

Australians at War Film Archive

David Rogers (Bill) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:32 **Okay if you could go through the summaries we discussed thanks.**

You want it from the date of birth do you?

Yep, just in point form.

I was born in March 1926 in Sydney, actually in the suburb of Darlinghurst and

01:00 I was then taken back to wherever we lived which was in Hunters Hill where my father was the chief chemist of what was then the Vacuum Oil Company and they had a big depot on the Parramatta River and we lived in Hunters Hill. We stayed there until I was about three I think and then we went, we came down to Melbourne.

01:30 because my father was transferred. I caught scarlet fever in the big epidemic which was in about 1929, I think. Went to Fairfield Hospital Came home from there and then my father was posted as the assistant manager of Vacuum Oil to Perth. So we went by steamer on the old West Australia to Perth and for

02:00 a couple of weeks my brother and I, there were only two of us then, lived in the Palace Hotel and we were fed in a kind of a broom cupboard because children weren't allowed in the dining room. We then moved into an old house out in Cottesloe and we had a very happy time there. It was a big block of land, lots of playing. I went firstly to a little preparatory school and then

02:30 to the Cottesloe state school where I was until I was about eight I suppose. We left Western Australia in 1932 and went back to Sydney again. Once again we lived in Hunters Hill in fact in a house right opposite the house that we'd been living in before and I then

03:00 attended the Woolwich Public School as they call them in New South Wales until I was about twelve I think. I was keen in the Cubs [boys' youth organisation] and it was a very nice time apart from the fact that it was the Depression, it was a nice time to be living in Sydney,

03:30 relatively uncrowded in those days. At the state school I remember at one stage my brother and I were about the only ones who had shoes and we used to take them off and hide them in a hedge on the way to school and put them on on the way, coming home. There were baths on the Lane Cove River where we used to have our swimming sports and we went down there for swimming

04:00 once a week. The headmaster's name was Mr Ousby, he was, my memory of him is a very nice man. The classes tended to be a bit rowdy at times when the cicada season was on particularly because one of the things that people did was to catch a cicada and it wasn't very difficult,

04:30 attach a bit of string to its leg and then take it in to class having tied the other end of the string to somebody else's desk. It would be then let go and of course would be very noisy and flying all over the place. So those were the sort of things. There were a few kids gangs that, Woolwich was deep in the Depression, it had a big dry dock

05:00 and a lot of the people who worked on Cockatoo Island also lived in Woolwich and the Woolwich gangs used to come up and want to fight the Hunters Hill gangs of kids and they were quite serious with stones and all that sort of thing. However, life was relatively peaceful. Then I attended a small preparatory school for about two terms I think and then we were moved

05:30 back to Melbourne where I went to a little school up in, we lived in Armadale, not far from here and I went to a school called Malvern Grammar which is now part of Caulfield Grammar, it's been taken over. It was in an old mansion that had been built by

06:00 a rich person. I don't think he ever lived in it but it was a huge building, not very suitable for a school but it was all we had and I was a boarder there. We used to have one hot bath a week, they had a big

- sort of marble bath up on the first floor and we all hopped in to that. I played
- 06:30 cricket and football there. My football skills took a bit of developing because I'd been a rugby player in Sydney and then I had to come down and play Australian Rules and that caused a lot of amusement to some people because I'd almost instinctively tackle boys instead of grabbing them. So where do we go from there? Well, I was there for, I was quite a good swimmer. I swam in the combined
- 07:00 sports and I think I came second in my race. Then it came to be 1939 and the war broke out. My father, having spent five years at the first war was asked if he would go back into the army again and so
- 07:30 after a great deal of humming and harring [indecisive] our house was sold and my mother and the three of us, by that stage I had a sister as well, moved into a flat while my father went off to the war and I went to boarding school to take a bit of the strain off Mum I suppose. I went to boarding school at Geelong College which is right in the town of Geelong.
- 08:00 I had happy times and unhappy times there as mostly one does. The war didn't make a great impact on us in 1940 but by 1941 we had rationing. We dug air raid trenches in the school grounds which rapidly filled up with water of course. We were blacked out
- 08:30 at night. Most of us qualified as air raid wardens and we used to be sort of lent out at night to be air raid wardens in the district. We all qualified in first aid. We were all members of the cadet corps, that was compulsory and every year we went for a three week camp, a long camp where we had intensive training.
- 09:00 I think when the Japs came into the war we, our .303 rifles were confiscated or taken back by the army I suppose and we were issued with rifles that must have been in store since the Boer War. They were single shot something or other Martini rifles and instead of being .303 they were point five. So life
- 09:30 went on. We used to have air raid spotting at night and there were search lights and so on and we thought we saw a flying boat that was Japanese. We had black plastic models of all the Japanese planes which used to hang in a room and you were meant to study those. Whether it was or it wasn't, I'm not sure but there was a Japanese
- 10:00 submarine which was lurking out there which did have a sea plane so it's quite possible that we did see a sea plane. So I remained there as a boarder. I was joined by my brother in 1941. I left at the end of 1943 and with three friends I tried to join the air force,
- 10:30 enlisting for air crew and I was declared to be colour blind so that was out. I then had a try for the navy and once again I was colour blind, still colour blind and the reason I wanted to join the air force was because my close friends were joining the air force but I didn't really want to go into the army, because my father was by then a brigadier
- 11:00 in the army and I didn't think that was a terribly smart thing to do. However, when I couldn't get into anything else I decided that rather than wait for a call up I'd go round to the local drill hall and enlist, which I did. I had to go home with a form to get my mother to sign it to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] . So I got an AIF number
- 11:30 and I went off to Royal Park where the recruiting depot was. After the usual business of being fitted out with clothing, medical exams, dental exams, I was allowed to go home the first night I think. So I had this brand new uniform on and a hat that I couldn't keep the dirt in the top of and as I was walking
- 12:00 past the town hall there was a few ladies of the night sitting on the steps of the town hall and one of them called out, "Hey does your mother know you're out?" So that wasn't a very good start. So I don't know how I came to be drafted. Firstly we went to a recruit training battalion which was at Cowra and we didn't in fact know
- 12:30 that there was a big Japanese POW [Prisoner of War] camp there. Nobody ever told us and weren't told about it. I did I think it was about three months fairly intensive training there and at the end of that I was told I was being drafted into signals. So I went to by train back, having been by train
- 13:00 to Cowra, I went by train back to Bonegilla which was just near Albury and there I did about four months signals training and finished as a trade group two signaller and then I was sent, I was told that I was going to officers' training school and I said that I didn't want to go to officers' training school
- 13:30 because I think, quite wrongly, I thought maybe my father had either consciously or unconsciously influenced the people who were making the decisions. So I went off then and studied the Kana [Japanese Morse code equivalent] code which was to interpret, listen to Japanese radio which I did in Sydney at Randwick.
- 14:00 And then I was told I was posted north to Central Bureau. I'd never heard of Central Bureau. It was at Henry Street in Hamilton in Queensland and I thought I was going to be a radio operator. Instead of that I found I was in the Y section which was traffic analysis. I was billeted on the
- 14:30 Kedron Greyhound track where the rats were bigger than the greyhounds, it was a terrible place and we used to be bussed over to Henry Street very early in the morning and then it was very tight security.

- We went across to a park which was over the road and surrounded with barbed wire and produced our security passes and we were allocated to various
- 15:00 huts where we analyzed Japanese radio messages which had been received by the radio operators. We gradually learnt, they were gradually breaking the codes and so we gradually learnt the priority of the messages. We were able to eventually locate the origin of the message, where it came from, and where it was going to
- 15:30 or it might be going to all the marine units and that information went off to other people who decoded or attempted to decode the very high priority messages and the rest of it was just counted. Now in the Australian Army you had to send
- 16:00 the same number of groups of messages every day, every shift that you were on. You didn't know whether you were sending real messages or what we used to call dummy traffic. It was all there and you belted it out. The Japanese were not so disciplined and so apart from anything else, the level of traffic from one place to another place meant a lot to people who were analyzing
- 16:30 and the decoders. So if we identified something as being just a routine message or something that used to be called deferred messages, they were messages that just contained a bit of information which was not of any great priority. They would be counted and the number of groups of them would be counted but nobody would attempt to deal with what was in them unless they were thought to be of some interest.
- 17:00 The Japanese code reduced the originating station to four letters. Kana, because the Japanese characters didn't lend themselves to Morse code they reduced or increased the Japanese language into a series of syllables 'go ka wa ta' etc.
- 17:30 and there were seventy two of them but the message always came over in numbers, as most messages were reduced to numbers for ease of transmission and you weren't supposed to use plain language anyway unless you were in dire straits and had to. So I did that for I suppose a couple of months and then I was told I was going to New Guinea.
- 18:00 So I had to go and get issued with all the tropical gear. Thank heavens I was moved from the Kedron Greyhound track to the Ascot track which was a bit of an embarkation depot. And went from there to the wharf at Hamilton and there was a tramp steamer, a Dutch tramp steamer called the Van Swol [?]
- 18:30 tied up. It was about three and a half thousand tons and on to it were loaded I think about a hundred of my unit, a whole heap of American deserters that had been rounded up and were being returned to the stockade in New Guinea. There was a radio unit. A fairly mixed bag. All of the amenities for the voyage
- 19:00 were stolen by the wharf labourers so nobody had any smokes and of course everybody smoked in those days and there were no sweets or chocolates or anything like that, that had all disappeared. Life on the Van Swol was extremely primitive we were locked down into the holds at night
- 19:30 for security reasons, we did have very small lights but we couldn't read or anything at night, you just went down into the hold and the hold was locked up. At six o'clock in the morning a Lascar seaman would come in and call out, "Washy decky" and he'd have a fire hose and you had to pick up all your gear and hold it up in the air if you didn't want it to be washed away. We had two meals a day and you spent most of the day queuing
- 20:00 up for them. You had one meal then you got in the queue until you got your next one. The only toilet arrangements were slung over the side so you climbed out along the plank and you had a rope to hang on to and there was a bit of rope at the back and this boat didn't ride too well so there was a lot of toing and froing
- 20:30 and then we ran into a typhoon in the Barrier Reef, near the Whitsunday passage. Two of the boats went aground in the convoy. We didn't but we must have been sheltering there for about three or four days. We then went on towards New Guinea. We went through the straits at Samaria.
- 21:00 By that stage we had just about run out of water. You got a cup of water a day so you could do whatever you liked with it but the sensible thing was to drink it. We got just around onto the northern side of New Guinea when a Japanese submarine was sighted so we were all with whatever gear we could carry assembled on the top deck
- 21:30 of the Van Swol and it became readily apparent that there were only enough rafts and lifeboats for about half the people on board so it would have been a terrible scramble. Fortunately we were up there for about three and a half hours and the all clear was sounded. We then called in at Aitape where there was still a bit of fighting going on but we were able to have a bath. And as you can imagine
- 22:00 the hold was getting a bit fetid by this time. And finally four weeks after we left Brisbane we arrived in Hollandia where there was a big signals outfit and where MacArthur had had his headquarters before he moved to Morotai. So we went up into the mountains
- 22:30 to about three thousand feet which was quite pleasant. There weren't many mosquitoes and there we did much the same sort of thing as we'd been doing back in Brisbane. I did have a major adventure

there when two of my friends decided for some extraordinary reason that they wanted to, we were at three thousand feet and the top of the Star Mountains

23:00 was about six thousand feet and they decided they wanted to see if they could climb to the top. Which was absolutely crazy because there were lots of Japanese up there. They'd been driven out of Hollandia but they were still there. They used to come down and raid the food dumps and things at night. Anyway, these two fellas took off and they didn't come back. I can't remember whether I volunteered or whether I was told but

23:30 we were given ammunition and with our rifles.

I'll just stop you for a sec, it's a great story which we'll go into in great depth later on for sure but just for now if you could keep moving on where we were.

Sure. Well we'd barely settled in Hollandia when I was told we were going to go to the Philippines. They'd just landed in the Philippines. So

24:00 I think from memory we went down to the air strip at Hollandia and we were flown to Peleliu which was in the Celebes and it had just recently been captured. They were still bulldozing the bodies of Japanese into caves and sealing the caves. It was a coral island and apparently thought to be difficult to dig holes for them so they put them into

24:30 caves and dynamited the entrance and then we got onto a frigate, I think an American frigate and we went to the Lingayen Gulf where we landed and there was still quite a bit of fighting going on but most of the Japanese, typically had just been pushed out of the way

25:00 into the hinterland and we went to San Miguel which was a little barrier near San Miguel. And we were billeted on what had been the golf links of the San Miguel liquor company and shortly after we arrived they managed to get the sugar alcohol factory going again which wasn't a very good idea

25:30 really, it caused a few problems along the way. So there we did much the same thing until we heard that a bomb had gone off in Japan and we had two radio units right next door to us so we were getting the stuff straight out of the radios

26:00 and we heard that some generals had come down from Japan to try and negotiate peace. And I've never read about that but we were pretty sure that it happened and that they didn't succeed and they went back again. Then we heard that the second bomb had gone off and then I can still remember a fella running through the lines at night saying the war was over, he was in his underpants, I can still remember him.

26:30 So a day or two of celebration and we literally stopped. We didn't do anything for a few days and then it was announced that we were going to improve the camp and those of us who weren't officers were going to build a road into the camp. So I didn't like the sound

27:00 of that too much and I got a couple of my mates and we went to see the CO [Commanding Officer] and said we'd like to run a newspaper and much to our surprise he said that we could. So we requisitioned a gestetner machine, a typewriter and got paper, wax sheets for the gestetner machine and we produced a paper called the

27:30 'Union Jackup' and I think we produced about ten editions of it. We used to listen to news from Australia and then there'd be news, people were always going off to Japan and those sort of things and we'd report on that. Then a couple of times I was ordered to act as a guard to take Japanese

28:00 troops down to the wharf where they had to be shipped back to Japan. That was a pretty terrible job, it was cattle trucks and the journey took about eight hours, it was very hot. You had to sit up there with your rifle, I don't know whether you would have shot. They all had dysentery so the train used to have to stop all the time. That was not very pleasant. Then we'd have a terrible trip

28:30 back again of course. Then we were all absolutely staggered when about the middle of October we were told we were going home. So great excitement and we had a jeep for our newspaper so I had to drive the jeep and a trailer and a whole lot of gear down to Manila where we went into a holding camp for a couple of days.

29:00 There were Japanese everywhere being shipped home and some were being used as orderlies. We got onto a boat called the Francis N. Blanchet which was a liberty ship and there was nothing on it. I mean it just had empty holds and a cookhouse, I think. I think it only took nine days to get back and

29:30 we landed at the very same wharf in Hamilton that we'd taken off from, so that was the end. Well then I had leave and I went home, that's another long story but we can go into that later on. And then I was notified that I was to report to drill hall in South Melbourne for shipment to Japan.

30:00 I'd been to Japan briefly while I was in the Philippines and I'd remembered to enroll at the university before I went into the army. So I put in an application and said that my education had been interrupted and to my astonishment I was successful so I got out of the army almost straight away and then went to university.

30:30 **And you work after that just briefly?**

Yeah, well I completed a law course. I served my articles for which I had to pay money but they paid it back to me at a pound a week. You only had to do six months in those days if you were an ex-serviceman. I worked at the firm where I did my articles for about a year and I wasn't very happy with the work I was doing there.

31:00 So when I went to play in a tennis tournament in the country and there I met a first world war digger who had a practice there and he was obviously in real strife, he couldn't get anyone to help him so I thought, "Oh well, I'll give it a try." So I worked in the bush for three years and I got married and we had our first child. Then the bush fell in a heap.

31:30 There was an ammunition factory in the town and it was closed. Two of the milk factories were closed and the beet factory was closed. So fortunately I was able to sell the remnants of my share of the practice to somebody and I came back to town with my tail between my legs and no money and got a job with the firm that I was with for the next

32:00 thirty years I suppose. And then that firm merged with the firm that I'm still with as a consultant. I had a few, a lot of board appointments and things in the mean time. So I had a pretty interesting time.

Definitely so. Okay, that was great. So now we'll go right back to the beginning and get all those details, all those stories, whatever you want to say, there's no limits now, it's fine.

32:30 **So can you tell us about your mother and father and what they were like?**

Yes, I can. My father was a minister's son and he was born in Tasmania which was one of the appointments where my grandfather had a ministry. They were Methodists and he got a scholarship to Geelong College where I finished up, when they went to Geelong.

33:00 He then got a scholarship to Ormond College at the university and enrolled in medicine in 1914. When war broke out, he enlisted before he finished first year medicine then he was in Gallipoli and then he was away for five years. Anybody who'd been away for more than four and a half years, I think, was eventually given leave home and he was actually on his way home from the war

33:30 when it ended. So he then decided that he couldn't go back to medicine and he did a science engineering course. My mother who was born in Gippsland lost her mother when she was thirteen and she then had two brothers and two sisters. She wasn't very happy with the arrangements that my grandfather had made in relation to female companions

34:00 so she picked them all up and brought them down to town and eventually she did agricultural science course. They married shortly after my father had finished. She'd of course graduated by the time he had and after, he wanted to be a writer and my mother continued to work. She worked at Burnleigh in the agricultural side and

34:30 I think they realized that he wasn't going to be a great success as a writer and eventually we finished up in Sydney where I was born and that's where the story began.

Those times growing up, what were they?

Well, I don't remember much. I can just remember being in Sydney the first time. I can remember being at Fairfield when I

35:00 had scarlet fever, only just. I do have rich recollections of being in Perth which was, it didn't have any, there was no water supply and there was no sewerage in Perth in those days. It was all septic tanks and you had a bore for water and drinking water came off the roof. It was a great life for kids.

35:30 You know, we had a canoe and we used to go down the river and catch crabs and prawns. The dads would all come home from golf on a Saturday afternoon and there'd probably be a keg of beer down on the river and they'd net prawns. And there'd be a half a forty gallon drum there with a fire underneath it and the prawns would all be cooked and we kids ran around, it was really an idyllic existence.

36:00 **Was that even during the Depression, that lifestyle, how did things change?**

No. The Depression started in the early thirties. Now I don't recall, I don't remember being particularly aware of the Depression when I was at school at the Cottesloe state school. I can remember that, as there always are,

36:30 some kids didn't have as much as other kids. We were not wealthy at all. I mean we were, Dad would have been still battling. We didn't have a car for quite a while and I remember the great celebrations when we got a radio. I don't know that we ever had a refrigerator in the west, we had the iceman used to come and we had a Coolgardie safe of course with the drip water.

37:00 We used to be taken over to the surf. Dad used to get up early in the morning and when we did have a car we'd all get on the running board and go over the railway line and down to the beach at Cottesloe and swim. At school there used to be a few entertainments but there was an open air theatre and they used to have special kids' programs in that.

