Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Kelly (Ted) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

01:06 **Okay Ted, can you tell us where you were born?**

I was born in Tasmania, in a place called Exeter, which is now known as Tatana, they changed the name after I was born. We shifted to Victoria in about 1919 just after the end of the [First World] War and lived in Victoria for years, I've worked in

01:30 Victoria, I've worked in New South Wales, I've worked in Queensland, I've worked in Western Australia, I've been all over the place. Joined the army, went overseas, taken as prisoner, spent over four years as prisoner, got home and life's been pretty good since.

02:00 Working for the same crowd for twenty five and a half years, Australian Motor Industries making Toyota cars and resigned in 1976 and I've been retired ever since.

There's a lot more detail in your life I am sure. We will cover that, why did your parents move

02:30 **from Tasmania to Victoria when you were four?**

The older sister was born there, in Tasmania, and the second sister was born in Victoria and Dad was shifted back again and I was born over there and after a while they shifted back here again and another boy was born here and he died when he was eight months old and then there was nine of us altogether, we lived in Victoria. Dad was a powder monkey,

03:00 explosive expert, worked in the, have you seen the shrinery in Melbourne, that goes down about forty feet under, Dad did all the blasting for that. He was the explosive bloke, that's why we shifted, he worked in the mine. I liked Victoria, I went to school in Victoria. I loved school.

So there were nine

03:30 **children altogether?**

Nine. One died, I am the last. I am the last of nine kids.

Alive?

Yes, touch wood.

What did you say, you said you loved school?

Yes, I believe in school. I won a scholarship but I wasn't allowed to take it up, Dad said it wasn't fair on the rest of the kids to spend the money on me. The other kids, they were

04:00 alright, but I got all the brains in the family I think.

What a shame you had the opportunity to go to school.

It was a fair way away, there would have been fares to go. We lived in Broadmeadows in Victoria and the school was in Essendon, I would have had to walk a mile up to the station, from the station catch a train up to Essendon, from there walk a mile down to school again. The scholarship only covered books, it didn't cover clothes or

04:30 fares, so I left home. At fifteen I cleared off and I've never lived at home since.

Since you were fifteen?

Yes, I lived out bush.

Tell us about that then, you decided to take off?

There were more opportunities in the bush than there were in the city. I started off as an apprentice for

a tailor at five shillings a week, fifty cents a week, in those days it was a lot of money. I thought, "There are better jobs than this".

05:00 My cousin, he was working up in Victoria, said, "Come and work for me and I will give you a pound a week and your tucker". I said, "I'm off". I was up there in about a week. Digging potatoes. I said, "I can do that". We were doing it as kids. I was making a pound a day on my own when I was about sixteen years old. That was good money, you had to work.

05:30 I was making more money when I was a kid than my Dad was and he was an explosives expert. I've never been unemployed in my life; all through the Depression I always had a job. I don't know, there is plenty of work around now, kids don't want it, they want to be managing directors straight off.

You were born in 1915 which means that you did see a bit of the Depression.

A lot of the Depression.

Can you tell us what you remember?

Things were pretty tough.

06:00 Gold queues. Those days you didn't get money for gold you got a chip worth so much and you took it to the grocery shop. You went to town and got firewood or vegetables and groceries. You used to knock off stuff wherever you could, you used to travel up and down the rail line picking up coal to take out and burn fire. Things were tough, but I was up the bush, we had plenty. In fact,

06:30 we grew, where we lived in the bush, we grew all our own food. We had a cow in the backyard and used to make our own butter. Dad, if we did buy anything, Dad was always in work, things were very cheap then, you'd buy flour by the bag, butter by the box, tea by the fourteen pound bag. Of course we weren't allowed tea as kids, you either had bread and butter or jam, you can't have both. That's very

07:00 tough. Dripping was a luxury, a plate of soup and a bit of bread with dripping, you put it in the bowl with boiling water and pepper and salt. That was a meal. Kids don't know today, they don't.

Tell us about your brothers and sisters, did you get on with them?

The second one, Eileen, especially because she was close to me. She was born in May, she was a very smart girl too, she had done stuff in a show,

07:30 fancy work and drawing. But the brothers, there was always a bit of a fight between brothers. I was the eldest one and whatever the other kids done it was always my fault. I got the blame for it. It was always me, I was the eldest, I was supposed to watch them, but you can't. You can't watch five or six other kids playing around. So I said, "This is enough, I am walking". I didn't tell them I got married, I didn't tell them I joined the army. I've never been home since; I've been in touch with them.

08:00 **You weren't close with your parents then?**

Dad was a bit of a martinet, a bit tough in the old days. He had to be I suppose with nine bloody kids running around I suppose, you'd have to have a rod of iron. Mum was a softy, like all Mums, a softie. Dad was, I wouldn't say he was a martinet, but he was the boss, which was a good thing. I learnt a lot

08:30 off my Dad.

What kind of man was he?

He was something similar to me. He was Irish, Dad was born about 1883. I've got all the history somewhere. He was a good bloke, but then I think there was a world between him and I. I had my ideas of what things should be and he had different

09:00 ideas. He was one from the very old school and I wanted to find out what tomorrow was never mind about what yesterday was. I wanted to find out and I thought the best way to do it was to clear off. I went bush.

What about your younger brothers and sisters, did you see them grow up at all?

No, it's a funny thing. After I'd come home from the army in 1945,

09:30 my wife met me in Royal Park and I went home to my Mum's place and as I walked in there was a young girl standing at the doorway you see, and I just walked in and it was my young sister. She was only…I had been away six years. She cried her eyes out you know. "You didn't know your own sister, you didn't recognise me". I wouldn't know her; she was about ten years old when I went away and about sixteen or seventeen when I got back. I didn't know

10:00 her. That upset her a bit. I remember going over there once, I had been up the bush, and I knocked on the door and a lady opened it and said, "I live here now". I called home again. I found out where they went and I knocked on the door and they said, "Who's there?" I said, "Me". I heard my Dad say, "Who's me?" I will never forget that, "Who's me?" That's the only time I ever visited them back again.

10:30 I didn't tell them I got married; I didn't tell them I joined the army.

Nine children; were they Catholic your family?

I don't know what they were. I went to a Catholic school to start off; I then went to State school. I could chant the rosemary okay, no doubt about that. I learnt nothing; I learnt more after I left school than I did at school. I do a lot of these; I just worked that out,

11:00 I'll read anything, I can read a book a day. I was always interested in languages, how, why, why do they call that, German, French, Greek, speak any of those, they fascinated me. I was always interested in electricity, radio, motor cars, engines. I would always say, "Why?"

11:30 I've got this enquiring mind. I could pull a typewriter to pieces and put it together again no worries. I could pull a washer to pieces and put it together again. I was a mechanic, sewing machine mechanic for five years, for twenty five years I worked for the motor industry, Australian Motor Industry.

So you are into precision?

I like to know why

12:00 and how, how does that work, why is it working.

That would've been a handy tool to have in the army.

It was; I was a footslogger though. In the army in those days you were a gun fighter. Not like today, the army today you learn a trade. In those days you were just, "Away you go Charlie". Unless you were an engineer or something like that. My young bloke, he's an engineer.

12:30 He went and done his training at Kapooka and then he went to the military school at Casula, he was a good shot, good champion rifle tracker, and he got two cups out of three. He was in Vietnam; he had his tour in Vietnam. He had his twenty first birthday in Vietnam. He was in the army, his son was in the army, his other son was in the army.

13:00 I lost two uncles in the First War, one at sea. Two of the boys were navy; Tommy and Des were both navy boys.

Your Father wasn't in the First World War?

No, he couldn't get in. He had ulcers and all sorts. It didn't worry him. He was in a protective industry and they wouldn't let him go.

13:30 They needed him back here. Unbeknownst to me, I volunteered of course in 1939, I was in a protective industry. Harry said, "You can't". I said, "I'm going". The bloke I was working for in the bush. He was a single bloke, his Mum and Dad were old and they needed someone on the place. He tried to stop me,

14:00 "No, it was my adventure". Don't ask me why I joined the army and don't ask me why I went overseas. It was for the shilling and it wasn't for the law in the country, it was adventure, overseas.

A free trip?

A free trip. Tourist, five bob a day. You got five shillings a day and you had to give three shillings to your wife and you got two. On top of that when you went overseas they give you

14:30 threepence in exchange so it was two and six a day. The wife got three shillings, and you'd give her another three shillings so she got six bob a day and we got two and six. All the women used to run around with a short rabbit coat, they called that ‘allotment coat’.

What do you mean by that, they used to buy a particular?

A little like rabbit fur, short coat, short jacket, and we'd say, "There's another allotment coat".

15:00 **Because rabbit was looked down upon?**

No, they'd have enough money to buy a (UNCLEAR) or like that, but everyone would have this little jacket on. As soon as they got a few bob, they got a fur jacket, fur coat, a little short jacket.

I suppose it was very vogue as well?

Yes, that was the fashion, of course it was.

Tell us about,

15:30 **do you remember anything from Tasmania?**

Yes, I know it was cold, very cold. I think when I was about four years old we left. I remember my brother was born, he died, young Leslie, years ago we used to have a cane basket with top and bottom and straps around it we used to carry our gear in. He used to sleep in

16:00 that, Leslie, I remember putting the top on it and sitting on it, I don't know why, they reckon I was jealous of the baby. They told me this years later, I can remember him, he was only eight months old

when he died.

What did he die of?

Twisted bowel, I don't know why, I don't know what happened. Mum walked around with him for a long while and he was like dead, and Dad went up to the get the doctor and the doctor refused to come down

16:30 so Dad jumped him and it was a hell of stink out and the police, sergeant of police, he knew Dad pretty well, and the doctor finished up leaving the town, he refused to come out for a dying soul. He got ostracised very quickly.

I wonder why he refused. It must've been difficult for him?

I don't know. I don't know much about it. I was only a youngster then.

You were this young adventurous type boy who

17:00 **worked on the farm in Victoria, your parents farm, what kind of things did they have going there, was it dairy cows?**

No, we lived in the bush but it wasn't, we had our own place, it wasn't a working farm. Dad worked as a powder monkey, we grew our own veges, we had trees orchards, we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, we had pigs to get our own bacon,

17:30 Mum used to make soap. All that was made. Light was only kerosene light, it was a good life, all the food was good food because it was home grown. Dad used to buy everything in bulk, bulk of butter when our old cow didn't give milk, bag of flour, box of butter when the cow didn't give milk. I was only a little bloke and used to use the plough in the orchard, I could barely reach.

18:00 It was a tough life, they say, "The good old days", not me. I remember Dad told us years ago two and six a week, a stone of potatoes and a stone of flour, that was the wages for a married man. I remember you could travel between Australia and Tasmania for two [shillings] and sixpence on the boat. As a matter of fact I had a ticket, could you travel to town on two and six, that's like twenty five

18:30 cents.

It's hard to imagine because...

You can't. They say things are dear now but in relation to what you pay now and what the wages were and what you pay now and what the wages were there is not much difference. You could get a packet of cigarettes for sixpence, five cents. Wages were three to four quid [pounds] a week. Cigarettes are now, what, fifteen dollars a

19:00 packet but the wages, four hundred dollars a week. As one went up so did the other. As far as the good old days, some parts of those days were good but today, we've got fridges and teles, and phone, the only phone in those days was "Hi".

How far away were you from other houses and other kids to play with?

Let me see.

19:30 About twenty three mile, twenty three mile from the town. We used to ride a horse to school.

There were so many kids but there'd only be three or four at a time going?

There used to be three kids on the one horse. Ride to school. It was good, that was the good days.

What, you'd just tie up the horse and go to school?

Yes, there was a big yard, we weren't the only ones. Other kids,

20:00 there was a house, the nearest house to us would be about a quarter of mile away, but you made your own fun. There'd be enough kids to have fun. You had too much to do. Everybody had a chore to do. The kids—some had to chop wood, some had to clean the fireplace, some had to blacken the stove, some had to scrub the table, there was always something. You

20:30 couldn't just lay around all day. Every kid had a chore to do, not like today. If you didn't do it, look out, Dad was there. It gave you something to do and you learnt a lot to go out to live.

Was the school just one little room, one classroom?

One classroom, the first school I went to was one classroom. You couldn't go to school until you were six years old, they wouldn't take you. From six years old up to fourteen year olds all in the

21:00 one room. The first school I went to there was only two teachers. I think there was about twenty seven or twenty eight kids, all ages. From little fellows to big fellows. Then I went to another school, south, I set the fence on fire that day. We had a huge backyard and all the papers used to blow against the fence from the kid's lunches. I thought that would be great to set fire to

21:30 one. I'll never forget that.

The paper that the sandwiches were wrapped in?

Yes, the newspaper like that's what you had, everybody had. Kids used to have bread and jam, no butter. You'd have bread and butter or bread and jam. You couldn't have bread, butter and jam or bread and dripping. You always had the same and when you got to school you'd say, "What have you got? I will swap you". I think they might do it today, I don't know.

22:00 **What happened, you lit the papers on fire?**

Just to see what would happen, all the papers burnt right up and caused a panic actually. I remember down one side of the school was a big row of maple trees and we used to cut the bark and get the sap, maple syrup and it used to harden and we'd use it as chewing gum, it was our chewing gum. You'd chew it all day.

22:30 That was a good old school that. Right opposite the hall we used to learn dancing. We thought that was great. We used to get a candle and scrape it all over the floor and you'd go with a bag and polish the floor so it was waxed and then you'd slide. It was good fun. Learning dancing fancy teaching bush kids to dance.

I think that's really nice though, so you had some sort of social skills.

We had balls and

23:00 school dances and concerts and things like that, there was always something to do at school.

As an adventurous young boy were you interested in girls at that time or not really?

I think I was about nineteen before I found out there was a difference between boys and girls. No, boys were amongst the boys. The worst thing you could do at school if you played up, the teacher would put you amongst the girls. That

23:30 was the worst thing, the rest of the boys would hound you for life. Sitting amongst the girls no way. Even up in the sixth, seventh, eighth grade, taboo, you didn't mix with the girls, they are out. No fear, otherwise you are a sissy. Things were different those days, not now. It was good.

24:00 Very tough but we managed, I'm alive. I learnt a lot. I learnt to be self sufficient.

What do you mean by that? You learnt how to pick things out of the ground to eat? Learnt how to grow things?

If you live in the bush and grow up in the bush it becomes second nature. I could never get lost in the bush, I know where north, south, east and

24:30 west is. Moss only grows on the south side of a log, and certain trees the leaves always face a certain way. That's instinct after a while in the bush. Very rarely you'd get a bloke, a bushy lost in the bush. He would always find his way home eventually. City kids, you turn them around and they're gone. It's a natural instinct for bush kids, not so much today because there is too much

25:00 distraction. But in those days you had to learn it to survive. That's the reason why. Now, there is too much television, games, we had none of them. You made your own fun. It was hard but you learnt. We learnt that in the army, because we were all bush kids. The army for us it was easy, for the city kids it was

25:30 too hard. We had a bloke, an Xavier College boy, a real mummy's boy. Poor bugger, they hounded the hell out of him but he learnt eventually.

He ended up being okay?

Yes he was corporal, he was sent to the trench when he got a bit of shrapnel in him and knocked him off. I said, "Come on let's get going". But it was too late. Got him right in the forehead, we were

26:00 only about four feet apart.

That was the end of him?

Yes. We had a lot of blokes; I had close calls here and there. Bashed across the head, bashed here and there, across the leg, lost half a foot. That's a part of war. You don't go to war expecting you are not going to, especially a frontline soldier, we were in the frontline, we weren't back behind, we were in the front. Same as my bloke, the engineer,

26:30 whenever a patrol went out in Vietnam, he went out with the foot soldiers. He had eighteen missions out in the jungle. A kid at twenty one years old. They wonder why they are a bit, you know. In the First War they called it shell shock, in fact a lot were shocked as cowardice, you might remember, and in the Second World War it was known as ‘going troppo’.

27:00 The Vietnam War it was PTS, Post Traumatic Stress. It didn't apply to our blokes. What I'm crook on and I wish the government would listen, they paid the Japanese ex POWs [prisoners of war] twenty five

thousand, now they've just paid the Korean prisoners, there was only twenty nine taken prisoner and only nine alive, they are paying them twenty five thousand, we got nothing. I had

27:30 over four years.

You are not the first person that said that.

Ray wrote to every politician…he sent out, typed it out, every politician he sent a letter. Now my bloke does, helping Vets and so forth, he went to a seminar recently and he rung me up and told me. By January next year I won't be paying rent here;

28:00 the POW grant will pay. Why wait now, there's only two thousand of us left. Why wait until we die and said, "We'll pay you". I don't know he told me all about it, what's going to happen and what's not going to happen. There is twenty five thousand in the pipeline. If they can pay a young girl three thousand dollars for a baby, what's going to happen, why don't they pay us,

28:30 twenty five grand is nothing to this government. They are looking at millions here and t here all over the place, why don't they pay us. Ray is crook on that. In fact he was going to pass his medals up and send them back. Tell them what to do with it. He wrote to every politician.

Can you remember the day you actually left home when you were fifteen?

Yes, I think it was

29:00 about November before the Melbourne Cup. That would be the Marabou Cup. About 1931 when I left home. I went with a cousin.

What happened, did you say to your Mum and Dad I am leaving home now?

Yes, I said I was going

29:30 to work up the bush. My cousin was there, Ray. The money, when he offered me a quid a week after working I think I got seven six, I got an increase, but you had to pay board I think seventy five cents a week. I used to walk to work because I couldn't afford the fare. I said, "This city is no good to me". So I went up to Gippsland digging spuds and I was up there for, I worked then for quite a

30:00 long while, worked on his farm, horses and plugging and so forth. Then I went way up north, started off at the Gulf country buying horses, three months on the road, all the way down to the Victorian border. Sleeping on the road, sleeping out at night. A pound a day and tucker.

Did you like that?

Yes, it was good.

Sort of mustering and…?

Buying stock, buying Indian remounts, buy a

30:30 horse with a remount, if we could ride it, it was good enough for the army. I broke in horses for a long while. Mounting and saddling, if we could ride it then they could ride it too. He's right. Often we had quite a few thousand horses over a period.

The first job you had was actually working for your cousin?

No, with my cousin.

With your cousin, when you first took off from home and that was?

Digging

31:00 potatoes. I was picking up, they were doing the digging and I was picking up. I thought, “We used to work at home”, and I said, "I can do that". Potato fork as five tongs on it, not like an ordinary fork, it's got five and they are diamond pointed and you use it off your knee, you don't dig your foot in it because the fork is shaped like that. I thought if he can do it I can. I said, "I can do that". The fork handle was pretty

31:30 tall and I was only a little fellow so he cut the handle down. I was making a pound a day, I was digging twenty bags of spuds a day and making a shilling a bag. I was only a little fellow. They were digging thirty to thirty five bags a day. I thought if it was good enough for him it's good enough for me. I never looked back. I thought, "This will do me, the bush".

How could you save your money in those days, did you have a bank account?

No, you never got paid until you finished your job. When I worked at the cattle station up at

32:00 Murray, you bought everything through the station, if you wanted clothes, travellers would come around and the station would pay them and when you finished he'd write you a cheque. I never seen any cash for years, you went into town to the pub you put it on the slate. You go into the store; you put it on the slate. You get payment at the station; you get a cheque off the station to pay them. Money it never

worried me then.

So you never really had money

32:30 **in your pocket?**

No, what's the good of money, you couldn't spend it. We were miles up the bush. The nearest pub was about twenty miles away. What were we going to do?

How would you know that they would come through on their word and you would actually get paid?

They were pretty big stations and pretty wealthy people. At the McKinnon Station at Carnarvon that was owned by McKinnon,

33:00 the Chisolm trail that you read about, the cattle trail, that was Captain C J Chisholm, owned Carnarvon Station wealthy people, they pay. Mrs Pearce owned the other station, her daughter married the attorney general; they were all wealthy people. Vagabond Station, Wollogorang, they were all money, that's where the money was. You don't go and work for the two bob cocky, you work where the money was. They'd pay you all right.

33:30 In 1939, we were getting a pound of change for fencing, cutting posts and the leg off the stump, five pound hundred. You had to work for it but it was good money. Fall a tree, saw it up, splint it, stack it on, they'd pay you five pound. Faulkners, that's a well known firm, Faulkners in New South Wales.

34:00 We used to lease land from the government for two and six for a thousand acres. Now a thousand acres is one and a half mile paddock, lease that for two and six. You'd get four or five of these paddocks and when things got tough in the riverina they'd shift the sheep to us and they were paying us threpence a head for three months. We were getting a penny a head. They might put a thousand, two thousand, three thousand sheep in

34:30 and they were paying enough to look after them. No, it was good money. I went out to work twelve, fourteen, fifteen hours a day, but it was good.

When you first left home with your cousin where exactly did you go?

Gippsland, Victoria. Working down near Kury Rock, all spud country, all potatoes, all farm area. We were

35:00 were living in shed, in the back, leading to the place. Potato diggers follow each farm, it's a seasonal job like a lot of fruit picking and stuff like that. When the job finished I was only a youngster and old Sandy the bloke who owned the place he wanted somebody to help in on the place, prepare the land and so forth, sew oats and I said, "Yes, I will be in it". I learnt a lot from him, handling draft horses, you get a five horse team and I was only a

35:30 little fellow. I used to stand on a box to put the collars on the horses, you'd bring them back at night and you'd have to wash them down, feed them, before you got to feed yourself. You learnt a lot. You learnt self reliance, I learnt standing on your own two feet. You had to, you couldn't rely on anybody else. It was a good life. I think that's kept me good up until now, I think that's why I withstood POW

36:00 life. That was pretty tough. Some had it easy, we didn't. We were right on the border between Poland and Russia and it used to get minus forty in the winter. Can you imagine minus fourty. No water because it was frozen. You could only get water by knocking icicles down and melt them on a fire, that's how you got water. People say, "Was it cold?" I say, "No, it

36:30 wasn't cold. It was bloody freezing". Absolutely freezing, then we got bombed. Camp got blown to pieces.

We will get into that later in the day. Out of curiosity, did you keep in touch with your parents by mail?

No. I remember, they must have found out where I was when I was working with Harry up the bush,

37:00 I used to go up once a month to pick up the mail, they ride in. There was a parcel for me, a pair of cufflinks, I've still got them, for my twenty first birthday. I've still got them, my Mum sent them.

They were thinking of you then?

They must of. I hadn't been in touch with home, they must've found out where I was. I never used to write home. No,

37:30 they forgot me and I forgot them. There was other kids at home, they didn't worry about me. When you've got a large family like that, when one goes they don't miss you. They've got another eight kids to worry about. It's different now I suppose, you wouldn't do it now. You get a hand out from the government if you leave home. Kids at fourteen who leave home get a handout from the government. I was born at the wrong time, wrong time of

38:00 year. I should've been born now and have a job like him.

We are coming to the end of the tape, what did you know of the trouble, being in the bush, did you know of the trouble that was brewing in Europe towards the war?

Yes, we had newspapers, we had radio. The old battery set,

38:30 you hook the battery up and get the news. Word gets around. The bush telegraph is a wonderful thing, the bush telegraph. It travels faster than what it does in the city. Something that happened a hundred mile away you'd know about it. Everybody knows. It's everybody's business to know what's going on. We knew what was going on. War broke out, we went to join up.

39:00 War broke out on 3 December, I was in the light horse, war broke out and we'd go down to join and they'd say, "We are not calling yet". They hadn't even raised anything. Menzies [Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia] called war without telling Parliament mind you. You knew that didn't you? He declared war and never told Parliament until afterwards. People don't realise that. He was an Anglophile, Menzies, he loved England, so he declared war and told Parliament about it afterwards. I said,

39:30 "Oh well, war's broken out, we'll go down and join up". They said, "We are not interested yet, we haven't arranged anything, there is no recruiting officer". He brought it on everyone too quick. I said, "Bugger it" and went back home again. Then they were calling and I went back in 1939 to a place called Wangaratta, you had to do all this, there was five of us, I will never forget that. You had to

40:00 be five nine, minimum eleven and a half stone, aged between twenty one and thirty five, twenty twenty vision, all your own teeth, no scar on your body longer than half an inch. This was early on when you started, when you first went in. Everybody got undressed down one end of the hall and they had a bar across, if you went under the bar you got back and got dressed, you are too short. You could see blokes growing as they walked, trying to

40:30 hit the bar. That was early on, that was the cream of Australia in 1939. Of course they started to get them from the bottom of the barrel.

Tape 2

00:37 **Just a couple of questions on your early days, did you learn much about your Father's powder monkey work?**

I could do that myself use explosives. When you are cutting timber making posts, you strip a log and use jelly [gelignite] or

01:00 powder. One blows up and one scatters that way and one goes up. You use that to split the logs. Instead of using wedges, dry wedges, go up, it makes it easy. Dad used to carry it around in his pocket to light a fire. Jelly is alright as long as its dry, when it starts to weep its dangerous. It's got to have at least fourteen pound pressure to set the jelly off. You can play it around like plasticine.

01:30 It's like a stick, have you seen it? It's about the size of your thumb. Have you ever seen plasticine. It's like a stick of plasticine. When it starts to sweat, get rid of it. It's dangerous. Its nitro glycerin, it's quite hardy, you can light a fire with it, like a match. When you are using it to blow, you've got the stick of jelly, you cut the fuse, you don't cut it straight across, you cut it at an angle, and you shove that into the jelly, it leaves a hole

02:00 and you put the cap on the end of the fuse, close it, you are not supposed to, but close it with your teeth, and stick that down into there and on the end of the fuse where you cut there is a little bit of jelly that's easy to light and you don't strike the match like that, you use the match and the jelly and you pull it across like that. Before all this is happening of course you get the stick of fuse and you light it and time it. It gives me five seconds so you cut it to the length you want.

02:30 It's fascinating, I learnt a lot, I used to watch Dad all the time, I never took it on, but I used it for posts or blowing stumps out or rocks or anything like that.

