Australians at War Film Archive

Douglas Leitch - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 **Doug, I might just get you to start by just telling me where you were born, where you grew up, a little bit about life for you as a young man.**

Ok, life as a young man, I was born in West End in Brisbane in 1923, which means I grew up in the rough and

01:00 tough times. There were razor gangs and bike chain gangs and we had to be very careful where we went. Paddington, Woolloongabba, West End were the three notable areas to be wary of. Young boy, went to school – most of my life, see I was born on the 22nd January which means that most of the things that happen before Christmas happens a year younger than what I was. For instance the scholarship, when I was

01:30 twelve I sat for a scholarship and most of the other kids were thirteen and fourteen, but because I was young I went young. So I went to West End State School, played football with them. I went to South Brisbane Intermediate School, the first year was a scholarship and as I said I was only twelve. Missed out because you had to get a percentage, you had to get a certain per cent. Sat it again next year and I finished up with seventy five per cent, that's somewhere in the records here.

02:00 Felt – this is one of the hardest parts – I felt I was unloved at home. So when I left school, those times, that would be 1936, things were tough – the Depression, the height of the Depression. Luckily my old man [father] had a job, he was a First World War digger [veteran].

02:30 He had a job five days a week. I got a job, and I've always known I was a bush boy. My old man was a First World War'er and he didn't talk much about his life. He must have put it into me, so at a young age, and as I say, most of the things that happen at Christmas which is a year younger, so when I went to a job at thirteen, they got their job, ok.

03:00 **What was your job?**

At Edwards Dunlop, I was an office boy. Edwards Dunlop in Edwards Street, it may still be there but I don't know. I sort of felt unloved so I thought I'd nick off [leave]. So off I go, unprepared. Got a job through Dalgettys or Goldsborough and Wards, I just forget which, and finished up at a place called Malleeby Downs [?], out from Wallumbilla. But they were worried because I wasn't home that night, so ok they come

03:30 the coppers [police] pick me up and take me home. Ok, so then I go to work then for the rest of the year, knowing full well where he's going to be. Anyhow, by the next Christmas, which would be I was fourteen – I was fifteen in another month's time, but I was fourteen. Go to town and country agencies looking for a job, they said, "Ok, here's a job, a shinboner, Cunnamulla." "Ok, that'll suit me down to the ground." They to pay you a brief, give

04:00 you tucker [food] on the train.

Doug, can I just slow you down for a little second because you're touching on a lot of interesting areas but I feel like we're rushing through them a bit. Can I just go back and ask you a little bit about what West End was like

04:30 **when you were growing up?**

Right, West End when I was growing up. My old man was caretaker of Davies Park. Davies Park in those days was two round – oval one, oval two, a lot of football played, all these test players come down. In fact, even England played Australia at Davies Park in the days of Tommy Gorman [Rugby League player], and I was only a whipper snapper [young child]. There was also the

05:00 speedway, there was a speedway track. Picture shows was up in the Rialto, and we spent a lot of time at church really, because my Mum was religious and my old man was a drunkard. So to get us out she used

to take us to the pictures. It used to cost threepence, it used to cost us a penny when we were little to get in, and we could have a penny to get something to eat, a penny's worth of chips or something else or other.

05:30 **Was it a grand cinema, the Rialto back then?**

Not really, even in the winter time there was no heating arrangements, and they used to bring drums in with wood and coal in them to warm the place up. They were all canvas chairs, and then as we got a bit older we finished up going to the Lyric, which was another one over by the same company, but that was down the West End down in the West End corner.

06:00 **What sort of families lived in the area, because it's a very multicultural suburb now?**

It was a very poor area, like for instance houses, a poor house – what would be the equivalent? It wouldn't even be a Second World War house today in the '40s, but the houses would have been built nearly a hundred years. But you could have bought them for a hundred pounds. We had what they call the Jews,

06:30 there were three Jews – we used to call them the Onion Bums, that's what we used to call them. You know the Jews that had all the gear on, all the long coats and everything. They used to buy these places, and in those days if you didn't pay your rent on the given date, the police would come and evict you. They would go to the coppers and say, "These people, get rid of them." So what they used to do was get someone into the house, keep them there for a while, make

07:00 sure that they – the Onion Bums that we called them – weren't in their office so when the woman comes down, naturally there was no one to receive their money for the week. That entitled them to say, "Get this mob [group] out." So they'd go, they'd have the deposit, it was never paid back, and the rent was paid, never paid back so off they went. Then they got another people in for the same thing. There were a lot of houses like that in

07:30 West End. There was also still the stage of horse drawn vehicles, there were a lot of horse drawn things, a lot of the fruit carters and milkmen and fruitmen all had horse and carts.

What about waste disposal?

Waste disposal was done by nightmen, we used to call them. They used to come of a night time and the toilet was up the back in

08:00 unit by its own, the thunderbox [toilet] as we used to call them. They used to be able to undo the back and pull the pan out and put a new pan in, throw the pan and off they'd go down. There was no sewage of course, that was what the thing was.

Did you feel safe in West End, was it a safe suburb?

In your area you were safe, everyone knew the Leitchs, the Tates, the Bendles and the

08:30 Walrens – they all knew those people. We lived in what we called Hill End section, that was at the West End tram terminus. So that was our corner of the world, and then the West End mob, they were down further where the West End corner is now, where the main shopping centre is now. That's where the pool rooms, there used to be a lot of pool played, and that's where the couple of mates of what's his name, and he was wild and Michael, his mate, they were wild and woolly

09:00 and we were part of, I believe, all part of this chain gang, razor gang sort of mob. Height of the Depression at Davies Park was the hobo camp where all the 'bos [hobos] had bits of tin and humpies [shacks] that they had down there at Davies Park. At the Crystal Palace, that's just over Victoria Bridge on the south side – there's no South Bank of course, this was

09:30 in the days of the Palace Hotel and Bayard's and wine shops and stuff like that. But just up further to allow for people was what they call the Crystal Palace, and that was another place where the stiffs, or the knockabouts, or the hobos or whatever you want to call them, where they camped. We'd walk from Hill End to the Trocadero, that's the Terminus Hotel, the Trocadero used to be down as well, and that was where they issued out the soup.

10:00 So we'd walk with buckets or billy cans, and they'd say, "How many in the family?" There wasn't nine at home but my Mum had nine kids – the youngest boy, and they'd pour the soup in and we'd take it home. So that's sort of how we existed. The fruit man would come around with a bucket of apricots from Stanthorpe, only a couple of bob, a few bob.

Were you hungry a lot or did you get by?

We were well looked after with

10:30 food. Dad was a bushman and he used to cook a cake. No, we were always, because luckily the old man was employed by the Brisbane City Council, which was Kurilpa Shire Council in those days, this is before it became Brisbane City Council. So he had a job for five days of the week.

Can I just ask you, I'm really fascinated with those razor gangs. How much of a presence

11:00 **were they? Were people afraid of them? Can you paint a bit more of a picture about those razor gangs?**

The razor gangs you'd have to be very cautious when you moved out of your corner. You were all right in West End because as I say, you all knew the Sheedys were from West End, and the Masio and the Acehearts and the Roses, and they were all West End. But we'd all gone to school somewhere between West End State School and South Brisbane Intermediate, so we knew growing up,

11:30 and they knew who you were. My old man was a very heavy drinker in the Boundary Hotel so he was very well known too. But if you went into another corner like Paddington or the Gabba, you had to walk shall we say, very softly because you'd have to keep looking over your shoulder because if they knew you were from West End you would have copped a hell of a hiding, particularly the older ones that used to go looking for a sheila [woman]. If they picked up a sheila from Paddington, well they copped

12:00 a hell of a hiding too, hey. So you were taught to use these or those, one or the other. You were taught yourself to learn how to fight or to run, you had to because that was the case of what it was.

Were there any famous ones that had particular names or reputations that you can recall as a kid?

Well a few of them took on professional fighting, like Billy Carsberg, he was a professional fighter from West End. But Pegs, they were cricketers and Pummel,

12:30 no they were footballers. But the other brother, one of the other brothers, he was a cricketer, they represented Australia. Betsus, they were another mob that played for rugby union. There were people that rose above heights – my brother for instance was because he was a bit of a larrikin, was eligible to play for Queensland in the cricket, a wonderful cricketer. But grog [alcohol] and stuff got to him and he pushed it aside.

13:00 **I've read about the razor gangs in Surry Hills in Sydney and they were quite vicious. Were there a lot of fighting amongst them at all that you were aware of?**

A lot of the fighting would have been involved with broken bottles. They broke a bottle and just jammed it straight into your face. So you always had to be on the defence, you always had to anticipate situations, and if there was a big blue [fight] on, well, you know I was only young and I never actually would be a spectator of a

13:30 razor gang fight, but I knew that it was all there.

Were you aware of what kind of rackets they were running?

Mostly betting rackets, SP [starting price] bookmaking, some sly grog, a lot of them played pool and get the suckers in that couldn't play pool and they'd play a couple of dummy [set up] games and let the suckers beat them, and then they'd increase the betting and let the sucker

14:00 win now and again, but by the end of the time the sucker was broke. They had all the money.

I'm interested in the West End school that you attended, what was your schooling years like?

Well luckily I have a brain, and as I said like when I passed with seventy five per cent was pretty high really for that time. The first time I couldn't pass because I failed in one subject – you

14:30 had to pass the four subjects, and I failed in one. The others were all right but one, and they said, "No, you'll have to sit it again next year."

What were your teachers like, were they quality teachers?

Oh yeah. Billy West the principal was very not so much strict as strict, but they had firm control on you. We'd line up and they'd always have the flag first thing in the morning, teachers up there, kids down here. We

15:00 used to have to say, "Good morning, teacher." And we'd have to sing 'God Save the Queen' and all stand at attention. So it was a dedicated thing which is not done today, which I think is one of the failures of our modern life, because we've got no respect. Even though we didn't like doing it, but when you look back you say well at least you respected the flag and you respected the teachers. They were all right, they'd give you a hit with the cane, but they were very

15:30 strict to make sure that you wrote. Copy books, oh the missus [his wife] had one somewhere downstairs – but the copy books had up the top beautiful English writing, and part of the copy book you had to follow that all there, and the same as maps. If you drew a map of Australia you had to put all the creeks in, all the rivers in, all the towns and the Tropic of Capricorn and all the other things that were there. Everything was made,

16:00 but the most important thing that I remember, if the inspectors came around and they came to West End or they went to Boulia, we would be to the same standard in teaching. Of course it was all done by card, and that time of the month, "Blah, blah, blah, and that's where you should be, where you were," at Boulia they'd be the same. The inspectors that used to travel the state knew exactly, and they could

make a comparison quite easily, “West End school is ok, but Boulia

16:30 school…” Oh, I shouldn’t say that, should I? But some other school wouldn’t be up to the standard, so they’d get stuck into the head teacher and say, “You’ve got to get that standard up because you’re a bit lower than what you are.”

You mentioned before that you were a year younger than a lot of the kids, did that cause you any problems at school, just in terms of your friends at all?

No, not at all. We all mixed pretty well

17:00 because I had elder brothers, see, so I could accommodate people that were older. I wasn’t a saint – Doey was my nickname, and they knew who Doey Leitch was, so that was just part of the thing. No, there was nothing there.

Coming from a big family, were you close with your brothers and sisters at all? Was it like having a bunch of mates with you all the time?

Not really.

17:30 One sister, not a lot of time for, but she rejected me not so long ago. I finally found out where she was and went up and knocked on the door and said, “I’m Doey.” The door slammed in my face. I’m used to it, love, I’m used to it – I’ve lived a life on my own, those things don’t interrupt me, they don’t worry me at all. When I say unloved, one of the reasons for that was because if I went home, like when

18:00 we’d been playing around the streets and that, “You’ll be home by nine o’clock,” you know. I’d go home and the first thing she’d say was, “Where’s Johnny?” That was my two year older brother. Now, and I probably felt it then, without expressing it, was why should I look after Johnny, Johnny should look after me. I’m only a little boy and he’s two years older. So I thought I was a bit unloved and it was an unhappy family, it was unhappy. The old man was a heavy drinker and he

18:30 used to make a hell of a mess of things – a lot of swearing, throwing the tucker all over the place when he’d come home drunk. So it’s all made part of my life, really, looking back now.

I was wondering when you were a young boy and you were walking around the suburbs, did you ever talk to any of the hobos or anything like that? Or were they people that you were afraid of?

Listen to me later on when I open up because I became under the bridges at fifteen.

But before that

19:00 **did you know them?**

Yeah, I knew a lot of them. We used to go down because the old man was the caretaker at Davies Park, and as I said there was a hobo camp down there. No, I wasn’t frightened, there was no sort of homosexuality or anything like that, no worry of getting killed or anything like that – they were just people and I was a boy. I would just go there, and you’d go to the Crystal Palace and you’d see them laying around, some of them drunk but there was never any fear.

What was their stories like, had any

19:30 **of them been in the First World War, or what was the story with most of the hobos? Why were they homeless?**

Not so much about wartime, there wasn’t much – my old man was a First World War machine gunner and he got wounded in the legs, but he never spoke much. Most of those fellas didn’t speak much about the First World War. They spoke about the tough time and they wished it would change, and, “What the hell’s going to do,” and, “Why don’t the government do something?” and, “Why don’t we get work?” One in

20:00 four, that’s twenty five per cent, was unemployed. They talk about now being tough – one in four, and later on when I get into the hobo part of my life, I’ll tell you why.

You said that you went out near Wallumbilla to a property out there to do some work. Can you tell me in a bit more detail what it was like working on a farm out there? How old were you then, you were quite young?

Yeah, well I would have

20:30 been – it would have been the first year of work, I got a job when I was thirteen, before Christmas I’d pissed off but I was only away a few days. My Mum worried because Doug wasn’t home that night, got onto the coppers, boom, boom, boom, back you go. Ok, so actually Malleeby Downs not here, the only thing I remember of Malleeby Downs, which is a bit crude, was that I was ignorant. I was that ignorant of

21:00 things, you know. I looked out the window – I was there a couple of days, and I looked out the window and I could see and I thought it was a kangaroo. So I said to the ringer that was there, “Oh, there’s a

little kangaroo outside." He looked outside – I'm being crude, love, I can only be meself – he looked out the window and said, "You stupid bastard" he said, "That's a dog doing its job." Because it had its tail out, sitting, "Ahh," see.

21:30 That's how naïve and silly this boy was – not silly, but he had no knowledge. So I got taken home and went back to Edwards Dunlop and I was an office boy there for about twelve months, until the next Christmas.

Did you like that work, being an office boy?

I suppose if I look back, I'd say yes I enjoyed it, it was all part of learning. I learnt my figures because I was office boy and did the mail and all that sort of stuff. I used to go and get their dinners and they used to give me money

22:00 and it was all tied up with honesty and trustworthy and being able to do a job.

Did you feel like a grown-up, having your first job like that?

Not really. My past was pretty rugged, love. Our house was full of nits, bugs, I was a bed wetter till I was fifteen. So I'd have to go to work with – and there was no shower, no hot water showers.

22:30 So I'd have to go to work sensing with myself that I stink, we never had singlets or underpants – sensing that I stink, so actually I was a bit conservative even there, there'd be mix. But there was one lady that cared for me, and she was one of the ladies in one of the apartments I was working in. She must have understood – looking back, I can see. She used to take me and talk and teach me how to live a bit better than that, you know.

23:00 So all of those things had a big bearing on me as a young man. They taught me a fair bit I suppose, Mr. Tanner, Beryl Powell was that woman I was talking about. I forget the manager's name – oh, incidentally, they used to get a lot of mail from England and when King Teddy [King Edward VIII], the bloke that abdicated,

23:30 all this mail was coming out and I had enough sense up here to keep getting all these stamps from all overseas and everywhere. So I finished up getting home and I bought a cheap stamp album from there because I used to get a cheap rate, "Here, I saved it for you, lad. Take that one." So I had hundreds of stamps of all sorts.

24:00 When I left and the kids, my other sisters, Peggy was the next one to me, and then there was Minnie and Aggie – they were twins. They ripped this bloody book up, and later on in life I finished up getting it and found it all ripped and then found out who did it, and I roused on them because they were grown up then. But then that walks into another phase of my life

24:30 that I left it behind – the story will unfold, love.

That's ok, just take your time.

Yeah.

I'm just curious, you had a pretty good paying job and a bit of responsibility as the office boy. What made you feel like you still wanted to move on?

I think it was hereditary, like my old man was ten when he left Scotland – he stowed away on a boat,

25:00 found out at the Bay of Biscay where he was, because the sailors were looking after him. Because they found him, he became the captain's boy, and they were that far from England – this is 1879 or something, and my old man had been born in 1869. Anyhow, it was too far to go back to England and they thought they'd take him to Australia and when they get back to England they'd dump him back to Scotland, because he didn't want to go in the coal mines – at

25:30 ten. He would have been put in the coal mines. So anyhow, just as a bit of humour, when he got to the Bay of Biscay, he became the captain's boy and he used to have to mop the cabins up, and one day he was throwing all the water and rubbish out from it, and out goes with it the captain's teeth. So the captain kept saying to him, "Andy," – he was Angus Leitch but they used to call him Andy – "Have you seen my

26:00 teeth?" He used to say to him, "Nothing's lost if you know where it is." So he came into North Queensland and that's when he decided with another mate to nick off, and in those days if you left a ship you could have been shot, you were a deserter, you were a deserter from a ship. You could be shot in extreme cases, it wouldn't be everyone that was shot, but you could be. So he nicked off

26:30 to the Northern Territory, but before he left he said to one of the sailors, he said, "When you're going back to England, when you get to the Bay of Biscay, you tell the old man" – they used to call the skippers [captains] the old man – "You tell the old man to stop and dive overboard and he'll find his bloody false teeth down the bottom of the Bay of Biscay." But he became a well borer, so I think it was in the wandering and all that, is from him. The wandering that's in me and the loner and all those things, because I became a well borer too later on.

27:00 I'm quite proud of me old man but there wasn't a great deal of love there, he was a heavy drinker. He drilled the deepest bore in the world.

Where was that?

Springvale, out from Longreach. They were drilling for water, he was an artesian driller, they were drilling for water and the federal government said, "Take this down further, we want to investigate." So they went to ten thousand feet.

27:30 The old percussion pan and didn't find oil. Then he was three of ten people to go to America in line with oil search. He was three on the list of ten people to go to America. There was probably before him the geologist and head drillers and stuff like that. So anyhow, the

28:00 Yanks [Americans] said, "No, we'll come over there." So they came over here, and he was also on – I remember so plainly – Mooney Field, you know the first Mooney Field that was found in Queensland with oil, at Roma, Roma oil box? He was the driller on there, and he told me this story – some things remain in me mind – telling me this story at about five o'clock in the morning, the Yank, the geologist that they sent out here came over and said,

28:30 "How long have you been in that sort of muck?" and the old man said, "Oh, a couple of hours." Now this is 1912 or somewhere around that time, and he said, "Here's five quid, now go into town and get on the booze [have a drink] or do what you like, have a spell. Here's five quid." Which is a lot of money in 1912 – that's ten dollars but five quid was a lot, a quid was a lot, ten bob was a lot. So they went into town and got stoney [drunk]

29:00 and a bloke rides into town and says, "Andy, the bore's on fire!" They'd left it all right, so they went out and had a look, they got the fire out. But then, because this joke with the drill – and I'm a driller too, we've got an undercutting drill now but in those days it used to be a chisel drill and they'd only go down so far, ten inch. Then it would start falling in, they'd have to case the ten inch shelf, take that off and put an eight inch drill on, drill on again until they

29:30 run into more trouble. But it meant that when they went to recover the tools – because the tools are down the hole. They didn't leave them down the hole, so the old man had enough sense to know that something had gone wrong. So when they went searching for to get the tools out – see, there's the diameter of the pipe, and there's the drill, it's the same size, or pretty well the same size as what's there.

30:00 It's inverted upside down, which means that you couldn't put – I'm a driller too – if it's that way you can grab the top because it's only a bar of about three inches, but the bar itself was about six inches or eight inches, or whatever it was – he didn't say what it was at that time. But that was taking up the full distance, the diameter of the pipe, which means that you couldn't fit over it. If it was this way where it was only three inches in a six inch pipe, we've got recovery tools

30:30 that you just send down and you pick it up and take it up. So really, he knew – he used to say to me, "It's there, the oil's there." He knew it was there but it was all closed down because of the mess after the fire and everything else there. Until about, what, twenty or thirty years ago they opened up the Mooney Oil Fields, now they've oil all over the place, more or less.

Great. We might just move through

31:00 **a little bit ahead in your own story now from when you left your job at the office store.**

Ok, you're going to wind me up now, this is where I get wound up. This is the interesting part.

Yeah, ok let's get into that.

Ok. Fourteen, but as I said my birthday's only a month after Christmas, but I always travel before Christmas, which means I was always a year younger, which means in another month I'd be fifteen. So I go into what they call

31:30 Town and Country Agency that used to be in the old courier mail building on the corner of Edwards and Queen Street, diagonally opposite the post office. Ok, Town and Country Agency, someone briefed me, so I go in the there – job, job, job. "Yeah, we've got a job for you at Humeburn" Where's that?" "Cunnamulla." "Righto, ok." So because of the first experience where I went with nothing, I said, "Well I'm not going to get caught out again. They're not going to know

32:00 even where I'm going to go. I'll arrange with my mate" – that ultimately travelled with me later on, because we were mates and he used to come down to my home. So he went down, but anyhow at the Town and Country Agency and got my brief, decides to go then, and what do I get? I got a little port about fifteen inches maybe long, by about four inches think,

32:30 it would be about nine inches that way, a little port. I bought a cheap cotton blanket, a towel – we never had toothpaste or toothbrushes at home, we never had any of that, this is still when I'm fifteen.

What did you use instead?

Soap or ashes, fine ashes, soap or soapy water, whatever. Clean your teeth with matches or whatever.

33:00 So I got this little port and I got this blanket and a towel and a piece of soap, so when I go, get out to Cunnamulla, the mailman picks me up – because they advise the other bloke, “Doug Leitch is on the train and he’s going to Cunnamulla.” So the mailman came, “Doug Leitch?” “Yeah!” Fifteen. Off I’d turn out there. So I get off the mail coach,

33:30 and the mail coach in those days carried all the tucker, all the passengers, all the petrol and everything else. They were about five tonners. So anyway, when I get off and Mr. Perkins who owned the place, well his son Bert. He’d won it through winning the Casket [Queensland lottery], that’s how he ended up buying Humeburn. So Bert, “Yeah, righto

34:00 get your swag.” And here I get off with this little port, and I said, “That’s all I got,” so he says, “All right.” I said, “I’ll tell you the truth now, I’ve pissed off from home, I’ve done it once before. I’m not going home, if I do go home I’ll run away again. That’s the position, I’m either here or I go home and I piss off again, whichever.”

34:30 But they were good people, and he rang Cunnamulla coppers, and they rang the West End coppers, sorted it all out and they said, “Ok.” Now comes the point. The arrangement was that whenever I – oh, ten bob a week, that’s one dollar, plus me tucker. The arrangements was also that whenever I got five pounds in my station account, that was to

35:00 be sent home to my mum. Now you can imagine how a bloke of that age, I felt like I was sold. As well as the feeling that I was unloved, now I have the feeling of unloved and sold, because as soon as I get money it’s got to go home. So I copped [took] that for a while.

How long did you last?

About, well the next step in that stage was – I was a cowboy, milking

35:30 cows, killing sheep, helping the cooks, and I’d work seven days a week.

Is this in Cunnamulla?

No, this is Humeburn, at the property.

Oh, ok. Is that near Cunnamulla?

Yeah, about maybe a hundred mile out, maybe sixty, eighty mile out, a fair way out anyhow. It’s on the Paroo River, way up. I’d be getting jack [sick] of this because I’d be up to get the horses in for them, milk the bloody cows, help

36:00 the cook to get things ready, chop the wood, do the gardening, help the cook again in the afternoon, help the cook again at night time. I was going from about five o’clock in the morning till about eight o’clock at night. The ringers [gun (top) sheep shearers] when they finish their day might come home at six o’clock, there was hours in those days, unlimited hours but they worked six days. The organised times in town was eight hours a day, six days a

36:30 week, but ringers had six days. But when they came home they were finished, they let the horses go, go home to the camp and just lay around reading or whatever. Come and have tea, go back in there and here’s poor Doey copping all this work. So I said to the boss on two or three occasions, I said, “I want to be a musterer like them.” He said, “You’re too young, you might get lost.” I said, “Don’t worry about getting lost, I want to be like them.” So he finally, I got to the stage I thought,

37:00 “Up this for the rent,” and this is 1938, early ’39. I said, “Up this for the rent, I’ll go into town.” So I drew what money I had out and went down, pursed up [with money], three bob in my pocket, go to the Hotel Cunnamulla. It was a pound a week, that was for a bed and a bit of tucker.

What was Cunnamulla like back then?

37:30 A town of pubs.

How many pubs, do you remember?

Three at the most. Probably two, but I’d say three at the most. I forget the name of the bloke that owns all the pubs out there now. So I’m there and when I realise, “Doug, you haven’t got much money left to pay here,” because I thought I’d get a job, you know – young

38:00 full of go, invincible. I went around the place looking for work – no, no, no. Because blokes were on, the Depression was on. Anyone that had a job stayed there, not like Doug being the bloody dill. So I went out, “No, no,” and I thought, ‘Well, I’m not going backwards to Humeburn. I’ll stay where I am and see what happens.’ So I was looking around and I’d seen these old fellas around town and went over and said,

38:30 “Where do you live, mate?” He said, “We live under the bridge out of town.” “Oh, fair enough.” Now here was golden, that’s how the army designated, that’s how snowy he was, this fella. So when we got out under the bridge, I went out to the bridge, that’s where I camped under there. Now because of all the crims – now in that camp was doctors, lawyers, accountants, ordinary people, all sorts, stockmen, drovers, all sorts of people were

39:00 camped under that bridge. Doctors and lawyer and criminals and prostitutes, the whole lot were thrown in. So anyhow, because no one was…

You know what, Doug, we're just on the end of that tape. Before you get into this big story I think we'll quickly just change tapes.

39:30 **End of tape**

Tape 2

00:33 **I was just wondering, before we get into life under the bridge, do you remember the name of the bridge and what it actually looked like?**

Oh yeah, it was the bridge over the Warrego, and because the banks go down and the bridge went back up onto solid footing back here, and what we called the bulwark, that was between the bottom of the bridge and the top of that bank there.

