight and I had to aim off. It would fall off the target otherwise. I could cover an egg with five shots at 300 yards with a 303. But they'd all be over in one little particular area. And if he was

01:30 airing the rifle that's where they went. If I was firing it, I don't know if you have target practice, if you know anything about it. It's like a couple of circles, grey and orange and the black lines. If you aim at the, where the three colours meet you've got a good aiming point. Then when you get back to the 900 mark it's still a good aiming point. And I wanted to figure the rifles my way so they had a good...

Why do you think you were such a good shot?

02:00 Training I s'pose and the fact that I used to like to cover it, pull the rifle in to the butt and it never hurt me at all.

Were there other guys who were training who were not so good?

Yeah blokes would get broken collar bones and things like this and held it right out here instead of taking it in. The kick from a 303 is quite tremendous. The bullet when it's fired doesn't travel as straight as the ones do today, but it had a big arc in falling,

02:30 it can be deflected by wind and things like that but it had a long barrel and was more.. what do they call it again.? The grooves in the barrelling would send the projectile almost on a straight path. But the stuff they fire today, the barrels would be twelve inches long you'd be lucky in that, like the American sub-machine gun it had a barrel about twelve inches long and it would kill

03:00 up to, it hit the target, when it got over 45 feet it could go anywhere. That idea about the Americans were there for the 45 pistol would shoot to kill, you had to be here to the front door away but any farther you had every chance of surviving. I know it's part of the future story but I was compelled to wear a 45 on the hip and carry an American Garand rifle when I was working for the Yanks [Americans] , because I used to be picking up the mail

03:30 and you had to be armed to do that.

Where was that?

In Milne Bay and in Hollandia, in Dutch New Guinea.

So what was the camp like in training?

Open paddocks, lots of horse transport, only saw vehicles about three times in the time I was there. And they had 44 gallon drums of something

04:00 not far from where we were. And because it was so cold out there the drum would shrink in density shall we say and when the sun got to it and heat it up again, boom. You'd hear these things popping off all over the place.

What were the instructors like?

Quite, well they were, I learned to smoke when I was in Dubbo. They used to say, "Ten minute breako."

04:30 They'd do a bit of training or whatever it might've been with weapons anyway. "Those who smoke fall out, ten minutes smoko." That means get your tobacco out, roll it, puff away. "Those who don't smoke, clean weapons." Of course I said, "Why should I clean somebody else's weapon?" My Father had told me years and years before, "A man who doesn't clean his own shoes is not worth his salt." I thought I'll use that later on to a Lieutenant General Robertson too, but anyway,

05:00 he wanted me as his batman [officer's servant] but anyway that's another story.

Were they strict with you?

Oh yeah. Well you could understand that. I have another story to do with that but I don't think I'd better tell, I won't tell it.

You can tell us, we've heard some, all ranges of stories...

No I daren't.

You don't have to mention names.

Yeah but if I tell you you've got it on tape. No I shan't.

05:30 **It was a long time ago.**

I know it was, 1942. And they're probably all dead by now. They said, "Right when you're falling out when you're on parade, don't bring any cigarettes, matches, lighters, no books, food, just the uniform that you normally stand in, that's all we want you to wear." So being a good soldier I turned out exactly like I should do with boots, tops, gaiters or putties I forget now, one of the two.

06:00 I think it might've been. No we didn't wear, on this exercise we didn't wear putties. Anyway, long trousers, underwear and a woolly sort of a singlet, a shirt, carry a jumper, if you wanted to wear it, and a giggle jacket [tunic] and floppy, sloppy hat. And that's what you turned out on parade. But of course my name starts with A, we're divided into alphabetical order and there were seven A's and

06:30 I was the back of the seven. And we were loaded, this is where I saw more trucks and we were loaded onto the trucks. We were strip searched, you had to take your boots and shoes off so that they could, socks and shoes I should say, boots, so to check that you weren't carrying any tobacco or matches and you had to open, pull out all your pockets and make sure there was nothing in there. Take off your hat. And then your arms outstretched and they'd pat you down to see if you had anything.

07:00 Some were taken away because they had all these things they weren't s'posed to. Anyway they loaded us up and we were the first batch on this one particular truck, I forget how many they put in a truck, probably about twenty, twenty-five something like that. Anyway and they took us out, they tied the curtains down and roped it off, sealed up everything you couldn't see out but you could smell the dust and you could feel the bumps of the rough ground we were travelling over and we seemed to be driving for hours. It might've been

07:30 a short time but, and when they stopped every time they lifted the flap and a group of certain name alphabetical order was called out until we were the last seven and I think it might've been the original group of five but because there was seven in the A's they kept us in the one group. And out we got and he said, "We'll be back in a week to pick you up if there's any left."

08:00 Anyway, being a city slicker I didn't have a clue, water came out of a tap, food came out of a tin or straight from the butcher shop or a bag. I didn't have a clue and some bloke said he's spent some time with the, he was a bit older than us, he'd be about 20 or so, we were all 18 year olds, he said, "Right-oh we'll sort ourselves out. We've got, first thing we'll do is we've got to find water." He said,

08:30 "Way in the distance you can see some dark green line of trees, that's probably on the edge of a creek and that's where we're going." He said, "Now right, I'll travel in the centre, I want you ten feet on either side of me so three on this side, three on the other side, that makes up a nice batch of seven. Now if you fall or can't walk, you'll stay there until we can come back and pick you up so be careful where you put your feet. Now you've got..." No we didn't have water bottles.

09:00 He said, "Pick up a stone, a small one and put it in your mouth and suck on it. The moisture in your mouth will come up. This is what the natives do apparently." And off we went. I s'pose it'd be about, we must've we boarded the trucks about nine o'clock I s'pose we would've been out of the trucks about eleven. Anyway the sun wasn't quite at the meridian. And I think it might've been three o'clock or thereabouts, it was late in the afternoon.

09:30 I can tell the time now but I couldn't back in those days, by the sun. Anyway we found this place and these people ran towards us with water. We'd had a spell along the way and everybody, not many people were talking to one another because we were a bit dry in the throat. Anyway we got to this water edge and he said "Stop. Don't run down and muddy up the water, we don't know what's in the river yet, there could be snakes." He doesn't think there'd be any crocodiles out

10:00 bush in NSW" he said, "But there could be. But don't muddy the water, I'll show you the place to drink. The water apparently is running very sluggishly but it is moving so it's somewhat fresh. Where it runs over some rocks it'll be cooler and fresher because all the mud will be filtered out when it goes over rocks. Now do not urinate or let any part of your body waste to go into the water. Back over there, I'll show you where that'll be.

10:30 Don't fill up with too much water because your body will be dry of it. Have a couple of mouthfuls or handfuls and we'll sort it out later." Anyway he gave us some information, he said, "What we've got to do is," when he got us all gathered back. He said, "First thing we've got to do is we've got to get some shelter. Now we'll stay close to the water but know there'll be midges and all sorts of things in the water and we'll be eaten by mosquitoes so we'll want a fire and we'll want

11:00 somewhere to sleep. We'll want some sort of covering because at night time close to the water you'll get, dampness will come and rise wherever you sleep so we'll want some sort of overhead shelter." He said, "Now you two," that's another bloke called Fred and myself, "You'll be the fire lighters. What you'll do is go out and gather all the wood you can find. Don't pick up anything off the ground, take it off the tree or just shake the tree and let the dead wood fall. It'll burn easier." So we brought back heaps of wood and stacked it up, big stuff and little stuff, twigs.

11:30 And he said, "Now how are you going to light the fire? Nobody's got any matches." He got out a, he got a piece of wood that was that sort of a shape and he got another one and he pushed it up and down and things like that, rubbing it in there. And he eventually said, "Feel that now, that's hot." Yeah it felt warm and he said, "Right if you do that eventually you'll get a piece of wood that will come out and char and you'll blow on it and you'll get a flame." I had blisters on blisters. Couldn't get any, I could get the wood warm but couldn't get any flame. Then I woke up,

12:00 as a child I used to read as a boy, I used to get The Champion, an American magazine, Pommy [English] magazine I beg your pardon. And the hero of this particular book was called Loftus Roman who was an air force type and he demonstrated when his plane had been wrecked for some reason or other he lit a fire by, he took his boot lace out and he made a bow. Anyway this is what I did and I got Fred to get me a piece of wood that was shaped

12:30 and to grind the edge of it like a pencil end so it had a fairly sharp point. It'd want to be about seven or eight inches long and something, a little bit of indentation on the top and find a stone that's got a little nick in it to sit on the top and anyway he got this other bit of wood and I found a, almost a knot hole and I put the drill, that's the thing that Fred had found and the rock on top on it, spat in the hole, spat in the rock, made this bow out of the green timber

13:00 and took a boot lace and put a half loop around it and sawed backwards and forwards and we had fire, we got a doggle [spark ?] and our fire fell into the leaves and things and they started smoking and burning and we blew on them and fire. We never let the fire go out for seven days.

And what did the blokes say to you when you got it going?

Especially the fellow who was supposed to be the leader of the show. He never had it, the aboriginal blokes don't have that bow system or boot laces.

13:30 He thought it was a wonderful idea.

So you remembered that from a cartoon?

It wasn't a cartoon it was a story, I read the story. Luckily because I couldn't hold it, this business of rubbing and holding. Yeah it worked quite well. Anyway that particular story I thought somebody might doubt it because when we came back, two other groups of five didn't come back. They didn't

14:00 make it in that seven day outing. But that, the army used to have a ten percent loss in training anyway.

What two groups of five men died?

Well that was the suggestion, because they didn't come back with us. And they never saw them again anyway. But Alf Kerr, he wasn't part of that troop he was down at, but he used to talk about it a fair bit.

And what did they say?

Didn't make it sort of thing, but they were sort of part of the company but we didn't sort of have,

14:30 they weren't sort of companions, friendship type things. So this fella Fred, I forget what his surname was now, he used to live at Mackay, he died about nine years ago. We sort of made, sent Christmas cards or something.

Was he one of the guys in the group of seven?

Mmm.

And you stayed friends all that time?

Yeah. Not hard to do if it helped save your life I s'pose.

15:00 Yeah we, the bloke that was in charge of the party, Fred and I shared the same tent because the fellow who was in charge, he would give the directions and tell blokes what to do but I, Fred and I were out lighting fires and keeping the fire going so we were up and down like yoyos. So he said, "Alright I'll share and put the other four blokes in the other tent." The other hoochie [tent] they'd made. The other two blokes, they sent the, two blokes went out to pull

15:30 tussocks of grass out of the ground roots and all, and the other two blokes had to cut or pull down and break straight limbs which they sort of interlocked to make sort of like a hoochie, a rounded sort of a shape. And then they put a bar across for beams and then they got tussocks of grass and they put them down so they sat over the things like that. So if it rained the rain would pour and it was

16:00 on a sloping so while it didn't go all the way to the ground it certainly kept the mist off us overnight. And I thought it was a pretty good idea. I never learnt how to do that but I know about lighting a fire which came in later very handy when I was eventually a leader in scouting.

In that seven days, was there, did anyone get sick?

No, we had plenty of fresh water, well water that got bubbled over the rocks and it was nice and clear, well it was cool anyway

- 16:30 it wasn't warm or hot. We could, the fellows who also made the hoochies also weaved, they'd get two poles and they'd weave a grass net, that's a skill I never learned and they'd make four or five of these things, and the birds came to water twice a day, morning and evening. And when the birds were coming in, thousands of birds amongst the flock, up would go these sticks with the nets and the birds would get caught in them and they'd pull them down,
- 17:00 ring their neck and throw them to one side. And the birds that'd fly into the net would spoil most of the net that's why they had a spare one. Anyway they, as soon as they hit the ground the ants would be all over them so we the fire lighters got an additional job of making a sloppy mix out of the mud and as soon as the bird had its neck screwed, they'd toss the bird to us and we'd wrap it in a clay sort of a form about an inch thick and then put it to one.
- 17:30 Well the ants didn't touch that. But later on, in the fire you'd put these things in the coals and you got squab and aspic. A very tasty feed, so we had plenty of birds to eat and occasionally we got a snake, it was like a python thing, a water snake. Slimy to pick up. And in the, we didn't eat it but in the creek there's a lily grows and there's a thing
- 18:00 about that big in the root section that's rich in nutrients. We didn't have to but this fella told us about it. You can go what's it about 30 days without food or anything, but one day if you're lucky without water. Two days if you've got some other sort of to collect, if you can suck something. Yeah without water you die very quickly out there where it's dry country.

How did all the... I was just wondering how the men

- 18:30 **all got on together. Were there any fights?**

No, no we relied on one another and the fact that the four they were making the nets and remaking them every day and we were wrapping them in clay and that would stop the ants. So everybody was dependent on one another and we'd break off every now and again to make sure the fires were still going. We'd grow and break off green leaves of eucalyptus trees in the vicinity, reach up and knock them down or grab a, and put them on the, we'd built a fire outside

- 19:00 the tent where the wind would drift through our lines, eddies I suppose is the best way to describe it and the breeze would waft through with the smoke attached to it and keep the midges and things away. So yeah everybody did something. A kangaroo wandered into camp, a wallaby I should say. We had nothing to kill it, we beat it to death with sticks and threw it on the fire and cooked it. And the ants didn't get much of that either.

What did they say when they came to pick you up?

Well they,

- 19:30 the only reason they found us was the fact that smoke was still coming from the fire and we saw the truck coming towards us. And the bloke said, "Well you'd better put the fire out." So we heaped lots of dirt over the fire and it went out, and water too poured over it, handfuls and cleared the ground around it to make sure there was no flame would get out to something and burn out the property. But the, we were the, I think we were the first batch picked up and they had the curtains rolled up or something on the truck.

- 20:00 We just people got in, we never noticed there were ten blokes not there. And when we got back and we did a debriefing I think they call it these days, what it was then I can't recall. Everybody went in in groups. Oh yes and this fellow that had been in charge said, "Don't tell anybody that I showed you fellows how to live Aboriginal style."

- 20:30 Apparently he and his Father were, he and his brother had been the children of a minister in some tribal mission somewhere and there were plenty of native boys in the vicinity and he, his brother had been bitten by a snake and died. And because he was the last boy left the Aboriginals adopted him sort of thing and taught him the skills that he was able to pass on to us.

So why didn't he want you to tell them that he knew that?

They would have kept him back to take other people out.

- 21:00 He wanted to go away, he didn't want to stay in camp as a staff person. I can't blame him for that.

When was the first rumours about the other guys missing?

When they didn't come to sleep in the, when Joe Blow or whatever his name was slept alongside me. Anyway, and we didn't sort of camp in, under all the A's, all the B's,

- 21:30 all the C, it was in this particular exercise that they sorted them out alphabetically. Being the tallest on the right, shortest on the left as they form you up when you're marching, I usually got to be marker. I was about six foot one then when I was 18.

When you got back to the camp, what did you think of them putting you in that situation?

Good. I loved it. "Let's do more". I was quite willing not to see the truck come back, I'd have been

happy to stay there. Yes,

22:00 it was terrific living off the land. I was that intrigued by it I made myself a promise that when I got the opportunity I'd do more of it. Maybe I could go out on those plains, in those caves in South Australia eventually when the war was over and I'd be able to live off the land anyway. Because Lassiter's story's around about there. Remember Lassiter? He was a bloke that was supposed to have found a gold mine, a mountain of gold

22:30 out somewhere in Australia. But he died, it was South Australia I think. The natives looked after him. Because he ignored them they walked away and left him. So he died on his lonesome.

So you thought you would have liked that lifestyle?

I don't know, I've never experienced it but I did enjoy working with the, living off the land and yeah, I thought it was good.

What was important about that exercise do you think from the army's point of view?

23:00 Well if you were, they thought that the Japanese were going to come through in boats to Australia and batches would be sent out here and there. There was going to be the Brisbane line-up, perhaps you've heard about that? Stretching across from Western Australia to Brisbane and every man would get five rounds if he was lucky in their rifle and they'd shoot the enemy as they came. But let's say, let's presume to know what the invasion of the Indonesians in their thousands, millions of them.

23:30 And they all want land, and they said, "Right-oh they'll land at the Cape and over in the Darwin area, they'll knock off everybody there, and they'll just move through until they take Australia. We couldn't, we wouldn't have enough ammunition to kill them all. No we wouldn't. Even the Chinese, they used to reckon if they came down, if they invaded Australia in their millions, by the time they got down to the Brisbane line they'd be second, third generation being born because they breed like flies.

24:00 So the story goes about it.

Did you leave a girlfriend behind to go to the army?

No. No I was interested in the girls but I didn't have any one particular girl at that stage. I didn't oh yes I did, my sister was a member of the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] and they used to have outings to

24:30 Jenolan Caves I think it was, I think I went on one of those. But although I was particularly keen on one girl and I used to write to her when I was away in New Guinea, but she took up with an American Negro [African American] and had a child. One of my friends from Sydney came up and told me all about it. I was still writing to her and he said. "Well she's got a Negro husband," so that was the end of that one and I never bothered to

25:00 'til I was coming back through Townsville, 1943 I think, found another young lady who was friendly and they had a house and her Father and Mother made me very welcome.

And had you had much in the way of sex education up till that point?

Not really. You pick it up as you go along.

Did your mates talk about it?

No, well they'd boast a lot but

25:30 I don't think there was anything in it.

So what's with the seven days...?

When I was in the... well there was more important things to do than girls and thinking about getting married. My brother didn't get married until he was 28 and I wasn't going to do any better. Any different. Once you get married that's for life, it's not a thing you play with. I've had my wife with me for 52 years.

26:00 Same girl, never looked at another one since. Don't need to, all I want to live with. Good cook, good housekeeper, good Mother, don't need any more. I've been everywhere man. Not really but still, quite content with what I had.

With your feet, your feet had problems, did you have problems with the marching?

Not really no. The army has a supply

26:30 of boots, they were magnificent. That's why I wear a size twelve because my feet can expand in these shoes. They were golfing shoes by the way so it's comfortable to walk in, I wear them on Anzac Day too, when I'm in the march.

What were the difficulties in training for you?

Jumping the barbed wire or being the person who throws himself on the barbed wire and they run up your back to leap over the rest of the barbed wire.

27:00 I used to come away with cuts and scratches. And I didn't like bayonet, in, out, "On guard" sort of thing. After a while the bayonet got very, the rifle got very heavy. "Hold it up there, hold it up!" And climbing the wall with it and a pack full of bricks on your back.

What sort of things would they do to you if you did do the wrong thing?

You'd go on what they called "Confined to barracks".

27:30 And you'd be every half hour you had to do some special activity because the first four hours you might march around a parade ground or they'd even double around depending on how the instructor wanted to do it. And then you'd have to, you might come back dressed in walking out dress or something like that, with boots shining and polished. Come back next time all fitted out for rifle, bayonets, webbing

28:00 and in your haversack four bricks. And then you'd walk, march around the parade ground. Some of it was tough. I never did it fortunately, not till the second time in the army. Which I didn't get, back in those days they were a bit more civilised, they didn't put house bricks in your pack. But I had to travel from the barracks block over to the headquarters, I'd have to run to get there on time.

28:30 Every half hour you were doing something and that was including the changing of clothes. It was because I was ten minutes late for parade. I've never been late for parade since. Never been late for an appointment, I think if I could train my wife to be early for appointments it'd be terrific. She was ten minutes late when we were getting married and I was about to walk out, I couldn't stand any more of it. And then they played that music and down the aisle she came.

29:00 **Nearly walked out huh?**

I would've yeah. I don't stand around and wait for anybody. If I can get there five minutes early, be early for parade, you can too. Oh well you've got to have some rules and regulations.

I So what happened after Dubbo?

I was discharged for medical reasons.

29:30 **What happened there?**

I won't tell you that. And that's what, they posted, when I got back Manpower said, "Right, you're, you've had technical skills, you'll go and work on a lathe somewhere in Broadway." And they took me to a place that was, now days it wouldn't be allowed to exist, it was an overhead gantry with belts and you had to sort of duck around belts. No, nobody ever said, "Don't wear loose clothing or a jumper or have long hair or anything", not that men

30:00 had that, but any woman walked in the area would've been picked up very quickly by these belts racing around the place. And they gave me a lathe to work on, about that long and I was making brass screws to put, to mount landing lights for Beaufort bombers. I said, "I'm doing something for my brother, you beaut [excellent], yeah I'll do this."

Did you miss the army?

Yeah. I missed the army and you had to stand up all the time in this work and I

30:30 a table about that high, work on a lathe mounted on that and I was six foot one and you couldn't sit down, you couldn't kneel down. I could've knelt down but it would've been unsafe with all this belts racing around the paddock. And my little lathe, only so long, worked off a frame that had a gantry overhead with a belt about that wide driving it. A lathe about that big, all geared up so it wouldn't. Anyway they used to work three shifts a day, three eight hour

31:00 shifts. And one day the, somebody pulled the lever the wrong way and the gantry fell from the rafters and jammed up somewhere and about five blokes were badly hurt. It fell amongst them. The belts were still rolling when they hit the floor and everybody got, I was around the corner behind a pole working this little lathe, so I was quite safe but said, "Right, the shop was closed," and this fellow said, Manpower said to me, "Find yourself a job or we'll send you out with

31:30 the CCC," Civil Construction Corps making aeroplanes, "Making strips for aeroplanes." So I plodded around for a while looking for another place to get a job and my Uncle, the water policeman character, I met him in George St and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well I'm out of the army now, I'm looking for a job." He said, "Well they're hiring at Number 10, Walsh Bay.

32:00 Americans." I said, "Right, thanks very much I'll try it." So I went down there and so within about five days of being discharged I was employed by the Americans as a ship's chandler, carrying all stores for vessels.

Were people inquisitive about why you'd left the army?

No, you just change from working in Number 10, Walsh Bay I had to put on an American uniform so I

was, one change of khaki

32:30 I s'pose. But they would be surprised when I talked Australian lingo [language] and not that "nya, nya, nya".

So what happened when you first went down to the ships?

Down to Walsh Bay? Thumped on the gate, escorted in and, "My uncle, a sergeant in the Water Police advises that you have a vacancy for people who - I've just been discharged from the army." "Oh," he said, "We're looking for a storeman. You ever done any of that?"

33:00 "Well," I said, "I was a storeman for tractor firms" and blah, blah, blah. He said, "Right, you're on." Take me over to the workshop and showed me, the storeroom, a wharf shed I s'pose, it'd be about as long as this whole block of units or maybe twice as long and three times as wide. "Right, any stores that are in here, they're yours." And about, I'd been on the job about a fortnight and I walked out to the wharf area and

33:30 there was a barge tied up and he, they probably didn't know at the time but there was about two foot four drop in tidal up and down, high, low in Sydney at that time when the moon is in the right position, and I said to the character they had who stepped off the barge, I said, "You'll want to slacken off those ropes or you'll tear the wharf apart when the tide goes out." "Oh don't worry about it." Anyway later on there's this

34:00 screech as it tore the bollards out of the wharf, the weight of the barge. The things, the bollards they tie those ships up to on the wharf, it pulled two of those off the wharf and down it went. Break the ropes. You ever heard a rope crack under strain, it's like a real sharp whip crack.

Was this in Sydney Harbour?

Yeah, Walsh Bay in Sydney.

34:30 It's Harbour Bridge, Dawes Point, Millers Point, next door Walsh Bay. I s'pose it could be all Walsh Bay in that area.

Had the threat of the submarines in Sydney Harbour happened at that point?

I was in camp at Dubbo when the midget submarines got in.

What do you remember hearing about that?

We didn't hear about it until after I was discharged. They didn't tell anybody jack [anything] . And there was no leave at that particular time when we were training. But though

35:00 I did hear on the grapevine [by informal methods of communication] about that, the British somewhere off South Australia, Western Australia. I think the German raider got two of them. I think, I'm not sure whether it went down but I do remember reading, hearing about this on the grapevine about this, they were going to save Australia the British ships that were coming out.

How much of a threat were the Japanese, did you feel at that point?

Oh yeah, when the

35:30 when they started moving through it. We got it on the news that they'd moved in, we had maps on walls that showed these places they'd occupied so very quickly and their stupid Singapore stuff. My wife's brother was captured there, I didn't know about that until later, and he got sent to Japan to a place called Nagasaki which I'll tell you about later, where they dropped the second atom bomb. He died in 2001, so he survived the atomic bomb.

36:00 A lot of people didn't.

What did you think of the Japanese at that stage, early on?

Well the description we got of them were all midgets, blind as bats because they wore great big glasses. And it's not true, some of them were bigger than me and wide across the shoulders, thicker through the heads of course, very squat. Five foot ten. And they were having, having served in the Japanese country I know that they're not

36:30 fools, they're good soldiers, they were dedicated to their Emperor and they would die gladly rather than concede surrender.

What happened then after you started with the Americans, what were they like to work with?

Some of the Americans were quite nice. Well not, I wouldn't say nice, they were men who had jobs to do and they recognised what they had to do. Then they came to us about the middle of December,

37:00 when they were having their whacko, Christmas was coming and Santa Claus was going to come around and meet every one of them or something or other. I hadn't celebrated Christmas for some years because there was a shortage of things to give away. But anyway, I must tell you one of those stories too

about that.

