Australians at War Film Archive

Keith Young (Bill) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:52 **I was just wondering about your life history, your pre-war life**

01:00 **and then after the war and we'll come back to the points as we come along.**

I was born in Tasmania, my mum died when I was a baby. My dad brought me up to Sydney and we lived in Ultimo through the depression. People have often asked me about the depression. When you're a kid you don't realise you're in any sort of situation. Except that you're happy to be alive, and you enjoy yourself. I enjoyed myself when I was a kid in Ultimo, kicking cans up Brewarra Road.

01:30 Then my dad he went away. He got it into his head to go off to Spain, the Spanish Civil War. I'd been rather annoyed at that when I was a little fellow. I thought he could've stayed home with me, but there you go. I was on the road for a while. A friend and I rode push bikes around. Originally our idea was to ride around Australia. We got as far

02:00 as the desert and they asked us where our water bottles were. There were no roads, only tracks, so they turned us back and after a bit of wandering around doing spare jobs here and there we decided to join the army. That was the start of my main adventure. It took me into a different life altogether. I joined the army in Melbourne. The shed or the

02:30 place where we joined up was a hut that was put temporarily beside the GPO. I remember that morning very well. We hadn't eaten all day. The day before. That morning, it was very early, about six or seven, there was a heavy fog, Melbourne weather, very cold. we crouched outside the building, it wasn't open. I remember us going crook because there was a war on. You'd expect the

03:00 recruitment office to be open. Eventually they opened. I remember the fellow came to the counter and he said "Which mob do you want to join up in?" My friend and I said, "We want to go in the army" and he said "Which army?" and we said "The one that goes overseas". He said, "Are you old enough". We said "What age have you gotta be?" and he said "Nineteen" and we said "Oh, that's just right for us we're exactly nineteen". He said "You can get your mum and dad's consent?" and we said "We're orphans" and he said "What

03:30 both of you". We said "Yes". He said "Whose your next of kin?", an' we said "An aunt". He said, "An aunt, oh well. Here, take these forms and get your auntie's consent". So we went next door to the Post Office. There were plenty of pens and inks there ready. So Don signed my papers and I signed his,which was very kind of us. We took them back. They took us out to Royal Park.

04:00 After hours of red tape and going through medical examinations and what have you, and still nothing to eat and when we got out to Royal Park the kitchens had closed and the cooks had gone home. But fortunately they salvaged some sausages and mashed potatoes and gravy.

Bill, I'm going to come back to that, I think it's a great story. Let me just continue with your

04:30 **history. I will come back to the recruitment. I think it's a great story.**

You want the pre-army history?

Up til now, just the through and through.

Well, we went out to Bacchus Marsh where we trained. Eventually I became, Don he went into a transport company, I became a member of the third reinforcement to the 2/29th Battalion, who was

05:00 about to board ship to go to Malaya. After a fair bit of training we went off a few weeks later in a Dutch ship, the Seviak. We went across the Great Australian Bight and one of the wildest storms that the captain of the ship had ever seen. So much so that it had wrecked all the crockery and gear and we had to pull into Fremantle, as did the other bigger ships.

05:30 There we were fortunate enough to get a day's leave and we took another one as extra. We thought it

was only fair. Later on they didn't think so and we were fined five pound, of course, for being AWL[Away Without Leave]. But while I was there I met a lovely family. They were very nice. A young girl, I'll remember her, I remembered her for quite a while. We walked hand in hand, you know. That's the last I seen of her but I'll always remember that little incident. We left

06:00 Fremantle and we went on up and unfortunately one of the fellows died there, Pat Green, nice fella. When we went on final leave before we sailed off, when we came back one of the guys was missing, never came back, so Pat, who hadn't been on the draft, was brought on to it and I can remember how happy he was. He was a family man and unfortunately he got meningitis. It was up near Broome that they buried him at sea.