- 37:30 The talkies had just come in of course. But I don't remember being conscious as I was later on of the Depression, you know, where half the houses had 'To let' on the fence and it was really very hard times for a lot of people.
- 38:00 I can remember kids that came to school, their clothes would be almost in rags. Hunters Hill at least had a lot of open spaces and so on and there was a lot of land that had been developed and had then been overgrown with lantana. There were lots of places where you could build cubbies and hide.
- 38:30 We used to make canoes out of galvanized iron. We got a sheet of old galvanized iron and hammer it out and then pinch the ends up, put a bit of wood on the ends and nail it up and then wait for a hot day and put tar into all the obvious holes. And then you had to get an old bit of hose and put it along the gunwale of the canoe to stop your
- 39:00 arms getting cut to ribbons and then the big shot was to see if you could paddle across to Cockatoo Island, across the Parramatta River. If a Parramatta ferry came past while you were on the voyage, that was the end of the voyage, you had to swim to one side or the other because the Parramatta ferries were very fast and they used to have a big wake and of course they'd just go straight over the top of the canoes. You'd turn it side on and hope
- 39:30 to hell that the wave would miss you but it never did. So we left a few of those canoes in the bottom of the Parramatta River.

How did your father's struggle with wanting to be a writer affect the family?

We weren't there. By the time we arrived he was a chemist. I think my mother had given up work. I don't think she ever worked in Sydney but she was at Burnleigh for a long time when they were first married.

- 40:00 **We'll stop there.**

Tape 2

- 00:33 **Growing up during the Depression did you go without food or was it a struggle to have food at that time?**
- No, no. As far as food was concerned I don't think we had any serious problems but my mother
- 01:00 was constantly feeding people who came to the door. You know, they'd want a job, they'd want to cut wood or sharpen your knives or whatever and some of them would be with a swag [pack on the back] even and my mother would be, you know, she'd cook something for them or make some sandwiches. They would usually ask for money and she didn't like to give them money I can remember.
- 01:30 She was also a bit wary of people who wanted to sharpen knives because that was one of the trades you learnt in jail. Most of these people were just innocent characters who were doing anything to try and get a few bob but she always gave them something. If there was a job to do, even though
- 02:00 it might have been done three times that week, she'd give it to them.
- Did the swagmen seem like desperate?**
- No, no, they were just people who were obviously down on their luck as we used to say. I can remember right opposite I had a great friend called Billy McCreedy and Billy McCreedy's family lived in, leased a big house and they had about enough furniture
- 02:30 to furnish about one a half rooms from memory. And Billy never invited you into the house even though we were great friends and used to do a lot of things together and he used to come into our place. But when I had a birthday, I remember Billy was invited and he gave me a present which amust have been out of a
- 03:00 collection of Charles Dickens' works, you know obviously his mother had gone through all their possessions and looked for something that they could spare. So, I don't know what happened to Billy, he went into the navy during the war I heard but.
- We'll just stop for one second.**
- We spent a lot of time in the cubs and scouts,
- 03:30 a lot of camps. We went to a jamboree and again a lot of kids had tremendous trouble getting the uniform and I remember getting a cubs' uniform for my birthday once, which must have been pretty expensive, relatively at any rate,
- 04:00 and I thought I'd been duped a bit by getting because I had to have a cubs' uniform anyway. But a lot of the kids only had half a uniform. So it was a particularly, I don't know what the unemployment was

down in the Woolwich area but it must have been very substantial. There was one kid from the Woolwich area

04:30 who had a bike and he was a very tough kid and he used to give us a hard time on the way home from school. You know, he'd follow us along on this bike.

Bikes were rare back then weren't they?

They were, yes. We used to get jobs if we could. The best job of all if you could get it was on the milk cart because the milkman used to come around you know and he used to have a ladle.

05:00 You left out a billy for your milk and that was a good job. The baker was another good job because the bread was all delivered.

Even though they were hard times, you and the other kids, were they happy times for all of you?

Oh yes, I don't think, we weren't sort of thinking of storming the Bastille or anything. We were all pretty

05:30 happy times at school. I mean, you always get a school bully; you don't miss out on those sort of things. Then of course we had girls as well and there'd be all the usual business about boring holes in the wall down at the baths and all that sort of thing.

Was it successful?

I can't remember. I probably

06:00 wasn't tough enough to get to the top of the queue.

Even, do you think because the kids and yourself were of a young age that you didn't really know any better times, that the Depression?

Well we certainly didn't know any better times and we were all at the same school. Largely

06:30 the religious difficulties that our parents might have had didn't sort of worry us at all. There were a couple of catholic schools in the area but none down in the Woolwich, Hunters Hill area. There was of course St Joseph's College which is a big college, public school in Sydney up in the top end of Hunters Hill but otherwise it was just almost religious

07:00 free at school at any rate. We were sent to Sunday school.

Was religion a big thing for you and your family?

No, I don't think my father had any religion to speak of after the first war. My mother was, well, certainly a believer but didn't militantly go to church. I think they thought it was the right thing to send us to Sunday school

07:30 because you got the morning off anyway if you sent the kids to Sunday school. So we used to go up to the Sunday school and you got a prize at the end of the year too, just for turning up, so.

Made it all worthwhile.

One of my very close friends died of peritonitis.

08:00 He must have been about eight or nine we had a big cub funeral, you know and we all formed a guard of honour. I can remember that being a very moving experience.

How did you handle the moving around a lot and changing schools?

Well I went to six different schools and I don't suppose I

08:30 enjoyed it all that much but mainly because you had to get to know people and that always took a while. It took a while for you to be accepted. But no, I don't recall it being too difficult. When I first went to boarding school in 1940 the first term was very tough because it was pretty hard going. They had initiations and all sorts of things and it was not very pleasant.

09:00 **Would you be upset when you had to move to another school or how did you take it?**

No, I don't think so. I think I remember when I went to a boarding school, boarding at Malvern Grammar, being a bit

09:30 unsettled for a while. It was a pretty harsh environment anyway, this big house, and we had all sorts of kids there who were I think a bit unsettled too but eventually I really quite enjoyed it. I've always been keen on the theatre and they had a master there who used to

10:00 produce a play every year and I was usually in that and that sort of gave me something to do, something that was enjoyable. Anyway, I was quite a good swimmer so I'd go off to swimming training. I gradually learnt how to play football and I was a reasonably good cricketer so there again there was plenty to do.

What type of initiation was there at boarding school

10:30 **and what made it so tough for those first few months?**

Well you were sort of made to feel lower than a snake's belly and you had to get up and sing and they'd put about three tables on top of each other and then a chair on the top of that and you had to stand on the top of the chair, it was pretty dangerous apart from anything else. And then you had to sing and they'd ask you all sorts of stupid questions

11:00 and if they didn't like your answer well they'd keep you up there. There was a fair amount of bullying and bashing and that sort of stuff. There were older boys who almost made a career out of it. But you know, if you're reasonably resourceful you work your way around those sort of things. Really that was the last year that it went on, they stopped it.

11:30 There was physical punishment and so on anyway.

Was it a form of bastardization back then or?

Well yes, well certainly it was no place to have some physical abnormality or to stutter or anything like that. You know, it was pretty merciless.

And how was that condoned

12:00 **by the teachers and so on?**

Some of them were very good, others just turned their back on it, it was too hard for them.

As a student there how did you feel about the teachers that turned their back on it?

I didn't like them at all. I thought, I had a pretty highly developed sense of justice and I used to get into trouble

12:30 quite often for wanting to get involved in those, in trying to stop it and so on.

In the end how did you really deal with it? Did you develop a thick skin or a sense of humour?

I've always had a reasonable sense of humour and that's really what used to get me through mostly. It got me into a lot of trouble, too. I remember getting a detention for

13:00 untimely facetiousness, was written in my record book.

Should be proud of that one. Were you the class clown in a way?

No. Well, you'd have to ask other people. I was certainly not by any means out of the action but I mean, I can tell you a silly story. We used to have

13:30 prep at night. We had a master, you have to realize that a lot of the good masters had gone to the war. The masters that were left were not necessarily the best masters but this old chap used to get very drunk after school in the afternoon and then he'd have to take prep at night and so that'd be a pretty riotous occasion.

14:00 Anyway, the food also made you pretty flatulent. So I made a deal with another fellow, who was sitting on the opposite side of this big room to me, that I'd let a very big fart and then he'd own up. So, it was really a rip snorter and it sort of half woke him up, he was looking straight at me

14:30 and he said, "Come and see me after study Rogers" and he said, "And you too, good sir" so then we sort of in the end we had to own up and say what it was all about and he just shook his head and said he didn't understand, "You both come from good families," he said.

Was that the first time

15:00 **you were away from your family for a long period of time?**

No it wasn't, in fact well, I had, I certainly wasn't away from them until I went to Malvern Grammar but I wasn't a boarder all the time there. The family eventually got a house and I came back to it but from 1940 until I finished at the university I was hardly home at all

15:30 because I went to Ormond College, I went to Melbourne University because that's where I was enrolled and that's how I'd got out of the army so I couldn't haven't gone anywhere else if I'd wanted to. My family then moved back to Sydney so I was down here and they were up there and I used to go home for every second vacation, if I could afford it. I wasn't all that

16:00 poverty stricken because I had my deferred pay from the army and we used to get a sustenance cheque every fortnight which was about two weeks at a basic wage.

Did you have any relatives that were in the army in World War I?

In World War I, yes. My father's brother, they both got a Military Cross, my father and my Uncle James.

16:30 Nobody else from either family in World War I. In World War II there was my father and me and I had a couple of aunts who were in the AWAS.

Did your father speak of his experiences in World War I?

Very little. I mean we lived with a virtual arsenal, there were German rifles,

17:00 I remember a prismatic compass, a Very pistol, German helmets, so you know we could kit out for a war any time we wanted to. That was in between the wars.

Did you know what World War I was really like then?

I had a pretty,

17:30 not as much as I know now but I had a pretty good idea that it hadn't been very pleasant because my father had a diary, a series of diaries and I found these rooting around under the house one day in a trunk and so I read a lot of that and I knew that it wasn't very good and

18:00 I remember when he used to go to his battalion reunions and so on and there'd be a lot of people there that were obviously not very well and who'd obviously suffered great trauma during their life. As he got older he used to always have a pocketful of ten bob notes. I asked him why did he do that and he said,

18:30 "Well, there'll be a lot of fellas who'll come up to me, and say, you know, you've done well Jack, how about, you know, something for a beer or a drink," so he'd give them ten bob.

Did you see guys around who were suffering from mustard gas?

No. I knew a soldier or a returned soldier who'd been very badly burnt by mustard gas. In fact

19:00 when we were in Armadale he lived two doors along from us and my father used to chat to him. And there were fellas who were wounded of course, one armed fellas. I remember Arthur Coles of G J Coles who joined up the same day as my father out at Broadmeadows had a very bad wound

19:30 in his shoulder. I remember being at the beach with him one day and he had this huge cavity up here.

Before World War II how did you see the government and the people taking care of these returned soldiers?

I don't suppose I was very conscious of it. I was very conscious of the RSL [Returned and Services league] , I was conscious of Legacy [Organisation that looks after families of deceased veterans] because my father was a member of Legacy

20:00 and I had a Great Uncle Fred who'd been to the Boer War and he was out in Caulfield Repatriation Hospital and my mother used to take me to see Uncle Fred every now and then. And so I'd be conscious of all these people who were in bed and some of them had been in bed for many years.

With your father writing the diaries,

20:30 **that was pretty rare, how graphic were his thoughts that he wrote down?**

Well, he talked about people getting knocked and I knew what that meant. They'd talk about people wounded and I remember he had a great friend called Egington who got very badly knocked, in his diary he said there,

21:00 "I don't think we'll see Eggy again" but Egington lived and I knew him after the war. So, I don't think that the returned soldiers from the first war got as good a deal as we've got after the second war.

Did your father seem to have any ill effects from World War I?

He was only wounded once and really

21:30 not very badly. No, I don't think he. He was a remarkably resilient character and he got a commission in the field on Gallipoli and he became the battalion

22:00 intelligence officer which meant that after having spent a couple of months charging trenches and so on he would not be doing that any longer. But he did, he got an MC when they first arrived in France by leading a raid on the German trenches and they grabbed some prisoners and brought them back for interrogation. And then

22:30 in his diaries he describes, you know how he'd be riding, I think he had a horse for a while and they'd ride through the mud and then they'd get into the lines of troops and so on but I don't think he did any actual shooting much after they got to France apart from in this raid, because he was an intelligence officer. And then in 1918

23:00 he was seconded to Blamey's headquarters or at least to Monash's headquarters where he worked with Blamey in planning the Battle of Hemel which was really the big success that the AIF had in 1918. In the end of course, because he'd been away for so long, he was sent home.

Do you know by any chance what he thought of Blamey?

Yes because he had a lot to do with Blamey in the Second World War.

23:30 I think he conceded that he was a man with considerable weaknesses but that he was a very good soldier, that he had a good mind and that he looked after his troops. He'd be the first to concede that he did have his weaknesses.

What were they?

Well, one of them was alcohol and I know my father

24:00 disapproved heartily of the fact that he managed to get his wife to the Middle East in the guise of being a Red Cross worker I think or something like that. I can remember after the war when he became a field marshal and he was very ill. They gave him a dinner at the Hotel Australia and I drove my father into town

24:30 and then picked him up at half past eleven or whenever it was when the dinner finished and I met, I think it was the only time I met Blamey and he was in a wheelchair I think.

Still having a drink?

I would think so and he had a lot of aides that were sort of social butterflies and he used to be

25:00 very tough on them. He'd keep them up drinking until three o'clock in the morning and say that he wanted to be up at five you know and if they weren't there they quite often would be sent somewhere else.

Did your father seem to suffer any psychological effects after World War I?

I don't think so. I mean, he might have but he soldiered on to an extent. He was the acting

25:30 Commanding Officer of the Melbourne University Rifles while he was a student so you know, I don't think he was suffering.

Do you think in a way writing his diary as he did, pretty graphically, would have helped him cope with what he went through?

I think so. There's a book called 'Rough As Bags' about the 6th battalion and he gets quite a few mentions in that.

26:00 If you met him, he was a very quiet but level headed man, a very able man and very understanding too, you know, he was really a pretty good fellow.

Clever?

Yeah, he got exhibitions and so on which was all a bit of an embarrassment for me. So did my mother - they were

26:30 both brilliant students.

A clever family I think. Was empire important before the war. What impact did that have?

Yes, I'm sure that empire was very important to all of us. I mean, we used to celebrate Empire Day which is now, I think it's the same day now as Queen's Birthday, that used to be Empire Day and at school

27:00 if there was a coronation, we always used to get a mug with a picture of the king and queen on it. I've probably got one somewhere or other. We used to get medals and things. I remember, I've still got one somewhere that we got for the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Australia but that

27:30 had a lot to do with empire and we used to send a big contingent of soldiers to a coronation or a funeral of a king or queen. So yes, empire was pretty important and people were pretty patriotic too I think, much more so than they are today.

Even though we're so far away, was it a real link to England?

Oh yes, people

28:00 used to talk about going home to England. I don't think my father ever regarded England as being home because my family on both sides of the family came out in the 1850's, so it's pretty far removed and a lot of them hadn't been back, so they didn't really think of it, although they were, I think

28:30 on leave in London and so on from France was regarded as pretty important.

Having such a deep Australian history was that different at the time?

Yes. Well there weren't, see we didn't get many migrants between the wars, I think at the end of the first war the population was four and a half

29:00 million and by the time the second war came along was about six million. There weren't too many migrants. We used to get a sort of dribble but there were no supported migrants from England or Ireland.

When you the rise of Hitler was occurring in the 1930's did you know about it?

Oh yeah, we were very conscious of that. I kept

29:30 a big scrapbook of all that was going on in Europe and the various acquisitions by Hitler peacefully or by force of arms and of course we were all greatly shocked when war was declared and Bob Menzies said that Australia was at war.

30:00 **Even at that time did you feel it was far away, where Hitler was and what he was doing or did it feel close to home?**

I mean they started recruiting the second AIF almost straight away so it was very much part of what was going on, so we were conscious of people joining up and people marching along the streets.

Did people have a sense of what was going to happen in say '35, '36?

30:30 Well there were, yes, I do remember that even though I was quite young I was conscious of the fact that there were left wing people particularly during the Depression and I was conscious of the fact that there were also right wing people. And I well remember

31:00 I was living in Sydney when Captain De Groot charged and cut the ribbon to prevent Jack Lang from opening the bridge and of course Jack Lang was a socialist. Yes, we were conscious of the fact that there were widely divided political views in the world but basically people were still Australians.

31:30 But we were also very conscious of what was going on in Europe. It became highlighted when the Spanish Civil War was on because that started in 1936 and eventually out in the open it was clear that the Germans were fighting on the Franco, the nationalist side and that the Russians were fighting

32:00 on the republican side. The republicans probably would have won the war if it hadn't been for the fact that they were such a divided mob. They had anarchists and communists, union people and they never really got their act together. But we were very conscious of that and you know, people used to write articles about the fact that the Germans were really using it

32:30 as a training ground for their weapons and their troops.

Just quickly, a little side note, did you say you were at the opening of the bridge?

I wasn't at it but we were in Sydney. I remember the bridge being finished. And we also had the Empire Games while we were in Sydney. That was in 1936 I think. So that was very much an empire

33:00 affair and South Africa was still part of the empire of course. I remember a South African, I went to the Empire Games a couple of times. There was a woman from Western Australia called Decima Norman who won a lot of the sprint events, the ladies and a South African, I can distinctly remember, broke the world record for the hundred and twenty yards high hurdles. I remember those two things.

And they later became the Commonwealth Games?

33:30 Yes. They were called the Empire Games then.

When war broke out and started how did life on the streets in Australia change?

Not much for the first year or so and then we started to get rationing and people were not as far as I can remember, people were not terribly happy with rationing because

34:00 they didn't see any, they were not happy with the fact that we were self sufficient and why did we have to have rationing? But people used to send a lot of food to England because they were very short of food and amongst the things they used to send, to my amazement, were tins of dripping, beef dripping.

34:30 **How did people cope with rationing considering they'd been through the Depression as well?**

Well, we'd had a couple of years of relative prosperity. I suppose '38 and '39 would be as prosperous as any times in the last hundred years, perhaps not as prosperous as pre World War I. You know, it was a nuisance. There was a black market of course.

35:00 You had your ration books. When I went to boarding school I just handed over all my ration books. I used to get them back to come home I suppose for the holidays.

How did the black market operate?

Well you could buy eggs and butter and alcohol from

35:30 people who were just, you didn't know where they got it from but it was there if you looked for it and you wanted to pay a bit more for it. Meat as well. And of course a lot of people who had friends in the

country used to get meat sent down to them which wasn't coming out of the ration book.

You had to know the right people.

Mmm.

36:00 **How old were you when war was declared?**

About thirteen, nearly fourteen.

What were your thoughts about being involved yourself?

Well not very much at the start but eventually we all really felt we were being fattened up for the kill. I mean, you knew that when the time came you'd have to go.

36:30 **It's interesting you said, "have to go," was there ever a thought that it would be coming to us?**

Well it was very, very nearly here.

But when it started did you think it would come?

I think that I would have felt it was my duty to go. You know, my father had been and so on and I was an able bodied person so I couldn't see any reason why I shouldn't.

Did you think the

37:00 **war would actually hit Australian shores though?**

Well it did, in Darwin. I think that when the Japanese got their really big run on it was almost inevitable people thought. So that's when they started talking about the Brisbane Line and just abandoning the northern part of Australia and all that sort of thing.