When my brother and I were down at Gerry Valley, this was in the pre-war years, we were given for Christmas two miniature

37:30 45 artillery guns. My Father was in the artillery I s'pose that was the reason. And they fired corks, the cat got some trouble and it was just a few smacks on the legs from corks but they didn't sting us much, then we couldn't find the corks any more but we found that rabbit dung fitted the barrels a la beaut, would go further and hit what you aimed at. So that became, we'd pick up handfuls of this dried stuff and it became a... anyway the cat, "Meow", took off

38:00 and then the sister complained about being stung on the leg so Dad said if we didn't scarper away we'd get a big hiding each and he'd confiscate the guns.

So rabbit dung was the ammo [ammunition] .

Oh yeah. Good stuff too. Anyway we went out and shot a few birds and trees and the person who hit the bough and they'd take off straight away. And then we remembered that we used, my brother and I had the job of going down and getting water for the camp out of the pump

38:30 about quarter of a mile away from the tent lines. And we had to carry a, like the Chinese carry that pole between shoulders and buckets, only it was a four gallon kerosene tin which was quite heavy when full. Weighed about at least forty pound I s'pose, plus the tin and the pole and I was just a little bit shorter than my brother at that particular stage of my life so the thing would sort of slide down my shoulder anyway,

39:00 we were coming back and we noticed a great lizard laying on a log and he'd be about six foot long I s'pose and his tongue was sticking out and we thought it was a dragon, so we skirted around that and went a different route back. And we were telling our parents about it and Mum said, "Don't worry about that, wash your hands. You've got the water we'll make a brew, it's Christmas Day. Don't open your presents."

39:30 "Presents?" "You don't open your presents until after we've had breakfast." So forgot, promptly forgot all about the lizard until later on when we remembered we'd run out of things for targets. My brother said, "The dragon!" or whatever it was. So we went back and lined ourselves along this hill overlooking where this thing was lying asleep on a log. It was still there and it must've taken about twenty or thirty shots each I s'pose

40:00 before one hit this thing and it stood up on its hind legs, "Crrrr" and it looked straight at me and it started to run and it was coming straight at me I thought, and I threw me 45 and went off like a rocket. I could hear this thump, thump, thump behind me and I said to myself, "God, I've got to run faster." And I ran up a sand dune but I just couldn't make any headway and I flopped. I said, "Oh let it have me, I can't run any further." And me brother flopped alongside of me. All this thump, thump, thump behind me I thought it was the dragon.

40:30 I never did find that gun, went back. He had his still in his hand, he wasn't throwing his away. He still had his gun, but I went fishing and he said, "It was no fun firing a gun on his own, he needed a companion." So he put his gun away and by the time he got it somewhere, my Father gave me a hiding for losing one of his Christmas presents. "I went out and got that especially for you." So not only had I got a gun

41:00 for Christmas I got a hiding to go with it. And I told that story to, on air, ABC up here a lot of years ago, not long after I got out of the army about 1979 and the radio went to somebody in Magnetic Island and they rang up the station to thank me for the story, it was very enjoyable.

Tape 3

00:31 **Ken I just want to go back to that story that you were telling Nicole [interviewer] earlier about the army exercise.**

Survival.

How, was that a common occurrence? Did people prior to you doing it, do that exercise?

One only.

It was a one only exercise like that. So how many people were involved altogether.

The whole company I s'pose about a hundred and fifty people. Hundred and twenty might be a better term.

So a hundred and twenty people were taken out in...

Recruits, a hundred and twenty recruits and

01:00 I s'pose you'd get at least twenty or thirty staff involved.

And were you told before you went out what the whole idea was?

No. Only when you got off the truck did they tell you.

So nobody knew they were going to be left out in the wilderness.

No not until they told you and we couldn't, the others were out, they'd be away from the truck so you couldn't hear any conversation. It was quite a pleasure to stop every now and again because when they lifted up the flap the air would get into the truck, it was like an oven there inside.

01:30 **Out of a hundred and fifty people how many people died?**

Ten. Well they allowed, you know that when you're in the army doing the training you allowed a ten percent loss. That's deaths not just accidents, that's ten deaths.

That's standard.

That'd be twelve out of that company would be dead before they'd completed their training. And you'd say, "Well look it's not going to be me."

Were you told that when you first joined?

It was sort of word of mouth type of thing.

02:00 **So everybody expects there's going to be accidents in training.**

Yeah.

And when those people died in that particular exercise, how did the army respond?

The people who took place, "Shut up and don't tell anybody, don't talk about it". But they cancelled the system, nothing ever followed.

What do you mean nothing ever followed?

There was never any more of them. One only. I think it was because they, nobody had any pre-warning

02:30 of what they could or should do. We weren't taught anything about getting water out. Now days I teach or used to teach scouts, venture scouts how to get water of a tree and not kill a tree, how to tell the time by the sun, and how to find direction and all the survival skills which I was interested in.

How early in your training did you do that exercise?

I was eighteen.

No I mean how much training had you done prior to that particular exercise?

03:00 About five weeks I s'pose.

But all that then you're learning what the army wants you to know and how to, when they tell you to do something you do it. That's primarily to obey orders straight away until it becomes instinctive and if somebody says "Turn left" you turn left. "Quick march," you quick march. "Double" you double. Then they say, "Right-oh we're going out to see if you're a group to - being dropped here

03:30 you've got to survive. You're the last off," blah, blah, blah. "You're on your own for seven days and we'll be back to pick you up if there's anybody left." And that's what they said.

And you were with a group of?

Seven.

Seven. And what was the reaction amongst the guys when you found out what you were going to be doing?

"What are we going to do? How are we going to live?" Because we were city slickers we didn't have a clue. If one bloke hadn't been near I think we might've been seven still laying out in a paddock because we wouldn't have moved away from where they dropped us. They would've come back to pick us up in seven days but, but

04:00 we'd have died for sure because we didn't know where to get any water. I would not have, my water came out of a tap. I was a city person even though I had been to places and get water out of a, when we went down to that place at Mullim Beach to get water in the kerosene tin, we used to pump it up with an old cast iron pump thing. But you had to feed water into it first before it would supply. Until we found out, I mean if you're given a little jar of water which you could, didn't have a lid on it but you had to be careful.

04:30 My brother used to get it, he'd carry that and he'd be the fellow that primed it while I pumped the handle. If it didn't supply the water when required, there was none left, you'd either, we used to have to

go back and borrow water from somebody else and we'd get a hiding because we'd wasted water. Until we found out it was easier to go down the reef fill the jar with salt water and pour it in, it'd work then. It might be a bit brackish when it first started, that's the water that you put in the pump but it was, it was

05:00 only being pumped out from water filtering through the sand anyway. So we used to get away with it.

When these, when you did that particular exercise, the survival exercise, all of these young blokes had only been training for about five weeks? And you'd had no real preparation for that type of survival exercise?

That's right. As far as I know anyway.

So what's your view about that exercise that was done?

05:30 It was instructional I tell you that. It was a lesson to be learned and remembered. And how you can live off the land if you have to. As a matter of fact I'd be quite happy not to go back in the truck. I'd still be there if they'd let me.

Did you know any of those blokes who died?

No. No they were in a different group to me, different tentage to me. Even my friend Alf Kerr was a few tents down from where I was and he wasn't in my group.

06:00 And he certainly didn't die with other batches of five.

But they were all young recruits, eighteen year olds like yourself.

Eighteen year olds yeah.

And the army actually. What did they say to you exactly about how you should deal with that?

I think, the term they use now days is debriefing but my, you'd have to go up and speak to an officer, the whole group of seven would be in a building about this big. Everybody was sitting at a desk talking to an officer and you'd tell him what you did and how

06:30 you did survive. "Why you survived and blah, blah, blah". And we all pre-worked out that we wouldn't accept that this fellow had been with the aboriginals, it came out of the Trials For Champion books, Loftus Row or whatever his name was.

So what did they tell you about what you could tell people?

This is secret, you're not allowed to because if other things occur and the enemy gets to

07:00 hear about it, it could - I forget what the words were, consequences or something. So we didn't speak.

Was there any public reaction to all those people dying in one single exercise?

No, I was stationed at Canungra and they used to lose people there going away to Vietnam so it was no great, big deal. But that's happening all over Australia wherever they train soldiers and sailors and airmen, you had a ten percent loss.

07:30 **And when you heard that those young blokes had died, what did you think about it?**

"I'm lucky I wasn't amongst them. I'm glad it wasn't me". Well that's, that's about all you can say, they weren't buddy, buddies or anything like that, they were just part of a hundred and twenty men.

How was the CMF viewed at that time?

Well we were called "chocos", "chocolate soldiers".

08:00 Not to go overseas, but in nineteen forty, in 1942 they were part of the group that stopped the Japanese at Milne Bay. I might've been one if I'd stayed in I s'pose.

What was the significance of the term chocolate soldiers? [based on character from G.B.Shaw's "Arms and the Man"- ed.]

They didn't go overseas. Not to be exported or, they were protected. That was the terminology

08:30 given by the AIF to the, those who did go over there. But most of the AIF who served in the, not most, many of those that went over fought in Egypt and places like that overseas, one of my friends was a "Rat of Tobruk" [member of the 9th Australian Infantry Division] and he didn't, doesn't use the terminology but at that time a choco was a less than, not game enough,

09:00 brave enough to fight and not to, doesn't. But the Prime Minister John Curtin at the time said, this was when the Japanese were moving down through New Guinea and there were Japanese captured in northern Australia, "Anybody in Australia is on active service." So my short time in the army was active service.

What was your reaction at the time to being called a

09:30 **choco?**

I didn't hear it, I knew of it but I didn't hear - nobody ever spoke to me because I, nobody ever told me about it until later on when I was in the, somewhere else.

But you knew about the sentiment, what did you think about that?

Well there were people in Martin Place handing out white feathers, that was a term for cowardice in those days. And

10:00 anybody that didn't have a puggaree [pleated hatband] that they wear on the hat like the AIF wear, were chocos. They used to have a, I'm trying to think what we had around our hats, I think we might've had a felt hat band rather than a puggaree. But I think there was only a couple times in my life that I marched around Sydney in uniform, when I escorted Mum somewhere or I was on leave or something.

10:30 **So did anybody ever give you a white feather?**

No.

Did it bother you that sentiment that people had about it?

If somebody did that to me I'd probably smack him in the mouth. And I'd probably slap a sheila [woman] if she did it to me too.

What was your own view about your involvement in the CMF?

Well I didn't want to be in it, I'd have rather been in the RAAF but when you're like Dad said, "If you're not doing what you like, like what you're doing." So it became, I was quite happy with the life there was plenty of food, it was

11:00 exercise. I was, I could walk further or better than most of the others. Part of our training was a twenty-six mile route march and the last nine miles was forced. That was the only hard part I didn't particularly care for but I had no trouble doing the 26 miles.

Did you ever think it was strange that you were fit enough to do the CMF but you weren't they'd qualified you as being unfit to be in the AIF?

No. I was unfit for both of them.

But you were doing training for the CMF,

11:30 **you were doing those marches.**

Yes. I was discharged for being medically unfit. But I could not avoid it in the AIF at that time. Twelve months later I did.

Were you frustrated by that situation?

No. I was doing, well when I got put into the other place making those little screws, I was doing something for the war effort so I was very happy when the Americans who were doing something for the war and I spent,

12:00 I was at Milne Bay, Port Moresby, Dutch New Guinea between 1942 and 1945, no 1943 and 1945. I didn't get into New Guinea until about late January in 1943.

So what did you know about the American small ships when you joined them?

Nothing. As a matter of fact it was just like another, just an American company or outfit that had moved overseas, or to Australia.

12:30 I had no great love for them, I couldn't stand their language, especially those who were the New York type characters. I used to think they talked like gramophone records, they couldn't stop. Never could pull the plug out on them, yukkety, yukkety, yuk. I'll tell you about it later, about a Lieutenant Chew who we met in Milne Bay, he was an idiot but he was the heir to the Reynolds Tobacco Company.

13:00 He was a fool, gutless. Anyway, bit later I'll tell you that.

So what was your first job with the American small ships?

I was the storeman handling all the ships, equipment used by the vessels. We had vessels only about, at that particular time, only about 8,000 ton was the biggest one. Most of them were like those boats that carried,

13:30 like pearl luggers about that size. They went, instead, they travelled by wind. They didn't get picked up by the enemy as having a motor ticking over somewhere. They used to think that was all right. And there was a two masted Margaret Thwaites I think it was. She was in Milne Bay when the stoush [fight] was on, she was, they blew a plane out of the sky. No I don't think they, there were plenty of

14:00 35 foot working boats and I used to have a license to drive a ducw, that's an amphibious truck which I

used to take mail and supplies out and bring them back to freezer ships in the harbour.

Can you describe that amphibious truck?

Yes, it's like a flat barge with a sharp prow and a sharp stern or a bevelled should I say with a drive shaft to a propeller at the rear.

14:30 Even though the wheels could turn if you wanted to but it didn't do you any good because they'd be more of an impedence than an added thing in the water but the, we could do flat out it'd be about ten knots but most of the time you'd travel about eight knots which is a little over about seven and a bit miles an hour I s'pose. And I would take forever to get out to some of these boats if the tide was running the wrong way. I'd have to go further upstream and then come back if I had to do it that way but normally I'd only

15:00 drive that sort of thing if I had to, something special on. I had to deliver mail to one particular ship that had, freezer boat that had a crew of two and normally when you bring out mail everybody races to tie your boat up for you, tie up the duck. I thumped on their rails and nothing came to the surface and I thought, "Oh, the sods are away, but anyway I'll put this stuff downstairs". When I went downstairs there were two fellas dead in their beds.

15:30 They'd contracted that, they had that brain malaria which killed them. I hadn't seen them for weeks and they could've died any time between then and then. So the, the smell wasn't as bad as it could've been, I've smelled a lot worse than that amongst dead bodies. So I what I did was, I didn't pick them up and take them, I couldn't manhandle that and my boat too so I went back and reported it and they sent out a, someone to bring in the bodies and deodorise it and put somebody else on it.

16:00 **Was that the first time you'd seen dead bodies?**

No. No I'd seen people run over by trams in Sydney before, when I was a kid and I got my backside kicked for dropping a match to see if the blood would travel, carry, float on the blood. Well I was an inquisitive child.

16:30 I dropped a match on the blood to see if it would run down the railway line, tramline. "Callous little man", I think they called me and kicked my backside for that.

Someone had died from a tram accident.

They'd been run over by a tram and both legs had been severed about there so she was dying if not dead by the time I got there. But the blood was still running down the rail. I dropped a match in it to see if it would float and it did. And I think it was a policeman that kicked my backside and told me that I was a cheeky little

17:00 ignorant sort of a so-and-so.

How old were you when that happened?

About nine, eight.

Were you bothered by seeing that person dead?

No, my - this sergeant of the Water Police introduced me to a fellow who worked in a morgue and I used to go down there and he'd be sitting on a body with his lunch on the chest. He'd be eating his lunch off the cadaver if you like that word for it.

17:30 So he was fairly callous and I s'pose I, "Well if he can do it" you know, it was nothing, they can't do any harm to you when they're dead.

That was when you were a child, you used to visit the morgue.

The sergeant was a pretty callous sort of - he had met my Father in France during the First World War and he came home and married Dad's sister so yeah, we were friendly

18:00 sort of characters. He was pretty rough and ready.

How often did you go to the morgue?

About five times in those tender years I s'pose. Mostly to deliver messages. Of course now that he'd introduced me to this, my uncle had introduced me to this bloke who was having his lunch off the table shall we say, I could take messages. What was in the message I didn't have a clue but I could deliver the message.

What did you think when you saw him

18:30 **there having his lunch?**

"Callous so-and-so" but after a while there is a, there is a smell of death, a sweet, cloying I s'pose is the word and I met lots of it in Milne Bay later on when I went to see where the Japanese had landed. Or they were buried in a creek and along came the rivers and the rain and washed poor incy [reference to nursery rhyme with the line "incy wincey spider"?] out. Lots of bodies all strewn all over the place,

there were pigs having a feed

19:00 over there.

How do you think that early experience prepared you for what you...?

Probably made me, well I saw lots of, when I was driving recovery vehicles later on I'd see quite a few deaths. I had to recover a truck in the, on the road in between Tenterfield and Armidale there was a civilian truck that had been carrying timber, a semi-trailer. And the fellow didn't know about this Moonbi Range area

19:30 which is a lot of bends and things and he'd gone out, over, he couldn't make the corner. The truck had gone out like that and you could see where the tops of the trees had sort of been chopped off by the truck going out there. And then the load fell that way and it dragged the truck down and he went to the bottom and there was a creek at the bottom about as deep as that door, about six, five feet six feet deep and about four feet wide, front wheels went in, truck stopped on the other side and the load on the back came through and the truck was about, where the cab was was about that wide. And I had to pull

20:00 the cab apart to get the body out. And a bloke said, "While you're down there are you going to recover the truck too?" And I said, "Oh I don't think so, it's my job to get the body out. And we'll forget about the timber." I said, "The only thing I'd do, I wouldn't be trying to drag that thing up the hill with my recovery vehicle, I'd tip it sideways, send the trailer over and drag it up that way, but I'd probably disconnect the truck and drag it up at a later time. But as it is it's a holiday period and the trucks are

20:30 not good to be going south". (UNCLEAR They'd out-pass my truck.)

Was that before or after your army experience?

In the army, I was in the army.

That was while you were in the army?

Yeah my army recovery route was Armidale to Cunningham's Gap, quite a distance.

Before you went overseas?

No.

Oh after you went overseas, okay. So just going back to that incident with the small ships, what was the condition of those men who had died of malaria?

21:00 **What was their, how did you know that they had died of malaria?**

Well I touched their throats which they'd taught at some of the First Aid somewhere, that the idea was to touch the throat and if there was no pulse under it, then they were dead. So that's it, "They're dead and there's no way I can load them onto the duck, so I'll go back and report them". And that as far as I was concerned, that was the end of the session.

But did you know that they'd had malaria? How did you know that?

They told us at the,

21:30 brain malaria which is the one that really kills you. There are plenty of people around the paddock who have ordinary malaria because Milne Bay was one of the worst places to - for malaria in New Guinea to my knowledge anyway and we used to have, we found a, not only did we get a salt tablet every day and you'd rattle because they don't dissolve very quickly in the stomach, was to you had to take this Atebrin tablet.

22:00 And it, there's nothing yellow enough in this room to describe the colour of the skin after you've been taking these for about seven days. In fact I had a yellow touch to my body even after I left New Guinea. Anyway but they used to say you take six Atebrin tablets every week, one every day, have a rest on Sunday. Because it was so bad for malaria in Milne Bay I took two on Sunday.

22:30 I never had malaria in all the years I spent up there.

Those two blokes that died of malaria was that in Milne Bay?

Mmm.

Okay I wasn't sure about that I hadn't realised. So can you tell us about leaving Australia and actually going to New Guinea?

I went up, we travelled by troop train from Sydney to Brisbane and we laughed about getting out on a train track that's five foot four or something or other wide, to a goat track that's less than three feet wide. We thought the ice-cream trolley

23:00 came through that way. We got on a train and went to Townsville. It took us five and a half days to get from Brisbane to Townsville. Then I went out, they were drilling out and we stopped at a place called Armstrong Paddock. That's where the TAFE [Technical And Further Education] College is at Pimlico

High School, stayed there until they said, "Right, you're on your way." And we boarded a four engine, short sump flying boat which took off over Magnetic Island and turned left and

23:30 we flew up the coast to Milne Bay.

So how long were you actually with the small ships in Sydney before you actually...

About four months.

About four months. And during those four months you were working as the...

Storeman.

Storeman. And what exactly did that involve?

Unloading, I didn't personally unload it but unloaded the forklift that unloaded the truck and I'd store the equipments

24:00 where I could within the space they'd allowed for the stores that were held. There was things like ropes and anchors and chains, bollards and I think there was even a smoke sack for a steam engine. Not a choo-choo train but a ship. All the associated stores were to do with ship handling I s'pose is the best way. Lots and lots of ropes of various diameters or thickness.

24:30 Yeah. And different plies. Most of it was sliceable hemp.

Where did you actually live when you were working in Sydney with the small ships?

At a place called Dawes Point where the bridge goes from south Sydney to north Sydney in a tenement house. That's the one I was telling you about where the backyard was only 12 foot square. Good place to get out of. It was a three storey place,

25:00 we were a family of Father, Mother and three kids until Dad moved out. I knew the people upstairs, the Gordons and above them, I can't remember. Maynard I think it might've been. She was a, the Mother had some back problems and she never got out of the house from the time I ever saw her. But anytime she moved out they would carry her down the two flights of stairs and put her in an ambulance

25:30 and take her somewhere. And the lass, Miss Maynard, she stoped to look after her Mother. I think she was, I first went there in mid, about 1932 I s'pose, 1931 and she was still there when I came back on leave from Japan.

What was the atmosphere like in Sydney at that time

26:00 **between the Yanks and the Australian soldiers?**

Chalk and cheese [opposites] I s'pose. The Australians didn't have much loving for the Yanks who had more money and lots of girls were very attentive to the Americans who had money to spend on them. Certain types of girls anyway, those who liked that sort of thing. The Americans used to think they were top of the tree [superior] because they had so much money to

26:30 spend and the Australians were a little bit different. "Say something to me in Australian." And then I'd get a, I'd come home on leave and I'd get in a cab and the bloke would say that, he'd do a circuitous trip around Sydney to drive me home. I'd say, "How about you get back on the road," in an Australian accent. "And take me to Dawes Point. That's where I want to go. Up Trinity Avenue, down Argyle Cut, I'll show you where to go from there." "Oh," he said, "You've got an Australian accent." I said, "Yes that's right."

27:00 **He thought you were American?**

Yeah, well I had the American, after you're with them for a while you can't help but pick up their twang. I was in a hospital in Hollandia, that's the later part of the story but Lady Blamey and Lady Wakehurst came through to visit. I was the only Australian in an American hospital in Hollandia and Lady Blamey was the, I think he'd [General Thomas Blamey Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces (AMF) and Commander, Allied Land Forces] been made a field marshal second to Macarthur [General Douglas Macarthur Commander-In-Chief of the Allied Forces] .

27:30 The Americans thought I was god because I was, such important people had come to see me. And the Governor General's wife for that matter too. Lady Wakehurst - Governor General? Maybe the Governor's wife, anyway the Americans thought I was pretty good.

They came to visit you personally?

I was the only Australian in an American hospital. I'd had an operation for appendix.

28:00 **They thought you were pretty special, what about you?**

I didn't think I was much good. I held the role of assistant harbour master.

But you must've appreciated the visit from Lady Blamey?

Not really. I was supposed to sit up and make sure the counterpane never got disturbed and, "Don't smoke," you can't smoke in a hospital anyway but, "Don't attempt to." "Be polite," everybody gets it. "These important people are

28:30 coming to see you." I said, "Why?" "Stay in bed and don't get out." "But I'm walking, I'll be out in three or four days." "No, stay in bed, you're a patient." That sort of thing. I'm not really, my Grandfather used to say that I would never amount to anything, that I was the second son. The first son gets all the cream of the crop I s'pose the second

29:00 son usually gets pushed off to some southern place or outlandish place to grow cotton or coffee or something. That was his idea for a second son: I would never amount to anything. I had a smart remark like, "Well you've never made anything and you're the first son." Or the only son. I got slapped for that. My Mother jumped to my defence and said, "If you hit my son again you'll never be welcomed back."

So just going back to that time in Sydney,

29:30 **you were describing the sort of atmosphere between the Yanks and the Aussies.**

It wasn't very good.

How did you get on with them?

Well I had to wear an American uniform to get through the gates. Well I had to be wearing it when I was on the wharf, that might be better so it was just as easy to wear it to and from home. But I used to wear their, it wasn't the khaki uniform, I wore a green jacket and green trousers, long trousers, that was a working dress

30:00 so I was probably a unique green man I think, walking around that area. But my friends at Dewey and the shopkeepers, I'd get a wave from them and some of the blokes that constantly visited the pubs across the road from my place, I'd get a wave from them. And I never saw any Australian soldiers down that area.

Were there any big fights between the Yanks and the Aussies?

Up town there were yeah. And just like there was in

30:30 Brisbane, the Negroes were over to one area and the white Americans were in another area. Segregation I s'pose is the word for it. Later on I'll tell you about how on two occasions I had to bear arms against the Negroes during a riot, shoot to kill.

Okay we'll keep that story. Okay so when you left Australia what were your thoughts about going overseas?

"You beaut. I'm going somewhere".

31:00 "I might be able to meet my brother up there". He was on Goodenough Island and that's not far from New Guinea. It was a long way from Milne Bay mind you and I never got to see him anyway.

You were feeling pretty happy about it?

Oh yes. Yeah I was doing something. I knew I'd, I'd been discharged from the army I'd - not very little chance of doing anything for the country but now I had an opportunity. Yes.

What

31:30 **were your first impressions of Milne Bay?**

Well we flew in and landed and I didn't really see much because the bow wave sort of came over the windows so I never seen anything but water. But when we got ashore there was a big impression about, the first thing they feed you with a salt tablet and an Atebrin tablet so. An Atebrin tablets is even worse than vinegar and three times stronger than the normal stuff. Bitter as gall, the fact that they didn't give us any water to swallow these tablets made

32:00 it even worse. And the salt tablet, I tried to break mine up but they wouldn't let you do that, you had to swallow the damned thing whole.