06:30 Quite an emotional ceremony they had, when the ship stops and there's no sound and the motor and everything like that and all you can hear is the slap of the water against the ship. And they put the flag draped body and it slides out on the arm and you watch it going, slithering down, an impression I had as a young man, it's always been with me. We got to Singapore after that with no mishap. But

07:00 as soon as we got to Singapore we didn't stay at all. They put it straight on trucks and whisked us up to our training camp at a little town called, now what was it called now? Harpour, was it? It doesn't come to me. But our army base training camp was just outside the little village and there we trained. I can remember the little village. And one of the memories of it was across from the little

07:30 Chinese cafe there was this cordial factory, soft drink factory, this old weatherboard, non-painted, standing there, but its attraction was this huge sign, which, written across the whole length of the building, the Fuk Heng Cordial Company. Many a toast we made to that sign, we thought it was very cordial of them. Another attraction they had at that little

08:00 village there was a river just down from it, a lovely little bay. The water was so inviting. Into the bay was this little jetty, timber jetty. We'd go down there after a session in the bull ring and we'd hang our clothes over a sign that said "swimming forbidden by order of the army command". Then we'd dive in and have a good swim. One day we were warned that the

08:30 provos [Provosts – Military Police]were coming. Our cockatoo yelled out "The provos' coming". So we out the water, we're going along trying to get dressed, at the same time racing away from the law. All of a sudden we realised that the people where we were going were all funny looking. Some of them were hideous, with scars and deformities and we wondered why so many people in the one place. It wasn't until we came though the rather ornate iron gates of the place that we saw

09:00 the big sign across the top saying the 'Johore Baru leper colony'. For days afterwards we were going around examining ourselves for signs of leprosy, worried, you know.

And you were then put into action?

When the war started funnily enough I was on guard duty this particular night and we could hear the droning of the planes high up in the dark

09:30 sky, in the night sky, with the clouds around and I remember the lieutenant of the guard came out, the officer of the guard and he had a lantern with him and he held it up, not that the light did much good, we couldn't see the planes by it. But he did remark, he said, "I didn't realise we had so many planes". And then all of a sudden the ack-ack opened up and fired at them and we realised that they were enemy planes, not our own. They'd just come back from bombing

10:00 Singapore. I often wondered if anyone had got round to ringing the Yanks up and warning them about it because this happened a couple of hours before Pearl Harbour. The time difference between Singapore and Pearl Harbour. So it'd be interesting to find out if someone rang them up and said, "I say old boy, do you realise the Japs are bombing us, they may come over to you too", something like that. I've wondered about it. Then, not long after that about a week

10:30 or so after that, a group of us was put into a truck and taken up country onto the Muar River, to the dam there and we were to guard the dam. We stayed there for a couple of days wondering what was going on and who was going to try and steal our dam. I am happy to say no one did, when we left it was still there. Another coincidence is that a few days after that about three quarters of our battalion

11:00 was involved in probably the biggest battle fight that was there at the Muar River.

Perhaps we can just compress the time a little bit. We will come back to these finer details. It's just to give us, tick us the major landmarks. I know it is a very complex story. Perhaps the details we don't need at the moment.

11:30 You mean we just want a rough sketch at the moment, sketch it out in charcoal. We'll make it a charcoal.

12:00 The fellows in our battalion was involved in the war up in Muar. On one day alone they got ten tanks. Everyone's seen the photos of our tanks the fellows got. The 4th anti-tank and the 15th artillery field regiment and the 29th. They battled down. We lost a lot of men. Hundreds of men were killed in that battle. And we went down to, um

12:30 trying to remember the names. Fancy forgetting them. To the river there at, I have to stop a moment. I have to try and find. What's the name of the river where we stopped to put the reef on the west coast?