37:30 **And what did your father think about World War II when it started?**

He thought he'd have to go, that's what he thought. So, early in 1940 he was off.

Was he emotional about it at all?

Well he was very emotional about leaving us. I can remember you know, being very sad and thinking and saying

38:00 that I didn't think I ought to go to boarding school I ought to stay home and look after my mother. However, that wasn't to be the case and off he went. Then we started getting letters from the Middle East. We weren't sure where he was going actually at first, we just knew he was going.

Was he called up or did he?

38:30 No, no, he volunteered.

Because of his previous experience, what position did they initially put him in?

Well he was a general staff officer two I think which is intelligence. So he would have been, in the first corps, he would have been about number two or three in the intelligence at first corp.

At least he wasn't on the front line, in danger.

Well he was in Greece.

39:00 And he used to go right up to the frontline. Particularly when the first fighting against the Italians was taking place.

As you said, he must have been a steely character to go through it in World War I and then be prepared to go back into it again in World War II.

Hmm. Well I think they put the arm on him so he went.

39:30 **You were still relatively young when war broke out. Did you think it was going to last that long that you would be able to become involved?**

No I didn't but I had to go into the cadet corps straight away so I was, I had a modicum of military training then, got a bit more intensive as the war got a bit closer.

40:00 **And that's another tape.**

Tape 3

00:32 **Okay with your father's military career after the first World War you illustrated before he was**

involved in intelligence at the latter stages in the intervening years between the wars did he have anything to do with the military in a reserve capacity?

He was on the reserve of officers and I think, though I'm not quite sure, that they used to,

01:00 I know he used to get correspondence addressed to Captain Rogers but I don't think he was, he served, as I told Miles earlier, he was acting CO of the University Rifles when he went to the university after the war.

So what did he do at the university?

Science engineering.

01:30 **So he was studying a degree in science engineering?**

Uh huh.

When the war started you mentioned before about your father leaving. How did he get selected to become director of army intelligence?

I guess by attrition of time and

02:00 becoming more senior. He came back from the Middle East before the Japanese had captured Singapore. I think they were in Malaysia. When he first came back MacArthur had arrived from the Philippines and he was appointed as the senior

02:30 liaison officer to General MacArthur. Then shortly after that he became director of military intelligence, first as a full colonel and then as a brigadier.

When the second World War started how did that influence your view of joining up?

03:00 Well I regarded it as a fairly remote possibility at the beginning of the war but as the war went on and looked as though it could go forever, I just accepted it as inevitable that I would have to go. And as I said earlier my first preference was to be in air crew

03:30 and I went with my close friends to join up and was found to be colour blind which was the end of my ambitions to be an airman.

Fighter pilot I take it?

I don't know that I was too worried about whether it was single or multi engines, just wanted to be there I think.

04:00 In fact I was pretty lucky that I was knocked back.

From 1939 to '43 when you were still at school what sort of correspondence did you have with your father who was overseas at the time?

I would have probably got two or three letters a year I suppose.

04:30 He would mainly write to my mother and she would write to me and pass on messages and so on. I used to get direct letters from him two or three times a year.

And come 1943 you just told me that you were interested in joining the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] but were not accepted.

05:00 **When it came to the army were you called up?**

No I wasn't.

You weren't called up.

I decided I wouldn't wait. I could have waited. In fact I could have gone back to school if I'd wanted to, so I just went round to the local drill hall and made enquiries, yes, they'd have me.

05:30 So I didn't ever get called up.

So this is the AIF you were interested in?

Yeah.

Which particular drill hall did you go to?

I went to the drill hall in Elwood, it was the nearest one. I just walked around there and there was an old sergeant there and nobody else I think and we had a bit of a chat, he said, "Yes that'd be alright. Here's the form, get your mother to sign it

06:00 and if she signs it you can be a member of the AIF."

Did you have any friends that had already been called up or had gone overseas?

Oh yeah, just about all of the year ahead of me at school had all gone into the forces and my friends who were going to the air force were about to be called up I think.

06:30 So yes, but I wasn't expecting to run into a whole lot of friends.

I recall you saying before, you said that it was somewhat a sense of duty you were outlining, was there pressure from the World War I generation in any way?

No.

07:00 **Was there a sense that the younger generation wanted to live up to the ideals of their fathers?**

I just remember that I thought it was the right thing to do. Nobody put any pressure on. I also knew I suppose that I was going to be

07:30 called up.

How was the First World War generation of soldiers seen amongst the youth, your friends, your colleagues?

Well a lot of them were in the army with us and a lot of the instructors at the recruit training battalion were First World War soldiers.

Can you tell us about the enlistment process for you, how it took place, you went to the drill hall.

Went to the drill hall and

08:00 when I came back I was told to report to Royal Park and the main entrance to the recruiting was where the children's hospital is now and there was a huge number of huts and so on there. Then I

08:30 sat down, I had a psychological test, I had a dental examination, a medical examination, an eye examination. Then at the end of all of that I was sent to the Q [Quartermaster's] store where I was issued with one of the two sizes that they had in the army - too big and too small.

09:00 **Two sizes?**

Two big or too small, yeah.

You said they also had a psychological test. What sort of questions did they ask?

Oh, it was a sort of IQ [Intelligence Quotient] test and I subsequently saw my IQ test, because I had a university vacation job at the barracks and I had the opportunity of looking up the record of anybody that I wanted to look up, so

09:30 I saw my test. Just said I was capable of any technical training.

So after the examination what took place there?

Well as far as I can remember I was given the night off. I was told I could go home and be back at probably six o'clock the next morning or something like that.

10:00 I don't think I'd been issued with any arms at that stage. So I went home and I don't think I was looking too warlike but as I told Myles [interviewer], a couple of harlots asked me whether my mother knew that I was out but then I got the tram back early the next morning and then I'm sure I got

10:30 and signed for a rifle, bayonet, webbing, all the rest of it. Then a kit bag and then I was put on the train with a whole lot of other recruits and we went to Cowra in New South Wales. Train absolutely full of people and at one stage

11:00 a couple of girls came on the train at Seymour and they were hiring themselves out on the floor of the carriage, so it was a big experience for me.

This was predominantly a troop train?

Entirely a troop train apart from these ladies.

Can I ask what they were doing on the train?

11:30 Fornicating for money.

Really? I wouldn't have thought that would happen at that time on the train.

You wouldn't have thought it, but it did.

This was from Seymour onwards was it?

I think they probably got off at the next station.

12:00 **And you got to Cowra.**

Mm.

Cowra is of course known for its prisoners of war.

Indeed. We didn't know they were there and I was in the number 3 Recruit Training Battalion, RTB [Recruit Training Battalion] and in the hut where I was there were, there happened just by coincidence to be

12:30 several people that I knew and there were also some real hard cases from Fitzroy who had all belonged to some gang in Fitzroy.

Do you remember the name of the gang by any chance? Wouldn't be the Crutchies would it?

No, no, they were called the Don Mob. I don't know why they were called the Don Mob but they were

13:00 the sort of fellas that pulled pickets off fences and hopped into it. So it took a while to get to know them.

Just out of curiosity while you mentioned the mobs in Fitzroy which was pretty well known for its pushes, you've heard of the Crutchy push haven't you?

I think I've met, read about it somewhere or other.

13:30 **Apparently a bunch of disabled people with crutches.**

No, I haven't heard of them but there were a lot of pushes, particularly during the Depression and these characters were all, I can remember one of them was called Snowy Buckley and Snowy Buckley was shot

14:00 in a gang fight after the war. There was another fellow called Jimmy Buchanan. I subsequently found out that Jimmy Buchanan died in a knife fight in Japan in the occupation force. So they were a tough bunch.

This would have been new to your experience?

Yeah it was. Everything was new.

14:30 The language was unbelievable as far as to my untrained ear.

What sort of things were they talking about when you say language?

Well the language was, you know, the crudest type. They were talking, one of them used to say, "Will we talk about it now or will we work up to it gradually?" which was, you know, all about

15:00 and to put it as nicely as possible, sexual adventures.

So all this being new to you, this is obviously a bunch of people thrown into training from all facets of society?

We didn't miss out. I think there were thirty men in this hut and we all came from different backgrounds except that there were three

15:30 fellas who had belonged to this mob or push.

You joined up as a private, infantryman? Why did you choose to join up as a private and not an officer?

You couldn't join up as an officer. I'd been an officer in the cadet corps. I was offered an opportunity after I'd completed my signals training to become an officer but I decided

16:00 that it was much better for me at my age to serve in the ranks and then later on if I proved myself good enough, maybe I'd become an officer but it wasn't really a very high priority.

Was your father encouraging you to become an officer?

I didn't ever see him.

Whenever he wrote or when he found out that you joined up?

No, no. He never suggested it.

16:30 I did pretty well in my signals training and at the end of that they said, "We want you to go to officers' training school" and I said, "No, I don't want to go. I feel I ought to have some overseas service before I even think about it."

Did you actually choose infantry when you joined the AIF or were you just sent there?

No. As a recruit, everybody does

17:00 fundamental infantry training. That's for three months. Then you either get sent off to an infantry

battalion or you get sent off to be an engineer or a signaler or whatever or artillery. I don't know how the selection process worked but I was just told I was going to be a signaller.

17:30 **Can you tell us about the training at Cowra?**

Yes. Well you know, it was the bugle went off at six o'clock in the morning. You got up and you did exercises and you tidied up all your gear and set it out according to the regulations, so many folds in each blanket and so on. Then you went to the cookhouse, had breakfast.

18:00 Then it would depend what was on for the day. You might be going to the rifle range, you might be going on a route march, you might be, what else. You might be under instruction on various aspects of military training. Then you got a lecture on VD [Venereal Disease] and

18:30 movies on VD, not very nice ones I might say.

What did they educate you on specifically for VD?

Just the hygiene sergeant, as he was called, was very, he was pretty fundamental. He just said, "If you're gonna get on, if you want to have a fuck,

19:00 have it first and then do your drinking." That was one of the messages that he gave us. The movies were all of the most revolting kind. At the end of them you'd hesitate to go near your mother they were so bad.

So it was a case of worst case scenarios.

Then you got issued with your blue light outfit. It was called a blue light outfit because

19:30 it was light blue in colour; outfit, blue, light. That was a contrivance that you were meant to use before you had sexual intercourse to stop you getting VD. Then you'd have a parade and rifle inspection. You might have a big march in formation. You might go for a forty mile route march.

20:00 They managed to fill in the day. Then you'd have tumbling training, running at full belt and falling over and tumbling. Jumping off heights, all of that sort of stuff.

How did you find the regimentation of military life?

I'd been in the cadet corps so I knew what it was like.

20:30 It wasn't like staying at the Waldorf Astoria, you slept on hessian bags full of straw with a few blankets and people used to go to the wet canteen at night and because they were young some of them would get very drunk and they'd come in and they'd be urinating all over the place.

21:00 **Nothing seems to have changed today.**

No. Then they'd wake you up too, you know, "Do you want a piss? Just thought you might want a piss" and all that sort of stuff, but you got used to it after a while.

You said there was a thirty man...?

Thirty men in a hut.

What were the groups like. How did you adjust? Who did you become friends with and how did you find yourself socializing with them?

21:30 Well you didn't have anybody else to socialize with so you gradually started talking to people, finding out about them and they'd be asking you questions. You mightn't tell them everything but told them enough to keep them happy. We didn't tell them we'd been to a private school for instance because that would have got them pretty excited. They eventually found out of course.

22:00 **What do you mean pretty excited?**

Well, you know, they thought you were upper class or something like that and so they'd give you a pretty hard time about it and talk in a mock English accent and all that sort of stuff, you know.

This they did?

Yeah.

Interesting. How did you find this

22:30 **class differences?**

Well it disappeared after a while of course. There were one or two people who were a bit eccentric and who didn't change, didn't drop a couple of notches perhaps, swear a bit and all that sort of stuff. Everybody sorted themselves out eventually. Then you'd have fatigues. You might be working with them in the cookhouse or something like that so

23:00 you'd get a good talk to them and find out about them.

How stark were the cleavages in class at that time in Australian society?

Much greater now than I think it is, sorry, it was much greater then than that it is now. Also there were great religious splits in the community too,

23:30 particularly between Protestants and Catholics and I think the war just about got rid of it.

You're from a Protestant background?

Yes.

When you were in that bunk how did you find the religious cleavages amongst the soldiers?

I don't think anybody worried too much. We had to go to church parade. Well, you didn't have to go to church parade but the sergeant major used to

24:00 call it, "Fall out all Jews, Catholics and non-believers" and if you had any sense you didn't fall out because if you fell out you were given the job of cleaning up the camp, so it's much better to go along with whatever was going and have your religion and come back and the other fellas'd just be finishing cleaning up.

How diverse was this group of people,

24:30 **you said Jews?**

That was the sergeant major, he just used to always say the same thing, "Fall out all Jews, Catholics and non-believers" and then the rest of us would be marched off to church parade.

Amongst the soldiers did you find that Catholics would stick together and Protestants?

No. We didn't ever, I mean there were some people

25:00 who were quite religious. We had one fella in our recruiting group who was a Seventh Day Adventist and he wouldn't carry a rifle so he used to do drill with a broom.

Was he teased a lot for that?

Yes he was. Ivan was his name, I can't remember what his other name was. He was the one who,

25:30 you know, reckoned the second coming was almost any day. So he used to be asked every day, "What's happening today Ivan, is he coming today?" Ivan used to get a bit upset but not too bad. I don't know what happened to him. I think he probably was sent off to a medical unit

26:00 or something like that.

So apart from this Seventh Day Adventist chap, were there others who felt that they couldn't possibly be in a situation where they could kill someone, conscientious objectors?

Well, conscientious objectors would usually stop at a much earlier stage, you know, they'd go to court and try and be declared conscientious objectors.

26:30 If the court found they weren't conscientious objectors well then they had to do the same thing as everybody else, except I think if your religion prevented you from doing something or other you were allowed to do fundamental drill with a bit of wood rather than a rifle because I remember drilled with a broom. That might have been just done to humour him, I don't know.

Was he explicit about his views?

Oh yeah, if you ask him he was,

27:00 he didn't sort of force them on you.

But he had stated that he couldn't kill someone?

Well, he just said that he was fundamentally opposed to everything that the army stood for, I think something like that. Also he was getting ready for the second coming as well.

I've heard that before

27:30 **How does the infantry training break you down? What were the officers like, the sergeants? Is it like what they show on the movies here now?**

Well some of them were good and some of them were unpleasant. We had a sergeant major who was a pretty tough old soldier and

28:00 a lot of the officers were officers who, in my opinion weren't, were either First World War people or were people who hadn't really quite been good enough to do the job in a full battalion so they were just in their for training. Or else they might have had some sort of psychological problem. Some of them,

28:30 some of the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] were very friendly, some were not.

The ones that weren't, is it like what they show on the movies?

Well they could make life pretty unpleasant for you.

Such as?

Well they could put you on cookhouse duty for a week. I remember, this was later when I was at Bonegilla, I was guard was another duty that you got which was pretty unpleasant because it was

29:00 two hours on and four hours off over twenty four hours. I was guarding what they called the boob where they locked up soldiers who were sentenced to something or other. It was freezing cold and I was there with my rifle and bayonet, you had to have a fixed bayonet, sitting in a little hut and they all decided they'd break out.

29:30 They put the big top of the table against the wire and they all climbed up and went over the top. I didn't have anything to stop them, I couldn't bayonet them, so they disappeared into the dark and I went over and reported it and I got a lot of extra guard for that. Instead of being understanding. So guard duty was something

30:00 that you didn't look forward to. Because every time an officer of field rank came past you all had to turn out and present arms to him. So anybody from a major above came through, the guards all had to turn out of their bunks, so you had to sleep with all your uniform on and your webbing and the rest of it.

Was there much bastardization?

30:30 I didn't suffer from any. I mean, there were people I didn't get on with very well. There might have been some that I didn't think were of outstanding intelligence but you know, you had to keep it to yourself.

Would you say that the entire experience of recruit training was harsh?

No. It was meant to teach you certain things and I think they did a pretty good job of that.

31:00 **How confident were you as a private soldier, infantryman at the end of the three months in your ability?**

Well I knew how to shoot, knew how to slope arms, I knew how to present arms, I knew how to change socks during a route march and all those sort of things.

What about fighting?

We used to bayonet bags and all that sort of thing, had bayonet charges.

31:30 So whether I'd have been any good at it if the bag had been human, another thing, and he'd been having a go at me. We did all of that. We went over obstacles courses. We went under barbed wire with machine guns firing over the top of us. So, you know, reasonably competent.

What took place after Cowra?

Well then I went to

32:00 signals training at Bonegilla. We were in a new intake. I forget how many of us there were, thirty or forty and we had lectures and Morse code, we used to sing Morse code and then we gradually built up our speed, transmitting and then we used to have to

32:30 receive messages and write them down and then we used to get into a van and go into the bush and rig up an aerial and transmit back to camp and all that sort of drill.

Is that what you wanted as well, even though you were chosen to do signals training, was that something that you were preferring or would you have preferred something else?

I don't think so. I mean

33:00 it's not something that I've ever been keenly interested in ever since. No. It was quite interesting, particularly the Kana training later on.

How long was the actual training at Bonegilla for?

It'd be about three months I think.

Can you walk us through the procedures you'd learnt,

33:30 **Kana code?**

Well Kana is, all messages come across occasionally in plain language but basically if you're in an operational area there's no plain language. The messages are all converted into five number blocks

34:00 and you receive them. You learned how to start messages how to finish messages but in the Australian

Army and in I think most of the Allied Armies, you sent the same number of messages every day or every time you were on duty.

34:30 So you never knew whether you were sending real messages or dummy messages. This was for security reasons so that anybody listening in wouldn't know that you were getting ready to do something or wouldn't know that it was anything other than a routine operation. So we would practice with a Morse key for a while which didn't do anything

35:00 other than make a noise. Then you gradually built up and you had to in the end receive about twenty five words a minute, which was twenty-five five figure numeric groups.

Did you find it difficult initially?

Numbers are very easy because there are only

35:30 ten of them anyway. Plain language is a bit more difficult.

What were the differences in terms of the people you encountered at Bonegilla, culture, past, all that sort of thing?

I think there were only

36:00 two people out of my group that went to Bonegilla. The other fella was a medical student who deliberately failed his second year so he could go into the army but they were generally speaking of a higher level of intelligence than if you'd taken a mean of the intelligence at the recruit training battalion, it would have been lower than...

36:30 So they were mostly people who'd had a bit of schooling and perhaps a bit of advanced schooling.

Can you describe what the camp was like and your daily training procedures?

The camp was a whole series of huts and/or tents. I was in a tent

37:00 with three other fellas. It had floorboards in the tent and again it was pretty much the routine. The trumpet sounded at six o'clock and we had exercises and then we went off to lectures or training during the morning and before we went to lectures and training we always

37:30 had a march around the camp and they had a band and we'd march right around the camp. It's probably about five miles I suppose, take about half an hour. It was very cold in the winter, the frost and so on and we used to put the butts of our rifle near the fire in the cookhouse to warm it up a bit. And we also had

38:00 training exercises and then tests and exams on the electronics that we'd learnt. We learned how to lay wire, signal wire, how to insulate things and how to work a battery charger and all those sort of things.