You learnt this at a pretty young age?

Yes, you don't play with it of course. You don't play with fire.

You also mentioned being an apprentice to a tailor, how long did you do this for?

03:00 About eight or nine months. I started off making threads for making button holes. All button holes in those days were made by hand. Then I went to making tea, that was natural, make the tea, run messages. Then I went to ironing seams out, open the seams out, iron flat. Then I got up to pattern making. Now I can make a pattern.

03:30 I measure you up and I can make a pattern on paper. I thought that was alright. I worked for five shillings and seven and six. That wasn't bad. That's good money. Basic wage those days was two pound

five a week, thing were relative to the price, the wages. When a quid a week is offered to you after getting seven six, I'm off, and tucker. Because they lived well those bushies [bush workers].

You

04:00 **told us a lot about your bush work. During those times did you get up to some fun like going to dances or anything like that?**

Yes, I used to go to balls and dances, yes. We used to go to a place called Tallangatta, a little Essex ute I cut out, we'd leave for Albury, we'd leave on Friday night and come back early Monday morning and go to the dances at Albury, yes, we had to have fun.

What about meeting girls at these dances?

04:30 Yes, that's why you went. I used to ride a horse twenty mile when I was courting my wife. That was nothing, that was just down the road. It's like you getting in your car and going down to Brisbane, it was nothing. You'd get home early hours of the morning, it didn't make any difference.

Tell us about meeting her, where did you meet her?

I think through her old man.

05:00 It just happened. Across a crowded room, “She will do. She's not bad”. That's how it happened.

Did you have a dance with her or a chat? Do you remember your first chat or dance?

Not really, I was walking on air at the time, I thought, "She's was dancing with me". You get your mind set on a

05:30 girl, she's nice, and all of a sudden she says, "Okay". I am on cloud nine. All the blokes down one end of the hall and all the girls down the other end of the hall. A lot of blokes would hate going up to the girls and get a knock back. If they didn't like you they wouldn't dance with you. She come and ask me. I thought, "Ready". There's a photo of me when I was a young chap.

06:00 **You were courting her by horse so to speak, what would you do with her?**

Sit and talk, cup of tea, hold hands. I am not telling you what we done, learn yourself.

I am just trying to get some tips. I guess how did you develop to a

06:30 **serious romance?**

I think it was about time, I was about nineteen I think, I thought it was about time I settled down. Nineteen. I found out the difference between boys and girls, I thought they were all made the same. No. I think it was the right thing to do.

This was in the lead up to the war, how long were you seeing her before you proposed?

07:00 Couple of weeks; that was long enough. I knew the first time I seen her, I knew. You get that, that's mine. I don't know what they do nowadays, but that's mine.

By this stage you were kind of thinking of going to war?

Yes, I was in the light horse, we'd been in camp, the army life. I loved horses

07:30 in fact the army still owes me for my horses, they never paid me, they requisitioned them. In those days they requisitioned all the horses in 1939, I never got paid.

I will ask you before we go on about your wife and getting married, tell us about what made you first join up with the light horse, it wasn't war yet?

No, it was just something to do on the weekend, I loved horses and all my mates were in it. There was

08:00 eighteen of us and as a matter of fact the captain we had was a bloke who inducted us into the army when I joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. When we took the king’s shilling [joined the services; i.e. received a wage], they put a shilling in your hand, you joined up to fight for King and Queen, King and Country, you got a shilling and he was a colonel by then, in 1939 he got promoted and we thought, "Beauty". We were in this drill

08:30 hall. "We'll go down the pub". He said, "Not bloody likely, you will stay here". He wouldn't let us out, the same bloke. We loved doing it. We were all good rifle shots, you'd shoot for rabbits living in the bush as kids, used to rifles and guns and so forth, that helped us in the light horse, loved horses.

It's interesting because

09:00 **it was before the war, did you get any hint when joining the light horse that it was preparing something in the future?**

No. There was nothing. We used to, when Chamberlain [Neville Chamberlain British Prime Minister]

went to Berlin there was a hint of it, but we never thought Australia would be into it. They were way over there. That's the trouble with Australia, send our blokes over, Boer War,

09:30 Ukranian War, Rebellion.

We were just talking about the light horse, they weren't really thinking

10:00 **about preparing for the war, so what was the purpose of the light horse at this stage?**

I think it was just a natural progression from 1918 war. There has been light horse and militia in Australia since it first started and going right back in Phillip's days [reference to Governor Phillip, early Governor of penal settlement of NSW] had an army out here. Militia, civilian soldiers, I still think they should bring it in now. Make it

10:30 compulsory like it was before. Make every kid do his training. The thing is, to get into the army now you have to have education. They won't take you if you don't know two and two and you've got to be physically fit and you've got to have the right disposition. If you are the real gung-ho type they don't want you. I know because I know a lot of blokes that have tried. When my grandson,

11:00 he was one of thirty five kids all went up at the same time and only four were accepted. You do a psych test, we don't want you, checked your educational leaving certificate, you had to be physically fit, blokes look fit but you do the test, "No, sorry". Four out of thirty five.

That's amazing. Back then, with the light horse, I am interested, it has a

11:30 **bit of history the light horse. Was that inundated with you, were you told about the history and given the traditions?**

Well, you read a lot. I read a lot about it. The First War, there was a film made called Forty Thousand Horseman. Have you seen that? The light horse in the desert. Harry Chauvel, his daughter married a mate of mine as a matter of fact up in the bush.

12:00 He was the director of that. I think there was another boy, Harry Chauvel and Frank Chauvel. The history, that was the light horse in the First War. I've read a lot of books.

With this history, was there a bit of a kind of light horse has a somewhat reputation of being

12:30 **kind of elite in a way?**

Beautiful, that's another thing to get the girls in. The plumed hat, the feathers in the side, the bandoleer, the boots, the leather, you were a soldier mate. You were just a little bumpier than the other blokes.

Did you use this uniform to good effect?

Why not,

13:00 probably one of the reasons we joined, it's a good draw card. Even today, why do sailors get all the girls, the uniform, not the boys, the uniform.

Would you go down to the dances in the uniform?

No, you can't you've got spurs on. "Oops, sorry love".

13:30 No, not really.

Where would you use it to good effect with the girls? Would you ride around town?

Yes. They all knew we were in the light horse. It's not like you were hiding in the bush somewhere. You are higher when you are on horseback. Strutting, sit up straight. Look at me girls.

The mix of

14:00 **blokes in the light horse, what was the mix? Were they all bushies?**

In ours they were all bush blokes. There was no light horse in the city that I knew of. There might have been. Prince of Wales light horse that finished up turning into an armored division. Fourth light horse, eight light horse, six light horse, they all finished up armoured mob when the war broke out. No horse could fit into Bren carriers and

14:30 light tanks. That's what the light horse became, armoured mob.

That brings up an interesting question, was some of the things you were learning were they kind of out dated for modern?

They were outdated. We used to go out and pretend, I was in C Company, there was A, B, C, D company. Each company had so many platoons and

15:00 and so many men in a platoon and there was a corporal and a sergeant and when we went on

maneuvers an airplane flying over and you'd fire that in front of it nine degrees with a 303 [rifle] to bring him down. If the whole platoon fired, there was a chance of five million to one that the bullet would hit him. Imagine doing that with a jet flying

15:30 across, you'd have to fire there when the jet was there. That's what we learnt. When we were in the desert we were digging trenches in the Middle East in the sand. We were fighting the war on 1914/18 handbooks war books.

I will come to that in a while, but I am interested in the light horse. Specifically, some of the things you were learning?

You might have seen

16:00 tent pegging, you put a peg in the ground, that was to stab your opponent. You might have seen melons on posts, you pull and slice them off, there was a lot of things you learnt, how to look after your horse, how to drop a horse and fight behind it. How to hold a horse down with your finger. Do your reckon you can hold a horse with your finger? You can. You can drop a horse just like that, as quick as your eyelid.

What do you do?

16:30 Drop him down and put your finger on his eye and he won't move. You had to train him to lay there. You drop him down and just drop naturally, that's training, over a period of time they do it. Horses are pretty smart boys. You get a brute of a horse, you get rid of it. A horse is your dog in the bush,

17:00 that's it. Every dog should have a boy.

You were learning all these techniques, which are fantastic techniques, but against machine guns?

They were useless in the war. The gun we had was called a Hotchkiss and it was fed on a slide, the bullets were on a slide. Years later I thought, "What did we learn?" It was absolutely useless. The

17:30 stuff we learnt. The thing you learnt was comradeship and to do as you were told. And you done it instinctively, if they said, "Jump" you said, "How high" It was discipline which is lacking today. You done it without thinking. When I first went to Pucka [Puckapunyal] we built the playgrounds. There was nothing.

18:00 Civilians were still putting up tents and big huts. Every morning you'd go out and do rifle drill. You'd throw your rifle down in the firing position now after a while that becomes automatic. We wondered why the hell we were doing it. When we got overseas and you hear a shell automatically you lay down and the rifle in front of you. It's these things, repetition, you do it, eventually.

18:30 We were in the bush learning, it was useless as far as World War II was concerned. I was like, "It's a waste of time". We learnt companionship, comradeship, learnt to do as you were told without question, you done it. They said “Do it”, you done it. You never said, "Why?" He was the boss. He knew what he was doing. The difference between our blokes and say the

19:00 Pommy [English] soldier, if we were put in a position we would say, "There must be a better way of doing this, go around there". A Pommy soldier would stay there until his last bloke, he won't move. He doesn't question why he is told to do it, it is instilled into him. We say, "There must be a better way of doing it than that way". So we do it ourselves. That's one of the reasons why the sergeant was so good, not only this war, the Vietnam War.

19:30 They got that initiative. The Pommy soldiers, it's been drilled into them for hundreds of years. Do it, that's it. We say, "Why?"

What were your instructors like in the light horse? Were they ex World War I?

We still did drill. Rifle drill. Still present arms, look after your horse, how to dress your horse, how to care for your horse, how to feed your

20:00 horse, how to groom it, clean your saddle, clean your boots, the whole, you learnt a lot of that. But later it was useless.

Were they World War I?

Yes, I had a 1914-18 [reference to the First World War, using the period it lasted; 1914-18] rifle.

I mean the instructors were they World War I?

Yes.

Did they tell you much about the war?

No, I think half never went. They used to use the old cloth puppies in those days, the uniforms were terrible. When we got to

20:30 Palestine, we still had surge, it was forty one degrees. You know the surge uniform?

What is the serge uniform?

Army, now they use camouflage and khaki drill, we didn't, we had a heavy surge, heavy stuff, like they make overcoats out of. That was the army uniform in those days. Trousers, you used to wear

21:00 spats, like gaiters, and a belt and the two pockets on them and the pocket in side. That's serge, like that. Heavy. Don't want to talk about that one.

You told Heather [interviewer] about the lead up to war and the announcement, I am interested to know you mentioned off camera about Menzies sending the troops,

21:30 **being a Kelly, perhaps of Irish background, how did you feel about King and country aspect?**

It didn't worry me. I remember a mate of mine, the sarg [sergeant] was going crook at him. He couldn't understand it, and he said, "I suppose you know the King is English". He said, "I hope he is; I am fighting for him". This is back in 1939. No, it didn't worry me, it was just an adventure. I think if you asked ninety nine out of a hundred blokes it was an adventure to go overseas.

22:00 **What did you expect, what was the adventure you kind of had in mind?**

Nothing, you see in those days there was no pictures like you have now, no cameras, we had no idea what was going on. We heard the stories and you read the books but then you read a lot of stuff in the paper and my old man said, "You only believe half what you hear and nothing what you see". What you see in the paper

22:30 could've been blown up. We did meet a couple that had been overseas and said things and we thought, "That's alright, that's over there, we are here, that's a thousand miles away".

Did it seem exciting the idea of going to war?

It did, it's a great adventure. So would you, if you were in the same position we were, you're off.

23:00 **What about death did that ever enter your mind as a young bloke?**

No. You see this is where they made the mistake with Vietnam, where they pulled the blokes names out of a hat, if they had called volunteers like they did with Korea…that's wrong, just because you are born on a certain day.

23:30 I am not saying now, there are too many foreigners now, but Australia, adventure, you give them the opportunity they'd go, call for volunteers and you'll get more than you can handle. When they start pulling names out of hats that's when people went crook. I went crook on that too. I wouldn't want my kid to go because his name was pulled out of a hat. That stinks.

A bit rough? Tell us when you first joined the AIF, what was the process, did you have to go through tests?

Yes,

24:00 medical, I told you, you had to be five foot nine at least, this was early on, you had to be eleven seven (stones & pounds), twenty twenty vision, all your teeth, no scar on your body more than half an inch, and you had to be really physically fit. I remember five went out to Wangaratta and we stopped at the Sydney pub. We had to do a urine test and we had all been at the pub and nobody could do it, one bloke done it for the five of

24:30 us. I thought, "If that bloke is crook, the whole lot of us is done". But we had to do it all again when we got to the show ground. Five doctors and two dentists. Not just one doctor, five, and two dentists and they really give you a go, sorry, sorry. But afterwards, that's in 1939, they wanted the ‘crème of the crème’.

Did you have any problems joining up?

No.

You were in health then?

25:00 I was about twelve and a half stone and as fit as an army bull and twice as dangerous. My wife didn't want me to go, and I said, "I have to go". I had been working up in the bush. I said, "It will get me away from here a while". That's what it was, a holiday, join the army.

How long were you expecting it to be?

Till Christmas. We went overseas in 1940 and thought, "I'll be home for Christmas".

25:30 We used to say that every Christmas, 1944, 1945. She's apples mate. In fact my wife drew the widow's pension. I was missing in action, missing and killed in action, killed in action, when the island fell at Crete a bloke and I cleared off, we didn't want to be

26:00 taken prisoner and I lived on the island for six months, lived with the Greeks and of course no body knew where we were, we were missing, gone, finished. It was two years my wife thought I was dead and

she was paid the widow's pension. When my mate got malaria badly, we had to give ourselves up. It took along while, they wouldn't believe us. I had long black hair, dressed in civvies [civilian clothes], the only thing that saved me was our dog tag [identification tag].

26:30 We were civvies as far as they were concerned. In fact, I nearly got shot, a civvie.

We will come to that a bit later, but I will ask you about your wife, you mentioned how you had your romance and how it developed and you asked her to marry, tell us about getting married, this was before you joined the AIF?

I was married in uniform. Come out in an archway of swords, that was great.

27:00 She's dead now of course, I was sent home from Germany; she burnt them all one day. Had a big clean out of the house, everything went. She was a crook lady; she didn't want any memories, all her past life. Didn't worry me, I didn't want to know about it either. That was a good life; we had ups and downs as everybody else.

27:30 **When you got married, you got married in your light horse uniform. Where did you get married?**

In Wodonga, Wangaratta.

What future were you looking at, at that stage, war hadn't started?

War hadn't started, it was about 1935, no war then.

28:00 I was even thinking about war then, they might have been, but I wasn't. That was when Marabou won the Melbourne Cup. 1934, Peter Pan.

Remember things by the Melbourne Cup?

I remember things by the Melbourne Cup who won. 1905 was Blue Spec.

28:30 The first race course…was the river and they were bringing people across on a ferry out to the races and the boat tipped over and two people drowned. The horse that won the first race was called Disaster. Blue

29:00 Speck won the Melbourne Cup and Dad was telling me about the one that won the last race, something tied in, I will always remember that. I was born in 1915, any year I can tell you about the Cup. I was always interested in it.

For those four or five years, what were you doing after you got married?

Working up the bush.

29:30 She worked at a hospital.

Did you have any children before you went to war?

Yes, one, well two, a girl she died. But the other bloke, he died after I come home.

How did your wife feel about you joining up?

She had no say in it, I was boss. She was a bit taken up about it, but she saw everybody else joining up, so she was alright.

30:00 She thought I'd be come again shortly, you don't expect the war to last that long. Like the Vietnam war, do you know that war went for ten years. Longest war, ten years, 1965 to 1975. We said, "We'll be home soon". Just like one of these jobs, a trip overseas, we'll be home soon.

Tell us,

30:30 **you had a long time in the light horse, you were already well trained, so training must have been?**

Training was totally different because you were a foot soldier on the deck. Rifle drill was different, training was different, marching was different. We never marched, we were on horse back. Marched thirty or forty kilomentres, "Get out mate". We used to march from Puckapunyal out to the rifle range, about twenty odd

31:00 mile, shoot there all day, and march back home again. Twenty mile, that's a long way to march. One thing about the army, every fifty minutes, you had a mess, men may smoke, you sit down. You get as near as you can to a fence and you put your feet up, or get your feet higher than your head and it takes your tiredness away. You just lay flat out. Put your feet up

31:30 high. If you've been walking or running, put your feet up higher than your head. You'll relax quicker. It was totally different. The firing was different, twenty metre range out to a big range and from a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, eight hundred metres. Yards in those days. Trying

to hit a target about that size.

32:00 Flying an aeroplane, how's a 303, it's got a fifty million chance in hitting it. You know what guns we had when I first started in the army? Wood, a piece of wood. This is a 303, this is a Bren gun, that's a machine gun. Wood. We trained with dummy stuff. Funny thing, when we

32:30 went over to the Middle East they had tank barriers up, with a steel, made of wood, and the tanks would drop wooden bombs. They dropped wooden bombs on their tank things. They were good planes, big Savoyan bomber [Italian Savoya-Marchetti], four engine bomber, but they flew that high you could hardly see

33:00 them.

I will ask you about, even though training was different, were you kind of coping a bit better than the other blokes because you had been in the military?

Probably yes because when we joined up and went to the show ground, we were still in civilian clothes, no uniforms, sleeping on the

33:30 floor. Blokes were coming in all the time, they were recruiting from country areas down to the city. My mates and blokes I had never heard of before, they came from all over Victoria and then they herded them all into Melbourne. When they got enough together, they were still building Pucka then, they hadn't built it, this was early on. We were going to Pucka and they lined us up in four ranks, one, two, three, four, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th Battalion.

34:00 No, it was the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Battalion. Because New South Wales was 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, that's how you become formed. When I joined up you, it was formed fours, it was always formed fours, then they tried to make it threes. You tried to get to your mate, all the way up there, that was your rank, they tried to separate your mates and you'd try and sneak in. I don't know why they did it, that's the army, two brothers couldn't be in the

34:30 same unit. That was in Pucka, early days.

Why not two mates together?

I don't know, a bit of collusion maybe, one was bad enough, get two together and it was too much to handle. There were a few rogues in those days. In 1939 things were pretty tough for the army. Very few jobs, and I remember in early 1940,

35:00 four or five big cars came up from Melbourne. Full of coppers [police]. The whole brigade was lined up and the coppers walked up and down the aisles. A couple of days later a lot of those blokes were missing. If you were a wife basher, or a minor thing, they didn't worry about you. If it was a serious charge you got discharged straight away. The cops took you. But they didn't worry about

35:30 speed fines, they didn't worry about it, you could join the army, but a serious crime, we had a lot of blokes disappear. They joined the army to get away from the coppers. Coppers caught them.

What was the recruits like, the 1939 troops. You said fit and healthy but why were they joining up first do you think?

I wouldn't have a clue, same as me, a trip overseas.

36:00 We knew there was going to be fighting overseas; it was a good trip, chance to get overseas. It wasn't the money, you couldn't say it was the money, I was earning more money and they were paying me in a month. It wasn't for King and country, it was an adventure.

36:30 **Let's get to it. We'll talk about the ship you went on.**

Strathmore. Good ship. We were lucky, we got quarters on board, we had cabins. The other Dunera, Ettrick, couple of the troops in World War I, they slept in hammocks. We had two man cabins, civilian ship. There were still

37:00 civilians on board. She had been requisitioned by the Department of War, we had a wonderful time.

Were you in there with your mates, in the battalion?

Yes, the whole battalion on one ship.

Did you have a tearful goodbye with your wife at the

37:30 **port?**

You had (UNCLEAR) we sneaked out of camp and a mate of mine had a car and picked us up and we went to Melbourne, if we hadn't been on roll call next morning we wouldn't of gone overseas. Everybody races to get back again, seven o'clock, roll call. If I had known then what I know now, I would still be in Melbourne.

38:00 A lot of blokes went to the second lot. Just one of those things, adventure.

She didn't see you off at the port?

No, they weren't allowed. All the ships went out and we were up in the top deck and I wonder it didn't tip over we were all

38:30 leaning on one side and they were waving at us, yelling and screaming, we didn't worry about it. Took us about five days to get to Perth. Down in the southern ocean. When we got there we picked up the 11th Battalion. There was a 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Battalion. We picked up the 11th, we left the

39:00 convoy then in the Indian Ocean, because our ship was a passer and we took off, left the other blokes behind, because the track could do about twenty odd knots.

Tape 3

00:32 **You were talking about going over on the Strathmore, passenger liner?**

P&O [Pacific and Orient line] ship.

So you had a pretty nice trip going over?

Yes, a good trip.

Do you remember where you stopped first?

When we left Melbourne, first stop was Perth. We stayed there a few days, to pick up the 11th Battalion.

01:00 The 11th Battalion were anchored out on a ship what they called rotary row, they weren't allowed ashore. I don't know why. We weren't allowed to leave at the same time. We had a wonderful time in Perth. In fact the lady that, a mate and I, I don't know how, we were talking, she had a maiden voyage

01:30 on the Queen Mary and she had a model like of the Queen Mary about that big and you pulled each deck around like that and it showed what was on the next deck. Everyone that was on board has got one of these ships. We were fascinated by this thing, it was a huge ship. This thing, you slide it around on hinges on the end and it showed what was underneath each deck. We were fascinated. We had a beautiful meal there because a mate and I decided to do the washing up and wiping up.

02:00 They were amazed, men doing that, it was a rich family and they had maids to do that. We volunteered to do it and they were amazed we done the washing up for them. She was a lovely lady. I got a letter from her overseas afterwards.

This was a woman basically your Mother's age?

A woman who lived in Perth. One of the rich people, she was money.

How did you get talking to her in the first place?

I was walking down the street

02:30 one day and we were in a café or something and we got talking. (UNCLEAR) Victorian regiment, she wanted to know what it was. We talked and talked with a mate of mine and she invited us back to tea and we did. Drove us back again. It was good. We did the same thing when we got to Colombo. Our next stop was Colombo when we left Perth. We all marched up, the ship couldn't

03:00 go right in, it was too shallow, we had to go in by penice, boat. We all marched to what they called the polo ground, a huge open area and pub down that end, the canal, we were standing out talking and a lady come up and talked to us. Apparently her husband was a brigadier in the army and he was posted back to England or somewhere and she loaned us her car with a chauffeur

03:30 the day we were there. Took us all around Colombo, Kandy, out to Trincomalee, out of the blue. Her husband was the army, she must've thought she would help these two, why she picked us I don't know. Must be the angelic look on my face. We had a good time. Took us everywhere.

This was in Colombo?

The Galle Face

04:00 hotel is like Raffles in Singapore. Beautiful place, big swimming pool, marble statues and the floor was scrubbed, of course we had hobnailed boots on, we walked across this dance floor and we thought we were going to create a riot if we kept walking that floor. Army hobnailed boots on, one of the famous dance floors in the world, we got kicked out. It was a beautiful pub.

You couldn't actually go dancing there because of your shoes?

04:30 No, we weren't allowed on the floor. We went there first to what they called the Asio money changer. You change your money into rupees and anas, you know. Get a handle of small stuff, ones with little

holes in it, some is bigger, some is bigger still, throw it to the kids. I think we were getting eight rupees to the pound and so many anas to the rupee and something else.

05:00 There is a hundred for that and that give them to the kids. That's a week's wages for a lot kids.

How long were you there in Colombo?

Only for the day, shipped in and gave us shore leave and back again. I don't know what the idea was, probably, might have been to take on stores, I don't know. From there we went up through the Red Sea,

05:30 got chased by a submarine. We took off; we went to a place called Al Qu?ayr. We disembarked half way up the Red Sea. We got onto a steel truck open truck open truck like a cattle truck and it had square wheels on it I am sure. They took us from there to Palestine.

06:00 We were in our surge, steel train, about forty one degrees. Used to getting heat here, the heat, not like that.

How did you manage on the ship by the way? Did you have seasickness at all?

No. A lot of blokes did, we used to make them sick and stand in front of them. "Look at that poor bugger there,

06:30 you look a pale colour, did you have greasy bacon for breakfast?" A bit of a devil at times.

07:00 **So how was that with mates did you strike up any friendships on the ship on the way over?**

Our battalions, a lot of funny things happened. There was a portable gramophone, the one you wind up; it was a blackout ship, all dark. This bloke kept playing these records over and

07:30 over, Sunset Freeman, he had sunset red hair, one of the blokes picked up the gramophone and threw it over the side, "You are not playing those bloody things anymore". It was driving everybody up wall; he threw it over the side.

Sorry, who through it over?

This big bloke, nobody was going to argue with him; he was too big. He was sick of the music being played over and over. God knows how many medicine went over the side,

08:00 you get on deck and you just put your hands back and let it slip out your hands. You did ski ship over the back of the boat, lay targets. You'd exercise on board every morning. Going through the Red Sea, god it was hot. You left your cabin and went on deck and you'd take your mattress up top and sleep. About four o'clock in the morning the laskas they'd come and hose all the decks down, god knows how many mattresses went over the side too.

08:30 It was hot; you'd sleep with nothing on. We had nurses on board, Strath was a big ship, brigade had quarters and we had the 2/2nd AGH [Australian General Hospital], nurses, and our platoon struck what they called in line picket. We had to pull crews on the whole ship to keep everybody off. A and B and C deck

09:00 were taboo, no soldier was allowed up there. The lowest rank was (UNCLEAR). You have no idea; we were all wandering around B deck where all the nurses were, stinking hot, doors open, port holes open, we were patrolling the ship, flat out. It was funny.