01:00 Now you could put your swag there – well get back to where I started because we didn't want to be known, everybody had a non de plume [different name]. Because I had snowy golden hair, as the army said, I became known as Snowy from Cunnamulla. So everywhere I went I was known as Snowy from Cunnamulla. But the bulwark was there and you'd put your swag or whatever, you had to put your swag – I've got a little swag downstairs, I'll show you later on. Because I talk to schools, I talk to

01:30 people, whatever – whenever they want a history of the past, I'll give it to them. You put whatever you put up there was never ever touched – you could be away six months, it would not be touched. I'll show you something else – now put your hand out and I'll shake your hand. Now young people today think that's a marvellous thing, they think big deal, this is the new handshake. That handshake when I'm talking about, because there was

02:00 crims and because they knew how many beings made five – in other words, they knew how to work around problems, that would be how they wanted to shake your hand. Now if you shook your hand just, "Hello" without going like that, when you did that it meant that you had a criminal association. That made you a link with that people that shook your hand like that. But the next thing he'd say was,

02:30 "Where were you, mate?" So you had to be sharp enough, and I served some time, you had to be sharp enough to say, shall we say, "Rockhampton." The next question he'd say, "Give us a name." Now if you couldn't name a water that was in Rockie [Rockhampton], because you were talking to someone that's knocked around [travelled], if you couldn't nominate that water, say that water Beresford,

03:00 he'd say, "You're an f'ing liar." But if Beresford was there you became his friend, and he taught me so much – how to rob a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s' [chickens'] nest, how to get WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s off sticks.

How do you do that?

Love, it's so complex! That's quite easy, because there's the stick with the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s on, so you put your

03:30 finger along side there and you keep tapping the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK 's foot, and the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK will put its foot up. You put his foot onto your finger and then you just tuck him under your shirt, and it depended how many that you wanted for the day. Right, now we're going back under the bridges. Ok, so I told you about this part about that, the names how they had to be non de plumes. We had no dole [unemployment cheques] at that time but it came in later on. We used to get about seventy five cents a week.

04:00 Right, '39 Christmas time, we're under the bridge, we're all doing it tough. Someone's got a bit of tucker but not much tucker. Christmas Day, right, "Let's do the town." So now we go in to do the town, see. Snowy looks in, knock-knock, looks in – in those days the houses were front door, back door, side window, side window, so that any way the wind blew, it would blow through the house. There was no screen doors and no ventilation, none

04:30 of this air conditioning and that stuff. It was all pretty primitive, and I don't think anyone even had fans. So anyway, I knocked on the door and I looked in, and the tables used to be right in line with the front and back door to cop the breeze. I looked over and I saw this bloke and his missus and they were having Christmas dinner. He came out and said, "What do you want, mate?" I said, "We're doing it tough under the bridge. What are the chances

05:00 of getting a bit of tucker?" "What do you mean? It's Christmas Day, it's my day with my family. No, piss off you bums." So I wandered around and couldn't see any more, so I thought I'd go back to the camp and see how they got on – nothing hey. So we said, "Well there's only one thing that we can do, we'll go down to the baker." So we toddled down to the baker, to his house because it was Christmas Day he wasn't working. Bones in, so what does he give us? Two loaves of bread and a tin of soup.

05:30 So that was Christmas dinner in 1939. The next day, Boxing Day, around again – not the same house but we went to other houses, and we couldn't get enough scraps. They were giving scraps like half WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, bits of ham and spuds [potatoes] and everything that was cooked. So that was in here, Christmas Day came one day late. It was Christmas Day on Boxing Day that year.

06:00 From then on we become on rambling, another little story while I'm there in Cunnamulla, the bloke that had been there for years, Tom, had been camped out there – natives weren't allowed in town – there were three laws: vagrancy, loitering, and associating with undesirable people – and undesirable people were Aboriginals. If they knew you were associating with them the law could quite easily bump, bump, and be

06:30 put in boob [gaol] for associating with undesirables. The same as loitering, that was if you were hanging around too long, that was to split up any feeling of communism or starting a thing, any feeling that would get these groups together, split them up. That's why they didn't give us enough dole – you couldn't get your same dole in the same town two weeks in a row. So that meant you had to get out of that town somehow, whether it was jumping the trains, which had become a part of the thing, or walk or get a lift or whatever.

07:00 There wasn't many cars so that meant a lot of us walking, most of us train jumping. The Yanks used to call it riding the rails, we called it jumping the rattler, that's the two different. Hobo is derived from America, they used to say, "Hi brother," then it became, "Hey bro," and from there it was broken down to hobo – 'Hobo' – and that's where it came, it's not an Australian word whatsoever.

07:30 The same as corks from your hat – a lot of them ask me when I talk about these things, "You didn't bring your corks on your hat." I say, "Look, forget about the corks on the hat. I've never seen any bastard with corks on his hat in my life." And then I show them how we used to do it, you know, you put your shirt over your head, or you had a spare shirt and you put that one that you could see through the material. You never had singlets or underpants though, no toothbrushes.

How many people would live under the bridge?

08:00 Oh thirty, forty, fifty. Some were man and wife, left their kids at home with Mum, left and come out, they were all the same. If it was a husband and wife case they used to be able to score a lift because they'd go downtown and say, "We've got to get to Wyandra." Because it went Cunnamulla, Wyandra, Charleville – each week because you couldn't get your thing.

08:30 Oh, there's so much, love, I could talk on for hours about it. There was a bloke that we used to call Over the Shoulder Ned – the copper. You'd go in to give us the seventy five cents, you used to go in to get your dole, and he'd say, "What's your name?" You make a name up, "Joey Smith." "Right, Joey Smith, from?" "Oakey," or wherever, the first thing that comes into your mind. So then you go with the mob and you wait until

09:00 a few was lined up you know, and you think he's forgotten now Joey Smith, so you go through again. His thing was, "Ok! Ok!" But he knew what was on really, and then you'd go through and you'd say, "Billy Jones from Wallumbilla." "Ok!" Away he'd go. So there was a lot of rorts, a lot of things where you'd get yourself put in jail, because

09:30 if you were put in jail overnight you'd get bed, get fed. If you went in about four o'clock you'd get tea, you'd get bed, you'd get breakfast. Then invariably the copper, because he was a lazy bastard anyhow, would say, "Which one of you buggers are going to mow my lawn or chop my wood?" "Me, me!" Which meant that you got smoko [cigarettes], because by the time you did that it was smoko time. The woman used to get a shilling a head for everyone that was employed, for all the meals.

10:00 So they were on a wicket [they were in a good arrangement] too, and they were worried about – they knew the touch that was on, they knew that we weren't hurting each other. We'd be rolling in the dirt and everything else, "You mongrel," and having a – but they knew, they were all part of the swindle. So they let it all go. But you can see that you had to learn how to live, that was a part of existing. That's what it had to be.

So it was almost like a social game that happened so that

10:30 **everyone could survive, in a way?**

That's right. It was a sort of thing, and as I said the tough fella with the handshake, they knew a lot of these other things – they knew how to knock shops off [thieve], not that I went into knocking shops off because my old man taught honesty and lies – never tell lies, never be dishonest. When we get to the brief stage,

11:00 those seventy-five cent brief, we suddenly realised that the shopkeeper had to get a quid too because no one was buying. There was no money, everyone's unemployed. So we decided that we'd put all this brief together, so the first fella we went into we had all these briefs, you know and said, "We want this, that and we want some grog." "Oh, I'm not allowed to sell you grog, put your coin away," bread and jam

11:30 and syrup and flour and something like that, and tea. We'd soon learnt that it was just a case of saying, "Well, mate you get nothing, we'll go to the next shop." Which meant that he didn't get all those briefs so his income was curtailed too. You had to do all these things.

Why wouldn't he sell you grog, was it because you were hobos?

He wasn't allowed to, he wasn't allowed to brief that.

12:00 He was only supposed to give you food to exist, not even tobacco, just food to exist. You couldn't take tobacco, he'd say, "No, I can't give you tobacco or grog, wine." and you say, "Ok, mate, let's back out." We'd all back out and say we're going up the road. "Oh no, no come back here. I can give you a little bit of tobacco and a little bit of grog but don't tell anyone." So he had to be under the thing.

Can I just ask you, under the

12:30 **bridge, were there any political discussions that ever happened about your situation or the way the country was going?**

We were all pretty disappointed, communism was entrenched overseas in Russia. We didn't have much people agitating change, we were too busy about living, and hoping that the future will be all right. There wasn't much discussion about things,

13:00 much the same as it is now.

What about social things, like that there weren't enough jobs, and I guess just the domestic politics about what you were suffering and what you wanted for the future?

It had been on since 1928, the people were just adjusted to, "That's it, that's life." They just accepted that's it. If you got a job well ok, you might have a job for a week, you know a driving trip or something else for a week, and away you went.

13:30 But I was going to tell you another story too, see on the common – it was called the common, there was Charleville, there was the common with sort of government land with sheep that was stored, cattle that was stored and horses that were stored. You could leave them on the common and pick them up. But anyhow – and there was white fellas that lived there too, old Tom was a First World War bloke, I think he had trouble with his legs or something. Anyhow, he decides after all

14:00 these years to go to Brisbane. So there's his tent, a rough old thing but there it is. So Tom thinks, "Gee, how can I leave all of this behind?" He didn't have much, but it was very valuable what you did have. So he puts a sign up and says, "Gun trap set here," a gun trap you know, so if you broke the wire it would shoot you. So off he goes thinking that he's right. He comes back

14:30 and when he comes back, one of the town larrikins had put another sign up along side of it, "If there wasn't before, there is there now." And poor old Tom had the wind up to go into his tent, so what the only way they could see out of it was to walk out and muster up the sheep – because it was a lot of different people's sheep, and muster them so they finished up getting together,

15:00 and muster them up and bring them up and keep working them through to show old Tom that there was no gun trap set there. So the sheep would run through his tent and under it and around the back, before he was satisfied that there was no gun trap there – but he never left town again, did he? But anyhow, that was just part of the things. Then came the stage of jumping the train, because like I say, you couldn't use your dole two weeks in a row in the same town.

15:30 Maybe all right in Brisbane where you could go from Salisbury to Mount Gravatt or something like that, you could walk there, but out there was a long way and there was nothing in between. So it became a case of learning how to jump the trains.

Can I ask you about the Aboriginal people that you encountered, and maybe just give us a snapshot of what life was like for them, how they were treated, and your interactions with them as well?

16:00 It jumps along way ahead of what I was on but I finished up – I nearly swore then, hey – but anyhow, I finished up getting a job with Capel from Cunnamulla to take some sheep down Cuttaburra Creek, we were going into New South Wales, those there subject to sale. So we were down Cuttaburra Creek, that's down Cunnamulla going towards the New South Wales border. Alex Horten,

16:30 he was a cook, I was one of the drovers, there was another Aboriginal there, and had our dogs. Anyhow, when we get down and the sheep are finally sold while we were still on the sand, when we went to get our money he said, "No, I can't give you any money. I've got no money, we've done it tough too." So I said, "Oh well." I talked to Alex and said, "What are you going to do?" and he said,

17:00 "I'm buggered if I know." I said, "Well we can mate up together if you like," so we said to the bloke, "Look give us two horses and the wagonette and forget the debt," for the two of us. So when I was driving back old Alex said, "I know Billy Hall's from Ardock," we went down there rabbiting, then we went back to Toompine – I was an amateur jock. Toompine used to have an annual race meeting.

Hey, I've been to the Toompine pub,

17:30 **what was it like back then?**

Yeah, the Toompine pub.

It was just a tiny shed, what was it like back then?

Yeah, that's right. Probably the same, if that's how it is now, that's how it was then. Just a little shed and they had a little racecourse – not a racecourse but all it was, was the straight, and that's what it was, just a little shed and that was it because they only had the one race meet and the Toompine pub was there for anyone that travelled through. So I got up through there and we had to come through Toompine,

18:00 so I rode a winner to get a few bob together but that's another story – there's so many stories. The graziers used to like to ride – I was eight stone, when I joined the army I was eight stone eight. The weights they used to give the horses there to suit graziers was about twelve stone, which meant that I could make me weight up with me stock saddle which I was using every day. The grazier, the big fat fella, he had to

18:30 get a racing pad and had to sit up there and he wasn't used to it. Of course Doug wins on this little chestnut mare this year, and so we leave that behind now, I won that race and got pissed [drunk] and sang and went all bloody silly at Toompine. So I finished up at South Monega and this is going back to the question you asked about the Aborigines. Right there was a few of us on the place, white fellas working, but down on the river, the

19:00 Bulloo River – I think it was the Bulloo River – was this tribe, they were Aborigines. Una – I remember her name because she was the housemaid waitress up at the boss's office, looking after them. I was that involved with them and so desirous to know so much and I was still only a boy. I'd go down there till two o'clock in the morning and ask them

19:30 all the questions and they taught me all their culture, how to wake up, how to track people, how to put the special ring around people so that they're safe and all that sort of thing, and crossed blood, because they wanted me as their brother. So they put a prick and a prick in mine and, "We're brothers now Doug, we're brothers." And their old mama, old Muti, was the mother. They were the kangaroo tribe, Boda, the kangaroo tribe,

20:00 that was their section all around Cumonden and Quilpie.

How did you come for them to treat you like a brother? How did you get to know them?

Because they were open, love. Because they were so open. Like if we were droving I'd never reject them, in Cunnamulla or anywhere. Like those blokes that when I say weren't allowed to associate with undesirable people, they were black people. Not so much crims because you lived with crims here under the bridge with crims,

20:30 the coppers knew who they were, but they made sure you didn't associate with those black people. Then we went on droving trips or little trips like that and you'd only have one blanket between him and me, or he'd have a blanket and I had a blanket, and it would be that bloody cold you'd say, "Hey, come and get together with me." And that travels, that knew travels that this fella's all right, he accepts me because he'd sleep with me you know. That travels up there, see.

21:00 Anyhow they taught me all this thing, how to track – I could go into a lot of detail about everything like that.

I wouldn't mind a little bit of detail about the things that they taught you, Doug.

They told me about how Lake Eyre was made in their religion, in their culture, and I get very upset when people talk about them as being bloody ignorant and totally un-Christian. They had their faith but they didn't know that G-O-D spelt God,

21:30 all they had – they had no language – all they had was a passed down language. All they knew was what was passed down through generations back and that's what they taught. So anyhow, they taught me all these things – how to wake up, how Lake Eyre was, the tracking. Ok, I said, "Show me how to track," because that was one of the things I wanted to know. So they explained very easy…

Oh, could you sit down? Could you just explain it?

I could do it here, I've got to show you. See, when you walk you

22:00 walk heel toe, heel toe. When you run, you run – you've seen them on the sports – they run on the ball of the foot, that way. So they taught me all these things – how if he's the right man, if you're looking for a big heavy man, you look at the track to see how far the track went down in the sand. You look for bent grass – that was quite easy, I could understand that, and when it all comes down it's all commonsense. I used to think it was marvellous,

22:30 that they knew so much. But now we come to a creek, I say, "What happens?" "No problem, you just look down, you see the stones, you see the moss is bent, bent, bent – he went down that way." I said, "Fair enough, I accept that. What about if it's been a week, if the tree's been running in a sturdy current?" He said, "You feel

23:00 very soft and gentle, and you feel if the moss is bent, and you go on further. Then you put a man on that side of the river, a man on this side of the river in case the bloke that went down there went across."

One goes around, one goes this side until they pick his track up where he came back out, then they follow the track, “Hey, come on,” and then they follow that track to wherever he went. I used to tell them about the blood hounds we had, but the blood hounds we had once they got to the water we were stuffed.

23:30 They knew no more, that was it.

Did they teach you any language at all?

Yes, a bit, “Dora butsa guardia,” a few little words. It’s a long time, love, it’s sixty years, but I do remember some of their, as well as some of the Papuan language. They spoke broken English, and it was easier for me – Una, because she was up there, she mainly translated to those that couldn’t speak English would speak through her to me.

24:00 **So Una was an Aboriginal house girl, was she?**

Yes, she lived in that camp, she was part of that camp. There was her mother, the old father, two sons and Una.

How was she treated, do you feel, by the family?

She never ever complained but they’re not complaining people. I’d say that he would have – he wasn’t a bad bloke, the boss that was there, the manager – he didn’t own the place, they were managers, and Jackie Chalmers who was the bookkeeper, they used to always have bookkeepers on those places,

24:30 they did all their books. the manager didn’t have to worry about pounds, shillings and pence. No, but they never – they were very terrified of white folk. Look, I’ve seen so much – driving trips, blokes that chop, you know, lamb chop, well it would be mutton chop – pick the eye out of the thing. The natives, like they couldn’t come over and sit at your fire,

25:00 “You sit there, you black bastard.” “Tch, tch, tch,” in the bloody dirt and they’d have to pick them up and things like that, bloody awful. Another place I worked on, one day – well just that night really – I finished up with horses and stuff, I was pretty independent. I went out to this place Thylungra, that’s way out to buggery towards the channel country.

25:30 Black fellas line up here, white fellas line up here, and they always gave the white fellas the instructions first, “You go out, blah, blah, blah and muster this paddock.” The black fellas had to stand there with their faces down like that, and I didn’t know this, and this bloke used to walk straight over with his bridle – he used to always have his bridle in his hand this boss fella, and he just went ‘whack’. Blood and stuff all came out of this bloke.

26:00 I stepped forwards and the bloke – and I met the bloke after – I stepped forward to say, “Hey!” and he said, “No, don’t say anything, you won’t have a job here. Don’t go crook [get angry] at him.” I said, “I wouldn’t work for that bastard.” I said, “Why do you cop him?” and he said, “Oh, well things are hard to get.” I said, “Not for this fella.” So I just abused him and looked after the native fella as well as I could, just wiped him over a bit,

26:30 and left. I said, “You can shove your days pay up your bum, mate. I wouldn’t work for a bastard like you.” And I finished up going back further.

Were black fellas [Aborigines] still getting shot and stuff in those days? Did you ever hear anything?

No, not actually getting shot. This would be 1939, no the only thing I seen was the rough treatment that they got, like throwing their meat at them

27:00 and really picking the eyes out of it and throwing it like mongrel dogs. The natives couldn’t come over to your fire.

I’ve heard town rumours about things happening on the quiet and that sort of thing.

I wouldn’t say that I ever heard anything about that, that people were shot. They were starting to emerge too, because the Depression allowed people to be associated with them, where before they were in the common, they couldn’t

27:30 even come in town for a drink or anything, they were just banned. “That’s where you live and you bloody well stop out there.” They had to get their own tucker, their bush tucker, they didn’t get the dole, they got nothing. Boom, “There you are, don’t you come in our town.” So they were treated pretty rough in my opinion.

Were they still pretty much bush people then, or were there some that were making that…?

No, well that far out, love, I can only say that in the main

28:00 very primitive. There were ones that had been on droving trips that were starting to assimilate into white peoples’ habits, but they couldn’t associate. Even if you were on the road droving with him you couldn’t see him and take him in town to a pub, even a little place like Toompine that was way out to buggery. You couldn’t take a native in with you, in fear that that bloke would ring the coppers and you’d

be gone. It was law, love, it was a law.

28:30 You could be thrown in the boob and that's it.

What do you value most about your time with Aboriginal people, what did they teach you that you really value?

Waking up.

What does that mean?

Well I often speak to people that I associate with, they taught me how to wake up. You wake up listening, you wake up opening your eyes, you wake up smelling

29:00 before you do anything – you listen for your horse bells and it's a very slow operation. You check the trees, you run your eyes around to make sure there's no red belly black snake coming towards you, that everything's ok and that nothing's been disturbed during the night. That, I would say would be the most important thing. The tracking, after a long time was only commonsense.

29:30 Most of their things were commonsense – when they talked about Lake Eyre and I said, "Explain it," they said, "Well, a long time ago all the frogs up north where the rain was used to open their mouths and collected all this water in their belly. No water come down the creek." They were probably talking about drought time, probably, I don't know. "No water come down the creek," and everything was dry.

30:00 So they decided we must find out, so they sent tribes that went up there. The tribesmen tried to boss them and they frogs just wouldn't do anything about it. They people to talk to them, they wouldn't do nothing about it. So they got together and they said, "Well, we'll send kookaburra up." So kookaburra goes up and he started telling them a funny joke and he said that they laughed so much that they

30:30 vomited out all the water, that fed the creeks and became Lake Eyre. Now, we call the kookaburra the laughing jackass, and that's where it all goes back to, they called him kookaburra – they didn't call him laughing jackass. So there, and they're the things and when you look at it you can understand the simplicity of it. Like we're flat out understanding God, and I'm not

31:00 a God person – my wife may be a priest but I'm not a God person, I'm a Holy Spirit person. That's probably tied up with the spirit that they carry, because it's very close to what I believe. I know the results of what I learnt and that's it.

So let's move forward a little bit in your story now. When did you join up? How

31:30 **did that come about?**

We're up to that stage? I'll let a lot of the other stuff go, hey?

We can come back later, it's just with the time.

Yeah ok. When I finished rabbiting at Ardock and we were working on South Carmonigan, I was suspicious – even at that stage when I was eighteen. We had to go out to one of the

32:00 outstations, the boundary rider's huts, Lou Simbly. Lou was that pleased to see us, he had a bottle of schnapps, spirit, and we get, well more than half pissed, hey. So we finished up camping on the floor but during the night – I'm very sensitive, a very sensitive boy. I sense that this bastard had his hands over my body.

32:30 So I woke him up and he said, "No, I must have done it in my sleep." I was always suspicious that he was a homosexual. I'd had a homosexual experience under the bridge, not that they did anything to me, but I was under the bridge in my camp and this bloke used to camp right next to me. After a few nights, and this whopping big sailor came over one morning and he said, "You shift your f'ing spade or I'll kill you." And there's me, you know, fifteen knowing nothing about it.

33:00 So when daylight came and I said, "What was the story about last night?" and he said, "Don't you know?" He said, "That man was…" – I can only use words, love, that I understand – "That man was going to root you [have sex with you] in the night." And he explained what it was all about, he said, "Now be very careful who you associate with, who you befriend. Be very, very careful." What were we up to?

33:30 **You'd gotten very drunk…**

Oh yeah, we're getting to the army stage now. So I dealt the horse – I took one horse and I said to Alex, "You can have the bloody wagon." I'd given away a lot of stuff in my time. I said, "You can have the wagon, I only want one horse." Then one of the blokes on the place, he had a couple of horses and a bit of (UNCLEAR).

34:00 **Ok, keep going.**

So anyhow, I leave South Carmonigan, dump the one horse for two other horses this other fella had. A pack saddle captain was one and the other one was a young mare. Captain, you could pack saddle him and off I go away riding to Quilpie. I get into Quilpie – I nearly had the name of that

34:30 pub bloke, Rooney or something like that. That's beside the point. I get into Quilpie, look around, inch out some work and a bloke says, "There's a job at Beechal." I said, "Where the hell's Beechal?" and he said, "It's out by Cheepie." So I've got two horses, a few bob because I'd worked at South Carmonigan and got a few quid from the droving trip and some other things, the money I'd saved from the races and all that. So anyhow, I finished up with pack saddles and riding saddle. I

35:00 ask the bloke in town where Beechal was. "Oh yeah." "Will I find water?" "Yeah, you'll get water so far out of town," and other water. So I had what we called neck bags, they were sort of water bags – some had a breast bag and some had neck bags. I had neck bags and you could undo them and you could tip them, and tie them up again. I loaded them up and thought, "Ok, off we go." First waterhole, no water.

35:30 I thought, "Oh well, just bad luck." The second waterhole, no water. I'm starting to drink the water, thinking, "I must find something." I've got two neck bags of water – I wasn't thinking of the poor bloody horses. I'm riding along and it's about two o'clock in the afternoon and there's men coming down a road coming this way – I'm going that way. I see this bloke come

36:00 right along, and my neck bag is just about empty. I don't know how far the next waterhole is or anything, two o'clock and my tongue is all swollen, my lips were all swollen. But I was using what the Aboriginals taught me – pick a stone up and use it like chewing gum in your mouth. Just keep sucking on that and that keeps the saliva running in your mouth. But still dry, and this bloke, so I waited and pulled up. I'm becoming Aborigine see,

36:30 and I said, "G'day matey, where you going?" and he said, "To Quilpie." I said, "Mate, to tell you the truth I don't think you'll get to Quilpie unless you've got plenty of water." He said, "No, I've none. Have you got any?" I said, "There's only a mouthful. We'll share what we have. Here you have a go." I said, "You're Aborigine, you're probably a local fella?"

37:00 He said, "No, I'm not local, I'm just coming down to see my people." Oh, love, there's so many things in between (UNCLEAR), but anyhow. I said, "You're Aborigine, ok. You're not local but you buggers know how to find water. If you don't find water we're both bloody dead, it's as simple as that. Too hot, middle of December. You won't get to Quilpie, I don't know how far I've got to go

37:30 to the next water hole. If we don't get water, and there's no water to be found within – you won't get it because I've come that way." He said, "Yes," and he wheeled his horse around for a while and he said, "I think maybe four mile." And I thought, "Well what have I got to lose?" So away we went and – you never look up in the air, you always look at the ground when you're a bushman, because you're looking for tracks of some sort.

38:00 So there's kangaroo track, goanna track, all going this way. Maybe. We go on a bit further and we see birds, and ah – this bloke knew what he was talking about. But when we got there, there was a little hole in a hard clay pad about that wide on the top, then underneath it there was all this bloody water. That's what

38:30 they called a native well. The natives knew – he didn't know, he wasn't a local man, he didn't know it was there – or he may have, I don't know. But four mile, he was tracking as much as I was, looking at the tracks on the ground. "What do you think, mate?" "Oh yeah, he looks all right, there's goanna, he must be going for water." I said, "Well that's great," you know. So we filled up our bags, come back at the T roads and I said, "Well you've got enough to get

39:00 you back mate, you'll be battling by the time you get there, but you'll get to Quilpie all right. I've got enough to get me a fair way along the road." But I only went till about nine o'clock that night. See I would have been dead, and at nine o'clock that night there was a big lagoon in front of me, and I said to the horses, "Well bugger him, I'm not working tomorrow." I was talking to the horses and I said, "We'll stay here now for the night." So now we get to Beechal.

We'll just stop because we're right on the end of that tape now.

Tape 3

00:34 **Did you want to pick us up, Doug, where you found the lagoon for the horses and decided to stay overnight?**

Yeah, I'll just take it through to the next step quickly. I camped there overnight and the next day I finished up at Beechal, I forget the bloke's name. The job was set up because it was set up in town, they'd rung through. There were three or four other musterers on the place. This was early December

01:00 and in 1941, so I'm there and the war's been going for a couple of years. I'm eighteen, not thinking of any bloody war or anything else. So these blokes decide then that they'll go and join up, and Doug looks at the situation and thought, "Well, if they go I'm here on my bloody own."