13:00 It's worrying to forget. It's so important. They came down there, that's where Colonel Anderson got the VC [Victoria Cross], and then the battle became so overwhelmingly on the side of the Japanese that the order was given, every man for himself. Some of the fellas escaped up north and joined the guerilla forces up there. Others went down across to Sumatra. One group got back

13:30 home to Australia. There's been a book written about those fellas just recently, a year or so, but when the guys got back down, those that came out of it, we were outside the sultan's palace by then, in Johore, which was just across from the causeway from Singapore Island and there we reformed. At first it looked as if the Battalion would be finished, our losses were so great, but they combined all the reinforcements from all

14:00 over the Division and so the Battalion was functioning again and we marched across the causeway and settled down on the Krangj River, right near where the Kranji cemetery is now, where our brethren are buried there now. I remember looking across at the Japanese while we were waiting and thinking about the ordinariness of the scene. The same sun was shining on them that was shining on us.

14:30 It was almost democratic it was. You realised of course that if you stuck your head up they would shoot you and you'd do likewise if they did. A big advantage they had, the Japanese. The air was controlled by them. Their Zeros were flying over all the time. And they were even able to have observation balloons up, so you couldn't even go off for a pee somewhere without a Zero coming over and machine

15:00 gunning the area. Their observation balloons were deadly. Then on the night of the invasion, I can remember it well, the artillery fire was something tremendous. Hour after hour after hour they fired across the Strait on to the lines of the 22nd Brigade and the 19th Battalion in particular who had lost so many up at Muar with us. The 29th Battalion up at Muar, they had bore the brunt of the

15:30 bombardment and the attack. When the Japanese came across early in the morning, two o'clock or whatever time it was, they just overwhelmed the 22nd Brigade. And for some reason or t'other, because of the strategy of the leaders or whatever, the Japanese were able to break straight through and cut the six, cut the brigades into pieces and

16:00 go through and within days, within about four or five days of that, the Island had surrendered.

At the surrender, you were…

I was in hospital, I was wounded. I was taken on the 14th. It's not really fair. I was a prisoner of war from the 14th and they didn't let me out of goal until four days after the surrender, so I got that five days extra pay they owe me.

16:30 so,

Perhaps, I know this is a very complex and big story and we will come back to it I promise you, but perhaps you could just tell me the places you were held in captivity during the war which will allow me to , just the names of the places …

I was in hospital in the 13th AGH, which was near Changi on the coast and about a week after the surrender we were driven over into

17:00 the barracks. I was in the barracks for a while. Then I was in different working parties. We went down to the wharf and we were working there. We went down to Thompson Road, building the memorial. And then on the 23rd July a group of us, roughly 1500 of us were designated B force

17:30 and we were sent across. We boarded ship, on the Obi Meru, we were transhipped across to Borneo to Sandakan and from Sandakan we built an airfield and while building the airfield I was caught outside the wire and after being bashed up so much so that the fellas thought we'd been killed. They thought our eyes had been gouged out, among other things.

18:00 You'll probably go back to that. Then we were transhipped to the Sultan of Sarawak's yacht. Sounded good but it was a dirty old tub and the Japs made it so I think. We were all handcuffed together. There were eight of us by the time we all got on board ship, there were five other chaps who had been picked up escaping. One

18:30 chap had hit a Jap. We made our merry way down the coast of Borneo. We stopped at Lavawin, we stopped at Jesseleton, it's now Kodakinabaloo we stopped at a couple of places and then finally we ended up at Kuching. We were put in a wire cage the eight of us and we were there for about four months, sitting squat-legged with hands on your knees. It was a coot of a position for us.

19:00 I don't know how the Asians, they seem to be comfortable with it but we're not, I wasn't. Then we were sentenced at what had been a catholic church and mission. The Japanese had converted the main hall into a military court and when we came in we were all handcuffed. There were five Chinese. It was very dramatic in as much

19:30 as we didn't realised what was going on. It was all in Japanese, Japanese speak. Pieces of paper going

up and coming back down amongst the hierarchy up to the judge and back down to the prosecutor. They have a habit of sucking in their breath and “Ah so hi hu ku hi ho hu hu ho.” It's quite a thing to see. “He ho hi he ho” and up'd go the piece of paper and then “He ho hi he ho” and down it would come again. And then finally