What ship had you travelled on from Australia?

I came up by flying boat.

Oh flying boat, okay so that was when you said "We came ashore". Right. What sort of flying boat was it?

A four engine short Sunderland. That's the name of the type of craft. It was a RAAF crew.

32:30 But they gave, went across Magnetic Island and took off. The coastline was nice to look at, nothing special, I hadn't seen it before but it was nothing it was just green on one side and greener on the other.

Was that your first experience in a flying boat?

Yes.

How did you enjoy that?

Just something to get to, most of the time you'd only see the engines or see the fuselage or the wings. You couldn't see much

33:00 to the stern of the boat. Nothing special for me, it was just another lump of land. And I wasn't really interested in coastlines anyway, because I could imagine myself being a bit of a target because they weren't very high off the water and I didn't remember seeing any life jackets or other means of transportation in the water if it was shot out of the sky.

Like you thought about the possibility of being

33:30 **a target?**

Well yeah. That was one. It was only six months before that the Japs [Japanese] had tried to take Milne Bay. October, yeah about four or five months in it.

How worried were you about that?

"Fate, if it comes it comes. If you're name's on the ticket then you're gone". Gotts be a fatalist in these things. If your time,

34:00 if your number's up or the clock stops [if you are meant to die] , that's it. You know the clock is wound but once, nobody knows when it stops. When it's your turn bingo. And I'm not a Christian I'm a Deist so that makes it easier.

And you thought that even back then?

Oh yeah I've been a Deist ever since I'd put meat tags [army identification tags] on and they wanted to know how to spell Deist.

What does that mean?

I believe in god but

34:30 not the son of god and all these other hangers-on. Only one religion for me, there is a being greater than man. He might not even be a human type. Something's out there, something must've put all these little things up in the sky but I don't think JC [Jesus Christ] was it. Not in my opinion anyway.

So even at the age of 18...

Younger, about 12 or 15 I have believed that.

35:00 **So you had that philosophy when you were travelling into what was basically a battle zone.**

Well not quite, it was up shore from a battle zone. But there were Japanese used to get on our mess queues every now and again. But we had some Filipinos in amongst the crews that were visiting and they would always know it was the Japanese and not Filipinos and they cut him to death before he could even get served, the tucker. I've never seen a Filipino that didn't have

35:30 a knife about that long, like a bowie knife only, as sharp as a razor blade and they wear it between their shoulder blades in a sheath and they'd pull it out and have this bloody great knife sticking out. About as long as a bayonet.

So can you tell us what happened when you arrived at Milne Bay?

Well they didn't call it Milne Bay, they called it Fly River which was something that flows into Milne Bay I think. I think one of the RAAF crew said, "This is a good

36:00 gold mining area," which was very interesting but I doubted I'd be digging for gold. "You'll be building a water point." That's what I went up to do, build a water point to supply the troops but when I got up the water point built previously by what they called See-Bees, Americans I don't know whether it's naval or army but anyway they do all that sort of construction stuff near the waters,

36:30 near the ocean. So they said, "Right, well you're, I don't know what to do with you," the captain came around and said, "I don't know what to do with you." He said, "Right-oh the next job I've got for you you can load some, while we're waiting pending your employment somewhere, you can stack 44 gallon drums." 50 gallon drums they called them. So you could put three on the base, two on top of them and one on top of them, so three high. But they forgot we were there. We worked for, instead of having a break at four hours, I think we did ten hours straight.

37:00 And I was absolutely saturated. I had sweat that poured out of me, I didn't have any energy left and I badly wanted a smoke. And I said, "I'm going to light a smoke." "Don't light a cigarette here." "I don't care what you say, I'm going to have a smoke." So I was the only one there when I pulled the cigarettes out of me pocket and I went to strike me matches and they were that wet from perspiration they wouldn't strike. And I said, "What am I bloody doing?" So I took me cigarettes and I put them and I put my matches and closed up the box and I carried them like this. And I walked

37:30 out the gate and went to the ocean and walked to about knee deep and lowered it so it was near the water let them float away. And my friends who had deserted me when I said I was going to have a cigarette, they all came around and clapped me on the back and said, "Yahoo." And that's when I broke down and cried. I was that tired I was ready to commit suicide by lighting a cigarette, but I didn't realise that I was being stupid. But I couldn't, until I sort of woke and my brain ticked over and said, 'What are you doing?'

38:00 **Because these were full of fuel?**

Oh yeah, yeah. But we'd been working for ten hours straight without a break and that's a lot of bloody drums to be... You'd have to put the three down and then put chocks against it, then roll two on top of the board then take the board out and roll these drums up, one drum up the top again. And there was a group of, I think it was six in our group.

Why do you think that you broke down and cried?

I was so relieved at still

38:30 being alive. I'm not sure what it was but I didn't feel so good afterwards when I woke up to the fact that I'd cried too but still, everybody patted me on the back because I'd been so smart as to dump the cigarettes and the matches. Nearly made me give up smoking but I, when they came around and gave me a smoke later on I broke down again, so. But the Yanks used to give you a packet, they used to give you a carton of cigarettes a week. Ten packets

39:00 to a week, seven days. But the Australian army had taught me to smoke so I can't blame the Americans for that.

What do you mean that the army had taught you to smoke?

Well when we were at recruit stage at the Infantry Battalion at Dubbo, they, for some time we didn't have rifles, we used to train with bits of wood and we came with, they brought out cases of rifles packed in grease and we were to clean them.

39:30 Some of us would clean the weapon and then this corporal would say, "Right ten minute smoko, those that smoke fall out. Those that don't smoke keep cleaning weapons." Not being a, wanting to be dipped in grease all the time I said, "Right-oh, I'll smoke." So the blokes said, "Right-oh," of course they were keen to smoke too so, you'd wash your hand and get the grease off and roll a smoke. Or somebody did. Clean their hands, roll it for you and give you one. You'd put it in your mouth and cough your lungs up when you took your first draw.

40:00 But after a while it wasn't bad. But you certainly didn't dip your fingers in grease more than anybody else. I can remember when a packet of ten Capstan would last me a fortnight, one a day sort of thing or maybe one more if I was playing cards or something silly like that. But when I gave up smoking in 1982, I'd smoke at least two ounces of weed, rollies [hand rolled] at least 35 cigarettes a day.

40:30 Tailor-mades; with a pipe I'd smoke two ounces a fortnight out of that. Sometimes I'd have a cigar. Yeah I was really into it. Then I took up a job driving a bus with school kids in it that get off at sport somewhere, I went cold turkey for a week and I haven't had a smoke since. 1982 that happened. And my son's, he's about 40 now, he can't give up smoking. I said, "Well go cold turkey." He said, "But as soon as someone lights a cigarette up alongside you,

41:00 you get a whiff up and you start again." I said, "Well you're weak-kneed. Give it up, give it up. Make sure you stop." He said, "Well you beat me that way Dad, I can thrash you at anything else but I can't beat you at that."

I reckon he'd be hard pressed.

Tape 4

00:31 **So back at Milne Bay, after that first incident, what happened after that?**

Well they said, the captain in charge of the thing came around and said, "What are you blokes still doing here? You're supposed to have knocked off six hours ago," or something. We said, "Well we've been working straight." He said, "Well I'll have to give you your run, no work for the weekend, come back in three days time," or something or other.

01:00 "Anyhow, I don't want to see you for three days." When I got back to the area where we were camping in the small ships division they said "Well we've got a job for you, you're the supply officer. You'll get a one and a half ton truck, a Chevy truck, you'll get a ducw, you'll get a jeep. Now you've got to learn to fire a rifle and to carry side-arms when you carry mail," blah, blah, blah. So I said, "That'll be a piece of cake." So I had to go to the provos [Provosts - Military Police]

01:30 and prove that I could fire a .45 and hit what I was aiming at. I had no trouble with the rifle, that was the terrible thing they treated it like a football. They'd kick it, they'd drive it and dump it to the ground, I was surprised they could hit anything with it the bloody thing. But, have you ever seen them drive them into the ground and drive the butt into the ground and hit trees and things with their rifles? Crazy sods.

So as supply officer, what did you have to do?

I had to feed three thousand men a month. Cater for them

02:00 sorry, sorry, sorry. That's the strange thing about Americans, they don't like tinned apricots and my tent lines I s'pose were here to the RSL away from where I worked in an old copra shed on the end of the Gili Gili Wharf. Anyway I made a pathway between that building and my tent lines, three cases wide and three deep of tinned apricots.

02:30 **What do you mean you made a path of them?**

I made a walkway through the mud and slush with three cases at the base and three above and three move above that so that there were nine cases to a stack if you like, of tinned apricots. And there'd be something like twenty tins to a case, I'm not sure now and they went from here to the RSL entrance there.

Can you describe that in terms of a distance?

Shall we say it's about

03:00 two hundred metres. Three cases wide, three cases deep.

And why did you do that?

What was I going to do with them? Nobody would eat the things. Americans won't eat tinned apricots. So I used to take it out the army base and swap it for bully beef [canned meat] and they used to, the Australians would say, "Here comes that idiot that wants bully beef. Give it to him." Of course that's all their ration basically was. But we had a cook who had, who could turn out

03:30 seventeen different meals with bully beef, all delectable. I can still remember beautiful stews made out of bully beef.

Seventeen different meals?

Yeah, beautiful meals. But the only thing wrong with this particular cook, he used to keep a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK under the kerosene fridge in the kitchen. I thought that was a no-no, but he turned out these meals and I wasn't going to say anything wrong. Because some of the other cooks we had before he came, they were terrible.

04:00 Wouldn't even put water with the bully beef to make it, kill some of the salt content. Makes your throat the driest thing in the world.

So that pathway, why did you actually, why did you need to do that?

Because the ground content in that particular area, it was very close to the beach and it was either sloppy sand or sloppy mud. And not too far from my tent lines

04:30 where I was camped there was another pathway, another - Frank Atherton another friend of mine that had come up from Sydney with me, he drove a, he used to drive a 35 foot work boat taking people all over the island, all over the bay from the American lines and he and I had what they called a funk hole, a slit trench which sort of catered to our place to hide when the Jap planes came over and they used to come over every night anyway. And we didn't know whether they were spotters or whether they had bombs

05:00 on them or anything like that. So we were trying to do, you do hear, they're supposed to fire three shots but here they did two because the other bloke would be that far, until they introduced sirens. Anyway the, I had another bit of a track cut between our tent lines but I wasn't, they came along and said this pathway was a no-no, "You can't do that. They'd see it from up there." So I thought, "I'll leave the one between the wharf and the tent lines, leave that one there that'll keep me dry and my feet clean so

05:30 I can board ships and things like that. But the one going into the funk hole, we'll keep that bare and my, part of getting to the slit trench was across a creek, a shallow creek I'll say here to the door wide", and it used to have those little lobsters like crayfish or whatever the Yanks call it, but they were poisonous. If they nipped you you'd be sorry sort of thing. They wouldn't kill you but give you a nasty ulcer type leg sore. Anyways I used to run across this coconut

06:00 tree and into the slit trench. Sometimes I'd slip and fall but not too often. And in our slit trench we'd put duck boards on the bottom to keep our feet dry, we had shelves cut into the side of the walls and lined up with everything. Nice big round piece of tin off a hut somewhere and covered with lots and lots of sandbags and that was our funk hole. And when it got really tough and we saw a bomber or something we'd get into the place that was covered but otherwise sit outside and watch the plane

06:30 go over. We were prepared.

Can you describe that base came that was there?

Well it was based on an old copra wharf where the luggers used to come in and carry the Lux, I think it was Lux, Palmolive soap or whatever they called it. They used to make another sort of soap that was banned from use because it had Lyesol. It was banned from use in the troops because it had

07:00 some brew inside it that would bring out heat rash and tear your skin off in great lumps. Not a deodorant, what's the other word? Anyway, terrible tack but it was banned, couldn't be sold to troops or used in troops. I've lost the word sorry. Anyway they used to take the coconuts down,

07:30 dry them, split them open and dry the copra, copra, and feed it into the holes of the luggers and away they'd go somewhere. They'd take it somewhere for processing. And there were lots and lots of coconut trees in that particular area and the shed where I had my distribution stores was their old copra shed. And there was a wharf going out to reasonably deep water where the one, two wheeled trolley open trolley that they loaded it

08:00 up on to take it out. That was the wharf area and our tent lines were, we were facing the wharf our tent lines were to the left and there was too much slop to the right side and a lot more coconut trees which was considered dangerous if a bomb should drop somewhere, it'd shake all the coconuts down and anybody walking past would die.

Did that happen very often?

08:30 No because most of the trees would be denuded of their nuts or the explosions had already blown them down. A lot of the coconut trees didn't have any tops on them because that's where the snipers used to hide, or they thought. Anyway my friend Frank used to live in a tent about three from me but he used to, the work boat used to be tied to the wharf so if it was in, Frank was around. If my duck broke down he would take me out on to the other ships that were tied out.

09:00 **What were the living conditions like?**

We lived in tents on an arc mesh base about eight feet off the ground because if the tide came in it'd go right underneath the tentage area. Not that - your stretchers were those wooden framed things and they'd go in between the gaps in the arc mesh and you'd be sleeping lopsided or fall out of bed. One of the two. Some blokes used to sling hammocks but there was nothing much of the tent you could hang

09:30 it to and the tent poles didn't like you.

How many men to a tent?

Eight. They were big Yankee bell tents, they were. No six, beg your pardon, once you got the arc mesh in. Six men, three on each side.

And how many people altogether would've been living there at that camp?

Maybe 40, 50. And some itinerants used to come through every now and again. They'd bring a group of -

10:00 we had Filipinos and then we had those Arkansas hillbilly characters that came in. They were pretty terrible. Sometimes we'd have officers and somebody'd have to vacate a tent. But my tentage stayed where it was because I was the supply officer under the rank of lieutenant should I be captured. And ten you'd go out on a main road and it went down to the airstrips

10:30 to the right. On the left used to go up through the Australian army detachments, anti-aircraft and medical.

So who were the 3,000 men that you had to supply?

This camp that we were in, so the 40 or 50 that were there and any ships that came in for, carrying, the small ships would carry stores to and from the east coast of

11:00 north-eastern coast of New Guinea up to where the, up about Madang I think at that particular stage. They were at risk, they could be bombed.

Can you describe your storeroom for us? The storeroom, the shed.

It was about twice as big as this area or maybe three times as big as this room. I had a little desk and chair, filing cabinets.

11:30 There was a double door entry and a window that overlooked a wharf so I could see what was moored out there. We also had a water point, a pipe went along the wharf and these taps to it where these boats could tie up to get water to their vessel so, and that was part of my job too I had to make sure there was water, was on ready to go. We had a big tank

12:00 within the lines itself on a big stand which was a target for when the bombers came over. Never got it but they'd have a target, they'd drop something in water near it. And I'd have stacks and stacks of box

items. I had ten native boys working for me, they did all the stacking and carrying and they liked working for me because I used to reward them every now and again.

What did you reward them with?

Well I made a jungle juice [homemade alcohol]

- 12:30 in a 44 gallon drum. Special drums used to have a red cross on the top which used to go amongst all the other fuel drums and I'd make a brew every, cook up every 27 days. 21 days but it had to sit there until they delivered the supplies every 27 days or something. I forget what it was. But I'd make a, all these apricots I thought they were going to waste, "Why waste all that beautiful fruit and sugar?" So I'd have the native boys opening
- 13:00 the tins. I'd clean the 44 gallon drums first with a steam cleaner and drain it and then put the big red cross on the top. And they'd, put a big funnel in I'd made so they could pour the juice in and the, they'd open the tins and they had a big wire screen across the top to catch most of the fruit and the juice and syrup would go into the. They could eat the fruit if they wanted to or they could throw it in the sea and the ocean'd take it somewhere. And the
- 13:30 when the, I'd made a plunger, a measure. A stick would go inside the drum and it would float to a certain, that's that first reinforcement rim inside the 44 gallon - when it got to that area no more sugar would go into that one. Any tins were left out of the case and they wanted to take them for tucker, they could have them. The native boys thought that was pretty good and they used to bring me a like a sandbag full of fresh fruits like limes
- 14:00 and banana and they'd throw a coconut in every now and then. I'd knock that back, I didn't want that. Anyway but they'd bring in limes. If you ever had to take these salt tablets, a little squeeze of lime juice into the mashed up salt tablet and wash it down. It was a lot easier than trying to swallow the tablets every time you walked around the place you'd rattle, "plob, plob, plob". Very indigestible things. Anyway the, I put, my sister used to send me a packet of mixed peel every week in the mail
- 14:30 and it'd go into the drum too and at the top of a coconut tree there's a cabbage which would be as big as your hands put together like that and it grows on a stem about as long as my thumb. And you bend it over and you hit it with your hand like that and it weeps this colourless liquid, very potent stuff, very potent. Runs about sixty percent alcohol I think. It's powerful stuff. Even better than hundred proof rum which is only about 35 I s'pose.
- 15:00 Yeah and it's got quite a kick to it. Anyway it would, I used to measure it out in an enamel jug about yeah big, in down through the strainer hole, put the bung in it, lock it up nice, wheel it in amongst most of the other fuel drums that were going back empty and it'd sit there until they came in to pick up the supply. It had to sit there for 21 days minimum but they used to
- 15:30 come around every 27 days and give me another supply of fuel. And they'd take that one away and bring back the empty drum. First time they tried it they said I had to drink some first to prove that it was edible. Or drinkable whatever you call it. So we had some glasses. Do you know what a "Lady Blamey" is?

Can you tell us?

Yes, you get a beer bottle and you empty it and make sure it's clean inside and you put a, either used a

- 16:00 hot wire warmed up with a Bunsen burner or a pump up, I forget, what do you call those blasted things? Anyway, or you get a piece of rag and you soak it in kerosene and you wrap it around the neck of the, where the neck meets the bottle and you light it. Then the flame goes all the way around, you invert it and stick it in a bath and it breaks at where the heat was. And you get a stone and you rub it on the inside of the glass where you're going to drink from. That's a Lady Blamey. She didn't
- 16:30 like the idea much to be making her name into a beer bottle drinker, glass. But when I first went through Brisbane, no through Townsville that's right, no they didn't have it in Brisbane but they had it in Townsville at a army canteen vessel or trailer would pull up with two kegs in it and you paid your shilling and you'd put your glass out and they'd fill it up. Depending on the size of your glass, it wouldn't make any difference whether it was a cup or a thing that big,
- 17:00 it would cost you a shilling for whatever the content was in there. And the circle would form up and queue and by the time you got three of those down you got pretty sozzled [drunk] anyway. And it wasn't cold beer, hot beer, I mean it wasn't cold, it was hot or warm and by the time you walked the circle three times and had three of these Lady Blameys, that was enough anyway, in the heat. Good days. Anyway up in New Guinea we were, I used those Lady Blameys
- 17:30 to siphon off some of this 44 gallon drum and, about that much, clear, or not clear it had a yellowish tint to it. That was the apricot juice I s'pose, and sip that. "Ah sink it down," so I sank the lot down about that much in one go and nearly - flames coming out of my ears and hair stood on end. Powerful stuff. No more, I can't drink any more of that. I was only about 18 I think. Yeah, 19 maybe, anyway.
- 18:00 And they said, eyes were wide open and hair stood on end and they said and then they tasted it, they said, "Oh the bees knees [great], I'll have one of these every month." I said, "Every time the fuel drums

come around I'll give you one." And I said, "But what do I get in exchange?" And they said "Well when our liberty ship come in with PX," what they called PX supplies, that's all the canteen stuff that the yanks have, "They'd put an extra truck in and that was mine". And I used to get cigarettes and ice-cream and toilet paper and cigarettes, all sorts

18:30 of goodies anyway. Oh yeah chicken, tinned chicken and tinned turkey and some other slop, like baby food it is, terrible. All their foods are like that, everything chopped. Their chicken is chopped to itty bits and there wasn't a piece of chicken that long amongst any of the tinned stuff. But I'd get lots and lots of that stuff and I'd put it back and the native boys used to put, stack it away in one particular area that I had inside the shed and they would get three tins of half and half tobacco

19:00 which, it was pipe tobacco and they'd take that away quite happy. Overpaid they used to think. But when you finished a smoke, taking your weak tobacco out of the tin it would pole down and you had a cigarette box, cigarette case. It'd hold ten cigarettes or more I forget, anyway I didn't use it for that. Might've been 15 cigarettes, half a pack would fit in a tin yeah. Right.

So what did you do with all those extra goodies that you got?

A lot of the stuff I'd take out to the Australian

19:30 DID [?] and swap it for, I used to take, some I used to take to the RAAF first and they used to fly fresh supplies in from Queensland. So they used to take a lot of that tinned chicken and tinned ham and whatever, chilli con carne? Terrible that, baby food. And I'd swap that for the rations I could, whatever was going, the fresh rations I could give to the ships if they were going away. The, I don't know if you've tried the ration, the way it comes out of the Australian

20:00 Army, we used to get some of our food and some of the Yanks, but most I used to get from the Australian DID. How can you get half an egg shared between three men for one day sort of thing, that was of course powdered eggs in those days or etherised eggs. Shocking things those, etherised eggs but how do you share half an egg between three men? So you'd have to swap that to get one egg for one man. So you'd give some of these some other until you get a decent - I used to cater for the ships that were going away and they

20:30 wouldn't be back for maybe three weeks but for the first one or two days they'd have a decent feed, then they went back to their tinned stuff.

So, I didn't quite get that what did you do about trying to divide one egg between three?

I would swap this, with the RAAF I'd get green vegetables for this chilli con carne and tinned ham and chicken and stuff, and with the other one I'd swap some of these other rations that they'd give me with the

21:00 Australians for bully beef which our cook used to cook no trouble at all, a la beaut. So I supplemented the rations that were given to supply the vessels going out with the crew or maybe ten or twelve or even less sometimes I think there were about five on a lugger. And because of the peculiar systems that they have about rationing, a third of a teaspoon for four men for seven days, a tin of jam for - when I was in the scouting system a tin of jam wouldn't last a day with the scouts

21:30 but it was supposed to last, a whole 16 ounces but you only get half an ounce per man per day sort of thing.

So how much would say one can of tinned turkey or chicken how much would buy you?

I forget now but we'd swap it for, I'd take it to the RAAF and they were quite keen to get a bit of green vegetables and fruits and things that you couldn't get in New Guinea. Cabbage and cauliflowers

22:00 and apples, tomatoes, things like that.

So where did those fresh vegetables come from?

They'd bring them in, they'd fly them in, the RAAF, they'd have the aeroplanes.

So the RAAF flew in all the fresh stuff and you'd...

For their officers.

For their officers.

And I'd swap this stuff with the officer's mess, whoever was the catering person for the officer's mess, I'd swap this stuff for their stuff.

Why would they swap their fresh stuff for the stuff

22:30 **that you were giving them?**

Well they wouldn't get it otherwise, they wouldn't get this tinned, this Yankee baby food that I had and I didn't want it anyway.

They liked it?

Oh yeah, they used to think it was great. And it was slop basically, it was stuff you'd give a baby.

So you can't remember how...?

Nothing chewable in them. What was the ratio? One for one sort of thing, no I don't, I forget, I think they'd got more of this stuff than I wanted.

23:00 I didn't want it anyway so.

Who set the price?

Their catering officer and me. I'd say, "Do you want any tinned apricots?" "No, we've got a stack of that." I'd willingly give that stuff away.

So did you have to, was there a sort of a bartering...?

Oh yeah.

Did you haggle?

Oh no, no. They'd give you, you'd sort of go overboard a little bit and say, "Right-oh I'll give you

23:30 a case of tinned chilli con carne," or something which is, it's not even hot. It's like weak pumpkin soup I s'pose in taste. Or, "How about a dozen lettuce?" or something like that which was scarce as hen's teeth [rare]. I don't like lettuce, there's nothing in it as far as I'm concerned, chlorophyll but that's about it. But other people liked it and it'd supplement their, give them a cold salad lunch.

24:00 You didn't eat too much hot stuff up there, it's pretty hot Milne Bay.

How did the guys react, the people that were going out to sea, how did they react when you gave them fresh vegies [vegetables] ?

I was very popular. I never made any profit out of this jungle juice. I used to write to my sister and say, "Thanks very much for the mixed peel," but that was it sort of thing. And the native boys did quite well out of their labour, quite well, they loved to come and work for me. And they the fellas that went up the coconut trees

24:30 too to get this kava or whatever they call this stuff. Jungle juice, potent stuff.

How did that jungle juice you made, how did that affect the natives?

They didn't get any of that. They want it they can make their own.

I thought you said you gave them that as a reward.

No I didn't give them any jungle juice, no. No they gotta make their own. That stuff coming out of the coconut tree was pretty potent, if they wanted it they could get it.

I'm sorry, so who did you give that jungle juice to then?

25:00 The people who supplied the fuel. And they would, they'd give me the fuel and take the drum away and I would, they were the ones who would supply the truck full of PX supplies. They'd somehow just bung a truck in the, nobody would check it out they'd just load it and off it went, delivered to my place. The boys would then unload it, The native boys could unload it in say twenty minutes and stack it in the shed.

So the guys who supplied the fuel, who were they?