01:30 I had made it up to a certain extent with them, so I said, "Oh, well, I'm coming too." So I left all my gear

– and I had a lot of gear, a bloody beautiful sixteen plait stockwhip, oh all this bloody gear. I had loading gear, I had two rifles, pack saddles, riding saddles, breast plate, (isleair UNCLEAR) boots, spurs – the lot. Then I decided to go, so we get down and walk in on the 22nd of December, '41,

02:00 now I'm eighteen. The first thing the bloke says is, "You can't join." I said, "Why not? All these other buggers are joining." He said, "No, you can't join." I said, "Well, mate if I can't join I'll go that far out that you'll never find me. It's as simple as that as far as I'm concerned." So he said, "You're a determined little fella." But he was, it something to do with Blocksedge and Ferguson, they were the big real estate agents in Brisbane at that time.

02:30 He said, "What I'll do is, I'm tied up with real estate. I can get you a job at my place and you can do the grass." And I said, "No way, I'm not a slave to anyone. I either join or I go back to where I'm happy." So he said, "Well" so they interned me but I had to muck about the exhibition ground until

03:00 I was nearly nineteen – that was the 22nd January, that was a month later. See this was the 22nd December, the 22nd January I'm nineteen. So they moved me around and finally they said, "You can go to the 11th Training Battalion in Red Bank." So I go up there to Red Bank, a bit of shooting, you know in the reserve, at the rifle range. So then they decided to give us a bit of training, so then they send us down to

03:30 Southport after a bit of route marching around Red Bank and those places, down to South Bank because the sand at Southport – Southport was pretty rough in those days. Southport was a long way from where the water was. Then we had to climb up over this sand and get used to sandy conditions and everything else. A lot of things that happened there would be of interest too, I suppose. They were teaching us how to – they had a mortar that

04:00 fired shots that you put in your rifle, it had a little mortar – not a big mortar that they have now – but a little mortar that fitted onto the barrel. You had your ten or five second hand grenades and you pull the pin, hold the clip, slip it down, pull the trigger and it would fire the, up it would go. That's all right, doing it without pulling the pin for a lot of us, "That's ok. Now you do it fair dinkum." This bloke's

04:30 got the shits, he's trembling like this, you know, so the bloke says, "Righto, come on," so he grabs the hand grenade, pulls the pin, goes to put it in the mortar and he doesn't put it in the mortar, it falls on the ground. And here's all us, and luckily the lieutenant who was training us grabbed it and he hauled it, "Down!" and he hauled it down, it exploded down wherever he through it. But anyhow, that was Southport, and then come the call, "2/12th reinforcements for the Western Desert," see.

05:00 I still wasn't nineteen, this is before I'm nineteen. There was a blue and white patch, the 2/12th 30s, I forget what divvy [division] they were in, the 9th or something, or 7th or whatever. So we line up and, "No, we can't send you." "Why not?" and he said, "You're too young." "Oh." In the meantime I'd met a sheila and got

05:30 engaged, unbeknown to all my family, in Southport. She finished up pregnant to a Yank, but that's beside the point, this is after I go. So the next lot on the list is the 26th Battalion, the 2/26th Battalion, and these are the poor buggers that went to Singapore. The Japs were waiting for them and said, "Drop your rifles, you're our prisoners" and took them to Changi [prisoner of war camp] and up into the thing. Again, too young. See, Doug's not

06:00 realising life at this point.

Can I interrupt you there?

Yes.

Your father had been a World War One machine gunner and you'd seen the negative impact it had on his life. He'd been injured, hadn't he?

Yeah. He was on disability, yeah.

I find it amazing that you would join the army, you were saying a few times that you were no one's slave and that you didn't answer to anyone, and that you enjoyed your freedom out there. The army couldn't be much more different than out riding your horse around the outback?

Probably I thought the biggest thing

06:30 was that they went, and the second thing was that you were doing your bit, which was another part of what you do when you're mustering sheep, you're doing your but towards the musterers of the station there. No, it never got into my head not to go. It never entered my head for the flag like they talk about, or your family, or your – maybe to some degree I would be defending the women of Australia, my Mum and my sisters, but not that I was close to them.

07:00 But the main thing was that those blokes left and Doug was bloody selfish enough to say, "I'm going too." I probably wanted to.

Let me ask you about another important point in the development in the story, must have been the outbreak of war, which would have occurred when you were living under the bridge.

1939.

Can you tell me when you heard that Australia was at war?

No, it didn't have any impact on me, no. I thought, "Oh well." It was too far away

07:30 because it was overseas. It was too far away, it wasn't New Guinea and I don't suppose I was particularly interested to go overseas at that time, or anything else. I was quite content, I was happy doing what I was doing. I was free, a loner, independent.

Was it a source of much discussion amongst the people living under the bridge?

A lot of them spoke about the sacrifice that Russia was making because

08:00 there was talk of communism in Australia. So Russia was one of our things, the Yanks never came into it until '41, so we weren't worried about the Yanks, they're nothing. They're supplying the gear, but nothing. England, yeah fair enough, Dunkirk and all that sort of stuff. England's copping a hiding [getting beaten], ok. But it was that far removed that it didn't impulse me – it may have other people, I don't know, but that was their feeling. But it didn't

08:30 have an effect on me whether I should go and look after England, that was one of the things there, why should I go over there to bloody defend England? I suppose, I don't know.

Do you think amongst the ranks of the homeless and the unemployed there was a fertile ground for communism and for the discussion of it?

Well I wouldn't say communism as communism, but a lot about socialism – about people, about caring for each other and things like that.

09:00 A lot on the social side of life, not that they were socialist, or that they were communist, or fascists or anything, it was just they were more concerned about the unfairness of it all. And because there was so many unemployed, it was just nothing – like I said it was one in four. They talk about ten per cent, Oh God, ten per cent – there was twenty-five per cent. Those poor buggers couldn't even get the dole, there was no cheques coming to your front door, you had to

09:30 travel from Cunnamulla to Wyandra, to Charleville and back and that before there, and the other things I spoke about before – use your brains to get a feed, things like that. And most of the blokes that joined up, and I'd say most of them that were there, I'd say a big part of the first lot of the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] would have been knockabouts [homeless travellers]. I say hobos, knockabouts, stiffs, whatever you want to call them – would have been there because you

10:00 had nothing, we had no underpants, we had no singlets, we had no toothbrushes. Simple as all that, we lived that way and accepted it because that was it, we just went on.

I guess in a lot of ways the lifestyle you'd had over that last few years would have been fantastic training for going into the army. There would be a lot of the elements that would prepare you well for it.

That's right.

How did you cope with your early training,

10:30 **in terms of your marching and your basic training?**

I didn't mind the marching and because you always had a band and that part was all right, I didn't mind the marching. I liked rifles because I was a kangaroo shooter and I wasn't too bad when I hit the thing. They knew – they didn't make me into a sniper, thank Christ, but they knew that I could look after myself.

What about taking orders, it must have been tough sometimes?

Yeah, sometimes you'd get a bit browned off [angry], "Why does this bastard want to stand over me for?" but no,

11:00 you sort of fell into line. 'They can make you have a baby, but they can go further than that, they can make you love a baby' – that's an old saying that they used to say. That's just how it is, they just find some way, even if they put you in CB [Confined to Barracks] or make sure you're not allowed out, or fine you, and keep breaking your money down that way if you were too much trouble.

So what do you think your approach

11:30 **was at that point? Were you going in to make life as easy as you could while you were in there, or were you willing to take on some of the leaders – if you were asked to take on something that you didn't believe in were you willing to stand up for yourself? Or were you just keen to live life as easy as you could in there?**

I became a part of it, let's put it that way, because they broke a lot of those things, the independents and all that out, because it was

12:00 the first time that away from under bridges, but they were broken up into different ones anyhow. There wasn't – there were groups of people but there was none that Doug – Doug was very independent, but at least I had a family that I didn't have, even though they were in Brisbane. I had a group of blokes that I could be with – get pissed with and laugh and joke and everything else. No, I walked into it after a while pretty good. The training was all right, the

12:30 sand and shit, you know. And there was the prospect of the overseas trip – I'd never been on a big boat and all this sort of thing. So there's a lot of little attractions that sort of made me accept while I was there. But I can tell you it wasn't out of loyalty to the flag or to the governments or anything else. Probably to the women – which includes my mum.

Speaking of women, who was this sheila? Come on, I want to know who this sheila was in Southport.

13:00 Yes well, when I went to Southport, how it first happened I had to get clothes done, and it was pretty primitive washing things around, and somebody said there was a woman down there that would do our washing – Mrs. Crompton. So when I go down to see Mrs. Crompton there's this Laura, sixteen – I'm eighteen and she's sixteen, and nice and attractive. So anyhow, I was only there for about

13:30 six weeks. So I said, "I'll be going away soon, I want to make something a bit more secure," so I bought her an engagement ring and gave it to her, not telling my family because my family was there. Doug was going to do what Doug wanted to do, so I put a ring on her finger, and when I went away even, I would have given her enough to buy a bloody house, because I got to send whatever I won in betting and two-up and all that sort of stuff, and some of my money

14:00 was sent to her. She had all this stuff, like the mother was telling me later on, 'LAL' – Laura Amelia Leitch, all on the blankets and sheets and all of that. She was fair dinkum [genuine] at that stage, but of course I'm away twenty months, the Yank comes and pregnant and that's it.

Was she your first love? Was she the first girl that you'd had a relationship with?

Yes.

14:30 That made a big difference in my life for many, many years.

In what way?

Not trusting women – and not using them in any way but I just wouldn't associate with them. I'd never get close enough to accept them, I just wouldn't trust them. I wouldn't be looking for them to be making love to them or kiss them or cuddle them or anything else. I just, women – Doug was Doug. He'd stay with this mob and get pissed.

15:00 I became a very heavy drinker.

What about in terms of getting into a relationship with her, did that make a big difference to you? Having been someone who was on the road and travelling and independent?

At that time it did, yeah.

To get engaged to a girl's a really big deal at that point.

I think it was because of the lonely life I'd lead and thought that this was it, so yes, I was

15:30 close enough to her. I think illiterate with love too, I wouldn't have know the first thing about love at all. I wouldn't even have thought about pulling her pants down or anything like that first, see. So, that was Southport.

Let me ask you as well, you asked her to marry you in the context of leaving to go overseas?

16:00 **That was coming up, you were there for only six weeks, you felt that you probably would be going overseas to fight?**

Yes, I knew, I was prepared at that stage to go overseas. I wouldn't have worried about that, but even to the desert, even that far away and bugger the Poms [the English] and all this sort of thing. Once I got adapted to the army that was ok, I thought, "I'll go wherever they send me, I'll do the best I can and that's it."

Had you given any thought to the fact that you might not come home, or to the fact that you might die while you were

16:30 **away fighting?**

Not really, no. Because of what I'd lived – and I'd lived a lot of dangerous times, lost in the bush wondering how I'm going to live, no bloody tucker, taking those horses, no water that day that I was talking about. Things like that had conditioned me to, "What the hell, tomorrow's tomorrow, let it be.

17:00 Yesterday's dead and gone, tomorrow's not yet in sight, see me through the night." As simple as that. I wasn't worried about getting bowled over or even getting wounded, I never really entertained that really.

So you missed two lots of reinforcements because you were too young to go off to the Western Desert and the other one going up to Singapore, the 2/26th.

17:30 **Did they keep you hanging around down in Southport? Were you training until you were nineteen?**

Well it was very soon after that when they took me back to Red Bank and they said, "You will be going to New Guinea now that you're nineteen." Now I had the distinction, or privilege or whatever you want to call it, there was Chockos – Chocko soldiers, they

18:00 won't get upset because it's a credit to them. I know what they did, whether they were chocolate soldiers or CMF [Citizens Military Force] or militia or whatever, or AIF. There were Chocko soldiers with us and there was thirty AIF, and they were the first AIF to go to New Guinea. I have the privilege or the satisfaction to know that I was at least the first AIF to go there.

18:30 Will I go onto it now?

Yeah, well I guess I'm interested in what your impressions of the enemy at that point. What did you know about Japan and what Japan's campaign through the South Pacific had been like?

When I was young and at South Brisbane Intermediate, the Bartolomeo Corleone, that was an Italian warship came, and I walked over there, and there was Japanese boats and everything – when I was a boy, this

19:00 was before army days. I just accepted people as people, I knew some of the stories but because you had no knowledge, no personal knowledge of it, it doesn't register. Like if you go into something strange that you know nothing about, say an operation that you know nothing about, you're concerned about the operation but you don't know what it's going to be, how much pain or anything of what it's going to be. That was more or less the same with that. I knew where I was, I was a

19:30 soldier, you're going over, bang, bang, bang off you go. Whatever's to be there will be there.

So is December '41 when you signed on, December 22nd?

December 22nd I signed on at Red Bank and told them they either grab me now or they don't get me at all. I had to wait buggerising around, a bit of training until I was nineteen.

20:00 **So you must have heard then that Pearl Harbour [bombing of the American Naval Base] had occurred only a couple of weeks before that?**

Yes, we realised that, that the Yanks were going to be in it, but it still didn't register any great big thing. I wasn't even worried about Japanese over there because they were still way to buggery back in Malaysia and Rabaul, we knew that, but so what.

Ok, so you're in the middle of your training when Singapore fell, early February?

Yep.

How did you react to that, or how did you guys react to that?

Oh well I felt sorry for the blokes because

20:30 a lot of those fellas were blokes that was in my unit, training battalion. They were people that I knew, because some of the blokes were some of the people I'd gone to school with, and I got to know a few of them and I felt a bit sad and sort of hopeful that everything would be all right for them – not thinking that the Japs were as fanatical as they were, and what they did to them.

The situation must have become a lot more real for you at that point, the idea that you too could easily…?

Yeah,

21:00 I didn't realise that I had an angel on my shoulder until many years after, until I was sixty and I walked back through life. I realised that I had this angel on my shoulder, the war business and other things, that was all coincidental. But I was very broadminded, I adjusted to a lonely life that I could handle everything, I was invincible, nothing would hurt Doug, I knew that

21:30 because of the things that had happened in my life. I knew that I couldn't be hurt, but I didn't know that there was an angel up there did I? I just believed it was Doug that did all this, but it wasn't.

So what was the unit that you were combined with the militiamen into, at Red Bank? What was the name of the unit that they put you into?

Then name of the unit when they first called us out was BIPOD – that's all they said, BIPOD.

22:00 So then we start thinking to ourselves, British Independent Parachuters Overseas Detachments – you know because we're looking for probably glamour, you know. So that's what we thought we were going

to be, parachuters overseas. Then they said, “You’re going to New Guinea” that was the next move.

22:30 So then they load us on, back to the exhibition I believe, load us on a decker. Now we’re loaded into all sorts of carriages, some of them were only suburban carriages. Suburban carriages in Queensland was just two seats like that, wall up and that’s your confined there, and that’s your doorway to get out, and two windows, a window each side of the doorway. A luggage rack up here.

23:00 They’d given us, at that point I don’t think they’d even given us the full regalia of the belts and the braces for your ammunition, and your backpacks. I don’t think at that stage we had that, because we’re going to go to Townsville and we’re going to get on the boat in Townsville. So we’re in the train, those that were in the

23:30 country trains that had toilets in, they were just there and there was a laneway leading to the toilet, they were all right. But us poor buggers that were in this suburban thing, like when you were taken short and the trains moving, you’re not going to sit there and shit yourself, so you say to your mate, “I’ve got to go to the toilet mate,” so you push yourself out the window, drop your tweeds [pants], push

24:00 yourself out the window and he’d hold you by the hands, and you, “Oh,” got rid of that. Or if you wanted to do a wee that wasn’t too bad, because it was ok to just open the door, stand there and just ‘swww’ to your heart’s content. The blokes along the railway line, the navvies, had a great thing, they used to be looking for paper. “Paper, paper, paper,” you could hear them as you’re going along, and we’d have a local paper, the Brisbane Courier or the Telegraph and that

24:30 was the paper that was around at the time. There was always water, there were two big jugs of water up there and whenever you pulled up you made these bombs made of paper and filled them up with water. You hold them very careful and when these buggers used to say, “Paper, paper,” you either used to say to them, “Use a bloody stick like a bushman!” to wipe your bum, or you’d just say, “Cop this, young Harry!” and you’d throw the water bomb over the bastards,

25:00 you know. So anyhow, away we go, that’s how we travelled up through there, and some of the blokes used to sleep in the luggage cab because there were four of us in each seat, they were limited. Some would sleep on the floor, some would sleep in front of the door, some would sleep in the luggage racks even, that were up there. They were sort of gauze sort of things that you put things in and so on. So when we get to

25:30 Townsville, “Sorry, no we’re not going now. We’ll have to send you out, hold you up for a couple of weeks.” So we go up to a place Selarang, a new camp, no tucker. So we finish up raiding the local bloke, he was a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK farmer. So we raided him and we were getting what fruit we could from around the joint. Up come a few tents, we out a few tents up so we could live a bit comfortable. We stayed there for a while, and then

26:00 after a while they said, “Ok, here’s your issue now,” and we got all our webbing.

Doug, when were you pulled together as the BIPOD unit and briefed about what you’d be doing, when did you come together as a cohesive unit?

Not until we got up there, we didn’t leave as a BIPOD unit. We were going to first Dos Corps, and in that corps there was the service army corps

26:30 was this section BIPOD, but we didn’t know until we got up there where we’d be or what we were going to do.

So you were travelling as a fairly random group of fellas up on the train?

That’s right, very random.

Who were you with? Were you with some of the guys that had been in other reinforcements training in Red Bank?

No, the only bloke that I knew was a bloke from Brisbane and him and I, he was a 2/12th too but he was an older man, I don’t know why he never

27:00 went. I think he sort of must have been missing a link, he was sort of a larrikin, he might have been ackwilly [AWL – Absent Without Leave] see, he might have been away. But he was in our, and the rest of them were from all over the place, Victoria, New South Wales – there were very few Queenslanders in amongst them.

Were you travelling with any of the militiamen at that point?

Some of them were Chockos yeah. We weren’t all AIF, there was only thirty AIF that went up in that lot, and there was a trainload of people, so they would have been split up

27:30 all over the place. Some of them would have been going to be truck drivers in army service of other types. There were no infantrymen, even though we had done infantry training, but we weren’t infantry. We’d done enough to get us out of trouble.

So the whole train, what was the corps that you…

The 1st Dos Corps they called us.

The 1st Dos Corps?

28:00 **And that was the first load of Australians that had been sent up to New Guinea?**

No not really, when we got there – I'll jump ahead of things.

You were the first lot of AIF guys to go up there?

To go in that lot. When we got to New Guinea – I'll jump into New Guinea and then I'll come back.

Ok.

Right, they said that there was fifteen hundred there already, before we got there. Look, if there was five hundred, that would be all. But anyhow, we get back to Townsville,

28:30 on the boat Taroona and off we go, in a convoy up to Moresby.

What sort of ship was she?

It was the boat that used to sail between Melbourne and New Zealand – not New Zealand, Melbourne and Tasmania, the Taroona. Pretty bumpy because of shallow drafts, it wasn't a deep drafted thing, because it just used to go across there, it was only a ferry really, but a big ferry.

29:00 We were out and they had certain conditions – you couldn't smoke on deck and all these sort of things, and they had the window up. Anyhow, one morning we're called up on deck, we had the HMAS Arunta out there, HMAS Warramunga on this side, and a convoy of three or four of us. So they called us up on deck, this is outside along way from Moresby and they tell us,

29:30 "You're going to Moresby, we don't know what's there. It might be an Anzac Cove [reminiscent of a World War One battle] sort of a situation." We had no ammunition, well they'd given us a rifle and bayonet and our gear, we had all that, but nothing, no bullets. So they issued us with ten bullets – ten bullets per man. "Now, we don't know what the situation is when you get there." Because the reason why he said we're breaking convoy, he said,

30:00 "Don't be worried, we'll outpace them, submarines. We're a very fast boat. But you heard all that 'boom, boom, boom' this morning. That's the [HMAS] Arunta and somewhere out there are submarines, so we're breaking the convoy, they'll stop here, we'll be on our own." So away we nicked off

How did you cope at sea, it was your first time being out on a big ship?

Yeah, well I thought it was marvellous really, and I handled it real well because after we came back and we went to Melbourne after a

30:30 few years, I went across on the boat and I was quite cocky. I said, "It's no problem to me, I've been on big boats you know." We finished up right on the end of this ship, I forget what it was, the one that went to Tasmania. It used to come up and 'whack, whack', you know and all along Doug was, 'ough, ough'. Me Mrs said, "Oh dear, I hope you didn't do this on the other boat." But the same thing, when I was there

31:00 there was this bloke from Central Australia and he used to just look, he was dumbfounded. He'd just look over the side of the ship like that, and he said, "Doug, I've never seen so much water in my life. How much is there?" I said, "If we stayed in this boat and sailed around the world, we would be in water all the way." He said, "I've never seen so much water." So anyhow we get to Moresby.

31:30 **So you split from the convoy?**

Yeah, we split from the convoy, we went from our escort. We went into Moresby – luckily we went into Moresby Harbour, we didn't have to do any Anzac Cove thing, which is just as well because we only had ten rounds of ammo [ammunition].

Had you sighted any Japanese planes at all?

Not at that point of time, no. It was just the 'boom, boom' of the thing there. We get into Moresby and the Macdhui has been sunk over there.

32:00 **What time of day was it that you came in?**

Oh it would have been about half past nine or something like that in the morning. But they told us so much bloody lies, when you think back, the lies that they said. They said that the Japanese are four foot high, they've got very heavy glasses, they can't see in the dark, you'll have no problem handling them. They've got size .22 rifles, and we've got .303s, and they gave us all this jazz about you'll have no problem.

Was this information on the way over there?

On the boat,

32:30 on the boat going over.

Was it done in lecture form, was it lecture material?

It was in lecture form, they had us all up when they were talking about what this Anzac Cove sort of caper was going to be, that they were splitting the convoy – he gave us the whole jazz, the captain of the ship not our boss, the captain of the ship, he spoke and told us all the thing about it.

Did they say why you should be angry at the Japanese, or what the Japanese had done?

No, that

33:00 was never brought up, it wasn't news then. It may have been happening in Australia.

I was just wondering if they'd create that for you, a reason to go in?

No, they never caused us to be angry at the Japanese, they never taught us to be angry or even showed us to be angry. They just assumed that we were Aussies – First World War, Anzac Cove and all that caper up there, that, "You blokes are invincible, you blokes will win the war." That was as simple as what it was, and we were confident that we would

33:30 win the war. We were confident.

Let me ask you, you knew you may be facing something like an Anzac Cove situation, what was your attitude towards having to kill a man?

I'd killed that many kangaroos in my life it wasn't a thing, it wouldn't have worried me. In fact even today, if you were a druggie and you admitted to me, and I had positive proof that you were the man that was giving all these kids there, and someone said, "Here's a gun, mate. What are you going to do about it?" I'd put it to your head and I'd pull the trigger.

34:00 I wouldn't be worried about it, if it's legitimate. I wouldn't kill a man, I'm not a murderer, but if in cases like that, yeah. I don't believe in saying, "Oh, naughty boy, go to jail for ten years." I'll say, "Give us a gun and I'll get rid of this bloke." Because you've killed five hundred people really, you're only one of many. No I wasn't – and they didn't teach us to be angry at the Japanese, didn't even teach us much on their habits as soldiers. We knew about what

34:30 happened over there as they came down towards Singapore, that they were riding bicycles and all that sort of caper. We knew all the build up to it, but we were invincible, we couldn't be beaten, it was as simple as that. That's how I felt anyhow, the other blokes might have had the shits, I don't know, but that's how I felt. I wasn't worried because what is it? If you're dead, you're dead, you don't come back.

35:00 **So you pull into the harbour at about nine thirty in the morning?**

Nine thirty in the morning, right, ok. We get out and we walk up the main drag and there's whistles blowing and stuff. A lot of people starting to poke about, white people and native people were there too, but a lot of white people.

Australian servicemen?

No civilians, there were still civilians there. Burns Philp store,

35:30 built like a big K-Mart – nobody there. Packages being half wrapped, money, watches – whatever you wanted. Japanese silk dressing gowns, whatever you wanted. It was like walking into a big K-Mart with nobody in it. The bloke said, "Leitchy, come and get a look at this." We still our kitbags with us at that stage,

36:00 they said, "Come and get a load of this." Because we knew we had to send our kitbags back, because we had to put our heavy gear, our big heavy overcoats and the big clothes that we had, we had to get back into khaki shorts and shirts. So they said things and, "Leitchy, come and get a load of this." But as I said I was never taught to be thief, I said, "No, not my game. You please yourself what you do. I'm going to walk around town." So I went around town on my own, we had our rifles because

36:30 we had to look after our bayonets, we had that. They'd taken our kitbags into some area. So I walked around town and because I'm a socialist, because I am as I am with the Aborigines, decided to walk around town. Now there were cars with their engines running outside houses. I went into a few of the houses, because the whistles were blowing, and those people – we got off – and those people that I'm talking about had to go on the

37:00 Taroona to go back to Australia, so that meant that their cars were still left running. There was meals left half eaten still warm on the table, whatever you wanted was there because they took just what they stood up in. Whatever you want was there, open slather. There was no money because I suppose they took their money, I didn't see any money but it might have in been in other places. I thought, "Oh bugger this, this is not mine. I'm more content to see how the natives live."

37:30 **Doug, just tell me about the white locals who – the whistle had blown and they're getting down on the Taroona, what was their mood? Were they fearful, were they angry, were they upset?**

I didn't make contact with them, they were moving that bloody fast and I was lost in my own thing that I was doing.

Did they look upset or concerned?