20:00 it was all over and the chap, the prosecutor, he turned to the five Chinese who was on my right and he said to the first one you'll be sentenced to be executed. It come out in English now, the English interpreter gave us this and as soon as they said execution we thought these guys are playing fair dinkum you know. And the next china, execute and execute and execute. And of course by this time Jimmy Brown, my friend, he's the first between the Chinese, and of course his hands

20:30 were shaking a little bit 'cause of the seriousness of it and I think it registered right up the line I should imagine. And then the Jap interpreter said “Private Brown, you have been sentenced to”, we all waited, “eight years in prison”. We could have kissed him. What a nice kind man. When death is the alternative, what's eight years life? Different kettle of fish when you're talking in those terms.

21:00 It has different bearing on this situation. At any rate, it went right down. Anyway, he said to me, “You’ve been sentenced to eight years, but because of your youth and the mercy of the Japanese justice system we are reducing it to four years hard labour”. And so it went. Then we were taken out and we were taken straight down to the wharf. Some of the guys, Australians, were working down there and later told me of seeing us. They were made to

21:30 turn their backs on us so they weren't allowed to watch what was going on. We were taken out of the trucks and put into a horse box of all things. Still had the evidence of the horse on the floor. They closed the lids on the horse box and of course you can imagine the heat, it's very hot, it's right on the tropics. We were there for hours in this horse box eight of us, in back with the manure in it.

Maybe we could hit the place names to get us

22:00 **through, so we can come back to all this**

Well then we came across to Singapore and from there into Outram Road gaol. In Outram Road gaol I spent two years and a month, roughly. And on the 19th of August the nice man came along and let us out. The guard, as a matter of fact, the guard

22:30 when he let us out I looked and I had two Indians in the cell at the same time. Only a little cell and they crowded us up one end. Tell you about that later eh. They let us out and I remarked at the time to one of the guys in the next cell, I said “This is it. The guards haven't got their swords on.” They looked naked. All that time we'd seen the Kempetai [Japanese Military Police] guards always had their swords and on this day they had no swords.

23:00 Well they took us up to the top, well the warden of the gaol, well he was there, the old bloke, the captain, and through the interpreter he told us today we are sending you out to Changi prison war camp, but you must come back later to complete your sentences. I'm still waiting. We haven't gone back. Then they sent us out, the trucks came at last. I went back to my Battalion. I was too sick to

23:30 stay with them. I had to go into ward. We're in the ward, then they put us on to the hospital ship, the Arangi, and we came home. Marvellous reception. We stopped at Darwin, different place had a picnic for us and we could see all the damage that Darwin had taken. All the destroyed ships everywhere. My old ship had gone to Tasmania then. The Salandia. It was over on its side on

24:00 the bank, wrecked. When we went to Sydney, my aunt, who was in the Red Cross somewhere, she'd got permission for me to come off the ship because only those that were to get off at designated places were allowed off the ship. Well I got off the ship and my first impression of Sydney and the wartime in Sydney was I'd finally got to a pub and I had a friend with me, got him out without a leave pass

24:30 and we got to this pub and it was crowded. It was the Town Hall hotel. It's not there now and there's a crowd outside the door and this old fellow come along and he had two dirty glasses and he pushed them into my chest, and he says, “I always look after the diggers”. And I looked and I'm scratching my head, and this fellow comes over and says, “He's doin' you a favour mate, before you can get a beer, you've gotta get a glass”. So that was the conditions in Sydney that I found when I came home.