What do you mean, you'd see all these nurses in their

09:30 **underwear?**

Nothing, it was too hot to wear underwear. It was stinking hot, no breeze.

So would your mates try to switch so they could do the patrol?

Our battalion struck it, our company really, our platoon. We had to be there. You'd do that for eight hours, patrol.

10:00 **There were some perks then?**

It was good, you had not other duties like that, you'd do eight hours of that and the rest of the time you were off. Everybody wanted to get on. The canteen was robbed too one day. We knew what went on. There were dixies [cooking pots] down the kitchen they had tea in. The canteen was run by civvies; they put beer into these big tins. They left the

10:30 barrels there but emptied them all. It caused a hell of a stink about that, nobody could do anything about it. When we got to Palestine all our platoon was caught up, caught. They were charged with stealing. Nothing happened to anybody. We knew nothing about it, we saw it going on, we weren't going to dob in a mate. You don't dob your mates in.

11:00 Hundreds of pounds of beer and stuff was gone. It was all drank and when finished with the dixies through it over the side, no evidence. We used to play bingo, housey housey, we used to use a big white

beams from the kitchen, when you finished you threw it over the side. They tried to get our blokes to do the washing up in the kitchen, out the water hole.

11:30 No more, as soon as they had to do their own. They tried to put our blokes on kitchen duty; that stopped very smart.

Sounds like there were a few mischievous chaps?

There were some very funny men.

Can you remember one in particular?

Tutter Ryan was one. They called him Tutter.

12:00 Fitzroy boy, Sunset Freeman, Lefty, they were all real cards, funny boys. Clowns in a circus.

Tell us what your first impressions of Palestine were?

Hot, hot, hot, all you could see was sand, miles and miles of nothing.

12:30 Our camp was at (UNCLEAR) and the first job we had there I was patrol and the Kibbutz they were built on two road side, houses, we used to have to guard them then against the Arabs, we had to stand guard in the Kibbutz. All the girls and boys, the girls wore

13:00 white shorts and blue shirt and the boys were blue shirt and white shorts. They all worked out in the field and everybody chipped in. If you had any money, plonked it into the Kibbutz. They were hard working. The Arabs done nothing for Palestine, they never grew agriculture or nothing at all. A few sheep and cattle and goats. The Jews made Palestine, that's +

13:30 why the Arabs want it back now, the Jews have made it what it is. Oranges and fruit, they were self sufficient.

Do you remember being told by the army or your superiors about what would happen in Palestine?

No fraternisation. You don't fraternise. You used to go the dances and sing songs

14:00 and link arms. What the eye don't see the heart don't believe. You didn't tell anybody. You just sneaked out of camp at night.

Were they friendly to you the local people?

Yes. They knew what was, why we were there, the Arabs wouldn't come in. We had blokes who would've shot them. We were told to be tough with them. That's

14:30 when I seen red headed blue eyed Arabs, over from the First World War. Old enough the kids born from the First World War.

One thing we didn't clarify early on was what was your specialty in the army, what was your role? As an infantry man?

Shoot. What they called PBI.

15:00 **What is a PBI?**

Poor bloody infantry. That's what we were known as. Cannon fodder. That's what a foot soldier is.

Do you remember getting to know any of the Jewish people there in Palestine?

Not off hand. We were never

15:30 that close to them to get to know them. You'd mix with them but as far as knowing who that was and who that was, no.

So you actually had turns doing patrols in between training, is that right?

Yes, we used to do what they call punter patrol, we used to go on camel ride. You might be out for a fortnight and you'd camp out and just to make sure everything was all right. I don't know why, the powers above say

16:00 do it so you do it. You are in the army now, you don't query it, they say do it, you do it. A lot of us got seasick riding camels.

Did you?

No, it's weird. Did you ever get a chance to ride a camel? It's like when they start to get up and down.

16:30 Camels are alright as long as you don't stand in front of them, they'll spit at you. They were dirty things, I hate camels.

What was the training there, how did it really differ from Puckapunyal? Was it because you were training in the desert?

We were training in the desert and we were training as battalions and brigades. In Pucka we only did basic training and used to go out and dig trenches, as your battalion. But over there we were part of the

17:00 whole army. We were out on maneuvers, we had the whole brigade. In fact we interfaced with the 16th Brigade, the 17th Brigade, and the 18th Brigade. There were thousands of men out there. That was the training. What was the point when sending planes over, how do you fight the planes.

So you didn't have anti-aircraft guns?

We did but they were

17:30 useless. The plane is gone like that.

You were actually in the camps when they would strafe [bomb or harass with shells from aircraft] you?

We were in the camp when the Italian bombers came over. They were bombing Cairo and bombing Alexandria. We were about twenty or thirty kilometres out or more. We had big EPIP [English pattern, Indian product] tents,

18:00 where the anti-aircraft guns were firing and the nose cones were landing in our camp. When they fire up like that, the shell would burst and the nose cover was falling on to our camps. They didn't know of course, they were twenty or thirty mile away. They were firing at the plane and as the shell went up it burst and the nose

18:30 come down. From that height, they hit nothing, our tents were buried in the deck anyhow and they were done so far. Twenty men to a tank there was, big EPIP tents. Huge things. The danger was getting hit by a nose cone from one of your own shells. Nobody ever got a hit but it was pretty close at times.

Was this a regular occurrence?

Yes, when they come over to bomb, they'd just open up. Aircraft in Alex would just open up

19:00 and blow hundreds of shells into the air and depending where the nose guards went depending which way it was coming.

What kind of exercises did you do there in Palestine?

Mainly formation. They dug trenches mind you, we used to stand to every morning, the whole battalion used to stand there, in case the enemy attacked, the enemy were miles and

19:30 miles away in bloody Italy. We still had to do that every morning. You'd clear your gun; you'd fire your burst out your gun to make sure your gun was firing properly. You'd stand down. They were digging trenches.

In the sand?

Big trenches.

This might sound a silly question because I don't understand engineering, but when you are building a trench in the sand, wouldn't the sand just keep coming back in?

People have got the wrong

20:00 idea of sand, it's not all sand. Half the time it's rock. In fact a lot of places you built a little, what they call a ‘sanger’, you collect all these stones and get behind it. It's that hard. It's freezing of a night time. Sand doesn't hold heat, in the day time it's that damn hot you couldn't move. But as soon as the sun went down you'd freeze.

What a

20:30 **horrible environment?**

It was terrible.

What about water, did they give you water rations?

Water bottle full of water and you hand back a mug of that to the kitchen for making tea and soup. It was chlorinated. We wondered why up in Pucka they used to give you water and they'd chlorinate the shower so you wouldn't drink it. All you got was a water bottle full of water a day. You could see the

21:00 idea of that because if you drunk it all at once, your mate wouldn't give you any. You got your water ration, that's your ration. You didn't drink the water you'd get under to have your shower and jump out again, the chlorine was in the water to make sure we didn't drink it. When we went out on patrols, we come to a village and there would be a well and we'd drink that water. They would say, "Don't drink that water". But when you are

21:30 thirsty. I've drained the water out of a radiator of a truck to get water to drink, oil and greasy water, that's what you do when you are thirsty. You are not hungry until you are starving and you are not thirsty until your tongue is hanging down to your stomach and I've been both.

So was that water from the radiator hot?

No it was a broken down truck.

It was lucky you had that skill to know how to go to a radiator.

22:00 You can…little shrubby stuff in the bush, you put your dixie in the bottom, fill that with leaves and put a poncho and you get water in the morning, the leaves would sweat off the shrub and you get

22:30 water. A lot of blokes don't know that. You can always get water in the bush.

In the desert?

Yes, as long as you got a bit of green stuff. Of a night time it's moist.

Tell us what happened then, how long were you in Palestine before you moved up?

April, May, we shifted up the desert in Christmas. We had Christmas in early

23:00 December. I can tell you. That red book has the dates. We had early Christmas dinner and we went up to a place, Derna, Fort Capuzzo, all those

23:30 places, that was before Christmas 1940.

What do you mean Christmas dinner? Do you mean mint jelly and lamb?

Yes, the cooks dished up, we had beer, Christmas pudding, cake, nearly all tin stuff it was. They give us a good meal. Once you get up there you get nothing, a ration, you get bully beef and biscuits. That was a good feed. I

24:00 think it was the night before we had a case of beer in our tent. Our beds was three planks with wood at the end and you put a plank in the middle and you lay on that and I was laying down and pouring beer in that side and it was running out that side. That's how full we were. We had to move out at four o'clock in the morning. You couldn't take it with you so you had to drink it all so everybody drank their

24:30 grog. That was funny.

Nobody thought, "We have to get up at four o'clock in the morning it's probably good just to bury the beer"?

No, we didn't know what time it was. The whistle would go, it was still dark, you only took what you had, you couldn't take your kit bag that was already stored. We knew we were going, so all your other stuff was put, you took what you could carry. Hop into the trucks and took us way out to, dropped us out the back and

25:00 walk now, "Walk where?". You couldn't see nothing. It was the early hours of the morning.

How was this then, what did you know about I suppose the military movements? Italy had joined the war by then, now this was the first stop after Palestine, was it Derna?

No, before Derna,

25:30 Sidi Barrani in Egypt. They tried to come across the border. The first Italian I struck was at a placed called Fort Capuzzo. Air force had bombed it and we went out on patrol, our platoon. The bloody plane was machine gunning us; they thought we were Italians, our own planes. Nobody told air force we were in the area, they thought, "There's

26:00 movement there".

Did anyone get killed?

No, our job was to make Molotov cocktails [home made bomb] to destroy the planes on the aerodrome at Fort Capuzzo.

Is that what you did?

We did.

How did you get there, did you sneak in there at night?

Walked.

You walked onto the airfield where the Italians kept their planes?

Yes. You light it, of course the Italians are all down underneath. They had dugouts dug way down the bottom, concreted

26:30 in. We went out and shot back again.

You just destroyed their planes?

Yes, most of them. They had to get a supply from Italy then.

Where would you get the materials to make Molotov cocktails?

A bottle of petrol and a bit of rag, that's all it is.

Where did you get the bottle from?

Plenty of bottles around.

Beer bottles?

Beer bottles, wine bottles, any type of bottles, the Italians are great ones for wine, you get plenty of bottles.

27:00 Plenty of beer in Egypt. Good beer. Tie a rag up and light it; that was a good weapon, they're still using it today.

Why not use your grenade, because they are too special?

Grenade is just, this was fire. A grenade just, when you throw a Molotov cocktail and it explodes it sets

27:30 fire to everything. It's better than a grenade. You drop a grenade down a hole. They had trenches built underneath and they had airholes coming up and our engineers used to pour oil and diesel and petrol down the hole and drop a few grenades down and put an eye tank over the hole, it was big trap. Of course that would set fire underneath. We went down there afterwards, people were

28:00 burnt everywhere, they were underneath, twenty or thirty feet underneath. Italy spent seven years building that all around Derna, Gazala, and all those places. Mussolini [Benito Mussolini Italian Head of State] was going to hang onto that. He forgot our boys were coming over.

That would've been a bit of fun in a crazy kind of way.

It was. It was fun to us, except when your mates started to get knocked off, then it wasn't fun.

You are talking about the Molotov

28:30 **cocktail period there, now your mates didn't get hurt there did they?**

No.

How long were you doing that for by the way?

It was only one or two nights. The artillery went up and brought a barrage down. We went forward. We had to go through the tank trap; there was a big tank trap. Through the barbwire, through the minefields. You hunt for the mines with your bayonet through the

29:00 sand. "There's another one". On your hands and knees.

Did you learn that training in Puckapunyal?

No, you learnt that overseas. It was quick that you learnt too. You didn't know where they were, it was all sand. When we camped at a place, I forget the name, off the road and we stayed there for a while. There was blokes that had cleared the place of mines, they laid what you call a grid pattern, they put charges

29:30 on the pattern and set off what they call instant detonation which means they can blow all the mines up. That was in theory. It blew, I suppose, ninety percent up. But when the trucks were coming in and of course the sand was blowing, the sand would open up and bang up would go a truck. You didn't know where they were, the sand was shifting all the time. It's alright to lay a mine in sand

30:00 because it's only that deep, but as soon as the wind storms comes its that deep. A lot of blokes got injured. A mate of mine driving his truck the front of his truck got blown off. He's sitting there like this. I'll never forget that. Another bloke got a parcel from home and they were shelling us. He opened up his parcel and the next thing there was a shell along side of him. Boom, blew him and his

30:30 parcel, when it cleared he's got a tin of fruit in his hand. The rest of his stuff has disappeared. That was a funny thing.

He would have been annoyed?

Was he ever. I'll never forget that. The I tanks [?] done a good job.

The, beg your pardon?

What you call 'I tank'. Big tank with a huge track on it. Heaviest tank they had at that time

31:00 but they weren't a patch on the German tanks. They were bullet proof more or less but not shell. But they were, what, English mob, I tanks.

After the one or two nights of throwing the Molotov cocktails at the Italian air base, what happened then, were you given orders to keep marching more?

31:30 We went back to our lines again. That was under to get rid of any planes in case anyone took them off. We went forward. When they found out about the planes, the Italians started retreating. Retreat, retreat. Fort Capuzzo, the whole lot, they kept going back and back and back. They were at Tobruk we captured thousands and thousands of Italians. We had them in a big compound. They had this big compound built

32:00 for us. It was the reverse thing. I remember Billy Ledgerwood, say that's the compound, they had the Italians down in one corner and Bill stood on the corner and put a Bren gun and down that one and down that one and no body would move. He had thousands of blokes lined, nobody was going to put a foot over that line, he would've shot them. He had a Bren gun. He was holding them all back. They were all standing there.

32:30 I remember giving a drink of water to a bloke and he just got up and he died, I was crook at him for drinking my water. I helped him, I thought, he said, "Aqua, aqua". I gave him a drink and I was crook on that for giving a dead bloke my water.

We just maybe missed out a little bit about what happened after the airfield, what was your orders though, what was the next bit of

33:00 **action or conflict?**

Go forward.

This is just solely with the Italians, this is before you started?

No Germans then.

The Italians are, what kind of fighters were they? Did they put up a good fight?

There was two different battalions. There was King Frederick's men and the black shirts. They wore black shirts, they were Mussolini's boys.

33:30 They were in front, the black shirts were in front, they didn't want to fight at all, they weren't interested in fighting, but the other blokes, they came out with little suitcase and a white flag, and behind their back, they'd pull a gun out when they got near you. Any black shirt that came out with his hand up got shot, you couldn't trust them. But the other blokes, the King's men, they didn't want to fight. They were the old

34:00 soldiers, they weren't interested in the black shirts or Mussolini. It's like, all Germans weren't Nazis. Some of the younger ones, but the older ones, they knew what war was about. Some of the guards we had on camp there towards the end when Russia started eating all the Germans up, we had chaps who were ex prisoners, German prisoners in England, called up all the

34:30 old ones as guards for the camp. They got that way, when the bombers came over, they just opened the gates and let us out. It was that bad. Our camp got hit god knows how many times, we lost about a hundred and fifty men in that camp. A bomb went right through our hut, (UNCLEAR) we were lucky we had trenches dug and big pine lines over the top and covered over with dirt.

35:00 It had to be a direct hit to cause any damage. Our hut was two, four, six, eight rooms. It landed, blew the end right out.

Tell us about the Italians, did you get to know any of them, the ones you took prisoner?

We had an Italian chap in our unit,

35:30 his brother was a prisoner. His brother apparently had gone back to visit Italy and he got inducted into the army, they called him up. He was guarding his own brother. That's the trouble, you see, we had a lot of Italians, if they had gone back to Italy, they'd get into military service, irrespective of how old they are. If they clear off before they get a certain age and go back they get called up, they've got to do it. Greeks, Italians,

36:00 Yugoslav, we had a lot, quite a few. We didn't care much for them really. Didn't worry about them, they were just wogs.

What about this mate of yours and he was guarding his brother, did they talk to each other?

Yes. The other blokes made, he was Australian. He just happened to go at the wrong time.

36:30 They inducted him into the army, he was that age, into the army. The other bloke was Australian army. We had a couple of German parentage in our unit. They were German but they were Aussies. (UNCLEAR)

Do you remember any of them later on meeting up with any Germans and talking to them?

No. Not really. There as all sorts. We had

37:00 Danes, we had a lot of Irishmen. The Irish battalion who fought through the war, they hated England, they were neutral. Germans and Irelands, they were neutral.

They were Irish Australians you mean?

No, they were Irish themselves. Now the Irish guards, the palace guards, has Irish, Scots and Welsh guards, they are all attached to England, they fought.

37:30 If you were in the army you did as you were told. Irish guards fought.

When you said you took a lot of prisoners, at Tobruk you were talking about?

Not only Tobruk, every place, we had prisoners galore, they didn't want to fight poor buggers, In fact we overrun them. They fought alright; we lost a lot of blokes there. They were down in concrete bunkers with

38:00 machine guns firing at you. But our intelligence mob mapped, their guns were mounted on what you call a mounting and they'd come out and fire and they'd shift and they'd do that every night, all through the day, on a fixed mounting. They mapped, they used to take three minutes past twelve, at five minutes past twelve the shift would go like that, and you'd miss them, the machine guns were firing and you could walk right through

38:30 them. They never had enough brain to traverse the gun, they were told to fix mount and they'd fire a burst there, they'd hit it and move. They were mounting, like the Germans, the Germans, (UNCLEAR), it's gotta go, I remember unloading engines, railway engines off a truck once, and flat top

39:00 truck, they load them on alright and we wanted to get them off for building sleepers and making a platform and running it down. They said, "No". We said, "Righto" and just tipped it off the side. He said, "It's got to go". They wouldn't do it our way; you've got to do it their way.

Tape 4

00:35 **You were just telling Heather about fighting the Italians, even though there was death happening and all that did it seem that the war was going quite easily for you?**

Well, yes. At that stage with the Italians it was a breeze. They didn't want to fight. Once you get a movement on,

01:00 you bypass, keep going and going and until we got up to a place called Agedabia, way up in the desert they told us that there was Germans further up. We said, "Bullshit, Germany is way back in Europe". Once the planes started coming over we knew Germans were there. We were right on the road, the sea was there and

01:30 for about twenty or thirty kilometres inland there was a marsh of fog, they couldn't come around. The only way they could come around was up the road and we were guarding the road. A platoon of men guarding the rode and the German army had tanks and planes. They sent these little scout cars up, run backwards and forwards, they come back with bullet holes in them. The Germans were firing at them. They'd go in a

02:00 scout and come back again. "There must be Germans up there; there must be somebody up there". By that time they pulled us out because the Germans started going into Greece. They wanted the whole division, the 6th Division, was going to Greece and they pulled us out and brought the other division over. When they got up to us they though were going to get our rifles and everything, they come up with nothing, not a thing. They took us back

02:30 to Alex about two or three days up to Greece and we were still in khaki shorts and khaki shirts and they took us up to Larisa. We were up to our knees in snow. Freezing bloody cold. Army. No brain.

Did it make a lot of sense because you were desert trained and you already had experience?

Churchill [Winston Churchill British Prime Minister]. The whole division,

03:00 play war games, in the war office, keep pushing stuff down. "6th Division, that will hold them, I will push them over". We were written off. We lost forty five percent in Greece and I don't know how many percent we lost in Crete. Our battalion was reformed seven times, that's how much we lost. It is a

03:30 shambles, absolute shambles. No planes, no navy. The navy come to try and get us off Crete but lost all their ships. That's why Mountbatten [Lord Mountbatten Head of Combined Operations Command] was there. He was on the HMS Kelly, straight in, only those on top of the deck were safe. We got sunk.

We will come to that in a bit. Why would they pull out

04:00 **fighting men well trained in desert war fare?**

Ask Churchill. One they sent over to us hadn't been in the desert either. They'd done services in Palestine but that's totally different. They got pushed away, they got pushed right back. I've always tried to work out why they did that nobody could tell me. Ask the English. Churchill I'm sure, the powers, they were

04:30 fighting this war the same as the 1914-18 war. Trench war. Churchill thought he was, a newspaper (UNCLEAR) correspondent in the Boer War, that's what he was originally. War correspondent, I think he thought he was back in the war. When the Boers' took prisoners, our prisoner, they didn't lock them up. They disarmed them and walked back to your own. Only

05:00 one war where there has been no prisoners taken, do you know what that is? Vietnam. The only war we fought that there was no Australian prisoners of war. Boer War, Colonial War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Malaya, all prisoners, none in Vietnam. There was MIAs, missing in action, but no prisoners. What did we lose?

05:30 Five hundred or something. Why they took us out I wouldn't have a clue. That amazed us too. If you are going to take us over to a place like, get us clothing. Bloody shorts and a shirt and up to your knees in snow, freezing cold. You couldn't even light a match; your hands were too cold. Ours is not to reason why, you do as you are

06:00 told.

Just before you went did you have any leave time, time off?

In Alex [Alexandria]. They took us out of the desert and dropped us down at El Wan. I think we got two days, it wasn't long enough. A lot of blokes shot through at Alex. The train, what they called "Leaping Lena", the old used to, and you'd get a cab coming back home again

06:30 and you'd leave the cab about half a mile away from camp and wouldn't pay him and walk back to the camp. No leave, you weren't allowed to leave. A lot of blokes got docked out of their pay. If you were smart enough you'd sneak back into your camp. The next thing you know we were in Greece.

What did you get up to on leave? Where would you go?

Pubs in Alex, bar. Have a good feed, good

07:00 food there. One place, the Sydney Hotel in Alex, the waiters were Sudanese, about six foot four, half past midnight to look at them, black as the ace of spades, and all wear like a white night gown, all dressed in white. There would be twelve of us at a table and everybody would order a three course meal and he wouldn't write a thing down and he'd bring it out and put it right in front of you, didn't make a mistake. They were wonderful men.

07:30 When we were on leave we stopped at a pub run by the Red Cross. You'd take your shirt and sox and shorts off and boots and put them outside your door, when you got up in the morning your shoes were clean, shirt and pants washed and pressed and starched and a cup of coffee and a newspaper and croissant for breakfast. That was leave. It lasted two days,

08:00 that was terrific.

Did you go to any of the wilder parts of town?

Yes. The Rue des plaisirs, do you know what that was? Any World War bloke would know what sister street was.

What went on there?

That's where all the bordellos were, same as in Rose Street in Fremantle. The one in Kalgoorlie. Thousands of them there.

08:30 French quarter, English quarter, a lot of French. There was one area there where they were all French, the houses, the streets. French were very big there; in fact it was a Frenchman that built the canal. That was beautiful. One of our blokes used to spend most of his time in the French quarter. Used to pick him up in a car and take him back again. He had a wonderful time in Alex. There was a lot to do.

09:00 **Did you go into the bordellos?**

No, I was a married man. It cost too much money; we never had any bloody money. You went to a pub and they'd have food on a counter, you'd order a beer and you could have a feed.

Tell us about going to

09:30 **Greece, you told us it was cold but what were you expecting to face when you got up there?**

We landed at midnight, it was dark. It had been bombed, Larisa had been bombed. The place was

burning, everything was burning, fire. We landed in the middle of this. "What the hell is going on here" and they said, "It was bombed last night". "What the hell are we going to do here?" Stukas [German bombers] were coming

10:00 over, bombs, we were told there were tanks up the road, they were there all right. There was one road and one railway line in Greece. The railway line comes through two or three tunnels and one road. That's all there was going up to Greece. Unbeknown to us the Germans knew where we were. A lot of the

10:30 Greeks ploughed arrows into the ground to show where we were. In fact when we first landed in Athens there was German troops walking around the street, because Greece was neutral. You couldn't do anything about it, it's a neutral country. Egypt was neutral, Cairo.

11:00 Embassies were open; you can't go shooting the Germans in the Embassy. Same with Athens. Telephone lines were open between Athens and Germany.

What did you do when you saw a German soldier?

Nothing, what could you do, if you shot him you'd be up for charge. There weren't that many of them mind you, that's when we first went there. Of course they disappeared when they started really pushing

11:30 in from Yugoslavia and those places they all disappeared. That was six or eight months later. Totally different people, the Greece people are totally different to the Egyptians. Everybody over there wanted a handout. The Greeks were different, they'd give to you. We had a good time in Greece.

12:00 **When you first got to Larisa, it was on fire, where were you set up? Where did you have to go?**

Nobody knew. It was absolute chaos and pandemonium. I don't know what our crowed thought was going to happen, it was dark, and they sent a train, the railway was working, of course the line got bombed and you couldn't get back that way,

12:30 you can't get back on the road, they'd shoot you off. We had to walk. We walked from one end of Greece to the other. Twice we were rear guard on the railway line; we blocked the tunnel to stop the Germans coming up the tunnel. If they did, it was to blow it. Now there is a railway line engineer, Buny Young, he was an engine driver, and they drove a train, engine,

13:00 with ammunition on board and they drove it up the line and after they got past they blew it. It only took five minutes and the Jerries [Germans] would fix it again. They had engineers, they had air supply. You'd be coming along and they'd pick us up and a truck would be outbound a couple of mile down the road and you'd hear, "Truck coming out". The truck would clear off and leave us on the side.

13:30 They were bombing the road, I got hit there. That's where I got hit across the head and my eye there, I don't know what happened. We lost a lot of blokes there. They were going to march us right down to Corinths, right down the Corinths canal, right down to a place, what's the name of the place we disembarked from? Everybody had to carry a rifle and ammunition, a lot of it.

14:00 We got out to this place and the navy was going to take us off. It was night time only and we had to hide under the bloody olive trees in the day time because the planes were flying around. When night time come we walked into the water up to our necks carrying your rifle to get on a barge that took us out to the navy ship. They put us on the Costa Rica ship and we just

14:30 got past Greece and they dropped one down the funnel and over the side and climbed onto the destroyer, the HMS Hero, I forget, everybody off the ship, I think we only lost one man, he jumped, the boat was going up and down in the water he jumped and they come together and another bloke busted his ankle. Everybody come off, we were lucky. We had to go back to Greece, to Crete

15:00 disembarked at Crete.