They were walking pretty fast, they were running and walking very fast, and

38:00 I would say they would have been concerned about having to go, but I just don't know. Everything was so quick, that's why the cars were still left running, because they were just in there to say hello to their mates. You know, "What's going on?" "There's some troops come in now." So I decided to go down to Annal Bardei [?], that's along the waterfront, and as I'm walking along there's a big hall, and

38:30 Doug thinks, "I'll go in here and have a look at what's in here." When I go in there I pick up all this rations regalia. Big sashes, the CCCP [Russian] pads, the Communist Manifesto that goes back beyond Anglos and all these fellas that they talk about, it goes way back because socialism in its form, or communism in a form socialism, was

39:00 something that was happening in France a long time before there. So I took that book, and another book was Out of the Night that was written by a Germans about who was Nazi, joined the Communist Party and gave a lot of guts to it. All this bloody regalia and everything else, so I grabbed that and put it away and walked out to the natives. The natives had a barge that was on stilts out over

39:30 the water and that was their toilet, they'd just walk along the thing and they'd drop their – well they didn't have tweeds on did they, they just lifted their lap-laps up, did what they had to do – men or women, it fell into the ocean, or Moresby Bay. Then I came back and there was a bloke I'd made it up that was going to our unit, he was a lot older than me – not a lot older. He said,

40:00 "There's a bloody car up there." And we'd found out then that we were going to be in the BIPOD, which was the petrol – Bulk Issue Petrol and Oil Distribution. It wasn't the parachuters' overseas detachment at all. So we knew that we were going to have access to petrol, and this Bluey could drive a car, and he said, "I'm going to knock that little car off." It was a German made – I don't know whether it was a Volkswagen but it was a German Opel.

40:30 Like we have a Holden, or a Mitsubishi Toyota Tarago, it was an Opel. He thought, "I'm going to knock this off, I'm going to snooker it there, and we'll always have a car wherever we go, there'll be a car. If we ever come back here there'll be a car." So I went down there just a little farther and then they moved us out to what they call about the Nine Mile, I would say, because the 2/9th (TVH UNCLEAR) finished up there.

Doug, I'm going to interrupt you there, mate. We're right on the end of this third tape.

Tape 4

00:33 **You just mentioned right at the end of that last tape, that you'd just found out you were the BIPOD unit. When did you find that out and how did you react?**

When we got onto there, when we got towards the tail end before we embarked – disembarked I think it is, embarked is when you go on. They said that you'll be in BIPOD, and we said, "What the hell is a BIPOD?" and they said, "Bulk Issue Petrol and Oil Distribution. You're part of the 1st Dos Corps, you're part of

01:00 the ASC."

What was that last bit?

You're part of the ASC, Army Service Corps, and that was attached to the 1st Dos Corps.

How many of you were assigned to the unit?

Oh bugger all, it ultimately finished up wherever the captain came from, they may have been up there, I don't know. I don't think they travelled with us, I think they met us there. There would only be about six or eight of us, that's all.

01:30 But they impressed all the cars and trucks and everything that was there. See, Moresby was a town, a civilian town and there were people with cars and trucks and everything else, and the army impressed that. We must have been the forerunner, that was the 2nd of April – sorry, we left on the boat on the 2nd of April, it was the 9th of April when we landed in Moresby, '42. This is before a lot of things even happened.

02:00 The big blues didn't start until September, '42 and they didn't tell what who was who.

What do you mean they impressed that on you?

They impressed the cars, not impressed them on my mind. Impressed mightn't be the right word, they took control of them. They came and just said, "They're ours, we need them," because they had no

vehicles, and

02:30 they had to have them. So I remember that we had to go across the four mile strip, that was four mile out of town. There were some civilian planes, not many about four or five. They were stuck away off the main airstrip part. They must have been people that had a quid. So we finished up about nine mile on the banks of the Loki River.

03:00 We camped on this side of the road – the Loki, road, us. It was the first time that I'd ever seen the top half of a woman, because they were natives and all the women had was grass skirts, no pants, grass skirts. Everything else was top, and this one was over there – we'd learnt in the little time we were there, that we learnt some lingo – you know, 'Namuhy area' means 'Ok'.

03:30 'Tava' means 'white boss', little words that you had to pick up. 'Kokini an ahini' and 'Tobagus an abogus' is 'toilet', so you pick that up in the hours that you're in Moresby, you had to learn something. But anyhow, the Japs were coming down. A couple of the Zeros used to come down every now and again and strafe the Catalina flying boats that were in Moresby Harbour.

04:00 We had no land planes or fighters, so Catalinas and they used to go over to Rabaul and have a look around there – not that there were so many Japs there but at that point of time, it was very early, they built up all after. I could hear this crying and I looked over and there was this luscious looking sheilas you know, nice tanned skin and nice firm boobs, and it's the first one that I'd ever seen in my life.

04:30 Never even seen my sisters, really, because we were a very square family, you see. So anyway, we're there and we were only there for a couple of days, and our bloke said, "You two have got to go up further." "What do you mean up further?" and he said, "Well, nobody knows where the Japanese are.

05:00 They don't know how far down they are, they know they're in Rabaul, they don't know whether they're in New Guinea," because there's no land link in those days, there was no connection to tell you the planes had left to bomb Moresby even. So they said they wanted a group of us to go up, so we went up past the Rona Falls and they had cut about enough width out of this cliff for one truck or one car to go up

05:30 what they call low levels. Low levels was the first one past Rona Falls – you look down and there's Rona Falls and it's a long way bloody down you think to yourself. I hope to God the truck doesn't fall over. The method was to get those trucks up and down, there was about five or six trucks in our lot and we were held up. We thought, "Oh, what's here?" and they said, "Just wait a while." Where we were the road made into two units because this is the way we used to do to.

06:00 So then there'd be five or six trucks coming down from low levels, the last truck without a brief is supposed to say, "I am the last truck." So down they'd come and when the last truck got to our first truck, he'd pull up and give the bloke the note, and he'd wait until they moved and we were safe, and we'd go up truck after truck until we got to low levels. When we got to low levels it was still in the phase of being built, there was a

06:30 thatched roof igloo or whatever you want to call it, that the natives were all building, that was to be accommodation. We went on to a place called Koitake that was on a bit further where there was already one built. No oven or any stuff like that, any cooking was done with your dixie [cooking pot].

Koitake, that ended up being a convalescent home out there didn't it? Was there a big house that became a convalescent home?

07:00 I wouldn't know, when I walked away I walked away. I never walked back. It was just a small settlement, some natives, but the main thing was just to build this camp for oncoming, there were no English type buildings, it was just this big shed and native shacks.

This was to be the

07:30 **BIPOD personnel?**

No, they sent us up there to check out where the Japs were, they had no clue.

Sorry, so a couple of you from BIPOD were…

Yes, plus others, plus Chockos.

How many of you were there?

Only about eight and a sergeant, that's all.

Eight and a sergeant, and you were going on a reconnaissance?

A reconnoitre, just to see what was there.

08:00 **So Koitake was the end of the road was it, as far as you could take the vehicles, and you were going to…**

At that point, well low levels was, and we got out at low levels and we walked to Koitake. It was pretty rugged, they were just native tracks really. Then that's all right, so up we go and we walked along and

kept our eyes open – and incidentally they gave us two pass words in case

08:30 there were Japs there – 'Woolloomooloo' and 'Woollen Woollies'. The reason why they gave us that was because the Japs couldn't say an 'L' – they would have said, "Woorren Woorries," they wouldn't have been able to say, "Woollen Woollies." The same as, "Woorroomooroo" – they wouldn't have been able to say it. That's what they believed, whether or not it's true I don't know. They would have had enough sense to have someone that could speak English, wouldn't they? So anyhow we walked up and we couldn't find anything, until

09:00 we got up past a couple of the native villages. We got up towards Templeton's Crossing, and this big fella came out of this thing, this big man with a beard. We, he was a sergeant, we were just shit. He went over there to talk to him, and he came back and said, "This is as far as we need to go." We said, "Who's that bugger?" and he said, "That's Bob Templeton."

09:30 He had a coffee thing up there, a plantation. He said that his boys, we were checking with his boys – and we had some PIB fellas too with us – that's Papuan Infantry Brigade. They were the local infantry lot. So there was a couple of them, because they were able to speak to the natives and transfer it back, you know whatever you call that.

10:00 **Sorry, was it Papuan Infantry Brigade?**

Yeah, the Papuan Infantry but we just called them PIB. They had blue lap-laps and white shirts with a lot of red and blue, red and black on them.

So to get up to Templeton's Crossing, that's a big walk, a big trek.

Oh not from Koitake and that, it's a long way from Moresby but not from Koitake and that. It was

10:30 only a couple of little villages in between there and there. No it wasn't a long walk. I think we camped out one night, one night we had the ground sheets and we had the capes, that's all we had and we camped out one night. No one had the shits because we'd seen nothing, and like I said, we were invincible, no bastard was going to knock me off.

Were you patrolling as though you could come across Japanese?

Yes, we had to be on the lookout, they just didn't know.

11:00 They knew in their own sense that they'd only be forward scouts, that there wouldn't be a unit of them. But that's what they wanted to know, just exactly what was there, so that if there were forward scouts they would have know that military was back further somewhere, in Kokoda or Popendetta or some of those places up in the highlands, would have been more troops. But we struck no one and Templeton said, "No, these natives have never seen anyone here." But another

11:30 interesting thing comes in there because I never actually seen them, but we were told about the golden stairs. These stairs were made by natives, they were the foothills to the track, and they were made by natives to make it easier for them to get up on the thing. Now, I spoke to a lot of diggers that come back – never heard of them. So it

12:00 tells me that they weren't in there at that particularly time. A lot of them, after it settled down a lot of them went by air to Kokoda and places. So a lot of them had never walked from Moresby to Kokoda, they would have gone up and landed at Narrogin or somewhere like that, or got up by trucks because the jeeps, you know you hear this thing at one stage later on, this bloody thing in amongst all this jungle.

12:30 That sounds like a bloody car, what the hell would a car be doing – we'd never seen a jeep or a bulldozer or anything in Australia, and around the corner comes – this is much later on – round the corner comes the bloody Yanks in this little bloody jeep. "Well Jesus bloody Christ, that'll go anywhere," they said, "Yeah it will go anywhere all right." So after they'd done that they then took us back, we went back there – see I'd never seen any Japanese or fought any Japanese,

13:00 I was not a bloody hero that way, other poor buggers did all that. So we came back down to Nine Miles.

Is that where BIPOD personnel were based, at Nine Mile camp?

When we first went there, the few of us, the six or eight of us and the captain. Then they took us back to Moresby because the only petrol and stuff that was there was all still in the Shell Company and BP [British Petroleum] or whatever, Plume and that was in their thing.

13:30 **Can you explain that to me what facilities or infrastructure was there to be holding the fuel? At the time you mention there was BP and Shell.**

Just their yards and their ramps so that they could load trucks, the same as what you see here, there were ramps and they had all the petrol there and the truck would back into the ramp, because the ramp was about three or four foot high and the trucks would back in and they'd just roll the drums onto the truck and away they'd go.

That was the normal way of doing it.

So pre-war they had these huge holding tanks, they bring in a ship…

Not tanks, they brought it all in drums. There were no big tanks full of fuel and stuff, it was all in drums. White spirit, which is used in stoves and petrol irons, that's white spirit. There was dieseline, they call it now distillate or probably another name for it now. And there was petrol, which was probably only one

lot anyhow. The equipment of an unleaded was a high octane – not an aeroplane octane, but it suited all the trucks up there at that time.

So Shell and BP, and you mentioned one other?

Plume.

Plume, and they had big holding yards to hold all the drums?

Yeah the drums, and they had to put walls up, wire up to stop people from getting in.

That was close to the wharf was it?

In around Moresby, yeah. Some were close to the wharf, some were a little bit further away. I'd say two of them would be reasonably close to the wharf, to the right hand side when you got off the wharf.

They were there to supply Moresby town?

The civilian population of Moresby, yeah. There weren't a great lot of drums there or anything at that stage.

I was going to say that surely the number of people in Moresby

would have increased incredibly with the Australian servicemen's presence there, or the army's presence. There must have been many more people than were there?

Well as I said before they claimed there were fifteen hundred there. I walked around a fair bit and I'd say there would be lucky to be five hundred, and they didn't know one thing about what. They had us making dummy anti-aircraft places, anything that sticks to the straight

you built some sandbags around it and you prop this stick against the sandbag and you'd cover that with bags or whatever you could do to make it look like an anti-aircraft gun. They had tents up in places that there was no bugger living, just to make it look more there, to confuse the Japanese in case they wanted to come over. If they had come over quickly, we would have been gone, as quickly as that when they sent us up there.

Can you describe for me the structure of your unit?

You said you had a captain?

We had a captain, we had no sergeants at that stage, we didn't even have a bloody cook. It was just this crew of us, about eight of us.

Privates?

Yeah privates, I think we might have had a corporal in amongst us but we didn't have a sergeant. There was the captain and his main job was to fill our pay book in, signed Captain Wetto. You had a pay book and keep going whatever

you did to your money or whatever, whether you drew it out or were sending it home.

Did you require any specialist training in regards to safety or understand the way that fuels worked?

Not a bit, we were just there and that was it. They brought us back from the Nine Mile over the Four Mile Aerodrome, which was Jackson Strip, it became Jackson Strip.

It was Four Mile when we first were there, then it became Jackson Strip. They put us into the Four Mile up on a bit of a ridge on the Four Mile, so that the bayonet wouldn't worry us. They'd built some tents by then, when we came back there was tents there. We got some hoop pine that goes around to bind like

bails of wool and stuff like that, but it's steel about an inch wide and probably could be nearly eight or a little bit thinner than that, and we made them into little reaping hooks – well they weren't little ones, they were tall enough a man could hold it up here, and we bent the bottoms of them so they were

at right angles to coming down, and the handle part. So there was a handle and the part that was bent like that, and we used to put a bit of rag on it and we gave it to the natives to cut all the kunai grass down, which was five and six foot high. Every now and again there would be all this yabbering going on in their lingo, and they'd drop everything and they'd be chasing a bandicoot, because that was their tucker – a bandicoot or a rat. They'd chase it and catch it, "Good tucker, good kai!"

19:00 They'd go and get this, kai was food see, native for food.

Just as a quick aside, did you ever get to eat any of their tucker?

No, I had plenty of Aborigine tucker – witchetty grubs, snakes, porcupine, yeah – I've eaten plenty of that, kangaroo.

Back to BIPOD unit, you had the holding yard which was down near the wharves, or down near Moresby town. What were you given as your duties, your responsibilities

19:30 **towards the unit? Was it to guard and maintain and refuel as was necessary from those yards down there? Or were you also responsibility for the refuelling at the airstrips and things like that?**

I'd say well there was bugger all air there, see there was only these few commercial planes, they were only little – oh the things you see putting around now, these English plane now, single engine thing. So they were just local planes. The main thing was

20:00 to prepare for – they probably knew the Yanks were going to come – to prepare for the supply and distribution of it. So all that stuff that was there, all the drums that were there we had to load all those onto these trucks that they impressed, or grabbed or whatever you want to call it, and take it out and hide it in this bush. Make stack out here, stacks out there and all those different places all over the place, so that we knew where they were

20:30 but nobody else would know where they were.

Right, and probably so that they weren't a target for the Japanese planes, is that right as well?

At that point in time the only plane that came along was Zeros, and they used to come up the Three Mile Valley – we had another area at the Three Mile and we used to break these drums down into four gallon drums. We used to break the white spirit into four gallon drums for the Yanks, because they had these flash stoves that used petrol.

21:00 But the Japs would come down there and they'd swoop over Three Mile over the Moresby hill and then they'd just sweep straight down over the Catalinas in Moresby Harbour. So we got to the stage, and they got to the stage too, because we'd be there. We had one ratbag who put the wind up us as quick as lightening because he'd be sitting there smoking away, pumping petrol into four gallon drums,

21:30 and often – more so we found out later he knew what he was doing – if they were full drums he would butt his cigarette into the petrol. But because they were full, we only woke up to it afterwards and we'd go for our bloody quoits, get away thinking it was going to explode. But he knew what he was doing because he used to work for the petrol company down in Sydney or somewhere, and he knew that as long as the drum was full

22:00 and if you popped it in quick enough, the petrol would put it out and it wouldn't explode – because it's the gas that explodes not the petrol, and he knew that. But he had the wind up us, we'd all go for our life. The latest to come in and we got to the stage where this one Jap, and we'd say, "That bastard's coming," and we'd have our .303s, 'bang, bang' – we never ever put one down, did we? But he got to the

22:30 stage where he just gave us a big smile and a wave, "Good luck you Aussies."

The Japanese pilots?

Yeah the pilots, because they knew we couldn't hurt them, they knew we didn't have machine guns or anything that – we just used to fire with our .303s.

You mentioned that the authorities would have been preparing for the Americans to come?

I'd say so, it wasn't official.

Also realising that Port Moresby would start to become a target, it was going to become a combat zone and

23:00 **that it would be unsafe to have all the fuel in the holding yards down there.**

Yes.

So was part of your job working out where you were going to distribute the fuel, where to hide it?

The captain, the boss, he'd sort it all out and we'd go around. He finished up with a car of his own that he grabbed, so we'd drive out and have a look around. "We're going to make a stack here." So we'd load them there and then we'd take them out and drop them off, and stack them two high on their sides.

23:30 **Then would you need to camouflage them in anyway?**

No, it was very heavy timbered, and it was just the tacks of us going in that would be visible, and who was there? There were only Australian troops and natives. They weren't interested in petrol, and the troops they were all domiciled anyhow, they didn't have vehicles. The only ones who had vehicles were

us few that had grabbed these vehicles in Moresby – not only us, I suppose others did too. But they grabbed them and the

24:00 other either became captains' vehicles, or became vehicles, the trucks became vehicles for duty, for work, and that was it. No one had a vehicle as such to call his own, unless you were sharp enough like Bluey and grabbed one and hid it.

Where did you hide it?

Oh just in amongst the thing, just out of town, the scrub was very thick just out of town. You didn't have to go very far out of Moresby, there was just Moresby Harbour,

24:30 Burns Phillip was up here, immediately behind that was all this stuff, and in amongst that was all the petrol dump, that was part of it. Then there was a road that led up towards Moresby hill, not very far, and that's where the civilians lived and there was only more or less a row of houses and a row of houses. Then down the river front going down to that Hanabada was a few more houses plus the big hall. That's all that was there, there weren't many people there at all. So they

25:00 got home. It's good to walk back over your life, and I tell people this when I address them. They call me Our Boy from the bush, not what they call Doug. If they want to swing a billy or do things that were bush wise, they say, "Get out boy from the bush." But that's, yeah – but I don't talk much of war because I get very upset with Anzac Day,

25:30 and all those things, it's very traumatic for a young fella to be up there. I must sound as though I was pretty brave but really I had the shits, and it was a long time – many years and years. I still have it, I can see dead bodies and all these things there. Of course it was an imagination of your mind probably,

26:00 I don't know, I'm not a doctor. But I suffered that for a long time, and the last couple I've been able to look at but Anzac Day gets me too upset. I get emotional at times but I'm pretty strong anyhow, but it does get me a bit, yeah.

Doug, can you tell me a bit more

26:30 **about your early days in Moresby? Tell me about the camp, where you set up camp, how many people were there?**

When we first went there, there was only about eight of us and there were tents. Then we got some reos [reinforcements] from down south, they came up, they were all militia people, they all came up, and we probably finished up with maybe twenty that were there.

27:00 Later on we probably developed to thirty because there finished up a Lieutenant Darcy came up, and he brought up another mob from down Sydney way. Most of the people had been involved with petrol, I don't know why they sent us up, I wasn't involved with petrol. There were odd things in amongst us, for instance I say we lived on baked beans for five months

27:30 but I know that three months would be – all I know is that all we were getting was baked beans for breakfast dinner and tea. On top of the table was salt tablets and they said, "Eat three of them a day, because you were in the tropics now and you'll be losing the salt." Baked beans and no flour until one day

28:00 after the camp – that was at Four Mile – and it became the receiving area then off the boats. The boats started to come in – I jumped a bit too far – when the Coral Sea battle was on, see mates of mine went down to Milne Bay – not mates from there but my brother-in-law and others went to Milne Bay. That was supposed to be the attack, the Japs were Moresby, over the highlands, into Moresby, take Moresby. Into Milne Bay,

28:30 take Milne Bay, come up and link at Moresby, come to Australia – that was the overall plan. We were down, not guarding, we used to be responsible for them, because if someone wanted fuel well they'd go and then they'd have to come down with us with a brief from the captain to say, "Supply this man with four drums of dieseline or a drum of white spirit," and we were camped – this is Ernie and I – we were camped down at

29:00 Koki Beach, that was one of the places where we were. This day, this is very early in the piece, there wasn't a lot of aircraft and stuff yet, but we were there this day and we looked out and we could see these planes coming, and thought, "What the bloody hell's this?" Then when they come and the Australian air force used to have a big red

29:30 disc surrounded by a blue disc, a blue plate. But all we could see was this red bloody disc, and no one had told us what it was about. So everyone opened up with whatever they had, a Bren gun or a bloody 303 or whatever. We didn't put the shits up them that's for sure, they must have been told to nick back out to sea before they could get the message to us that they were ours. And they were RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] fellas,

30:00 they were RAAF Kitty Hawks getting led in by a Lockheed Hudson. So we used to call them mother duck and the ducklings, and they were the first ones to come over, and they landed sort of at Four Mile, at Jackson Strip, and they became part of the thing. But they were also tied up with Milne Bay, because

Milne Bay was still not fought then.

Walk me through a typical day at Four Mile camp.

Oh a typical day when boats came in, they

30:30 couldn't sit there from eight till four and, "I've done my eight hours, I'm knocking off." We'd sit there until that boat was done, and some of us would have to work probably thirty six hours sometimes. You' be had it.

The ships would come in laden purely with fuel?

Yeah, a lot of them were laden with all sorts of stuff of but mainly a lot of fuel

31:00 because by then the Yanks had been up, the Yanks had got there. Ninety six engineers with one in particular that I know, because they used to be one of our, shall we say, customers. We used to build the airstrips and all that, and they wanted the dieseline and they wanted this white spirit stuff. It became a negotiation point then, "You want some white spirit, we want some cigarettes off you, you bludger." We were sort of getting a bit on the side there. The boats would come in

31:30 and we would have to stop there until they were loaded, and there were only a handful of soldiers. You didn't have much chance of changing one shift of twelve hours, and another shift for twelve hours. Sometimes you'd be there for twenty-four hours, and then they'd say, "You better have a bit of a spell [rest]" or you'd have a bit of a camp between trucks coming. They had those Yankee drivers, those Negroes, they'd load them on their side and they were shit frightened of everything too, because by then planes were starting to come over. There were starting

32:00 to have bombs dropped around in different places. They had to ring up, if they heard a plane they just left their truck, but oh they were mighty drivers. You just stand there like that and they'd come right back and drop their load and it wouldn't run you over, they would drop it off the back there and they knew – they were marvellous drivers. It would just drop because it was packed on the cars in the right way, and 'boom, boom, boom'

32:30 off they'd go. They wouldn't wait because they knew it was a petrol depot and I suppose they had the wind up.

How would they unload the drums of fuel off the ships?

Well all the ships had a hoist on them and that would go down, some were in the cargo, some were in the holds. They'd just have, there were seamen and there were merchant seamen on the boats. There were some Australian troops that went over too, they knew how to drive

33:00 cranes on the boats, so sometimes they'd go over.

Were the drums on pallets or were they unloaded individually?

No, individually, yeah. They just made big hooks that fitted on both ends like that, you know they've got a ring on them, on the end. They just hook onto that, lift it up and down. You'd break that off and go back for another one.

Onto the back of a truck?

Yeah, onto the back of a truck.

33:30 Then they'd get about, you'd get about five or six, two rows, five or six on their sides. That's what I say, when they come to load, you couldn't load them the way they came back, they just go and drop them and go 'boom, boom, boom' and you might just tidy them up a little bit. Then when the next load comes, you'd get him back and he'd do the same – and here's

34:00 a point or two – I've got to tell you the whole story. These trucks that were impressed were about – and we did get some Australian trucks, we did get some Yankee trucks, but the first ones were these other Australian ute [utility vehicle] like a BP Ford, about that high, you know. This is how we load them, and they wonder why people come home sick

34:30 and busted up. We had no lifting devices, we had no ramps because we were all in different things, and this is how we loaded those trucks – we should have had ramps but we put at the back of the truck we'd stand one drum up that way, which left it about that far below the back of the truck.

35:00 At the base of the drum that was standing up that way we laid one on the ground that way, which meant that it was about half way up the drum. This might take a bit of believing, but when you've got fear in you, you can run a hell of a lot faster and you can life things a lot heavier than what you would normally. So when they came to get on the back of the truck for them, we'd have a bloke put on the back of the truck and there'd

35:30 be two down here. They'd roll the drum up to this one that was laying on its side. They'd physically life this drum up onto there, have a rest and get your balance, have a bit of a rest. Then you'd physically lift that onto the drum that was standing upright, and the bloke on the truck, as he was coming up on the truck as it got towards him, he'd reach out and grab it on both sides, and you're already under here

lifting

36:00 it that way. So he'd give it that little bit of extra pull and you just give it the push, and it went on the truck. Now people would look at that now and say that's impossible, but when there's fear in you – because you had to be bloody fast, you couldn't just sit there and be mucking around for two hours to load a truck. You had to be fast because the Zeros or the bombers or anyone would come and have a go at you. That's how we used to load that.

36:30 Later on when we got more stabilised we did cut some trees and made rough sorts of ramps to roll them up, but we found it was just as easy to do it the hard way as what it was, because by the time you roll it up and you've got big long ramps, you're buggered by the time you got up to the top. Because you had to roll them and you weren't allowed to hold them because the bloody things would roll back.

So you'd be down at the wharf actually

37:00 **supervising the trucks being loaded, or did you have any involvement in actually loading the trucks?**

I was always back in the unloading part. Whoever was down there, it could have been anyone, not necessarily BIPODs even, it could have been the ASC in the transport department.

So you wouldn't travel in the trucks with the Negro drivers, you'd be at the drop off points?

No, we'd wait there.

And all day you'd have people turning up and dropping off

37:30 **and you'd have to organise and arrange?**

Yeah, dropping off the stuff.

And also people would be turning up to pick up fuel?

Yeah, all done by brief, because they had to keep a record naturally against the Yankee government or against a bloke that wanted it for another transport division, or whatever.

Would you have been expecting set people during the day, would you have been given a brief by your CO [Commanding Officer], or do they turn up with something signed?

Oh they just turn up with something signed,

38:00 you don't know who you're going to get. The major one that we had was when the 96th engineers come, they were this Negro mob that did all these airstrips and all that. Happy was his name and he was happy, he'd sing all those early days, you know, 'Blueberry Hill' and all these sort of things. He was as cunning as a fox because once he found out where the stuff was, and one day we went out to where we had it snookered, one day we went out and all

38:30 the dieseline, all the distillate was gone, and that was what they had. They had all these tractors and bulldozers and all this and all that, and they were all diesel fuel. "Where's all the bloody stuff gone?" We got our heads together and said, "I wouldn't want to put two and two together but that bloody 96th engineer's got it." So we went back to our boss and said, "You better check out this, there's no dieseline left.