25:00 Then I went down to Melbourne and they had these radio announcers, one of the first outdoor broadcasting affairs and they were making a big thing of it. I was on a stretcher going by and he said to me, he said, “How old are you?” and I said “Nineteen”, and he said “Are you one of the crew are you?” and I said “No, I'm a prisoner of war”. Nineteen was the legal age

25:30 of course for joining the army then and I'd been home, over four and a half years, and I went home to a great welcoming and it was beautiful. Another thought that came out of it, I remember getting out of hospital some weeks after I got a day's leave to go to my aunt's place in Hobart. When I got there I'd brought my haversack with me and all my uncles and aunts and that were sitting in the big lounge room, the main room at my grandmother's

26:00 and unthinkingly I pulled out a cigarette and I lit it up, and after a while I noticed my uncle breathing a sigh and watching the smoke and I said “Uncle, have a cigarette”, and he said “No boy, we couldn't take

one of your cigarettes". So I grabbed my haversack, which was full of packets of cigarettes, Capstans and Players and I tipped them in a heap there. Well within two up the place was full of smoke, everyone,

26:30 they were all rationed and of course the ration wasn't until the next day. I happened to get there on the day before rations came and they were all out of cigarettes, and that's another impression on Australia from when I left it and when I came back. Then after another while in hospital I took a CRTS course in cabinet making and became a cabinet maker, but I

27:00 couldn't keep up. My nerves weren't too good at the time, inside with the dust, and with my chest, so they advised I went back outside into carpentry, so I went out into carpentrying. I met Betty my wife, must have been, my wife, around 1950s perhaps. In 1951 I married and I've got 4 children two boys and two girls, which are very well worked out, a boy and a girl and a boy and a girl,

27:30 which is not easy to do. Unfortunately life for us wasn't all that good, well in one way or another. Divorced now, after twenty-five years. I came up here to Sydney and I caravanned 'round Australia. I spent eighteen months doing that. I came back to Sydney

28:00 and I stopped at a caravan park down there at Ramsgate. When I got there it had a sign up saying no vacancies. I went to turn around and an English lady's voice came out and said "Yoo hoo, are you looking for a site?". I said "Yes, as a matter of fact I was". She said, "There's one vacant on Saturday if you come. How long do you want it for.?" I said, "Oh, a couple of weeks" She said "Right, come Saturday". I did, and five years

28:30 later I moved out. I stayed there for five years. Marvellous place. Nice shopping nearby and the club, nice people, I met Frank and all the people. So since then I've retired and here I am here now in front of the camera.

You a carpenter for most of your career?

Oh, a carpenter, and I was an electrical retailer, I had a couple of shops in retailing, but carpentry, mainly, yes,

29:00 carpentrying. Up here, when I came up here, I did a lot of sub-contract carpentrying, bathroom alterations and kitchen alterations. Things you could handle by yourself more or less. So, eh yes, it was a complete life. I've been reasonably happy with it. Looking at it I don't think I'd need to swap it, unless I got a two for one deal or something like that.

29:30 People often say to me, they say, "It must've been dreadful being a POW, I wish you hadn't've gone". I said "Look, it was the best thing that ever happened to me". It was a cruel time and dreadful times and unfortunately so many of my mates never came back, but without that in the background, itself. But the other things that came out of it, the development for me personally as a person. With my start out in life I'd probably have ended up a larrikin. I was a

30:00 larrikin when I joined the army, there's no doubt about that. I argued with everything, I quipped at every movement in the army. If there wasn't a war on the army would've kicked me out I'm sure. The people I met, Paddy O'Toole, Bob Shipside, those blokes in the army, they pulled me into line. On reflection I find it was probably the best thing that ever happened for me because I'd had no education and I hardly ever went to school.

30:30 There was no one driving me to go to school. When you're a lad and no one asks you to go on to school you don't go on to school. I wished I'd had've in some ways, but I do all right.