25:30 Just a petrol point crew, I don't know what their branch was.

Americans?

Americans yeah.

So they were the guys that got the jungle juice.

Yeah they got the jungle juice, I got the truck full of supplies, the RAAF got the tinned baby food, they would give me greens and I'd check some of the other stuff that was at the Yankee, there was ice-cream even. The yanks would get ice-cream and toilet paper which you couldn't get in the Australian area. Newspaper if you were lucky. And I'd

26:00 swap that for bully beef. Yeah that'd supplement the rations and with all the other stuff that we didn't want, they could do what they wanted with it.

So you had quite a complicated system going.

Oh yes.

How did you work all that out? How did you manage it?

Just, why waste it. "Yes, I think I could swap that for something, yeah I'll go and try, I'll go and see some

of the other..."

26:30 So I'd go and say, "What do you folks do with all your bully beef?" "Oh, we've got to eat it because we can get it and we've got nothing else." "If I gave you some X,Y,Z would you give me some bully beef?" "You can take all the bully beef you can handle." "No let's be fair about it." And so it worked out.

So how popular were you?

Very popular. But when they'd see my truck coming in, a little Chevy, it was like

27:00 a 6x6 GMC but it only had one axle at the back so it was a 30 ton truck, a 30 hundred weight truck rather than a - that's wrong, yeah a ton and a half instead of a two and a half ton, and, "Here comes that idiot that wants to swap food for bully beef." And I didn't mind if they called me a fool because I was getting some stuff that our cook could do something with. Of course the cook used to get a lot of that surplus stuff too because he would supplement something with bully beef. But when the

27:30 Filipinos, they have a liking for fish products so some of that tinned salmon and stuff used to go down well. Tuna or whatever they packed up in those days. And the, there was plenty of fish if you wanted to go and drop a line over the side, crocodiles. Jeez I've shot a few of those things in me time.

So the guys who supplied the fuel,

28:00 **what sort of affect did the jungle juice have on them?**

I don't know, I only saw them when they'd deliver their tins or take them away. And probably they'd be sober by the time they picked them up because they wanted more.

Did they tell you anything about it?

Except it was good stuff. But why don't I make two tins, two drums. I could only manage one at a time. "We'll give you more drums." "No, if somebody comes down and does a spot check they'll ignore one drum but

28:30 if there's more than one there I could be in trouble and you'll get nothing." "Oh no, leave it the way it is."

Was all that bartering and swapping and everything, was that acceptable or was it...?

Quite illegal, quite illegal. Illegal. But I did it, I didn't make any profit out of it, I didn't make anything out of it except the ice-cream maybe. And chocolate. Why would you want chocolate in bloody New Guinea?

Where did you get chocolate from?

Out of the truck, it'd come in the PX supply.

29:00 Terrible tack, it's not as sweet as Cadbury's or Nestlé's, it's more like dark chocolate without the sugar. More like cooking chocolate, that's the best way to describe it. I didn't like it much at all, their ice-cream was all right but that was a bit insipid too. You get to like it after a while, it's like their beer. That'll only give you a, a case of that will only give you a headache. It's even worse than the light beer that we get out here.

And who wanted the chocolate?

Anybody that wanted it could have it.

29:30 "You want any chocolate?" "Oh yeah!" "What are you going to use it for?" "We'll find a use for it."

Did you swap the chocolate for stuff as well?

I'd just chuck it in if they wanted it. Supplement.

You said it was all quite illegal, so how did you get around that? How did you get away with it?

The stuff that I got in would go out to ships that were going away. And the stuff that I surplussed would either go into the kitchen for use - nobody ever went down there.

30:00 In America, if they issue you with something it's written off then. I saw an American driving a dozer in a engineering plant. I went out to get something I forget what it was, something I had to get for the camp. Anyway the bloke said "I want a coconut." I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'll knock a few down." "I'll get out of your road because I know if coconuts fall they hurt." So he drove his dozer into the coconut tree and bent it over like that and he put it in reverse and he looked over his shoulder

30:30 and back he went and the coconut hit him on the back of the head. Killed him stone dead at the controls and this bulldozer was still going backwards. It went through about two million dollars worth of stuff. Crushed everything, it didn't stop until it came to another coconut tree and it stopped it. He was still at the controls going backwards at the fastest rate he could get out of it and the coconut 'splat' in the back there and he was dead. And the truck was still going backwards. And nobody thought,

31:00 that was just the dozer moving around the place, it was just going. They never paid any attention until it stopped and this bloke didn't get off the truck - off his dozer.

Where were you when that happened?

Milne Bay.

That was in Milne Bay, that was during this period that we're talking about.

Yeah, you want a story about Milne Bay, my first,

Just staying with that story for a minute, that bloke who was killed, who was he?

He was just a driver of a dozer. Just an American soldier. Buck Private

31:30 I s'pose you'd call him.

So the American driver who was driving the...

He was just carried away, replaced by somebody else.

32:00 Died in action. He was overseas so it'd have to be in action.

And you saw all that happen.

Mmm.

And you'd sort of warned him about the coconuts?

No. I said, "I'll get out of your road because coconuts come down with a bit of force and they'll kill you. That's about all I'll say, I'm not going to be standing under one of those if you're driving a truck or dozer into it." He raised his blade on the nose about half way up so that he'd get some concentration on the flexibility of the tree.

32:30 Sure paid his dividends for him. Well I don't s'pose it would've been two million dollars then, but it'd be a couple of thousand. It'd be two million today if he had to replace that sort of stuff now.

What was it that got so destroyed?

Steel and pipes and hex - what do they call it not hexican [?] , anyway that stuff that they use for airstrips and

33:00 lex [marsden matting] - anyway won't worry about it. But the fact that if you dropped a bomb on an airstrip it'd hold. All you'd do is fill it up and you'd put this metal over the top and planes would land straight through. So it wasn't a great loss to, if you bombed an airfield. If you bombed it tonight, tomorrow morning lunchtime there'd be planes landing on again. That was how quite it was to repair. I can't think of the name of it, anyway there was lots of that stuff went under the tracks which of they roll over it

33:30 it sort of bends it out of shape and you can't use it. And there were probably a couple of engines in there ploughed under it too.

So this bulldozer just kept going?

Yeah, it ran up to another coconut tree and stopped and that was it. I think that maybe it just stalled because I couldn't go any further. I think maybe that's what stopped it otherwise it would've ploughed everything down.

You said you had several young native boys working with you, what were they like?

They were pretty good once

34:00 they, once I rewarded them for their labours. They wanted, they always used to bring me limes and other fruit for me to enjoy because it goes well with Atebrin tablets and salt and things like that.

So what did they do for you?

They're the ones, they unloaded this truck that I got in. They would stack it in the shed for me and that's, and they'd bring me down that half coconut gourds of the stuff from the coconut tree. So yeah, they think they got

34:30 well paid, three tins of tobacco each. They were flat out getting a smoke from some of the characters around.

How old would they have been?

Anywhere between 16 and 60 I s'pose.

So you had older guys working for you as well. How did you communicate with the?

I'd tell them what to do. This fellow, pigeon English sort of thing. I got the message across.

35:00 "Him fella, put em over there," sort of thing, "Stack stack." And they'd get the message and they could carry anything on their shoulders but they couldn't pick it up. You'd have to pick it up for them and put it on their shoulders and away they'd go.

Were they hard workers?

Oh yeah good, good workers. The fellas I had anyway.

So how did you enjoy working with them?

Well they smelled something terrible, they eat that betel nut or something, runs down their face. And it stinks

35:30 pretty putridly. They don't seem to wash, not my blokes anyway. But normally the people up around the Mount Hagen area or up around those over in Moresby were quite clean, they wouldn't to smell as bad but I think it's like most people have an aroma that's indigenous to he area that they come from I s'pose. I did go to a property in Moresby, that's a later story but they'd grow beet or some sort of stuff

36:00 that they get - sago, no sago's a palm. They'd get something that grows sugar, I forget what it is now but they'd dig this stuff out of the, they'd get it out of the root of the plant. Sago they grow a lot of that stuff. God, terrible tack. I wouldn't even eat it as a kid.

You said you never really profited from all the swapping and the bartering that you did, but

36:30 **how did you reward yourself?**

Well I got pleasure out of the fact that the fellows going away on the ships got better fed than those who were stuck in camp. I used to like to think I did a good job, and I used to get a lot of ice-cream and cigarettes to smoke for nothing. Even though the Yanks issued you with a carton of cigarettes a week, I preferred Lucky Strike which was probably the worst thing you could ever smoke, stronger than most other things. And now and again I'd get a heap of cigars which when I was

37:00 playing cards it was nice to have a cigar burning in the ashtray. I did alright.

You said you were pretty popular, did people do anything for you because of what you did for them?

Well I used, people that went away with the, took the ships up, sometimes they'd bring me back something I could send away, something like a lacquered toy, a carved ship, little, what's a lacquer toy. Name pops into my mouth, lacquered toy though I think that might be a sort of a canoe with

37:30 a sail made out of some sort of palm leaves I think, which is very nice. And I've got a canoe about that long, a war canoe. Car pegs and little things, all the legs have fallen off. I don't have much left now that my brother-in-law and my Father nicked most of the good stuff. Let's not go into that just yet.

38:00 **Did anybody frown upon what you were doing?**

Yeah, Lieutenant Chew did. This fellow who was the officer in charge of the show, he was the fellow that I said the Reynold's Tobacco idiot. Anyway he came to me one day and he said, "I want you to," he had a truck a Dodge Weapons Carrier, I don't know whether you've seen them but they're a 4x4, the wheels are about that high and that wide [indicates] . A big lump of a cumbersome thing but a six cylinder motor in it, very powerful. He said, "I want you to go down to where the Japanese landed.

38:30 Now you can take a friend with you." I said, "Right," so I asked Fred, my friend Frank Atheton if he'd like to go. "Yeah, right," and he had two officers sit in the back in a sort of lord of the manor system, go down to where the Japanese landed. And we rocked up with water and fuel and oil, I used to have a 44 gallon drum lashed on the back seat, he was going to drive it to Moresby if the Japs invaded that area again. He'd have never gotten over the ranges out there anyway

39:00 so, there was a big bluff about 200 feet high, he'd have never have climbed it in a truck anyway. If the natives didn't eat him first - there are cannibals down there by the way. They had plenty up in the, I'll tell you about Hollandia later on. Anyway, get out the Dodge and make sure it's fuel and he said "You're the driver." Everybody dresses ourselves up with a copy cardboard pith helmets and

39:30 sunglasses if you could find them. And loaded up and took off. Drove for a long, dodged around odd sorts of trees and ditches and things and came to a single strand barbed wire fence with a black triangle hanging on that. He said, "Don't worry about that, that's only the Lever Brothers, that's their fence line. Drive over it." So I did that,

40:00 left it laying down flat and we came to an area and there's this sweet sickly smell of death. It sort of rose from the ground and sort of around all of you and we came to a place where the Australians had buried all of the Japanese in a creek, unknowingly that the rains would come in the Christmas period and wash old incy out again. And all the bodies were strewn across, some in the creek, some in the, on the

40:30 river edges and when I pulled to and tooted the horn a mob of wild pigs were feeding over on some bodies on the other side of the creek. Took off like rockets out of the scrub but they came back later

even though we were there. And you could see the bodies had their bearing arms alongside the creek and we went out souvenir hunting even though the stench was pretty putrid. I got a Jap [Japanese] rifle and a hand grenade,

41:00 a live one which I wrapped up very carefully after I made sure the pin was spread at the end and it wouldn't pull out accidentally and stuffed it in the glove box, packed it up with lots of bits of paper and handkerchiefs and things. And I put the rifle in the rack where the driver sits. I used to, when I normally carried a rifle I'd put the Garand in a particular place or on the dash. Anyway and I wasn't really interested

41:30 in walking around the rest of the dead but one of the officers had a Bull Durham bag, that's a tobacco bag ready, that stuff they smoke and he had a hammer and he was knocking out the teeth, the gold teeth and putting them in the bag. It didn't appeal much to me at all. And Frank come over, he said, "I'm not happy about this." And I said, "Well what have you got?" He said, "I think I've got," I can't remember now what he said he had but he had a couple of items.

Tape 5

00:33 Right, where did we leave off? Can you give me a run back?

Yeah we had, there was one guy was taking gold teeth out.

Oh yeah, and I said to Lieutenant Chew who was the OC [officer commanding] of the party, "What have you collected?" He said, "I don't like this, it's making me sick just to look and the smell." And I said, "Well we could always go down to where the landing barge is." But he said, and I said, "And when you're down there you can wash your hands in the ocean or

01:00 you can take a few sips out of one of the buckets, the tanks we've got on the back." "Oh good idea," he said, "Right-oh you fellas" to the up the hill officers, "Pack up your gear we're going to go down to where the barges are." So we loaded back the stuff in our vehicles and I backed up and continued making dodges around trees and holes in the ground and came to another fence with barbed wire across it. So I drove over again like he said but part of the wiring got caught on the

01:30 little bumper bar thing on the back of the truck and I was pulling the fence down. I said, "I'll stop and I'll fix it up again." When I got out, some red writing on the triangle, "Do Not Enter: Mine Field" and I'd just passed through it. Just passed through a mine field, luck of the draw I s'pose, and this fellow, one of the officers, the fellow who'd been knocking the teeth out he said, "Well we're out of it now, we're in the clear. Go down to where they, we'll have lunch now and when the sun drops a bit so it won't be overhead, we'll be able to see

02:00 the ditches you travelled with your wheels and we'll follow it back." He said to Lieutenant Chew, "You and I, we'll sit over the front wheels and make sure the driver stays on the tracks." "No, I'm not going to do that. If the bomb goes off..." I said, "Don't matter where you go if the bomb goes off, we'll go with it." The other officer said, "I'll do it," so they, "I'll sit over the front wheel with you." Not with me, I was driving but, and that's the way it came on to be later. But we went down to where the barges were and there

02:30 was about, I think there might've been up to nine landing barges. Some were up on shore, some up on the beach, some still in water and they said, "Oh, we'll go down to the furthest one." I said, "I'll have a look at this one," so I walked out to one that was about, well about half way up the hull, it was in water lapping to and from. I didn't tell you before that when MacArthur stormed ashore at Milne Bay he, will I interrupt that and tell you that part of the story?

Sure, yeah.

Yeah well MacArthur

03:00 came down to his entourage. He flew, you could see him come in he had a big silver Douglas DC3 [aircraft] and he landed and his entourage. I forget how many officers were attached to the system with him, he was a, I think he might've been a three star general then but he came over to, they came to me and said, "Right, get out of the area you," unregimentally dressed, they didn't say 'unregiment' they said "You're not dressed to see the general," because I only used to wear a hat, a pair of shorts and a pair of boots

03:30 and I was as brown as a native boy I s'pose. And so I went back in to my shed and walked over to the window that looked to wharf. And he walked along the wharf and a workboat pulled in, not Frank driving it but somebody else. And he was assisted down from the wharf into the workboat and they drove it up until the bow was just touching the lapping where the waters were splashing on the shore. MacArthur got over the side and got his, the water up to this part of his

04:00 shoes, boots and then they backed the workboat out of the road and there they was, cameramen taking pictures with MacArthur storming ashore at Milne Bay to save Australia from the Japanese.

What did you think of him?

Well I wrote a story and got it printed in the local Bulletin. I've got a rough draft of it here, the print out that the Bulletin - I think I must've posted it to someone. I didn't think to save it because I had it on the computer and the, what

04:30 do I need it, a page out of the Bulletin? But there was another story attached to it which I'll tell you about shortly. And I had written a story about a fellow building a floating toilet and the episode about that. But the story about Macarthur landing and storming ashore sort of wiped that story out of the Guinea Gold which was the local paper printed in New Guinea at the time.

05:00 Anyway big headlines, "Macarthur Storms Ashore," and I sat back and laughed and laughed and laughed and wrote letters to my parents about Macarthur storming. I think they had it cut out by the time they got it. And that was that part that was humorous but, this landing barge, will we go back or do you want the other story?

Let's go to the landing barge.

Well I went out to the landing barge

05:30 it was just to my right and they went further down the beach. They decided they were going to have a look at things and then come back and have lunch. And I went up on this landing barge, I looked inside it and there was something submersed in the water just below. So I climbed down to check to see what there was underneath and there wasn't, so I picked up three bundles of invasion one pound notes. About 30 pounds in each bundle which I dried out by shaking the water and

06:00 stuffed it in the side of my jacket so nobody could see what I had. And climbed on the shore again and was standing on the beach waiting for them. Gathered up a couple of bits of timber to make the fire later on to boil the billy and Frank and his mate came up and I said, "Did you find anything?" And he said, "No, nothing down there." So we went up and, "Did you find anything there?" "No, thing's full of water, so wasn't much to see. Just like the landing barge we're staring at full of sand and stuff. Must've

06:30 got a hole in it, when they got ashore they must've put a hole in the side or something," blah, blah, blah. So we went back and washed our hands with fresh water and Frank and I lit the fire and boiled up the billy and made a brew of coffee and we had a couple of packs of K rations if we wanted to eat anything. Then later on about, we had smokes and talks and yarns and at about half past two, three they said, "Well the sun's in the right place now to - can't let it go too far

07:00 or the sun will go down behind the coconut trees and we won't be able to see nothing. We'll be stuck there all night. The light will shine into the ruts and you'll be able to see your way out. We'll sit over the front and if you're veering out we'll give you directive. I'll give a yell. And Lieutenant Chew can sit in the back and still be the captain of the whole show." They didn't think much of him anyhow. And away we went and when we came to this fence Frank was on the back seat and he crawled around to the driver's seat,

07:30 the passenger's side to the back so we could hook a stick over and grab the fence and pull it upright again. So this is, and then we were in the minefield area. And we just followed the ruts exactly where the tread was, "Little bit left, now to your right." And we came to the part where I'd driven in so they could get off and go do their collecting and I'd got my rifle and stuff, and we'd padded all around their area in our bare feet, our boots and I backed out again to drive on. Well I said,

08:00 "I'm not going to back in there and muck around so I just drove across to the gap and there was no problems, no detonations." And finally we get to the back and there was a triangle, it was written on the inside of it. The sign should've been on the other side. So Frank pulled up that fence and everybody cheered themselves on how lucky we were and back to the place and that was the end of that story. But Lieutenant Chew said, "Do not tell anybody that you've been down to where the barges are because you'd have gone through the minefield. And we don't want anybody to put a ban up on that do we?"

08:30 So we, well that's the way it happened. I carried that Jap rifle all over Australia. I went to, when I got back to Australia I just stuck it in a port [bag] and secured it until I joined up again and when I was back in Australia I was posted all over the place. I went to Ingleburn, no, no not to Ingleburn I went to, I got posted to...

09:00 West Aussie it went with me, up to Darwin kept it with me then, down to Brisbane, Wallangarra, Macrossan, back to Wallangarra, Canungra, I thought, "This is no good to me". I finished up giving it to the RSL at what's that bloody place over the border in Queensland? Anyway, gave it to an RSL in northern NSW, I can't think of it.

09:30 That's the end of the Jap rifle. But I also rammed a knitting needle up through the barrel so that no-one could ever fire it, if they did it would blow up in their face.

And what was the other part of the Macarthur story?

Well it wasn't the Macarthur story, it was about the fellow - to go to the toilet we used to go and find a spot on the beach and kick sand over it when we were finished our job

10:00 and the tide would wash it away. I mean it was a bit inconvenient and no privacy attached to it because you haven't got - a wide open beach and everybody was going past. Not that there were any females in

the area I s'pose but it wasn't, decorum wasn't the top of the tree. So we had a fellow come in and we told him to, he was instructed to build a I think it was a seven seater and a three stander floating toilet. And he had three native boys to help him

- 10:30 which he gave the sack to because they couldn't understand what he wanted and he couldn't speak their pidgin English, but I went out and picked up a lot of the stores. He'd write me a list of what he wanted and I'd go out to the engineers store and pick up all this stuff and bring it back in me truck. So he and I were sort of friendly in that respect but every time when he sat down at the breakfast table he'd be telling us about this thing he'd just built and what would happen and blah, blah, blah. Getting a bit boring after a while. Anyway, eventually
- 11:00 it floated. He had it launched, everybody came down and gave a big clap and, "Hooray!" They called him Ted or something like that I think was the name, I can't remember what it was. And he finished making the thing and had it completed and towed it out where it sat between two sets of piles so that it would rise up and down with ease and not be lost. And it was anchored to a fair sort of an anchor on either side of it.
- 11:30 But there was a terrible double plank walkway from the shore and no rails to hang on to. So you had to make sure you were sober when you walked the plank. And I don't know why it happened this way but one day this Ted decided to go and nobody else went too, but they cut the cables and away it went, drifting out with the tide.
- 12:00 It was about ten miles down the bay before we got a message to say that some sort of a calf was tied up to their one of their boats down stream. "Did we want it or could they tow it away and use it for target practice?" And back came the message, "No we'll recover it", so one of the tow, sea-going tows had to go down and tow it back. And they wouldn't let him on the tug, he had to stay on board the floater.
- 12:30 And they towed him back and they put it into more secure anchorage this time and it shifted around so that the plank didn't sort of go that way onto his floater, it went out that way. And it hadn't something, support, one rail you could hang onto, you wouldn't want to have any passing company though. And of course there used to be a, I think there was about a maybe a 20 foot drop in the waters
- 13:00 out that way and it used to, the currents used to flow fairly quickly when the tide was going out. And there was no backfill from the tide, what went out stayed out. And that was the basic other humorous side of it. Ted never mentioned his floater after that and he stayed another two weeks before he got posted out somewhere else. He was a, they used to call him a "chippie", he was a, not a
- 13:30 carpenter there's another word for it, terminology for it, people who work on boats with timbers, I forget the name of it. Anyway, chippie.

You didn't like Lieutenant Chew, why was that?

He was an idiot. This truck that he used and had filled up, he was going to go to Moresby if the Japs, he used to call it his Red Alert Truck. Well "red alert" means the bomb, well something's coming, there's enemies coming. and he's stand outside his office

- 14:00 and he'd say, "Lofty," that's me, "Lofty get the red alert truck!" And as soon as you mentioned "red alert" everybody was gone. I said, "Why do you call the truck the red alert truck?" He said, "Well, it gets everybody's attention and I can see they're still awake." And then he didn't have any man management skills. He was so frightened of anything.

Did you

- 14:30 **feel threatened at that camp?**

No, not really. While I was there we had Joey Brown, a famous big mouthed, lips anyway, big mouth he'd tell jokes. He entertained us in the pouring rain for two and a half hours and all the officers were sitting up front under a big canvas tarpaulin thing and it was starting to - we were sitting back in the rain under coconut trees that didn't have any coconuts with our

- 15:00 ground sheets wrapped around us and we'd see this canopy start to billow and fill with water. And we had listening to the jokes we'd been watching this and suddenly it split right up the middle and drowned all these officers underneath. And we went, "Yahoo, that'll teach you." And this little officer popped out, "Take that man's name." And they moved forward en masse, Americans and Australians if they'd have got hold of this lieutenant they'd have killed him. And the officers grabbed him and hustled him behind stage and away he went. And
- 15:30 Joey Brown said, he made some nasty snide remarks about the officers and their privileges. And everybody clapped him for that but he said, "He had to go because he was given another something towards Port" - not Port, well somewhere he was going anyway. "He had to leave but we were a good audience, nobody's ever sat in the rain before for that period."

What about other entertainment there?

We had a film, used to have a film on every now and again. 16mm projection sort of

- 16:00 thing, they'd run through the reel and then put another reel in, or another reel and another reel. But

The Wreck of the Hesperus was this one, it was on for six weeks straight. The only entertainment other than driving yourself up the wall. And you weren't supposed to have any lights in your tents and the, of course that thing with the picture screen, they could cut it straight and it'd be total darkness. But yeah, we used to have Japanese planes come over and they used to call them

16:30 "Washing machine Charlie" because it'd sound like a washing machine, "zroom, vroom", and everybody would scatter and run for your slit trenches or sit there and take it. And this one particular night they got fed up with this character coming over and making them take shelter when they were doing nothing but spying, and they mounted jeep headlights with batteries in a particular area surrounding the anti-aircraft guns. And when they thought he was overhead they switched on every one and there he was sitting right in the middle of the

17:00 headlights. "Boom. Zip". Blew him out of the sky. "Hooray!" So the bloke went, next time we went, "Hey another washing machine Charlie," he was about another ten thousand feet up which the guns couldn't reach.

Did you ever feel threatened in an air raid?

Yeah, my first air raid I'd never been in one before and I was driving a truck with petrol in it bringing some, before we got these other fellows, petrol point fellows to deliver the stuff.

17:30 I was bringing in some fuel guns and "red alert" sounded, two shots anyhow and I dived straight out of me truck, switched it off, fall under me truck and an idiot, well not an idiot I was the idiot this fellow in the truck he said, "What are you sitting under a petrol tank for?" So I ran from the truck straight under a coconut full of coconuts and I pulled a cardboard pith helmet over my head protecting myself.

18:00 What a fool, I used to think to myself, "What an idiot you are Ken. You'd be better off under the truck". Yeah, if a bomb had landed anywhere the coconuts would've shaken down and I would've been history.

You said the hillbillies were different kind of American soldiers.