39:00 What do you reckon?" and we said, "Well that bloody Yank and Negro bastards have got it, haven't they?" So he said, "Well, we better put on a bit of a show." So he got us to get ourselves dressed up into a bit of battle dress, our bayonets and our rifles. Went over to this 96th engineers and our captain's seen this other bloke. "G'day, where's all this dieseline?" Anyway we solved the problem that they had it because he could see

39:30 where it was. It was at their bloody camp, and he said, "Take that bloody stuff back and you do it the right way" because if there's no signature there's no transferral of goods. He would have been in a mess if he hadn't done anything about it because all the dieseline would have been gone and no figures to show where it went to.

Did you at any point then start having guards on the drop off points?

Yeah, well Ernie and I finished up down at Koki,

40:00 and that was one of the reasons why we were down there. This Ernie, Mama I used to call him because I was a boy and he was a man. Mama – I should have called him Daddy I suppose but he mightn't have liked being called Daddy, so I called him Mama – Mama Bryant.

We're right on the end of the tape there so…

Again?

We'll pick it up.

Tape 5

00:36 **I was just wondering if you did much letter writing, or how important mail was to you?**

Mail, well in your comforts fund you might have socks and a cake and something like that, they never sent the file to get you out of jail though, did they. But anyhow in amongst it, was particularly the socks, was little notes.

01:00 Yeah I ended up writing to two or three different ones, one at Wagga and another one at Orange somewhere, some other joint.

So these are people that put their address into the socks and you'd have someone to write to if you wanted to?

Yeah, that's right. That was always available from the Sallies [Salvation Army] or the Red Cross, they had places up there. The Sallies were always the best, they were right up with you. The Red Cross were back this way a bit, but they always had a list of people

01:30 you could write to and writing paper and stamps and everything.

What about Laura, because you were engaged to her in the early part of...

(UNCLEAR)

Did you write to her?

Oh yeah I used to write pretty well, but what happened there, my mate comes over and he was in the 2/31st Battalion. They came over probably August, September, and

02:00 I knew he was in the 2/31st, I went down the boat and seen him and he said, "How's the baby?" and I said, "What bloody baby?" He said, "Laura's baby?" He was a spud too, I said, "Jimmy, I've been over here nearly twenty bloody months! I might be dumb and know nothing about sheilas, but I know I ain't the father!" "Oh." Then I had to apply for compassionate leave to go home, so I

02:30 went home, and I didn't see her, I saw my mum and my brothers. She wasn't there, I don't know where she went.

Tell me how that impacted on you, because you'd been sending her money, hadn't you?

Yeah, that doesn't worry at all, love, because if I had all the money that I've given people back, I'd be a lot better off financially than what I am. But it didn't worry me in the least bit, money.

03:00 I did a lot of things that come out after, you know, I rose from nothing, way up here, and then that process I've seen a lot of fellas bought off for two bob a day. Two bob a day, change like that. So I made sure money never made any difference today. And the other thing is part of my philosophy, if I've got it, whoever needs it gets it. They don't have to give it back or anything else.

03:30 If they're short or something, yeah.

You went home for how long on compassionate leave?

Only about a week, that's long enough to sort things out a bit and come back again.

You went back from Moresby did you?

Yeah on the [HMS] Gorgon and went back on the [HMAS] Canberra.

You went to see Laura's mother?

She wasn't home – the mother was but Laura wasn't there. She was probably shacking up [living with] with

04:00 the Yank somewhere.

Do you recall the kind of conversation you had with her mother, was her mother disappointed?

Yeah her mother was very disappointed, because like I said, he was snowy haired – there a picture, love – who wouldn't grab him at that age. And know nothing, a virgin, got him. But anyhow, no she was very sad about it all, and she said Laura really wanted me to marry her,

04:30 and I said, "Well you can't expect me to carry on now, can you?" So I left. But Laura died anyhow, she died of cancer.

Did you keep in touch with her afterwards?

No, through my mate.

Oh, right.

He kept in touch with that family. He knew them too, he sort of kept in touch with them. Not that he used to tell me everything but he was the one that told me Laura had

05:00 died, and I thought, “Well, that’s it.”

You mentioned the Sallies, where were they situated, the Salvos?

They’d be pretty close behind the frontline. They were all over the place in those areas, in Moresby or in low levels or right up behind. The Red Cross was the same, but the Red Cross made sure that they were a long way back, but the Sallies would be right up with you.

What was the set up that the

05:30 **Sallies had at Moresby?**

With regards to accommodation and stuff?

Yeah.

It was just one of the houses and it used to have all the notebooks and stuff for you to write home, go in and have a bit of a feed or something if you wanted a feed.

So you could go in and there were things to do there?

Oh yes, they had things to do. Yes they had

06:00 leather work you could do, make stamps and designs on leather and make them into wallets, they had all those sort of things to fill your time in.

Did you get to know any of them?

Not really, no. I was mostly all the time off a bit, like what I was talking about with Ernie and that. We were mostly out of town a bit.

06:30 A lot of things happened there, there was a big two-up school and swy school, there was a bloke he was in our unit really, he come up and he said, “I don’t need to fight a war, I’m here to make money.” So he set up a big gambling school and we used to get Cockatoo’s money – Cockatoo was a lookout for the military police, and he’d pay us some dough

07:00 which he would go and put back into the middle and lose. Then he finally took over the whisky – he was well organised, he had Yanks flying it in, he had it coming in on boats – and he was in our unit, so I know the story of him, old Jimmy. But the bugger wouldn’t sell it to us for any cheaper, he was getting big money for it, I think ten dollars – no it wouldn’t be dollars, it would be quids – a bottle.

07:30 I don’t know what he was paying for it, I suppose he was paying a lot of blokes to shut up. But he had this bloke come in one time, and of course we knew him, and said, “What are you going to do about it Jimmy?” and he said, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do,” and he went to the phone, rang an ambulance unit up, a fleet of ambulances went down and picked it up. So that’s how far things can get, without people knowing. But a lot of those things are not on record, see,

08:00 I don’t think it would be on record us poking up to Templeton’s Crossing, I don’t think there would be a record kept of…do you mind just…

So a lot of things wouldn’t be know, you were saying?

A lot of things wouldn’t be there, I’d say for reasons when I said about the 96th engineers, our blokes taking them to the 96th engineer because that would be close to an international situation, wouldn’t it? There’s Aussie troops all armed talking to a bloke and saying you do what we want or we’ll shoot you, more or less.

08:30 And the same as going up to Templeton’s Crossing and the golden stairs. I’ve read a few books, and there was only one fella that I met one time at Shorncliffe that said, we were talking about it and I had my badge on or something. He said, “You’re a digger, I’m reading an interesting book.” And I said, “Oh yeah?” So we had a talk and said, “Were you there?” and I said, “Were you there?” and I said, “I didn’t go up the golden stairs but

09:00 I was pretty close to them.” He said, “That’s strange, I’ve read a lot of books and the book I’m reading now is talking about it, but I’ve never heard of anyone talk about them before.” And the Markham Valley where they jumped out of the aeroplanes, that was another thing. I’ve never seen that in books, maybe in one book that I might have read a long time ago.

What’s that story?

Well they had to encircle the Japanese as a surprise attack, like they had biscuit bombers, the old DC bombers –

09:30 biscuit, DC-3s, Douglas planes. So they grabbed this mob of Aussie troops and they say – I didn’t see it – but they say it was only two hundred feet they jumped from, and these blokes never been in an aeroplane in their lives were – you know, when we talk of trauma, who had the trauma? But I don’t

think, I've never seen that recorded anywhere either. And the other thing is

10:00 people used to lay on that Jackson Strip that I was talking about, Jackson Strip of a night time with their torches on, laying on the strip to guide the Japanese bombers in. Like what ratbags – we talk about fanatic Muslims and that, they'd be just as fanatical themselves because they'd be going 'bup' and they're gone as well. That's what they were saying but I don't know.

So the Japanese would be lying down with torches?

No, they'd have to be Aussies or natives, they weren't

10:30 other fellas because the Japs weren't in there, they were just still coming over the top, they were still getting chased over the island.

So you're saying that…

Either Allied troops or Papuan natives would be laying there with torches to guide them. Well there's no reason that in the night time there were torches on and there was a bombing raid on. Everything's shut down.

Were those people ever caught?

11:00 No, not that I know of. They may have got some towards the end there, I don't know how long it even lasted.

Did you ever see any Japanese shot down at all or anything like that?

They came over fairly often, and incidentally it rained pretty well everyday, and it's a recognised thing at ten past four everyday it would rain. It's pretty well recognised, you speak to anyone and they say, "Oh yeah, I remember that."

11:30 Yeah, well once instance that I seen personally, it was a bombing raid and when you look closely at a bombing raid, they're coming in on that angle, and that's when they let their bombs go, they're going to hit you over here, not when they're over here. It comes at about that angle, but if you look closely you can see the little black things come from under their bellies, and you know that the bombs are for you because it's in line.

12:00 But this day they'd been on a raid and they must have been going home, but anyhow, there was ack-ack [anti-aircraft] gun and this plane was struck, and you could see the fire. Then out of it this little black thing. So we went up sticky-beaking [looking around] to see what it was and there on the road was a heap of blood and guts and bones. He jumped out – see they didn't have parachutes, the Japanese didn't use parachutes in their planes.

12:30 They were fanatics.

What did you think about that? Was that a foreign concept to you, that fanaticism the Japanese had?

I was very angry when I found out about the prisoner of war caper. I was very crook [angry] at the government for leaving them off the hook [not punishing them], particularly now that what they're doing with Saddam [Hussein, former leader of Iraq being tried for war crimes and genocide], they're going to kill him,

13:00 and Slobivic [means Slobodan Milosevic?] and that, people that's happening now, and Mugabe [Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwean President] – why let him loose, he's killed a million people. No one goes over there, the Yanks don't go over there and say, "You're a naughty boy, we're going to tidy you up." But they go into poor old bloody Iraq – not that it worries me, they should have killed Saddam the first time. But still and all, you can't speak like that one way and then close your eye to something else that's happening similar. It makes me a bit upset and that's why

13:30 what's-a-name [means Anzac] marches brings too much back and it makes too much anger.

But at the time before you knew about the POWs [Prisoners of War] and so forth, and you just knew about the fact that the Japanese didn't have parachutes on board and their willingness to die for the Emperor, I guess. Was that a strange thing for you to grasp?

Not to grasp, but I understood to some to degree because I knew that they were ratbags.

14:00 Fanatics but ratbags, you know, they'd just go with a nice 'Uh' and across like that, and if they didn't die they'd be lying there with a hand grenade underneath, and when you went to kick then to see whether they were alive and that, they'd roll over and 'boom' up would go another Aussie or a Yank or whatever. So they were fanatical that they went to the ninth degree with whatever they did, to get one.

14:30 I suppose it's in a sense that, I suppose we were fanatics in our own way. We were invincible, we weren't going to get beaten were we? So we'd be fanatical without the depth of all that other caper.

Did you spend much time at the airstrip at all? Did you see activities there?

No, not a great deal because when it improved more and more – see Moresby was the

15:00 base for the bombers and the stuff that was going over to Kokoda and Buna and Gona and Rabaul and that sort of thing. No, we'd be more involved in, too busy looking after ourselves, getting the stuff. As I said you'd work thirty six hours, you'd sleep until your head fell off, until they woke you up and said, "It's your turn to go on now." You wake up bleary eyed and just go.

15:30 **Can you talk us through how you saw the escalation of the war from your point of view, in terms of what type of equipment was coming through, and whether you saw things really gearing up as the war progressed?**

Originally there was very little contact between the east coast and the west coast, that's Moresby, Buna and Gona, very little. There was very – it

16:00 took a long time to get any wireless [radio] connections through. We had a bloke, people thought he was troppo [mentally affected by the war], he was nuts – Arty. You could take it from him – for some reason he must have been spiritually inspired or something, but he'd say, "They're coming, they're coming!" And that would be an hour before, but there'd be no link, he wouldn't have a phone, there would be no link to Moresby. But he must have had a spiritual or

16:30 some connection somewhere along the road that he could see these things, but he finished up a bit. He was with us for a long while. He was a Queenslander as well at one stage. I wouldn't say that it made a great deal of difference, you're just there. With all respect to anyone that talks, it's Doug Leitch that was the important one.

17:00 If you see someone get killed, if he's dead he's dead. I lost a horse the other day and everyone's worried about Doug and his poor horse. I said, "The horse is dead. Let's hope he's in horse land up there at the top of this world." What can you do about it? But if he's wounded you can say, "Medic, get this bloke," and get him out. But if they're dead all you can do is either bless him, or just say, "Rest in peace, Digger," and go for your life, because the next bullet might be yours.

17:30 So you've got to keep moving around. No, it wouldn't have made a difference. Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda radio broadcast], she spoke a lot about and gave this mob music and say, "So-and-so and so-and-so have been taken prisoner, and so-and-so was killed." Then they'd play this mournful 'Home, Sweet Home', you know, 'Home, sweet home, there's no place like home'.

What did you imagine what Tokyo Rose looked like?

18:00 **Did you have a picture in your head of her?**

In my head, yeah. Being young I imagined she'd be a good looking sort and a trim figure and everything else. I didn't look at her as being some old hag or something. She might have been, I don't know. Her voice was nice, she had a nice voice. She was very thing but she was polished, it was a very polished show. But that didn't take much thing, it sort of made you more determined, more than win you over. That's what they thought, that they could make you melancholy and want to go home,

18:30 and talk about all the Yanks with your women at home, and all that sort of stuff, hoping that it would get you all upset.

What did the men think about Tokyo Rose, did they think she was nice or a bitch?

No, they thought she was just a nutter, that's all, just a fruitcake [mentally unstable]. It was all propaganda, they didn't worry about her.

They pretty much laughed it off did they?

Yeah, more or less. "Did you hear Tokyo Rose last night?"

19:00 Because she'd come through on the wireless.

Ok, so while you're loading the fuel and so forth from the def ships, what else is coming off the ships? What kind of equipment is coming off that you see as well?

The heavy stuff came in bigger boats and that was all loaded off, more or less a boat load of equipment like tractors and graders

19:30 and all that sort of stuff. But with the other most of it was supplies, because it all had to be carried over the top in biscuit bombers, in DC aircraft. So that was loaded at Moresby, loaded into the plane. Kicked out of biscuit bombers they used to call them, they'd just kick it out.

So whey you got there it was not so busy, it was just started?

Originally, no.

20:00 **How long did it take for things to really started?**

Oh, before things really started, it would probably be about – I was there in April, I would say it wouldn't be until about August or late July before it all started to get together, because more troops –

see they had to get some of these fellas home. It was only those chocolate soldiers that we talk about that held them up. My brother was a 49th Battalion, and the way it came around, I don't know where it came from, they said,

20:30 "Johnny's on the thing" probably letters from people in Australia to up there. So I went and seen him, and that day was a bit spectacular, sort of going in – well there was Three Mile and then there was a hill up to Moresby, the main drag to Moresby was up going out to somewhere. So this Jap that I was telling you about before that used to give us the thumbs up and we'd give him a charge of whatever we had.

21:00 But when they zoom over your head you know how lucky you can be, because I would be just at the side of the road about that deep, and it's all right for these blokes to talk about these brave Aussie – you know, we can job ourselves too quite easily. When you've got those, 'dig, dig, dig' going over your head and they're only just missing me because you're only just about there – there's the road there and its just there hitting the road and going over you. But anyhow, when I got down to him, because I knew all about the experience and because I was a bushman, I told him,

21:30 "Don't light your bloody cigarettes up at night time." I showed him how to light a match properly and I went like that, you know, strike the match on the side. "Don't get in a group and smoke because the smoke will go up and the Japs will see it. And the most important thing, if you run into a bunch of Japs, don't shoot the first fellow in front of you, shoot the fellow that's last." He said, "Why would you do that?" I said, "They're just like kangaroos,

22:00 you shoot that last kangaroo the rest of the kangaroos jump towards you. If you shoot the first kangaroo they all jump away." It's just a thing that you learn in the bush, and I said, "If it happens, that's the bloke to knock over, the one that's last in the line because they'll think that they're surrounded and that someone's shooting that way, so they'll come to get away. But if you shoot this one, they know that he's in front so they can go back and disperse."

Which brother was this, tell me about him? Was he older than you

22:30 **or younger than you?**

John. He was the bloke that was two years older that I had to care for, when I get home, "Where's Johnny?" That's what had me upset in the early stage. He was two years older than me, but he was a militia, he was CMF before the war, Light Horse before the war. Then they became the 49th Battalion when they came over here. He finished up joining – see there was four of us that went away and four of us that came home, which was good really, when you consider other families, four went away

23:00 and none come home. So he was an infantry man totally, and the 49th Battalion they were in the thick of it too, they were part of stopping the Japs. The 39th Battalion, the 53rd Battalion who bolted but they went back up again. The 49th Battalion were all ones that stopped them up there first, they were the ones that held them. If they hadn't have held them, Doug wouldn't have been talking to you now.

23:30 Then he joined the 2/1st Battalion, he joined the AIF because a lot of them did that – joined the AIF from the militia. He had a lucky escape, I think he was even in amongst the news, as far as I can gather, I don't know who told me, but a bullet went through his steel helmet, it must have hit him on that angle and it must have penetrated his steel helmet, it didn't deflect and went through and around the top of his head. He had a plate

24:00 in his head and he was a ratbag for the rest of his life. He was a heavy drinker, people were using, "Come and give us hand Johnny, we're doing the roof." Well he'd walk off the roof, he'd just step straight off the roof, crash down to the ground. He never got killed, they say that God looks after his own, don't they. So if you're a drinker, you're looked after.

Can I just ask, it seemed like you hadn't had much contact with your family for many years. Is that not the case?

24:30 **How long since you had seen Johnny?**

Oh, well he's dead now, for a couple of years.

No, but when you met up with him?

Well between then and then I'd say it would be maybe twenty five years or something. He came to live at Laidley and I was living at Lowood. I had horses at Laidley.

But when you met up with him in Moresby had you been in contact with him or your family, since you'd run away from home?

Not really, no.

25:00 I only heard about them from other people in the West End.

How was that reunion for you? It must have been quite dramatic.

Not dramatic, I felt it was what I had to do. I knew what was supposed to be done and I had to pass it on to him for his protection. Whether he took notice of it I wouldn't have been worried, I wouldn't have

been concerned about it. None of it's been a trauma, my life's

25:30 never full of trauma. Now I don't worry because I'm on the right tablets and I'm docile, it keeps me level. But because of my life I can handle a lot more problems – like my wife said, "I worry more over one penny than what I would over five pound." She said, "I can't understand you." I said, "Because the penny's more important." The other just floats away, if you're earning that much money that you

26:00 can muck around with five pound notes, but you mightn't be able to handle one pennies. That's life, love.

When you went to give Johnny that advice, it seems like you were still looking after him. Was that for your mum's sake that you did that?

It never entered my head, no it was all for his sake because they were all city people, and I knew the value of a lot of these other things. I knew the value of the smoke going up in the air

26:30 and lighting cigarettes that people can see a mile away and all those. I knew the values of what I told him, and I was just telling him to look after himself because I wouldn't be there to look after him, would I. So I had to tell him what was there. It was different if I was in the same battalion and I could say, "Johnny, go here." No, it might sound hard to people but that's me. Other people do think I'm hard, they say, "What a mongrel son you turned out." This is what

27:00 I think now, and what my sister said, "You'll never know how much your mum worried about you, Doey." It's made me realise that what a mongrel son I had been, not going home. But every time I'd go home there'd be a blue on. They were heavy drinkers – I was a heavy drinker but I knew that if I drunk as heavy as what they made out they were, I'd be collapsed on the floor,

27:30 I wouldn't know anything. But they came home from town half shot, demand the taxi fare, demand more money off Mum, and I've walked in and he'd be shaking Mum, and I've dropped him. What happens? Mum says, "Don't come home here causing trouble." I said, "Mum, if that's how you want it, I'll roll my swag and that's it." So I thought it was pointless to do that. That might sound hard to people

28:00 but that's me. I played the cards as they were dealt to me.

Can we just go back to Moresby now, you spoke a little bit about the fellow that was selling alcohol to the Americans before.

Oh yeah, Jimmy.

Were there other instances where men brewed their own alcohol that you recall?

Well you're getting on the story now. Early in the peace I said that I say five months to people because it seemed five months to me that

28:30 I lived on baked beans. We had no flour, we didn't even have a cook for a long time, until Les Cook – that was his name – became our cook, and when he became a cook he became a sergeant. So he must have seen that, "I'll become a cook and I'll get three extra stripes." That's his business. When the oil and petrol and stuff had come in, it had come in in drums, and in amongst it

29:00 came a lot of grease. Grease used to come in forty four gallon drums too – you know axle grease and all the different greases for your tractors and that. We were there one day and we opened it up – I suppose this was about three months after we were there really – and it's a drum of flour, flour for cooking. "Beauty, beauty! Hey, Cookie, look what we got!" So we used to take him up, because it was a

29:30 full drum you couldn't take the drum up. A few days after came a drum of dried fruit, sultanas and stuff like that, because they must have shipped it in big lots, I suppose they had to because there were a lot of troops to feed. So someone gets the bright idea, they said, "Let's make some jungle juice [alcohol]." "Who knows how to make jungle juice?" and someone says, "I think you only put water in it, take some off and put water in it."

30:00 Then we used to go and watch it and it got this big thick scum on it about that think, and we used to keep taking the scum off. You could take the scum off until it remains clear and there's no more scum coming up, that means that the fruit has given up all that's good. All that's there is this liquid that must be a thousand per cent proof. By then the Yanks had been over and the air force mob were camped just above us at some air force.

30:30 They had pictures of course, we didn't have picture so we used to go over there and have a look, so we took this – all of us got our water bottles full of it. The next morning there was that many stiffs laying around you know – sick, drunk, rotten, all around. But anyhow that was only one part of the turn out.

31:00 Another episode, when you're talking about grog, was we were told, because we were a part of the ASC, we were part of the Army Service Corps which was transport and everything else. They used to give you a shot of rum if things were real tough and they wanted something done that was a bit impossible. They'd hit the troops with a

31:30 nip of this rum. Anyway, we found out one day where this store of this was in Moresby, a long way over from where we were. So we scouted around until we got some tin-snippers and we made sure that the

guard that was watching it – because they always had a guard on there – we also made sure that he knew who we were and what night we were going to attack, and we'd go and snip the wire and got a big demijohn of this in wicker baskets.

32:00 That was good, that was a good night. But early in the peace the only stuff we had was there was a soft drink factory that was there before we, and you'd get a big soft drink bottle for a penny. One penny a big bottle of soft drink, that's about the only, there was no grog, there was no cans of beer or bottles of beer or anything else. They came in after time.

32:30 **Was there much of a black market [trading of banned substances] there at all? Can you talk about that?**

In Jimmy's caper would be the – and our little bit with the white spirits with the Yanks to the thing, we'd say, "Yeah we can give you four gallons of that but it will cost you two cartons of smokes." It wasn't in a big way, although he was, he was in a very big way.

So if you needed something would Jimmy be the guy that you went to see?

Beg pardon?

33:00 **If you needed something, if you were chasing something, would it be Jimmy that you'd go to see to get it for you?**

Oh no, he seemed to stick wholly to that, he only seemed to stick to the grog, but that's about all you needed. You were given food and you had your camp at night time. There was nothing else that you really needed. In fact a bloke from Melbourne he came up, and he and I went one time, because he was going to make his fortune with an unders and overs game – you know, unders and overs, that's coins with twice?

33:30 So he thought, "The Yanks would love this." So we go and park ourselves in front of this Yankee hospital and the Yankee nurses were dolls – not good looking dolls but they were dolls, all painted up like painted dolls they were. But we didn't last long, the Yanks were too busy with the big game that Jimmy, see that was big money, a lot of money.

34:00 They were more concerned to go to him than bugger around with us for a couple of Yankee dollars.

Tell me a bit more about the Americans, either about the nurses or just the American troops. What was your impression of them?

They tell me – a lot of things I didn't see, but I've heard – that on occasion the Yanks were locked up for about four days,

34:30 they wouldn't move, just wouldn't move. In desperation they sent some Aussie troops up behind them to overlap them and go and do the job, because as it turned out there was only three snipers up there, and they had this whole mob laying on their guts for two or three days. This captain said, "Hey you guys, those bloody Aussies are coming up and if you don't get up and start fighting,

35:00 they'll bloody well kill you." And of course they got up and they thought they might be, because they had a lot of respect for Australians, and they thought, "Well the mad bastards might do," you see. There's a lot of things, there's the instance of the lower goldfields. Below the goldfields there was a creek up there and one of the things that they did was to scrape through the chains of the big dredge

35:30 and get all the little gold. The Japanese had a lot of gold in their choppers [teeth]. It doesn't matter whether you're dead or not, Aussie mob just keep putting the boot in until he spewed all his teeth out, "There's a gold one." Not recorded, and probably some won't like that being said, but that is me to say it, and they can dispute it as much as they like.

36:00 There were some awful things.

Was there anything that shocked you more than anything else, was there any one particular incident that really shocked you?

Then biggest shock I got was the day that the big bombers raided. There was a big bomber raid on the 3rd of June, 1943. We'd been out all night and it was about nine or ten o'clock in the morning

36:30 and they threw a lot in because they were getting pushed back. We were at Coral Sea, you heard the Coral Sea battle at Koki Beach that I was talking about before, we could hear this 'boom, boom, boom.' I said to Ernie, "What the bloody hell is that, Ernie?" "I don't know." Later on we found out that it was the Coral Sea Battle that we could hear. What were we talking about?

I just said was there anything that...

37:00 Oh the big raid, the big raid. They had been over but for some reason – at this stage there was that many drums of stuff. There were about eight thousand drums of stuff, and it must look like a bonanza to a bloke in an aeroplane. Drums full and empty and stuff all over the place, oil and grease, petrol, empty drums to go back. We'd just unloaded this boat and –

37:30 I'm a very spiritual person, very spiritual, I may not be a Christian – well I shouldn't say not a Christian, I am a Christian, but I'm not a religious maniac. I take things at face value and read into it. I was down there and there were about nine other fellas, all sorts, I couldn't even name them because I didn't mix much.

38:00 I didn't worry about names, I knew a few and they were all that I kept. Like I say, you could see them at that angle. But this voice kept saying to me, this voice – I was nineteen, twenty, this lad of twenty – and this voice, I've got no respect for much in the world, kept saying, "Walk up that hill, go up that hill, Doug.