Before we get to Crete, I am interested to know how quickly after getting up to Larisa were you backtracking?

Next day. I don't know why they sent us in the first place, every bloke is coming this way and we were going that way. Army. Never query what the army does, you are not supposed to know, you just do what you are told.

Did it strike you at the time as very strange?

15:30 We didn't know, it was night time. It's dark, all your mob is going north. As I said, one road one line. Nothing, you walk. I thought, "What's going on here?" All the place was burnt, all the stores, it's a rail head and all their stores were stored there. Everything was on fire. You help yourself to food, "Food, food, where is it?" Tins of bully beef and

16:00 biscuits, help yourself. All of a sudden we had orders to retreat. 1st, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th battalion, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, the Kiwis [New Zealanders], I think there was one Pommy mob, it was nearly all Australian and New Zealanders, the poms wouldn't have a bar of it. Churchill wouldn't have anyone in there. No air force, no planes.

16:30 "They are only Aussies, get rid of that lot, they are expendable". They were, the whole division, not just, the whole 6th Division was written off. What people forget is you never send a full battalion into battle. Never pull the same company together to form the same platoon. If there is ten men in a platoon there will be two what they call BS line, they can reform the

17:00 battalion on those two, which they did seven times. We went from our place to Syria, lost a lot in Syria, up in the islands, they lost a lot in the islands, in fact it was our blokes dropped the parachute, thank Christ I was behind wire at the time.

It must've seemed very strange to arrive that night and be going the next day?

Well, it did.

17:30 You can't do nothing about it. You were glad to get out of that bloody place, fire, smoke, they'll come over and bomb it again. They set fire to something and then bomb it again the fire goes, we lost a lot of blokes there, the 1st Battalion, they all did, everybody lost a lot of blokes there. We knew then this wasn't the desert, war is on.

18:00 Crete we knew there was a war on then.

What was it like coming under the German air attack?

Hope to Christ its not you. Their Stukas, they've got whistles on the wings, they scream as they are coming down. It's funny, after a while you say, "He's not going to hit me he's going over there". You watch the plane and if he's flying over the bomb doesn't go down like that,

18:30 it goes down like that. Parabola. They've got to let their bomb go a long way before they hit to their target. They can't just grab their target and drop the bomb. You say, "He's alright, he's over left". When he's coming you cringe and hope to Christ it's not you. After a while, you sort of read the sounds,

19:00 he's over the right, over the left, don't worry about it. But the noise, you still jump you know. If he's right behind you, I've been bombed, I've been shelled. The worst is being bombed by your own planes. You don't mind being bombed by the Jerries but when your own blokes come over and drop bombs on you, that's out. As I said, you are in the army

19:30 you are not paid to think, you are paid to do.

You mentioned you got hit; this was on the withdrawal, what happened exactly?

Bomb landed close to us and I got picked up and thrown to the other side of the road and wrapped around a tree. Had a cut across the head, across the leg there, two toes blown off my foot,

20:00 but you don't feel it. Concussed and the rest of it, and eardrum burst, concussion but you just get back in the truck again. They dress the wound up, didn't go through the brain it went through the scalp, otherwise I wouldn't have a brain. You didn't worry about it. You get hit and you don't know about it until afterwards. A bit of shrapnel took the tongue out of my

20:30 boot and took my toes off and after a while I thought, "My foot is sore". I took my boot off the tongue of the boot fell off. Shrapnel went right across and cut the boot. You don't worry about it. The adrenaline, you are high up. One across the calf of the leg, everything is incidental you know. When you hear it, it's no good ducking your head, it's gone, it's the one you can't

21:00 hear that hits you. I think everybody is a fatalist. It's not me, it's my mate, he'll get it not me.

What about once you are hit do you get kind of worried?

It depends on how bad you are hit you know. I had a bit of shrap in the back of my neck and they took it out and years later, a bit of shrap in the back of the neck there.

21:30 You are in war, you had to get hurt. If you are worried about it, you'll grow grey hair. It's part of war. I don't know. Either it's on, if you are going to get hit you are going to get hit.

Still, losing a couple of toes, and shrapnel in legs and shoulder?

That's incidental.

22:00 It's like playing football and getting hit in the leg, that's part of the game. That's part of war. You can't expect to go to war and come out with nothing. Even if your brain, there is something there. You learn a lot. I learnt, you learn mateship. Even now they say, "Anzac, they are glorifying war". They are not, if you get amongst a couple of blokes on Anzac Day they are not talking about war

22:30 they are all talking about the funny things that happened. Mother Nature is a funny thing. I remember getting hit but I can't remember the pain. You never experience that pain again. You know it was there but you can't feel it again, it's gone, that's Mother Nature. You can run for miles with a bullet in your leg, then you might collapse. It's finished.

23:00 You'll just take off. Funny thing survival.

What are your memories, you got hit, do you remember at all, did you pass out, what happened?

I might have been out for a while. When everything cleared off and my mates come over, a bloke raced over, "Are you alright?". I said, "Yeah, I'm alright". Eyes full of dust, I couldn't hear, ear bleeding, blood here and there, like a lot, I wasn't the only one. There was a whole lot

23:30 of us that got hit, you look after your mates. "No, I'm alright". Hop in the truck and away you went. A bit of blood is nothing. Bandage it up. Sulfide powder, put a bandage on, you are right. Not like today, they call a chopper down and get the dust off you. Then, they put sulfide powder, they don't bother cleaning it out, because as soon as you start putting anything in, you bring the germs in.

24:00 Dust it with powder and bandage it. Within a week, all new skin underneath. I had a bullet went right through there. See? Took the end off my thumb. "Oh, I've been hit". It's just one of those things, it's part of war.

Does it make you scared, a bullet, shrapnel going through your head, top of your scalp ?

Well, no you are too frightened to be scared.

24:30 You are frightened to be afraid you know what I mean. It was going to happen but it would happen to him. It never happens to you, it's always him. If you start worrying about that mate you've had it. You doubt your own ability, lay down. It's not going to be me; it's always going to be him.

What about when it

25:00 **was him, a mate of yours?**

That's too bad, it's him not me. You see that much of it, blokes being knocked off. The Italians, thousands of them. Especially of them in the camp there, I've seen thousands and thousands of bodies stacked high in the camp. You've heard of Auschwitz [concentration camp], our camp was along side of it.

I will talk more to you about that a bit later on, but

25:30 **in Greece you also mentioned in the withdrawal you did some rear guard action.**

We'd hold the line while the others go back.

You did some blowing up?

We blew the line up, we blew the railway line up and then we got back again and they fixed it up. You'd hear them on the railway line the noise would come through the line and we'd clear off. We'd go back overland, there was no trucks,

26:00 walk, walk, walk. Greece was like that, hills, only one road one line. You just keep going, twice we done the rear guard. The third time we done that on Crete.

Could you see the Germans in the distance?

Yes. You could see them. We knew they were there, they knew we were there. We were on a hill looking down. A mate of mine, he was

26:30 killed, supposed to be killed, another Tasmanian boy, Hallis, a bloke said, "He got hit, got his head blown off". We get to Germany as prisoners of war, he was there in the camp, the Jews had fixed him up. We thought, "He's dead, we won't worry about him, he's had his head blown off". The Jews had fixed him up. He was a POW.

Once you had your injuries from the bomb

27:00 **blast were you still walking with these injuries?**

Yes, you had to. There was no other way, either that or just lay down and die. It wasn't bad enough to stop me from, I was deaf, I got to keep going, there might be another one behind him. It's a funny thing, you don't worry about it, well, I won't say you don't worry about it, but

27:30 you've got to keep going otherwise if I had lay down there I would have been cooked long before, I should of laid down, stopped there, then I wouldn't of gone through so much. It's a funny thing, I think you become a bit of a cynical in a war like that, instead of me it's him, he's going to get hit, not me.

So how long were you walking from Larisa down

28:00 **to the withdrawal point?**

It might have been five or six days, walk, walk, stop for a few days. Stop under a tree. You could only walk at night you couldn't walk during the day, too many planes around. You'd hide under the olive

trees, they were pretty big trees. If they had seen any movement, they'd shoot. They'd do that in any case just in case you were there. Then you move again. You all

28:30 come down to one spot. Greece, the Corinth Canal is only a narrow…everybody had to come through there to come south. We had to disembark at a place called Calamata, that's where we got on board. We did get on board after a bomb come through and we had to take it back to Crete.

How long were you hanging about in the olive trees?

About three or four days. We couldn't get off.

29:00 They said the navy had come back to take us off, which they did eventually, that's how they got hit, they had to come back again, no hope of getting off then. They said, the navy is coming in at the night time and if you can get to a certain spot they will take you off. Which we did but they didn't come in.

What did you eat along the way through Greece?

Bugger all. Scrounge what you can. The Greek people would give you olive and cheese and stuff called,

29:30 Greek wine, Retsina, tastes like resin, good food olives, goats cheese. A bit of food here and there. The army would give us a bit of a feed, bully beef and biscuits. Plenty of oranges around. You could live.

30:00 **So you told us how you went on this ship that got hit and it was sinking. As it was sinking a war ship pulled along side, what happened?**

Three destroyers, the ship started to list. It was a Dutch ship and the Dutch threw the things off and left us. The engine started to tip. Of course with the swell of the water going up and down and the

30:30 destroyer is along side too, they are taking on as many men as they could, then that pulled away and then another one come in, another destroyer, the destroyer had to keep going flat out otherwise they tipped over. Too many men on board, she only holds about one hundred and forty men. We had hundreds and hundreds. A lot of them weren't fighting men, they were artillery, cooks, didn't carry weapons, that's what was wrong with Crete, they had no ammunition no

31:00 gun. When we landed there we had to carry our own rifles. Artillery don't carry rifles, cooks don't carry rifles. Men of staff don't carry rifles. With every rifle that was on Crete, there were four or five men with no gun. No ammunition.

So this war ship takes you, why wouldn't it take you all the way to Egypt?

31:30 It was too far. They took us back to Suda Bay, drop us off at Suda Bay, and go and get some more probably. They were pretty fast ships. Suda Bay had been bombed, there was sunken ships in the harbour. I remember, it sticks in your mind, a couple of blokes were real scroungers, they'd find anything. There was a NAAFI ship, English NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute]

32:00 is like a canteen. It had a lot of stuff on board. The rumour went around that that ship was full of NAAFI stores. A couple of blokes wanted to go and get it. They scrounged around to find a boat, they got almost to the boat and it blew up, it was a bloody ammunition ship. So much for rumours. They were going to get some food. That Suda Bay harbour was full of sunken ships. The navy lost a lot of ships there.

32:30 Bombed out of the water. General Freyberg the New Zealander, he's a VC [Victoria Cross] winner, he was CO [Commanding Officer], top brass on the island. I forget the name of the place under the olive tree, "They expect every man to do this" etc

33:00 he cleared off, he got taken off. Our Colonel, Ian Campbell, he got captured. Put him in an officer's camp. Up in Pucka our playground, there was the ranks, the playground and the officers quarters, their rooms were around and there was a bathhouse for all the officers,

33:30 he had a towel over his arm and he had pink pyjamas on. Walking across and we were all on parade. He's known as Campbell and his pink pyjamas. Everybody used to laugh. You didn't say it to his face mind you. The youngest colonel in the army he was, I think he was thirty-two. We had a captain who was nineteen.

34:00 Nineteen year old. How old was Mack? He was only twenty-three. Blokes up in the militia when the war broke, they needed officers and instructors so anybody who had that rank made it up. I went to the charter course, NCO [non commissioned officer], to get made up, you get part one orders and part two

34:30 RO [Routine Orders] orders, and then war broke out. You don't get substantive rank.

You were in Crete, what was this meeting under the olive trees?

Old Freyberg give us a, what was it called, when you convey something, "You've done a good job, keep

35:00 doing the job". Pep talk. He was sorry that we never had enough guns but he said, "We are looking into it. The navy will be back". The navy will be back. We had no food, we had no guns, a lot of us had guns and no ammunition. There was no way the navy was going to come back with hundreds of bloody Stukas

flying around.

35:30 Then the paratroopers arrived on May 15th. You've never seen anything like it. Shooting down like a penny arcade. They were crook on that, you shouldn't shoot them until they land on the deck you know. Vickers gun mounted in the fork of the olive tree.

36:00 Max Smellin the heavy weight boxer champion, my brother in law fought him, he was a prisoner, for three days. He got recaptured. He had his paybook, he was the heavy weight boxer champion of the world he was, he was a paratrooper. Germans were ready to pull off at Crete when our blokes capitulated. They sent a lot by sea from Greece across and a

36:30 couple of navy ships, what they call Kiyachis [?], ships thirty, forty, fifty, sixty footers, they went straight through them. They lost out, in fact after they washed up on shore in Crete, they lost thousands and thousands. They lost the biggest part of their paratroopers were wiped out, shot them down. They had gliders, one plane would tow three

37:00 or four gliders made of corrugated aluminium. They crash landed them. The paratroopers only jumped out from two or three hundred feet up. All their stuff was dropped by chute, our blokes woke up to this and got one of these big containers and put a sign up and they

37:30 come over and dropped all the stuff down. Their own sign, they thought it was their command, it was our blokes. It didn't make a difference eventually. What a shemozzle [mess]. We did the rear guard out in Calamata, the navy will come and pick you up. They did pick a lot up but they can't go back anymore; they lost too many ships. A mate of mine said, "Bugger this, when we stop we will clear off". Officer said, "Throw down your arms".

38:00 He said, "I am not throwing". We got shot off round the island. We heard about it after they marched you all back to a place called Chania, across the island again. We were away. We got shot at by an old Greek. We entered a field of wheat and were eating the wheat corn. He fired a gun at us. We got out of there. Eventually we got picked up by a family,

38:30 they supplied us with food, they gave us honey and bread and stuff like that. We lived there for quite a while, in fact I lived there for six months on the island, not the one place we had to keep moving because of the searches. Dressed like a Greek in civvies, long side burns and black hair.

Tape 5

00:32 **You were talking about you and your mate taking off on Crete so you didn't get rounded up with all the other blokes, what was your mates' name?**

Somebody asked me, I spent six months with him and he was a copper, when he came back he was in the police force.

01:00 He finished up with malaria. I'm a bit Alzheimer's. He was in our battalion too as a matter of fact. He wasn't a real close friend, if I was going to go off with anybody it wouldn't have been him but it's just that the two of us decided at the same time. It could have been anybody. It happened to be him.

01:30 **Was he a bush bloke like you?**

No he was a city boy but he was quite adaptable. He had been in the army. A few months in the army they soon teach you their way.

Tell us then about living amongst the people on Crete.

It was good. I was always interested even at school of words and their

02:00 derivation, what they meant. Is that a Greek word, Latin word, Germanic word, what does that word mean, how do they get the word. I loved words. The kids are the idea, if you want to learn a language and you are a boy go to a young boy, "That's right, that's not right". They teach you the word right.

02:30 If it's a boy get a girl, if it's a girl get a boy and they'll hammer the kids. Not so much the grown ups, it's the kids, and they'd laugh like hell if you said it wrong. Eventually you got it right. Good. Move on to the next one. They were very very good the kids, I think it was fascinating the kids.

Who gave you the civvies to wear?

Greeks.

03:00 When the Jerries, they started combing the island looking for an escaped people, a lot of our blokes got shot. A lot of the young blokes they boom. We'd get shifted living in caves, living with people, they'd warn us, "Get away" and give us some food and clear off for a while. There was one village in Crete the Germans killed every living thing in the village. Dogs, cats, birds, the lot,

03:30 burnt the village, because two of the women were wearing a dress made of parachute silk which the Germans had dropped. They wiped all the buildings out. They did the same in Lidiche Czechoslovakia. They dropped the...and buried the whole bloody town because somebody shot a German. The paratroopers that landed on Crete most of them were Oxford graduates, they had perfect English.

04:00 It's amazing. The bloke in charge of our prison camp in Germany, Prince Vonholen Zolen his wife was English and she was in England and his kids were in England all through the war. He was our camp (UNCLEAR). A cousin of King George IV. The Crete people themselves we got on well with them. The Crete people are different to Greek people. They speak slightly different Greek

04:30 in the accent and different words because they were under Turkish rule during the war and they wear those funny pants, their knife, the 'maxeri', it's never a straight blade, it's always a straight curve, different people altogether. They are either very bad or very very good and if you crossed them, look out.

How would you actually approach them when you were running out of food and you needed a place to

05:00 **stay?**

You'd sus the place out. They are not big towns in the islands, all small. You sus out and have a look you know. Speak to the kids eventually, "Ponjari" and they'd go back home and get all this stuff and help you. They didn't like the Germans, Cretes didn't like them. They'd knock them off. They see a German hanging from his

05:30 parachute they'd take his boots off. Stuff was scarce. That hated the Jerries.

Did they actually know where Australia was when you said Australia?

No, they thought Austria. Even the Yanks [Americans] when they recaptured us, "Where are you from mate". We said, "Australia". They said, "Austria". Half of them had never heard of Australia,

06:00 they didn't know where Australia was. One bloke said to me, "I've got an auntie who lives in Australia; she lives at a place called Gippsland". I said, "Do you know how big Gippsland is, it's as big as England". He said, "I thought you might know her". They had no idea. They look on a map and see Australia on the globe and think it's a little place. "You might know her, she lives in Gippsland". It's the size of England.

06:30 Greek people were very very good. We found a lot there spoke English. They had lived in Australia and gone back home again. Made their money here as fish shops and fruit shops and gone back home to retire, quite a lot. A lot that come from America had gone back to Crete. You get a Greek speaking with a Yankee accent. We got on very well. Ray,

07:00 he went back eight or nine years ago, never cost him a cracker. If I went back there I would be treated like a king. Australians, yes, because we had lived amongst them, I liked them, they were good people.

Did you know that you were actually being looked for, did that come up in those six months that you were hiding out? Were you actually being searched by the Germans?

Yes, the bush telegraph [informal communication method] used to come around.

07:30 The Greeks would know, "Better go and hide, the Germans will be here tomorrow". Sure enough they'd be through the village. Mobs going out all the time looking for them, every time a plane went over you'd duck and hide.

But looking for you in particular?

Any prisoner at all. A lot of our blokes, we had hundreds of blokes living on the island. They refused to give in they just cleared off, they weren't going to be taken prisoner. I wasn't the only one. Hundreds of them.

08:00 **Did you ever run into each other?**

No. Part of the island I was, they were on the other side, the Turkish side of the island, we were on the other side of the island. Up towards Redomo. In the hills, it was quite good. Actually I've read about it and I didn't believe it. King Mitas, you've heard of him, and

08:30 Mionos, do you know anything about Greek history? They built that road that went from, the road was still there and these huge blocks of stone cut square, that was up on the top of the mountain. It must be true. Ancient history, that goes way back, god knows how long. This was in July,

09:00 snow. Middle of their summer there is snow in Crete, we were eating snow as water, there was no water so we'd eat snow and it wasn't cold.

Did you ever get hot meals and beds?

From the Greeks? Fish, no meat, but they cooked everything in olive oil,

09:30 they use it, their greens was deadly night shade and a type of grass and all vegetables actually come

from wild stuff but they used to cultivate that and cook it up. Olives, walnuts, almonds, breakfast was a glass of Ouzo and a handful of almonds. Have you heard of Ouzo?

10:00 You put water in goat's milk. They used to make a drink out of mulberries, distilled and you'd use it as aftershave, use it on sore muscles, scalp wash, if you got a cut put it on to stop bleeding. Distilled mulberries, a big dish and put the sticks in and put the mulberry leaf and all this

10:30 mash and it would just build it up and up and put the top on, with clay, light the fire and stuff would come out. By the time the last one came out it had water coming out but the first lot that come out you laid down to drink it.

What did it taste like?

Beautiful. Sweet. Geez it had a kick. I like mulberries too until you get the stain on you.

11:00 **Would you just sort of stay at a place for a couple of weeks or a couple of days and just move on?**

Mainly we stopped, we didn't want to move too far. The bush telegraph would tell you, "Don't go to so and so the Germans are there they could be back again". They are cunning buggers. They'd go to a village and sneak back two days later in case somebody come back in again. I used to go to this chap, his daughters, Casula,

11:30 Yamos, I forget the girl's name, and I used to get their old donkey and I used to go down to the sea with him and there were holes in the rocks we put sea water in and waited for it to evaporate and get the salt. The Mediterranean is very salty and it's hot. We bagged it up and take it up. He'd go inland with his salt and trade that for potatoes or something else. No money changed hands, it was always bartered. We'd catch

12:00 fish and we lived off fish and salt was a big commodity over there, it was all from the sea. The people from inland they had no salt, the salt evaporated, it was good for you. Almonds especially and a glass of Ouzo that was a good breakfast, it would clear the pipes. I like Ouzo, aniseed.

12:30 **What about the social side, did they let you in to get to know their daughters or anything?**

Yes, used to go to weddings, they are great gamblers the Greeks. The women do the work, the men don't work. That's an ideal society that. They play cards all day at the cafes. The women do the work, cut the wheat, hand cut, put it in a big

13:00 stone, run the cattle around it and get this big wood poles and the wind blows the shaft out and they grind the wheat up and that's what they call 'buchamati', bread. The core stuff on the outside they cook it up and make like a cake. They do all the work, the men don't work. That's what they got married for, for someone to look after them.

Who looks after the children?

The women.

As well?

Yes, they do all the chores.

13:30 That's an ideal society. No, they drink this, it takes getting used to, it's a wine they make that tastes like resin. 'Aspro' is white, 'coso' is red. It's nice stuff. Their honey,

14:00 I've eaten honey that is nearly two hundred years old. They have these big ovens and they put the fire in the oven and clear it out and make the bread and cover it up. Like a beehive oven. They make it long and thin loaves and they mark it like that and when it comes out they break it up again, and they put it into these

14:30 big jars and seal the top. They do that every year, you only get wheat once a year. They get a couple of these, like a big roll, soak it in water and wrap it in a cloth, that's fresh again. Just like fresh bread, it's beautiful, nice crust. They put it in these big beehive ovens. They've got all these sage bushes and it

15:00 blows like that and get a piece of sack on the end of the stick and get the ashes out and all the bread is made and they cover that up and leave it there.

It would have been a change from bully beef [tinned meat] and biscuits?

Yes, and honey, a lot of honey.

Did you actually end up helping any of the women with their chores?

Yes, the blokes didn't like it. They didn't like us helping the women. That's out.

15:30 I amazed them once, they killed a goat they eat very little meat and I thought, "What the hell are they doing?" They put a straw in and started blowing. Blows up and the skin comes away from the flesh. I thought, "They'll spend a couple of hours doing this bloody thing". I said, "We don't do that in Australia".

16:00 I had it done in a quarter of hour, cut, quartered, the whole box and dice, they had never seen it done before, hung it up, I'd done it in the bush. Punch it all. The only part is hard is the busket, the rest of it is, and the skin comes off.

I wonder if they used your technique afterwards?

I don't know. I never found out. They used to put a straw in and blow the

16:30 air in so the skin would come away. They had a set of lungs on them; it would take a couple of hours. They couldn't believe it. The inside pulled out and the heart is still beating.

Did the women thank you for helping them?

Yes, they were thankful, we used to help them a lot.

17:00 Especially the grain, we done it, these big round stones witch a handle and they drop the wheat down the middle in the hole and grind it. All the coarse stuff used to go to the outside and the fine stuff collected, it was pure flour, bran still in it. None of the stuff you get now. The coarse stuff on the outside, like

17:30 oatmeal, crumb and you'd cook it and it would be like a cake. It was nice. Put honey in it.

Did you put a lot of weight on?

No, I ran too much.

You obviously didn't get your hair cut, you let it grow?

No, not the way they cut. Tied it up, tie it in a bow,

18:00 long side burns, razor blades were hard to get. It was a great life, I liked it.

Did the Greeks actually think, I know later on the Germans had trouble believing you that you were a soldier, but did the Greeks actually believe you were Greek when the saw you with what you looked like?

Yes, the Germans wouldn't believe it. When we give ourselves up they wouldn't believe it. We had to get a Greek who spoke German who could understand

18:30 English to prove that we were, I spent about six weeks in a Gestapo prison.

Before we go there, your mate because he was sick that you decided to do this, to give yourself up, was he with you the whole time?

Yes. The two of us. We weren't' together all the time, we were in the same village. The village has two sides of a big gully, he lived on that side and I lived on that side, at least one of us that way could get away.

19:00 He was alright, David, but he wasn't the sort of bloke you take as a bosom friend.

David, that's his name?

David, I am trying to think of his other name.

Jeffries?

No, I will think of it. If you had the choice of taking that bloke or that bloke you took that bloke. Although he was a soldier, I was glad of the company.

19:30 I won't say he was dumb, he never went to the trouble of learning what they were saying, he never learnt Greek. He wouldn't. He was too dumb. I knew a fair bit of Greek before I went there that I learnt at school and dictionaries and books from reading, alphabet, language, numbers. Everybody knows alpha, beta,

20:00 I learnt all that before I went away, I don't know what kids do now. I learnt the Braille language at school, I learnt Morse Code [communication system], I learnt the flags [semaphore], the symbol of flags. I learnt that at school, the kids don't learn that now. We done algebra in the sixth grade.

20:30 **Ted when we finished we were talking about how the people in Crete treated you and your mate David, can you tell us about their concern that they might get in trouble for helping you, was that ever an issue?**

No, it never entered their mind. They would have done it irrespective, they were good people, they hated the Germans and would have done anything to help our blokes get away from them.

21:00 It was probably, Greece itself was a problem but not in Crete. They were different people. They were still Greeks but ones…Crete was under Turkish domination for so long, Greece is a very old country, older than Rome really. Goes way back, they speak

21:30 two languages there, old Greek and modern Greek. A lot of it is similar, like high [German] Deutsche and low [German] Deutsche, like English and Cockney. Unless you are living amongst the people you wouldn't know what they are talking about.