Yeah we had some Virginians in Camp Static. They were their basic small ships support division.

18:30 And they were humans you could talk to them and talk about their country and they were soft spoken and obliging in their manners. And then came these hillbillies, Arkansas hillbillies. We had them for three weeks. I s'pose there'd be about 25 of them. They had the most despicable manners, habits that I've yet to see in a human being. They didn't mind where they defecated and they'd spit and they'd smoke and never washed their hands before they came for meals.

19:00 And you couldn't tell them anything, "Where I come from..." I can't put their accent on though I must admit I spoke like a Virginian after a while. But anyway, what they'd do they'd have these meat trays. Most of us would have a tray that's all got little sections in it and you'd have your food put in it, served when you came through. But these ones were like bowls and that's

19:30 all they'd bring to the table. And I only saw them the first time for breakfast, I never sat next to them again for any other part of their meal, they'd get the like Cornflakes I think it was with the powdered milk, into the bowl and it'd be about that deep and then they'd get powdered egg and some sort of meat, I don't know what it was but it'd go in too and the coffee on top of that and the sugar and they'd stir it all up and sit there, they sat in

20:00 front of you spooning it down their "glug, glug, glug, glug". I don't mind Chinese or Japanese with their fish with their chopsticks feeding it in because it's easy, they might drop a bit but these hillbillies they were terrible. And they'd smoke at the table, spit over the side in the mess hall. They chewed tobacco and spat anywhere. So

20:30 we used to walk up and treat them like pariah dogs, like the pig got up and walked away and that was about it. Couldn't stand them. And then the Filipinos came and they were good at one stage because they could pick out the Jap that got on the mess queue. Of course anybody wearing an American uniform with a bit of colour, we'd say they were Filipinos, but the Filipinos definitely knew they weren't and they'd kill them before they got far. And bring out those great knives, bowie knives they'd wear down between their shoulder blades. A blade about that long.

21:00 "Chop, chop, chop, chop".

When did they come along?

The Filipinos? Well they'd visit from somewhere I don't know but they'd say, "Right, we've got 30 Filipinos to be catered for too." And they'd knife fight for entertainment. I used to wear a knife on me belt for carving up rope or whatever. You always used a knife in the stores somewhere and this little squat Filipino come up and he said, "You fight

21:30 with a knife?" "Not me, I don't fight with knives, I only use them for carving things I've got to cut up." "You and I fight." I undid me belt and dropped it, I said, "I don't fight with knives." "You frightened to fight." I said, "I don't care, I don't fight with knives but if you'd like to get a rifle and I'll give you a 300 yard start, we'll try it that way." He didn't say any more.

And what was the rumour about cannibals on the island? How did you hear about that?

Up in the, not in Milne Bay...

22:00 **Oh not in Milne Bay.**

...but up in Dutch New Guinea. Yah. Did you ever read about that plane? A colonel took some people up for a joy flight around Hollandia and they crashed in what they call Shangrila. Anyway the plane went into this crater I s'pose you'd call it, they were - a volcanic eruption in such a time had blown the guts out of a mountain and just a

22:30 people were living in there, thousands of feet up the side wall. You couldn't climb out. Sheer cliffs. And when they crashed of course they killed a few and a few others were hurt. Luckily enough I think the colonel died so he wasn't up for doing stupid things and they flew a glider in and they put up poles and they towed this glider out. But these people had never seen white

23:00 men before. And they were cannibalistic, they wanted to eat the dead, they wouldn't want to waste the meat. But somebody amongst the party told them it was a no-no and if they did it the Americans would come over and if you offered them - they knew about it because the aeroplane had sent out a message. It took something like three months for a party of white fellas to walk in from Hollandia.

23:30 And they had three months to get there. It was only about 60 mile from Hollandia but I mean the mountains out there are...

Did any other things, was there anything else significant that you remember happened in Milne Bay?

Oh yeah, I was there when a hundred pound, hundred plane bomber plane came through and enemies. On the 17th of April I think it was, 1943.

24:00 The Japs had dropped some bombs on a, the 16th or 15th and I think they ditched that place, Moresby and New Guinea um - Milne Bay. That was their last really solid attack to try and get back their area. They had never taken Moresby because they'd never got, never beat the Kokoda Trail. But MacArthur was very upset about the Australians who hadn't got up into the places and defended against the Japanese who were knocking on the door of Moresby.

24:30 But he didn't know that the mountains - it'd take you 21 days to get up there and down there and across and up there again. You can't walk across the top of the mountains, there's big holes between them. And he didn't realise for years that the, or sometime that the Australians were walking through sloppy mud.

So what happened when the bomber came over?

Which one are we talking about now?

25:00 **You said that you were in Milne Bay when a bomber came in?**

Oh yeah, we had a warning that there were a hundred bombers coming and the fellow that told me about it was a, he'd had something to do with that aircraft guy that shot that thing again, and he said, "We've got nothing to stop them." Anyway you looked down the mouth of the bay and there you could see these Zeroes [Japanese aircraft] coming up who went upstairs amongst the clouds and sort of drifted around there for a while then came down and had another look and then

25:30 up again so that there was no other aircraft again. Then the bombers flew up in this beautiful formation. Heaps and heaps of them. And out of the blue came Lockheed Lightning. A twin tailed fighter plane, I think it was an American at the wheel and he tried, he dived up and down amongst these bombers to break them up but I think they were going to break up anyway but when he landed the Zeroes came in like a pack of wolves and he was dead at the controls. They didn't set fire to it but they blew the plane, bullet holes, you'd never get it to fly again.

26:00 But he'd run out of petrol and run out of ammunition. Only one allied plane in the sky at that time. So the Japanese had open slather [able] to do what they liked. So about a hundred and fifty yards off where our funk hole was, Frank and I watched these flights of bombers come in to get this plane which was a, this ship which had ammunition on board,

26:30 it was flying the red flag and it'd broken a propeller something to do with the engine propeller shaft or something got damaged and we were in direct line of fire. We were quite scared. There were about five planes coming in one after another to drop bombs on this thing. Not one of them hit the ship, they had a couple of near misses and the nearest bomb was about fifty metres away from where we were, our funk hole was and the coconut trees in the vicinity shook.

27:00 But there wasn't much travelling of detonation through the sand because it was wet. But yeah it was quite scary. In my run to get to, when they told us the bombers were coming in about half twelve, we just said, "At twelve o'clock let's go, we won't worry about dinner." And we scarpered [ran] . Ran across this coconut log as though it was a bridge four foot wide.

27:30 Frank said, "I've never seen you go across that bridge so fast."

You said that in Australia the Americans and the Aussies didn't get along too well, how about in Milne Bay?

Well they sort of, well we only saw the Australians and the Americans as a conglomerate when the entertainment was on. We were stationed at Gili Gili, did I tell you about that? About end

28:00 of April, May, beginning of May they shipped us in in one big lot and took us to Wagga Wagga across the bay which was about ten mile wide and set up camp on the other side.

From Milne Bay?

In Milne Bay, almost directly in, almost due east of Gili Gili. And there was a big, when the

28:30 the bay itself was very deep in Milne Bay, quite a big harbour, as big as Sydney Harbour or bigger and, a lot wider, seven miles from one side to the other, it was quite a big hole. A lot of crocodiles on the Wagga Wagga side. You could see them popping up every now and again, it wasn't a good place to swim. And I was out on a, going out to pick up some mail

29:00 and I was stopped by a Provo sergeant, he said, "You got a gun?" I said, "Yeah I've got a .45 on hip and I've got this Garand rifle on the dashboard." He said, "Come with me." I said, "What's doing?" He said "We've got a riot. Negroes are, three Negroes have raped an American nurse and we're going to catch them, identify them." ID [identification] parade I think he called it. Anyway they lined up all these port workers and

29:30 we stood behind them with the weapons at the ready to fire. A Garand rifle is an automatic, you pull the trigger and the bullets come out and they don't have to cock the weapon every now and again. And the, we're all lined up and the Negroes were all shaking and no mention and the girl - what's more, they were just lined up in a sort of box fashion and the

30:00 along came a Dodge weapons carrier with the girl leaning over the windscreen and as she went past she'd point to a bloke. They grabbed him, threw a rope over his neck and take him to a tree, throw the rope up and up he'd go. And they killed three, hung three without a trapdoor or anything like that, just pulled them into a tree to kick out their lives. And I said to this Provo character, "You leaving them there?" And he said, "Yeah, why not, they're only rubbish, nobody wants them. And they're black anyway."

30:30 He used other words but that'll do for the story. Yeah, another, I was in Hollandia and there was a similar incident but there was nobody hung in that one.

How did you respond to it at the time?

I thought I was doing a good job. I didn't have to fire my rifle, only to ensure these characters didn't break. If anybody, the order was, "If anybody breaks file, shoot to kill". I'd have

31:00 done it, no trouble. Any of these paedophiles and things with kids, I'd have no trouble pulling the plunger. Easy piece of cake, I mean I don't have much time for that type of character. I was a probation officer once in my life. Anyway, yes, well there wasn't much doing in Milne Bay after that as far as entertainment except Gary Cooper and

31:30 Carol Landers? Carol, couldn't have been Carol Landers. Anyway she used to wear her hair over her eyes, she had what they called the Sheep Dog look because her hair used to hang over her face. And she came onto the stage first and said something about she was slating the Australian girls who fell all over, killed one another to get to an American soldier and the whole audience stood up and moved en masse towards the stage. If they'd have got her they'd have killed her. Gary came racing out onto the stage, grabbed her, pushed her

32:00 through the back of the stage, put her in a vehicle and shot off like a rocket. And then he entertained us with, he apologised. Carol, I can't think what her surname was.

Why was that insulting toward the audience?

Because the Australian girls were being maligned as being tramps I s'pose. It might've been true for some but certainly you couldn't blacken the whole of the Australian population of girls with that tar brush [make the same assumption for all] .

And what did Gary Cooper

32:30 **go on to do?**

He entertained us, he was very, he apologised for the lack of sense of this, "Stupid, little girl," he called her.

What was he like?

He was very entertaining, very - I'd seen him not long before that with captain, what did he call him? Sergeant York or something. Supposed to be a good shot or something or other. I had sympathy for him, I used to be a good shot. Empathy might be a better word sorry.

33:00 Yeah. Yes he was quite good.

What did he do? How did he entertain the group?

He just told how his life had been, how he'd been introduced to pictures. He used to speak very laconically. I think another good one was supposed to be written, based on the Spanish wars and he died to save her life or something. I forget the real story to it but that's the way it came across to me. Anyway that's about the end of Milne Bay.

33:30 **So what happened after Milne Bay?**

I got flown on a bomber back to Townsville.

Before you go on to that, did anything that happened in Milne Bay disturb you or bother you?

Only I should've stayed there longer. Yeah I had, I was doing a good job I thought. I thought it was, there was some fun.

34:00 The Yanks tried to teach us baseball and we tried to teach them cricket. Not that you could do much bowling on a sand strip anyway.

Did you miss home?

No, not really. I'd write every now and again and I'd send my money home. I think I was getting six pound a week and I was sending four of it home. Before I went away I only said, "Right I'll take two pound a week. To take with me and Mum can have the four pound a week."

34:30 And I was insured for ten thousand pounds, I paid for all that before I left.

What about women at Milne Bay?

No women. The only women we saw were that sheila with Gary Cooper and there was an Australian Air Force Concert Party, but they were limp-wristed [homosexual] males. There were some Americans

35:00 nurses but not within my jurisdiction.

Did you ever hear of or know of any homosexuality within the American soldiers?

It might've been on but it never came to my notice. There was nothing went on amongst the Australians that were there that I didn't know. I don't doubt it was on but they must've done it in seclusion because it wasn't a mentioned thing. Anyway they used to give us

35:30 that stuff in your drink that eliminated the need I s'pose.

What was that?

I can't think of the name of it but it has a deadening affect shall we say. I can't think of the name of it. The Australian troops used to get it all the way through.

And it worked?

I used to get it when I was a choco. I got it later on when I joined up again. I think it starts with an 'm' but I can't bring it to mind.

36:00 One of your other customers might be able to tell you about it but they used to feed it to all the troops over in, overseas in the forces out from Suez, El Alamein, Rats of Tobruk got it.

And it takes away sexual urges?

Mmm.

And it worked?

It worked for me anyway. Later on they used to give us in Japan

36:30 but I'd seen cases of second or third degree VD [venereal disease] where things were rotting off shall we say. Both male and female and that's enough to turn you away from. And we knew that there were volunteer women being infected with VD for any troops who wanted to dilly-dally. Quite a lot

37:00 of, quite a few blokes married Japanese girls, illegally and left them over there with their kids. And their children were not accepted by the indigenous so they probably blew their own brains out or did the big chop or whatever they do. Hara-kari [suicide] , but you're not supposed to do that unless you're a Ronin or trained in the arts of using a sword or a knife to kill yourself.

37:30 **How did the Americans treat the locals at Milne Bay?**

They were worse, well they treated - the American Negro was a port worker who did all the stevedore sort of works. Anybody less than that was, well I don't think I ever saw an American soldier talk to an indigenous. No. There used to be a lot of hatred between the Negroes and the Virginians.

They'd have fights?

38:00 They'd shoot the Negroes any chance they got. There were a lot of them in the military police. I met the same sergeant of military police in Hollandia when I got called again to do similar "fire at will". But I'll tell you that later, another three tapes ahead.

38:30 **So when you went back to Townsville, what was it like being back in Australia?**

It was good to see civilisation again but every day at one o'clock the siren would blow. And having just come from a place where it meant something if a siren blew, I went to cover crouching against a wall. And all the people around me looked at me as though I was an odd-ball. Scaredy-cat, American or something, scared Yank. But I, "I'm no bloody Yank."

39:00 And then I had, I forgot where I was in Brisbane. I was going to get a license to drive a vehicle around and have a look at Brisbane but it went off, this bloody stupid thing at one o'clock and I dived against the wall in the back of the garden where the grass lawn was. And the copper up on the landing made some snide remark and I said, "Laugh you big fat..."

39:30 I never went, never bothered about going in to get my license.

Were people critical about you being, working with the Americans as an Australian?

Not really because they thought I was American. Only the, oh yeah when I came back from Milne Bay I should say, I must continue that story. I had all those invasion one pound notes which paid my way. I had three left when I got to Sydney and I gave two to a

40:00 taxi driver to drive me home and he thought that was wonderful. But I was selling, when I was flying back on this plane to Townsville from Milne Bay, I was swapping with the Americans on the plane, pound for pound. I did all right. They probably sold them elsewhere but pound for pound, it was only a bit of invasion paper anyway, not worth a crumplet. I had one that I put in the back of my photo album with a lot of other

40:30 Japanese and other currencies that I'd gathered over the years but that, whoever it was took all those photographs - I had photographs of Japan and some pictures of Moresby, and I had them in an album and I went to a school to talk to the children in the Heekey High School, and they said, "Well leave the things here and we'll go and have smoko." And they had chocolate cake of all things which I loathe, so all I had was a cup of coffee

41:00 and went back to the room and all the albums had gone. Everything was gone. I have nothing. And I'd already picked up, I'd loaned a lot of photographs to the 2 Battalion War Museum to a friend who ran the place and I borrowed mine back as soon as I had the thing with the kids, I'll bring them back to you. So I had to go and apologise, "I didn't have anything to give back to them, they'd taken the lot".

41:30 **That must've been upsetting.**

It was, I even swore I'd never take anything to any school anywhere in Townsville again, little thieving so-and-sos and so-and-sos. And you're my nephew. "Oh," he said, "You didn't leave them here." "Right-oh, suit yourself. Let's leave it at that."

Tape 6

00:32 **So Ken, after Milne Bay what happened then?**

Well I went to, I returned home with a bit of leave, went down and signed on again and they sent me to Port Moresby where I was given the role of a technical storeman. I don't know if you've been to Moresby, there's an island with a causeway running from the mainland to this island.

01:00 I think they put the causeway out there because the bigger ships could pull in, a liberty ship could pull alongside the area. I haven't much to talk about, life was pretty easy there except where our campsite was they must've found some rotten fish from somewhere and they buried it in the ground and that's where they put our camp. And when it rained the steam and the aroma would rise and make everybody quite ill. I think the islanders called it tatami

01:30 I'm not sure about that. There was a ship in the harbour too, a hospital ship that had been sunk, I can't remember the name of that either. Anyway the Macdhui, might've been, I can't remember for sure it might've been, bit loose up there. But I was walking along the wharf with a fellow one day and he said, "Doesn't that water look lovely." I said, "Yeah, I wish I could swim but I can't of course," and splash, I was in, in about 30 fathoms of water.

02:00 And I couldn't swim, still can't and a fellow from the liberty ship alongside said he could see me turning around, walking out to see. I thought I was walking to shore but it was the only way I could get there I s'pose. Anyway he dived off the Liberty ship, took me ashore and I swallowed half of Port Moresby Harbour I think. But by the time I became well his vessel had sailed, and I never got to thank him. One sorry part of my life and a week later

02:30 they caught a crocodile swimming under the wharves and it had a leg of a native boy in it when they cut it open. And smell, I've never forgotten the smell of the crocodile that they dragged it ashore and killed. If you, I can't even, I think it tastes like blotting paper, boiled blotting paper crocodile flesh. If you didn't put salt and a bit of sauce on it you might as well eat blotting paper

03:00 because all the flavours in it.

Who was the boy?

I don't know. The boy that was inside the crocodile? I'd never be able to tell you.

You don't know?

No. But I was in the water the week before so if it was in there I could've gone too.

What was the situation in the war at that time?

Well Moresby was a non-entity at that particular stage. I think they were moving into Dutch New Guinea about then but I had this job to do as a tech storeman at the,

03:30 of the small ships catering for the various vessels. I got a reduction in rank too, I was no longer a lieutenant if captured, I was a tech sergeant.

What did they tell you about what to do if you were captured?

"Go with the group that you were allocated to. Just tell them who you were and your name and don't worry about anything else".

Was it something that you thought much about?

Nup.

04:00 No, never sort of never, I didn't think I was in a job that would, and by that way at the time by the way they had been stopped at Milne Bay by the Australians in the AIF and the CMF in October of 1942. And only saw one, about six Japs I think while I was at Milne Bay. And they never got to Moresby.

And the Japs that you saw at Milne Bay, what were they

04:30 **doing at that point?**

They were in the mess queue and were the ones that the Filipinos cut to pieces. In different times, I never saw one in his own uniform, except the dead ones I saw at the burial appointment. No I didn't see any action at all in the sequel to any action. Moresby was a bit of a non-entity as far as I was concerned.

05:00 **What did you know about the POWs though at that time in the war, had you heard stories about...**

I knew that my brother-in-law was a POW. Well I hadn't married the girl then but I had heard that he'd been captured in Singapore and had been shipped to Japan. He was on that ship that was sunk by the allies, or a submarine or something and it still kept going and landed in Japan and he was. I didn't know where he was stationed until

05:30 later on but after the second bomb dropped I found out that he was in Nagasaki where the second bomb dropped.

So can you tell us about finally heading up to Hollandia?

Well I'd come home from Moresby and I'd got aboard a, they put me aboard a Dutch ship in Sydney Harbour, and they were very mean with their food supplies and smoko, if you wanted an orange or a drink of tea or a glass of water, you had to buy it

06:00 at threepence each. Or Gilders [Dutch currency] I think it was, we got paid in Gilders. But when on Princess Juliana's birthday, I think we'd probably be off Madang going north at that time, they turned it on. They gave everything you wanted them too, schnapps flowed like water and everybody was joyful and happy and singing songs and ditties and things. And then the next day it reverted back to the threepence a cup

06:30 of coffee or cup of tea or whatever you wanted. But that day was very good, and they were jovial and very friendly but next day, it was just like turn the page and close that section of the book.

When you say you were put on a Dutch ship, were you still with the American small ships?

Yeah, they were going up there with stores and they said, "Well you can take a few people." And we lived in a like a

07:00 wooden box mid-ships behind the deckhouse. With a cargo ship you've got a bow, cut one or two holes in the front and you've got the where all the steerage and all the passenger listing or whatever goes on in the middle and behind that was this little wooden box and two more cargo areas and a mast here and there and a propeller at the back.

So can you tell us about arriving there

07:30 **and what happened?**

Well there was, when I got to Hollandia which was a very big harbour, even bigger than Milne Bay and holds more ships than Sydney Harbour could possibly hold, I saw the invasion for the Leyte, Philippines and I suppose there was that many ships in the harbour you could've stepped from one to the other had the plank been long enough. Terrible

08:00 amount of Americans, but the didn't want any Australians because this was in MacArthur's private little pigeonhole.

Can you describe that scene for us?

The scene?

Yeah with all those ships and what was going on and what was happening.

Well we weren't allowed entry into the water to go out to one of these ships even though I was a, I wasn't a supply officer I was only an assistant harbour master and my job was to feed the small ships who came in for water and rations and

08:30 mail and I didn't, to get off the dock occasionally and go to the post office for mail, but I didn't somebody else went and picked up the supplies. I just issued them out. And I had an argument with an American colonel, I didn't know he was a colonel until he stood up. Their wear their rank on their little collar there. And he was climbing over a ladder and he had a cardboard pith helmet on his head. He wasn't supposed

09:00 to moor there because I had a small vessel coming in behind him, about a 500 ton, would've made matchwood out of it if he had've stayed there. And I leaned over the side and said, "Idiot," or words to that effect, "Don't leave your boat tied up there or we'll make matches out of it. If you look astern you'll see a ship coming in to tie. It hasn't got the, it can't give way like you can and I bet you'd get out of the way quickly." And he climbed up the ladder and his crew went somewhere else to launch. When he got up on the deck I noticed he had

09:30 colonel's bars on him, what do you call it - rank structure on his collar. "Sorry Sir, I couldn't see your rank, but it wouldn't make any difference I'd still have to warn you off. Could you see that sign over at the step ladder that says 'no small vessels to moor here, vessels coming in for watering or re-victualling.' And if you want to argue about it, see general," X - I won't say what his name was, "He's in headquarters, he wrote the instruction and even had people come up and put these signs up.

10:00 And I was told to refer anybody that contravened these orders to the general." "I'll see your OC." I said, "Well that's the other building up there, the door on the right. Captain," somebody "Will probably put you in the same picture. And I'm the assistant," God what's my rank?

10:30 "harbour master for this particular area. APO 565". "Right." And away he went and I continued what I had to do, even caught the rope, I usually had ordinary seamen out there tying these vessels up but there wasn't one at the bow so I caught the rope and pulled it over the bollard and asked them what they were after, "Come up and see me in the office with the list and I'll fix up with the supplies." So I went up the office and did some paperwork and as I came out

11:00 this colonel was coming out the other. And he said, "Pick up that bit of paper." I said, "No, I've got ordinary seamen running around here doing rubbish jobs I've got more important things to do." "Refusing an order," or something or other. I was sacked on the spot because I wouldn't obey - I wasn't doing any particular duty I was just coming out of the office to do something but the fact that I'd refused to obey this command, well

11:30 ordinary seamen were in the vicinity, I'd disobeyed a lawful command so I got the big heave-ho [exit]. But at Hollandia while I was there, there were some other incidents. You may have remembered that plane that crashed with a load of sight-seers, women and nurses and other staff, it crashed into a crater I think you call it, that's where the inside of a volcano has blown and the walls are as steep as glass,

12:00 and the officer or the pilot flying, colonel I think it was, died in the accident. There were several others injured and the report come later that the indigenes who'd never seen white people before wanted to eat the dead. They were cannibals.

Where were you in relation to that?

I was still working at the time.

Were you close by?

No, no I just heard about it. But it came out in the, whatever paper they printed at the particular time.

12:30 **So can you tell us when you first arrived in Hollandia, what was the scene there, can you describe what you saw?**

Very few Australians in or out of uniform. The only Australians that I came in contact with were some that were on board ship. I still had this position of this, to pick up and deliver the mail and I had a vehicle and I'd carry a rifle and an automatic weapon on the hip. On such a trip I

13:00 was hauled over by a regimental policeman who waved me down and I turned out to be the same sergeant who'd pulled me down in Milne Bay. Flagged me down in Milne Bay. "Hello guy, nice to see you again. What are you doing?" He said, "You got a gun?" I said, "Yeah still got one of those." He said, "Well come with me, we've got another riot on our hands." And he hopped into my jeep and we drove to where the WAC [Women's Army Corp] camp was stationed and that was on the tip of a hill

13:30 behind a stockade. All the women had special guards to protect them from insurgents I suppose is as good as word for it as any.

Would you like some water? Shall we stop?

The provo pulled me over and said, "We have a riot on our hands be prepared to shoot." And this was a peculiar system all the people

14:00 of the WAC quarters where the barracks were, there was a big stockade about twelve feet high all around. And about eight feet out from the stockade was a circle of guards who looked after the camp. About twelve paces out from them were Negroes in a circle. And behind them was us, about six or eight feet back all with weapons pointing inwards. The Negroes didn't know

14:30 which way the guards...

You were talking about the riots and when you arrived, where everybody was.