38:30 **At this stage of the war, this was still 1943?**

'44.

'44. Did you see the wars coming to an end?

No, I didn't see the war coming, even when it ended I thought I was going to be away for at least another two years because we were all getting ready to go to Japan and I was

39:00 convinced that that was going to take a hell of a long time.

Sorry you thought that there'd be an invasion of mainland Japan, is that what you're referring to?

We were more or less told that that's where we were going. Our winter uniforms had arrived so it was imminent.

But did you see Germany as being defeated, that the tide had turned?

Well Germany had surrendered.

39:30 **'44 this is, at this stage.**

Not in '44, no, well, I think I thought that Germany was certainly going to be defeated because the Russians started to and I remembered my history and Napoleon which was really the Germans in Russia, was history repeating itself.

40:00 **So you felt confident that it was only a matter of time before the Germans were fully defeated at that stage?**

Yeah I did.

The war with Japan, what about that, that was closer to home?

Well we'd retaken a lot of the areas that they'd conquered but there was no sign of anybody surrendering and even though

40:30 they'd captured Okinawa there was no sign that the mainland was going to surrender. In fact they kept making pronouncements that they were going to defend it to the last man so we just assumed that it was going to take a long while. Because we would have probably landed at Kyushu and it's very

41:00 mountainous country. It just would have taken a long while.

Now our tape's finished so we'll have to stop.

Tape 4

00:32 To study in Kana and I thought I was going to be an intercept radio operator but when I got to Henry Street I was put into what I've now found out they called the Y section. We were analyzing enemy traffic.

01:00 That consisted, well my day consisted of coming across from the Kedron dog track to Henry Street where we'd have a parade and sometimes we would march up and down the road for half an hour or so and then we

01:30 would go across into this very tight security area and we would be sent to the same hut with the same people and you would start then to analyze the messages that you had in front of you.

What sort of messages would come through?

They were all in numbers. You had no idea except that eventually you learnt how to detect the priority of the message, whether it was top secret or whatever,

02:00 right down to deferred and sometimes you could discern where it had come from and where it was directed to. But a lot of the traffic went from Tokyo or Nara in Japan to Rabaul which was still a very big Japanese base. There were eighty thousand troops there

02:30 and mostly marines. Most of the troops that were round the coast in New Guinea were marines. One of the ways that code kept being broken was that they would break a code either by good fortune or by hard work and because some of these marine units on the coast of New Guinea were isolated

03:00 they'd start using the new code but they'd have to send the same message in the old code to the isolated units in New Guinea and thereafter the cryptologists or cryptanalysts were able to do it pretty easily. So in the end we were reading not so much the army codes but were certainly reading the navy codes because of

03:30 the marines.

Tell us about the Central Intelligence Bureau.

Central Bureau?

Central Bureau, is that was it was called?

That's what it was called. I don't know why they called it Central Bureau but well, it was a unit where if you had a colour patch you wore the colour patch of wherever you'd come from, otherwise you wore no colour patch at all.

04:00 And it was just very secret. They were a very strange group of people. A lot of university graduates. Most people were at least up to tertiary education apart from the cooks.

And this was in Brisbane?

This was in Hamilton,

04:30 in Brisbane, not far from the Ascot Racecourse.

When you were selected for the Bureau, Central Bureau what did they tell you?

They didn't tell me very much at all. They just said you were going there, you had a movement order and then you arrived and found

05:00 your way to where you had to go and then I think I did have an interview and somebody, I was expecting to be directed to a radio, instead of that I was directed in to this Y section. I wasn't there for very long because we were taken off to New Guinea.

How big was the Y section?

Nobody ever knew what anybody else was doing.

- 05:30 In our hut there would have been twenty or thirty people I suppose all beavering away, doing various things but you never really knew too much about anybody else or what they were doing. That was deliberate I think.
- Were you told that nothing could be discussed?**
- Yeah, well we were told it was top secret work we were doing.
- Even amongst yourselves?**
- Yes, you were certainly never to discuss
- 06:00 outside the unit.
- How long were you stationed there for?**
- In Brisbane I was there for about three months and then we went to New Guinea.
- Three months. During that time you were there in Brisbane or Hamilton**
- 06:30 **there was a sizeable American presence.**
- There was. In and around Brisbane there were about two million Americans which is about three times the size of Brisbane.
- We all know the Americans created problems for**
- Well there used to be a lot of jostling and so on.
- 07:00 Alcohol was in very short supply because there were so many people wanting to drink it but if you had a day's leave in Brisbane and you were having a beer at some hotel, you were lucky enough to get a drink there'd be a, somebody would run past the hotel and yell out, "It's on at the Railway." Everybody would down their beer and off they'd go to the Railway Hotel and so on.
- 07:30 People on leave used to chase the beer all round the city. Then there were great queues at the brothels. Some people used to stand in the queue at the brothel and once they got near the top they'd sell their place.
- What sort of tensions did**
- We had a lot of Americans
- 08:00 in our unit so that, we were friendly with them. I remember we went to Lennon's Hotel and the only Americans who were allowed in Lennon's Hotel were officers, so we had to get some parts of uniform and lend them to our American friends so they could come in and have dinner with us at the hotel.
- 08:30 **You had Americans working at the Central Bureau as well?**
- Oh yes. There were Americans and there were naval people and air force people, yeah.
- What was it like to work with the Americans?**
- Oh, it was okay. A lot of them had come down with MacArthur from Corregidor. There were a couple who were really
- 09:00 top decoding people, one of whom, he's dead now, he came out to a reunion a few years ago.
- By this time was your father back in Australia?**
- He might have been, he was in and out of Australia. I did meet him once in Brisbane.
- 09:30 **So I presume him being director of intelligence in the army he would have had significant liaison with the Central Bureau?**
- He was in charge of all intelligence but there was another brigadier, Brigadier Wells who was directly in charge of Central Bureau, Z Special Force [Services Reconnaissance Department] X Special Force, all the special forces.
- 10:00 **They came under the jurisdiction of Central Bureau?**
- No, no. Central Bureau was part of the general intelligence group, the corps of intelligence.
- Now I understand that this bureau was directly linked to MacArthur?**
- Naturally being very low down the
- 10:30 pecking order I didn't know where the information went but I do believe a lot of it did go to General Willoughby who was MacArthur's chief intelligence officer but it would also have gone through to

probably Brigadier Wells.

This was the ultra that was used,

11:00 **the ultra decoding system?**

The top level message was called top secret ultra and ultra was the code that we used for the top code. They had all kinds of code breaking machines really, I suppose the predecessors of the computers. They had

11:30 card systems that they used to fire into the machine and try to mesh various things to crack the code.

Were you aware of any of the intelligence that was coming in?

Oh, we used to hear something occasionally. I do remember when the war was ending we heard, the messages had come in about the bomb and about the

12:00 visit of these generals that took place, that came into Clark Field, so we heard. I haven't ever read anything about that but I think it was probably right.

Under that sort of environment where secrecy is paramount, when you'd finish up for the days work where would you end up going to?

12:30 Go back to have your meal, your evening meal.

And sleep?

Maybe sleep.

Where were you camped at?

Originally at the Kedron dog track and later on at the Ascot race course which was very much closer to where we were working and it was a kind of an embarkation depot too, where people went to be prepared to go overseas.

So generally speaking

13:00 **most people tend to talk about work after work, how would this?**

We didn't talk about it at all. We probably talked about girls or beer or something like that.

Did that create any tension?

No.

Not being able to discuss work?

No. I mean there were some pretty strange people and they were a pretty good

13:30 subject for discussion.

In the Bureau you're saying?

Mmm. Pretty eccentric people.

Like what, what do you mean by that?

Well they didn't pay too much attention to being properly regimentally dressed and they really were not terribly well disciplined.

14:00 They were just sort of odd bods [odd bodies] but they were there because they were good at something or other.

When you say not well disciplined, in what way were they not disciplined?

I mean, if you're in an infantry battalion there's a lot of spit and polish and all that sort of thing whereas life tended to be a lot easier in the Bureau. We had a sergeant who was a bit of a spit and polish man. He used to

14:30 take us for a march every morning but nobody liked him very much. You'd be arranged in three sections and the front section would go as fast as they could, the middle section about half pace and the last section would dawdle so he'd be going up the front stopping the front and then he'd come down the back trying to hurry them up and that used to go on nearly every morning.

15:00 **Did you enjoy yourself there at the Bureau, your work?**

Oh yes, I suppose I did. As a job it wasn't very exciting but I had some good friends there so it was okay.

Did General Blamey visit the Bureau?

I think he did once visit Henry Street.

15:30 I think there's a picture in that book of him visiting Henry Street but I didn't see him.

Was he seen as, he was seen as quite a controversial figure.

Not with us because he really didn't mean very much to us.

Generally speaking was his name that of controversy?

Well there were some people that did and some people. There were a lot of people he wasn't really terribly relevant to their lives,

16:00 so they didn't worry too much about him. There'd be stories about him and that sort of thing. I mean, I wouldn't say he was highly revered but on the other hand I don't think that people were really worked up about their dislike of him. I mean, we had no contact with him so there was really nothing to get very excited about.

Now when you first encountered Americans, started working with them and socializing,

16:30 **meeting up with them in Brisbane or whatever, what was your initial impression of them and how did that change, that impression as time went on?**

I don't think, there were a lot of the Americans were very aggressive, or some of them were, not in our unit. The people we had in our unit were very much like ourselves. They were all

17:00 either university educated or ready to go to university. We didn't have any problems with them at all. We didn't have fights or anything like that, it was all pretty peaceful. They weren't in our lines. They had their own American lines.

The ones that were aggressive, which ones are you referring to there?

Well, you know if

17:30 you went on leave in to Brisbane some of them would be pretty aggressive when they'd had a few drinks. But that's not just Americans.

Can you give us a few examples?

Well there was a big brawl in Brisbane one night. They brought the fire brigade out and turned the fire hoses on everybody to break it up.

18:00 But no, our main watering hole to have a drink was to go to the Breakfast Creek Hotel which is a very famous hotel which wasn't very far from where we were. There'd be a few Americans in there but nobody used to be too concerned about them. The only ugly one I saw were on the boat subsequently going to New Guinea. They'd all been arrested because they were

18:30 AWOL [Absent Without Leave] or whatever and they were a pretty nasty lot. Whether it was true or not, one of the officers that was in charge of them disappeared during the voyage. He could have been below decks but the story was he'd been thrown overboard.

Did you notice the

19:00 **racial tensions within the Americans themselves?**

We didn't have any coloured people in our unit and basically we used to run into very few because they were nearly all in labour battalions. That is they'd build air strips and all that sort of thing. We didn't have much contact with the infantry.

19:30 Basically the Americans sort of segregated them and used them for other jobs rather than having them in the infantry, as far as I could judge but I didn't have too much to do with them.

I suppose at the time race theory was a fairly widely accepted concept.

20:00 **Was it surprising for Australians that they were segregated along those lines to that extent?**

I can't say that we worried about it very much. I don't remember there being any lengthy debates about it or anything else. You'd occasionally run into groups of them if you were on leave and so on.

20:30 They could sometimes get a bit menacing. The main thing was to have a good friend who was about six feet three.

To bail you out?

Well then they'd leave you alone.

So you obviously had some encounters where?

Oh yeah, where people have got pretty nasty about things for no apparent reason.

21:00 **Were the blacks considered to be aggressive?**

I don't think they were any more aggressive than anybody else. They probably had a feeling that they were being hardly done by and there used to be a lot of excitement about them being with Australian girls.

Excitement?

Yeah, well, people would get agitated about it and so on and the girls'd get

21:30 called names.

So Australian girls would openly walk with black American soldiers?

Some of them did, yeah.

It would have been quite odd for that time.

Yeah, it was and I suppose the general feeling was if you saw them walking with black Americans that they probably weren't very nice girls

22:00 but I didn't sort of worry too much about it.

There was a saying for the Americans, "overpaid, oversexed and over here."

That's right.

Can you tell us how it impacted on the female population of Brisbane, the presence of Americans?

Well not being a female I really don't know but I know Jan's

22:30 sister used to go out with American soldiers. I don't think, I mean there were some people who, they had more money than we did and they were a bit more effusive in giving flowers and all that sort of thing. People weren't worried about it.

It changed the dynamic of dating.

23:00 They did, yeah, a bit.

It must have been quite difficult under those circumstances when you have so many males in one area, like Brisbane and so few females?

Yeah, I suppose so.

When you were in Brisbane what would you do socially in the after hours, generally?

Go to the movies if you get in,

23:30 have a few beers, that would be about all there was to do. Beach was too far away. I don't remember there being any swimming pools you could go to. So it was just a matter of walking around and looking at things and

24:00 staying out of trouble if you could.

What were the MPs [Military Police] like in Brisbane?

They were pretty vigorous, both sides, there were American MPs.

Could American MPs discipline Australian soldiers?

No but they'd issue orders to you about not coming here and all that sort of thing. You'd be pretty foolish if you ignored them. They didn't have the power of arrest I don't think.

24:30 I can't remember them having it anyway.

About that time you were starting to get ready to go to New Guinea. Can you tell us how it worked out, the process from Brisbane to New Guinea?

What do you want to know, a description of the voyage or? Well you firstly

25:00 had to be issued with all your medicine, Atebrin [antimalarial drug] tablets, mosquito net, jungle green clothes. I think we had a different kind of ground sheet which was more of a poncho than a ground sheet.

25:30 Eventually, we were always going to go the next day but finally the day did arrive and we went off to the Hamilton Wharf where we got on a Dutch tramp steamer called the Van Swol.

A nice ship?

No it was terrible. It was crewed by

- 26:00 non English speaking Lascar seaman and Dutch officers. Three and a half thousand tons. There were eight hundred troops on board, all different kinds of troops, American deserters, wireless people, ourselves, some infantry reinforcements for Australia.
- 26:30 All the amenities for the ship were stolen by wharf labourers, we had no cigarettes on board. I had a carton of American cigarettes which I'd got from somewhere or other and I used to smoke them down to about a quarter of an inch and there'd still be two or three people following me around say, "Don't throw it overboard."
- 27:00 We had no chocolates or anything like that that you would normally get. We slept in holds on the ship which were covered up at night. We just had lanterns in there I think. For security we were
- 27:30 shut in at night and then at daylight we were let out. At six o'clock in the morning a seaman used to come in with a fire hose and call out "Washy decky" and we all had to stand up and pick up our gear and stay out of the water.

Washy decky?

Washy decky, yeah.

An Indian Lascar?

Yeah.

This must have been highly amusing

- 28:00 **for you to see all these different races of people in Australia?**

They weren't in Australia, they were just working as seamen on the ship. I think in those days they were about the cheapest kind of seaman you could get. We had two meals a day. We had to barely finish one meal and then line up to

- 28:30 go round, you went round two decks to get to the cooks for your second meal. We used to play cards.

So the conditions on the ship were quite bad?

Terrible, yeah. There were no toilets but they had a ten holer slung over the side of the vessel so you had to climb along a plank on the side of the vessel then you could sit yourself down.

- 29:00 We ran into a cyclone in the Whitsunday Islands coming inside the reef and two of the boats in the convoy were run aground and we must have spent three or four days there, very rough weather. I was sitting at the bottom of the stairs into our hold one day and a fella, the boat gave a great heave and

- 29:30 he came down with everything, hot coffee egg powder, the whole lot was all over me at the bottom of the stairs, so then I had to go get back in the queue again.

What were the Dutch like?

They were pretty rude to us. So it was not a very, it took us a month to get from

- 30:00 Brisbane to Hollandia where we were going. We were out of water. No bathing facilities.

Definitely sounds like you weren't on the Love Boat.

No we were not on the Love Boat, no.

The Dutch seem to have a universal reputation amongst Australians as being quite arrogant and rude.

They were.

Why is that, what sort of things did they do that were irritating?

They were just very curt.

- 30:30 You know, they'd never speak to you. They used to have parties in their mess and that used to irritate everybody. Sometimes they'd come out and they'd be a bit drunk and be abusive.

- 31:00 You get used to that sort of thing so you don't worry too much about it.

Were there any fights?

There were fights amongst the Americans who were being taken back to their stockade, as they called it. They were not a very nice group of people.

- 31:30 There were one or two of them that were okay who probably just stayed behind because they had a girlfriend or something like that. Most of them were pretty low class people.

So I presume you would have some sort of interaction and prior knowledge of why they were

on board?

No, they were just there and they couldn't lock them up because there were no facilities so they just used to roam around the ship.

32:00 They were all in the one hold as I remember. We didn't have much to do with them. Some of them used to, I can remember, one or two of them used to sell dirty pictures.

What sort of pornography did they have at that time?

I'm not a great expert but they were just mainly pictures of naked women.

32:30 **Just standard pictures of naked women?**

Oh, some of them would be, might be doing other things or they might be getting undressed, that sort of stuff.

Were there actually pornographic films at that time?

Could have been. I'm sure there were but I didn't ever see them, only the VD films.

33:00 I regarded those as pornographic.

Didn't turn anyone on though, did it?

No, no. Turned them off, that's what they were meant to do.

Do you think it had the intended effect?

Well certainly they were very graphic. Pretty awful really.

33:30 **I would also assume and this is an assumption here, that this would have been new to Australians, pornography at that time?**

I don't know, I'd had no exposure to it.

From what you had seen with the Americans that it is. I'm not certainly accusing you of being a porn king or anything like that.

I'm not admitting to being one either.

I've noticed that the Americans tended to have all these.

34:00 Yeah, they were much more interested in it than we were, I'd have to say. I don't remember them being any magazines of the sort that are around these days. Oh, that's not quite right, there were in places like Hong Kong, they had catalogues of sexual apparatus. I think I can

34:30 remember one or two people having those.

At that time they had that?

Yes. Then we used to have a short arm inspection, as they used to call it.

Tell us about that.

Well you just had to stand in a line and show your genitals to the doctor who had a look at them.

Everyone had to stand in a line?

35:00 Yes.

Short arm inspection. How often were these things conducted?

I think we only had one short arm inspection, would have had one. We might have had two just in case somebody was a bit slow developing whatever it was that they'd caught. And then they used to be isolated and they had to eat in a different area.

What were the diseases that were rampant, the VD rampant at the time?

35:30 I don't know what they were. I suppose it was gonorrhoea and syphilis. Venereal warts I think was another thing.

Must have been embarrassing for the people who got pulled aside by the doctor in that line.

I think the ones who did were probably used to it anyway.

I've heard stories where some chaps had caught gonorrhoea three or four times.

It's possible. You used to be reduced to sixpence a day if you had it.

36:00 **With your trip to New Guinea did you know what the prior purpose was for you to go there?**

Didn't know where we were going, we just knew we were going to New Guinea. We did know that there were people in Madang and one of the rumours was we were going to Madang but then once we passed

36:30 Aitape and Wewak we knew we must have been going to Hollandia.

You only passed Aitape and Wewak, you didn't stop there?

I think we did stop just to get water.

Did you get a chance to actually get shore leave?