38:30 Go up that hill." I'm nineteen, twenty thinking to myself, "What the bloody hell is this talking to me about? Go up the bloody hill?" At that stage they weren't over the top of us, so I finally decide to go up, and I was walking up the hill – boom, over they come. We found nothing of those nine fellas, no hats,

39:00 no boots, no dog tags, nothing – finished. Now if that thing hadn't said to me, "Doug, go up the hill," Doug wouldn't be talking to you. But I was saved. When I wrote my book when I was sixty, it made me realise that, "Doug, you didn't do this all on me own." Something was up there, whatever, angel, Jesus, God, the Holy Spirit, horse, dog, cat – whatever.

39:30 It's walked with you all your life and I realise that because lost, the time with the water that I told you about, all reflect back.

How far from the explosion were you?

Probably four or five hundred yards, they were down the bottom on the flat and I was about half way up the hill. Then they put us on guard, and of course you're shit frightened, the

40:00 least noise you want to shoot. One bloke ran five miles, that's how bad he was. He ran five miles, we found him five miles away. They said, "Where's so and so? Better go and find him." Five miles away, he ran. So it was a terrible thing for some.

We might just stop it there because we're right on the end of that tape.

Tape 6

00:33 **I'm interested in how an experience like the day that the depot was bombed, how that affects your nerves or your ability to concentrate? Did that play with your emotions for a while?**

It played a lot, the trauma of it. It's the trauma that throws soldiers around really, because they're there and they're not there,

01:00 and you realise in my case, it could have been me. In amongst them probably there would be some that I know and respected more than some of the others. Yeah, trauma – and trauma never leaves you, this is the thing that you never realise. I never realised how bad because as soon as I got out of the army I went straight out, way out to Julia Creek, Maxwelton, out in that country out there. Drunk, go and get a job, go and get rotten drunk for weeks.

01:30 My mate, even this Spud, he was the one that got me this man powered out, and he wouldn't even come in to – he told me after, a few years ago he said, "Why don't you help your mate in town?" and he said, "Oh stuff him, he can look after himself," because he knew I could, you know, I always would look after myself.

How would you describe the trauma at the time? What was the experience like?

Well very nervous, very shaky,

02:00 want to shoot out at anything that came along, because they put us on guard. They said, "You better go on guard." You were that keyed up that anything irregular that would have happened you would have shot, you wouldn't have worried who, piece, advance, and be recognised. You wouldn't be worried about friend and foe and giving the password, you just went bang, you just don't care. The trauma is always pretty bad in your mind. You sort of

02:30 lose a lot, that concentrates on the whole lot. Anything else around doesn't seem to worry, it's just that things that's happened there, it's sort of there. I suppose any of them that were in a bad mess up would have the same, having been subject to heavy mortaring and stuff like that would be the same.

03:00 **Because for you, you'd been so carefree up until that point, hadn't you? You really hadn't had a sense of the fact that you could die, living in the present.**

Yeah that's right. Not of dying but of tomorrow is another day. If I was killed tomorrow it wouldn't have worried me, because tomorrow is another day. It's not for me to say what tomorrow's going to bring for me. So that's how I walked and that's why it was always removed from me,

03:30 I never worried, "Oh, what am I going to do? Oh, shit, what do I do?" Didn't worry me.

But after that bombing raid you did start worrying about what tomorrow would bring?

On top of that other bit that I told you we went up to Koitake, up along there and the trauma of – you know I didn't fight Japanese but the vision was enough to throw me out of gear. The vision, and I see them now,

04:00 the Japs with their little peaked caps and all that, now even, when I'm sleeping of a night time. I wake up crying and the Mrs, saying, "Are you all right, darling?" There's those sorts of things that doesn't leave you. But they'll be ratbags or not be ratbags, who's the right one and who's the wrong one? But again, I always looked deeper into it because

04:30 as I said before, all that part of your life is what makes you what you are today. That's what's given me the strength to keep going and surviving. Otherwise I'd have said, "I'll be like the rest of them, just take today, go and spend all my dough, go and get pissed, smoke all my cigarettes." What a great life, when I look at it what a great life, they've got no worries. Whether they're broke today or not they just go and bight someone for two dollars and go and have another beer. I don't know which

05:00 is the right way to look at it or not, but I'm happy as I am. That's the biggest thing, I'm happy with what Doug is. I don't have to worry what anyone thinks, and I talk just the same, I say what I believe and it's up to them if they don't believe what I say. It's up to them to say, "You're all bullshit." Then I can say, "Well, I'll show you why I'm all bullshit," and these are the facts and show it to them. That's it, but most people

05:30 respect me, I know that by the way they listen and everything else, they listen to me, and they know I'm not a fruitcake.

Were you rested for any period after that experience, when you were edgy and you weren't feeling like you were safe on guard?

Not at all, Simon. Like I say, we were there twenty months – I've got it all there in the records

06:00 over there, when I went to Veteran Affairs. I didn't realise I was crook [sick]. Before the war when I was out in South West Cunnamulla, in South West Queensland and my mate got me man powered out because he was at Gladevale. He got the next door neighbour to man power me out because the war over, it was 1945, when they were only too pleased to get rid of us really. "Oh, he's got a job, let him go." But I don't know,

06:30 life just sort of rolls along and I don't think anyone can be worried about what's there. But before the war – see down south they'd break in say twelve horses, there's four people working on the property. They break in twelve horses, the bloke can only handle them for two or three days. He wouldn't know what they are, he'd ride them out to the yard and everything else, and then the boss would say, "Grey one, they're yours,

07:00 that one, that one, they're yours." Then you'd have to go to the breaker in, the horse breaker and say, "What's the strength of this fella?" "Oh, he's a bit pig headed, he'll shy at a shadow." So you knew what was there. I'd hop on and if I was thrown I'd just hop back on again, give him a good hiding with my spurs or with my hat and that would be it. You either won the day or you didn't win the day.

07:30 But when I got back there and onto this clue he sent me down to do some work one day at Pickinbur and I took this, he was a sort of a brownish chestnut horse. When I came back I'd made my mind up that the day the before, a quiet horse but before I got on him – after I came back, I'd wee a little bit, do a little bit in me pants, and I knew that something was wrong.

08:00 "Something's wrong, Doug." I found that when I was too frightened and when I got on him I'd sit there, not so much shaking but too frightened to give him a kick in the guts to make him walk. I thought, "Doug, that's enough. You've had enough, that's it." Still not knowing what was wrong. Then when they picked this burr and I walked this horse down, when I came back I was riding him back. I said, "Bill, I'm finishing up.

08:30 I'm no good to you here, I've got the shits of horses." and he said, "Well you're a funny boy. That horse that you were riding there would be the worst horse on the place. You're quite comfortable," and he said, "You got to load a burr on him as well." So I left then, I just changed into a different mode, into fencing and any work that wasn't involved with horses. I breed horses now, I never get on them.

09:00 **What do you think it was about being on the horse back that triggered that experience for you?**

No, I think the whole thing triggered when I came back. See, I know what you want, I'd be in town as happy as Larry and burst out crying. Blokes would say, "What the bloody hell's wrong with you, Doug?" and I said, "There's nothing wrong with me, mate. This is how I am." So finally I came down to Brisbane years after,

09:30 no Ipswich here, and talking to a bloke here that I knew and he said, "What the bloody hell are you crying about?" I said, "Oh, I don't know." He said, "You're talking happy as shit one minute and the next minute you're crying." It must of twigged and he said, "Were you a soldier?" and I don't look eighty-one by any means, I don't think I do anyway – well I mustn't have to him. He said,

10:00 “In what, Vietnam?” I said, “Go back to the one before that.” He said, “Were you in the Second World War?” “As a young boy, yeah.” So he said, “You better go to Veteran Affairs.” So I went to Veteran Affairs and got sorted out, now I’m with Dr. Fried, the psych [psychiatrist] fella, and he just keeps me on a level. But I still get dreams, I still get trauma, I still can’t watch too much war sort of thing. Too much noise, angry, too much

10:30 noise makes me jump. Cars, people, all those sort of things. I’ve got to keep myself under strong control.

What do you think it was about those experiences that triggered that for you, because you had a life that did have a fair bit of suffering in it before the war?

That’s right. It’s in the make up of the man, that’s all I can put it down to.

11:00 I still think I’m invincible but I know that I have a weakness, I have a weakness that I just can’t do. I’m getting older now and so I’m starting to get a bit forgetful now, but that’s because I’m getting old. See, I came down from the bush as a young fella, I came back when I was about 1950 or something like that, so I would have been twenty-seven. Now when I came back, as I say to the people and tell them, as a shit kicker [worker of menial tasks].

11:30 That means a knock about, no nothing. Billy Kendall, he had the steel works (UNCLEAR) because I was very straight, I would argue with him. If he said something bloody stupid I’d argue with him, and he owns the place, he owns the business. For some reason he must have realised that this fella’s worthwhile caring for, so he walked me through the whole sequence, everything –

12:00 purchasing officer, safety, all these different things, even the figures and all that until I was assistant manager and manager. Now I always thought that that was a big step for him to trust me, and believe in boomerang throwing – throw it back, give someone else a chance of it. But that’s how it comes, he was prepared to accept me because of my honesty, and came enough to talk to him

12:30 whereas the other manager blokes that were around all bullshitting to him and everything else, and showing false figures and all that in the returns. I know what they were doing and he knew that he had a bloke here – in so much that one day he rang up and said, “Who’s in the office?” and I said, “Your manager and your chief secretary.” He said, “Piss them off.” He said, “Doug – Roy.” Roy, I used to be because of union business I had to be Roy Leitch there, because unions could have claimed all the

13:00 years that I was here years before, union dues. So I was Roy Leitch and he said, “Roy, what is the problem?” So I told him what the problem was. “How would you fix it?” And I told him how I would fix it. He said, “Put those other bastards on now.” and he swore a lot, he’d used the F-word and everything else, and so would I. He wouldn’t frighten me because I said to him one day, “Mr. Kendall, I worked before I came here and

13:30 I’m not frightened to work again.” So he knew that he wasn’t going to stand over this boy. I went out and got them and when he left they said, “What did Mr. Kendall say?” I said, “You get on the bloody phone, you ring Mr. Kendall in Sydney and you ask him what did he say to Roy.” No, they didn’t hey. So that’s how it is, and that’s a lot of the things I’ve lived with, a code,

14:00 a code that I have, a principle or whatever it is that I have within myself. So I’m not worried about things that happen, and as I said, I was taught to be not a liar, not dishonest – the two most important things. And how did I learn that? My old man was a well borer and I said to him, “How come, Dad?” and he said,

14:30 “Well, I thought I knew everything,” he said to me. Then he said, “We’re out doing a bore and we’re having trouble with the drill. We couldn’t get it to the right degree of hardness, and this swagman looking bloke came into the camp looking for a feed, and he could see that we were having trouble. He said, ‘Do you mind if I do that drill for you?’” They were big drills, they were about that wide. “Can I do that drill for you?” So what did he do? He put it in the fire

15:00 and he kept looking at it, so then he went and broke a bit – because you used to get your butter and stuff in deal board boxes, all your fruit was in wooden things, deal board – so he snaps a bit of deal board off and he went over to it and, “Not yet. Not yet…Right, put it in the water now.” And my old man says, “Why was all of that?” and he said, “Well, on a sunny day

15:30 you wouldn’t see the glow of the steel as good as you would on a dark day, on a cloudy day.” Each day is different but with the piece of wood, it would only burst into flame at a given heat, so whether it was a hot day or a cold day. So he said, “That’s what I’m passing on to you,” what I’ve just said to you. So there you are, learnt a lot didn’t he?

16:00 I’ve had wise men too and for some reason because of that youth and because of what was on my shoulder, if I had a problem I’d look for the oldest man there, black, white, yellow, and I’d go to him and say, I’d open me guts, this is my problem. I would listen very patiently and I would only take out of him what suited my circumstances –

16:30 not all the other words he talked about, just what suited my circumstances.

Did you mind any mentors like that in Moresby that you were able to speak to about your experiences?

No, I've only found one fella since that time that spoke to me about what it's all about. Because see, my old man he died a long time ago, and

17:00 I was concerned because every now and again he would be standing there – see him as plain as day, not a word. Anyway, I worked in the railway and this bloke said, "You're a very strange man, Doug." I said, "No, maybe to you but not to myself. I know how many beans make five and I know how to count beans." He said, "No, you're strange. There's something deep in you. Come over and have dinner with me." So I went over one day

17:30 and had a bit of a talk about things in general, and he said, "Will you come back tomorrow?" I went back tomorrow and he said, "What is your problem?" I said, "I've got no problem." He said, "There's something." I said, "The only thing that I'm concerned about in any way is my old man comes back to me maybe once every six months, three months, twelve months, sometimes, and just stands there. I don't understand it."

18:00 Because I'd lived with Aborigines, I don't understand. He said, "Well, sit down and I'll tell you. I lived in South Africa, I lived with the Zulus. Why your father comes back there and he doesn't talk is that he's not capable of talking to you. He's capable of showing that he's there, but there is something that he should have told you but he didn't tell you. Until that's

18:30 flushed out he will always keep coming back." Now I haven't seen him for fifteen years or more, he never comes back. But I can only assume that whatever he had to tell me has happened and I've jumped the hurdle, so there's no need for him to give me a reminder. So it's funny when you're a spooky person, really. It doesn't frighten me but I understand it all.

19:00 **Have you found a sense of home since then?**

A sense of home, you mean on earth? Not really, no. I know where I'm going, I've got a lot faith in spirits – even to the extent of I said to a priest one day, I was sitting there at the church and I was sitting

19:30 and he said, "What's wrong with you, Doug?" I said, "I'm just working our where I'm going and how I'm going to get there." And he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Not on this earth, I'm going to the spirit world up higher." And he sort of looked at me with a sneer on his face, because I learnt to summarise people how they look and

20:00 how their eyes – very important, eyes. I thought, "Well stuff you, you stickybeak." I said, "Where are you going?" He spun around as quick as he could and walked away. Now if he had said, "I'm going to God, I'm going to heaven," I would have accepted it, but what he was doing to me he wasn't accepting what my belief is, he was ignoring me. And then I met old Tom, he was

20:30 another old priest after, a few weeks after accidentally – again, spiritually, because he doesn't come to town, and who's walking along the street a few weeks after, this old Tom? I said, "Tom, I've been thinking about you, I've got a problem and I want to talk to you because you're a wise old man." I told him and he said, "Don't be worried about it, the same thing happens to me, Doug. Don't you worry about it, you know where you're going.

21:00 Don't let anyone change you." So there you go.

In relation to your Dad, you mentioned something that he told you a while ago and I'm wondering if you could give what it means to you. 'Nothing's lost if you know where it is'. What do you interpret that to mean?

Oh yeah, well a lot of different things. Never give up the ship for a start – never let anything beat you. It's there

21:30 and if you have the ability it wont be lost, it will be there, you have to find a way – nothing is lost if you know where it is. Well we don't know where it is because to us, it's lost, and until you open your eyes and see where it could be, or not, that's it, just keep chasing the avenues until they're there. He taught me a hell of a lot, my old man.

22:00 Like I said, the worst thing anyone could ever say to me in my life, "That is impossible." I've done some things that have opened their eyes – I've converted coke stoves into wooden stoves, and they said, "No, this bloke comes from England, one of those cookers, he comes from cooking in England." I told him what I was going to do and he said, "Impossible."

22:30 So I worked and worked and worked until I had it so that it was working, maybe not as attractive as his because I had to build a cylinder and an exhaust to get to the thing, it had to be a bit different to what was there, but it still the heat was going through and all the same. I said to him, "I've done what you said is impossible, would you like to come up and have a look at it?" He got very shitty and said, "No, I don't want to come and have a look at the bloody thing." Because to him it was

23:00 impossible, and here was the bloke that made it possible, so he didn't want to know.

Doug, I'd just like to take you back to Port Moresby now, between the bombing raid, it was June?

Yeah, the 3rd of June. That's my Anzac Day as a matter of fact. I don't worry about or respect Anzac Day – I respect it to some degree but it's not the important one, that's the important one

23:30 to me, because it was inflicted.

You remember that day?

I remember that day, I remember what happened that day, and some of these other diggers that you talk to and know certain things that happened to their mates on that day.

You had quite an extended period of time between that and leaving (UNCLEAR)?

Yeah, I was discharged probably about January '45

24:00 I'd say. They got me a discharge laying around.

You left Moresby in late '44 was it?

Yeah, I'd say it would have been pretty late. I was up there for seven hundred and four days, so that's nearly two years, from April '42 so that would be into '44, that would be.

So a pretty tough year after the bombing raid? Or fifteen months or so?

24:30 Oh, not really no. Things started to change a lot, that's why the bombing raid was bunged on by the Japs, because it was getting crook and they were desperate. I suppose they thought well if we can attack this base, get rid of that base we've probably got a chance of winning this war. But they were pushing the shit uphill and they couldn't withstand it all. With all respect to the Yanks, I've got to say

25:00 well it was their gear that saved the war. I don't think the soldiers did but their gear did.

What could you do to take your mind away from Port Moresby? What did you do to have a break?

While I was up there? It wasn't such a great big worry because we

25:30 knew that when that raid happened it was just every day things, they would bomb us coming over. We didn't have any ack-ack for a long time, we had no anti-aircraft guns, and those Zeros and planes they were the bane of your life. They'd swoop down as I said in Three Mile valley, skim the hill, hit the Catalinas at the bottom of the thing, attack any of the boats that were in – no defence, there was nothing to defend it. But when the ack-ack came of course that started to push them higher.

26:00 They'd explode and the box barrages, and they'd explode and they'd keep the planes pretty high, you know. I was involved in the fighting business, you know like I lived in West End, I was inclined to be that. A bloke took me on because they thought maybe this bloke could look after himself a bit. So I took on the ring and sort of got up into our own unit.

26:30 **This is formal fighting?**

Yeah fist fighting with gloves and everything, because they started to run competition for that sort of stuff. We didn't have that before, the competitions and that was one of the main ones. So I could handle myself in amongst my own mob until a bloke named Laurie [Laurence] Delaney – he was a southpaw [left handed], he was this way not this way, see. I was having a

27:00 spar with this other fella who thought that he might have been able to clean him up pretty quick, because I knew I had to knock him fast. So Laurie was there and I didn't know he was a fighter, he wasn't a professional fighter then, but I didn't know that he was even a fighter. He said, "I'll give you a round or two, Doug, keep you in trim." He just had me by the throat, because he was a southpaw, you know,

27:30 whereas we'd lead the other way, we'd lead that way, he was leading this way. So I thought to myself, "Jesus, if I can't handle this fella, how the hell am I going to get on when I meet all the other units?" So I thought, "Bugger this, Doug, you better get away from this." And just as well because Johnny Shields who became a Queensland champion, maybe an Australian champion, they called him the mad windmill. He'd come in like this,

28:00 and he took a lot of stopping but he rose fairly high, you know. So I was pleased because I would have got a hell of a hiding with him, because I wouldn't have been able to handle that sort of stuff. I was more defensive and wait for the right moment. Yeah there were things like that but there wasn't any basketball or stuff like that. Boxing would be about the best thing that was around.

What about unofficial fighting, where there any blues amongst the servicemen?

28:30 Not a great deal because there wasn't a there wasn't an amount of grog there. That was the thing, there wasn't an open slather grog place. There were bottles of whisky and that, that Jimmy used to have but you'd buy a bottle and you'd just have it amongst yourselves, your mates, so there wouldn't be anyone

to cause any strife with. A bottle amongst four or five of you is only a couple of drinks each,

29:00 so you go home a bit dopey but that would be it.

What was the story you were telling us before about the man with the photos, the Yank with the photos?

Well lots of things happened you know, the Yanks came over when they came over and this loudmouth Yank was talking about these bloody sheilas and how he was rooting this and going on with all these women

29:30 and that. He said, "I've got pictures and some and some of them are half undressed," and that, "You can see everything they owned," and we were all squatting down like this and he was flicking them onto the ground. The next minute this bloody Aussie bloke races over kicks him here, knocks him ass over and then starts getting stuck into his head, just starts kicking his head.

30:00 We'd thought he'd gone troppo, a lot went troppo too – went off their rockers. We thought he'd gone troppo, "Hey, what's going on?" and trying to drag him off. He said, "That's my bloody missus that he's got there that he's talking about." So you could imagine how he'd feel hey, he didn't take it as good as I did. He didn't want to take compassionate leave and go and see her. No, there was a lot of sadness with

30:30 some of the incidences like that. Then there's the incident about the bloke who's bloke was quite open with him and said, "I'm on the game, but when you come home I'll give it away and we'll be wealthy for the rest of our lives." She had stacks, about eight or ten homes or something. I don't know what she finished up with, but how do you take life. There wasn't much up there, there weren't any women. When I talked about the woman that when we went to Nine Mile,

31:00 they very soon after that – because the Aussie troops and they knew the Yanks would be coming because the other thing had started in Pearl Harbour. They took all these women and their babies from Moresby to Daru, which is on the other part of Moresby Bay, straight across like that, but unfortunately a Japanese sub [submarine] was here, and as they're going 'tchou'. I don't know how many died,

31:30 I never heard how many died but there were a lot of the women and kids that died.

Native women and children?

Native women, yeah they took them away because – well it wasn't uncommon to see, when we first went there, because you see everything in a primitive light, they were very primitive when we first went there. It's the same like the sheila with the grass skirts and the men with just a lap-lap over their dicks, whereas later on they put

32:00 proper lap-laps bits of material around them and hid themselves, and the women started to dress up with shirts on to hide themselves. But they had to take them away because – but it wasn't uncommon to see a woman with a baby suckling this titty and a pig suckling this titty. It wasn't uncommon

32:30 because pigs were in high demand, because pigs were food and in high demand. We thought all those things were all haywire, a bit hard to grab hold of it. But we thought, "Well, they're only bloody natives anyhow." That's the sort of attitude that you got, they were just natives. The same as when they chased the bandicoot, they'd chase a bandicoot for the food – you'd be spewing your guts out when you were eating it, wouldn't you?

33:00 **So you didn't get to explore a relationship with those natives the way you did with the Australian indigenous people, the Aboriginal people when you were in Australia?**

No, I never got close to them. There was one bloke but it was only because he had control. We used to think of him as number one boy, they used to take one boy to be number one

33:30 boy, and he would control all the others. It was just him and he could usually talk a bit of broken English, a bit of Motuan and English, and between the two languages you got there. I never developed anything to find out anything about how they worked, I was probably not completely interested. I'm more, when you compare them to the Australian Aborigine, they're just two different lots of people. The same as those blokes that I knew down the south, I didn't

34:00 associate with the Torres Strait Islanders in the north of Queensland ones. They were different types of people and everything else, they lived different. I suppose I thought I was a bit incumbent to them by the fact that all they taught me. It's all changed, all different things – what suits this tribe down around the south west of Cunnamulla

34:30 wouldn't suit the rest of the tribe that's up in the northern part of Cunnamulla. You just have to treat them all as people, learn as much as you could from each one and go on.

Did you learn anything specifically from watching them or any contact that you had with them?

I was telling the lass there before that they made me a blood brother,

35:00 he punctured his and punctured mine and put the two together…

Sorry, I meant in Port Moresby.

Oh no, I wasn't completely interested in them, not their spirituality or anything else. They were inclined to sing a lot, and no I just couldn't get down to that level with them, I don't know why.

35:30 I learnt enough of their language, just enough to live by and that's all.

You mentioned before that a lot of people went troppo. What happened there, what were the circumstances?

Under pressure by what was around. I suppose if you look back a lot of them wouldn't of even thought that they were going to go to war.

36:00 A lot of them were militia boys that had been in there from years had gone by, and then when they came up and they joined the CMF and then they joined the chocolate brigade, as we called them. It was circumstances, the weather wasn't the best, you were always nervous, you wouldn't know what was going to happen.

36:30 There was no connection between Buna and Gona in the early days, and Moresby, so no one knew where the planes were. Later on you knew exactly where they were because messages would come through from just outside of Moresby right over Buna airport. There'd be a bloke watching and he'd be connected by a wireless to another bloke that's on top of the hill, say fifty mile away, and he'd be connected to there, so 'boom, boom, boom' and it got to Moresby a long time before

37:00 the planes came over. But in the early stages you just didn't know, you'd wake up and 'boom, boom' they'd have a go at you. I suppose that, and a lot of them were country boys – like I told you about the boy from Central Australia to the other bloke that sat on the side of the bloke and kept saying, "How much water?" Another bloke when we were sailing said, "I've never seen as much rain." Well in those days you used to get

37:30 rain late in December, and then January would get it and February and March you'd get cyclones, and then April you'd get the April showers, and you'd have a dry winter. He just hadn't experienced all those, and when all this rain, "Jesus Christ, how long is it going to rain?" I said, "It might rain three days." All those things I think had a bearing on their mental capacity to handle life.

38:00 **Did the rain and the conditions lead to outbreaks of malaria, dengue fever, that sort of stuff?**

Dysentery and diarrhoea, yeah.

Around Port Moresby itself?

Yes, I was in different hospitals at different times for dysentery and diarrhoea, malaria – chronic malaria they put it down as. Of course the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] don't want to admit that, do you? No, because there'd be that many applying for it,

38:30 I can understand it. There would be that many because I would say that ninety nine point nine out of a hundred men up there would have had malaria at some time.

You managed to get through without it?

Oh well, yes and no. Not so much now, it's gradually gone over the years but, oh, six months ago I had one and I knew what it was. The doctors said, "I wouldn't relate it," but I said, "I know,

39:00 I'll get rid of it." But you know the symptoms because I had it a long time. You get all the fevers and stuff that go with it, around your eyes, feverish and all that.

You must have seen a lot of the soldiers coming back from the track, a lot of the injured and dead men being brought back to Port Moresby?

Not a great deal came back because

39:30 they had a pretty fine art towards the end with air transport. I wasn't one to hang around hospitals but there was a lot of AGHs [Australian General Hospital], a lot of clearances were done in the CCSs [Casualty Clearance Stations] and all those, the Casualty Clearance Stations and places like there that moved them quickly through. So by the time they got back to say Kokoda there were aeroplanes

40:00 enough to take them to Townsville, so they didn't load Moresby with them. The ones that were still around Moresby were the ones that were still close and were coming back. In fact a lot of Japanese were finished in the hospital when I was getting my toe done or something one time, and there was Japanese in there. They didn't take their life because they started to wake up themselves after a while when they were there. No, I didn't see a great deal of blokes with legs off and things like that, I think they

40:30 moved them away back to Australia pretty quickly, because they had a good air service and the Yanks had plenty of gear, they had plenty of planes going backwards and forwards.