22:00 A lot of words used to get us. You could always tell someone who used to come from the mainland. They spoke a different language, not a different language, it's like Queenslanders speak differently than south.

And slower?

Yes, well that's the way it should be. Cigar, cigar. Slowly,

22:30 slowly. Cigar, we smoke it, in Greek it means slowly, in Polish it's a watch. I love languages. Italian, Greek, Arabic, Polish, Russian, English. English is a mix, it's a terrible language to learn, English.

23:00 That's why foreigners have a lot of trouble with it. It's a bastardized language, it's bits from everywhere.

Tell us about the decision to actually hand yourselves in to the Germans. What actually happened did your friend become worse?

Very bad yes. One of the old Greeks was treating him. A glass and a piece of wool

23:30 dipped in Ouzo and you light it and put the glass and it pulls the flesh up and they glide it back. Cupping they call it. They used to do it years ago, cupping. They put that as the air and drop it on the skin, all over your back doing that, raise the skin up, it reduces the temperature and cures everything. Cupping, I don't know their word, it's a

24:00 glass or cup, they put heat on it and burn here and put the air and it sucks the skin up, like big bubbles.

Did it work?

I don't know, we had to give ourselves up or he would have died. I should have let him die. Poor bloke. Very bad with malaria, malaria was rotten over there.

Why didn't you sort of help him be given up and then you sort of take off again?

Well, I suppose,

24:30 by that time I think it was too late, I had been there six months and there was no way to get off the island. I couldn't see myself being there for three or four years, I could have I suppose. One of our chaps married a girl in Greece, from our battalion. It was about 1952 before he come home.

Did he stay there the whole time?

Yes, he married a Greek girl; the old man had plenty of money.

25:00 He stayed there and come home for a holiday in 1952.

Did they remain married?

Yes, he learnt Greek, she spoke English, they had a good time. The Maoris were the ones who were well over there, the Germans didn't know, they were talking Maori language and the Germans thought they were Greek. Because they were dark skinned and their language; a

25:30 funny language Maori. When we were marching from the camp to go to Germany they were standing on the side waving to us, these bloody Maoris, some of them could still be there for all I know. Dark skin and talking Maori language, I don't think any German knew what Maori language was. It's a weird language. The people themselves weren't

26:00 worried about the Germans. If they were knocked off they were knocked off. A lot of them got jailed, shot. When I was in this Gestapo [German Secret Police] prison for about six weeks, about every second day somebody got shot.

Did you hear it?

Yes, take them out to the courtyard and shoot them. You know, "It's not me, I am Australian, I had my dog tags on". These poor Greeks had done something.

26:30 Stealing food was a capital offence, bang. They were very tough there. They conquered the world, they thought they would.

What happened the day you decided to give yourselves in so David could get help?

We had to walk a fair way to, I forget the name of the town, where this Greek

27:00 who understood this fair bit of German. We had to get a German who understood English to translate from one to the other because he was pretty crook by this time. In the end they eventually accepted it. It took a lot of messing around; they took him to hospital and put me in the brig. Only the fact that I still had my dog tags and they knew Australia, that's what saved me, otherwise I would have been up

against the wall as well.

27:30 **Did you go into a Post Office, is that where they?**

No, into a village. Away from where we were, we didn't want to give ourselves up in the village we were in that would of put them in a bad light so we went way across town in the front somewhere and somebody told us that they were sort of pro-German, they weren't as well dressed as us, to give ourselves up so we thought we would give ourselves up there. There is no policemen as far as police go.

28:00 There might be a village elder or something was speaking Greek and we had to get a German who spoke Greek and a Greek who could understand English. That was sort of a three way tie.

It must have been very frightening to you?

It was, I had a pretty fair idea, the Greeks kept telling us that because we were Australian they would look after you.

28:30 "Give yourself up". If you start doing something on the sly they'd shoot you. We were dressed as civvies, spies, they had every right to shoot you if it come to that. If we had had a uniform on it would have been different. We got rid of the uniform, it was too obvious in a Greek village running around in an Australian uniform, we put Greek clothes on. We got rid of the others, and burnt them, of course if they had

29:00 raided the village and done something to the village. The village was very small, wouldn't have been more than a hundred people, it would have been a big place if they had more than a hundred people. All self sufficient, they had a sort of bartering business, they've all got their wines, and their olives and honey and cheese. I like Greek cheese. I can live on it, you can

29:30 live on it, you do live on it Olive oil, everything cooked in oil. Rub it on your hair, your skin.

How was the German that you gave yourself up to? How was he taking it all in?

They didn't believe us. We looked like Greeks, and he must have thought, "What are these two blokes going on about?" We convinced him and when I

30:00 started pulling my tags out then they said, "We will have to take you back to headquarters, to the car now". I spent six weeks and then we went out to a place called Sfakia which was a big camp where they were and from there went to Salonika by ship.

Just before we go there, what happened with your mate? Was he sort of non compos mentis [not mentally capable] then?

30:30 Yes, he was off this planet, he probably would have died if he hadn't got treatment. He was pretty crook. I found out years later he joined the vice squad as a copper, if I had known that I would have let him die, a vice squad copper. He never turned up to a reunion

31:00 afterwards, we used to go to a battalion reunion but I've never seen him. Another bloke, Darky Hedge, he shot through and when the fighting started he cleared off, deserted. He turned up one year and they nearly killed him, at a reunion. You don't run out on your mates in a battle. They believed us in the end, we convinced them, we told them we were who we said we were, Australians.

31:30 Of course we got to prison and they were a bit dubious then about it. We convinced them, we had to name this that and the other. They knew as much about us as we knew about them, or more than we did.

Hang on a second, when you first gave yourself up, they separated you two and took him into hospital and then where did they take you first?

By that time they had contacted

32:00 the Germans, probably with his radio at headquarters and they sent a car out. I was only there a day, it's not a very big place, you could walk across it in a couple of hours. Crete is a very small place.

They sent a car for you?

Yes, paddy wagon with a guard. Not that I was going to go anywhere; I had given myself up but they thought I might have. It was alright.

32:30 A bit fearful you know, what's going to happen, will I, won't I. It took a while to say, "You go and give up mate and I'll wait". The old bloke in the village didn't want me to give myself up. He said, "They'll shoot you" and I said, "I don't think so". He wanted me to stay there. I said, "No, I might make it bad for you". If he went on his

33:00 own he might start talking. They tried and tried to find out where I was, where I stayed, who fed me, where did I get the clothes from, otherwise they would have gone out and raided all these villages. I said, "I don't understand". It blew over in the finish. I was under suspicion for a long while being a spy.

33:30 **Did they put you with political prisoners?**

Yes, with the Greeks. In behind the bars. Being a prisoner, six weeks of that.

Six weeks of that before they moved you on?

Yes.

And this was every second or third day hearing somebody being shot?

They'd question you and take you in to the room, the Gestapo.

34:00 "Who are you?", "Where are you from?" They could tell me what battalion I was in and I never told them. All you tell them is your name, rank and serial number. Probably they knew what unit I was with. We got over it.

Did you lose a few mates in that battle?

Yes we lost quite a lot.

34:30 Greece alone we lost I think forty five percent. We lost a lot in Crete, we lost a lot up the desert, that's war. I got wounded a couple of times, sent me back to hospital, from the hospital I went to the RTB [Return To Base], rehab, where you get back. Then they call for reinforcements and I was lucky to get back to my own

35:00 battalion. Once you go back to that place you can go anywhere. I was with the (UNCLEAR) battalion where you get out from hospital and recruits and if the battalion is up they send down so many men. I was lucky, the chap in charge of the RTB, he joined up the same time as I did. He said, "Do you want to go back to your unit?" I said, "Yes" so I went back to my unit.

During this time

35:30 **was it alright for you to basically feel that you would be okay?**

I was alright, I didn't think they would do anything. It was a bit grim at times when all you hear is bang, bang, bang every now and then, but I didn't get belted up or thumped or anything like that, it was just questions.

Did you have a sense from the Germans that they liked Australians or were going to give them a fair

36:00 **go?**

They knew Australians were good fighters and the fact that we wiped out just about all their airborne from the ground, they didn't like that. Even the German that captured me, he congratulated our colonel on the fighting abilities of the men. We didn't fight dirty, we fought man to man. Not like

36:30 them, they dressed up in English uniform, spoke perfect English, you didn't know who they were. They did that in France. A lot of the Germans, if your grandfather or grandmother was German they would accept you as German, what they called Volks Deutsche. We had

37:00 one chap that got shot and he was Sudeten German, from Sudetenland when Germany took it over, he was real sod, he only lasted five minutes. Yankee bloke shot him, he said, "Have any of these bastards been ill treating you?" a bloke said, "He's a real so and so" and bang.

Was he really a bastard?

He was. He was a Volks Deutsche. He tried to get in well with the real

37:31 Germans.

This prison, the civilian prison that you were in for six weeks before they moved you to, what was the name?

Chania the capital of Crete.

When you were there for six weeks did they feed you and look after you?

We got the same feed as the German soldiers. Once they found out we were Australian. What they were trying to get out of you was where you had been,

38:00 trying to get us to pull all these Crete people in and we wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it anyhow. I wasn't the only one there; there were others they had caught. We got the same food as they did.

Were you in the same cell as other Australians?

No, they had them all separated so we couldn't talk to one another.

Did you know that they were there?

We knew they were there because the Greeks had told us. They'd yell out to one another, the Greeks.

It's a fair size,

38:30 they are all cages, they put up more there were a lot of prisoners there. There was all sorts there, they even had Italians locked up. Italians were on their side. Of course when Italians changed over, of course they…

What about the trip from that prison to the one in Germany, what did they do to come and get you?

We went from that camp to a place call Galatas, which was the

39:00 huge funny camp that one. A donkey came in one day and the only thing left was the hooves. They killed it and ate it. They were starving nothing to eat. I've picked up dried orange peel for something to eat. You'd eat anything. I said you are not hungry until you are starving.

39:30 Food is the main thing.

Tape 6

00:33 **We were just talking at the end of the tape about a donkey being eaten. Did you eat any of the donkey?**

No. We heard about it. Before we got into the camp, we heard about it, they'd eat anything. Blokes were dying left and right with dysentery.

This is the one up at Salonika is it?

01:00 No, this is a place called Galatas. It was right on the water and I remember the body getting washed ashore from where the ships had been knocked off. You used to get these sea eggs. They are round with all spikes over them, it's like a cooked egg when they come out. Seagull

01:30 eggs, I've eaten hundreds of them. Boil them, eat them, it was something to eat. They were nourishing, why not, it's only an egg.

What about mice stew?

Yes, you used to catch mice, skin them and make a stew. Sparrows, used to get bricks like that with another brick standing up with a bit of spring on it and put a few crumbs up there, a little sparrow, pull the

02:00 spring and bang. If you caught four or five sparrows, they'd make a nice stew. It's only poultry.

Pretty hard conditions?

I wouldn’t do it again but still you'd eat anything when you are hungry. Food, food, food.

Were you regretting having given yourself up at this stage?

Yes and no.

02:30 When I was in Germany I was sorry I had given myself up. Could have been living in luxury in Crete. I don't know, they might have caught us eventually and then again, I think it was a couple of years after they retook the island. A lot of blokes were still living there when the British came back and took the island. Could have been, I don't know. There was regrets I suppose

03:00 but six months was enough. I thought they might be worried back home and I was getting worried myself about what was going to happen. Never heard a thing. No wireless, how the war was going, all we knew was that Germany was on top at that time.

I know you had that mate and you were on your own, did you come across any of the other blokes which were hiding?

Once.

03:30 But they wouldn't stay, a New Zealander, he had a big family in New Zealand. A bullet had gone through there and come out through there. He wouldn't give himself up, he said, "I will keep going". I never knew what happened to him. Nathan. A big family, wealthy people from New Zealand. He had a bullet that went through there and come out there, firing

04:00 down. He wouldn't give himself up. It healed itself it did, a big scar, he was a big boy. He wasn't a Maori, he was New Zealander, but he wasn't going to give himself up. I met him once and he said, "I will keep going". I don't know what happened to him. He probably got off or lost track.

What about when you were on the run were there any particular close calls when the Germans came in?

Yes and no. We saw them a couple of times.

04:30 We were down on the coast and we saw this patrol. They used to walk, there was no other way to get around. You couldn't, there was only certain areas you could bring a car or motorbike in. The rest of the time was on shanks' pony, it was too rough even for a motorbike, now days they've got trail bikes. Those days no. I forget the name of the town, on the port it

05:00 was, on the sea front, where there was a ride there going up to Chania. There was Rethymno, Iraklion, about four places where there was a road. We are going way back years, I think it's older than Greece. At one time I think it might have been above Greece. The Mediterranean, underneath that, that water is as clear as a bell the Mediterranean

05:30 and very salty and if you jump in you sort of float.

But you were inland?

Yes, but we could see the sea, the island is not very big. We were about an hour's walk to the sea from where we were, we were high up.

The Germans never actually came in to the village?

No, it was up and down, I don't think they liked walking and up and down hills. A lot of those places they built in

06:00 between and built half the buildings there and half the buildings there and not just one big, and you've got a flat ground there is always wheat or something, there is not enough room. An area about the size of this would be flattened off, that's where they put the sheaves of wheat and run the cattle round and round and the movement takes it off, the women would walk round and round this and they'd have a wooden fork and

06:30 wait until a windy day and throw it up in the air and it blows all the shaft away and grain and they sweep that up. It's a real going back, doing it for hundreds of years.

They never came in so you were able to, not relax, but in a way enjoy life?

The bush telegraph was pretty good. They knew then within ten or twenty miles there was a German there. Word gets around. Don't ask me why, there is no radio or telephone number, I think they might have used

07:00 signals but the word got around. They'd tell us to go and hide. There were big caves there and we'd go right back in the caves. If they did come to the village they'd never find nothing. Everything we had was all, nothing, nothing army. Otherwise they'd just knock them off.

Describe your friendship with the family in Yunos?

It's a Greek name, his was Yasu, which is John. His daughter was

07:30 Casula, I am trying to think of the young bloke's name, I think it was Johnny, his wife, I don't know, she kept to herself, you don't mess around with the Greek women. I had more to do with the kids and the men. The women are like the Arab women, they stick to their men. Not that we were interested in them,

08:00 I think they were a bit apprehensive, they might have heard about Australians. Keep your distance, I don't know.

You became good mates?

He was a hell of a nice bloke. I'd like to meet him, I don't know what happened to the kids, I'd like to see them. She was a nice girl Casula. She would have been about fourteen and I think the boy about eleven or twelve. They'd get you speaking

08:30 and it would drive you up the wall, you had to pronounce the word properly. We would write it down phonetically. They'd say theftarus was Monday. How would you write that down? It's not "Th", it's different, we would write it down phonetically, they'd tell us what it was, theftarus, that's Monday, or bitarum, what's the

09:00 time, or one clock, they'd get at you until eventually you got the real word. In six months you learnt a lot, you had to. Very few of them spoke English.

During that time did you have any elaborate plans for escaping? Getting on a raft or something?

We tried but there was no way in the world. There was no boats, the Jerries made

09:30 sure of that, they patrolled the island. A couple of chaps did get a boat load across early on, they had a boat and rigged a sail and got across to Africa and one lot that got across run into the Germans and got brought back as prisoners to Italy. In the book there, one boat load of them got right through. All different, some from our battalion, a couple of Kiwis, couple of 6th Battalion blokes, they

10:00 sailed the boat right through.

With you, you said you were dressing in gear, what was it exactly again?

Civvies.

What were they wearing?

Like a pantaloons trousers. It's like a long skirt and you pull this part up and hook it through your belt and it looks like a pair of pants but it's like a long skirt. They've got a name for it. They wear a cummerbund and knife stuck in

10:30 that. They all carry their little knife; it's got a curved blade on it. That's from back in the Turkish days, back in 1300.

Pretty amazing, I better move on to where we were because I digressed. The camp, did you run into some of the blokes that you had been fighting with before in Greece?

Only one. I met a few after we got to Germany of course when we got to prison

11:00 camp. That's where you meet them. In the village itself, no. First time I saw them, even at Galatas camp, never run into any. First time was when they took us up to Salonika. That was a trip and a half. They load us on a bloody old ship, down underneath. Fed us on salt fish, no water to drink. They took us up to Salonika and put into

11:30 camp. The beds were three tier high. Two men in each bed. It had to be from the First World War. It was absolutely lousy. You weren't allowed out at night. A big bucket for a latrine. It was a shocking place. They loaded us onto a train and we spent fifteen days and fourteen nights on the train. Being shunted off here and shunted off there. From Salonika right through Prague, right over to, we

12:00 landed Lamsdorf about half past eleven o'clock and we had to march out to the camp at Lamsdorf. Middle of the night, just follow the bloke in front, that's all you could see.

Tell us about, before we get to Germany, tell us about Salonika camp, what was that like?

That was a horror camp. Horror. A prisoner of war camp, I think the Turks had it, it was an old army barracks years and years ago.

12:30 Big high buildings, all the beds were three tier bunks, wire, they give us a blanket, we had clothes but it was freezing cold, lousy, bugs, they'd eat you. You weren't allowed outside, they'd lock you in at night, if you went outside you'd get shot. I don't know what they are frightened of, you weren't going to get away from the place,

13:00 you were on the sea front. It was a horror camp. Any bloke who was a prisoner at Salonika will know what that was. It was shocking. It was a death camp. Terrible.

How did you survive the Salonika camp?

How did anybody survive? The will to live. The human is a funny thing; you can live for a long while.

13:30 I don't know, some give up the ghost, just lay down and died. Some blokes have got no will power, "There is no way out, we are going to die". The next morning they'd be dead. No guts or no heart or lack of will to live. We always saw tomorrow. There is always tomorrow,

14:00 never mind today, that's gone, look for tomorrow. Something might happen, the war might finish the next day, it has to. That's what we were hoping; we'll be home for Christmas. But didn't say which year. Always home by Christmas. We started getting, in prison camp, we got a few letters, cards, we were allowed to send a card. It was printed. "I am well/I am not well". You cross out

14:30 what you don't want and then they put a stamp on it and send it home to your people. That was the first time my wife knew where I was. Because the Red Cross informed her, I told them. God they are stupid these Pommy blokes. He said, "What's your name, what's your occupation". I said, "I am a station hand". He put me down as a railway worker. He didn't know what a station hand was, you know, working on a station. Of course then the Jerries wanted me to work, I said, "I don't work mate".

15:00 NCOs didn't the work in Germany. If you wanted to you could volunteer, but they couldn't make you work. Privates yes, NCOs no. But to finish up they made it that bad in base camp you'd volunteer to got out and work because you'd get food.

I am interested also in Salonika, the bad conditions, disease must have been rampant?

15:30 There was all sorts, dysentery. Malaria, there was a lot of malaria around. People say, "You can't" and I'd say, "Yes you can get malaria". You were that poor that there was lice, typhus and one thing the Jerries did do was give you typhus injection. They were frightened of it. When we got to Lamsdorf the Russians were along side, they got nothing, they weren't covered by the Red Cross.

16:00 They knew we were going to Germany and they didn't want us to carry typhus back to Germany. So they

give us all a shot. Typhus TAB [vaccinations] or something in your arm.

Why were they letting the camp run to such conditions?

I don't know. It was an outpost really as far as the Germans were concerned. Greece had fallen, Albania, and all those place, they controlled that, and they were concentrating on Russia and

16:30 England and they thought that was out of the way. Then they wanted us to work in Germany so back to Germany.

How long were you in the Salonika camp?

About four years.

In Salonika?

About a month. I couldn't have took anymore. A lot of blokes walked out and got

17:00 shot there deliberately, they couldn't hack it. It was freezing, terrible. The bed, two in the bed, wire, no mattress, nothing, no fires. They'd give us ersatz tea, a maple leaf tea and you used that to shave with you couldn't drink it, it was the only warm water you got,

17:30 you shaved with it. Razor blade you sharpened on the glass, razor blade will do you twelve months. Some blokes grew beards, my kept sticking out so I had to keep cutting it off.

It must've been dreadful if men were walking out to be shot?

I've seen blokes, you might believe a prison camp was that bad in some camps they put their hand when they were on the cement factory, where they were running

18:00 skips down, so they'd get their fingers cut off so they'd get out of the camp. A lot of camps were really bad, working the cement factory. Like a mate of mine lost a lung, he's only got half a lung left, collapsed the other one, cement dust. Coal mines, shoveling snow during the snow storm, you have no idea. That was early on, we were slaves.

18:30 Towards the finish when they started losing thousands or millions of men in Russia all the able bodied men were gone gone so they got old blokes in. Some of them weren't bad at all, ex-POWs from the First World War. They had been in England, they treated us, but they couldn't get any food either. There was no food in Germany. Red Cross parcels used to come up from Switzerland but you'd get one every so often

19:00 and they'd split and the Germans were using it. We were eating frozen, when we started marching on the road we were eating frozen potatoes and frozen carrots, it's like chewing ice.

Tell us about leaving Salonika, you told us you went on a train, tell us about that?

On a horse carriage,

19:30 it's got a sign on the side "Forty Men or Ten Horses". That's what the truck carried, steel, they put straw on the floor, a little window on the side, barbed wire up and down that, they'd lock the door and we were fourteen days in that. One bloke had a tin hat that was the toilet. Chuck it out the gap in the window. People have got no idea, no

20:00 idea what it was like. A little Kiwi bloke, he only had a few strands of hair across his head, there was hardly any room to lie down, he woke up one morning and his hair was frozen to the side. We thought it was a hell of joke, he had to wait until his hair thawed out before he could move. You'd always laugh at another bloke's misfortune. If a black fellow broke his leg you'd laugh like hell.

20:30 Men are stupid, you see a funny side of it, you have to.

How important is it to see the funny side?

What's the point of seeing the bad side all the time? If you see the bad side all the time you are not going live. You've got to lift yourself out, why walk on mud when you can walk on dry land. Lift yourself up, think positive, there is always tomorrow.

21:00 There is always another day, it might be a bad day, it could be worse tomorrow it could be a bit better. Think about it. Never look on what's gone, always look ahead.

Still you must have gone a bit crazy on this fourteen day trip?

They give us four hundred and fifty grams of bread,

21:30 about a pound and a tin of beef, it's about that size and that was the ration for fourteen days per man. You had to eat it otherwise some bugger would knock it off. In the camp you used to get a slice of bread, about two hundred and fifty grams, you'd eat a bit and put it under your pillow it would be gone in the morning. Somebody

22:00 would knock it off. As soon as you got something you had to eat it, you couldn't save it. The bread was

terrible bread, made of wood flour and potato, you put it on the wire for toast and it would just melt. Some of the bread they give you was about two or three years old. It had the date on it. You lived. The human body can take a lot. It was forty degrees in the

22:30 summer and forty below in the winter. We would run around with just a singlet on at thirty below, no sense no feeling. I was born in Tassie anyway. Even now I don't feel the cold. It never gets cold in Queensland. My bloke lives out at Warwick, he rang me and said, "It's minus seven". I said, "That's a warm day over there".

23:00 **So these two weeks on a, what did you get up to what did you talk about?**

Nothing. We slept all the time. Bump, bump, bump. If a bloke tried to say something you'd tell him to shut up, you knew what he was going to say almost you know. It would drive you up the wall to listen to some bloke moan. Everybody is in the same boat, you have to

23:30 take your load and bear it. They pulled up Prague, Budapest, Vienna, we spent two days in Vienna on the side road, we couldn't go, they had troop trains going back and forth. I think one stop they let us out of the train for a mug of warm tea, that's all we got, then back in.

24:00 Next thing you know it's midnight, it's dark, everybody out, all we could see was bloody snow for miles in the middle of bloody winter. March to the camp, it was about four or five kilometres to the prison camp, still dark, you could see lights on, it was full of poms. There was about fifty or sixty thousand people there. Prisoners. They had been captured from Norway, France, all over the place. A lot of

24:30 prisoners there. There was thirty one thousand six hundred Australian prisoners, I got the book there, they repatriated a lot home. Stretcher-bearers, our bandsman, they were non-combatant, they repatriated a lot of those, they were really crook, lost legs, they repatriated them home. The rest you worked,

25:00 you didn't have to, they couldn't make us, we worked, you get better food. If you stopped in the base camp you got base food which was next to nothing. So you'd go out on a working party and get a little bit extra.

Tell us about this first camp, what was its name and where was it exactly?

Lamsdorf, 8B, it's

25:30 almost over towards Poland.

This is the first place you come to the fifteen days?

Yes, first time they pulled us up at. We didn't stay there very long, we went to a place called Blechhammer, further out right over near the Polish border.

What were you thinking when you come to this camp which was packed full of people?

Well, Pommys run, pom sergeants, no officers they go to a different, but the poms had been there that long

26:00 they owned the camp. I've got no time for the British soldiers, little tin gods, issue a bloke with one stripe on his arm, jump to attention, they couldn't understand we called our officers by their surname and not saluting, we'd say, "G'day Charlie". They were trying to put us in for not saluting their officers, I said, "Get out mate".

26:30 He's a good soldier but he is that regimented. He sees an officer and he's got to stand. Totally different.

Even in this massive German prison camp?

Yes. The sergeants, sergeant majors, warrant officers, they run the camp. They had their own little,

27:00 they reckon if you can't beat them join them, but you can't join them either. They issued all the food out in the camp, the Germans didn't do it, you ought to see some of them, in a war camp, they were like eighteen or nineteen stone. They were living on the good stuff, they were taking first pick. We had good blokes there, we had Billy Novis, fast bowler of England, he was in our camp, Sonny Bennet,

27:30 the wicket keeper, he was in our camp, in Colberts they had Earl Arbor, the Queen's cousin. That's where little Douglas Bader was, the bloke with no legs. If you escaped two or three times…one of our blokes got right through to Switzerland and he gave himself up too close to the border and the Swiss gave him back again. All the way from there, when you look on the map it's a bloody long way and he made it all the way round to

28:00 Switzerland.