Oh no. You wouldn't have wanted to have shore leave either. You were just allowed out on the wharf.

37:00 I seem to remember, I can't even remember whether the showers were salt water or fresh water but you were able to get a shower.

Were there any encounters with the enemy on that voyage?

Yeah, we had a submarine alert. There was a submarine there, we were told it was there. So we were all up on the top deck

37:30 with as much gear as we were allowed to take. It was perfectly obvious that there were only enough rafts and boats for about half of us so we were all pretty happy when we got the all clear.

Tell us about Hollandia, once you arrived.

Well,

38:00 I do remember there was a big dump of poison gas where we got ashore and then we got into trucks and we went up into the mountains where the camp was, sorted ourselves out

38:30 and went to work.

Poison gas?

Well there was a big dump there of poison gas and I guess it was there in case the Japanese decided to use it. I don't think we ever used it but it was there.

What does Hollandia look like, or did look like at the time?

Well it was a small, it was the capital of Dutch New Guinea so it had a

39:00 main street and a few shops. Wasn't too much left, it got badly bombed. There was a lot of fighting there. Up where we went there were just a few tents and there might have been a teleprinter line I think,

39:30 either to or from Morotai and Brisbane. So an area had been cleared and the jungle was on the southern side of the camp

40:00 and then there was some food depots and dumps and the Japanese would quite often come in at night, not to do any attacking, but trying to get food. So the guards would sometimes put a spotlight on the food and then turn it off and then wait 'til they heard people rattling around there and turn the spotlight on and if they were the

40:30 wrong people then they'd be shot.

We're out of tape now.

Tape 5

00:30 **Your father was in Hollandia at a time?**

He just came in in a small aeroplane I think just to see what we were doing and clothes don't last very long in the tropics, so most of the fellas had American clothes which they'd either borrowed or stolen or whatever. Anyway, he gave the CO [Commanding Officer]

01:00 a pretty hard time about it and a whole lot of new Australian clothes were sent up from Aitape or Wewak and everybody had to wear them. If you put on a brand new unwashed shirt in the tropics it's very unpleasant. So I wasn't at the top of the hit parade for a day or two. By that time people knew who I was you see, which they hadn't done for a long time but they eventually found out.

01:30 **There's a lot there just in that little bit but first what did they do to you in the case of the shirts?**

They just used to give me a hard time, you know, are you comfortable and all that sort of thing, make

uncomplimentary remarks about my father and all that sort of thing. All in good heart really but I did get a fair amount of hassle. He would never have come

02:00 they used to say if I hadn't been there, he'd have never come there. I didn't see him.

Because you knew them, you were already in that team, you knew them already, they weren't that mean, were they?

No. It wasn't unpleasant, it was just a fairly continual, for a while. You don't have too much to talk about in those places anyway.

02:30 **Did you try and keep secret who your father was?**

I kept my own identity secret, yeah. People used to talk about the brig and so on and for a long while they didn't know that it meant anything more to me than it did to them.

Why did you think you had to keep it secret?

I just thought that people might think,

03:00 anything really. That if I was ever promoted or something like that, that it was because of influence and all that sort of thing so I just preferred to be just plain Mr. Bottomley.

Did it make life easier for you?

I think it did, yeah, for a while until they got used to me and then when they all found out it didn't really matter very much.

How did they find out?

I think

03:30 they found out because there was an officer who was censoring the mail. And I must have written to my mother about this and he in turn quoted out of my letter somewhere or other in a letter or a communication back to the headquarters in Brisbane and somehow or other it got out and he was sent home to Australia for doing it.

04:00 Then the news was abroad.

Funny, there's a lot of stories about people who censored letters actually not using the information correctly. Was that the case a lot from your knowledge?

Well that was the only occasion where I knew that anything had happened as a result of a letter that I wrote.

04:30 That settled down and then I think it was shortly after that that these two fellas decided they'd tried to climb to the top of the mountain which was a very silly thing to do.

Just one second, we'll get to it, I've got a couple more questions about your secret identity in the army. When they found out, in a sense did they have respect for you working with them rather than being higher up and so on?

No, I

05:00 just continued doing the same thing that I was doing and I had the same friends. One of the drivers who was up in New Guinea who used to take a bit of care of me. He was an old fella as far as I was concerned, he was thirty or something like that, he was a big lump of a bloke. His picture's in that football team there. He used to chiac [tease] me but he used to also

05:30 take good care of me.

Once they know you too it's hard to suddenly dislike someone they know and like already.

Yeah. I don't think I was ever disliked by anybody. Probably just regarded as a bit of an oddity I suppose.

You think would have been treated differently if say you'd just arrived with them and they knew who you were,

06:00 **would they have treated you?**

They might have. I can't judge that. I just hoped that they'd treat me as another unfortunate.

Alright, we'll move onto the two guys that went up the mountain.

Well they didn't come back and I can't remember whether I was a volunteer or not but all I know was that the next morning,

06:30 armed with a rifle and a few rounds and a haversack about eight of us set off into the mountains. It was very tough going. The only way you could really make any progress was to get up onto the razorbacks where the jungle wasn't quite so dense and you could work along the top of the razorbacks. Well we

kept going 'til about

- 07:00 four o'clock in the afternoon and it gets dark pretty early up in that part of the world so they decided, we weren't equipped to camp there or anything nor would it have been a very good idea, so we started to make our way back. And we got to a point at the end of a razorback where a bit of an escarpment went down in that direction and there was a river down there
- 07:30 and somebody said, "Why don't you," me, "go down to the river and follow it along and we'll meet down the bottom of the razorback." So I set off and I got to the river and it was pouring with rain and the river was pretty high. At the top of the rapids, there's a waterfall down here, at the top of the rapids I started to cross because I couldn't go any further on the side
- 08:00 that I was on. I got about halfway across and I was wearing jungle boots which had a rubber sole and I slipped and off I went down the river. Fortunately, I had my rifle slung and that caught between two rocks so there I was and the water was pouring over the top of me but there was air in there and so on.
- 08:30 So I had a bit of a look around and a feel around and I thought, "No, I'll wait for a while before I try to do anything." So I waited and waited and finally the rain eased off a bit and I could get my head out and then somebody called out and the others had come back. They saw me there and I said, "I could try to get out
- 09:00 but I don't think it'd be very sensible at the moment" and they said, "All right, we'll camp at the bottom of the waterfall." It was only about from here to that wall down there from the top of the waterfall. So they said, "We'll camp at the bottom of the waterfall and we'll talk to you during the night so that you're all right" which they did. The next morning they shot a rope across the river with
- 09:30 another rope attached to it which I attached to my belt and they hauled me out.

How many hours were you in the water for?

Would have been twelve I suppose. Anyway, there was a Philippine ranger battalion in the area which was meant to be looking after us I think and you know, making sure we were secure and they found the two fellas

- 10:00 later in the day. And very shortly after that we were told to pack up and we were off again.

Was the water cold?

No, not really.

So it was more of a game of patience?

Well the rocks were all very slippery and while there was a lot of water going down, my safety

- 10:30 apparatus was my rifle which was caught in these two rocks and I just thought, "If I disengage that I'll probably take off again and mightn't be so lucky this time."

So what actually happened to the guys, they just got lost?

They got lost, yeah and they got into trouble. I was actually posted missing so

- 11:00 there was a bit of fuss over that.

In what way was there a fuss?

Oh well, I think my mother eventually heard somehow or other that I was missing but not for very long.

It sounds like, even though they weren't there, your mother and also your father was in the loop so to speak, kept an eye on you,

- 11:30 **is that right?**

Well, I'm sure my father usually knew where I was. I'll tell you another story later about the only time I did actually see him. I'm sure he knew where I was by then at any rate.

Where was that?

That was when we were at San Miguel.

Okay, we'll get to that. With the conditions and the uniforms you were mentioning earlier we've talked to a lot of guys from

- 12:00 **Vietnam and New Guinea and they went around with no socks and no underwear. Was that the same case?**

Well you might go without socks. I can't ever remember being without underwear, particularly we were able to get American underwear. Australian Army underwear was terrible but the American underwear, they were sort of jockey shorts, boxer shorts

12:30 and they were very good, high quality. I think I used to wear those, probably used to sleep in them as well.

On that little excursion you had, was it a bit of an adventure for you, or how do you look back on it and how did you look at it at the time?

Well I'm still very friendly with one of the blokes

13:00 and we've really been close friends ever since. Yes, well, it was an adventure but it wasn't an adventure that I'd planned, nor would I want to repeat it.

Was the work demanding at this time?

13:30 Yeah, I mean you were expected to deal with a fair amount of stuff in the shift that you went on. It took a lot of concentration and you know, you eventually picked up a lot of extra things and you would recognize things. In the very few times that I listened to enemy traffic directly you could pick the

14:00 radio operator. They all had quite distinctive touch on the key.

That was easy to do or it just came with time?

You may hear three or four messages in say an hour and you could tell that they were all different or you might tell

14:30 that two were the same. Then if you heard one again who had a distinctive style you'd pick that. You'd know, perhaps that he was at Rabaul. I do remember there was a radio operator in Rabaul had a very distinctive style.

And all these messages were going back and forth in code?

Yes.

And at that time were you not only

15:00 **getting the message, you were deciphering the messages as well?**

We weren't, no, another group of people were doing those but we were aware of the fact that they changed, we were mainly dealing with naval codes, with marine units and with the navy itself and the soldiers in

15:30 Rabaul were marines. And when they found out somehow or other that we were reading the marine code, so they changed it but they couldn't get a new codebook in to the marines who were in Wewak because they were cut off and they weren't game to fly in, the Japs didn't have an operating airstrip there.

16:00 So for quite a while we would get a general message going out in the new code and the same message going to Wewak in the old code, so you were able to pick that up and the decoder people were able to hop into it pretty quickly.

So did you yourself know what they were saying to each other?

No, about as far as I went,

16:30 I could tell, in the end, I could tell a top secret important message and I could generally tell where it was coming from and where it was going to and with some of the weather reports that they used to send out for the pilots, aeroplane pilots, I could generally work that out.

And more for the sake of the camera but can you

17:00 **tell us why that work was so secretive and why you couldn't talk about it out of work and so on. The reasons why you couldn't talk outside.**

Well I don't think the Japanese believed we could ever read their code. Sometimes they guessed we might be getting close to it and I just don't

17:30 think that they wanted anybody to know the extent to which we were able to read codes. Nor did they and I think I might have said earlier, in the allied forces or at least in the Empire, Commonwealth forces you had to send the same number of groups, five numerate groups out every session.

18:00 The Japanese were very haphazard so that there'd be all of a sudden a great rush of messages from somewhere to somewhere and generally speaking that meant something was happening. That would probably be another reason that they didn't want people to know that we were intuitively monitoring the traffic to such

18:30 an extent that we were able to glean intelligence from that.

It's sad to say in some ways but that's very much the case today isn't it, where they are monitoring traffic a lot to find out what terrorists are doing and so on, it's still very relevant.

Yes, that's right.

With Rabaul, that was the case where a lot of Australian troops had to escape, is that correct?

A few of them did escape

19:00 including a guy called Geoff Donaldson who was my predecessor in Woodside and amazingly enough when I was with Woodside I was going to Japan regularly. We had a very unpleasant customer in Hiroshima who ran the local gas company

19:30 and he really was a very unpleasant individual. He chain smoked all through the interview. One day he said, "When I was in Rabaul" so I said, "Oh that's interesting, when were you in Rabaul?" and he said, "During the war" and I said, "Oh we used to listen to your radio signals from Rabaul" and at that he dismissed everybody from the room

20:00 and he sat down and he talked for two hours about it. He'd been a signals officer.

Just on that, it must be, even though they're enemies and so on, is there a relationship between soldiers?

I don't think there was any relationship between the Australians and the Japanese during the war, no it was very bitter. There was no sort of friendly exchange.

20:30 In fact a lot of the time they didn't take any prisoners on either side.

How much of that was known, how much of the Japanese POW camps and so on and how they were treating prisoners was known at the time?

Very little. We did know about

21:00 Borneo which eventually turned into the Sandakan march and we knew that they'd been building the airstrip there and so on. At one stage my father told me this after the war he was very keen for the paratroops to go in and rescue them but MacArthur wouldn't give any backup. And so they didn't know how many Japanese were there

21:30 apart from the guard and it might have just resulted in the massacre of everybody, because there were no naval ships to take them off or anything like that so it didn't come to anything. My father regretted that almost to his dying day I think.

So from there you moved on to the Philippines, is that right?

Yes we moved first to Peleliu which is

22:00 part of the Celebes, again we were in the Dutch Indies and I think I told you earlier that they'd only just recently completed the fighting and they were still burying Japanese in the caves with bulldozers and then we went by small naval vessel to the Lingayen Gulf where we went ashore and went down to San Miguel.

Did you actually see them with the bulldozers

22:30 **burying them?**

Mmm.

How does that affect someone?

Well it wasn't very pleasant and you know most of them had been dead for a while. In the tropics the smell after about twelve hours is pretty bad but after that it gets really offensive.

23:00 So for instance in the walled city in Manila where there were something like ten thousand Japs who were killed inside there and the place was all mined and they couldn't get in there to, or only get in very gradually as they were delousing all the mines and you know when the breeze was coming off the harbour, terrible.

Was that the first deaths you

23:30 **saw in the war?**

The first, yes, I think that probably was, in the Celebes would have been the first and they were long dead. There were one or two killed around the camp in the Philippines that mainly came in to try and get food I think. I don't think they were going to attack us

24:00 or even knew what we were doing.

They were becoming desperate at that time.

It was a strange situation. The Filipinos really didn't like us any more than they liked the Japanese I don't think. They were forever stealing things, we'd have tent boys, you've probably seen the pictures there, little boys who would come in and they'd want to

- 24:30 be your tent boy and tidy everything up and of course they were stealing stuff a lot of the time then they'd go off and come back with Japanese caps and things like that to try and sell them. They used to take food to them sometimes too I think. You know, they'd knock off a few tins of bully beef or something like that. Generally speaking
- 25:00 the Japanese, they came from everywhere after the war, we were amazed at how many of them there were. They were all pretty emaciated, so they all had dysentery.
- With the bulldozers and the Japanese, how many bodies, estimate, would there have been?**
- I don't know because we were not there for very long, we just saw them doing it.
- Tens or hundreds or?**
- 25:30 I don't know how many, it was very heavily defended this little island because it had a coral air strip and I guess there would have several thousand who were killed. I don't think there were any survivors, I think they were all wiped out. Damien Parer the famous photographer was killed there.
- 26:00 **The guy that did the Kokoda Track?**
- That's the one, yes.
- When you see this sight, is that a time when the reality of war hits home to you a bit?**
- Yeah, well, I suppose particularly as a unit that was not allowed to do any fighting it
- 26:30 brought you a lot closer to it. I mean we were not supposed to even allow ourselves to be captured although they never gave us anything to take.
- So what did they recommend that you do if you get captured?**
- They didn't say. They just said certainly we were not to go looking for trouble. I think that's really the way it was put to us.
- Of course that's because of**
- 27:00 **your knowledge and so on. How much were the English involved in breaking the codes and that side of things?**
- In the last month or perhaps two months of the war a whole raft of young English officers arrived and they'd come from Oxford and Cambridge and they were Japanese linguists and they were I think going to be employed
- 27:30 and probably were employed working on codes and Japanese language material.
- Were the Japanese codes in any way similar to the German codes?**
- Machine codes you mean?
- Yeah, the boxes, the magic boxes they had?**
- Like a big typewriter really.
- Yeah and they used to communicate with their U-boats [Unterseeboot - German submarine] . Was it a similar type of thing with the Japanese?**
- 28:00 No. They just had, I didn't ever see any machines, they had these huge books and there must have been an easy way of accessing the information that was in the books to convert into radio traffic because one of the times that they broke a code,
- 28:30 they'd just driven the Japs out of a camp and somebody saw a tin box in the river and they opened it up and it had the current code book in it. So that had to be taken back and dried out which took a few days and that was really a very critical breakthrough.
- In those cases were**
- 29:00 **troops on the ground informed what to look for, keep and eye out for code books and things like that do you know?**
- Not that I know of but they probably were. I'm sure that every unit would have had an intelligence officer and one of his jobs would be to go round looking for stuff that might be of interest.
- At this point in the Philippines how did you see the war going?**
- 29:30 Well we thought that it was going reasonably well but we didn't see any chance that it was going to finish for a long while because they were gonna have to conquer Kyushu and Honshu. Nobody had any idea] , they'd been bombing Japan for quite a while without, in my fleeting visit to Japan just after the war, the damage

- 30:00 was unbelievable but it certainly wasn't going to stop them.
- At this point were the Americans pushing the Australians into the background so to speak and on to smaller islands or was that a bit later?**
- Well, no, I know that Blamey was very keen to have Australians involved in the invasion of
- 30:30 the Philippines and other islands and instead of that they were given Borneo and that was about it.
- Bougainville.**
- Bougainville, that's right. Well Bougainville they were there for quite a long while before they were in Borneo. There were very few Australians in the Philippines, only the
- 31:00 radio and intelligence people. So MacArthur I think, he was an enormous egomaniac, and really didn't want anything taken away but really a lot of the island fighting was done by marines under Admiral King and they were not very friendly with each other, MacArthur and King.
- 31:30 **I don't think MacArthur had that many friends higher up.**
- No. I don't think he did. Wasn't too many above him.
- At the time when he was pushing Australians into background were there feelings amongst the Australian troops where you were about this at all?**
- Well I was not in touch with the troops, the troops that were up on the Tablelands I think got very
- 32:00 sick of being there and wanting to be doing something. Some of them were up there for eighteen months so they would have probably been a bit frustrated.
- But for yourself and even the guys you're working with did it matter at all?**
- No, didn't matter at all.
- With the natives, let's talk about that, the natives not only on**
- 32:30 **this island but the previous one, how did they look upon the Australians there and what was happening?**
- Well the ones in Hollandia, there weren't too many up in the mountains, they were very friendly. Well they had no one else to be friendly with I suppose. In the Philippines it depended if the Filipinos could make a bit of money out of you, they were reasonably friendly and they used to call out,
- 33:00 "Victory Joe" when you were going along the road but then quite often they'd take pot shots at you after you'd passed. So it was very hard to judge.
- Besides the pot shots were they ever dangerous?**
- Well they were down in the south, the Huks [Hukbalahap - Philippines resistance group] . We were very happy with them when they were fighting the Japanese but when they
- 33:30 turned around and started to get very unpleasant with us it was a different matter. In the Philippines there were still quite a few very wealthy Spaniards. In fact the owners of the San Miguel sugar refinery which became the brewery and so on were Spanish and they had a house not very far from our camp.
- 34:00 They were of course reasonably friendly, haughty, but friendly. The kids like Alberto and so on used to hang around were always friendly and going around saying, "You want pom pom?" and all that sort of stuff, pushing a bit of business.
- 34:30 **In the Philippines were they more pro-Japanese then?**
- Well, the Japanese with their Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Scheme broke up a lot of the big Spanish estates and gave the land back to the people and so they were very popular when they did that but they were also very beastly to a lot of people and which on balance I think turned them
- 35:00 against. They existed quite comfortably near our camp so obviously the Filipinos weren't all that unfriendly to them.
- Would they help Australian troops as they did in New Guinea, the natives?**
- Well, when you call them natives, these are pretty, they're much more sophisticated
- 35:30 than the locals in New Guinea. There'd be a few of them used to hang around the camp and look for jobs to do and so on and most of us eventually used to get our laundry done by Filipino ladies and they used to be very friendly and come around. We had two radio units, one over,
- 36:00 there was a little creek about here and radio 5WU [Wireless Unit] was there and 3WU were up on the hill in that place that I showed you in the album and in between us and 5 WU there was a one lady

brothel and she had one tooth in the middle of her head. She used to operate all night you know and you'd hear this voice coming out in the dark,

36:30 "Next." I remember one of the fellas in our tent started off and I said, "Oh, you're not going there are you?" and he said, "I'm just gonna get underneath the hut and listen."