Oh yes. The Negroes didn't know which way to face because the guards had their rifles pointing out and we had our rifles pointing in and they were between it. It would have been suicide for everybody at the place of, the Negroes

15:00 by the way had sub-machine guns but they didn't know which way to point them. And some fellow said, I didn't know who he was, "This is stupid action, we're all going to be killed but you fellas in the centre are going to be slaughtered. Why don't you put your arms down on the ground and stand with your weapons on your, with your hands on your head and we'll walk away from this scene." And that's what they did. Yeah.

15:30 They uncocked weapons, took the bullet out of the breech and went back in the magazine and the American said, "Well," he introduced me to all his other provo mates and said, "This was the fellow I was calling in at Milne Bay for the same sort of thing."

Do you know what that one was all about though? This one in Hollandia?

Yeah they wanted sex. Oh yeah they were screaming, "We want it," and it was a real riot it would have been. That's what they are

16:00 those Negroes by the way, they're mad. They think that women were put on earth just for them.

What women were there?

Army women in uniform American Women's Army Corp or whatever they call themselves, WAC I think it is. W.A.C. Yeah.

What did they actually do? When you say they wanted sex, what did they actually do to, what started it all off,

16:30 **what started the riot?**

Somebody probably said he was starving for sex and everybody said, "So are we," and bingo it was on. I don't know if that was the factual part of it but that's the suggestion that the provos were making.

And when you got there everybody was pointing their guns at everybody else?

The Negroes were on the outside pointing their weapons at the guards and I joined a group of other fellows including provos who had come from nowhere to

17:00 face it, weapons down I suppose it was.

And were there any women in the vicinity?

Behind the stockade. Screaming some of them, which was probably stirring along the Negroes no end.

So you don't know if anyone had been injured or threatened or anything?

They were threatened, oh yeah. Otherwise the guards wouldn't have been on the outer periphery outside the gate,

17:30 stockade. There were still some inside the stockade leaning over the balustrade at the top with the sharpened, you know those outposts they have in American movies with the sharp peg poles all around

them? Well that's what these were, big double gates and then a big crew outside all around the perimeter, then the Negroes, then us. Only one shot fired would have killed everybody. And they'd have raked the, the fellows with sub-machine guns would have raked everybody between them and what was surrounding it.

18:00 **How tense was that situation for you?**

I thought how bloody stupid it was. I just told the guards to fire. I would've. And we'd pick out those from the outside, anybody that stood up after the first one, I would've had no trouble shooting them. In fact I said to a bloke the other day, I said,

18:30 "It's a pity they didn't bring back hanging I could go and pull that lever no trouble. You ever want one, look me up."

And what happened afterwards?

Well they just went and loaded up their trucks. The provos gave up all the weapons and delivered it to the Negro headquarters as everybody was supposed to have, when you got outside your camp area you were supposed to have some sort of weapon, because the, in 1944 the Japanese were still north of

19:00 Hollandia. But Macarthur said, "We will take Philippines, the Australians can take care of the rubbish that's left in New Guinea."

So what was your daily life like in Hollandia?

Monotonous. Monotonous. Monotonous.

How did you spend your time?

Well I tried to give it what was need down at the wharf area, work place. Oh yes I should tell you, I s'pose, I told you about being in the hospital didn't I.

19:30 Was that on the tape?

You did mention that earlier yeah, when Lady Blamey came to see you.

And Lady Blakehurst yeah.

You were in hospital why?

An appendix operation. They sent a message up to tell me why I hadn't reported for duty and I said, "I was too sick, I don't feel like going to work today." They said, "You said that yesterday" and I said, "Yeah I've been like that for about five or six days now." That was the first time I'd heard that the Americans do a spinal anaesthetic and I was the sufferer

20:00 or guinea pig I suppose. They give you a spinal anaesthetic and you're numb from the waist down. And the bloke came over and put the towels around me and put a nick with the knife and I said, "I can feel that." "Ha, ha, ha." I said, "Yes I can." He said, "Waggle your feet." So he said "Give him another few minutes." Then he came back after a while I thought he was away for half an hour. "Move your feet. Nurse. Pentothal." I think he said or something like that and she put a needle in my arm

20:30 and said, "Count from a hundred down." and I got back to about 96 and I woke up three days later. They'd overdosed me and knocked me out. And I had two doctors and about three nurses and a couple of wards-men all hanging around the bed and it was a...

Were they raids happening in Hollandia while you were there?

No. There was, the big thing was getting the ships ready for, with troops and the escort vessels. Some of the destroyers would come in for water

21:00 but, two I think while I was there but there was no issuing of rations or anything like that, just only came in for water.

So how important was your role delivering mail?

Well because there were still some Australians on the small, on the ships, they thought better an Australian was picking up the mail and dishing it out because I could understand the lingo Australians write I s'pose

21:30 rather than the Americans. And the, they just said, "Well he did it before he can do it again." I used to have a little book for everything, every recognised, what's the word for it? Registered mail, I had to get somebody to countersign the fact that he was issued with it and I put my little signature alongside to say that it had been delivered. Yeah I had to have something like that otherwise I was gone when it went astray.

And how did people view you because you were the one

22:00 **who brought them their mail?**

I was very welcome, those I, and took it away to be posted too. Yeah but, APO 565 it was, Hollandia. They didn't give Hollandia just APO 565. I thought I was going to go away with the Americans to follow the, 'til that colonel put a stopper on it.

So you said earlier that you witnessed an invasion. You spoke about an invasion earlier,

22:30 **you mentioned an invasion?**

Did I?

The Philippines?

No-no, that's the ships being prepared for the invasion.

Oh okay right, okay. So you can you tell us: you just saw the preparations?

I saw the ships all lined up and I saw some of the smaller vessels like the destroyers that were in the escort, would come in for water. But we weren't allowed to go onto where the loading took place of the troops and the rations. I'd say there'd be nearly 500 ships

23:00 which was quite a few and they were all nothing less than a 10,000 tonner so a liberty ship size.

Did you actually see all those ships depart?

No.

But you saw all the preparations for them.

I saw all the things lined up ready to go.

Can you describe what you saw in terms of what they had to do to prepare for that invasion?

Well there were oil tankers. I wasn't really interested basically because I had seen ships before and one ship is as good as the other

23:30 but so many all clambered, I used to think how easy it would be if I had longer legs I could step from one ship to the other. But of course they wouldn't be, it would be about 20 odd paces I'd be taking or more. But that seemed to be how close they were, say here to the wall difference between one ship and the other. But it just cluttered the whole harbour area. And they were full of troops and supporting vessels and probably catering. And of course they wouldn't go without their toilet paper and ice-cream.

24:00 And they had to have I don't know if you ever saw what the Americans had for sleeping quarters but, they had like a sleeping bag as you were, like a hammock with a like a net covering all over that, that zippers up and a little rain cape over the top, and it all ties up. God knows where they were going to find the trees for each of them but anyway, that was their jungle sleeping equipment.

So what did

24:30 **you know about what preparations were being made for that invasion?**

Only that the destroyers would come in for water and that wasn't normal. And the fact that there were no Australians in part of the invasion force. Not that the Australians, Macarthur had issued instructions that the Australians would carry on with the mopping up of the northern part of Dutch New Guinea.

And what was the reaction by the Australian soldiers to that?

25:00 They didn't particularly care much about that, they weren't very worried about the Philippines.

What did you personally think about Macarthur?

I would put him on par with Churchill [Winston Churchill British Prime Minister] . I didn't like him at all. My Father hated him. Should I say that in front of the...?

Why didn't you like him?

Well my Father taught me I suppose. Churchill was the War Sea Lord or something or other [First Lord of the Admiralty] for the invasion of Dardanelles [during the First World War] and he told the

25:30 Turks where we were going to land. My Father was not in the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Arm Corp] landing but he was in France and he was most upset about how so many Australians lost their lives for this. You've got to take that position that nobody wanted any way. And the Turks were in fixed, they had machine guns placed on every point of the front. But somebody was clever enough to have, and the other part about the armistice was it?

26:00 No not armistice. One Christmas Eve they all stopped to be friendly and then the next, five minutes later they're all shooting at one another again. That's about the only part but my Father hated Churchill.

And why didn't you like Macarthur?

Well he, I was there when he stormed ashore at Milne Bay. I thought he was a bit of a blow-hard. The fact that he

- 26:30 wiped that other story out about the floater that put him. And the way that he denigrated the Australian troops that were trying to get to, up the Kokoda Trail. And he said, "They were slow coaches," they weren't, "They didn't have their heart in it" and that sort of thing. And men were falling down by the roadside with all sorts of illnesses you can get in a strange country. Diarrhoea, dysentery,
- 27:00 malaria, starvation and a lack of ammunition. But who was going to carry the stuff up the hills they'd just clambered up anyway? And he didn't realise the difference between one hill and another, might be two thousand feet up and two...

Speaking of illnesses, what sort of diseases and illnesses were people suffering from in Milne Bay and Hollandia

27:30 **when you were there?**

There wasn't much in Hollandia but there was a lot of water, what are those wogs [diseases or parasites] that you get in the water that get into kidneys? Fluke or something or other, is it fluke? Something like fluke that gets in there and is very destructive to the kidney area and the bladder too apparently. There was the diarrhoea and dysentery, I don't have to explain those but they were pretty rife. Malaria

- 28:00 was always a thing. And there was a, if you didn't have a change of diet every now and again, pardon me, your teeth would fall out. I'm not kidding, you get that, what do they call that thing if you don't eat something in green vegetables that contain...? Before Captain Cook started issuing his troops with lime juice or something or other [scurvy] .

Oh right.

Whatever it is anyway. Well you can get that, if your diet is constant on

- 28:30 salt beef and no vegetation to, vitamin C or vitamin something or other, whatever it is. Well that was constant.

Were you well in Milne Bay?

Yeah I think so because the native boys used to bring those limes and I'd use those to take the salt tablets.

So you didn't get any of those diseases?

No I didn't have that problem, and of course the, I'd also help myself to the greens that came in with the

- 29:00 that I'd swap.

After Milne Bay, what happened to your friend Frank?

He went to, he said he was, he didn't want to be pushing a little 35 foot work boat so he signed up with the, he went as an able-seaman on a craft. I never saw him again until the war was over. So yeah, he did all right.

- 29:30 **Oh, I was asking you about Frank. You were good mates.**

Oh yes, he lived a few doors down the road from me. He was younger than I was but, he'd signed up when I was in Moresby, to advise me that the girl I'd been going with had just had a child of Negro strain. While I was away she was playing around I s'pose.

- 30:00 **Were you sorry to leave Frank when you...**

When he went away? Yeah. I knew, there wasn't too many people I knew from my previous life, in the Port Moresby area. It was just a job, I wasn't wrapped in being a storeman anyway, in that particular role.

Had you made some good friends in Milne Bay?

Oh yeah, especially amongst the Americans, I used to write to one bloke for a long time,

- 30:30 before he went to the Philippines, I never heard of him again. No mail came back so I presumed he'd met his Waterloo [died] . And I knew the captain in charge in Dutch New Guinea, he rose rapidly to the rank of lieutenant colonel I think it was, or colonel, or full colonel whatever it is, until one of his staff officers wrote back and said, I used to call him Dickie, Dickie-Boo.

- 31:00 Captain Starling "Dickie-Boo." The staff officer said, "We don't address our officers in that manner."

How would you describe the friendships that were made when you were there?

Some were lasting and some were just passer-by. I'd like to have met that fellow that saved my life but his ship had sailed. And they wouldn't tell me the name of the liberty ship so I couldn't make contact.

- 31:30 **Were they important or special friendships because of...?**

The special ones were yes, like Frank and Ted, a fellow I'd met during that army one. There was, I don't think there was any special friends in Dutch New Guinea.

How do you think your experiences there affected those friendships?

Well the ones in, where they had that survival activity, that was

32:00 spot on. We didn't get to meet each other but we used to send Christmas cards and remember to, the times we'd been lighting the fires. Of course when I'd been discharged in 1942 he'd stayed in the army and gone wherever he went, but we didn't talk about that. He didn't want to talk about it anyway. He'd served out 'til 1945 and stayed for about three months before they would discharge him.

32:30 And he came to a, he worked at Mackay somewhere. I think he might've been in the sugar mills or the farms or something up at, yeah.

So, you told that story earlier about being sacked for not obeying a command.

Picking up a bit of paper yeah.

So when you say you were sacked, what happened?

Well they took me out of the

33:00 camp itself and put me into what they call a holding area, like where all the rag-tails go. When the first vacancy on a ship came past, I got put aboard with four other blokes who were accused of illegally mining gold. And they had rings on their fingers they said belonged to a Tongan I think it was, but the weren't Chinese, but they had all these hammered gold around their fingers for rings and that's how they were confiscating stuff back out to Australia.

33:30 When we drew, I had a .32 and a .38 pistols which I'd taken on for security, my security. I didn't know where I was going to go and I couldn't carry that .45 with me all the time and we were, when we pulled in the first thing customs decided to check were all our kit bags and

34:00 equipment, pat the pockets and see what we had. The four other companions were taken away and checked away. But I broached the subject too quick, I'll go back to coming down the north-west coast of the, south-west coast whatever you call it of New Guinea in the liberty ship and they learned that I was born on Anzac Day. And this, the mate I think it was said that, "Anzac Day was something pretty good for the

34:30 Australians," and so they feted me with and the other Australians with plenty of booze [alcohol], American booze which was terrible stuff. Oh I should tell you about that one too later. Remind me about a ship that a hole, a stoved number one hole, I'll tell you about that one, that was in Hollandia? Yeah, that was in Hollandia. But the other part was the, they learned it was my birthday and

35:00 I was going to be 21, so they put on a terrific feed and everybody toasted my birthday and I had to sing "Happy Birthday" to everybody or whatever it was. "Today's the day we all love it to be, for it's my birthday for certain you see." That thing, maybe you've heard of it? And I had a good baritone voice in those days, before I lost me teeth. But the Americans took out most of my back teeth because I

35:30 used to get these pains. And they'd say, "Yuronga teeth" and they pulled all my back teeth out. I'd still get the pains and it was sinus problems, blocked passages. They'd taken all my back teeth out. I used to say, "Leave the ones, the lower ones," I said, "The pain's not down there." They took them out anyway, they said, "You'll bite into your gums and you'll have more pain."

So this 21st birthday celebration on the liberty ships, was on the way back after being discharged?

Yeah.

So what kind of a celebration was that for you?

Pretty good.

36:00 I had my 21st birthday at sea with people appreciated what Anzac meant and, not that I was one and my Father wasn't one but the Australians reckoned I was pretty good and it was a tradition they wanted to celebrate. I had seen men march in bare feet on Anzac Day during the depression years down Martin Place. God it was cold too, they'd been toughened.

What was your

36:30 **reaction to being discharged in that way?**

A bit angry. Very angry in fact. But there was no sense in saying it because he promised me he'd put me in the stockade if I opened my trap again. "You say, be vocal against any order I give you you'll be in the stockade." And they used to have a tough time in the stockades, even worse than the red caps. [military police]

Did you regret what you had done?

Well

37:00 I didn't think that, telling him that, "I had ordinary seamen doing those labouring jobs around the place, I had more important things to do," I thought that was the right answer. And the fact that I couldn't see his rank when he was climbing up the ladder illegally, I thought I was well within my rights. And apparently my captain had told him that I had the right because General X had said so and so and so and so. But that fact that I said, "No, I've got," I said, "No," that might've been it. If I'd have ignored him he might've had something more but like I say I didn't hear him or something, but

37:30 I didn't realise at the time that I needed to make an excuse, that I wasn't an also-ran around the paddock.

So where were you when the war ended?

I think I mentioned I was in, working at a meat providores in I can't think, Gloucester Street maybe, in Sydney. It might be

38:00 Gloucester Street, anyway it's near the Harbour Bridge. And the can of meat fell on me feet and I was on compensation walking past the, hobbling past the Lyceum Theatre in Pitt Street when somebody rushed past, "The war is over!" But that was only VE [Victory in Europe] Day I think. I was, I'm not sure where I was on VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day. I might've been in Martin Place.

38:30 Was it hard to adjust to life back in Australia having being discharged from...?

Well yes and no, they put you in a job and you're doing something and you, I didn't particularly like the job I was doing but I adapted it. I mean they could've sent me away to that curtains cowboy scheme again if they'd wanted to, but they were still looking for people to go and build aircraft landing strips, or finish the job or make roads somewhere, I thought that was still on. Manpower still had control of that.

39:00 But Manpower had put me into that, this meat provedoring section anyway. But then the bottom fell out of it when VP came into it, they just didn't have a place to send their meat any more and the Americans were getting meat from America. It was closer to bring it from America than it was to ship it up from Australia to the occupation of Japan which was their next target. And then of course Macarthur made peace with the Japanese as soon as he could. He didn't want to be,

39:30 I was part of the occupation forces later on but he gave in too much I think. And then he wanted to charge into China and Korea, of course they didn't think too much of that either. I'm glad when his President gave him the sack [removed him from that position] .

You said...

Did you know Macarthur left the Philippines with two little Filipino ladies aboard his boat? Rather than take American nurses or something.

Tape 7

00:30 So tell us how you came to join the army for the second time.

Well I tried civvy street [civilian life] after the war had finished and VP and the, I worked at one particular place in Sydney in George Street, a floorwalker I think they call them, that's a sort of floor manager came to me and approached me and said, "Mr Aylward, you know that you've taken three minutes more than your allotted morning period break this week."

01:00 I said, "Three minutes? Are you worried about three minutes?" He said, "Yes, you're being paid for something you're not doing." I said, "Well you know what you can do with your job." And I probably told him. And I left and went down to the recruitment office and said, "I'll join up. It's Beecroft you've got in the paper, that'll do me, I'll go." They said "Are you sure you want to go over there? Had any service?" "No." He said, "Right, we'll do a medical." And I passed it quite clearly and even the fault that I'd known about,

01:30 they didn't know about because I didn't tell them and away I went. I did my training at starts with W, somewhere in Sydney. It's in my record somewhere but anyway.

And then they said, "Right, we've got a job for you, you have licenses..." I'd told them I'd been with the Americans and that I had

02:00 lots of driving license qualifications. And they said, "Well we want a driver over at North Ryde vehicle park recovering vehicles that come from New Guinea. Lease lend stuff and they ship it to Ryde and then they pick out the best ones of those and sell them to, give them to the ordinance depot at," somewhere in Sydney, it starts with M, "and the other stuff will be sold." So I was seconded to this ordinance vehicle park at North Ryde

02:30 for the best part of eighteen months. So instead of going to Japan in 1946 like I'd planned, I didn't get

there until 1947 which didn't appeal to me at all. Because now days those who went to Japan in 1946 have a government gold card. Which I've only just found out lately of course. But yes, I had, the skills that I'd acquired while I was with the Americans served the Australian army quite well in recovery vehicles.

03:00 I had licenses for, the Australian, Queensland license doesn't cover all the licenses I had when I was in the army. I had a license for cranes and tractors and motorbikes, trucks etc, most 4x4s and 4x2s, buses, tanks, graders, dozers, all that sort of - even had a license for a motor mower, how's that.

How did Sydney

03:30 **change with the end of the war?**

Well at one stage I was towing 21 jeeps through Parramatta, going out to Moorebank. I knew it started with an 'M'. And a little four cylinder Chevy came out of nowhere and jumped in front of me. Of course I had beautiful air-brakes on the recovery vehicle and I came to a sharp halt. But the people behind me, everybody went "clank, clank, clank, clank, clank, clank". Some they hit,

04:00 it was very dangerous what they did they drove up the tail of the one in front of them sort of thing. And out of nowhere came all these policemen. God knows how there were that many police in Parramatta. And this little poor thing went chug-chugging up to the station and I never saw it again. And they asked me why I'd stopped in such a hurry and I explained the reason. They said, "You know you can't tow more than one vehicle." I said, "Well according to the army I can tow 21 vehicles, I'm going out to Moorebank." "You can't tow ..." whatever it was.

04:30 He said, "Right now get going, get out of here." I said, "I can't do that, I've got to write up all the accident reports." So I stopped, I told the blokes to push the vehicles back so that I could inspect the vehicles and see what damage was done. "Everybody get out their accident report and we'll fill it in before..." And there were people piled in cars all behind me on the main road outside the railway station there, until eventually an inspector came along and ordered me to drive away. I said, "Will you accept the fact that some of these vehicles are not roadworthy now

05:00 as a result of this stupid clot," it wasn't clot the word I used at that particular time but, "Intercepting my advantage, I had right of way." "Get your vehicles out of here. Don't come back. If you come back with more than one vehicle in tow again I'll..." And I said, "Do you know that it's a military road and if they want to they can close this down and only army vehicles will travel on it." "You get out of here!" So I did, and as I drove off I told the drivers to slacken back until the

05:30 tow rope had been. They didn't, in the end I tore four bumper bars off. So we had to lash them up and tie them up before I could move off again. Ropable very angry] . Anyway I got out to Moorebank and delivered all the vehicles. And I had to put the drivers somewhere and they lay low in the back of the recovery vehicle. Three or four in the front seat and all over the back, standing on cranes and running boards and sitting on the engine cover.

06:00 So I went back the way I'd come and there was the policeman standing on the Parramatta. I thought, "Gee I should've taken another road", but anyway. And the only reason, the eyebrows raised his cap I think but he never said a word and never stopped me. But I got the picture, don't ever go back through Parramatta Road.

So how did you come to go to Japan then?

Well after a while I said, "Look," I went to the CO and I said, an ordinance man and I was a RASC [Royal Army Service Corps] driver at that particular, I said, "I've enlisted for

06:30 RASC" or ASC [Army Service Corps] I think it was at that time "And I've been seconded to..." He said, "Well you've been seconded because you've got the driving license and qualifications to do the job. Don't you like it here?" I said, "Well, I'm not getting any promotions out of it. I'm still doing the jobs." He said, "Well we'll transfer you to ordinance." "I don't think RASC, the ASC would like that and I'd rather go to Japan." He said, "Right-oh you're on the next draft." What a shame I hadn't sort of thought of it before. So they

07:00 shipped me up to Greta and blow me down if the colonel up there, brigadier, Brigadier Monagan said he wanted a driver, a senior driver. Somebody with a bit of sense. So they gave me to him. And I was supposed to report to him as soon as I got the word but I went down to the, I took the little one, 1500 weight truck down to refuel it and topped it up with water and all the things like that. Cleaned out the seat he might be sitting on, then went over.

07:30 And then he blew the socks off of me for not being there when I was supposed to have been there. And I said, "I didn't know what your plans were, I've refuelled it, I've rewatered it, I've fixed up the engine oil in case you wanted to go the full distance on both fuel tanks." He said, "That's what I like, a thinking man. You're on. Where you going to?" I said, "I hope I go to Japan eventually." "I thought I might sign you up as my permanent driver." I said, "No, I don't want to be a batman to anybody." He said, "I wasn't going to sign you as a batman, you're my driver." I said, "Driver

08:00 batman you mean Sir. No I'd rather not have it but if you make me go I won't like the job and I'll get out of it as soon as I can, even if I've got to take a discharge. And then I'll sign up again somewhere else."

And he said, "Right-oh, I'll keep you another three weeks." And he did. Then they put me on the HMAS Kanimbla, a steamship, coal burning thing. And it was the first one that went over to New Zealand to pick up New Zealand troops to take them to Japan. But in the cross between Australia

08:30 and New Zealand, the seas were like this and of course I had pretty good sea legs and I was one of twelve blokes who fronted up for the evening meal. A petty officer came up to me, he said "Are you worried about the weather?" I said, "What weather?" He said, "Can you deal with a rough sea?" I said "I don't mind them, I've been on worse than this and bigger tubs too and smaller ones for that matter. It doesn't worry me any." He said "How would you like a job as a watchman? We want you to sit at the centre of the boat and stop the blokes from leaning over where

09:00 the wash from the props [propellers] come up. And they lean over and lean over and they fall in. We don't want that to happen whilst you troops are going to Japan." I said, "What time?" He said, "The dog watch, between two and four." "Piece of cake." He said, "Well before you say yes, you'll get a bunk, you won't be in a hammock. You'll be in the cabin with one other person, another petty officer, you'll get the best food in the seamen's mess and when we stop anywhere you can have

09:30 days in lieu while we're moored." "Right." So I travelled to Japan as a paying passenger I s'pose. I just did, well eventually I took four hours, two till four, four till six. I let somebody sleep in, he didn't mind, he thought it was a good job.

And you got paid extra?

No I didn't, never did get paid no. I missed all the running around the deck at a fast gallop when everyone was doing their exercise because I was on duty two 'til six.

10:00 And I got excused all other duties. No mess orderly's jobs, catering or stewards or something or other. Poor other blokes slaved away at it. When I went to New Zealand I got a full day's leave. Got a launch to take me to shore, bring me back.

What were the New Zealand soldiers like?

Well I s'pose, it's beer like American beer. Have you ever tasted American beer? It's weaker than the lightest beer we have and a case of it will give you a headache. And the stuff in New Zealand

10:30 sells for sixpence a glass. Then, I s'pose threepence a glass might've been better. Richmond Beer, have you ever tasted that? You would've tasted that down in Orange wouldn't you? It's terrible tack, I think they wash up the cook's boots in it. And this stuff they were serving in New Zealand was pretty terrible too. Yeah I drank a case of that American Bud, Budweiser beer whatever it was, it's absolute crap - garbage. Terrible stuff and this New Zealand

11:00 beer wasn't as good as it.