Did the behaviour of the British and the way some kept the food cause a lot of resentment?

Yes it did. The squatty himself, the little bloke, the private soldiers, they weren't bad. But any bloke with a couple of stripes on his arm he thought he was a tin god, it didn't go down with our blokes. What do they call

28:30 them, they've got a nickname for them. They are that regimented for hundreds of years. We had a little bloke there and he had been in the army since he was fourteen years old and he had spent twenty seven years in the army and was still a private. It took him fourteen years to get his threpence a day education allowance. Before he passed the education test. Blokes who don't have a

29:00 job there get in the army, you only got a few bob a day but at least it was something to do.

Describe this camp, what did it look like, it must have been massive?

I suppose it would be five kilometres by three kilometres. Streets laid out. It had been a prison camp in the First War. Huge, you got to

29:30 laugh, they used to put the dogs, the Germans wouldn't go in the Russian camp, they put the dogs in, they only did that twice and no dogs come out. They knocked them off and ate them. Big Alsatians. It got that way that way, they sent a lot of our blokes with first aid in with soap or something and the medical blokes to help them and if a bloke had died the Germans used to count them, forty of them and they'd sent rations for forty,

30:00 they'd hold them up, the Germans would count the bodies but some of the blokes were dead. At one stage there they cut the buttock off and cooked it, that's the Russians. Poor buggers they were. Cossack women and Polish and Ukrainian women, they were doing all the heavy work. They were laying railway lines, all sorts of things. They were big

30:30 ladies. It was a funny set up that. The Russians, they died of typhus, and they used to prop the dead bodies up and they'd send a car down to cart all the dead bodies off every so often. That was a terrible place. The camp now, Lamsdorf, there is not a sign of it.

31:00 There was one camp there with all women in it. Political prisoners just a couple of stones, a mate of mine from England they went to visit and they couldn’t find the place, the Russians had cleaned the whole lot, bulldozed and levelled the ground out.

31:30 We were alongside of Auschwitz. They don't believe Auschwitz, it happened all right.

What would you see exactly of what happened there?

I'd see a pile of bodies bigger than three of these blocks together, about twenty or thirty high. Thousands high, they don't bury them, ten thousand of a mass grave at a time, those that wouldn't fit in an oven, and the

32:00 ashes were thrown into a lake and the lake, there was that much ash in the lake that the lake was almost solid. You dug big trenches, dig a trench like that, lay logs and put all the bodies in and set the logs alight to burn. Anything that'd run down that bloke would ladle the juice back over them to make sure the bodies burnt. What sort of,

32:30 when you get a German low enough to do that, which they were, some of them were brutes, farmer type, no education, done what they were told otherwise you were next. If you don't do it, Russian front, that's where a lot of them, did you ever see that Hogan's Heroes? That's how they kept Russian front. That's a big spoof. A lot of our blokes

33:00 escaped but they come back in again, we had tunnels going out. They had to come back in again, it was too far.

Tell us more about Auschwitz? Where did you view what was going on, how far away was it?

I'd say quarter of a mile. A big place we were working on, they used to have Jews working there, we were working side by side. Like those that couldn't get out, like they put Harry Flashman there, I've met him down the Gold Coast,

33:30 he was only a kid of seventeen, a Dutch Jew he was. He was lucky to come out of it. I talked to him on the phone. He was lucky. He said in the book he met hundreds and hundreds of Australians and English. Of course they didn't know who we were; you weren't allowed to talk to them. They worked side by side doing the same work. You know a gas bottle you'd pick one up and put it on your shoulder, it used to take five or six Jews to carry one.

34:00 If you had a gold ring they'd buy it off you. They'd swap their food for gold and yet they were dying, like flies, money. When I say Jews, Dutch Jews, French Jews, Belgian Jews, Jews from all around the place, Jews come from everywhere. They control the music world, they control the film industry.

34:30 You've got to have them. In fact, the German economy, all through the war was run by a Jew. Heflar Ketwan, big Jew, I had his book somewhere, he run the economy, the money.

Tell us, you weren't allowed to talk to them but did you ever communicate with them at all?

Yes, you used to, but half of them all spoke different languages. They knew their own language, they don't speak Hebrew. They speak Yiddish.

35:00 Yiddish is like a bastard Hebrew. In Israel they speak Hebrew, a lot different; one is like a slang, Yiddish.

They were all skinny and stuff but did you see their faces, did their faces tell a story?

They all looked the same. Did you ever see a bunch of

35:30 skeletons together? That's what they were. All dressed in striped pyjamas with cap on, all the same, skin and bones. All the same. How the hell they walked bugger if I know. As long as they could walk they were sent out to work. People don't believe it, you tell them and they say, "Bullshit". Even I can't believe it. Show them the book, they still don't know, "That's only a photograph". You get a bloke that was there and

36:00 he'd tell you and they'd say, "No, he's making it up". It's not, it's the truth, thousands of blokes seen the same thing.

What did you think when you seen these sights?

Nothing I could do about it. Something to me at that time, those particular ones were the lowest of low, they'd do anything for anybody, they were real "yes" men. Jews,

36:30 they had bosses, they got a bit better allowance and Jews shoving their own bodies in the what's name. Anything to get a little

Did you see any of the burning you were talking about?

No, we saw the ovens. Never saw, you knew what was going on because you could see the smoke.

What about the smell?

No, burning bodies don't smell, it's gone. Big ovens.

37:00 Have you ever been to a cremation? When I retired from work years ago I worked about two years on and off part time as a funeral director for a mate of mine. I went all through, make the coffin, do the coffins up, trim them, do the bodies up, and put them down, drive the hearse. I said, "They can't hurt you, they are dead,

37:30 you don't have to worry about the dead ones, it's the living ones you have to worry about". There was nothing to it.

What about anything like ghosts or anything?

No such thing. I don't believe in ghosts, I don't believe in religion. After you've seen what I've seen there is no such thing. What amazes me, I had a mate of mine who was up in New Guinea, there is twenty five different religious denominations teaching the

38:00 New Guineans Christianity. There is only one. What is the difference between them worshiping their idol and us worshipping the Virgin Mary. A mate of mine, his Father told him he was going to send him to a Catholic school, so he went up and had a look through the window and he saw this figure of Christ on the cross, he said, "I am not going to that school, if you are bad they nail you to the bloody wall".

Tape 7

00:34 **You were just telling us off camera about the fact that you used to make costumes for some of the plays you put on in the camp at Blechhammer, what kind of costumes did you make?**

We had girls and I tell you what, some of them come up pretty well.

You mean as girls?

Yes, boys, we had Charlie's Aunt, well known

01:00 play. We done Desert Song, my mate done up as the Sheik, one I was a copper,

01:30 we went to a holiday camp, at a place called Genshagen, just out of Berlin, we took the play there to show, as guests. We went through Berlin and we were there the day they started the first daylight bombing of Berlin. Fifteen hundred of planes came over in one hit, Flying Fortresses, ground is going, and we were

02:00 eight kilometres out of Berlin. They herded us all back, before that we wondered what the noise was. There was aluminium foils dropping down, the planes dropped thousands of them to stop the radar. They couldn't pick up the radar from the plane. It went for hours and hours, just as well they didn't bomb our camp.

02:30 **They would have messed up the play.**

It's funny how you improvise. We'd put on plays where two speakers out the front pull the curtains across and we spoke into another speaker as the microphone. You had half a dozen different parts to play with different accents. It was funny. Putting these plays on, a lot of blokes wouldn't be in

03:00 it. I'd be in anything once. Irish accents and all sorts of accents, it was great fun.

Tell us about being able to use your tailoring skills. You had retained all that you learnt?

There is nothing in it. When you are up in the bush if anything happened you've got to mend it yourself. You can't run down the corner shop,

03:30 you have to do all your own ironing, own darning, sewing buttons on, pressing, making, you have to do the lot. It's quite easy, it sticks in your mind after a while. But making a costume, first of all I started, we used to get a battle dress, the German would give us a jacket of the field, the battle field, of course they were torn and holes and if there was a hole I would cut a piece out and cut another piece up and sew another piece in.

04:00 In fact our officer, John Bory, I pulled his uniform to pieces and turned it inside out and re-sewed it back again. It was all shiny on one side so I reversed every bit of that thing, I reversed the lot of it. In fact he's still alive, he's in Switzerland. He's a lung specialist. He'd be

04:30 eighty or ninety.

An Australian?

A Kiwi. Hell of a bloke.

Did the Germans actually give you some of their darning to do?

No. I know what would have happened. We had a boot maker, Barry, in fact my bloke Barry is named after Barry Wickham, the chap who saved my life. Barry was our boot maker.

05:00 **How did he save your life?**

During the bombing raid he pulled me out, I got buried in under the rubble, and he pulled another bloke out.

At Blechhammer?

Yes, we got bombed. Our camp got knocked off rotten. We lost one hundred and fifty men.

From the English?

Yes, the Yanks, they blew the hell out of the camp.

Didn't they know that you...?

Well, they had a copy of what

05:30 I've got there, every prison camp in Germany. But if a plane gets hit, what does he do, he just releases the bombs. He's not going to cart his bombs back is he, he just lets them go. They could go anywhere. The camp at IG Farbenindustrie, they've got four big chimneys that stood about a hundred metres in the air and they used to let smoke pots off, the smoke would only go so high, the top of the chimney would be sticking up amongst the smoke and the plane knew where the factory

06:00 was, so bang, bang, bang, our camp was inside the factory area. I forget how many bombs landed on that place, one landed in my room and blew the place up, a lot of us got fires, it got that bad that they opened the gate to let us out and run, don't stay in the camp, but where are you going to run, you used to run into the forest, Ray used to finish up about eight kilometres

06:30 away, I don't know what his idea was.

He just kept running?

Nowhere to go. If you went too far that way you ran into the Russians. We suffered a lot there in that camp. We had another big camp along side of us, another prisoner of war camp. They were Arbeitsdienst, it's the works battalion, they could send them anywhere, they lost a lot of men. Trenches like that, and dropped stick of bombs like that

07:00 and each bomb landed and we were right along side their camp, we were lucky. I fought in the camp along side there too, they had a boxing match there one day, used to be a rival between the two camps. I put the gloves on, we used to have sports fields, horse race, running, jumping. Ray down the coast he was school boy hurdling champion in his day, he's a Queenslander. I've got a photograph

07:30 of him running down, we called it Red Cross Street, I forget the names of them all, he's jumping over hurdles and a bloke is there taking photos and right at the end of the shot there is a big white tower with a German guard in it, he's never seen a bloke with a camera. He took another shot of me next door

fighting, they had a

08:00 one track mind Germans the lot of them. They used to come into our camp searching, they were looking for eggs. You could have a loaf of bread and they wouldn't touch it. They were only told to take eggs. Next day they'd come looking for bread and leave the eggs. Of course we traded with them when we got a Red Cross parcel.

With the German guards?

Yes. A bar of chocolate was worth a fortune over there. If you got a bar of chocolate you could get a parcel through.

08:30 Underwear, fleecy lined stuff; I never wore that; that was worth a fortune.

Who would send you care packages your wife?

Yes, and the Red Cross. We'd get parcels occasionally from the Red Cross.

Were you allowed to write to your wife from the camp?

Yes, we had certain things to fold up, used to roll it back and seal it. Half of it was cut out by the time

09:00 she got it. You weren't allowed to say this and that. The censors would cut it out. Only just a few years before she died she burnt all her letters. She went mad, burnt photographs and stuff I had brought home. She died not long after, "Bloody war".

She had Alzheimer's?

No, she didn't like anything to do with the war. That

09:30 time young Barry was in Vietnam, he had his twenty first birthday there and she was crook on that. "Bloody war". I come home one day and photos off the wall, burnt them all, incinerator.

What did you do?

What could I do, it was gone.

Were you angry?

10:00 Yes and no, it wasn't mine, they were hers. What is the good of getting angry, it's done? I'd come home from work and she'd say, "The kids have been playing up". I would say, "What's the good of it now, it's done". No good belting the kid six hours after he's done it. She would say, "Why don't you, it's not my job, it's your job". They are funny creatures women.

10:30 I was married fifty odd years, I've had a good life. I had six years away in the army. A few years away up the bush. Like a lot of these Hollywood marriages, he's working in Australia, she's working in Europe and you meet every now and then.

11:00 That's the way to do it; it's a good part of a marriage. You don't get on one another's nerves.

I was going to ask you in that camp in Blechhammer if you were treated badly by the guards?

Not really, we had the upper hand at that stage. When I say the upper

11:30 hand I think a lot of them had the idea that the war wasn't going their way. With the Russian front starting and they were taking a bit of a belting here and early on they were the bosses and then they started taking a few losses and started losing a few planes. We had a radio in the camp; we used to give them the news. We heard on their radio that all their planes had

12:00 returned safely and we knew they hadn't. We had the BBC, they bombed Germany, “all our planes returned safely”, we used to see them being shot down out of the air, we knew it was a lot of tommy rot. You had to tell the people at home. Like Darwin, when did people know about Darwin when that was bombed. How many people, they reckoned two or three people injured, all those that were killed. All those in the bottom of the harbour

12:30 they didn't say anything about that, censorship. Keep the home fires burning.

How did you keep warm?

Mind over matter, you can. Cold never worries me. Until I had this and my knee I was in that pool everyday, summer and winter.

13:00 It didn't make any difference to me, it doesn't worry me. They reckon no sense, no feeling. They used to say, "You are just wearing a shirt". I am not cold. I am even hot, feel my arm. Good blood.

What about

13:30 **how many men, you might have covered this, how many men per cabin in the camp?**

In Blechhammer itself there would have been eight hundred.

How many in your actually room?

Twenty.

And you slept in bunk beds?

14:00 **Would you jump into each other's bed to keep each other warm. I don't mean anything by that?**

I used to go to bed fully dressed; the only thing you took off was your boots. Then you had to be lucky with your boots because you couldn't get them

14:30 on in the morning, they'd be frozen. Used to go to bed fully dressed, overcoat.

Did you think about sleeping together to keep warm?

No bloody way, not in the army, I wouldn't trust them blokes. It never entered your mind in those days, you never thought of it. No. You probably would've been better huddled together to keep warm.

15:00 But no, never though of it, everybody was rugged up, overcoat, balaclava, only see that part of you. Take your boots off, blokes with big feet.

I guess I was coming at a practical perspective not worrying about what people thought.

No, I don't think I never saw

15:30 anyone in the camp at all where anybody slept together in the bed to get warm, together. When we were marching when they took us from January, across, we used to sleep in barns and you'd all huddle together for warmth wherever it was in straw or in a stable. You'd wake up icicles on your nostrils and breath, it was

16:00 bloody freezing I tell you. It was January, February, March, April, May, when they picked us up again, it was cold and you were all huddled together. Ray was on that. I had charge of a mob there. I kept a little diary.

16:30 **When you were there in Blechhammer did you decide to join the work party, or you were told to join the work party?**

I joined the work party from Lamsdorf. It was a big base camp in Salonika 8B and to get a bit better food we went to a smaller camp. A lot of people volunteered to go out to a smaller

17:00 camp. When I got out there I worked out there and I thought, "This is an easy job this, I will take the camp's tailoring". Repairs and so forth. We had a little room, there was a boot maker, Myers, myself and a little young boy, three of us, two boot makers, three cooks, cooked cabbage soup, bean soup, potato soup.

17:30 They call themselves cooks. It was a matter getting a bit of better food. In 8B you got basic food the same as what they call headquarter food, you got the same as what the soldiers did, which was nothing. The reason for that is they wanted them all up in the front line. They treated them badly there they'd go up to the

18:00 front to get better food to eat. A lot of blokes had good jobs. We had a bloke over here, there was only two of us, he was near Berneburg, he worked on a farm, he used to leave the camp, walk up to the farm, without a guard, work all day and walk back to the prison camp at night. He had an easy four years, a lot of poor buggers working in cement factories eighteen hours a day.

18:30 He had a cushy job, coming down over the border, 2nd Battalion. "Don't talk about prisoner to me, you've had an easy life". We lost a lot of men from flooding when they bombed those dams. It went right through one camp and just about wiped them out.

The dam busters?

Yes.

Which camp is that?

Somewhere down near Sudetenland.

19:00 Nowhere near us we were way over the other side. We lost a few in the camp with the bombing, blokes died, some committing suicide, other blokes died by something else, other blokes got shot by the guard. They were young fellows mostly. Most of them young blokes.

Can you tell us about Barry that saved your life? What happened that night?

When the bombing was on they

19:30 hit our thing and a lot of us got buried under the rubble. There was yelling and screaming and fire and

flames. They started pulling blokes out and he said, "Here's one here" and he got me by the shoulders and dragged me out. I wasn't hurt, I was buried.

So you couldn't move you were pinned?

No, I was staying there. I was afraid of the fire; the bloody place was on fire. Barry Wickham.

20:00 I went out to see him and he was on holidays. I went up to the pub and I said to the bloke in the pub, "Where is he?" and he said, "He's on holidays, he told me about you.". I stayed at the pub for three days and it never cost me a cracker. Got my food and meals and bed and lodge there for three days.

Tell us what was the hardest part for you at Blechhammer camp for you?

Blechhammer

20:30 was no food and freezing cold. You talk about ingenuity. They make out of the tins they hook the tins together and make a little wind race and with a few little pieces of coal you could boil a cup of water on it. It got that way all the window frames had all been sliced through and the beds were made with planks and half the beds

21:00 had planks missing. We had burnt them; we cut a bit in small bits for a fire going. A bloke who had a cigarette you'd put the cigarette and butt it out into it, the ash and get your fire going. Made out of tins.

Like a skinny long radiator?

Had a little fire going and the air going underneath it and make a little clay base. You get a bit of charcoal and it went red hot.

21:30 There was all sorts of things made in that camp. We had a fire put into our hut a square about that size there was a chimney going straight through the roof. The bloke said, "We can fix that" so they got all these size tins and hook them all together and went up like that and right across the hut and out again and to get a real fire going with

22:00 coal that would get hot and heat the room. Heat going up through this. You'd get a tin, square tin, like a kerosene tin and put that on top the stove and seal it and use it as an oven. Get the fire going, bake in it, grind up all your biscuits and make powder out of it and make a cake out of it. You'd be

22:30 surprised what you can do when you have to, you can make anything out of anything.

Was there a particular one or two people that came up with these ideas?

Once one bloke got an idea, there were a lot of smart boys, they'd start on something. Make it a little bit better. Down at Canberra a lot of stuff there is in the War Museum. A lot of stuff that blokes had made. Got their brains ticking over,

23:00 it's funny what you can do and the stuff they make out of bits and pieces. We got a two cent coin, gold and make it into a ring, I've got mine somewhere and it was gold those days. I've got a cross taken out of perspex taken off a plane; they used to make rings out of toothbrush handles. Twist it

23:30 around. Love to get a piece of perspex off a plane when it crashed, you'd heat it and mould it. They'd get two or three needles, darning needles and they'd use it as engraving. They'd go all over and make designs so you had four points of the needle,

24:00 made shoes, a beautiful pair of shoes out of scrap leather. Towels, you used to get towels, the colour strips, they used to pull a thread through, you ought to have seen some of the fancy work the blokes had done. Made colour stems out of towels. I could knit. I could do the heel, we'd all knit it.

I suppose this kept your mind busy too?

It had to, yes.

These are all the things that you

24:30 **were allowed to do and that you could do.**

Yes, and a lot of things you weren't allowed to do.

What weren't you allowed to do?

You used to get two round tins, about that high and put a piece of wood across the top and hook a wire on to that tin and a wire on to that tin put it in a bowl of water and switch the power on. You'd see the light go, the Jerries must've woke up to it,

25:00 you wouldn't put your hand in but it would heat the water. It used up an enormous amount of power.

They stopped that did they?

They found out where the power was coming from. We had a cellar under the cellar. The bloke down the coast had a camera. He's got photos, we had a radio, we had the BBC news, we used to post it up on the

notice board and the Germans used to come up and say, "What's the latest news?" They knew we had a radio they couldn't find it, we used to pack it up and

25:30 hide it.

When they started noticing that they could possibly lose the war and the young blokes went to the Russian front, the guards, what were the older fellows like, were they a little bit more relaxed?

Yes they were really. I think they knew the writing was on the wall. We treated them alright, we started to get parcels coming through, one bloke we sold him some

26:00 tea, a packet of tea, and he come back the next day and he said, "I didn't like that, I didn't like the taste". I said, "What did you do?" He had boiled it up and threw out the water and ate the tea leaves. They had never seen tea in their lives. That's how stupid some of them blokes were. Boiled up and ate the tea leaves and threw the water out; that was funny. It's marvellous what you do.

26:30 When you are in the camp you used to get permission from the guard if it would be okay to take you for a walk on the weekend. They worked thirteen days out of fourteen. You only got one day off a fortnight. You worked thirteen days. Some of the blokes in the camp were working eighteen hours a day. We were lucky being in the camp they couldn't make us work you see, NCOs, we didn't have to. They'd ask you but, "No sorry mate". They'd take you for a

27:00 walk. Right alongside there was a canal, the Adolf Hitler [German Chancellor] canal. A barge used to come up, they'd go all over Germany on a barge. All their stuff carried by water. In the winter time that stuff used to freeze over with four inches of ice on it. It burst the banks one year there was heavy snow, it had big blocks and they were blocked. Our blokes were standing in water up to their chest. Putting these stuff back, they did that day after day in the freezing cold.

27:30 No extra food or nothing. "You do it or else".

How long was it until you actually moved on from Blechhammer?

They opened up a new camp, this is funny, 344. I left Ray, this was

28:00 in about 1944, they opened up a new camp about three or four kilometres away through the forest. There is another camp along side it. They reckon they want to open up this camp because on the other side there is this big, still inside this big industry, but away from the other camp, they wanted more men on that side. I don't know why,

28:30 you don't ask them. I shifted across to there and it wasn't a bad camp, it was a good camp that. They put slip trenches in the middle, a big log, covered them over, a lot of blokes were working over in the factory but we didn't have to work, I stayed in side, there were four NCOs in that camp and we stayed in there. We looked after the camp. We had a cook, offsider, a couple of blokes in the RAP [Regimental Aid Post],

29:00 we had about a hundred and forty men in that camp. A small camp; that was a good camp, that was the last one I was in then we started marching then. The Russians started pushing.

Before we go there, why did you volunteer to go to the new camp?

It was something different.

For a change?

A change is as good as a holiday, new camp, it might be alright. It was, it was a good

29:30 camp. No fleas, the other places was full of fleas, it was sandy. Whenever the bombing started all the fleas would come out. You either get fleas or lice; you don't get them both together. The lice eat the fleas or the fleas eat the lice. Hang your clothes out in the sun and see them. You used to cut your seams, you wouldn't have your

30:00 seam like that, you used to cut them down to just, they used to lay their eggs in there, that's where lice hang out. You never get lice, if you are in good condition you don't get lice on you, it only hits you when you are down. The fleas will eat you anytime, whether you are fat, thin or skinny.

Did you have a remedy?

Shower, but in the winter time you couldn't shower because the water was frozen. All the pipes are frozen in the

30:30 winter. The only way you could get water was to break ice off the roof and melt it down, taps wouldn't turn.

You must of really wanted a shower though?

Not really, everybody smelt the same. You didn't care if you stunk or not. In the army, when we were up

in the desert, we had no water to wash, you were lucky to have water to drink let alone wash in it.

31:00 You'd cup the water, shave and wash your socks in it. In a cup of water. You daren't use anymore because once that bottle is empty you wouldn't get any until the next day.

You said you left Ray to go to the new camp, what was the new camp's name?

344, just a number.

Was that kind of hard, Ray was your mate?

31:30 Not really, he wasn't in the same room as me. There was only about six or eight Australians in that camp and the camp I went to there was only three of us. It didn't worry me. That was in 1944, we shipped out in January when the Russians started, we could hear the planes, bang, bang and we thought, "What's going on here?" They weren't very far away at that

32:00 time. They decided they would shift everybody. Everybody in that area, 344 moved, (UNCLEAR) all on the road, all different mob, marching, marching, stop where you can. I pulled up to somebody's barn. No food. They were frightened the Russians were going to capture us.

32:30 When we started going this way the Yanks were coming so we started going down that way. So we were between two. Russians one way and Yanks the other. The Yanks caught us on the road, we were marching along the road, when the tanks opened fire and they thought they were firing at us but they weren't they were firing at German trucks on the road about a mile away. They raced up these big, Patton's mob, old blood and guts Patton.

33:00 We had Jerry guards with us, they didn't know what to do, one bloke started running. The bloke said, "Let him go, let him go". There was a hill, he got back in the tank, swung it around and boom, blew the canister shell. He said, this big sergeant, "Any of these blokes been ill-treating you?" and he said, "Yes, he's a real so and so". So he shot him. That was on the road, we went back to a little village called Vinklan,

33:30 when we got there, there was a lot of Hungarian cavalry, horses, my mate and I said, "Beauty, let's get a horse". We pinched the horse and riding around on the horse, we were kings of the road. We went, my mate and I went with a tank for about three days; we formed with them, the Yankee army. We thought, "This is great", they had plenty of food, in fact we had that much food we were sick, we

34:00 brought it up again. We weren't used to eating food. They took us back to Reims in France, with lipstick across your head; they used to write with lipstick and a tag on your toe. To know who you were. That's the Yanks.

What do you mean put lipstick on your head?

They'd write on your head, "Ex-POW". Write it across your forehead.

Why would they do that?

34:30 So they knew you weren't a German. When they sent us back, they didn't know what we are, I could say, "I'm Australian". "Australia, where's that?" They assumed Australia was Austria. Half the Yanks didn't know where Australia was. It's only since the war, since they come out here on R&R [rest and recreation], through the war they heard of Australia. Australia is a foreign country.