What was her name?

Mary was her name, but

37:00 I didn't ever have the pleasure of meeting her. But she was a well known identity; everybody knew who she was, she didn't attempt to ride out at night as somebody different than she was during the day. She'd quite often be doing her laundry down on the creek.

With a one lady brothel though, maybe it worked the other way, was there less STDs [Sexually Transmitted Disease] around or was there more or did it matter?

37:30 I don't suppose it mattered. There were lots of brothels everywhere in Manila and in Japan, couldn't have been more than ten days after the war had finished, one of the first sights I saw when we left the Tachikawa air strip was a cat house for the GIs [US soldier] .

They knew where the money was.

Oh yes. Of course when we first got

38:00 to the Philippines one cigarette would buy just about anything but inflation came in very quickly then it was a packet, then it was a carton.

With the one lady brothel, what was her set up?

She was paid in pesos. She very quickly woke up. There used to be Japanese pesos lying around everywhere and banks were blown up and so on and she quickly woke up to the Japanese pesos,

38:30 she wouldn't touch those. We had invasion money, so that was all right, the American invasion money, US dollars or whatever.

Was she in a house or a hut or what?

Hut on stilts, bit of a sloping staircase where the queue started. I think there was one at the back too, you know, when you'd been served you went down the other side.

39:00 So it didn't get too crowded.

She literally had a queue out the front?

Oh yeah.

And what was her charge?

I don't know, I can't remember. It would have gone up pretty rapidly I would think so in the end it probably was five or ten pesos or something like that. Peso was worth about fifty cents US.

39:30 **We've often heard especially in the Middle East that the military higher ups and so on actually would designate brothels to go to and not to go to, this is clean, this isn't clean, was that the case with the one woman brothel?**

We didn't have a medical officer in our unit, Central Bureau didn't have a medical officer and as far as I know

40:00 nobody ever ran the tape over Mary at all. Certainly it was not held to be socially desirable to go to Mary but, well I didn't ever go over and see who was there but generally speaking it was regarded as a pretty low thing to do.

40:30 **Well, that's another tape.**

Tape 6

00:31 We set up camp in the grounds of the San Miguel sugar refinery in what used to be the directors' golf course although it was no longer recognizable as such because it was overgrown.

San Miguel.

01:00 **Presumably that was also a large town?**

There is a large town there, it wasn't all that large when I was there but now it would be fifty thousand people I suppose. But there was a little barrio, a small village very close to the camp. I've forgotten the

name of the barrio, it only had a very few people.

01:30 **Was there much of a battle there?**

No. The Americans just drove with heavy armour right down the middle of the island, Luzon and they just seem to have pushed the Japanese out into the hills on either side so that, I mean they used to occasionally, they'd be there, you were aware that they were there, but they didn't

02:00 attack us, although they used to come in trying to get food and so on.

At San Miguel?

Mmm. There'd be shots at night occasionally.

So what were you told of the Japanese in the Philippines before you left about the situation there?

We were told nothing very much, that we were going to the Philippines and that was it.

02:30 There was still fighting going on in the south, spasmodic fighting in and around Manila and Corregidor but apart from minor skirmishes, the Japanese around us just seemed to be existing there. I don't know what they were doing

03:00 but they didn't attack us.

Were there large detachments of them around?

Well they seemed to be large when the war ended because they came pouring in from everywhere.

This was May 1945 so basically on the verge of their defeat, what were your duties when you were at Lingayen Gulf?

The same duties as I'd been doing everywhere else.

03:30 We had, it was just a tent setting. They did build a chapel there. We had a cyclone very shortly after we arrived and that uprooted quite a few tents and things.

04:00 There were one or two trees and we pitched our tent under a tree but then they told us that the tree had to be chopped down and the tents all had to be in a line. So, that's what happened.

Were there any other Australian units there?

The two radio stations were Australians, they were RAAF

04:30 radio people and we were Australian Army and American Army.

Did you have much contact with the RAAF while you were there?

Well they used to bring the messages in that they'd intercepted. Didn't have much contact with them until the war ended and then we used to play football against them and so on.

Now

05:00 **because you were an intelligence officer did you carry any weapons at any time?**

Yeah, always had my rifle and I think, well there was somebody in our tent that had a sub machine gun which would have been an Owen gun [submachine gun] I imagine but I only had a rifle and bayonet.

05:30 **Did you ever have to do field work?**

No. Probably occasionally we'd travel somewhere to see something and you'd take your rifle with you. Your rifle

06:00 was inspected fairly regularly.

You'd have to travel somewhere you said?

Yeah and you'd take the rifle with you.

Where would you travel? This is the Philippines you're talking about, whereabouts would you travel to and from?

Well we might travel, there was a big market city not very far away from where we were called Tarlac and until things really got settled, if you went into Tarlac you'd probably take your rifle.

06:30 **Did you have any encounters at all?**

No. I think I let off a shot one night at a Japanese fella that I thought I could see through the trees.

This was a spontaneous?

In San Miguel. Yeah.

You weren't on guard duty?

I was probably on guard duty I think, yeah.

07:00 **Did you notice any changes in the behaviour of the Japanese soldiers, they generally seemed to have this fatalistic, that was the impression, banzai charges, obey orders, things like that.**

Well as I said, everything was

07:30 relatively peaceful in the Philippines except they were there, that was all. They were slaughtered in large numbers in Manila because they holed up in the walled city and they wouldn't surrender, so that was just bombed mercilessly and they didn't ever come out until they came out either on the end of a bulldozer or buried in there.

08:00 **You actually got a chance to go to Manila while some of the fighting was?**

Oh yeah, we were there.

Okay, can you tell us about your, when you first arrived in Manila what you saw?

Well it was a mess. It had been very severely bombed and shelled and the walled city which had a cathedral in it, it dated back to the Spanish

08:30 occupation, a big Spanish fort. The cathedral had just about had it. The Houses of Parliament were in ruins. A lot of their civic buildings were in ruins but there was the shops, the traders

09:00 had all got going again very quickly. I remember buying a Parker pen there which was a very nice looking pen and I bought it and I got it back to camp and there was nothing in it, I had the pen but the nib and the inside part of it was not there. He'd taken it, let me have a write with it and everything and then he'd taken it

09:30 underneath the counter and changed it or taken out the working part.

So there were still parties of Japanese soldiers fighting?

They'd gone further south by then, by the time I got to Manila.

10:00 There were still quite a few dead people in the walled city because they couldn't get in, it was very heavily mined.

So by the time you'd gone to Manila, I take it that it was petering out, the battle?

Yeah, sure.

Did the Americans have heavy casualties in that battle?

I don't think they were too heavy, I think they

10:30 had most of the armour. There must have been casualties but no, I don't think so. There were a lot of white American prisoners and children in the old university in Manila and they were all in reasonably good shape actually. I can remember going out to there.

11:00 Apart from the usual trade in Japanese swords and caps and things there wasn't too much doing. I think they were making Japanese caps by that stage.

So by this stage you would obviously have known about the way Australian POWs [Prisoner of War] were treated.

No, no idea. In fact

11:30 one of the things, you know, the army lives on rumours, one of the rumours was that we were, instead of going to Japan we were going to go to Malaysia to try and release the POWs. Not that we would have been in the fighting end of it but that's where we were going.

Even at that stage, you weren't aware?

No.

That's surprising. I thought those areas would have been cleared,

12:00 **like Sandakan and things like that.**

No they were still well and truly occupied.

There's been considerable debate about Australians being used for mopping up operations unnecessarily which you'd be completely aware of. Having seen the after effects and some of the battles in the Philippines

- 12:30 **do you think that in retrospect that the decision was a correct one not to involve Australians in the march towards Japan?**
- I haven't really got a view about that. I think they'd have only been able at the most to contribute a division and the fact that there were several armies involved it wouldn't have been,
- 13:00 apart from the fact that they were, it wouldn't have been all that conclusive or mattered that much.
- What about personally, did you feel that the Australians should have been more substantially involved?**
- Well we were in the Philippines and we were Australians.
- But more substantial involvement on the assault on Japan?**
- Well, we didn't know at that stage. We knew we were going to Japan but we didn't know and that was because we were
- 13:30 doing work which was pretty vital to everybody but we didn't know anything about Australian troops being sent there nor do I think we had any strong feelings about it.
- Now by this time**
- 14:00 **the bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.**
- No, not by this time.
- It was a bit later?**
- Yes.
- When it did happen, how did you first get wind of it?**
- Through the radio people.
- And when the surrender came through, what was the reaction amongst you and your colleagues?**
- 14:30 Great happiness.
- Were you surprised?**
- We were surprised it happened so quickly because we had no real idea what the destruction was from the atom bombs.
- How did the rest of your, I suppose just before the war ended, how did the rest of your service in the**
- 15:00 **Philippines pan out? Can you tell us what happened?**
- Yes. This is before the bombs?
- Yes.**
- Well we were doing exactly the same work as we'd been doing in Hollandia and I was talking to Myles earlier about my father visiting Hollandia and I didn't meet him but he did
- 15:30 visit the Philippines with General Berryman and they arrived in a Piper Cub. Now I didn't know he was coming but I was reefered out of my usual work and told to drive a jeep down to a little airstrip that we had and then the plane landed and I saw who it was. So the other fella and I,
- 16:00 there were two jeeps there, we stood and we stood and the officers were all talking. I suppose they were talking for half an hour so we decided we'd have a smoke. We'd only just lit the cigarettes and they were barely up to here when all of a sudden they were there. So, very embarrassing, anyway I then drove my father into the camp, spent a couple of minutes with him and
- 16:30 off he went again.
- How long had it been since you saw your father before that?**
- Twelve months I suppose.
- Must have been a**
- 17:00 **relieving occasion?**
- Mmm. I think we were both pretty pleased to see each other.
- I understand you were also ill at one stage?**

Yes I was. I got amoebic dysentery and I was taken into the hospital in Tarlac. There was an American hospital in Tarlac, a tent hospital.

17:30 **How badly were you ill?**

Well I had amoebic dysentery which means that I had these critters that were inside me that were eating my innards, so I was passing blood most of the time so I was quite ill.

How long were you in hospital for?

One or two weeks, I can't remember.

18:00 I was fed on a diet of something like plaster of paris and eventually I was discharged.

It wasn't long after that

18:30 **August 1945?**

First bomb I think was on the 9th and the next bomb was on the 13th and the war ended on the 15th, well, officially it ended, it didn't end 'til September.

When you say it didn't end 'til, saying officially, unofficially?

The Japanese surrendered I think on the 15th August but they didn't sign the documents

19:00 and agree to the occupation and everything until 3rd September or about then.

So what took place, you said you found out through radio confirmation that the war was over?

No, firstly we found out that there was this large bomb was being let off in Japan. We didn't know where. Next we

19:30 heard from the radio people over the creek that some Japanese generals had arrived at Clark Field which was the main air field, seeking surrender terms. Then we heard they'd gone back without agreeing to any terms. Then we heard from the radio people again that another bomb had gone off and then

20:00 my next recollection is somebody running through the lines in his underpants calling out, "the war's over." So we went down, I think we all stopped working and we went down into the barrio and had a big party.

Tell us about that party, it must have been

20:30 **a pretty amazing experience?**

We drank all sorts of things that we shouldn't have drunk, I think, in retrospect. So we were in pretty bad shape. In fact, one of my friends fell into a paddy field and he would have drowned if we hadn't pulled him out. Anyway, we all got back and we had terrible hangovers and so on but it was happy. Happy times.

21:00 **Since the war ended what were the orders given by the seniors?**

Well I can't remember exactly but I do remember that we were told that we were probably going to be there for a while and that the camp would have to be smartened up and that we were going to be engaged in building a road into the camp, a proper road to cope with the

21:30 wet weather and so on. So I got a couple of friends and we went to see the CO and suggested that we ran a newspaper for the unit. Much to our surprise he agreed, said we could, so we went and we got a Gestetner machine [very early version of a photocopier] from the Americans. We got wax sheets,

22:00 paper, a jeep and there was a fellow in our unit who'd been a commercial artist so we enlisted him, then we went to work. We produced about ten copies of the paper before we came home. Some of them are in the War Memorial.

22:30 We were still doing that when we were told we were about to go home.

What happened from there on?

Well we did the paper, used to deliver our paper around and then, twice I had to sit in the railway truck

23:00 escorting Japanese down to Manila to be shipped back home and that was a rather arduous all day journey and I think it was about eight hour journey because they all had dysentery and the train had to stop all the time. But eventually we

23:30 packed up and went down to Manila. I think we were there for about two days and we got on board a liberty ship and came home.

Before you left the Philippines when the surrender actually took place how long did it take for

the Japanese soldiers who were in the hills to start filtering in?

About four or five days.

24:00 **How was that organized?**

I think there was a ranger battalion not very far away from us and I think they probably sent messages up with the local Filipinos who would have told them the war was over and they could come down. So they had to all pile their arms and

24:30 swords and all the rest of it, then we put them in these railway trucks, they were just open trucks and took them down to Manila.

Can you tell us about the condition of these Japanese?

They were emaciated. They were not in good shape at all. They all had dysentery. They'd obviously run out of medication.

25:00 Most of them had malaria. So they were not in very good shape at all.

What was the disposition of the Filipino population towards the Japanese?

Well I think that initially they were very pleased with the Japanese because they broke up a lot of the big Spanish estates and gave the land to the Filipinos but then they became

25:30 very oppressive and I think in the end although they weren't all that fond of us, we were probably marginally more favoured than the Japanese.

Why do you say that they weren't very fond of the Allies?

I don't think they liked Americans and I don't think they liked the Spanish and we were sort of lumped in with everybody.

Was there any particular reason?

26:00 Because when the Japanese invaded the Philippines it was an American colony and although I think the Americans were fairly benign colonists, the Filipinos didn't like them. They probably had all the money and all the rest of things that make people agitated.

26:30 **From your own personal experience with interacting with Filipinos can you illustrate any specific?**

Well they weren't very trustworthy for a start and as I already related, after having given us the Victory Joe sign, they'd sometimes take pot shots at us. I think they

27:00 saw us as people who'd, really all they were having was an exchange of masters. The native Filipinos, that is the ones who were not Spanish, were pretty well poverty stricken

27:30 and most of the money was with the Spanish families. A few rich Filipinos but not very many.

What was your experience like there, personal experience like there compared to New Guinea, Hollandia?

Well New Guinea was very primitive and there

28:00 was nowhere to go to speak of, so you were just around the camp. The Philippines was quite an interesting place. If you went down to Clark Fields in your jeep or something you could usually get a ride in an aeroplane somewhere round the place if you had a day off.

What did you tend to do during your spare time, as in social?

28:30 Play cards, that was about all, play volleyball, later on play football.

Any of the towns you were at, did they have bars that catered for soldiers?

They had bars. They used to do cock fights. Tarlac had big cock fights. Several of the fellows

29:00 had their own rooster, a big white rooster and they had a trainer and they took it in, we all went in to Tarlac to watch this rooster fight but it was dead within ten seconds. We all lost our money.

29:30 **These are locals who had the roosters or soldiers, you were saying?**

No, the soldiers bought this rooster, they had a trainer to train it and they were going to make a big killing in the cock fights in Tarlac and they got skinned.

How big were the crowds for these cock fights?

Oh, you'd probably get a

30:00 couple of hundred people around the ring.

Interesting experience. Okay, so you departed from the Philippines to Japan, sorry

30:30 **for Australia?**

I went to Japan for about four days, not officially, just by botting [begging] a lift with the Americans and we went into Tokyo and Tachikawa and we were amazed at the destruction in Tokyo,

31:00 by fire bombs mainly. And we met a missionary in the street, asked him where he thought we should go and he suggested we went to Nikko which was up in the shrine country. So we went to the central railway station, they had the trains running again by then and we went off to

31:30 Nikko. To my astonishment, when the train came in the station master emptied all the Japanese out of the carriage and made it available for us. That was the most amazing thing to me. Nobody showed any signs of dislike or hatred or anything, the war was over and

32:00 they were going to get on with life, I think.

Did the Japanese look dispirited though?

Well it was a very dispirited place to be, there were limbless veterans begging and, oh yes, it was a down time for the Japanese, no doubt about that

32:30 but the Americans hadn't really arrived in force at that stage.

So you were one of the first elements of the soldiers that were going in.

Yeah.

Were you advised on any dangers or anything like that?

No.

What were you expecting to see before you left?

33:00 I don't really quite know. I don't think it was my idea anyway in the first place but I was just sort of swept up with the idea. I don't know what we were expecting except that I thought there'd be some animosity. There might have been animosity but it wasn't displayed.

Did you feel sympathy for the Japanese

33:30 **after what you'd seen, once you came to Tokyo?**

Well I must say that I felt rather shocked at the devastation and I heard some stories that made me certainly feel sorry for the civilians that had been badly burnt by fire bombs and so on.

34:00 And Hiroshima, we weren't allowed to go right into Hiroshima because of the danger of the aftermath of the atom bomb but we could see that it was absolutely flat. Hard to know what one's emotions were, it's a long while ago.

When you first heard of the atomic bomb blast over Hiroshima

34:30 Well we didn't know it was an atomic bomb, we just heard it was a big bomb. I don't think any of us had any comprehension of how big it was.

Once you saw the blast and you were starting to develop an idea by that time did you have any idea or you still didn't know exactly what it was?

When we saw the blast?

You said you went to Hiroshima but you didn't go into the city, you would have seen the

Oh yeah, it was obviously

35:00 and by then we knew a bit more about it, we knew it was an atom bomb and it was, I forget how many thousand tons of TNT [trinitrotoluene - explosive] , or equivalent of.

Was it difficult to comprehend at the time?

I suppose so, very hard to comprehend that such an explosion could have taken place.

35:30 People didn't know too much about it. We didn't see pictures of mushroom clouds and things for a long while.

What other places did you have a chance to visit while you were in Japan for that week?

Only we went up to Nikko which is very beautiful. Stayed at a hotel called the Kanaya Hotel

36:00 and the only other people that were there was the Swiss Consul and his family and we met Mr Kanaya who came down, heard our voices. He spoke perfect English, he was a Cambridge graduate so he showed us around, we had a lot of fun. He had a Rolls Royce in the basement of his hotel, tinkered round the back.