Tape 7

00:36 **I might just start by asking you about Japanese POWs that you saw at Murray Barracks. Can you talk about the first time that you saw them?**

I had seen them in the hospitals of course, as I said before, and I don't get prejudiced, it doesn't matter if a man's a communist, a Muslim or what, we're all children of God when it all boils down to it.

01:00 Not being religious, we are children of God not matter colour, creed or anything else. So anyhow I used to go down there because of my nature, and I thought, "Poor bastards, how would you like to be a prisoner stuck behind that barbed wire," I used to think to myself. I'd go down and I had cigarettes – cigarettes were very cheap to buy, you know you could buy a lot of them like that for only a couple of bob. So they'd go down, and one in particular

01:30 spoke very good English and I got to know him a bit and I always made sure that he had a smoke – always light them before you gave them over, and you gave them the hot end so that he'd have to take it the right way, you never gave it to him so he could put it straight in his mouth, he'd have to get it and turn it around. But anyhow, and he used to say that, "We're not beaten, it's just going to take us longer to take Australia. We'll take it now by different means

02:00 than what we're doing now." So he was educated and he realised that they weren't going to get it by military force, that was over, they were pushed back in New Guinea and Rabaul, and MacArthur [General MacArthur] chased them all the way back to Japan. So he realised that they were going to do that, and when you see about Iwasaki and all the stuff down the coast and they looked like really taking it over really, because they had the money, the second strongest thing in the world.

02:30 There was America and then them, they were close to toppling America as the money people in the world. They just went for their life, that's what they thought when they would take Australia by other means, and the other means, apparently, was financial means.

What did you think when this guy was saying that?

Oh, I didn't like it, I didn't like it at all. I used to say there's no way in the world, because we'll be fighting until we die. I said, "You might take over the main cities but there'll be people around those main cities that will

03:00 chop you down to size." No, I didn't like what he was saying. I took it as a certain amount of baloney really because I wasn't a financial wizard in any way. I knew they were beaten and I thought, "Well he's just talking, big deal. We lost the war, we'll win the peace," sort of thing.

What was this Japanese POW's rank, do you know what his role in the war was?

Oh, I wouldn't know, love. No, I didn't

03:30 question him, he was very educated so I think he would have been fairly high up, probably a captain or something like that, or maybe a bit higher, I don't know. No, I didn't question him. I didn't question where he fought or anything else, and he didn't question me, he didn't question me on mine. We just talked about things.

At this point had you learnt about the fate of the Australian POWs under the Japanese at this time?

No.

04:00 They keep a lot of stuff under the cush [hidden] too, we had no television – you see a lot more on television today, but a lot of that they keep under the cush because even if you're getting beaten, they never say you're getting beaten. They say, "We'll get around the other side and then we'll clean them up." That's how you carry on, it's just that they don't give you a defeatist attitude,

04:30 otherwise we wouldn't win anything.

At Murray Barracks where the Japanese POWs were held, where were they held exactly? What did it look like?

It was just, there was a big shed in the yard but it was a very big yard. I'd say there'd be two hundred Japs in there, there was quite a lot. I didn't count them individually but there was a lot. It was surrounded by barbed wire very close

05:00 together, about that far apart. There were guards at the gate and not so many guards inside, like you see Colonel Hogan, where the guards are inside. No, I didn't see that, they were mainly on the periphery sort of. They weren't using the sheep dogs chasing them back, they were just there with their rifles. But they subjected to it pretty good I think the Japs. They knew they were beaten and they

05:30 had enough sense to accept the war will be over sooner or later and they'll go home. I think it's just that they see things in a different light to probably what they were told, you know, "You're fighting for the Emperor, go kill them. If you can't kill them, kill yourself, don't be taken prisoner." But a lot of the time we didn't take prisoners too, so it wasn't just the Japanese. What they'd do was just pass them back to

the natives and a lot of those natives were still cannibals.

06:00 So they'd just say, "You look after this fella," and they'd walk on and wouldn't even look back and see what happened to you. But you wouldn't be walking along the roads, he'd be dead and gone.

What physical condition did a lot of the Japanese seem to be in, were they ones that had been out wild for a while?

No, they seemed to be in pretty fair buckle [in good health]. Some were a bit skinny but they were pretty fair buckle. When I say buckle, they weren't

06:30 crawling around, they were all upright and walking around – slowly but they were capable. They weren't starved or anything like that, I didn't see any of that stuff at all really. In fact I think that those would have died up there, where they cut them all off from their tucker and all that, they just didn't make it.

Once the Japanese were captured was there any

07:00 **cases of Japanese souvenirs being bought and sold, bits that had been recovered at all? Was there a black market in that sort of thing once the war was over?**

I wasn't involved in that but I'd say, if you asked me the pointed question I'd have to say no, because none of my mates had Japanese stuff. We had plenty of New Guinean and Papuan stuff – little lacquer toys and that sort of stuff that they made, beads and those sort of things.

07:30 Is it all right?

Yeah just try not to touch it.

Oh, all right, naughty boy. No, I don't think that they were there, I don't think that they bore them down – see that's what Colonel Murray was doing, he was one of the colonels up there. I would say that they treated them pretty well further back before they got there. As I said some were thin but they weren't

08:00 like how you see our prisoner of wars, bones sticking out of them everywhere, they weren't like that. But they were thin and some of them were in good buckle. So it depends, some of them may have been in hospital and got good tucker before they came down.

What sort of things did you see happening there with the POWs, what seemed to be the procedures being undertaken with them?

Well to tell you the truth they seemed to have a damn good life. There was no

08:30 bustle, there was no parades, I never seen them call a parade with them, they seemed to be always around. I used to always be around at different times during the day – I wasn't there at meal times or anything like that. No, see Australians are a different mob, we might think we're tough but we're pretty sentimental and soft when you've got someone on the ground, you get very soft towards them.

09:00 You don't really, you know.

How often did you visit Murray Barracks and see them?

Oh, I probably went down there about every two or three days. I'd look and stay outside the barbed wire, I never went inside the wire, just outside the barbed wire and this bloke used to sort himself out. He probably used to see me and he'd come through the mob, and I'd just say, "G'day." I didn't even know his name, I'd just say, "G'day, do you want a cigarette?" "Yes please, thank you." Very

09:30 polite. But I suppose thinking back I should have asked him a lot more questions, but I just felt sorry the poor buggers, because I wouldn't like to be a prisoner of war. I wouldn't like to be – even now – I wouldn't like to be tied up in jail, or locked up in this house and my Mrs wouldn't let me go to the TAB [Totalizator Agency Board – betting agency] or something like that, I wouldn't like that. That's me.

10:00 **Was it ok for you to talk to them or was it something you had to do on the quiet if you wanted to talk to them?**

Oh no, quite openly. No one ever came up to me and said, "Don't talk to them." It was a little bit of an undercurrent about it, you know, "Don't fraternise with them, with those Japanese, those bastards." But they weren't bastards to me, they were just people. I felt sorry for them that they were behind there really.

You've mentioned your friend Ernie a couple of times

10:30 **today, tell us about him, what kind of guy was Ernie?**

Yeah, well Ernie lived in Brisbane, he lived at Fernburgh Road, Rosalie. I've tried to find him phone book wise, I even went up Fernbugh Road because that's where Government House is, somewhere around that area. No I couldn't find any trace of him, but he was a bit of a larrikin in his own way, he's all right to me but he was sharp playing cards.

11:00 He knew the value of cards, and I used to play cards and for some reason he always knew when I was

bluffing and I'd never know when he was bluffing, because he was very inscrutable in his face. But he was a good bloke to be with, I always knew that I could rely on him, which is a big thing. If you've got someone, particularly under those circumstances, if you've got someone you can rely on to the extent. It doesn't matter

11:30 how crude or rude or anything else they are, as long as they're reliable.

Do you value different things in friendship during wartime than you might in civilian life, do you think?

I'd say so, because in civilian life I'm not a friendly person really. I'm very conservative – not so much conservative but I'm very much a loner. As I said before, three people have

12:00 got into Doug's heart in eighty years and that's saying a hell of a lot, because how many people have friends. But I've learnt over the years, when I was younger, that friends today, complete strangers tomorrow. I've helped a lot of people, men and women, and particularly women about forty in a hell of a situation – they either married too young, had some kids, husband finishes up

12:30 a rotter, they live on their own, and they're open. A lot of them say, "Where will I find someone, Doug? I'm lonely, where will I find someone? At the pub?" I say, "Don't go near the pub." Friendship to me is tied up – and I explain to these women this way – if you meet someone, you like them. Your like grows to love, your love grows to care.

13:00 If you've got the three of them you're a good man or a good person. If you've only got those two and can't care for them, it means that you don't love them, you don't even like them because you can't care for them. So to have the lot you've got to be able to – and the kingpin of that is care. Sex comes after – and I'm not frightened to talk to them like that – sex comes after, and it's what, a two minute stand, over and done with.

13:30 It might be a lot of love making in the pre-up but for the actual intercourse it's two minutes – sometimes with men, less. Sometimes with women a lot longer but they don't achieve it do they, because the man's finished. He does talk, doesn't he? But I don't, yeah, and that's why I don't create friends, because I've seen too many times and I have slipped a few times and created what I thought

14:00 was friendship. You get a few cards for probably two or three years, and then gradually you don't get any cards. You never hear of them again. But if you see them in town they're always the same, so they're friends in their own little way but they don't want to get in your backyard, and they don't want you in their backyard. But if you see them in town, "Oh, gee I haven't seen you for years, where the hell have you been?" That's nice too, but if you haven't

14:30 got that care, forget the other two because they're not sincere enough to really get that care.

Just back in Port Moresby again, do you recall when it was declared that the war was over? Where were you when that happened?

No, I was in Australia, I was out of the army.

Oh, you were out of the army?

Yeah, out of the army. I came over here in '44 and went out to the property out there.

Ok, well let's just go from

15:00 **when you get the word that you're going back to Australia. How does that come about?**

Well it was done through this man power thing. I wrote to my mate and he wrote to me and he said, "Billy Manson at Clewser wants a man, and I'm at Gladevale the next property, would you be interested in coming up?" I was at South Queensland, I was south west in timber country.

15:30 He was always a northerner on those open downs out there, with sheep as big as that. I was down in the other country where the sheep are smaller and a lot of timber to make fires and everything else. He got in touch with me and said, "You're ok to go home now."

So you were still in Moresby?

When I got all that. Then they put me on a Globe Master, a big plane a big Yankee plane and they flew me back to Townsville, and

16:00 I still finished up in BIPOD, I still went back to BIPOD in Townsville and until the process went through, that's where I was in Townsville.

I find it extraordinary that they would let you go back.

To Australia?

Was that a common thing for men to sort of be in a protected industry, and be able to go back?

Oh yes, a protected industry in the original cases, I could have stayed out there, that's what I was

telling Simon. That bloke that was in

16:30 real estate said, “No, you’re too young. I’ll give you a job on my place and then when you get nineteen you can come and join up.” and I said, “I’ll go that far out that you won’t get me again.” I’d have been man powered and kept there, the same as railway people were Manpowered. They couldn’t leave and just go in the army or navy or air force.

I would have thought that once you’d enlisted it was probably that was it, that you had to stay there, but it wasn’t like that?

Oh, not really.

17:00 It was different thing to now, now they’re bound for six years or something like that, but you’ve got to be a very naughty boy to get out. No, it was just service for that occasion, and it was AIF, so it wasn’t militia or SAS [Special Air Service] like they are now. See, they’re committed soldiers all those people.

Had you really just had enough by that point, you were ready to move on? What was making you feel

17:30 **like you wanted to?**

Possibly, I didn’t view it that way but possible that was there. Well I’d been in it for a bloody long time, over a thousand days or something, seven hundred and four days overseas and three hundred odd back here. Yes, I suppose, but it was starting to effect me that it was a complete waste of my life. That’s how it was starting to affect me that I could have been doing more

18:00 important things here.

So talk me through coming home, where did you disembark?

I came over in a big Globemaster aeroplane, the first aeroplane ride in my life. Then I flew into Townsville and they dropped us in Townsville somewhere and we finished up at the Bellingen Gardens out in the suburb, and there was a BIPOD camp there. Just dawdled around there,

18:30 at one stage filling up and getting scabies – they’re itchy things that get over you, and they plough you over with this axle grease sort of stuff, send you over to Magnetic Island until the scabies are all gone. That filled in a bit of time, when I came back the papers were there and they just said, “You’re discharged now, you’ll get your official discharge such and such.” So at least I had the courtesy – I didn’t want to, but I went back to Brisbane, but I used to stay

19:00 at the Salvation Army place in Peel Street, used to be where the old Cremorne – you wouldn’t know it but where South Bank is now, there was the old Cremorne theatre there, and there used to be a hospital, and Peel Street was where there was Salvation Army home for four bob – four shilling, forty cents. You get a cab fare of a night time and breakfast, but because they were a tough mob

19:30 you’d sleep with all your money in your sock with your shoes on. Never put it under your pillow because they slip it out, they were experts at all that sort of stuff. So I’d sleep, because the knock about that I had, I knew what I had to do, so I just put all my money in my sock, made sure my boots were nice and tight and that’s how I slept all night, because they’d have to take my boots off to get my money. But I used to live and learn.

20:00 **What next for you after that, after you came back? How long did it take to settle for you, before you went to your job?**

How long did it take me to settle, what ex the army to the…

Yeah, to that transition I guess.

I took it fairly easy, they did send me to Brisbane to pick up the clothes – they used to give you a set of clothes and your gear was supposed to be there, your bag that was sent back from Moresby when we first went over with all the heavy gear in, the heavy coats.

20:30 But I don’t remember ever seeing it again, I don’t where it all finished up.

Were your family still in Hill End at that time?

Yeah, they were still there.

Did you ever go, because that would have been very close?

Yeah, I used to camp at Peel Street at the Salvation Army home.

But you never saw them, never let them know you were back?

No, because I’d had enough. Why come home and having the fights, and they were really drinking a hell of a lot when I was there, and so was I and I thought, “Well bugger you, I’m better away from this mob,

21:00 you look after yourself.” And I knew where I had to go, I knew that I had to go up there.

So this property that you went and worked on, where was that again?

Out from Maxwelton, that's towards Julia Creek up that way, Hughenden, Richmond, Maxwelton up through there. So I went there, and I wasn't there so very long because I realised that, "Doug you're not the boy that you were,"

21:30 because as I said, I would wee myself and job a bit getting on horses, and when I got on them I was that nervous. I thought, 'Oh, that's no good' so I sort of got into town and got on the booze. I used to go on the booze a bit. I stayed there for a while, I suppose a few months because old Billy Manson was the bookmaker in Townsville, and his daughter was playing up with Yanks, so he sent her out there. Then there was another little girl on a property

22:00 just next door and they used to come, and Doug was right in the prime of his life, and they had no boyfriends, so Doug had – no, I didn't play up. But I sort of, you know.

That must have been nice after not seeing girls for so long?

That's right, it was nice to have them around, especially the one from the neighbours, because there was board rains on there, the water flowing from the board rains – you know the

22:30 flowing bore that flows into drains. One of my jobs was to take the horses and board rain delve it, clean it out. Once she knew that – it wasn't me that told her, it must have been the bosses talking to her people, and said, "Doug will be doing the south west board rain today," and she'd ride all the way over from their place just to be with me and ride with me for the rest of the day.

23:00 Yes, it was nice. Then – we're getting onto after life now aren't we? We've finished with the Moresby story. I drank very heavy – very, very heavy, not just a little bit. That's why I knew that the brothers weren't just pissed when they came home, I knew that by they way they behaved. They knew exactly what they were doing. If you're drunk, really drunk, you're not, you're out of this world. You're

23:30 either down there or you're staggering around out of this world. Someone has to lead you home and find you home and everything. So I'm in town and run into this bloke, and he was drinking – and incidentally, the bloke who owned the pub, old Dick McCormick, he owned five stations around Maxwelton. Five properties in and out and around that area in general, and I said to him one

24:00 day, "Dick…" All he could do was sign his name. If you did anything for him you'd fill the cheque out with the amount and everything else, pay say me – it wasn't me, I never used to work for him at all – but, "Pay Doug Leitch fifty pounds" and you'd give him the cheque. He wouldn't know what it said up there, it could have said ten thousand pound for all he knew. It would take him that long,

24:30 "Rich-ard Mc-Corm-ick," and he sort of intrigued me. I thought, "How the hell does a man like that own five properties and a pub?" So I said to him one day, I said, "Dick, how the hell did you get your money together?" He said, "Well, it all started with I took three and a half thousand wethers." You know what a wether is? A wether is a male sheep that's no longer a ram.

25:00 He said, "I took three and a half thousand male wethers up…" We call it the desert, the Gulf is called the desert because the red soil, black soil on the plains, they call that the desert. So he said, "I took three and a half thousand sheep up to the desert and I brought five thousand home." I said, "How the hell would you get five thousand sheep when you're away?" He said,

25:30 "They lambed well for me." "You cunning old bastard," I said. But anyhow, that's how he got his start from then on, I suppose he kept manipulating. So from there I made it up with a bloke, Alex Ferguson, he was a carpenter and I'd knock about because I could do a lot of things. At Toorak station a big storm had gone through and blown the windmill, the

26:00 shed, split the shed like that and the roof come down. So they asked us to go out, and he had a car, old Alex, to go out and have a look. He gave a price and I thought, "Jesus Christ, we'll never make any money out of this price he's quoted." I said to him when we came home, "You didn't give him much of a quote for that job, that's a big a job. We'll have to lift the roof and re-put the timber in, and pull the walls in and everything." and he said, "No."

26:30 So luckily Toorak people went away and they had an old car, a nineteen hundred and something Bean, a chain drive. And they had a '27 model Chev. or something. And all these old vehicles, some of them the first cars in the district because it was an old property. But anyhow, when we got there and he said, "Have a scout around, Doug and see if you can find some good wire and any turn buckles." I said, "All right."

27:00 So I found the stuff and brought it back to him. He said, "It won't be a hard job at all now that you've found them." So all that he did was drilled holes through the walls up there, because they'd gone up there like that see, drilled a hole between that and that, put this wire in and just turn the turn buckles and pull the whole bloody lot together, and the roof went up like that as we came in. So he just a put a couple of those different faces along and when they came home we said, "Thank you very much, the job's done." Boom, here's our money, in to town,

27:30 out on the booze again. So then we finished up him and I going out to a place called Edith Downs, that was going up toward Nonda, this side of Julia Creek between Maxwelton. So we get out there and we

were to do a bit of work on the house, and in those days they used to take people from Dalgettys used to send managers out for these women that had lost their husbands. They owned the property but their husbands had died,

28:00 so they owned the property. So they used to send these managers and invariably the manager could see opportunities and hooked in and married the widows, so he finished up with the property. We went out to do that and we were pretty crook when we got out, when you left those country places – even if we left them dead broke and owing them money, you always got a bottle of rum, free. Probably booked you up when you came in next time, but you got a bottle

28:30 of rum to see you on the road because they knew you'd be sick the next day. So I was over there and I'm doing all the work on this place, fixing up the walls and the windows, and bloody Alex is still over in the shed. So in a couple of days I see Mrs. Connolly walking over

29:00 and she's got a bottle of metho [methylated spirits] in her hands. I say, "Are you going over to Alex?" and she said, "Oh, poor Alex, he's got a very bad leg and he's got to rub it all the time." Doug know how many beans make five and I thought, "You bludging old bastard." So when she came back I went over and he's just in the process of pouring it down into a glass. I've never – I've drunk a lot,

29:30 lot's of stuff, and I thought I was sick too, and I said, "Does that stuff pick you up, Alex?" and he said, "Oh yeah, it's pretty good, Doug." I said, "I think I might have one." So I poured one for myself, methylated spirits and water. You shouldn't say these things, but as it was, when it was going down here, it was nice and cool because the metho was evaporating as it goes down, but when

30:00 it gets here, boom, like a big bomb explodes in your guts. So I said to him, "Alex, that's no good to me like that." The next morning when I woke up I had a sore throat. I thought it was all right, that it would come good. I had a few Bex and Vincent APCs [aspirins] and stuff. The following morning, I'm real crook and

30:30 can hardly talk, and he said, "You better go and see Mrs. Connolly." So I went over to her and said, "My throat's sore." She said, "I'll have a look. Oh, I better ring the ambulance, you're throat's nearly closed up." So she rang the ambulance and she said she'd get Tom or Ted, "I'll get him to drive and meet the ambulance in

31:00 Julia Creek coming back," because the hospital was at Julia Creek and not at Nonda. I'm in there and they put a needle in and sucked all the stuff out, got me right. I met a black on there, Jacky Tye from Prairie, that was another place down further. I knew I was finished with Alex, I didn't want to muck around with him. So he said, "What about we go kangaroo shooting?" So I said, "All right."

31:30 I get out of hospital, go down to Prairie, dig up Jacky Tye, so we look around then because he had no vehicle. I bought a gun because I had money, I bought a gun and some ammo. Looked around, what are we going to get, and there's an old T model Ford – see that red one on the second thing there? Same model as that with the lever on the side, and it had boxes for

32:00 – no batteries, it had these boxes of stuff and they used to 'beep, beep, beep' and when it was the right beep you knew it was time to crank it because the spark was up to the thing. There was this lever on the side to pull it back to put it in reverse. There was only two pedals on the floor, one was the clutch and one was the break, and this thing – this was just going forward. If you wanted a bit more speed you just give it a bit more thump and give it a bit more revs, and off she'd go. This other lever was

32:30 to put it into reverse gear or not. No tyres on, well tyres on but no rubber. 'Oh' we thought, 'Stuff it full of grass', so we stuffed it full of grass and we go over to the place that he had organised to go, up to a little dam. When we get there all the tyres are all worn out, there were no tyres left, there was no way in the world we're going to get that back to town, I was thinking.

33:00 We were there and got a few skins and stuff, and we said, "We better get back into town and just have a look around." By then we'd run out of tucker, that's right, and in comes into the camp comes the porcupine. You know what a porcupine is, hey? I said, "Hey, they're bloody good tucker you know." "You like porcupine?" I said, "Yeah, they're bloody good tucker." He said, "But we've got nothing to cook him in."

33:30 "I'll tell you how to cook him, I'll cook him black fella style." So we got some clay, dirty morning clay, got a big fire, put the coals down, dug a hole, put the coals down the bottom, put him on top with the big thick clay around him, and then covered it over the top and just left him there for a couple of hours. When the coals had died out and were cold you kick them aside, got him out and broke the clay because it was dry and it

34:00 broke like a thing. All his tummy had all gone into a little ball like that, that's what happens when you do these things. So the skin came off because it was well cooked, but it was the best tucker that he'd ever tasted, and I said, "Yeah, I told you it was good tucker." It tastes like, the whole lot combined, it tastes like WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , it tastes like ham and it's got all these beautiful tastes. Anyway we finish

34:30 up and we go back to town and we thought we had enough in our guts to get us along, so we had to walk along the road until the lip came and then we got back into town. We left the old car, we didn't go

back there any more. I was sick then of all that country up there and I thought I'd go back into south west Queensland back into channel country. I love that channel country, beautiful grass when the flood comes, so I went down there

35:00 into the channel country. Went to Brisbane a few times and met another one of Spud's brothers and he was working for the irrigation department. I was out of a job and he said, "Oh, I'll get you a job at the irrigation department." And I thought that would be all right. He said, "What do you" and I said, "Oh, any bloody thing." "What about being a driller's offsider?" and I said, "Oh, yeah, that will do me."

35:30 So he got me a job with him and we went down to Wolffdene, that's outside of Beenleigh and they were thinking about putting a think up there. There are so many things that make me laugh – I was still drinking heavy – he'd go into town because he was a singer. He finished up a professional singer, he was a good voice on him, but he was a mongrel. He'd throw the tools and then make me go and get them.

36:00 "I ain't your puppy dog, you go and get the bloody things yourself." Anyhow he used to go to town, and I stayed with him because it was a job. But in the pub where I used to camp on the weekends, when he'd go to Brisbane, there were these two sheilas – I won't say the names in case you know them – they used to call me the yellow butterfly. Anyway this other one, she must have been a red hot sheila because I was

36:30 sleeping next door to her room, and I hear these footsteps up the stairs and blokes would go in the room – I knew they were men because of the voice. I thought, "Jesus, she's hot." Anyway she drops the hard word on Doug one night [she wanted sleep with Doug], and I was a heavy drinker, and the golden opportunity's there, never had a woman in his life – the golden opportunity's there, and what does Doug do? He gets rotten drunk inside. So anyhow, the next morning she goes crook you know,

37:00 "You know all about it, love, with all those blokes that come up the back stairs of a night time. I don't want nothing to do with you." So anyway, we finish the drilling of there and then we went to another couple of places and we finished up at the Nagoa Dam at Emerald – what they called the Nagoa Dam, they call it the Fairburn Dam now, but that was the code word for the drilling. He was the driller and we had the little plant to dig the holes for the foundation, it was foundation seeking.

37:30 **Sorry, what were you drilling for?**

Foundation drilling for weirs and dams and stuff like that, so you had to be bung on, you couldn't go through fractured country without going into solid ground, you had to have ten foot of solid ground. So you had to even though you knew you were in crumbly sandstone that looked all right when it would come out, you had to know that what you're in. You had to be a geologist – luckily one of my sons later on, he became a geologist, that's

38:00 where the line is. So anyhow, we were up there and we finished up on the dam, and the first couple of holes up there and here comes these actives on top doing something to the ropes up there. He hoys a spanner and I've had enough, so I said, "Go and get the bloody thing yourself. Get into that bloody jeep" – we had a jeep and a trailer – I said, "Get into that bloody jeep and you get into Emerald and you tell them that you want another offsider because this bloke's leaving,

38:30 as soon as you get into town, he'll be gone. Tell them to send the cheque to Emerald post office." So anyway, he then made the decision that he'd give it away, but because I'd been there that long with him, quite a while, they said, "Would you like to have the job?" So I got that job. I did all this – I was there for about three years, I did all this drilling on the dam for these reserves.

How old were you then?