Did you leave a girlfriend behind when you went to Beecroft?

No, no I'd had several on and offs but mostly at that co-ed club, with the YWCA but my sister was in that and I couldn't take anybody on because she'd be teasing m about it. I thought it would be better to drink my milk off some other's doorstep [take my chances elsewhere] .

11:30 So how long did it take to get to Japan from New Zealand?

Well it was a day and a half to get to New Zealand, pretty rough weather. Stayed there for a day and a bit more. Then we went up to Drager Harbour off New Guinea, stayed there for a day and a half and I got, the said, "Do you want to go for a trip around the bay?" I said, "Oh yeah." So they put me in a launch and everywhere they went that day I went with them. And we stopped for smokos and but I wasn't allowed ashore of course

12:00 but the crew would have a brew on the launch and I'd join them. And I slept well all the way. And when it got too damned hot going across the equator, I got special privilege from Captain Neptune to be dunked in the pool and given a seaweed thing draped around me and have me photo taken, but of course that went with the album too.

Why were you so keen to go to Japan?

I hadn't been overseas except

12:30 to New Guinea and my, I didn't meet my wife until after I'd come back from Japan anyway, so. But I somehow knew that the Australians had suffered at the hands of the Japanese and I wanted to, I also wanted to see the, I'd got a report on the bombing of Hiroshima and I knew that in excess of 116 million, 116 thousand had died

13:00 the day they dropped the bomb and I wanted to see that. They'd showed pictures of Hiroshima after the bombing and it was almost flat country. And I'd noted there'd been a, somebody told me that a naval barracks with a couple of hundred thousand men had been training pretty close to where the bomb went off and they never found a square inch of anybody or the buildings. So that would be nice to see.

So what happened when you got to Japan?

- 13:30 They wanted to post me to a tank corps where they have, they didn't have any tanks by the way but the had plenty of marching around the paddock playing grandfather's bagpipes and I said, "Well I've been in a few tanks when I was at this Ryde Vehicle Park. None of them could I close the hatch on. And the scout cars I can't sit behind the tillers to drive those things, I don't think I'm suitable to drive into a tank corps.
- 14:00 "Can you see if there's a vacancy at Headquarters Beecroft?" "You can go there." So I went down to transport lines at Headquarters Beecroft. There's a story attached to that in the later parts, do you want to hear it now or later?
- Sure.**
- The, I belonged to a group, the Masons and I went to a lodge meeting and General Robinson was there and I sat next to him. And we talked later on and he said, "How would you like to be my batman?" "No Sir. I have ambition.
- 14:30 My Father always taught me a man who can't clean his own shoes is not worth his salt." And he didn't think much of that reply but he said, "All right son, okay." He said, "But I'll, I'll be sending my vehicles down to your transport yards and you must be the person in charge of the servicing." I said, "Yes Sir, I am." He said, "Right, they're very good. You're the first person that's ever knocked back Mrs Robinson from getting her vehicle when she wanted it. And I want a man with a decision who can stay by it." I had ordered that the, or he
- 15:00 had ordered that the vehicle was not to be driven until it was serviced to my satisfaction. Apparently I'd done a few before. And she'd rang up and said, "I want the car." And I said "Well you can't have it." "I'm Mrs Robinson." "I don't care who you are, if you were Mr Robinson, I'd take mission. But you're not, you have no military measurements over me. You can't order me, you're not a military person." "I'll tell my husband." "Well I'll listen to your husband but he also ordered me that the vehicle is not to be let out
- 15:30 until it's completed to my satisfaction... I'll give you the old Ford." Almost said the right word for being Japanese but anyway. So he said, "I like any person who can stand up to my wife." And he was about, not quite my height and she was about, she'd be like my Mother's height you know, walking under the arm. He said, "You can live up here in my quarters if you like." I said, "No, I prefer to stay in the, because I've got other jobs to do in the night time, Sir"
- 16:00 And he said, "Right but I'll call for you when I want you. And you'll come up." So every now and again I'd drive him around the paddock. He took me on a trip up through Tokyo and a few other places on a special tour. But I had a, because was in charge of the Transport Servicing Section and I lived in the transport lines because I used to be called out. And it was better to live in the transport lines than to live in the barracks where they'd, I'd have to get the
- 16:30 great key to open the gate and get out of that line and get my keys and get guard to open up the transport lines to get a vehicle out. So they gave me authority to sign a G2 to authorise me to drive, for me to drive my car out to the recovery vehicle. Most of the vehicles used to break down at Hiroshima in the red light area and only officers could hire the vehicles. And the story was they'd say, "The driver took the wrong turning or something and that's why we're in this particular zone. But I wouldn't want you to mention this to anybody, why you're in the
- 17:00 red light zone [area where sex industry is located] ." I'd say, "It'll cost you." And it did. We were on a ration scale of two bottles of beer a week if the boat came in. And most of it was that West Australian beer which wasn't that hot, West End or something, or is that South Australia? It was pretty terrible anyway, unless you could buy the Japanese stuff and it was maybe trustworthy, maybe not. Anyway, he used to, this one particular officer who he wanted
- 17:30 to know why the vehicle broke down every time he came into this area and I said, "Well, it must be something in the petrol sir. Or maybe it's the height in this particular area, I don't know the real story attached to it." But what I used to do to the driver, I'd say, "Look, when you're, if he takes you to an area where you know you shouldn't be, and he's not in sight anywhere, lift up the bonnet, raise the pump lever on the fuel pump as high as it will go and leave it. And you'll get the fuel that's in the carburettor to drive and that might take you out of the red light area, it might put you somewhere else. And he'll have
- 18:00 to walk to the nearest legal phone to make a phone call." And that's how it happened, I'd get in and I'd tinker around and pretend to be with spanners and rattle, rattle, rattle and I'd push the lever down and give it a couple of pumps, "Try it now driver." Brumm, brumm, brumm and away he'd go. And I said, "Shall I fill out the G2 authorising me to come to this area?" He said "No, don't do that, I'll make it two bottles instead of one." Then I'd swap that stuff too,
- 18:30 I'd actually give that to a sergeant in the quarter store, quartermaster's store and he'd give me his chocolate. We didn't, privates didn't get chocolates, we didn't get much beer.

What was the red light district like?

That was where the girls of the town would be supplying sex to the, whoever wanted it I s'pose.

What did it look like?

Just like any other ramshackle humpy.

19:00 After the and this was in Hiroshima too by the way, where the bomb had gone off and wiped out buildings ground floor level and there was nothing left and they'd put up, rather than suffer the earthquakes that occurred up there ever now and again, they'd put up very lightweight framed houses. A piece of almost like balsa wood, the timbers were very weak but wouldn't hurt you if they fell on you and the, instead of windows they had a sort of a silk paper.

19:30 And they were quite warm inside and they had charcoal burners going inside which used to asphyxiate more than it did warm and there'd be lots of people dying from inhaling the smoke from the charcoal fires. Sometimes every now and again somebody'd roll over and kick the charcoal fire and the house would burn down and all its contents including the inhabitants. Yes. It was interesting.

So the girls set up in the humpies there?

Not a humpy it was a nice little rice paper house if you'd like to call it that.

20:00 They lived, they sleep on what they call a futon, F.U.T.O.N. I don't know if you've heard of that. It's like a mattress at ground level and the Japanese have a piece of, it's more like a piece of china, it's a pillow, no covering over it, just a piece of china under the neck to, it must make their head sit more forward. That should be about it but they have a, they make a blanket out of

20:30 chopped fibres like paper and it's put in between two pieces of sheets and it's like a what do you call those bed things, you can't wear them, you can't get them in Townsville anyway, but they're quite hot. They're all right down south or somewhere like that. It's just like a double sheet sewn together around the edges and you stuff it with wool or something like that to keep you warm. Yeah that's about it.

Was VD a big problem

21:00 **at the time?**

When I went up there a padre clerk I think it was, a big lump of a bloke, he had a showing for those who had just arrived in the habitat and all who had just marched into the unit would have to see this thing. And he'd bring on a male and a female who had secondary syphilis and they'd show their private parts and the damage that the syphilis had done. And then they'd tell the

21:30 stories about the girls who had voluntary indoctrinated, not indoctrinated, injected with VD so they would give it to the Australian troops who wanted to be foolish.

A real woman and man would come in?

Yeah. Japanese persons male and female, male and... and they would drop their trousers, raise their skirts or drawers and you'd see the private parts with all the aggression that the VD had had between their legs.

22:00 Makes you walk a straight path after that I tell you. Very sickening too. And they don't have any treatment over there at that time to cure it. A lot of girls who were infected by troops, Americans had it pretty badly, they'd either commit hari kari or drop themselves in the ocean and forget to swim. Yeah not all the natives were

22:30 they were of a certain, they had to be of a certain grading in stature of class if you like before they could commit hari kari which is nice. It takes a lot of stoicism for my part to cut across there and take it back again and then, or back again to make sure the entrails all fall over in the right places.

What did you think of the Japanese women?

I didn't have much to do with them except those who, there used to be a girl called Duraglip. She used to have

23:00 false brass teeth I think and she was always bright and shiny and she used to come over to the mess and try to, to the ORs [Other Ranks] mess and try to tell blokes to come outside and she'd have sex with them for next to nothing. A glass of beer or something, a hundred yen. It was a thousand yen to a pound sterling in those days so for a tenth part of a pound she'd have sex with them out on the hard cold ground.

23:30 Not my cup of tea [no my type of thing] .

And you said that a lot of Aussie men married Japanese women.

They did secretly but they had a lot of kids and they didn't pick them up after they left Japan. So there were a lot of half caste Australian Japanese children who were disliked intensely by the Japanese people. And they would succumb to suicide because they weren't wanted by either race.

24:00 And of course the women who'd been sexually made love to sort of thing and then left for cold, they were, hated the Australians. Of course the Americans weren't much loved over there either. They'd do the same thing. A lot of rape went on between the Negroid representatives of the American troops. It's a lot of,

- 24:30 there were in one part of Tokyo, thieves like you could walk along with a packet of cigarettes in your pocket and they'd slit the pocket with a razor blade or something and take the cigarettes and you wouldn't know it was gone. There's a trick to having, you don't carry paper money in a wallet in your back pocket or they'd get it just as easily. I don't know if you've got trousers like this on your, like that
- 25:00 put your hand in. I haven't got them anyway, but if you jammed the money up in there in that corner pocket in there, nobody gets their hand in that section to thief the notes you've got in your pockets. That's the easiest way to secure your pocket money if you want to keep jingling change but they used to pay in Yen sometimes. I was chasing a, or trying to buy a chess set made of
- 25:30 ivory and jade, different sets, one of ivory one of jade. 126,000 yen they wanted or 126...
- About the money? Yes, I wanted to buy a chess set of jade and ivory and the figures would be about between three and six inches tall, 126,000 yen, or 126 pounds and my pay was
- 26:00 eight shillings a day. That was all, it would take me the rest of my life to get 126 pounds sterling. But I managed by devious means to get some other sort of funding, what do they call it? Some sort of mark but it's discoloured, it's not white. Anyway, I managed to get, I got 110,000
- 26:30 but they wouldn't reduce the price any more, they wouldn't come down and I couldn't raise the rest so I didn't get it but I told some fellow in Sydney about this thing I'd missed out on and he said, "You know you could've got thousands for that." The board too was jade and ivory. I'd have been flat out getting it out of Japan into Australia anyway. So instead of buying chess sets and things like that I bought cameras.
- 27:00 I had five very good cameras. I think the 1.6 was probably the best lens, another, I had a, the camera that I kept after getting rid of all the others was a little hand operated 6.3 Karl Zeiss lens made in Germany with a bellows type, which eventually corroded and rotted away, so I don't worry about taking pictures any more. But I used to use different coloured filters with a
- 27:30 black and white film sort of thing and I'd get variations of shading. So a red slide in front of the lens would give me snow, that sort of a thing.

So what sort of stuff were you dealing in the black market then?

Shhh.

You brought it up.

No I didn't say the black, I said not white. Cigarettes and only sergeants

- 28:00 and above could get coffee and, but other people used to ask me to sell their stuff for them. So I got caught for black marketing and it cost me two pounds or 14 days in the slop. So I paid the two pounds. But it took me a long time to recover my loss and get my long service medal and meritorious service medal. Once I'd passed the use by date for that

- 28:30 misdemeanour.

So what happened? How did they find out?

One of the drivers was carrying the stuff out. He used to carry it out in his jeep, in the glove box. But he'd, I'd grounded his vehicle for lack of maintenance and he came in with a piano accordion case and went out with all the stuff in it. "Gotcha." And he said, "He sold it to me." He got the sack about two hours later.

- 29:00 **And what was the process of your punishment? What happened to you when he pointed the finger?**

Well they charged me for illegal transit or selling of goods, because you're not supposed to. Especially as the fortnight before I'd signed a piece of paper that I wouldn't. All water under the bridge now, but that'd be 1947, or eight, 1947 probably, yeah.

- 29:30 **What was the, what were the Mason's meetings like in Japan? What would you do?**

Well it's a secret order. To my knowledge there are, women can participate in a Masonic lodge but not in mine. So I'm not going to tell you.

Was it very popular in Japan though?

In amongst the Americans it was. It was a little group in Kure where I was but, and I

- 30:00 was what they called a Master Mason, I'd got to a further degree and I never bothered after that because there's a lot of study in the rest of the things to do and I just didn't have the time.

How did you come to be a Mason?

My Father was one and introduced me when I got to be the age of - and I had to apply through, I don't know if you're a religious person, are you a Catholic or something? Well the, I had, the Catholics and

- 30:30 Masons don't see eye to eye on a lot of things usually. You promised to keep secrets and not tell anything to your relations. And the Catholics, you're supposed to tell the priest or the Pope everything you've done right, and that's not the same. And they're loathed in Ireland anyway, and they're not too popular in Italy either but there's plenty of them in America, Masons I mean. But,
- 31:00 I've been in Townsville for, since 1969 and I've only been to two Masonic lodges in that period so I've lost a lot of kudos for the system or wanting to be a Mason any more. I am one but I don't belong to any particular club.

Was it popular amongst the Australians in Japan?

Well they used to call themselves when the, Masons in New Guinea. And MOJAI, Masons on Japanese island and that was the group I belonged to.

- 31:30 I'd gone up there as a Master Mason but I'd done my training in Sydney. And my lodge number back in those days was 81 so it was fairly old in tradition but there's not too many takers getting into the system now so it's probably been defunct.

Did being a Mason introduce you to people who could give you...?

Oh no, I didn't join it for that.

- 32:00 You don't join for that, you join for the fellowship and the learning of the ancient ways. I had a friend who had 32 degrees but that was a lot higher than mine. I was about 29 less than him. But they go through a Scottish lodge and different other systems. You know it's back dated, it's supposed to operate or begun when the pyramids were being built 10,000 years ago or something.

What did you find

- 32:30 **fulfilling about it, or important?**

Well I was sort of a student in ancient Egyptian ways. They'd, they were civilised 8,000 years before we started to walk in England, Europe, before we sort of stopped being clannish and living in little mud huts around the paddock. They were well and truly civilised before we

- 33:00 came on the scene. But none of my ancestors were criminals by the way, they didn't come out here in a, my grandfather came out here to buy land. He got bitten by the gold bug [gold rush] but that's still operating I think. And he always swore that there was gold around White Cliff and I don't know anything about the New South Wales goldfields but White Cliff isn't one of them. All you get out there is fools good. It's a

- 33:30 iron pyrites that looks like gold.

What was some other memorable experiences that you had in Japan?

I used to do a lot of that recovery business. I had a driver working for me who trained to be a kamikaze pilot, you know the suicide pilot and he said he was driving the staff car out to Hiro one of the distant suburbs and he thought he was behind the, in his cockpit of his Zero and he put the foot down and he killed two people.

- 34:00 And he had to stay on the scene and he stayed by the scene where the two dead were for three hours and nobody came past him so he could flag them down. So he drove to a provo station and they booked him for leaving the scene of an accident. He was still driving when I left. Everybody accepted the fact that he thought he was back in the kamikaze behind his plane. He wasn't a bad sort of a fellow, he just slipped a bit, killed two.

- 34:30 But in Japan if you kill somebody, the body is yours until somebody else claims it. So he was stuck even though he came back to the transport lines, two bodies were delivered to the transport lines because they were his. Nobody else wanted them because you had to pay to bury people in Japan or you would cremate them because you can't dig any holes over in Japan to put anybody in it unless you got a power drill and make it big enough to slide one in.

- 35:00 We had a couple of earthquakes while we were over there, which the overhead light was touching the ceiling either side. Swinging down to about that high and touching the ceiling as an arc. And I got away from the transport lines into the middle of the parade ground waiting for something to happen, and a hole in the transport lines maybe about four feet away from me, just went boom into the ocean.

- 35:30 I could've been standing there too. And up on Anzac Park where the big parade ground for all Australian troops in the vicinity would have their parades on Anzac Day and a few other things, one side of the park just fell away and showed there were five tunnels dug under that particular level under the park. And nobody was allowed in. All we had to do was, we dragged a two ton truck out of one hole

- 36:00 and left it for somebody to pick up and take away. We didn't want it. But had to take a cabin truck down in amongst these tunnels which was rather surprising. And they wouldn't let anybody down these holes. There might have been another collapse and bingo they'd never get you out.

You said that when you first went to Japan you were suspicious of the Japanese, or before you went there you were suspicious. How did that change?

I was suspicious after when I'd been there. There were people being

36:30 behind our, behind General Macarthur, not, Robinson's place a bit further towards the hills near us, there was a hospital area. But there'd been reports of Japanese going out on the streets at night to, this wasn't the red light district they were quite ordinary citizens, but they were, any loan soldier would be attacked. So I thought there was plenty of hatred

37:00 amongst some types. Most of Japan, Japanese I knew, that I'd met anyway in the fields away from the city areas were very meek and mild. If you "boo" they'd fall over backwards. They were very hospitable. I ran over a, a bloke was walking along a footpath and I drove my jeep with three other blokes in the back and a hat fell off one of these

37:30 characters and it passed under my vehicle, which I pulled the vehicle aside, got out, pulled his hat off and walked over and handed it to him. He couldn't stop bowing to me, he kept bowing, almost dropping his head to the ground and I was standing that high above him. But they thought it was wonderful, especially the blokes in the back of the jeep, they never thought anybody would stop a vehicle just to pick up a hat for a peasant. Why not, he's human just like me.

38:00 He only does what he's told just like you do in the army. They say, "March." I used to have a lot of sympathy for the Korean, Australian troops who went to Korea and Vietnam. You go where they send you, it's not that you can say, "No, I'm not going." Because they'll just say, "Right-oh, treason. Put him against the wall and shoot him." Well they don't do it now but they could've. Or you could go to gaol for the rest of your life. There's a big gaol at Holsworthy that the army puts anybody that's reluctant to do anything they're told.

38:30 **What did you like about living in Japan?**

Trying to do something for the people I s'pose. I had an ex-school teacher who taught English to Japanese students when he was a pre-war man. George, I can't remember what his last name was, but he and I would read a book and we'd look at the sentences and he'd tell me, "That's a good sentence," or, "That's a bad one."

39:00 And we'd do crossword puzzles. My sister used to send me a book full of crossword puzzles. He'd get the answer first before I would ever. And I used to give him a lot of the stuff that I knew he couldn't get in his rations. And he'd eat it on the spot rather than take it outside and get caught with it. We had a coal brazier, a five-gallon drum with holes punched in it, a few bars set in it and we'd put the fuel.

39:30 When the fuel was up, there was some nice coals in it and put a billy [pot] in there and cook some, bring some meat over from the cookhouse and we'd make up some stew or something. And he thought that was terrific, especially since the meat he was getting was horse and the stuff we were getting was beef. I ran over, it could've been dog for that matter, the stuff that he was eating. I ran over a dog at Hiroshima, both tyres went over it and I could feel the "bump, bump", and thee wasn't a skerrick [any] of the dog when I went back to see if it was still alive.

40:00 Which I'd have killed it had it been. I don't like leaving animals in pain. I've got a story to tell you about that too. There might be a report somewhere in the documents I've got. I'll tell it to you now while...

Alright, yeah. Sure.

I go out endurance riding or I used to as a mechanic or the driver of the vehicle in case the original driver, he's either got to ride a horse for the endurance ride

40:30 or he gets sick and falls off his perch. And I would bring his children and they would bring the other horses back. And I inquired of the police could I take a license for firing a rifle on endurance rides, because if a horse falls and breaks its leg, it has to lay there in agony until a vet comes in from whoop, whoop and I'd rather see the horse put down than see it, watch it in agony. They refused to give me because the state laws

41:00 said they could only fire a rifle on private property and unless I did a course with them, I couldn't be given this permission to fire a rifle anyway. And I said, "I probably know more about firing a rifle than the bloke that's going to teach me. He's only been done it lately, I've been a Queen's Medal shooter and been in the army 30 odd years, and he's only fired a rifle. I'll tell you what, I've fired a bit more than he has. And I was a warrant

41:30 officer," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they said, "Sorry, that's the law. I've got to do what - you've got to fire on private property and you've got to do this course or you don't get a license." And it cost me \$40 to apply for the license, and they gave me back the lot including, when I set a letter. So I got all, I'm the only bloke that got all his money back I s'pose.

00:31 **Ken, can you describe the camp for us, where you lived in Japan?**

You mean the house, the barracks block or the transport lines where I lived, both?

Probably the barracks initially.

They were all basically Nissen huts [tunnel shaped huts of corrugated iron with cement floor] , that's the big domed shape thing where the guttering or the roof goes all the way to the ground because you get snow over there and occasionally a torrential fall of rain,

01:00 not often, more snow than anything else. And it's pretty damned cold. You can build snowmen after a decent sort of a fall and I've done that once or twice. And we were steam heated, we had a big steam boiler at the back of the lines which also fed the showers and things. One day the steam boiler wasn't working and I was under the shower and the steam was coming off me and I was having a shower, everybody said, "Oh it's good, how's the water?" I said, "Oh it's beaut, I love it like this." They turned on the tap and it came

01:30 out like ice blocks. I got belted by towels for about, before I got a towel wrapped around me and got out and escaped. Yes, that's just a funny part about it. We had Japanese guards on the gate, surrounding the perimeter and the sergeant would go around and see that everybody was on the job. That was about the size of our security.

02:00 Over in the transport lines where I eventually got permission to stay over there because I got called out so often, we had a steam engine, a little one, about here to the wall long. Only a little puffing billy [antiquated] sort of thing and it puffed up enough steam to get steam clean to wash the vehicles that we needed to. And to keep the occupied when the winter months were on, keep me nice and warm with the steam pipe going through the, around my bed area.

02:30 That wasn't bad.

How did your day to day life progress from early, from first thing in the morning?

Well I'd go out and have me, do my ablutions. I'd go over to the mess for breakfast, I'd do the various jobs required of me or go out and do recovery or go out to the workshop company or take stores back to the ordinance, do whatever it was that I had to do. Once I had to take stores to the Indian mess when an officer had to go and

03:00 do, sign some stuff out or in, I forget what it was. He said, "I'll go to the officer's mess, you go to the OR's mess", and they served me a bowl about yeah long, about twelve inches long and about four inches deep full of the hottest curry I've ever tasted in my life. Steam was coming off my tongue and the sweat was pouring out of my brow and dripping into the curry. And I manfully got through the lot and they brought back another bowl,

03:30 and I said, "No thank you." Enough was enough. And I reached for the cold water to drink and the fellow said, "No, dry bread." So there's a message for you, don't try and wash curry down with cold water, eat dry bread.

How did you like the food generally in Japan?

I didn't eat any Japanese food. Their meat was probably dog or horse or whatever was around. I never saw anybody eat any fish in Japan, though there was plenty of people who had it.

04:00 I had some Japanese people working for me in the, a Japanese mechanic and some drivers who'd do odd sort of jobs around the transport yard. But they were basically eating a lot of white rice, I beg your pardon, brown rice and maybe a little piece of meat from something to change the diet. They, in their farm area they used to have a, the rice paddy but they'd have a small pond and there'd be like

04:30 carp, goldfish sort of things and that was part of the diet. I'm not sure if they ate the bamboo shoots, but that was about the only greenery they got. And that was about their limitation of tucker but they did seem to do alright on it. They reckon you can live on a handful of rice a day. My brother-in-law was a POW, I probably told you that.

What sort of devastation did you see when you arrived in Hiroshima?

Well I had to go out there, we didn't land in there

05:00 we landed in Kure but I had to go out there well basically to see where the bomb had been dropped and, do you know anything about where the bomb was dropped? Would you like some explanation?

I'd like you to tell us what you saw.