Was Nikko affected

36:30 **by the war in any way?**

No. Had a very famous bridge there and lots of shrines and beautiful gardens. It's a very attractive place if you ever go there. It's a bit of a mixture. The Japanese are a bit inclined to mix the

37:00 beauty with the banal.

At that stage there would have been some demobilization taking place with the Japanese.

I don't know what was going on there. I mean there were obviously people in uniform walking around the streets and there were lots of,

37:30 as I said earlier, limbless veterans sitting around and begging. Just generally a state of confusion and depression I guess. They already had massage parlours and brothels operating.

That quickly?

Mmm.

38:00 **It sounds incredible that people can change their views, or their behaviour within such a short period of time after the war, did you find it difficult to understand the Japanese at that time?**

I was surprised rather than found it difficult to understand. Surprised that they didn't seem to feel worse

38:30 about us than they did.

Generally speaking I suppose there was a tendency to have a one dimensional view towards the Japanese, because of the lack of interaction between the countries. What I'm curious is, when you went to Japan apart from your surprise at their lack of animosity, what were the other things that came across to you

39:00 **that you previously didn't know about them?**

I suppose as most people are, I was taken by the fact that they're extremely industrious. I also realized how many of their houses had been paper houses because the fire bombs had just wiped out huge areas. The only buildings of any substance that were

39:30 standing were the old government buildings which were all designed on United Kingdom buildings, civil service buildings. The Tokyo Eki, the central railway station was virtually undisturbed. The Emperor's Palace was undisturbed.

40:00 But otherwise, I don't know that I could take it much further than that.

Okay, we'll stop the tape now.

Tape 7

00:32 **I'd just like to go back a bit to the magazine, the paper you were doing, the Union Jackup. What did it cover, what were you reporting in that?**

It covered trips that people were making after the war, round the Philippines, to Japan. Covered news from home, covered race results from home and football scores,

01:00 all those sort of things and a bit of commentary. We had an editorial. Shortly after the war a lot of alcohol arrived for the officers but nothing for the troops so we had a bit of an editorial on that and we got into trouble over that. We might have been in trouble but the officers were down in the lines offering drinks

01:30 the very next night so.

This was distributed to who?

To everybody in the camp and to the radio operators in the other two camps. We had a jeep and we used to drive around.

Just by hand and handing them out for free?

Yeah.

And this was all sanctioned by the army was it?

Mmm.

When you did get into trouble,

02:00 **what course did that take?**

We were paraded before, I'm not sure whether the big CO, we had a CO at San Miguel and we had a CO who was in charge of all Central Bureau. Sometimes he was up at San Miguel, sometimes he wasn't. I think we were ordered to parade to whichever one it was and we were told that if we did anything like that again, that'd be the end of our newspaper.

02:30 **Did you feel that was a type of censorship?**

I'm sure it was, yeah. I mean we were half expecting it really. Just seeing how far we could go.

Did a publication like that help morale in any way?

I think people always seemed to be pleased to get it. Because you didn't get very much news from home, you couldn't ring home or anything.

03:00 Pleased to get snippets of news. We had a professional artist in the unit and he used to do cartoons and things. He designed the letterhead.

So how many people were involved, including the cartoonist?

The three of us.

03:30 **And the names were yourself and?**

A guy called Mick Casey who came from Sydney. Peter Elkon who became the Vice Chancellor of Armidale University [University of New England] and was professor of English there before and he was the son of Professor Elkon the famous anthropologist.

04:00 **Where did you get the information from that you put in?**

Well by that stage I'd scrounged a radio so we could listen to Australia, get news and so on or else we'd go over to the radio groups and ask them what was happening.

04:30 **And you were writing articles yourself?**

Yeah. Used to write articles and poetry and all sorts of things.

When you were writing the articles and the poetry, your father wanted to be a writer, did it seem in the blood in a way?

I don't think I ever wanted to be one but I

05:00 do enjoy writing. I haven't ever tried anything serious but short stories and things like that.

How long did the paper last?

I think there were about ten editions. We used to bring it out every week so it was probably from the end of the war until we came home.

Were you doing reports on the end of the war and the bomb and so on as well?

05:30 We did one on Hiroshima. I'm pretty sure we did one on Tokyo and the damage there. Either Casey or Elkon had been there pretty early and there were one or two other places of interest. We were at Baguio during, when the fighting was still on. Baguio was the summer capital in Luzon

06:00 and I think somebody did an article on that. But I think people were more interested in getting race results and football results.

Is that possibly because of betting and so on?

Yeah, there would have been a bit of that I suppose. Although, as I was telling Sergio,

06:30 some of the boys did have a fighting cock which they backed heavily at the cock fights in Tarlac and got done like a dinner, so there was a fair bit of betting on that.

The report you did on Tokyo, the bombing of Tokyo, what was that covering?

It'd be just covering the individual's experience, who he'd met, who he talked to.

07:00 I think we nearly all met a missionary who hadn't been interned who was able to give first hand accounts of things. Once you got out of Tokyo, out of the bombed area, it was very interesting, even for quite a while after the war. Tokyo was a very sophisticated city but once you got to the edge of the city

they were goat tracks,

07:30 no highways. So you could get into some quite interesting places not very far out of Tokyo.

When you first were reporting and so on on the bombing of Tokyo, what did you think Japan had gone through?

08:00 Well it was pretty obvious that Tokyo had had a horrific hammering. It was flat for miles. As I said earlier the only buildings that had survived were the old government brick buildings and the railway station, the main central railway station. So one benefit of course the Japanese got was when they rebuilt Tokyo, they

08:30 had a standing start as it were. But there was a tremendous amount of suffering undoubtedly from the fire bombing which wasn't high explosive bombs, it's just the fire bombs used to rain down on these timber paper houses and the draft would be created and they'd go like a bush fire through whole suburbs.

09:00 **When you see this and know this, did it make you think that Japan wasn't that powerful after all and surprise you how on top we really were?**

I didn't think it'd be easy to occupy Japan unless it was by consent. I think the Japanese must have realized

09:30 that they'd lost the war a long while before they surrendered but they weren't going to surrender. I think they were still hoping to negotiate a peace which would allow them to keep Manchuria and oil fields in Indonesia and all that sort of thing. I think they still hoped in their heart of hearts that that was the way it was all going to pan out.

Do you know if after the war

10:00 **finished there were as we'd call them now insurgents. Not a general uprising but were there little groups that made trouble?**

Not that I'm aware of. It's a very disciplined society. It's not nearly as disciplined as it was. In fact when I first started going there on business they used to have a saying that,

10:30 "The only things that are stronger in Japan after the war, apres [?] as they used to call it are women and silk stockings."

Were you surprised by the lack of resistance in the occupation?

I was surprised that, yes, and almost the welcoming situation.

11:00 Not quite welcoming but for instance I was telling Sergio that when this missionary advised us to go to Nikko we went to the station and when the train pulled in, the station master emptied a whole carriage for us. Hard to explain. Certainly when we got to meet Mr Konoya at Nikko who was the Cambridge graduate,

11:30 he was very critical of the war and the fact they'd ruined his business and he blamed the military and so on. So, hard to say, certainly in my early days in Japan where after the war

12:00 the elderly Japanese were still very reserved and almost superior in dealing with anybody that they thought mightn't be their equal. And in society in Japan you bow when you meet but the convention is that the most junior person stays down longer than the other person.

12:30 So you quite often in a big company, I did a lot of work for Mitsubishi at one stage, you'd see fellas who hadn't seen each other for a while and they'd be trying each other out to see who was the most senior and they were very, very hard on their women. I remember being in a lift one day in a building

13:00 and everyone got out and at the back of the lift was a tiny lady with an electric typewriter that was almost bigger than she was and nobody was going to help her.

Have you got other examples like that of how they treated the women there?

Well they never, most of them, as I subsequently found out, not too early because most of my friends, the people I dealt with were not the very top bracket,

13:30 they mostly had girlfriends in bars and they very seldom took their wives anywhere. In fact it was very rare. Even the very senior people would even bring their wives to a dinner or something. If I had my wife with me they would, maybe, or else she wouldn't be invited.

14:00 **We've covered everywhere else the brothels and so on, what were the brothels in Tokyo?**

I didn't ever go in to any but they seemed to be doing a roaring trade. The first sign I saw leaving Tachikawa military airport was 'Cat House for the GIs' and there was certainly VD clinics set up everywhere and there was a fair amount of activity.

14:30 **Why did you choose not to go into one?**

I think probably the movies that I had seen in the early days had had a profound effect on me.

Could you get massages also in Tokyo?

Oh yes, you could. I did go into one of those I think. I just remember a fella in the next cubicle calling out, "More soap."

15:00 **Those little treats like the massages, does it relieve a bit of the stress of war?**

No, I mean, I tried to explain to this woman in my halting Japanese that I didn't want her jumping on my back but of course that's exactly what she did. My back's never been the same.

Really? It's never been the same?

15:30 Yeah. She did a jump.

I think there's grounds for litigation there.

Another fascinating aspect of their society is they have these very sacred shrines and in the middle of it fellas'll be selling balloons. It's very strange. Even in their war shrine

16:00 which is occasionally in the news because people go there and visitors go there. It'd be people carrying on business and so on.

Do you think when they lost the war, they lost a bit of respect for those shrines and so on?

They might have even gained a bit I think. Shinto

16:30 is really a religion that not everybody has but most people have a bit of it. So there are Shinto shrines and Shinto priests and so on but people don't necessarily go there all the time. There are quite a few Christians in Japan, many more than I thought there'd be. They're usually not

17:00 completely Christian. They might have one Christian name and they'll have a bit each way, you know. The ancestor worship is still pretty strong and you'll meet occasional people who still think they're samurai.

17:30 **Did the Japanese after the war look like a defeated race or a scared race or fearful race?**

They looked like a resigned race to me. They realized they had a long way to go back up again but they got a lot of, the Americans poured in a lot of new plant and so on. This is after the war I'm talking about now but I remember

18:00 one of the first times I went there I went to a textile plant. The employees were, with one or two exceptions, they were all women, young women and they were recruited in the country and they were brought to the factory and they lived in dormitories and they didn't go out and they were paid ten pounds sterling a month. So that's the way

18:30 they got back on top.

You also went to Okinawa, can you tell us about that?

Of course Okinawa's got a very interesting history as you'll no doubt know, it's been Chinese and then Japanese and so on. There's still a fairly mixed brew there now. I didn't do very much there, we just landed and as I said I was

19:00 smothered in presents and kissed by a couple of old ladies and I wondered what on earth it was all about and then I suddenly realized they thought I was a POW, so I snuck around the back and gave them all the presents back again.

How could they make that mistake at that time?

Well I'd had amoebic dysentery so I only weighed about a bit under ten stone I think

19:30 so I was pretty light. And having been taking Atebrin for quite a while, pretty sallow as well.

It also changed you to yellow didn't it?

Sallow, yeah. There were very few Australians about anyway you see so when they saw

20:00 an Australian hat, I suppose they assumed that if any Australian was up there, he'd have to be a prisoner.

On your travels to Japan did you enjoy your time there?

Sometimes. Sometimes I didn't. I had some very funny times there. Once I got to understand them a bit better. But,

- 20:30 I suppose I can tell you this story. I was doing some work for Mitsubishi, back in the early sixties and I was taken to a very expensive geisha house which was basically a house of entertainment and a restaurant and so on and pretty painful because you've got to sit on the floor and so on, not
- 21:00 too good for gaijin [non Japanese person] . They passed around a songster which was all in Japanese characters and the mama san strummed away on their instruments and they all sung these weird Japanese whining songs. When it came to my turn they all went, "Tie me kangaroo down" and so on. I thought, "No, I'll try something different" so
- 21:30 I sang them a bit from the Mikado which goes "Miyasama, miyasama dadada" and to my astonishment they all gripped their sides and rolled on the floor laughing. Then they brought everybody out from the kitchen and the dancing girls and they asked me to sing it again and everybody was absolutely beside themselves. So next day I go back to work
- 22:00 and that evening I was invited to a cocktail party at the, I think it might have been the Hotel New Japan, doesn't matter, and it was one of the big Japanese parties where they all wear chrysanthemums and so on. I'd only really just arrived when Mr Wokabayashi who was meant to be looking after me said, "Roger san, come over here" and he had a group of about twenty five
- 22:30 gentlemen in the corner and he said, "Please sing Miyasama song." So I launched into it again and it was an uproarious success. So I had to keep a straight face and I walked away. Next morning I said to Mr Woka, "Woka, I've sung this song before but never have I had such a reception." And he said, "Ah so. Roger san you miyasama very famous Japanese redi [Japanese for lady] have genital organ
- 23:00 of male horse." So there we are.

Back to the war. From Okinawa

23:30 **why were you there?**

I was only there on the way back to Japan and you had to go by the power of the thumb you see so you went out to the local military airport and hung around until you found a fella who was going somewhere and off you'd go. Some of them went to China. You could always hop on a plane and go. Then we got back to

- 24:00 the Philippines, to Clark Field and I think from memory I'd left our jeep there, so we drove back to camp and got on with our publishing.

One thing with Tokyo and Japan in general, how big was the presence of Allied Forces there?

Very few when I was there

- 24:30 but later on very big. The Australians for instance were all at Kobe and were all in that area except when they were on leave or something. The Americans had a big naval presence in Tokyo Bay. When I was there there were a lot of American vessels in Tokyo Bay.

- 25:00 I don't know, MacArthur of course had his headquarters in the Mitsui Building in Tokyo and he used to get on a white horse every day and ride through the city.

Did you see that yourself?

No I didn't. He wasn't there when I was there.

If the Japanese were so welcoming in a way, what was the

25:30 **need for all these troops to be over there?**

Well they were just occupying the country I think, to make sure nobody else occupied it. The Russians had a long standing feud, in fact they did occupy several islands to the north which the Japanese are still trying to get back. So that'll be one of the reasons and of course they still had a huge army,

- 26:00 disarmed but still huge.

What did they do with that army?

They just drifted back into civilian life. There were lots of limbless soldiers around, begging and so on. Pretty obvious that they'd had a hard time but I would think the reason that the occupation

- 26:30 took place was to make sure that it was a) orderly and that there wasn't some kind of an uprising and b) to stop the Russians from coming in or the Chinese.

At this stage when you were coming back did you think of continuing your military career?

No, I was no soldier. I was happy enough to be doing, to be there but

- 27:00 I had no ambitions about staying on. I could have gone off to Japan straight away with the occupation forces but I applied for and eventually got a discharge.

On what grounds?

Well I'd registered, I'd enrolled in Melbourne University before I joined the army. I was matriculated so I enrolled. I think somebody

27:30 told me it was a good thing to do and I did. So it definitely paid off.

In Japan at the time your work was still the same work you were doing before?

I didn't do any work in Japan I was just there because nobody knew where I was, I think.

28:00 **Was that the case for a lot of military up there, didn't have work?**

Well, if you had a couple of days leave nobody worried too much, you just went down to Clark Field and found out where aeroplanes were going and if they had a bit of room you'd hop on one.

It must have been, did you see troops who had been involved in other wars

28:30 **such as New Guinea and so on while you were there in Japan?**

Nobody else was there. No Australians. There were a few sailors out in the bay but that was about all.

What about Americans from other wars had been there?

There were a few American servicemen there because by that stage the air force had occupied most of the main airports,

29:00 military airports at any rate in Japan.

Did they seem relieved compared to the other battles they had gone through or anything like that, do you know?

Well there was no battle in Japan as such.

No but, because a lot of these people who were in Japan had fought in other battles around the world and found themselves there at the end, do you know?

I don't think I really talked to many Americans there. The only American I talked to

29:30 at length was this missionary that I met in the street. He told us about the bombing and all the rest of it. We, the only time that we really sort of socialized with the Americans was in Brisbane,

30:00 where we had quite a few at Central Bureau and then when the war ended they established a wet canteen at San Miguel and we used to mix with the Americans there.

And how did they seem to you, those Americans?

We were all in the same boat. Then the WACs [Women's Army Corps] arrived and there was a fair bit of action

30:30 after that.

As there would be. Can you tell us any stories about what they got up to?

The WACs? Well the fundamental thing they got up to was what you'd expect but one of our fellows married one. I think I showed you a picture of it over there, the wedding. You know, we used to

31:00 chat up the girls. There were occasional, when they started producing alcohol at the San Miguel refinery you could buy a gallon of drinking alcohol for about four pesos and that was enough to make a division drunk. That was really a hundred per cent

31:30 proof alcohol. They used to make cocktails you know for the girls and so on and that used to cause a bit of. I can still remember one party, there was always a fellow who was in charge of mixing, they used to put lemon essence, lemon powder or something and make what they called an alky cocktail. The first lot would be mixed very carefully and it wouldn't be too strong but then I can

32:00 remember late at night they'd be going, "No, need a bit more in there," tip it in. So of course there were people. I'm ashamed to say, there was a lot of rain on one particular day and night and to get across to our tent lines there was a creek and it was flooding and there was a log across the creek so I started to cross on the log and of course I fell in

32:30 and I couldn't get out. I finished the night hanging on to the log until the water went down.

What was it like once you returned home after your big adventure?

Well, I'll tell you. The boat, Francis N. Blanchet which was the liberty ship we were on pulled in

33:00 to the wharf at Hamilton and an officer on the wharf said, "Is there a Signalman Rogers on board?" and somebody said, "Yes," and Signalman Rogers was taken to the rail and, "Signalman Rogers you're under

order to leave the ship immediately." So I grabbed my migrant bundle and rifle and everything and I came over the side and they put a

33:30 special gang plank up. And it turned out that my father had heard that I was coming home and he'd teed up a leave pass for me and his friend General Berryman was going south in an army aeroplane and I was to get on that. Well I was late and General Berryman was really very upset

34:00 and his batman and I were there. All we had on was shirt and trousers and a window blew out of the plane and we nearly froze to death. We had to go to Sydney instead of to Melbourne. So I rang some friends and asked if they could give me a bed for a night which they agreed to do and then I got malaria. So I had malaria there.

34:30 Anyway I got home and of course my mother was very pleased to see me and I'd only been there about a week when I got the call up to go to Japan, so I didn't have very much time. So I got myself, I found out who was in charge of this kind of thing and I went and got myself paraded and they said they'd let me know and

35:00 three days later they said, "Report to Royal Park and you'll be discharged." So that's what happened and then I had a month or two to wait until university started. I got a job, helping somebody or other.

What was your mother's emotions when she saw you returned?

Well she was naturally very pleased. And it was all written up in Truth,

35:30 drama, mystery, soldier's air dash. Somebody on the wharf apparently told a reporter that my mother was ill and so the Truth immediately rang my mother and of course she denied illness so it was all a bit of a mess. Actually it was a marvelous trip down the Brisbane river, all the housewives waving their tablecloths and things at us and we were all waving back, a great experience.

36:00 **Was it for yourself and others, did you see a good welcome back for the troops that returned?**

Yes. I think everybody was delighted to be home. Some of them who were off to Japan were equally excited about it. I think most of them did enjoy it. I wanted to get on with my course but.