35:00 **What about, I think Kiernan [interviewer] will probably get into talking about that march and what happened with liberation, but were you hearing about what was going on. You said you had a little crystal set [wireless] that somebody made?**

Yes, well no, it was run off the power, once you got on the road you couldn't use it. It was made out of bits and pieces.

When you were at 344 were you aware of what was happening?

35:30 We had a pretty fair idea; you could hear what was going on. The Jerries would let you know anyhow, they were scared as well, the guards. Yes, they knew it was coming. You had planes coming over, they used to leave, bomb Germany, fly to Russia, refuel, come back and bomb and go to Italy. They used to triangle like that. They were flying over, you could see them all day, if you didn't see them, you could see their trail they were flying high. The

36:00 Jerries had no planes to go up and shoot them.

During all this time the Australian army had sent a telegram perhaps to your wife had they?

Yes, when they found out. It took them a long long while to wake up. By the time the blokes in the camp, the English blokes, they had to get information to the Red Cross. The Red Cross has to tabulate it and okay it and it was nearly two years

36:30 before my wife knew. That's how long it took them to notify her.

That you were alive?

Yes.

So the first telegram was that you were missing in action?

Yes. Missing in action, missing in action, wounded in action, missing in action, believed killed in action. Nobody could find out where I was.

This is when you were in Crete for six months?

Yes. They didn't know where I was

37:00 and I had no way of letting them know. The first little card we sent, "I am well/I am not well", you weren't allowed to say where you were otherwise they'd wipe it off. They'd give you these letters and you used to fold it up and seal it and you could only write on one side of it you weren't allowed to write on the other side of it. I seen it when I come home and there were bits cut out here, they'd run a razor blade through it,

37:30 the Jerries. They'd okay it but that didn't worry our blokes. We had blokes that used to make our own stamps. I've got photographs where the Jerries thought they okayed it, they hadn't one of our blokes made the stamp. We had Borstal boys, have you heard of that? That's where the bad [English] boys go as kids. They'll do anything. I seen a bloke strip a five pound note like that in two pieces.

38:00 A five pound note, an English note, is only printed on one side, it has a metal strand through it and he'd pull it out. They'd make anything. In fact the air force on one of their buttons is a compass. Every air force uniform, one of those is a compass. They have a little cloth which is map and they always carry money. Up there bombing raids and the

38:30 planes being shot down, our job at 344 was to go out and pick all these dead bodies up and all these bits and pieces where the plane got blown up and blown to pieces. We found one bloke, we got about that much of him, just the breast pocket with his own death notice in it but it wasn't his, it was his brother's who got killed in the islands. His name was say, William Raymond, and his brother was Raymond William. We had to bury all these bits and pieces and notify the

39:00 camp and they'd send over the Red Cross. Planes everyday, hundreds of planes flying over. The Germans had no planes.

I am just curious about your poor wife that received these telegrams saying missing and wounded in action then thought killed in

39:30 **action and then how long was this killed in action till you sent her this card saying I am well?**

Nearly two years.

She must've gone, did she tell you what she went through?

She told me years later, "I knew you weren't dead". They couldn't kill me. She had an

40:00 idea somewhere in the back of her mind that I wasn't dead.

She didn't believe it?

No.

Tape 8

00:32 **You are just holding up a little book, do you want to explain what that is for us?**

It's a little diary I kept when we started off in the camp at Hiderbrik when they marched us out right up until we were recaptured by the Yanks from January to April. Every town we went through I put the name of the town down. When we started off, we started off in January, and every town we went through I put the name of the

01:00 place down, right through, right through, Hamburg, Kafel, right through, up to Bayreuth, the whole lot of them, (UNCLEAR) Nuremberg, stayed there for a while, we were recaptured in Vinklan by the Yanks, marching along the road on the 27th, no 23rd April 1945.

01:30 We went back to Nuremberg on 27 April, in Nuremberg. From Nuremberg we went down to Reims in France. It's a lot of places there, a lot of these places have now changed because we went through Czechoslovakia which had German names and the Polish names were in Germany and back to Polish and now back to Czech. Hopendorf, Cheska, Subrarika,

02:00 Sepinvich, they've all changed names. They've gone back to German.

How far did you walk exactly?

About seven hundred kilometres, no, more, about seven hundred kilometres. It was only a stroll, Sunday afternoon. January, February, March, April, May, June, July, from January to April, just a walk in the park.

02:30 Bloody cold though, we marched through Bavaria in the winter and snow, it was cold. All you could see was snow and fern trees. Bavaria, Nemangruper, Teral, right through all them, kept marching. You'd march until you could find a spot to stop that night. Up again the next morning and away you go again.

What were they marching you from exactly?

03:00 Trying to get away from the Russians, they started coming that way you see. Then all of a sudden the Yanks are coming this way, so they started taking us down to that way. Right down to Bayreuth, we were in Bayreuth when they bombed it, I will never forget that. The railway station, we were foraging and the planes come over. What do you do? Hide, bombs dropping left and right, they blew the bloody place to pieces. We got back to camp eventually but

03:30 I wouldn't want to go through that again.

What did you think of being bombed by your own side?

It was our fault for being there. I suppose you couldn't help it, they didn't know we were there. In fact it got to that stage in the finish we were told afterwards, when we were marching along the road with the German guards that plane flew over the guards were supposed to walk away from us to let them know that we were prisoners. A few crowds got strafed,

04:00 our planes were strafing and they used to do that to say, "These are prisoners" so they didn't bomb us. They'd fly over you and could have blown you off the road. There was no German aircraft. 238s, Spitfires, and the guards would walk to one side, nothing we could do about it.

You mustn't have looked like a military column?

We were in march.

04:30 I don't know whether or not we were in step, it would look a bit suspicious with a mob of blokes walking along, you would know they weren't soldiers. They had blokes looking down from a plane, about thirty or forty feet above your head. You've got a pretty good idea who you are and when he sees the guards walk to one side, they knew we were soldiers, prisoners. I've got a photograph there of all the camps in Germany, every pilot was given a copy of that.

05:00 But if a plane gets hit he's going to open the bomb and let it go. He's not going to take it back and land it. They'd land anywhere depends where he was.

You said it was a walk in the park?

It was.

For some it mustn't have been a walk in the park?

No, we lost a lot of fellows, a lot of people lost fingers and toes from frostbite. Died, one bloke got shot

05:30 because he didn't stand on his feet too quick. Ray will tell you that. The guard shot him. He didn't even know his daughter; his daughter was born while he was overseas. She died a few years back, used to keep in touch with her. Quite a few died from cold, I was six stone five. I could walk alright. First feed I had I brought it all up again, the

06:00 stomach was too small, you could drink water, that's about all you could hold.

I know that you talk about survival and thinking about tomorrow and all that, but how did you stop the thought of "They are just going to murder me".

I didn't know they weren't going to. I thought I'd be alright. She'll be right Jack, she's apples. You don't know but what's the good of worrying about it. You are just as likely to get

06:30 shot by a young bloke from up to as get bombed from a young fellow from up top. The guard would shoot you, it would be too late, you wouldn't know anything about it if he shot you, you are gone. No good worrying about it then. They'd have to shoot a lot of blokes because that bloke said, "Any of these bastards been ill-treating you?" and straight away he went bang and they all shut up. He could have

07:00 shot the lot, he didn't worry, he had a long beard, all scruffy looking, an EPIP tent tank, warrant a tank destroyer, one of the Patton's boys, old blood and guts [George Patton, American General] No worries.

Speaking of that, did some of the treatment of the German guards change as they realised they were probably going to lose?

It did and it didn't. Marching along the road, it wasn't their fault,

07:30 we couldn't do nothing. We just marched. I don't think that the blokes marching us on the road, well, they were glad to be away from the front. Otherwise you are up the Russian front, they lost millions of

men there. The worst thing they did was invade Russia. Russia just pulled back and burnt everything, left them nothing. Their lines of communication got longer and longer and all of a sudden the big freeze set in.

08:00 Couldn't get nothing up there and then the Russians started.

Did you come into contact on this march with German civilians in the towns?

Yes, in the towns. Coming through Bavaria one little town the people come out and gave us apples. They got belted by the guards as well, rifle butts, they gave us apples. Bavarians. There is Bavarians, Tyroleans, all different types of Germans. They

08:30 dress differently as well. It was too late; once you took a bite out the apple you were gone.

Why did they give you apples?

Something to eat, they knew we were starving, hungry. A lot of apples grown round that area, I think they had an idea that the war was, most German people didn't know the war was, a few of the blokes up the top

09:00 even Hitler didn’t believe it. He did in the finish when he shot himself.

In this kind of tense situation where they knew they were going to lose did you have to be extra careful about not stepping over the line in case you got shot at this stage?

Not really, there wasn't much you could do. You couldn't sort of thumb your nose at them. They still had the upper hand. You are still a prisoner in their country. Where Ray was there was a camp at A11,

09:30 they didn't believe it until a big tank pushed the front gates over, with big guns sticking out, then they knew the war was over. That's the first they knew of it. Even the German guards, when they guards cleared off they didn't know what was wrong until this bloody big tank knocked the wall down. The war is over and they all went mad then.

You have described briefly what happened, but tell us exactly what happened when you were on this march and that day, 23 April, when?

10:00 We were still marching. We stayed in this town called Vinklan over night, they had moved us again. All of a sudden we could hear boom boom, things going on. All of a sudden we heard these shells whizzing over, we thought, "They are shooting at us". We thought they were German tanks, we could see the tanks, and we thought they were German tanks getting rid of prisoners. They were firing over our heads at some German trucks. We didn't know that at the time, everybody

10:30 dropped flat. Next thing we know up rumbles these bloody big tanks, never pleased in all my life to see, about half the size of a house, big Sherman tanks, big guns you know. What they call Tank Destroyers, a barrel about this long on them, knock a tanker over, even knock a Tiger Tank. There were scruffy looking buggers in it. They were about three weeks ahead of the main column; they were just clearing the way, bang, bang, knocking anything down. They shot

11:00 all the insulators off the telephone wires. If they come to a town and were a bit held up and they'd just go and call the planes in and blow hell out and keep going again. He was a mad bugger, General George Patton, no beg your pardon, just boom.

What was the first thing a Yank said to you?

They knew we were prisoners as we were getting marched you see. They didn't even

11:30 know, "Australian? Where's Australia?". Because we had English as well you see, and a mate and I, he said, "Austrians?" We said, "No, no, Australia, land of the kangaroo". It took a while because some of the British blokes were talking, they said, "They are our allies". They didn't even know us, they knew we wore a slouch hat but that's about it all.

What happened next did they

12:00 **give you some food?**

Yes, but we brought it up again. Chicken and parsley rissoles in a can. They lived well those Yanks. They wouldn't go unless they had ice cream too. You used to open your ration and there would be like a little biscuit and you'd put it in the dixie and heat a hexamite tube underneath it and add water on it and it turned to porridge. It would have milk and sugar and oatmeal

12:30 all in this tin. There was also two cigarettes and two matches, you know the book matches, two of those, a vitamin pill and three sheets of toilet paper in the can. That was your breakfast ration. I will never forget that, we were hoeing into this stuff and bringing it back up again. Gut wouldn't take it.

Could you quite believe the situation you were in after all that time?

Yes and

13:00 no. We thought, "What the hell are we going to do now, where are we, what are they going to do with

us?" They can't take us back, we had to hang on. My mate said, "We will go for a ride". We hoped in this tank, and no worries. When we got to Reims, it was funny, the airport, we were talking to a lot of Yanks there and said, "Where are you going mate?" and I said, "I am going up" and he said, "Hop in". They'd take you anywhere; give you a ride anywhere on a plane. No red tape, "My mate will bring you back". Blokes flew everywhere,

13:30 they didn't know who we were from a bar of soap. We had a car. We commandeered a car later on in the town of Reims. Went up to DID [?] dump, a Yankee supply dump, filled up with petrol, got any amount of cigarettes. You'd go into town to get a feed and you would pay with cigarettes. You would be surprised at the amount of stuff the French people unearthed. Cognac and champagne they'd kept through the

14:00 war. I drank champagne 1908 for a packet of cigarettes. I wish I had it now, it would be worth a fortune, all you would need is cigarettes. That was your currency. Money was no good to you, you couldn't spend it. One bloke through England had a thick box of Zeiss lenses, he knocked off when he

14:30 come through the town, worth a fortune in England. All we wanted to do was get back home. Blokes had perfume and god knows what to take back to England. We never thought of that, we just wanted to get back home, get out of it. A lot of blokes thought…they knew it was going to be worth a few bob when they got back home and it was.

How were you feeling, you were free?

Free. What do you do, sing, dance, carry on, scream, yell,

15:00 we were free but couldn't go anywhere. We had to rely on somebody. We went back to Nuremberg. A truck come and took us to Nuremberg. From Nuremberg we went back to Reims in France. We were outfitted there. They put us through the delouser, took all our clothes we had, they burnt all them, gave us a Yankee outfit, big kit bag, whole box and dice. That's where I saw

15:30 the big band, the bloke that played, Glen Miller and his band was there at the time and Francis Langford and Marlene Dietrich [famous singer]. I had my photo taken with Marlene Dietrich. My Mrs tore it up, I was crook on that. They were all there at Patton's headquarters; that was the first time I had seen Glen Miller's band. I

16:00 seen, the bloke that got killed in the plane crash, that famous song, Chick Henderson. When we took off from Reims the big airfield had a sheet of mesh down on it on the sand, the plane was a bomber runner, big Lancaster, thirteen of us on board

16:30 and another plane behind that again and another one and the third plane crashed on take off. Killed the lot of them. A bloke said to me, "Do you want to come up here?" There was a turret on the top and a turret underneath and where the gunners sit. I sat on there and when you looked, it was big plane; it was only about that wide when you got on top. You'd fall out. You could see flying across the channel and you could

17:00 see little waves, the bloke said, "Waves nothing, it's a hell of a storm". We landed at Brighton eleven o'clock at night. The girls came racing over and put DDT [insecticide] powder up there and up there and down your legs down your neck, they didn't know that DDT was a banned substance now. Changed all your clothes and issued you with new stuff. We had all been issued with new stuff,

17:30 deloused again, get your hair cut.

I might come back to England in a bit, I might ask a few questions about back in the camp, sorry to go back there, kind of jumping around a bit. Talking about some of the work and I am going all the way back to E3, what was the work they were making you do at E3, some factory work?

They were building a big place, everything was made out of

18:00 coal, torpedo fluid, saccharine, oils, made from coal, they could make anything out of coal in those days. Huge complex it was, massive big place. IG Farben works. We were helping build it, our blokes were putting the wiring in, the electrical work, steel work, trenches, steam pipes in, everything was made from coal. Jews worked

18:30 there and along side there were also a lot of political prisoners. Belgians, French, Spanish, Dutch, not war prisoners, civilians. So called agitators. Say a word against the Germans and into a camp. Political prisoners, they were working there too, you couldn't get out of it, there was a whole fence around it too with guards. They built that place and the Yanks blew it away again. These big chimneys there,

19:00 the chimneys stuck up through the smoke, they'd just go, "There it is" and boom. We were there, in fact there were half a dozen camps inside the area.

What were they going to build in the factory?

They'd build anything. Massive big place, IG Farben.

Build armaments?

Extracting oil from coal, extracting

19:30 torpedo fluid out of the coal, making saccharine out of coal, all sorts. Huge coal deposits there, a big mine. You could do anything with it. They are pretty clever the German medicine blokes, the scientists. They had to with their heavy water, it was only just a stroke of luck they didn't have the atom bomb before we did.

What was their workplace health and safety conditions like?

20:00 None. I say none, if it got above a hundred and five in the summer you got sent back to camp. It was too hot to work. If it got below twenty five back to camp it was too cold. But ten or twelve below that was nothing, just a normal day. It was cold, unload bricks out of trucks

20:30 as a gang. He'd throw two, you'd catch it, throw it to the next bloke, you'd do that hours a day, can you imagine catching bricks? You have no skin on your hands. Freezing bloody cold. I didn't have to do it, the other poor buggers, it was food, you'd do anything for a bit of food.

What extra food did you get?

You'd get hot food that was cooked in the

21:00 kitchen. In the basic camp you got next to nothing. Ersatz [imitation] tea, coffee, soup, you couldn't drink it; it was easier to wash in.

You mentioned the Jews, the Jews the political prisoners, was everybody segregated with different roles?

All different camp; weren't together.

I mean the work?

No we all worked together. Our camp they pulled you up the front and the gaffers, the boss,

21:30 and this one bloke, Ray will tell you, he had a thumb and finger on that hand, all the others were cut off, and he used to come up outside and he'd say, "Bracken fuf men" for five men, but he only put two fingers up and two blokes would step out. He was only a little short bloke and when he put his other hand up we knew he only wanted five men, but they'd do it purposely, I used to laugh.

22:00 He was a good gaffer though; he treated us pretty well on the job. I had another bloke, my mate and I used to work for him, he was a good bloke, cutting timber, I didn't mind. Out in the open air not being shut up.

We were just talking about some of the work and the

22:30 **man with the two fingers. You said forest work out in the open?**

Yes, anything to get out of the camp for a while. Didn't have to, used to get out of the place for a while. Apart from going out to get one of the guards to take you for a walk on a Sunday the rest of the time you are in the camp all the time. You get bored after a while.

With some of this outside work would you get a chance to see some of the German

23:00 **locals?**

My mate down the coast used to work for a telephone company, Telefunken. He was a bit shrewd, he didn't believe in hard work. He was a linesman and he got a job in the telephone company, "Yes they dial, come on". He had a girlfriend and all, his wife was back here and that didn't make any difference.

What about you and your forestry work?

I was used to working in the bush.

23:30 We used to help this old bloke, he was quite good, a hell of a nice bloke. Clearing forests, cutting timber down, lopping branches off.

With some of the political prisoners and the Jews you would see them working would you?

Yes.

Would they have the women and children doing some of the work?

The women yes, no kids. They expected Ukraine women, there were some big women amongst them, they were doing all the work.

24:00 They were manual laborers. Working in coal mines, working on the railway lines, sleepers. Working in timber. That's all they done all their life. The Russians used all the Ukraines before they used their own blokes their own people. Poor Ukraines; they are a different race altogether from the Russians. There is about five

24:30 or six different nationalities there.

Did you ever get a chance to mix with them at all?

Yes. They used to wear all their clothes, of course there was nowhere else to leave them, if you left them somebody would knock them off. They were all huge women; they looked like huge women with the amount of clothes they wore. They had to wear everything. None of spoke English and very few of them spoke German.

25:00 They were Russian. We had a few that spoke a word here and there but it was all sign language you know. Everybody knew what that was, that was food, or you want a drink of water. Or smoke, but they had no cigarettes.

The women, you'd mix with them occasionally?

Yes, they worked in the workplace, when you are out working you'd mix with them.

25:30 You couldn't speak to them because they couldn't understand you.

You learnt a bit of German?

A fair bit of German.

How did you use what you learnt? Did you talk to the guards?

Yes, talked to the guards, talked to the people. It come in handy at times, I learnt German before I went away. I was working on a station and the cook man, he was off a ship and he wanted to learn English

26:00 so he came way up the bush and took the job, he was a steward on a ship, and he taught us German. It took him a long way to wake up, the lady of the house said to light the stove. "Stove" in German is dust. "What the hell do you want the dust for?" We took him down to the pub one day, we rode about fifteen mile down the pub. We put him on a horse; he's never seen a horse. When it was our shout he was drinking little pints,

26:30 when it was his shout he was drinking big drinks, but unbeknownst to him it didn't matter what you drank it was all the same price, it all cost you sixpence. So he thought he was saving us money. We had to hold him on the horse riding home, he got rotten drunk. He was a good bloke, a German. I don't know what happened to him. His English got pretty good, he was there for about four months and he learnt English very well. I learnt a fair bit of German because I was interested in the language, I could read it, write it,

27:00 speak it, understand it. Angelica and I have quite a sensation up here. Every time I ring my mate we always talk in German.

Would you have any banter or jokes with the Germans in their language?

Not really. We used to change all the nursery rhymes into German. (UNCLEAR)

27:30 Quite a lot of them. There were very few swear words in German, they don’t cuss like we do. Spanish, that's a filthy language. German, that's quite good. I don't think the Greeks swear either.

Would you give the guards any nicknames to have some fun?

Quite a lot yes. One bloke,

28:00 they finished up sending him up to the Russian front, he wouldn't wash. He stunk to high heaven. The bloke in charge of the camp got our blokes in our bathroom to strip him off and scrub him with brushes. Our blokes scrub him and he got sent up the Russian front, he was a filthy bugger. Real

28:30 illiterate bloke, never went to school, he was filthy. We had a bloke in our camp who was a worse bloke. We used to get a tin of treacle every now and then and he'd run it across the table, he was a real slob; he got shipped out of our hut very smartly. The biggest thing we had there was a fight for ‘bogu’, do you know what bogu is?

29:00 Porridge. They used to make up these great big things of porridge, thick dobs, we had two tables run down the middle with twenty men on each side. A bloke flicked a bit and it hit a fellow, and another bit, another bit, another bit. You ought have seen our hut, they went down the cook house and brought up two or three more buckets, can you imagine? It's gooey, it'd stick to you. The guards come down and we had to take everything out and

29:30 hose it down, the walls, the floors, they upended both tables on the floor like a boat, and they are singing, and you have no idea, just how prisoners see it, they always see the funny side of it. Ray often remembers that, he's got that in his book, we had some fun. You make your own fun. If you start thinking

30:00 low you wouldn't last five minutes, they'd jump on you for starters.

You were telling Heather earlier about a play, what was the play?

We had Charlie's Aunt, that was a well known play. The Man at Six, murder mystery, I was a Detective Sergeant in that with an Irish accent. Ray was in the Desert Song, we had quite a lot,

30:30 they made…the Desert Song was not Romberg's version, we took all the classics and a lot of the blokes there made their own words. The whole play was done on the classics, and converted in English. We had some clever blokes in that camp. The violinist was with the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] Symphony Orchestra, the bloke that played the trumpet was Johnny Clay and his Clay Pigeons, they were all top bands way back.

31:00 The slap base artist was Ambrose Orchestra, number one, top fellows, we had a beautiful band there. The bandmaster as a British bloke, he had his band mastership from Nullahor [?] that means you can't get any higher as far as music goes. They always used to try and come to our camp and the Germans loved music. The Canadian Red Cross sent a lot of things, drums, the whole box and dice, we used to have concerts and

31:30 we had a good band there. Play and this bloke used to get this violin and it used to make you cry you know. The Jerries loved music that's one thing I will say about the Germans, they loved music and didn't say anything about music.

How many were in the concert party?

Depends on the thing. Apart from that Man at Six, I did most of the costumes. We had

32:00 three little blokes, two of them were marines and done up beautifully as girls. Looked better girls than they did boys. All the guards, the Germans would turn up to the concerts. They had front row of course. It was quite good shows, some of them lasted two hours or three hours.

Played for the whole camp?

Yes, we had about the size of our,

32:30 that held all the camp. They called it a concert room. We had a pianist there who could play the war shore concerto from top to bottom without a sheet of music. Nearly two hours and never make a mistake. This band master could pick up a wrong note, "You've got fly spots on your music", with about twenty blokes playing.

33:00 He'd have a violin on his knee, same as banjo, playing it like a banjo, and he'd tell a bloke he was playing the wrong note. Clever, good band, good camp.

Was it kind of an unusual situation to have an enjoyable concert almost?

It was but you had to do something. Everybody put something in, it wasn't just a slap bang thing. They were real, the chap that done the scenery, he had big rolls of paper

33:30 he was a scene maker with one of the crowd's in England and some of the drawings he done, some of the war backdrops, I think it was a Mexican scene and it was in a courtyard through an archway and you could see for miles but it was a flat board. There would be a photo hanging on the wall and he'd put the shadow on it from the light thrown on it. He was phenomenal. A scene, there was ivy growing all through these bricks

34:00 and it looked like somebody knocked off a piece of the brick and he'd fix it up again. Doing this ivy he said, "I used to catch the bus in and go up there that street and in" and he'd put the leaves in. Ray's got the photo, you swear you were looking at miles down, it got smaller and smaller and smaller, very clever man?

At any of the plays would you throw in a bit of taking the piss out of the Germans at all?

A lot of them spoke English. Our camp's commandeer,

34:30 his wife was English, he spoke perfect English. He was a 'ridmeister', a riding master, cavalry man. No, you'd finish up doing time in the brig and that was only six by six by six. You'd get a glass of water and a slice of bread for three days. You didn't do anything like that.

Tell us, jumping from concert parties, were you ever in the brig, did you ever get punishment?

Yes.

What for?

Giving cheek.

35:00 For refusing to do something I was supposed to do. I didn't feel like doing it, I got jack of it after a while. I spent two days, six, by six by six, with a hole up the top and water and bread. I didn't mind.

I suppose you had done…

Another time somebody pinched some bread and the whole camp had to come out and stand out in the snow, it was snowing like hell,

35:30 until somebody owned up. We were there for hours and hours and hours and nobody owned up. We know who it was and one bloke said, "It was me". They locked him up and it wasn't him at all. He pinched a loaf of bread out of the storehouse. That was one thing you can never do with a German, don't take food. If they caught you, they'd shoot you. Don't take bread, food.

Was he okay?

36:00 Yes, he didn't give a stuff; put him in the brig [gaol], blokes will look after him, bring him food.

How would you get food to someone in the brig?

Through the little hole in the top.

Wouldn't they try to stop you?

Yes, one bloke would keep the guard's attention, "Here have a bit of chocolate mate". There are ways and means. There are more ways to killing a cat than choking it. You could do anything. They were easy to distract a lot of them.