Well when I got out there, there was very few solid buildings standing. Two miles away from the point of detonation there was a railway station and it took out the first floor and dropped the second floor down or the first floor came down and occupied where the ground floor was. That was two miles from the blast. I spoke a while ago that

05:30 they lost on the day they dropped the bomb 116,658 people. Official estimate according to the records I've got somewhere. And later in about 1947 the group I belonged to, Masons group, we adopted an

orphanage and I was taken with a young lady she'd be about nine. She was whole when I first met her but when I left about two years later, she was, both arms

- 06:00 were off just below the elbow and one leg above the knee. Eaten by the radiation that goes into the bone marrow and they have to keep cutting it off otherwise it gets gangrene. So there's some pretty terrible things about atomic bombs. And the one they dropped on Hiroshima was much more deadly than the one they dropped at Nagasaki. I'll repeat that thing, my brother-in-law was in Nagasaki when they dropped the bomb.
- 06:30 And the Japanese knew they were going to be bombed because they'd learned from somewhere or other and they divided the prisoners between those who worked on the wharves and those who worked back at the camp where most of the Japanese were stationed. He was shipped both ways until lastly they took him out to the army camp and he, because they dropped the bomb on the wharf instead, he never had any fallout problems. Those who were working on the boats, this is the story he tells, that the Japanese knew that eventually there
- 07:00 were going to be some bombs dropped on the harbour because that's where the ships were being laden and things like that. They put all the Australians in the holes and battened down the holes, put wedges in so they couldn't get out and all of them just stood up on, the Japanese just stood up on deck and when the bomb went off none of the Japanese that were on deck survived. Eventually the Australian troops got out for some reason or other. Somebody got out and knocked the wedges loose and the other people got out, but they had to walk through the black soil. They call it the black soil, this is the fallout stuff
- 07:30 and they were impregnated in their, most of them were bare footed so they got the stuff in their flesh. And many of them had died before they got home. My brother-in-law was a big man, he was about my height, weighed about fifteen stone I s'pose, fighting fit and rearing to go. He'd have been flat out being, he wouldn't have been much thicker than a matchbox when he came home. He was about six stone and barely alive, and he was
- 08:00 living on scratchings of food. He had no love for the Japanese. When I told him I'd been over there with the Japanese he was surprised that I'd treated them so gently.

What other sort of devastation did you see in Hiroshima?

Well where the bomb dropped, it was over a science building. The bomb was detonated a hundred feet above the science building. There's a

- 08:30 bridge just to the right of the science building and there's an imprint of a human foot four inches into the cement, so the cement was liquid when this bloke was walking across and all that's left is this perfect imprint into the cement. The science building was just a wreck. It's now their possible cenotaph I s'pose you'd call it, to pay respect for those who died for Hiroshima
- 09:00 at that particular time. They had a report written by a Jesuit priest, he'd been out to see some of the other side of Hiroshima, he'd gone over the hill and into the distance. He was climbing back up the hill to get into Hiroshima and a great glare, so the bomb had been detonated and it lit up the sky with a colour he'd never seen before. And he went, the rush of air over the hill escaped him because he was near the crest of it
- 09:30 so it went past him, but he felt the reverse flow of the wind and it took him up to the top of the hill. The wind that's coming back is almost as deadly as the one going out. It's the vacuum that's got to be refilled by air so that that didn't get knocked over going out, was flattened by the wind coming back. And he saw the devastation. Where the naval barracks was there was nothing, there were 2,000 men there,
- 10:00 stationed in the area. A lot of the buildings were supposed to be cyclone, not cyclone proof, earthquake proofed, all the floors in it was just like that thing in America, the seventh, the 9th of September [2001], all the floors just dropped through the ground floor. There was a bank such as that, I saw that when I was in Hiroshima opposite the science building. Let's see, what else?
- 10:30 Fires broke out all over the place and a lot of the houses were burnt and a lot of the people with it. Lucky ones were burnt to death at the time because they didn't suffer that fallout. The eating away and slowly dying.

Ken you said earlier that one of the reasons you wanted to go to Japan was to see where the bomb had dropped, what was your reaction when you saw that?

How could anybody live through such a holocaust

- 11:00 I s'pose is a good word for it. But the fact that also worried me was the fact that this stuff was still on the ground even two years later. Well eighteen months later when I got there. And they said it was in the ground, it's still in the ground, it would emanate from the ground every now and again and I was frightened that I might get some of it. Apparently I haven't, it might be good luck more than good fortune. The fact that I always wore boots and had full dress uniform every time, I never went out there in shorts or anything.

- 11:30 **Was there any awareness of the potential for people to...?**

No we weren't told anything about it, except the bomb had gone off, the atomic bomb. But nobody had told us what the possibilities would be out of it. And I would go out to Hiroshima at least three times a week in those two years I was over there. But then I had friends who went to Woomera and they were stupid enough to wear a hat, a pair of shorts and a pair of boots and that's what their formal dress was. Bare skin for the rest of it,

12:00 the Poms [English] were dressed up toe to head with silver paper sort of clothing and they survived and too many of my friends and a lot of the other people who were over there are now dead and gone. I used to belong to a club in Townsville called the TRCOTA, Townsville Regional Committee of the Aging and some of the groups

12:30 around the town belonged to that because they were interconnected shall we say with elderly people. And this fellow was most upset that there was no recognition for those who'd served at Woomera. The government wasn't interested at all, any of the governments, weren't interested in coming to the party to give them a sort of a pension or relief from the pains and the sufferings they had.

Was the scene at Nagasaki, you went also, was the scene there more or less the same?

13:00 Not as bad as Hiroshima. The bomb that was dropped at Hiroshima was two to three times stronger than that at Nagasaki.

What were the conditions that the people were living in by the time you arrived?

They were frightened to live in buildings that had had any implosions, explosions in the vicinity that had wrecked some part of the building because if something came, an earthquake or something came later, the house might collapse.

13:30 And the, but they built houses out of balsa wood and silk died so that you couldn't see through it so much. And it was very warm inside but I had a friend who was a prefect of police, and, because I used to, my drivers used to take me up to meet with this fellow. Apparently I had some sympathies for this interpreter and they were friendly and I got introduced to

14:00 the prefect of police. He would tell me where the next raid was going to be.

Was there much poverty among the people by that time?

Yeah.

What did you see in that sense?

They'd only, didn't get much to eat. Nothing is wasted in the way, like I was telling you, if I ran over a dog and went back to check if it was dead or something, there was nothing left. Not even a hair on the ground where it had been.

14:30 So they'd eat that, they'd eat horse meat and you can always tell the difference between horse and cattle, it's a darker, I s'pose if you get a young one it'd be light but it's a bit of a rank flavour.

So in spite of what you knew what the Japanese had done to, including some of your friends, did you have any sympathy for them?

Mmm. Yeah I, like I was saying, during the army you'd do what you were told. Well the Japanese warlords, they said what was going to be happening

15:00 and those who were in the army were a step higher up the ladder than the poor, little peasant who only supplied; the class system is terrible in Japan. You could be a trained ninja and you were the top of the tree. There's the ones who don't, they were ninjas but they don't belong to any particular group, they were at a lower stage. There were those who supplied the food, they were sort of better than the peasants. Yeah the peasants can be lowest, and the girl peasant, she's the lowest of the low

15:30 because she'll get married and they'll have to give a dowry or something and they can't afford that.

Can you tell us a little bit more about that orphanage?

I can't tell you much about the building itself, except the hospital section of it.

...I mean about the people who were there.

Well our club adopted this orphanage and everybody selected a, or were allocated a person to foster care for, I s'pose is the word for it. And I got this young lass.

16:00 Rioki I think her name was, something like that. And she was, she didn't show any pain or disappointment that she was one of the sufferers, she always had a smile like Joey Brown across her mouth when I showed up. Of course I used to bring chocolates and things like that and she would share them out amongst her fellow patients. Everybody shared I think. And she was such a, the smile on her face was terrific. And she never

16:30 the nurse said that she, I can't think of the words now but she used to mutter something to me in Japanese that the girl, obviously didn't cry out when, or know when she was going to the operating table that she was going to lose something else. She didn't complain about it. I thought she was a game

little kid, braver than me. The building itself, they were all in, lying in a very simple bed like a futon,

17:00 I explained that earlier, which is pretty low to the ground and I had to get on my hands and knees to almost, kneel to talk to her when she was on the cot.

Did she understand what you said to her?

Yeah.

Did you speak in Japanese with her?

Sometimes, little bits of words. Nippongo skoshi nea - I speak little bit of Japanese. I don't remember too much of it now either. But I had to know a little bit of Japanese to tell the drivers what to do when it came to maintenance.

17:30 And to be able to tell them forcefully. I always had an interpreter alongside to explain the word. It helped...

How did the relationship for you, with Rioki, how did that affect you?

I was rather saddened by the whole thing. That was a person who had no connection with the war effort at all but

18:00 would be, an obvious, well eventually she'd die within about two years after I'd gone or something eventually. By the time they'd chopped all the legs and arms off there'd only the spine to operate on. And what do you do then. The best, she wouldn't be able to inflict any wounds on herself to die, kill the ensuing pain and they didn't have anything in those days to null the pain. They didn't have anything to kill the agony of the next bit of,

18:30 till that stage that she had to stay in bed. She couldn't walk, she couldn't hobble they didn't have crutches or anything, no wheelchairs. And we were thinking of making wheelchairs and sending them over there but the Australian government wasn't keen on accepting those.

What did you talk to her about?

Her life and the farm that she had lived on. But she was the only surviving member of her family.

19:00 And she had lived near where the naval barracks were, where they'd wiped out 2,000 men. Near, not too close, about three miles away apparently, on a farm area higher up in the hills. So she got some of the sweep as the explosion went out. But she was where was she, she was on the other side. She was on the other side of the house from where the blast

19:30 detonated, about three miles away so she was protected a bit. But the Father and the Mother were working on a paddy field on the reverse side of the house and they got the full blast. And the other child was on her Mother's back in one of those carry sort of things. So those three were wiped out almost straight away.

When you first heard about the atomic bombs

20:00 **being dropped and you were, I guess you were back in Australia at that time were you?**

Yes in August, yeah.

What was your opinion of that at the time?

Thankful, thankful because they, it was the first bomb dropped on was it the sixth? Yeah the sixth of August, the second one on the ninth and total capitulation, unconditional surrender on the fourteenth. That's a good memory isn't it? No I've got it written in my book over there.

20:30 As a matter of fact I'm going to a Beecroft activity on the Anzac Day after the march, and because there's a few Beecroft members still existing I'll say, "Who can remember the time, date, blah, blah blah and the second bomb, blah, blah, blah? How many died in the immediate explosion?" I'll be surprised if anybody knows the answers. And I'm the president, so I can ask those silly things.

So you said you were thankful when you heard about it.

Yeah,

21:00 I was so pleased that so many lives would be saved by not having the, having seen that, some of the, how the Japanese would exist in places in New Guinea and live off next to nothing in the way of food, and reading about the Guadalcanal and how long it took the Americans and all the ammunition that they poured into the island before they could take it. And then some of the Australians who spoke to me about Madang and Finschhafen and areas like that.

21:30 How they would undermine, they would mine and live in caves and things like that.

And did you experience in Japan, when you saw the devastation and you saw the sort of suffering that was going on, did that alter your opinion about the atomic bomb at all?

I was only happy, no I was happy that the bombs had stopped the war. The confrontation with the enemy. I can't say that I was sorry that an

22:00 enemy had suffered this because they had been pretty cruel in their approach to the war. But I understand that they have a belief. I can understand that if they're captured, they're dead to their nation anyway so if they can take somebody with them; there's no such thing as Valhalla for them. But they do better for themselves I s'pose, they do something for their very proud nation mind. They were

22:30 good soldiers, there's no doubt about it but, or they were good soldiers, whether they...

While you were in Japan, for those couple of years, was there much bribery and corruption going on?

Only in Tokyo.

What sort of things?

Well they'd, like I was explaining, they'd cut the bottom of your shirt pocket and take the cigarettes out and you wouldn't even know that they'd been there.

Well that's sort of thievery...

That's thieving.

I meant within the army, within the army.

The Australian army? No I didn't see much in the Australian Army.

23:00 I saw more of that in Australia but not overseas. I saw a bloke get thrown off a building because he put a double-headed penny into a two-up [betting game with coins] game. Soldier. Yeah at the artillery barracks at North Head in Sydney. They picked this bloke up, threw him out the first floor landing and broke both legs I think it was. Broke both his legs.

You saw that happen?

No I didn't see it but I heard, I was in the building going up the stairs and plop, "What was that?" Anyway kept going

23:30 and a fellow said, "We just found a bloke put a double-headed penny in a two-up game so that's him down there." "Right."

In what unit did that happen?

Artillery barracks, a lot of people used it for a staging camp area, so I can't say who was and who wasn't artillery.

You were in the army a long time, was that sort of thing typical of...?

Oh yeah, you cheated cards or cheated two-up which was a national game, you were chicken meat I s'pose,

24:00 dog meat. I mean we were only getting eight bob a day or five bob a day sometimes, early piece. In 1942 I was only getting five shillings a day and I used to give three shillings on to my Mother so I wasn't getting much and I had to live on two bob a day which is a pretty lean pickings [not much] . So and you have to buy your boot polish and your toothpaste and your soaps, and people would pinch [steal] your soap and you'd be there in the shower with no soap because somebody had thieved it. Other people would suffer that way and they used to

24:30 deliberately lose a cake, leave a cake of soap in the shower with razor blades embedded in it. And you knew the bloke who was pinching soap because he'd be bleeding like a stuck pig. And they'd give you, you'd get a belting for that too, because you'd pinched, well he'd be soaping himself up and there'd be blood pouring out all over. So you'd know the bloke that was pinching soap.

Are these things considered acceptable behaviour in the army?

Well you're not getting much and somebody's thieving from you. You're just as poor as he is but he's stealing from you, so yes, he should

25:00 he gets his just desserts [get appropriate punishment] . I'd accept that.

And the bloke that was tossed over the side of the building...

He paid for putting a double-headed penny to cheat everybody else.

No, were there any repercussions?

No, even the provos picked him up. Never worried about, somebody said, "Rotten so and so put a double headed penny in the...".

So is this something that's sort of taught to people in the army from the beginning, that...?

No it's something you get in Melbourne mostly.

25:30 Canberra. Can't tell I'm a Sydneyite can you? No I think it's not necessarily bred in the army, I think it may have been inherited from the days when they came out as felons under George III [reference to early convict transportation to Australia] wasn't it? For a minor, I mean you get sent out to Australia as a felon for seven years for

26:00 picking up something that somebody said, picked a piece of lettuce or something from somebody's garden, or he pinched an apple off the tree. "You're gone". So you spent seven years of your life and you didn't want to go home into that sort of caper again after you'd had such a wonderful country to live in like Australia.

How did you find adjusting to life back in Australia again after Japan?

No trouble. No trouble.

Were you glad to come back?

Well I was on a course to gain experience in another

26:30 field.

Can you tell us about that?

Yeah I came home, I was on a, they said, "You've applied to do a course in Australia on mechanics." And I said, "Yes." "Well you're on a plane tomorrow." No wait a minute, "You're on a plane this afternoon," that's right, "And you've got two hours to get there." So I had to get rid of a lot of stuff and I had the driver to take me out to the air force base and

27:00 I boarded a Lancaster bomber with the [Roman Catholic] Cardinal Gilroy and his party who'd been over there, kissed a mummified hand of our saving Saviour. And he thought it was lucky that a navy fellow, an army fellow - me, and a RAAF fellow, three of the services were represented to fly home with him to Australia. I didn't think much of it. Of course he'd gone over to the officer's mess and was imbibing quite freely and we were stuck in this airport without a, we'd left

27:30 my camp, I'd left came and gone out there to sail, to fly away without morning tea or anything like that. So I didn't get any lunch and I didn't get any lunch at the airport. In fact I didn't get a feed until I got to Sydney. And that was 27 hours away, no twenty-three and a half hours away, that's right. Never got a drink of any description, never got any food because old Gilroy and his crew were socking it up in the

28:00 various messes around the paddock. Anyway, so no tucker. Are you a Catholic? Sorry about that, bad luck but I'll have to tell the truth anyway. Cross me heart and hope to die. Anyway he was in the outer court of leaving Iwakuni, that was the RAAF base and when we got in this plane the rivets were loose from, I thought the plane was going to fall apart. The panels were shaking all over the place but anyway we got off the ground.

28:30 And it was a bomber, you had to be saying, "Now I've got to walk up there through this crowd to get to the..." but anyway. The RAAF bloke was next to me and the navy was in a single seat on the other side, and we were next to the bulkhead into the captain's cabin, or the pilot's cabin and we looked towards the stern or the tail of the plane. And if you wanted to get up and go anywhere, you had to go right through, down to the tail end. Anyway, and that was a precarious position to be because

29:00 the floor you walked on was the bomb bay. Hopefully they'd sealed those off. And the, we got to Clarke Field in the Philippines and nearly an hour, two hours tried to leave there and buy something at one of the shops to see if we could get something to drink. And I couldn't get off the airport because at that time the Australians had ejected a Filipino who

29:30 had married an Australian girl in West Aussie somewhere and he thought marrying her he'd get Australian citizenship but in fact, she'd be able to become a Filipino as far as the Australians were concerned, and they thought that was a big no-no sort of thing. And every Filipino, you weren't, they took a, this is my little pen knife I carry around which I carve up a lot of things with, it's one of those lock-in blade things. But anyway, the, my fruit knife would be about that long, wouldn't be as long as that part of my finger, it was just for peeling fruit

30:00 in Japan and they took that off me at the airport as a lethal weapon. I wasn't allowed to carry it off the plane. And he said, "I wouldn't go out there if I were you, Australians are not particularly liked at the moment." So I didn't dare leave the airport against, you could see these Filipinos bending over and you could see that great knife they wear between their shoulder blades. I thought, "Well I'm not sticking my neck out here, certainly got no back-up anyway." And

30:30 I remembered that Filipino that challenged me to fight knives in Milne Bay, I wasn't rapt in that. Anyway, so I got back on the plane again, I said, "I can't get anything to drink." So later on we left the plane and went to Darwin and off he went out to the RAAF officer's mess to suck it on again and they warmed up the engines twice, hoping the noise would reach the officer's mess and they'd get the message that we wanted to leave. But it, apparently, and they came back and he said, "Before we get on the plane,"

- 31:00 this is the Cardinal, "We must bless it." "More bloody waste of time," says I. And anyway he blessed the plane and we took off eventually and nothing really serious until one of the priests came up and said, "It's getting cold, do you mind if I turn on the heat?" I said, "Go back to your seat, I'll fix it for you." So I reached up behind me to the two knobs and switched it on to full hot, and I said, "We'll suffer a bit but not as bad as they'll get it shortly when we're flying over the," I forget what is it, "Queensland Downs."
- 31:30 Bump, bump. And it did. And everybody was watching the Cardinal when he reached for his little green plastic bag or whatever they used to do it in. He was as sick as a dog, and everybody else of his crew, his party were retching into their plastic bags, or their sickness bags just to be in sympathy I think, whether they were sick or not. Anyway, out of the
- 32:00 cabin comes the navigator. He said, "Oh god it's hot in here. Why don't you turn those things..." reached over me. I said, "The Cardinal wanted it hot so we gave it to him." "You rotten..." Anyway we were the last plane into Mascot, there was big floods in Mascot at that particular time, there was that much steam engine smoke stack sticking out of the floods at around the area where we flew over. In Newcastle. Yeah, we had three hours of petrol left and we couldn't have got much further if we had
- 32:30 to rev the engines and get away anywhere.

So you got safely back to Australia eventually.

Yeah, that was Mascot in those days, not Kingsford airport. Anyway. Yeah.

So how many years were you in the army after returning to Australia?

Let's see, that was 1949, I got out in 1977. You can do the maths if you like.

So you were in the army all up for over thirty years.

Over thirty-one, yeah.

And

33:00 **of those 31 years, how significant were those war time years for you?**

Well I, what I did I thought was good but I, those years with the American Army are not counted as service in the Australian Army. I get nothing up here, no ribbons for serving. The fact that I disobeyed a lawful command saved me from getting put in the slot anyway but no I didn't get, I don't

33:30 count any of that as service with the Australian Army, so that 30-odd years is extra to the war time service.

So why are those years not considered service for you?

I did it with a foreign country. You know when I came back to Australia from that period, I went in to join the RSL and they said, "No, you served with a foreign country." And I said "Right-oh," and there was a couple of blokes from Korea that had come back at that time and

34:00 oh no, I beg your pardon, that's wrong that was later when I went and joined the RSL in, and they said, "No, you served with a foreign country." And these couple of blokes from Korea had tried to join up and, "You served in a foreign country and it wasn't wanted by the Australian people". So they didn't get in either.

So what are your thoughts on that?

Now days, well I'm a member of the RSL now but, because I can see some benefits

34:30 for me possibly out of it but. And it's good companionship, there's people I know here. My secretary, treasury at the Beecroft club is the liaison officer for widows and what-not for the RSL branch of the system.

How strong are those memories, putting aside whether it's recognised as service, how strong are the memories that you have from

35:00 **those war-time years and the time in Japan?**

Some of them come back quite readily when I've had a few down the slot [a couple of drinks] . When I've had a couple of rums it comes readily to the surface. But you don't remember the sour things of life, I don't. Unless you brought up that girl in Japan, that's way in the background somewhere. That doesn't come up unless somebody mentions something that alludes to that area. Oh no, one only remembers the funny things in life. Crouching down with a cardboard hat

35:30 helmet on my head to stop the coconut falling on my head or a bomb or something. And the stupid things you do which would raise a laugh amongst your friends.

Do you talk to your family about your war-time experiences?

Not really, my son is not really interested and his wife and I don't see eye to eye about a lot of things. But eventually I'll give my medals to one grandson and I'll give my Father's medals to another, one of

the other boys, or the other son I s'pose, brother.

36:00 And they'll be quite happy and proud to wear them on Anzac Day marches.

What are you most proud about regarding your war experience?

I did my bit as a person who'd been medically unfit originally. I did something. My brother was over there fighting the good fight, my sister was a telephonist at the government, at the post office in Sydney so she was doing

36:30 her bit, and I could've been an also-ran civilian working on a lathe somewhere in the back of woop-woop [nowhere] or pushing a grader somewhere building airstrips. No I think I helped a bit by making life more comfortable for the fellows who were going up the sharper end [closer to the action] from where I was.

Do you have any regrets at all about that time?

I'm sorry that I was, when I came back to Australia that they,

37:00 I haven't told you the full story about it but when I was up in Darwin we played inter-service sports and a fellow, two fellows put their naval boots on me, put their feet on my left foot. I was about ten inches off the ground before I woke up and me left foot was still down there. And I couldn't walk for 21 days.

You did tell us that story. So that made you unfit for...

I could never serve overseas again. It made me a bit angry. Didn't have much love for the navy after that.

37:30 **How important is Anzac Day for you Ken?**

Well it's my birthday. My parents when they were together used to have a special day for me. My brother still writes me special Anzac birthday cards. My son and daughter remember it sometimes. My daughter does it pretty well but my son's a bit lax.

Is it significant to you that you

38:00 **share your birthday with Anzac Day?**

Yeah, my Father drummed it into me when I was a young fella, "That he was a sergeant and I was born on Anzac Day. I've got to be, when I join the army I've got to get more than a sergeant". He was quite proud when he, I was a warrant officer and I passed through before he died in 1960, through his house in Sydney. And his wife would lock him out because he had some problem, and I said "Well you come up to Brisbane with me. I won't lock you out of the house, I'll give you a terrific bed to sleep in,

38:30 plenty of hot tucker and plenty of hot sun. Take you down the pub for a beer every now and again. You don't have to stay married to her." That made me very popular with his wife.

So why do you think we should remember Anzac Day?

Well, it's a tradition I s'pose. And it's my birthday. Australia is a new country basically in the world, we've only been kicking around for a couple of hundred years. We have no history other than that.

39:00 We're not the Celts or whatever they were over in England, we have a lot of Germans and Danish even, they have history we have nothing except everybody thinks we came out here as prisoners of Governor Philip. But we weren't all that way. Not all people who came to Australia were convicted of any crime. And if we have some other tradition

39:30 that will carry us through, well even those Americans on that liberty ship when I came home, "Anzac Day hey?" They knew about it too and the fact that it was my birthday, special day to me. Special for them. Somewhere in my archives I've got the, and I can't find them at the moment because we'd keep moving all the time around the paddock in the army, are the, there's the name of the boat and the recipes for the meals on that particular day. Somewhere, if somebody hasn't burnt them up or used them for newspaper.

40:00 **Ken, do you have a final comment that you'd like to make to all Australians?**

Well my Father taught me and not long ago, "If you're not doing what you like, like what you're doing and you can do anything." That's about it, that's what I lived by. If they'd give me a rotten job in the army, I could always accept it because I wasn't, I could get to like it. I hated peeling potatoes but if you try hard enough you can do it properly. Instead of cutting off six sides to a potato and finishing up with a cube

40:30 about that big, you can have one with just its skin taken off. So you're contributing something to the welfare of the country. People are slaving their guts out growing the stuff, you might as well do it the right way. And if you're doing, like I wanted to be an archaeologist, but things were such that I had to give up school even and work pretty meagrely for a small amount of wage,

41:00 to feed the family. My brother was still at school, my sister was at school, my Mother was divorced from

Dad and I was the only breadwinner [only person earning money] at five bob a day. Five bob a week was it? Yeah five shillings a week. It'd buy a lot then but it wouldn't buy much now but it was contributing to our advancement. And my sister's dead but my brother and I are still kicking on well and 1924 and 1927

41:30 were good years weren't they? 1923 and 1924.

You must've been doing something right.

And both, he doesn't smoke and I don't smoke now.

Okay, that's fantastic.

INTERVIEW ENDS