39:00 When I got to work there, I was married when I was twenty five, I'd be about – '48, yeah I was married in '48, twenty five. Yeah I was there for about two years with him, that was after '45 – '46, '47, '48 I got married, so '46, '47, '48 I was up around that area doing all this drilling. So at the initial

39:30 stage then I would be about twenty-two. I still a heavy drinker, I'd go into town – first of all they took me down to Brisbane, they took me down and wanted me to have a look. They said, "Who do you want as a mate? Do you want a local mate?" I said, "No, you give me a bloke here and I'll check it out and see whether…" So they got me this bloke and he was drunk. When he came to me he was drunk – but I knew he was honest,

40:00 the words I used to work out, I knew he was honest. So I said, "Ok, off we go, you and me, off we go." He was a very honest man, so I was up there and like I said, I was a no-hoper, love. You know Jimmy Little the singer, the Aboriginal singer? 'Stairway to Heaven' or whatever it is?

40:30 I was derelict, I was a no-hoper really. Finally from there from years gone by. I'd go into town and she'd strip all the clothes off me and get me a new pair that she'd washed. The next week I came in, the same procedure, she'd strip all the clothes off me, give me the ones that she took off last week

41:00 and look after me, real Aboriginal woman. So finally I sort of – I'm getting near the end of it, how's time?

Actually we're right on the end of this tape.

Tape 8

00:34 **Doug, you were starting to tell me about the lady.**

Yep, I finished up there at this Nogoa Dam. I did Selma Wheel, that was a town supply but they wanted this big one, it's a big irrigation plant for Central Queensland, for Emerald, a big dam it is. Actually I was there for about three

01:00 years doing all the foundations right across this side, through the river, across the other side. Any chances out here where there might have been things I had to go and investigate them, find out where there were gravel beds, which meant that there was another creek that used to go out that way. You'd have to go through that gravel bed until you get to solid foundation so you'd get a wall there to stop that water. Anyhow, as I say, I was a heavy drinker and

01:30 you couldn't drink in pubs, and I've always been someone who can sing. Now we're talking about singing I better sing you the song that I was going to sing you before – this goes back to Moresby, Jim Davison's concert party. You came up there when things had settled down a bit better, and a lot of troops there, and a lot of station troops, a lot of Yank troops, a lot of air force.

02:00 I'll never forget this song, and there probably will be some that know it but unless they were in that area, one of those blokes that were up in Popendetta and Buna and Gona and Wau and Lae, wouldn't have heard this. So, I won't forget it – I'm a bit nervous now, starting to sing. "They say that some bombers just leaving Rabaul, bound for Port Moresby town. Heavily

02:30 laden with all sorts of bombs, ready to tumble them down. Now if those bloody Easter land are around here, they'll kick up a hell of a noise. But cause no commotion for ack-acks in motion, so cheer up my lad shoot, them down. Shoot 'em down, shoot 'em down, and lay 'em all over the town. Shoot all the Zeros and heavier ones,

03:00 and give them a guts ache with all of our guns. We'll roast them until they're done brown, and bury what's left in the ground. So cause no commotion, for ack-acks in motion, so cheer up my lads and shoot them down." Now that was a Jim Davison thing and they wouldn't be a great number of blokes – you're going to see different blokes, or they're going to get these tapes down there and by the time they piece them all together they're going to sort things out.

03:30 Anyhow, we're back into post-war life now.

How long did you knock about out there before you met the next girl that got into your heart?

That one would have got into my heart but she dealt some pretty wicked cards. Old Anne, the sergeant, he knew who I was – I'm very easily read really. I might seem

04:00 a bit tough and everything else but he's easily read once you get to know what he is. He got me aside one day and he said, "Doug, you're a good boy." He was an Irishman, he said, "You're a good boy and you've got a damn good job at that irrigation department. Now what I want you to do is get yourself a good sheila, and you marry that girl and you look after her and you'll be all right."

04:30 So it just happened there was a sheila in the café, and how the hell they ever stood me, I don't know. I'd go into old George Comino, he's the Comino's Café, and I'd just demand off him – I'd pay for it, but I'd demand off him a steak. "Sit down." "No, I don't want to bloody sit down at your table, cook us a nice steak and give to me and wrap it in a piece of paper." So he'd go and cook my steak and I'd be walking up town sucking on this steak.

05:00 I was a wreck love, I was a wreck. This sheila that worked in there was a waitress, she usually worked till midnight. Some how, I must have been game enough one night to say to her , "Can I take you out?" or some bloody thing. Oh, no it was the football at Alpha – I wanted to go and see the football. So I said to George, "What about Faye?

05:30 Are you going to let her come to the football with me on Sunday?" "No, she's got to work till midnight," she said. I got stuck into him and that and finally he said all right. I said, "That's my girl you're talking about." I used to bullshit like that, "That's my girl you're talking about, I want to take her to the football." So he said, "All right, take her to the football." So he gets up there and he gets rotten drunk too, and coming back in the train, because it was a train from Emerald to Alpha, quite a fair way. He gets rotten drunk, you know. But anyhow she forgave

06:00 all that sort of thing, and finally I said, "We'll get married." I was twenty-five then, and I said, "We'll get married." She said, "No, you're too rough. You knock around with me and you never get off the booze. I want something better than you." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I've got everything sorted with one of the blokes on the property in Malguna out by Caulfield."

06:30 When I mention names other things fly back, but anyway, otherwise you'll be here all day. Anyhow I rang him up and he said, "Yeah, ok Doug, come out here. I've got the boring plant and all the gear." I said, "Ok, I'll get a quid and I'll come back and we'll get married." I took her down to Brisbane really to get married with my people, she didn't have any mum and dad, oh she had a dad but he was a waster and her mum had died.

07:00 So anyhow, I went out there and I was getting there, and the conductor came along, “Looking for Doug Leitch, looking for Doug Leitch.” I said, “Here he is.” He said, “There’s a Mr. Alf Blackwell wants to meet you at the thing.” I don’t know an Alf Blackwell, Allen Dean was the bloke I was speaking to. So when I get off it’s Blackwell, is the local well borer, he had it on its own,

07:30 he had the district’s own. And here’s me coming. He said, “I’ve spoken to Allen Dean and we think it might be better for the two of us to get together.” I said, “Yeah, that sounds all right.” So I don’t know what he was getting but I knew what I was going to get, so I knew what to talk to him about. I said,

08:00 “Ten pound a week, and a shilling a foot.” It was pretty cheap drilling in those days, he said, “That’s all right.” Then he started off about, because I was a government driller see, “Oh, bloody government drillers are not worth two bob.” I said, “I’ll show you, you bastard.” So I went out and set the plant up, and he said, “I’m going to go and have a look around. I’ll see you tonight.”

08:30 He came back and said, “How did you go?” and I said, ”Sixty-five feet.” and he said, “What?” I said, “Sixty-five feet.” “Oh.” I woke up the next morning, he’d pissed off again. I was determined to make sure that I was going to, and he came home that night and there was another sixty-five feet. “Holy Jesus, you’ll beat the record if you keep going.” The record was thirteen days and so many hours, about six hours.

09:00 He said, “You’ll beat the record the way you’re going.” I said, “That’s what I’m here for. I am a government driller, you know.” Then he came back one day, I was drilling away and he said, “I’ll relieve you for a while.” I thought it was strange because where else could I go, miles out, where else could I go?

09:30 He said, “I’ll relieve you for a while,” so he went on. The next morning – we used to put a test piece of casing down, to make sure the casing would go down. Down – stopped, about ten feet above where he stopped for the day. So I said, “Didn’t you test the casing?” and he said, “Oh, I know this country, I don’t have to test my holes.”

10:00 I said, “There’s a jam down there at about a hundred and twenty feet,” or whatever it was. I said, “It’s jammed and you went to a hundred and thirty. So that’s ten feet above where you finished up.” He said, “Oh, I did go through a bit of rock.” And I said, “Well, you didn’t do it properly, did you?” So we had to the go and get – how you do it, you have to go and plug that up and then you’ve got to fill them with stone, hard stone, and then you drill that hard stone out. As you go through

10:30 where the crevice bits hanging into the bore hole, that will chop that out because you’ve got stone all around it. So we chopped it out but it took us into the fourteenth day. He said, “Yeah but that’s all right, we’ve done all right.” That was ten pound a week, I think we were there for a couple of weeks or something. As it gets deeper it gets slower, I went to nine hundred odd feet, that’s all I could go. We went into town

11:00 and I said, “You better square me up, I want to send some money away.” He just paid me for the two weeks, the twenty pound. I said, “Alf, you’re a bit light on. What about the footage?” “What?” He played the deaf act. He said, “I didn’t hear anything about footage.” and I said, “That was the arrangement, ten pound a week and a shilling a foot

11:30 for all I did.” I thought, “You’re a cunning bastard.” So I couldn’t do no more than take what was offered, send away what I wanted to do. He said, “Now we’ll go out to shift down Mills Creek down to another place that I’ve got lined up.”

Doug, can I just ask, how long – maybe we can jump forward to you another part because I think we’ve got enough of the drilling.

12:00 Yeah, all right.

You were going to clean yourself up and get some money were you, to marry this girl?

Yeah, to marry this sheila, that’s what I went out for.

Right.

I’ll just put in the quick one, the next day when we wanted to shift, we had to go over Mills Creek that was a sandy creek. He put some corduroy in there to get me over the creek, it was an old car, an old truck with solid rubber tyre wheels. I thought, “You bastard, you’re not going to beat Doug, are you.” So when I get to the creek, over it went

12:30 and bogged it to buggery. Of course he didn’t see me or pick me up, or should have been there, and he came back looking for me. I said, “The account’s squared, Alf. Now you know that I’m catching the train tonight, that’s when we’re going to shift this and you’re going to take me into town. The account is squared now. Don’t worry about the shilling a foot.” Because I knew he’d be there for a bloody long time to get it out. But that was because he cut it.

13:00 Ok, so back to Emerald, everything’s all right, money – that was a lot of money in those days. A pound was a lot of money, one pound and I had twenty, enough to get married on, I thought. I go back down…

Did you really know this girl, did you love her?

I'll be crude, love. It was my first naughty, so you can understand how I felt.

13:30 She was a good girl, she finished up as a good wife but will come in after. We go down and we get married and Jimmy, this bloke who told me about Laura and the baby in Southport, he was my best man. So we get married at Mitchell Street in Brisbane. I stayed at home for a couple of nights, get out of the game. But I made my mind up

14:00 before that, that when I get married my family will never have to suffer like I did. I knew I had to make a quid. So anyhow, I get there and – oh, she came back with me while I finished off the Fairburn Dam, the foundation drilling.

14:30 When we come to Brisbane I went to fruit row which is by Runcorn, Bradford Kendall Steelworks. I bought a little shed on a piece of land, just a car shed park. I went out to Bradford Kendall, asked for a job and they said, "What are you going to do?" I thought I'd come down and be a carpenter, because I'd done all this carpentering work.

15:00 I said, "A carpenter." So the union bloke came around that was there and he called him over and said, "This bloke, we want to put him on as a carpenter." He said, "Where's your ticket?" and I said, "What bloody ticket?" He said, "You've got to have a ticket to be a carpenter." "Pig's arse!" I said, "I've been doing carpentering work for years out west." He said, "No, down here…" So I had to be a labourer then for the thing. We had a little house at Prucrow [?], as I say Billy Kendall came into the picture, the boss

15:30 came up from Sydney because they started to build the place, and it was my job to be a labourer there. He came up and was starting to poke around, and I said, "Piss off." He must have took a liking to me because ultimately when he finished he put me in a certain position and he kept raising me all the time, right through the process of the whole business. So I had that little place

16:00 and then I decided to buy some land at Loganlea, so Doug being ambitious like he was, he didn't buy one block, he bought three blocks. Built a house.

What was Loganlea like then, what year are we in?

Loganlea, it would be 1951 to something like that, early '50s. So I built a little house, scrounging stuff, not bludging it but getting stuff at the right price all over the place. I

16:30 built a little house, got a heap of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, built the sheds to get the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s going.

Was it country out there, or was it suburban?

Oh, no it was country, love. It was Kingston, right out. I was going to be a big farmer, because I couldn't work out coming from the west, how they're not all rich down here with the rainfall and the market. I thought they must be all rich because they've got the rainfall to grow the stuff and they've

17:00 got the market to sell the stuff. But it wasn't to be because it was pretty poor soil and I wasn't used to this country down here, pretty poor. So I mucked around a bit. When I was at Bradford and Kendall and got to a certain height, "Well, Douglas, the land at Loganlea is not much chop, you better look for something else." So I got in touch with an agent and we had a look at some land at Beaudesert and somewhere else, and he said,

17:30 "Are you interested in a cane farm?" I said, "I'm interested in anything that's a going concern." He said, "I've got one on the market. Come down." So I met this bloke down there and he was a ratbag, full of talk but no work, always telling all the other farmers how to make money but no good himself. So I thought, "How do I handle this? I've got a house and land up at

18:00 Loganlea." And I had three deeds, and I said, "I'll sell one house on one deed. I'll give you that and I'll take over the debt that you owe on this other place." He was in a long way in debt, he wasn't paying hid debt at all. I said, "I'll take your debt to Fred Stringer," who lived in Brisbane. He couldn't quick enough.

18:30 I said, "On top of that…" because I was a boss cocky at BK [Bradford and Kendall], I said, "I'll also give you a damn good job." He said, "Oh, that'll be good."

Then you were a cane farmer, were you?

Yeah cane farmer and a dairy farmer. So I had a contract with Paul's, got into debt over there, went wherever banks offered me money I went. Luckily the Bank of New South Wales gave me all the money I wanted in one hit.

19:00 Tightened my belt.

What was the cane farming industry like, and dairy farming back then?

Stable, pretty stable. In fact it was only the next year that the Japs came into it, and they were paying a hundred pound a tonne, for sugar. But up to there it was good, it wasn't that high, but that's what they came in with but it was all baloney [untrue] because

19:30 it never eventuated. The milk and cows – I milked fourteen cows for half a gallon of milk, that's how good his property. Fourteen cows for half a gallon of milk. It used to take me about three or four days to get enough to put in a little can for the bloke to take away. So I knew that was no good, I wanted better quality cows and I want more feed and I want more cows. So that's when I went to the

20:00 Bank of New South Wales and went – I didn't say it to him like that, but I said, "I want fifteen hundred pounds." He said, "What's your figures? What have you got?" I told him what I had and he must have took it like, he said, "All right." So the fifteen hundred pound overdraft finished up at five thousand pound overdraft, because I just went in and I thought, "Well, Doug you've just got to go." But I never went on holidays,

20:30 whatever I bought I could have sold again. I bought cattle. Ok, if I can't jump the hurdle I'll sell the cattle, I'll sell the tractors, go back to where I was, zero. They'll be square, I'll only be time lost. So we kept going there and finished up buying the place next door, finished up buying the next place further on than that on the Logan River – because it was on the river. My places linked it all up together, and

21:00 that also gave me access to the sugar mill, instead of going all the way around here. Bearing in mind that I said my family would never have to suffer.

So you had children by this stage?

Two little boys at that stage. By the time they were there, Ray would have been about eight and Dudley was ten.

21:30 **Do you remember what it was like when your first son was born, how that felt for you?**

Oh, quite happy. Very, very pleased, yeah. Very pleased and very soft and wanted to cry. And the second one was the same, and the third one after – not that one – a bit more to go on here. She won't be listening to this. So anyhow this was my first wife. I worked very hard,

22:00 I acquired all this other land and then I was top cocky at Bradford Kendall, and I made sure that Bradford Kendall were paying big money for Doug Leitch. I was in a position to work overtime, whatever I wanted, bang, bang, Doug was taking a bit. I would get home at one o'clock in the morning, get on the tractor and plough till three, go back to bed for two hours, go back to work at five. I worked hard. My wife worked very hard, because I'd go and get the cows at five o'clock, she'd milk

22:30 them while I was away, she'd do all that part, clean up. The kids got a bit older after a couple of years.

It doesn't sound like you had much quality of life, it sounds like you were just working?

It was not a concern at all, that was the aim, whatever had to be done, had to be done. We had to sacrifice holidays, drinking, smoking, all that had to.

What were you doing it all for, Doug? What were you chasing?

To make sure that my family would never ever

23:00 have to suffer a life like me. Without parents, without security – so they'd have to, they'd always have security in their own backyard, they wouldn't have to go outside for anything. But anyhow, I ran into one of my first wife's boyfriend's

23:30 brother. I said, "G'day, Tom. How are things going, how's Fay?" He said, "All right." He had had a big dust-up [fight] with his brother – the brother that was my wife's boyfriend, at one stage. He said, "You know Doug, when you went to Caulfield to do that drilling in Winton,

24:00 that Faye was sleeping with my brother?" I said, "No, I didn't."

Was that before you were married or after?

No, this was before I was married but she said that she was a virgin, that she had lost it all at Rockhampton because of the rough tides, and Doug was that naïve and dumb that he believed everything that was told to him. So I went and just chewed on it, I'd

24:30 acquired one and I don't know what it was worth, it was worth – present day if they still had it, it would be worth three million now. But in those days it would be worth, going back to 1950, it would be worth one hundred thousand pounds, by the time I left – pound, this is after the fifties, after '66 when it was pounds. So I was chewing it over, I was

25:00 very just not happy about the whole thing. But bearing in mind what I told you before, a liar – was very important to Doug, and that hurt me a hell of a lot. Then I started to be a bit, not lonely but got my own lone atmosphere. I run into this other sheila, she was

25:30 married. A couple of years after – I wasn't playing up with her, I was young, I was forty-eight or something, full of life but I wasn't playing up with her. I said to her about going away, it took me a long time because she had two kids, it took me a long time to sway her to come away. Finally she decided and said we'll take the youngest one and we'll go.

26:00 So away we went and of course my first missus – oh, I drove home to get some gear, because I had the car. So I took the car, took four hundred dollars out of the bank, went home, the two boys were there and they said, “What are you home for, Dad?” I said, “Your dad won’t be home tonight.” “What do you mean?” I said, “Your dad’s leaving home.” Big stun.

How old would your boys be then?

Douglas would be about sixteen seventeen,

26:30 and the other bloke would be fifteen. So I went and we pissed off, then came all the other fun. Because I was up in that level, to eye contact with good accountants, good solicitors, barristers, I was in a pretty high fraternity. I might have been rough but he could handle himself in among this company and that company. It didn’t matter, rough as guts Doug can be, Doug

27:00 can be hoi polloi if he wants to too. So anyhow, I worked out where she could get it all free of gift duty – because you still had to pay gift duty in that day. Because of my connections and he explained what I had to do and how I had to do it to get it all done. So she could get all that for nix [nothing], just a complete sway over. I thought that was all right, I was happy.

27:30 **Why did you do that, Doug?**

I don’t value money. I don’t value money as being a god.

But you were starting a new life.

Yeah, I took four hundred dollars out of the bank because I knew that I’d make it, I knew I’d make it again. So away we went.

Did you ever confront her about what she’d done?

What she had done, my wife?

28:00 She was supposed to pay me a proportion of what – see I company-ised the whole thing, She as manager would get a good figure, the boys as working on the place would get good working wages, and they would all get a share of it, but get nothing. She was to pay me then, when she could afford it, six thousand pound or something like that, when she could afford it, which could have been twenty years.

But did you ever confront her about the betrayal?

28:30 Oh yes, a lot of times. She wanted me back right or wrong and everything else. I told her why, “I could just stand there and look at you, and look at you and think you’re a liar. I would be better away.”

So if she had of told you in the beginning, would that have been different?

In the very beginning – because of the hurt with Laura, I would have said it would have. I would have walked away then,

29:00 because Laura hurt me that much that it took all that time from eighteen to twenty five, that’s seven years and I had plenty of opportunities, to even get close to her – to even hold her hand and get close to her. As soon as they looked like getting close and getting attractive, piss off, or I’d piss off and leave that town and go somewhere else, anything to get away.

So that was your second big blow for you really?

But I knew that I would get over the hurt, I knew

29:30 I was very confident. I knew what I was capable of, that I’d go there. Even the bloke at the manager of BK, he wouldn’t pay me superannuation, he gave it all to her, to my first wife. He supported, he made sure that Billy Kendall wouldn’t, because I wrote to him and he wrote me a good reference – I’ve still got it at home, it’s probably somewhere here. A good reference on capabilities, but sorry Doug, I can’t do anything about your superannuation.

30:00 So she got all that as well.

Is there a happy ending for Doug?

I’m happy enough. I know where I’m going, I’m not frightened to die. The only thing I’m frightened of dying is if I’m mutilated, but I’m not frightened of getting sick and slowly go down, and me having control of the situation, and know I’m going down, and know when I’m going to die

30:30 because I’ll just go. As long as I don’t get run over by a train or cut up or get knocked around, I wouldn’t like that. But if it’s peaceful – that’s why I’m going to live to a hundred, because it’s got to be a peaceful death, see.

How did you come to meet your current wife?

Spiritually, love. I was boss of Bradford and Kendall – boss, kingpin. That was my department, special wheel plant, making wheels,

31:00 special plant. Steel foundry over there, griffin wheel foundry over here, Roy or Doug, king pin. So they decided when the got started to bring all the railway bosses, Evans Deacon bosses, some other firm bosses, all big firm bosses to have a look at this big pour. So we did the big pour – this is where I had the blue with Billy Kendall, that's why he knows.

31:30 So anyhow, and we bring the historical, the railway historical mob – my wife's husband was high up in the railway historical mob. They come by bus, never seen her in my life – that's the woman I'm going to be with. Simple as that, that's the woman I'm going to be with. Circumstances

32:00 I don't know how I come to know her any other way. A short time after, because I was office boy too, I had to do papers up in the office and all that. I walk into the office and who's on the switch? So from there, it was just a case of Doug going up, getting to know her more and more and more. It took two years – there was no hanky panky,

32:30 two years. We decided to go away. We have one boy – so I have two boys from the first marriage, one boy, Douglas, he's down in Melbourne, so that's it. But we've come all right, not as much as what Doug would have wanted to because there's a lot of opportunities that I wouldn't have. But I know that I love here by the fact

33:00 of what I do for her. My first wife with all the problems, of course her old grandma said, "No don't get into debt." My mum said, "Don't get into debt for anything over a hundred pound, Doug." She didn't know that Doug was in for about thirty thousand pound. I said – not telling a lie, "No, I won't get into debt for a hundred pound, Mum." But I didn't say that I was in debt for thirty thousand because I had all this property that had to be paid off.

33:30 The difference between – see my first wife I demanded that she sign the papers, and she'd say, "No, we can't afford it." I'd say, "Sign the bloody things." It was all for her good but she didn't realise because she wasn't used to money, she wasn't used to this sort of life. With this one, the first thing that comes to my mind if I think, land, horses, whatever I want,

34:00 "How will it affect Diane?" If I sense that it will throw her out of gear, even though I want it, push it aside Douglas, forget about that, let it go. So it tells me that because of my independence, because of the way I am, because I've never had to be bossed, I'm bossed without her bossing me. Bossing because she –

34:30 that's all, so we're going along all right. We're not millionaires but we have a quid, we don't have to starve. We're always in a position to help the bloke down there. He's bloody silly, he uses the credit card to the limit plus, and then he gets into strife, and "Mum, can you help me out?" "How much?" "Six and a half thousand."

35:00 But he's going to get it anyhow, so I say to him, "You have to pay that before I die," but he never will, will he. He'll get most of what's around here anyhow, plus what's in the bank and the land – we've got land in Laidley.

Do you still have a good relationship with your sons from your first marriage?

No. One wiped me completely, the other fella

35:30 it took him about fifteen years. I got a phone call one day – his name's Dudley, "It's Dudley here." I said, "Yeah, what's your problem?" He said, "Mum's died." They never told me. "Mum died x number of years ago and he's grabbed the lot, he got all the land, all the tractors,

36:00 all the money, he got everything. What will I do about it?" I said, "It's not for me to say what you would do about it, but if you don't do something about it, you will regret it all your life. Even if you do something about it and you lose. You will regret it all your life."

That's good advice.

Yeah, so he did and he finished up with – it was worth then a million then, when it happened.

36:30 He got fifteen thousand dollars. But his solicitor told him and me, "Take what's there because otherwise the solicitor's get the lot." So he took that, and he's all right, he's a millionaire himself now.

Doug, can I just ask why you thought it was important for you to talk to us today?

I probably want to tell the story. It's a different story to what I've got on tapes.

37:00 It's a story that I probably haven't completely told anyone else, and it's there and it's in archives, which means it's forever there. Someone gets my tapes and they throw them in the creek, it will be gone. The papers I've written will be gone, so that's it. All the stuff I've got here will be gone, but this is archives, so in time to come, who knows –

37:30 three or four generations are going to say, "Oh, I had a great, great grandfather named Douglas Roy Leitch that lived in 62 River Road, Bundamba. How can I find out about him?" You go to archives and you've got the story. That's how I see it.

Is there any kind of final words of wisdom that you'd say to either the young people in your

family that are to come, or just young people in general, being

38:00 **the man that sought the wisdom of others when you were a boy?**

I found in a lot of cases it's wise not to overburden people with more than what they can handle. If you overburden with what they can't handle they worry, and make a mess of it anyhow because it's something they can't handle. But all I say to them, let tomorrow look after itself, today is today. What you've done two minutes ago is history.

38:30 If I called you a liar in front of fifty people, those fifty people go away uptown and I come back to you and say, "I'm sorry, you're not a liar." Those fifty people that didn't hear me say that, will for the rest of their lives say she's a liar because they didn't hear the end result. So what you say or what you do now is history, that's immediately gone.

39:00 You can't retract that, you've said it or you've done it. You might be able to do something about it but you've done it, so you can't do anything about that. If you have an argument with someone, that's what I mean, or if it's financial you can do something, you can go and get a credit card and pay it off. But if it's something you've done to someone, like call him a liar, you can't retract that because that is said. What you've done is done anyhow.

39:30 If you take the wrong turn in life – and there is a road. We're all born to walk on a road. Your road may be similar to mine but there's a gap between the two roads.

40:00 Your road it there, mine could be similar but you've got to be handled in different ways because when this road comes to the bumpy part, what happens? You either jump the hurdle and go on, or you become a dingo and you leave it there. I was on a broad road for a long, long time, and it's only lately

40:30 whatever it is that talks to me – there was a chasm. This road finished in a big chasm, and I thought, "Gee." The next thing that comes to my mind is that I'm sitting on a rock in a big storm, in amongst it there's this… Not a voice – it doesn't say, "Do this." It's probably my own self, but it says, "Doug, you walk back and you'll find a way around it." So when I walked back on this broad road I found a narrow little road about two inches thick going there. Then when it got on further it was crossing creeks and gullies and very, very rough. And at the moment that's the road I'm on, so it's not for me to know if I succeed and keep, but I know that I have to keep walking. Now whatever's going to be at the end of that road will be it, whether it's what I need. I do… Like love and care, love is very important. Doug is not…