36:30 These blokes would be standing on the gate; blokes would bring stuff in from outside that they would trade with the civvies, this bloke had a rabbit tail sticking out from his shirt and walked through the gate and the guard searched him and never saw the rabbit. They used to have calico bags and hang them over the crutch of their trousers filled with flour and this poor

37:00 bugger it had a hole in it and when he walked there was trail of flour and the guard never seen it, marching right in with this trail of flour, trickling out this hole. You used to get these two sausages made and hang them down the crutch of the your trousers inside your leg, it had a hole in it and as he walked, the guard never seen it.

How did he miss it?

37:30 He's got a one track mind. A lot of them didn't worry after a while. As I said, they'd go looking for eggs and they'd only take eggs, there'd be a radio there and they wouldn't touch it. They were told to search for something and that's all they'd do. They were looking for bread, they'd take bread and leave the eggs. I wouldn't say all of them, some of them were smart. The average bloke was a bit, they were real

38:00 country blokes, all the smart blokes were up the front.

Was the threat of punishment a bit of a control; did it stop you doing anything like trying to escape or anything?

There was no where to go if you got out. From where we were, you had to be lucky, one bloke got out, he got to Switzerland, he spoke good German and dressed his clothes but gave himself up too soon.

38:30 They handed him back so nobody tried it again. Another bloke got into Yugoslavia and teamed up with Tito's men, he fought for years with Tito and finished up with rows and rows of medals. Randolph Churchill, his commando, (UNCLEAR), he got that far and thought, "This will do me", he couldn't go any further.

39:00 He couldn't go through Greece, he couldn't go through Italy, they had it all sort of, there were too many columns, offering a bounty, marching around, money, they'd turn you over. Once you got away from the border in Switzerland they'd send you out back home again. Once you get into Spain you can get home.

Tape 9

00:33 **When the American came and liberated you from the German guards, were the German guards hanging around or had they taken off?**

No they were still there. On the side. One bloke took off, cleared when he saw the tank and he started running up a hill towards the trees and the bloke said, "He won't go far". He got in the

01:00 tank and swung the muzzle around and boom. End of that bloke and all the leaves on the tree as well, canister shot.

Did the Americans take the German guards prisoners then?

Yes, they were prisoners, lined them up. It was funny. When they captured us, they took everything off us. All our papers, tore it up, when we give yourselves up. We told this Yankee sergeant

01:30 so they made them line up two or three rows apart, and we could search them. We knew, a lot of blokes don't, they've got a fob watch pocket that hangs right down to their groin. Deep. I've got the watch in there of this bloke. Beautiful watch. We searched them, took their papers, I said, "This will do me". He said, "My Mother". His Mother gave it to him and I said, "My Mother gave me a lot

02:00 of things but that's mine". I've still got it. It's fancy. It goes way back. "That's mine".

They took all the Australian...

They took it off us when they first captured us so we took all their stuff. All their photographs and tore it up like they did. They were crook on that. Took our pay books, took everything we had,

02:30 tore it up.

It seems kind of crazy they were upset with you when...

They were masters of the world at that time. They were way up. Feelings were high, they've got this crowd beat, we can do what we like with them, so we did the same to them. The Yankees sergeant said, "Do with them what they done to you, go out bush". There was about a hundred or so of us

03:00 there, they got stuck in to them, so my mate and I pinched these two horses and went for a ride.

Where did you go?

Round and round the countryside. Carmichael, he was another Irishman, I met him again in London. We got to London we went up to Moody's Irish House and of course Kelly and Carmichael go to Moody's place. Upstairs drinking the real McCoy, the real stuff up top, we had a wonderful time.

03:30 Bruce Carmichael, I don't know what's become of Bruce.

Tell us about what happened after you came back from your horse ride they sent you on a ship to France is that right?

Yes, first of all they were waiting on transport to ship us back, we couldn't walk back they had no room in the tank so my mate and I decided we'd go for a ride with them. We went for a couple of days with them and they sent us back again. We thought it was good being in a Yankee army.

04:00 No fighting of course they were just the tail end of the main column. Anyway we got back the crowd was still there and we were living in this village. The trucks arrived and got us back to France, back to Nuremberg and then to Reims.

What was that like arriving in France, you hadn't been to France?

No not then, we didn't have a clue where we were going. He said, "We will take you back to headquarters, get outfits and the rest of it and get you on your way back home to England". We thought this would be

04:30 great but what do we do now. They took us back to Reims and they took all our old clothes off us, boots, the whole box and dice. Put us through the delouser, bath and shower and the rest of it. Give us a Yankee outfits. Of course when we got to England they took that of us. We were not supposed to be in a Yankee outfit, they give us another outfit, Australian stuff from the store, we were crook on that because I liked the Yankee uniform, it was good.

So it was actually in England where they deloused you?

05:00 Late at night, a lady in the air force, the girls, had these big pump things, up your sleeves, down your neck and up your trousers, DDT powder to delouse you in case you brought back you know, then go through the showers. Burnt all the clothes, took all the clothes off us, we had already done that in France. We had been deloused, bathed, haircut and

05:30 they made us do it all again in England, maybe the Yanks didn't do it properly. We went on leave. Went to a place called Eastbourne. From Eastbourne we went to London. There was a big new place, the Red Cross had taken over this big new place, nobody had lived in it before. All these beds had been shifted in, army beds. Right opposite there was a Territorial Army camp

06:00 building. All the girls. We were on leave. We explored this big place, good food, they supplied us with plenty of food and there was a billiard table downstairs, three or four big billiard tables, still covered with the cloth. Billiard balls still in the box wrapped in tissue paper and the cues there. Nobody had used it. They had been there all through the war.

06:30 These beds, they brought these army beds in. I don't think anybody slept in their own bed. Went back to London, when I was in a prison camp, one of the chaps, his sister lived at Birmingham. Place called Hay Mills. I used to write to her, I met her in London.

She met you there and took you out on the town?

Yes.

07:00 **Is this where you got the card and sent it back to your wife saying "I am well"?**

I am well and I am in England. You had to cross out "I am well/I am not well". There was a telegram, like a cable gram thing and you were only allowed to say so many words. They coded that and when it got back here they decoded it. Like CWD might mean "I am well" or something like that. Then she found

out. I got a cable back when she found out where I was. It was about

07:30 three days before I got that I went home. I cleared off. When they were going to shift us home they took us up to Liverpool to the Dominian Monarch ship coming home. They were going to put us three to four to a cabin in hammocks, "No way Charlie was I going home in this thing". There is a big Pommy major standing on top and he said, "I say chap, you can't come off". He finished in the drink, pushed off the

08:00 ship, we weren't going home, we'd been locked up for bloody years, not putting us in cattle again, we are not cattle. Going home in comfort so they took half the blokes off. Christ, we are not going home in hammocks, we are free men. Took half off. I'll never forget this bloke. "I say old chaps you can't come off". Pushed him over in the drink; hope he could swim.

Who pushed him do you know?

A couple of blokes.

08:30 I walked right around the Aintree racecourse, that's where the big grand national hurdle is. Do you know where that is? Some of the jumps are that high. One, you come to a jump from here to that wall over there and they do a sharp left turn down the canal, that's the toughest course it's about four mile and it's owned by a woman.

09:00 They eventually got him, blokes shot all over him when they got off that trip.

What do you mean they eventually got you?

We had to.

You had to get on it?

Eventually, but after, half of them wouldn't go on, there were too many. They didn't want that many blokes on, we would have been all crowded together, we had been crowded together as it was. They decided to get another ship; I think three or four ships. We come from there

09:30 through the Panama Canal and straight to Sydney, never pulled in anywhere else.

These days you would have, someone who had been in a POW camp, they would know not to do that.

Pommies didn't know. This Pommie major didn't anyhow. You don't tell our boys what to do; they just put him straight into the drink. There wouldn't have been much gap between the ship and the wharf. It was

10:00 funny, I will never forget that. Red Cross were there, the Australian Red Cross. I've still got the lighter made out of a lipstick case, you fill it with cotton wool, I've still the got wool they gave me, it was 1945, nothing in it just a wallet and a cigarette lighter. I used to smoke in those days. Lipstick case with the cross stamp on it,

10:30 made properly, everybody got one. I had a fruitcake, I was as sick as a dog after that. Food, beauty.

The Red Cross gave you?

Yes, a big meal like that. I went to Australian House and they give you a box with plum pudding, cake, lollies, sweets,

11:00 tin fruit, to give to your friends in England. A lot of blokes said, "Oh bugger, I am not taking that". So I ended up with four of these, give to the people in England, prisoners of war took it to their families. I was there the day lights come on in London. We were walking from (UNCLEAR) coming back and there were barricades on the street, you can't walk, and

11:30 unbeknownst to us the Queen was expected there with the carriage and we said, "We'd better get back to London". I climbed the outside of Australia House and knocked the flag off. Went back a couple of days later and I wouldn't believe it, how I got up there, I don't know, I was full, I was stupid. Barry's got the flag still.

Were you there for VE [Victory in Europe] day?

Yes.

Can you explain what the

12:00 **mood was like in London?**

We stood on the entrance to the Strand Station, Savoy Hotel, on VE Day plus one, V plus two, V plus three, we couldn't move there was that many people. Millions of people you couldn't move. We stood alongside a woman, a woman and her two daughters who lived at Croydon which was eight mile out of London and it was the first time they had ever

12:30 been in London and they lived eight mile away. We'd been there a couple of days and we showed them around. Of course we had nothing to travel around. They'd say, "Aussie, yeah okay". Go by train, tram, taxi driver, wouldn't take any money. As long as you had your Australia's flashing. We were well treated,

I said, one girl was about twenty two, twenty three and had never been to London. Her Mother had never been to London.

13:00 They lived eight mile away. They had no intentions of going to London. We had a bloke that lived in say the village and they'd drink at a pub because their Dad and grandfather drank there. There is no way they'd go down to that one, "This is our place". They wouldn't even know what was next door. Now it's different of course, you've got television and radio. Then, you'd say to a bloke, (UNCLEAR) and they wouldn't have a clue. Wouldn't know what went on next

13:30 door.

Tell me what was it like seeing everybody celebrating going nuts after what you had been through?

You have no idea what it was like. I had it twice. I was in Melbourne VP [Victory in the Pacific Day] day. I got a tram at Royal Park, we were still in Royal Park at the departing camp going into the city and we got into a tram and got half way down and

14:00 it couldn't go any further and I said, "What the hell?" and he said, "VP day" or VJ [Victory in Japan] Day as they called it, so I jumped out and went to the city. I lost a button off here and lost my hat, the sheilas were grabbing this and that and I thought, "Bugger this I am going back home again". So we did, I went to the pub. Beer was short in those days and went to pack into the kitchen and old man Murray, we had friends there, and he had

14:30 beer was coming through the kitchen window we stayed there until the early hours of the morning. I was in London on VE day and Melbourne on VJ day.

Was it the same kind of celebration?

Yes, it was mad. Whistles and screams, you'd see a sailor with an airmen's hat on and an airmen with a sailor's hat on and a soldier with a sailors jacket, the war is over. Bedlam.

15:00 Hammersmith (UNCLEAR) holds a thousand dances on the floor. It's on a corner of the street and the whole area was a million people. We stopped at the entrance to the Strand and you couldn't move, you couldn't move at all. Absolutely impossible, jammed tight. People were trying to get in and trying to get out, but you stopped there. Just as well there was food kiosk not far. We met my mate Bruce Carmichael, his

15:30 brother or cousin was a good captain in the English air force and we met him and his wife and we went to the pub. I will never forget this. We had a beer and she had a brandy, it come to nineteen shillings. I thought, "Jesus Christ, what is this?" He left a shilling on the tray and the waiter took it as a tip. Three beers and a brandy for a quid, English pound and I said, "Get out of this bloody pub". Went down and joined a club.

16:00 I think we paid ten bob and got our beer cheap. That's a lot of money, nineteen shillings. For a glass of beer, only about one percent too, it was like water. I didn't like their beer. The only beer I liked in England was IPA, pale ale. It wasn't bad but the rest of it. Whiskey, I don't know if it was

16:30 real whiskey or not. They had to weigh it, take the whisky out and fill it with tea. They sold that to the Yanks. Have cold tea and half whisky. It smelt like whisky and tasted like whisky, it was half and half.

Tell me about the ship coming back to Australia, was it the Dominion?

Coming across the Atlantic was a

17:00 shocking trip. The way it was, it was sixty foot to the top and the waves were breaking over it. It had a horrible habit of going it would shudder and go back up again. Horrible feeling. Coming across the Pacific, flat as a tack. Not a ripple. Beautiful trip across, straight to Sydney.

17:30 Never pulled into New Zealand, a lot of other ships pulled into New Zealand. Our ship went straight through. We were buying stuff off the Yanks, cigarettes and tobacco and stuff like that. I had a kit bag full of it. The word went around that customs were coming aboard the ship at Sydney and blokes were trying to get rid of their stuff, giving it to sailors, I had a kit bag. No way in the world. We were buying a full pound of

18:00 tobacco for one and threpence. Cigarettes were nine cents a packet. I hung onto mine. When I come home, my kit bag was full. "Here have a pack of cigarettes". Within a month I never had a smoke. Customs didn't come on at all. We bought whiskey for one dollar twenty a quart.

18:30 Real bourbon, a dollar twenty a quart, at Panama. My mate and I left the ship and got on a tram. The boats were pulled through by a tram.

Did you happen to know that your wife was going to meet you back in Australia?

Yes, we were

19:00 told. When we got into Sydney, they give you a bit of a lowdown on Sydney and what's going on. We

were going to Royal Park and we come down by train to Sydney. She was waiting and so was my young bloke.

She was there on her own?

No, she was there with our young bloke. All the other wives, there were hundreds of them, "Who are you?"

19:30 I hadn't seen her since 1945 [1940?], over five and a half years. She had been informed by the Red Cross that I was a prisoner. She showed me the cable and she didn't recognise me. I was only about seven or eight stone. I was a big fellow when I went away. Took a while to settle

20:00 down though.

Who was she with?

My son. He didn't know me and I didn't know him either. He was only a little bloke when I went away.

How old was he when you got back?

About eleven or twelve years old. "Who the hell is that bloke?" I recognised her, but she didn't recognise me. A lot of funny things went on that day. Crying and

20:30 screaming, women crying. They got a cab and took us home and I settled in alright. It took a while to settle down. I got itchy feet. We used to meet a pub in Melbourne called the Port Phillip, all our battalion. You want to find something out you go to the Port Phillip, I

21:00 spent a lot of time there when I got back. My old mates, you are that used to be with them in the army, we had to meet them again, it took a long while it took about eighteen months before I really settled down. I was married. What done it, we used to go to the races, she loved the races. My grandfather trained horses, her nephews and nieces and cousins were all amongst horses. She loved going to the

21:30 races. A mate of mine I come home with, a friend of his was a bookmaker. We went down to a place called Aspenvale one day and he had two horses and he said, "Back that fellow, put it all on that one". So we did and it won. He was playing two up with three threpences so it's got to come down either tails or heads. He won about two thousand quid. That same

22:00 bloke, I've got a photo of him somewhere, he inherited a title in Scotland. His fathers, his uncles, his brothers, had all died and he was the last one. A niece of mine he was mad on, he wanted to marry her. She didn't want to. I said to her, "You are stupid, you could have been Lady so and so in Scotland". She's a dance

22:30 teacher and she, "No". He had plenty of money too, he inherited an estate. Max Kalick. There was Kalick, Kelly and Kennedy, we were all three K's. We were in the army and of course you are alphabetically and we all stuck together like that. He said, "Back this horse" so I backed it.

How much did you win do you remember?

It was quite a few bob, there was plenty of money around. I went down to Flemington the same year, 1945,

23:00 July, I thought, "I know that horse". I knew the name, the breed. A mate of mine had come home early; he was a barman on the hill in a bar. He said, "I've got a good thing" so I went out and had a look and it was sixty six to one. I said, "Forget it". He said, "Back it, it's good". So after a couple of

23:30 beers I went over and backed it thirty three to one. I put two quid on it. I went back to the bar again, I never seen it race. He won it. Paid me sixty eight dollars back then. He said, "UNCLEAR" and I said, "I know". Put twenty quid on it, won fifty. Put it in my pocket. Hurdle race, David, won the hurdle, backed it. There was another horse, Oatcake and Teacake, so I backed it. In the

24:00 meantime, the bloke that owned the pub in Melbourne he was secretary of the license victors and he had a horse going called Logical. Teddy Preston, an ex jockey, had the horse and owned it. We weren't' allowed to called Badness. I was told to back Logical. It was going to be Breezy was riding it. So what did I do? I stood to win eight thousand pounds. He got beat by six inches.

24:30 I come off the course winning ten bob and a gut full of grog. I tell you, Preston, a mate of mine had a good jumper too called Bitani, he fell once and broke his neck. Beautiful jumper. I broke in a good horse called Barin. He won six hurdle races, two on the flap, he was a

25:00 dud. Beautiful horse, I could handle it easy, a big stallion. The dudes were frightened of him, I used to hang on to the reeling bit, the ring, and lead him into it, others try and put a rope on him and he'd go straight at them. I got on well with him. I used to wash him down and feed him linseed with stuff called Siponica, liquid soap, and his coat shone like glass. Beautiful looking animal.

It's funny a lot of

25:30 **Victorian people are so interested in racing?**

(UNCLEAR) I've got photographs of (UNCLEAR) and won in 1933. Big horse, about seventeen hands high, big tall fellow.

How did your wife deal with you being so unsettled for a while?

She'd been

26:00 unsettled too. She had been without me for years. It took her a while. "Who's this bloke?" She had settled to her life and all of a sudden a bloke comes into your life, what do you think? I couldn't settle down straight away. I knew a lot of blokes, blokes who had come back from Japan, didn't last ten minutes. A lot of them ended in divorce, forty five percent died before they reached forty five

26:30 with the treatment they got. It took a lot on. Six years in the army and you are overseas and you come back and it's like, "There's your wife". "Who?"

It's amazing that when she thought you were dead and having grieved that she didn't take up with another bloke.

She had the little bloke, she lived with her sister in law, she was pretty good that way, she was a good girl, I picked the right one.

What was her

27:00 **name?**

Muriel Elizabeth. But don't call her Muriel, I used to call her Betty. Betty was her second name. Don't call her Muriel. The grandkids, nieces, always called her Auntie Dick. Her sister told the kids her name was Richardina.

27:30 It wasn't and the kids used to call her Auntie Dick, even right up until the time she died. She said, "That's Richardina, she wasn't ours, they left her on the doorstep". The kids believed it. It was funny.

Did it just take a while for you to get on your feet and start looking for a job?

Yes, I went to tech, a rehabilitation course.

28:00 I wanted to do building estimation and costing. I knew how to use tools and stuff. I went up to the tech and the bloke said, "This is a ruler, this is a saw, this is a hammer". I thought, "I want building and estimating, I know how to use a hammer, I know how to use" and he said, "But the other blokes don't". I did that for two or three weeks and I never learnt a thing. I give it away. The Government was

28:30 paying for it, it was stupid. I knew how to build, I knew how to cut and everything, but I wanted to know how do you estimate and those sort of things. That was next year. I wasn't going to wait until next year so I left it. I went into mechanical engineering, mechanics.

How long was it from coming back from the war to you getting a job?

I had a lot of

29:00 leave coming. I had leave. Use that first. I think it was after Christmas I worked. I was happy; I was making money off the races. I had plenty money and pay in 1951 when the third pay come on, the only thing I was crook on was that they didn't pay any interest. All the time you were away they took threpence a day out of your pay and they deferred that until 1951, you got a lump sum but no interest.

29:30 Threpence a day doesn't seem much but from 1940 until 1951, its compound interest so it adds up to a few bob. I remember about eight or nine months later I get a cheque from them they owed me two days leave, she had to get her forms. I think I got fourpence a day for the young bloke, allowance, and the first pension I got I think was about sixpence a

30:00 week. POW sixpence a week. The only thing Fraser done, good on Fraser, in 1966 he passed a law in parliament that all POWs, all sicknesses and injuries, whether war caused or not, will be paid by DVA. I was covered. From January next year I won't pay any rent here, All ex POWs, the Government will pick up the tab. If I went to a nursing

30:30 home now the Government would pick up the tab. It will be another two or three hundred dollars a fortnight. By that time I will hit the twenty five thousand, I can go on a holiday.

How did you manage back in your family with this young son and woman?

It took a while, eventually it went over, I bought the little bloke a bike, a push bike. That

31:00 was good. We made a few bob and I bought a lot of stuff for my wife. That mirror I bought that for her. I got this vase with these two ladies holding up a moon stone, and I thought she might like this, but I bought it and unbeknownst to me it cost me a lot of money and I gave it to the niece right after the wife died, it was a lovely thing, she fell in love with that. She had a

31:30 lampstand, it was a nude girl holding a ball made of chrome and I bought that for her. She wanted it and

I said, "You can have that". I think Barry, we were going past Middleberg's one day and there was this teddy bear, Loppy, they called him Loppy, made of lamb's wool, I saw it for Barry and he's still got it and he's fifty something,

32:00 before he was one year old. He's a hoarder, my baptism certificate, first Christmas card, everything that's mine; he bought all this stuff, all these papers, all on computer, now if anything happens he's got it all there.

You said you had another child that you lost, a girl, how old was she?

32:30 About eight months old.

What happened?

Don't know, mystery thing, probably a brain tumor or something, aneurysm.

That would have been very sad?

It was.

Was that before you went off to war?

Before I went away. I was ready to clear off and I blamed her. We probably wouldn't have had any more after that anyhow. Not like my brother, he's got thirteen

33:00 kids.

I think when you are grief stricken you don't know what to do.

When my wife died I don't know where I went. I woke up in the morning, she'd been sick, I said, "You feel cold". I woke up about seven and she must've died about four o'clock. I rung Barry and I rung a friend of mine and I cleared off, I don't know where I went, in two days I come back home again.

33:30 I don't know where I went, I never lived in that house afterwards, I sold it. We had been there twenty five years. I went over to Perth a couple of months. Sold it and said, "I can't go back there again". I said to another bloke I knew, "Get rid of the house". I said, "I want that much and what you get for it is yours". Got it, two days it was gone.

34:00 I come up here and bought a house up here. What did I do then? Give it to the young bloke handed it over to him.

You didn't remarry?

No, once was enough. Once bitten twice shy they reckon.

34:30 Once you get one, this business of, you can't no more, you have to break them all in again. You get one to your liking you know.

When did Betty die?

1987. I knocked off work in 1976 I retired. We had quite a few years

35:00 travelling around, bought a car, painted the house. Hired a caravan and toured all around Victoria in a caravan. That was lovely. Went and saw her sister, relative here and there. Every weekend we were out, hundreds and hundreds of miles in that car.

You were lucky considering you were talking about the statistics of POW divorces and that kind of thing, you are lucky you had such a good marriage.

35:30 I did. Probably if I had been there all the time it would have been different but I had a lot of gaps. I was away; I worked up the bush for a long while because money was better. She wouldn't go back to the bush again. My mate wanted me to go back to Moe; he was selling a truck full of fat cattle once a month, that was ten cows at forty quid a head. That was four hundred pounds a month he was making, half of that would have been mine but she wouldn't have gone back to the bush.

36:00 In those days the battling wage was about four or five quid a week. She was done with the bush. I said, "Righto". I went back to the bush; it was good money in the bush.

Where was that house that you lived in for twenty five years?

Ringwood, just out of Melbourne. We went there, there was no roads, no footpath, no sewerage, I got the house reasonably cheap. I didn't pay cash because I wanted the cash so a

36:30 friend of mine was a solicitor in Melbourne and said he'd lend me the money and give me an unsecured mortgage. I paid it off in twelve months and the house was mine. Sewerage come on and I had to pay for that. They started making roads and they started making footpaths. Each time they did that up go your rates and up went your rates and up, and I thought, "What have I bought myself into to?" They keep revaluing the property. First time it was two thousand five hundred

37:00 then it went up to eighty five thousand. They said, "We lowered the rates". It was seventy five cents in the dollar they lowered it down to two cents in the property because they upgraded the property about forty percent. That stinks, I went crook on that, it's cheaper to rent. I didn't want to pay the rates.

We've only got one or two minutes left on the tape and I am wondering what you would say to a

37:30 **young person today who wanted to join the army.**

Yes. Nowadays they teach you a trade, When I went in you were a footslogger or engineer or artillery. Artillery is no good in civvies street [civilian life], engineering yes, it's a trade. My young fellow was in RAAOC [Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps], he's now a director of a firm that handles food stuff, the other bloke he's a produce manager at Woolworths.

38:00 Join the army. He had thirty four years.

You said off camera you had some good times but you wouldn't want to do the POW all over again of course, what about the army?

I'd join the army again, I love the army. I don't know why. He liked it, grandsons like it.

38:30 I have nephews in the navy, a nephew in the air force. Grandson in the air force, grandson in the navy. They are all service orientated, they like it.

I've got one more question, do you think Australia will become a Republic?

Yes. Yes. We've got to. What do we want the bloody Queen for? They are a parasite.

39:00 We've got to pay for them, look when that son comes out here with [Princess] Anne they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, they can pay their own bloody way. I am crook on them. Republic. Howard [Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard] will go eventually. Costello [Treasurer, Peter Costello] is a Republican. He was very cunning last time when he put that word in, ambiguous bloody answer, don't matter what answer you give it was wrong. He'd been in

39:30 politics too long old Howard. You know they call him Little Johnny. Do you know he's five foot ten high? People don't realise that. He's not Little Johnny. Hawke [Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia during the 1980s] is smaller than he is, Hawke's a little fellow, about five six. I've sat along side of Hawke, you look down on him. I've had my photo taken with him, he's a little fellow. Blokes like

40:00 Gough Whitlam looks like a Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser looked like a Prime Minister, Menzies looked like a Prime Minister, but Johnny doesn't. Hawke didn't. Apart from the gift of the gab. They've got to be big fellows, he's bigger than he looks.

INTERVIEW ENDS