Thank you Bill that was wonderful. Thanks for your patience. That will allow us to go back and go back to the oils. We've got probably a

31:00 **whole mural I think we've got going here. Now we can go back, take a big breath and**

31:30 **start at the beginning. I'm interested in your larrikin past but we'll even go back before that. Your earliest memories. Do you remember your dad bringing you up to Sydney from Hobart.**

No, I was only a baby then. As a matter of fact, there's no plaque on the wall of the house, but I was born in the house at Clarendon Street, Newtown,

32:00 that my grandmother owned right up until she died. My grandfather built it, or had it built. And I was born in the front room, in Clarendon Street, Hobart. Newtown, Hobart. My dad brought me up to Sydney when I was about two, three, and I can remember living, we lived in Redfern for a while. Now my dad worked as a

32:30 barrowman at that time, with some people, the Jepson family, who were into the hostelry business, horses and carts. They leased out horses and carts and all that sort of thing. They had a place in Ultimo, with big stables all round the quadrangle. It'd been built for that sort of thing. It was a custom built hostelry. But of course with the advent of the motor car

33:00 and the coming of the depression probably the worst business you could be in was horses and carts and things like that, so gradually the horses and carts went down, they were sold put, the business deteriorated and then we went into smaller houses along the way. That was the history of the Jepsons

and the Youngs during the depression.

What happened to your mum?

She died, but why I don't know. We have a,

33:30 nn those days, it's hard for people to realise the feeling of animosity that was there between the Protestants and the Catholics. It's not now, because he's a Catholic and I put up with him now. I shouldn't do that, I'm not allowed to speak to him, I'm sorry. My mum was a Catholic. She's Irish, an Irish Shaw,

34:00 Shaw was her maiden name, the Irish firm of Shaw and McGorrah, legal firm. I don't think my grandfather, who was an old Protestant mason from way back, he was too happy about my father marrying a Catholic. I'm only surmising here, because he was really a nice old fella, but they did have these weird ideas about one another,

34:30 about religion you know, strong. So my family never ever told me about my mother.

You were an only child?

Yes, and the only inference I got of my mother's people, I think, I am pretty sure, idea that they were bog Irish, come over for the eat like I did when I joined the army. I must have it in my blood. But any rate, the only

35:00 time my mum's people would come to life was when I was in an ordinary school and they had a chance of popping me into a Catholic school. So I spent some time as a youngster in a Protestant school, state schools, public schools and also in Catholic schools, St Pats at Broadway was one. And at one time I was in a Catholic home. My father was up cane cutting. Jobs were hard to get, some.

35:30 jobs were very hard to get. You had to take what you got, you know. While he was cane cutting, one of my mum's parents' family, I can only assume, put me in a little Catholic home down at Seven Hills it was, I can remember. I remember it wasn't very nice, because I was little and a lot of the boys were big and that was mainly it. Bully aspect of big kids. And I can remember this day still. And I

36:00 was just a little fellow, four years old, something like that. But I can remember this lovely old lady coming in. She was going to take me. I didn't know. I can remember the fox fur around her neck, and the head of the fox and the two bead eyes and I'm looking at this and I'm looking at this old lady and I'm thinking if she comes anywhere near me. I was getting ready to strike out. But it wasn't like that she was lovely. She took me by the hand and she said "Come on Keith." My real name's Keith. I

36:30 dropped that when I joined the army and became Bill. She said "Come on Keithy, you're coming home with me". She took me up the road. It was quite a way up the hill to where Seven Hills railway station and when we got there some time, we'd missed a train and we had some time to wait for a train. Little restaurants at stations in those days. She got herself a pot of tea and I had a soft drink and a Chester cake.

37:00 I remember eating the Chester cake now. Gee this is great, this is great. This is what you call life. We got on the train and she took me home to her place at Ultimo. That was the stables I was telling you about and all the horses. One of the boys, Roy, he had a boxing gymnasium upstairs above the stables. He had a, boxing bags and what have you

37:30 and all that. He was a fitness fanatic. Well Roy, during the depression as it developed, got that far he went down to Woy Woy and he lived at Woy Woy. There may be some Jepsons down there now at Woy Woy. Randy, the other son, he was an actor and he was in quite a few of the talkies and that as the crook. He was a dark fellow, a darkish skinned fellow.

Why did your dad spend so much time working away. Why was your dad spending so much time travelling?