Did the guys going to Japan think it

36:30 **was just a holiday?**

Well you're still in the army and the army's never a holiday, there was a fair amount of spit and polish. The occupation forces had to always be beautifully turned out and behave themselves and a lot of them got into trouble up there, a lot of them got into the black market and in fact I remember when I first started to go up there, there were a group of Australians who used to meet at a bar

37:00 and they'd all been in the occupation forces and stayed on, because they were in the black market or something. They mostly married Japanese. Some of them still had a wife back in Australia and weren't too keen to go home.

When you yourself returned was there a ticker tape parade that you took part or family gathering?

No. I remember I sort of went around to see aunts and people.

37:30 I think there might have been a party somewhere or other. I was very popular because I had a lot of American cigarettes. Cigarettes were still pretty hard to come by.

Did you have a difficult war?

No, not terribly. There were one or two difficult times but I mean, I never felt I was in danger from the enemy.

38:00 Except when the submarine was thought likely to torpedo the Van Swol.

Do you think you were lucky in that regard compared to others?

Oh yes, I was. I mean although I was one of the very few people in my recruit training battalion who actually had lengthy service overseas

38:30 so that was, I mean at the time probably wasn't all that important but it's been very important since.

How so?

Well you get a gold card if you've been overseas for a certain amount of time and I got repat [repatriation] benefits at the university so it was all as it turned out, I had no idea it was going

39:00 to happen then.

Just a quick thing on the plane that blew the window out, was that a frightening experience?

Well it was frightening in that it was pressurized and the pressure disappeared and we were up at

fourteen thousand feet which is not very high these days but it was extremely cold, the weather wasn't good so the plane was in a bit of trouble

39:30 but once we got down we were okay. Fortunately we were close enough to Mascot.

When was the first time you saw your father when you returned?

He would have come home probably not long after I did. No, that's not true, when I got off the boat

40:00 he was there. Not on the wharf but nearby. He said hello then I went off to come home.

Was it a good meeting up?

Oh yeah, we were always good friends, right through our lives.

Do you think in a way you became closer because you both had war time experience now?

I don't know. I think

40:30 we were probably closer as he got older. But I think in a way he was pleased that I'd been to the war but I don't think it made much difference to our relationship.

Why was he pleased?

Well I think he was pleased

41:00 that I'd heard the bugle, or something like that, hard to say. I don't think he was distressed by it. I think he was probably pleased that I did rather than I didn't.

Okay, that's another tape.

Tape 8

00:32 **You came back home and you met your family, how did you find settling down after the war?**

It took me a little while. I had a friend who had a property up in New South Wales and to keep myself out of the pubs and so on I went up and worked for him as a jackaroo

01:00 until the university was ready to start.

Which was when?

I started in early March 1946.

That's straight after the war pretty much.

Yep. I don't think I was terribly unsettled. I felt a bit older than I probably was.

01:30 **You had a very interesting experience because the infantry, well people who were affiliated with units tended to have more of a post war reunions and things like that, you didn't have that.**

No we had a last thing I did on discharge was to sign a declaration

02:00 saying that I wouldn't associate with anybody that I'd been with in the army, or talk about what I'd done in the army or attend any kind of meeting in relation to the work for thirty years. So we didn't have a reunion for thirty years.

That's amazing. Sounds a bit harsh. Do you think it was justified though?

I really don't know.

02:30 Seemed a bit crazy to me.

Was the information you came across to your knowledge to what you'd seen was it that secret that these restrictions were necessary?

Well it might have been of interest to some people. It didn't strike me as being all that secret but obviously somebody thought it was.

03:00 **Did you make any good friendship in the war with any of the soldiers?**

Yeah well I've got the fellow who became the Vice Chancellor of Armidale University in New South Wales, I saw a low of. Frank Hughes I still see a lot of and he and I are organizing the writing of the unit history but apart from that I'd have

03:30 to say most of them are dead. We did have a reunion amongst a few very close friends, about eight of us

in Sydney about ten years ago and there are only two of us who are still alive.

What was it like catching up with your?

Oh, a lot of fun. You only remember the good things.

04:00 We had a big party and everybody brought their wives. We had a good time. I think some of us then marched on Anzac Day which was the next day.

04:30 **Can you tell us about the job you got involved in when you were at university, what sort of tasks were you doing when you first were involved?**

I had various jobs. I had a job for two years at the Victoria Barracks

05:00 sending out memorial scrolls to the families of people who had been killed in the war. Which meant investigating a lot of files including the people who were torpedoed, POWs who were torpedoed on Japanese boats and all of that sort of thing. What else did I do? I had a job as a clerk in a law office in Sydney

05:30 for one year. It might have been two years, then I had a job in an insurance company one year as a clerk doing filing and all that sort of thing.

And what happened after that?

06:00 I graduated and I went to do my articles. Had to pay to do my articles and they paid it back at a pound a week. I was still drawing my repatriation allowance then, as a loan, like your HECS [Higher Education Contribution Scheme] loan

06:30 and then I stayed with that firm for about a year and then I wasn't very happy and then I think I told you how I went to the tennis tournament in the country. And I met this old chap who was having a hard time of it, he was an ex-serviceman from the First World War. I offered to go and help him and he was very pleased.

07:00 So I went to live up in the country and I had two friends. We bought a house between us, we had a housekeeper and we had a pretty wild time one way and another. I stayed there, I got married towards the end of the time, we had a child and then the place fell in a heap and I came back to town.

07:30 Then I worked as a solicitor for another firm for thirty odd years I suppose and then that firm merged with my original firm and then I started to become a company director. So for the last twenty odd years of my professional life

08:00 I didn't do very much legal work, I was mainly a company director.

And what happened after that, you had a fairly extensive?

I'm still alive, that's what happened after that.

You also became Chancellor of Monash University?

Yes I did. To this day I've no idea

08:30 how that happened. The vice chancellor came to see me, he'd been the same vice chancellor Myles had, Mal Logan and he asked me would I like to be the Chancellor of Monash University. And I said, "Well, frankly I've never thought of it," and he said, "You don't have to make up your mind right now," and I said, "Well I'll think about it."

09:00 And he rang me about two days later and said, "Have you made up your mind?" And I said, "No, I'll let you know tomorrow." So I talked it over with Jan. I didn't know quite what I was letting myself in for but I did. I did that for seven years amongst other things.

You obviously liked it then?

I liked some of it. I found that academic people

09:30 are a bit tricky.

In what sense?

Well they're a bit careless with the truth at times and they're very tribal. I had a very big council, forty two people in the council and it was very hard to control because they'd all come from various campuses which had been merged in to

10:00 Monash and they were very parochial in relation to their interests. They were not really interested in the university proper but mainly their constituents and where they'd come from. But we managed, before I left I managed to reduce the number to twenty one and I learnt a lot

10:30 about life and about academics.

Is there any correlation between lawyers and academics?

Well a lot of academics have started life as lawyers. I think that because of such an emphasis on research these days

11:00 that teaching has suffered a lot. That would be an observation that I've made. Academics have got to keep publishing otherwise they never get promotion so publishing takes a lot of time and work. Then of course they only have to work four days a week, they can have a day to pursue other matters and a lot of them have

11:30 other jobs as well. So a rather confused scene I suppose. A lot of very great people and I enjoyed meeting other chancellors. I enjoyed going to university conferences. We had a chancellor's committee which used to meet every three months.

12:00 And I did two terms of three years plus another year when I was getting the council re-organised.

Sounds like a very interesting appointment. Now regarding the war and your post-war life, was there anything that, you said you used

12:30 **to talk about the good times with your friends, obviously there were also bad times, were there any images of the war or experiences that were particularly unpleasant to you?**

Yeah I think, well seeing the Japanese being buried on mass was not a very pleasant experience.

13:00 Seeing occasional violence, not a great deal of violence but occasional violence involving fighting. I think

13:30 finding out about a few things very late in the war. Now that you've come to remind me, I think we did discover that the Japanese had cleaned out the POW camp at Sandakan. And I think we did, I did

14:00 get a considerable shock when I saw the destruction in Tokyo and Hiroshima and in Manila for that matter. There were a lot of unpleasant things

14:30 the Filipinos used to bury their dead in the walls of the churches. Churches were built so that they had a cavity a bit like they put ashes in at the crematorium but this was for the whole body and when churches were blown up as they were during the fighting there were some, mainly Americans, I don't think I saw any Australians

15:00 that used to get in amongst the coffins and look for gold teeth.

Americans?

Yeah. I didn't really like that. Because the Filipinos used to put a lot of wealth in their teeth, it was very important to have at least one solid gold tooth.

15:30 But apart from that.

What general observations have you made about war from your own experience?

I don't think war is a good thing.

Do you think

16:00 **that it can be stopped?**

Very difficult. I was very much against the invasion of Iraq because it turned out exactly as I thought it would because I've spent a lot of time in the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia and other places and I know what they're like. So

16:30 I don't think it's possible to avoid it. You can probably limit it by being aware and being ready rather than pretending it isn't going to happen.

How did the war change you as a person, how did it impact on you?

It made me feel a lot older I think. I had a whole heap of experiences that I wouldn't otherwise have had.

17:00 I met a whole lot of different strata of society that I probably would never have been close to.

What do you mean by that?

I mean, for instance, these fellows from the pushes in Fitzroy. I would probably not have encountered and I met a lot of

17:30 people that I would have probably never encountered and whose company I enjoyed, for instance I think just a year after the war, a fellow who was a driver in our unit called out to me on Christmas Eve in Collins Street. And he was driving a brewery wagon with horses and barrels of beer and he called out, "Hey Rog" and I looked up and "G'day Frank," he said, "Come and sit up here,"

18:00 and I went for a ride up the road with him. They're the sort of experiences. I'm sure I'm a better and more tolerant person as a result of having been in the army.

You seem to have absorbed a lot, your environment, that you thought about it.

Oh yes, I

18:30 wouldn't say that I think about it all that often now. I've started reading a lot about the war. I don't know what drove me to it, probably my sister's book and other books so I want to know more about it. I think once you've

19:00 been in the army during a war you sort of have a rapport with other people who've had a similar experience, although a lot of people, I don't feel I have a great deal in common with a lot of the people who were officers.

Why's that?

Well because they had a different experience. They had messes and people to wait on them and all that sort of thing.

19:30 I tended to be a bit agin the government I suppose. Identifying with the boys, so called.

So would you say that your memories of the war are the strongest

20:00 **memories you have?**

No, not necessarily. I have a lot of strong memories. There are segments of my service that I can't remember at all but there are others that I remember quite vividly.

Is that because of, you're speaking in recent times that you can't remember?

I think that there are certain things that you

20:30 recall from time to time, there are other things that you don't recall from time to time and they drift out of your memory but if I see somebody that I knew during the war I'm likely to remember a lot of things. There was one of the chaps in our unit with whom I was very close became a Rhodes Scholar and then

21:00 he was in the embassy in Beijing and then he became the Ambassador to Taiwan and he's unfortunately just had a stroke and I'll never talk to him again but he and I used to recall all sorts of things, we'd ring each other up and have a talk.

Did you dream about the war?

I suppose I must of but

21:30 not much. I don't dream very much anyway. Certainly my dreams are not populated by the war at the moment.

When you did was there anything specific that you did dream about?

I used to dream I was going to go over the waterfall quite a bit but I don't any longer.

22:00 **Over the water fall?**

Must have been something I told Myles, I was up in the Star Mountains in the back of Hollandia looking for people and on the way back I slipped in the rapids at the top of a waterfall. And I took off and I fortunately had my rifle not in my hand but slung and it jammed in between two rocks

22:30 and there I stayed for some considerable time. And I couldn't get out and fortunately I was rescued the next day but I wasn't very far from the edge of the waterfall and that would have been the end of me. I did dream about that for a while.

23:00 **Certainly had some unusual experiences. What about the people you came across. You did speak about say for instance the people in your bunk, sturdy soldiers from different class backgrounds which would have been a fascinating experience but in the Celebes, in Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Japan,**

23:30 **just culturally speaking what did you gather from that, did it impact on you in any way?**

Well New Guinea impacted on me because it rained so much and we were wet a lot of the time. In the Philippines we had a typhoon while I was there and our tents were blown away. We were out somewhere or other and somebody said, "I wonder how the tent's getting on" and

24:00 there it was, it went over the top. Ropes hanging down and on the wind. I formed views about the Filipinos, I didn't think they were a very likeable bunch of people but I didn't blame them for that. Obviously we were just another lot of occupiers as far as they were concerned. The New Guinea natives

- 24:30 that I had anything to do with were friendly. I had no idea how they'd ever be able to look after themselves because they were forever fighting amongst themselves. I don't think I came away, I went back to New Guinea on business quite a bit after the war
- 25:00 and I just despaired of them. They've got a university for instance in Lae and people graduate from that at about the equivalent of our year nine at school. That's about the level they get to and they're graduates from the university. So, very different.
- 25:30 The only people, it's a bit like the Aborigines, the only people who take that extra step they need to take are usually people with, half caste people or quarter caste people, so I don't know what the answer to it is, must be anthropological I think. But I have organized aboriginal scholarships
- 26:00 at Monash and I meet the people who are in them every now and then, but they're basically white people. They've got blue eyes and got some aboriginal blood in them I suppose. However, I think education's the only answer and in a country like the Philippines
- 26:30 where you've got a very powerful Catholic church and the wealth all in very few hands, it's hard to see where the improvement's going to come from.
- 27:00 **Have you seen many of the war films after the war that have come out?**
- Well I saw a lot of film of the fighting on the Kokoda Trail, fighting in the
- 27:30 Middle East, saw some film of fighting in the Philippines when I was there, although we didn't have movies until after the war. I've seen you know, a few of the English and Hollywood films.
- What did you think of some of the films, like Saving Private Ryan, The Thin Red Line?**
- Well I've got the book of The
- 28:00 Thin Red Line so I was quite interested to see that. Would you believe it was banned in Victoria when it first came out.
- The book or the film?**
- The book. I think I'm very glad I wasn't in one of those infantry or marine groups that did those things.
- 28:30 There were times when we were pretty wet and muddy and so on but not coping with fire as well. They're moving and to some extent they're entertaining I suppose but they don't trigger anything else in me.
- 29:00 **What did you think of Thin Red Line particularly, that was a very long film, also incredibly emotional, philosophical?**
- Guadalcanal, Bougainville.
- Yeah, it was quite an unusual film.**
- Quite a few of my friends served in Bougainville. One particularly close friend served in an independent company there and it was
- 29:30 terrible country to fight in and the Japanese were very tough fighters. Somehow or other they managed to get supplies to them, landed supplies for them so they didn't run out of ammunition or anything like that. They were pretty tough. The jungle's not a very nice place to live for any length of time.
- 30:00 Even in Hollandia. Although there were no, or very few mosquitoes because it was high up, they were still rather unpleasant and there were lots of critters and big bugs and rain and all that sort of stuff. Nowhere
- 30:30 that you'd want to go for pleasure.
- No massage parlours. What about the places you went to. Did you notice the physical beauty?**
- Well, I'd have to say
- 31:00 the short answer to that is there was no physical beauty to notice really. The trip from Hamilton up to Hollandia we passed some very interesting places through the Straits of Samurai and so on and Cape York, right close up to Cape York because we were inside the reef to keep away from submarines and I suppose
- 31:30 it was reasonably attractive. Baguio in the Philippines could have been very attractive but it had all been blown up and there was fighting still going on there when we were there. Apart from that I don't remember any physical beauty. San Miguel
- 32:00 was flat as a nightman's hat, full of mosquitoes and not very nice at all. Might have been much nicer when it was all developed as it was meant to be developed but no.

Did you think that the Second World War was a just war?

32:30 I think so. I don't know that all aspects of it were but I think it was.

In what way do you think?

I think that in the end at least in Europe something had to be done as far as Hitler and Mussolini was concerned and the Japanese became

33:00 extremely ambitious to have an empire and to give themselves access to raw materials that they didn't have. There are very few raw materials in Japan. And I think they behaved in a pretty shocking fashion in doing what they did, so we really didn't have much alternative as far as the Japanese were concerned because they were

33:30 bringing the war to us.

Do you think it was a case of one empire replacing another, that all of Asia was basically imperial?

Well certainly there was a Portuguese empire, there was a Dutch empire, there was the British empire and then the Japanese moved into most of those empires. They didn't quite get into India but they got pretty close, they got into Burma.

34:00 That's one way of looking at it. They didn't seem to want to stop there. If you regard Australia and New Guinea as being part of the empire, although New Guinea was basically German. I suppose they were wanting to

34:30 replace an empire but I don't think they were doing it for any altruistic reason. They certainly didn't fight in a very altruistic way. I think their treatment of prisoners was particularly harsh.

If you were to compare the Germans and

35:00 **the Japanese, who would you say was worse?**

I couldn't pick a winner in a two horse race there. A lot of the Germans like a lot of the Japanese were very decent people. It depends who's running the show.

But in terms of actions?

Well I think it's easier for a person of European extraction

35:30 to relate to a German than it is to relate to a Japanese. Just as your Portuguese background enables you to...

No Portuguese background I'm afraid.

How did you get the name DeSilva?

Inquisition.

Really?

36:00 Oh well. I think there must be some in there.

You never know. Portuguese all seem to do massage parlours themselves. Something odd could have happened a few hundred years ago.

36:30 **Okay, on another tangent how did you deal with the absence of women when you were away from home, I mean you couldn't even interact with women unless you were in a large town.**

Well, when you're in

37:00 New Guinea everybody used to say they're getting whiter every day, it was just something that you, you lived a kind of monastic life. There were lots of other things to keep you occupied anyway.

But I am aware that some Australians did actually have some sort of sexual relations with some of the New Guinea women.

37:30 None of my friends did as far as I know, they might have. I didn't. You'd have to be pretty hard up to get too close to those betel nut chewing ladies.

Were you aware that some people did, was that known?

Well they used to talk about it.

38:00 I can't say that I could name anybody who's dead but you know, they were sort of standard jokes. People used to say they were letting their webbing belt out so that they could encircle the native girls, the Marys as they used to be called.

The Marys?

They used to call them the Marys.

38:30 A big Mary or a young Mary, whatever. As for the Philippines, there were plenty of ladies around if you were interested.

And they would have been quite attractive I take it as well.

Some of them

39:00 were, yes. But courting in a country like that when you know that you're only a transient individual is not something that many people get up to so you occupy yourself playing volleyball or something like that. Playing bridge if you've got any spare time.

From all your

39:30 **unique experience around the world, more specifically in Asia, I suppose you must have learnt a lot about not only people but also women, a lot of these experiences were new to you.**

I'm certainly, I'm not sure I learnt it during the war but I learnt that Japanese women for instance are very different to Japanese men. They are very kind and considerate and thoughtful and

40:00 not the least bit aggressive as elderly Japanese gentlemen seem to be.

Unfortunately we're coming to a close so we've only got about a minute and a half. If there's anything, I'd like to put the stage onto you and say if you'd like to say anything for the historical record about anything at all that you haven't told us or you'd like to say

40:30 **I'd like to ask you if you'd like to tell it now.**

I'd just like to say that I've enjoyed meeting you both and I hope that I've been able to make some useful contribution to whatever it is you're doing but apart from that, no. I feel you've cleaned me out.

Thank you very much then.

INTERVIEW ENDS