38:00 It was the depression time. And he was a big fellow, big Bill Young. There was an article in the Herald at one time about big Bill Young. He used to fight and charm 'n' tense and all that, to get a quid you know. I didn't know, I was happy, we don't realise what the depression is when we are young. It's the older people and of course they had to go away and work and things like that, so I was kept with ma running a boarding house, Ma Jepson, Ma 'n'

38:30 Pop Jepson. They were the people I recognised right through until I was ten or eleven.

Your dad was in the first world war?

My dad was in the First World War but he wasn't in the war. He was only sixteen. He was born in 1900. And in 1915 he joined the army. He almost got away with it. He was on the ship to go overseas when my grandmother who, they called her the Admiral. She was a big woman my grandmother and no one got past her, I tell you.

39:00 She, old Nanna Tot the older people used to call her Nanna Tot, and the others it was Admiral. And Nanna Tot came down to the ship and dragged him off the ship. And I've got his discharge papers at home for underage. That probably, I mightn't've been alive cause if the death rate of people going

overseas if he'd 've gone overseas. But Nanna, she dragged him off the ship.

39:30 **He was fifteen years old?**

He was sixteen, he was fifteen when he joined, yes. He was born in 1900 and he joined the army in 1915, so he was fifteen when he was there and he was sixteen when he was discharged out. When my grandmother claimed him, you know. Now he and my uncle they were into all sorts. One job he had, his own, he worked for himself at times on

40:00 different things. One was self photography. One of those tripods and a camera and they have a bucket of hypo underneath and they develop your films. He had that job and he was going around Sydney taking photos. And another time he and my uncle had a billiard room in Redfern. You can imagine what that would have been like during the depression.

We've got a technology constraint here, we have to change tapes.

That's all right

40:30 That's great, we'll pick that up as soon as…

Tape 2

00:31 **We'll pick that back up again. Your schooling, can you tell us a little bit about your schooling.**

School, well, I went to Ultimo public school for a couple of weeks, I reckon, and I thought that was fair enough. We used to have a stall down at Paddy's market

01:00 and we used to sell fruit and all that. We had a barrow we used to go round, Uncle George that is. I'd much rather do that than go to school. So for the few years I was in Ultimo it was a continuous duel between me and various truant inspectors, you know. For those years I didn't have any schooling. When I went down to the south coast. I went to the south coast for twelve months, I was

01:30 looked after down there by a family and I went to school down there, Mr Miller I think the teacher's name was.

Who sent you down there?

Being an orphan I paraded from one place to another.

This was after your father had died.

Yes, this was in 1938/39. Beginning of the war.

Can we go back a little bit to that time, what happened with your dad?

Well,

02:00 I exactly don’t know. He joined the Communist Party, like a lot of people did in those days. It become a religion to 'em just as much as you would be if you became converted to Catholicism or some Protestant or Seven Day Adventists and that and you become really, the converts are the ones, they're the worst you know. You can't brush 'em off, they are so persistent.

02:30 My dad was like that, he was persistent. He thought Comrade Lenin and Comrade Stalin were the saviours of mankind, and so did millions of other people. Quite intelligent people some of them too.

Did you know much about the Communist Party at that time?

Oh, no, no. Except that my dad said they were the best and of course I believed him then when I was a kid. They must be. My dad said so, you know. I can remember various

03:00 things. I can remember coming home, I never had an overcoat or anything like that, and I remember coming home with him to a meeting he'd gone to and it must have been ten o'clock or so at night. We came across the old iron bridge that goes there at Market up to Ultimo, you know that bridgeway. It goes across the train lines where Darling Harbour is now. They've got a new one now. Used to have an old one. We're going across that and on the side of it, on the left hand side of it

03:30 going along, that's the Powerhouse there, Powerhouse Museum and there was a building coming out of it those days, an outhouse sort of building and it had a big wall and it was plastered, ideal. Now it was about five foot away from the closest you could get to it on the rail of the bridge. Ten o'clock at night and my dad's got a pot of paint and a paint brush on a stick, and he's painting

04:00 "Hands Off Abyssinia". Now why the bloody hell couldn't it have been Libya or something with a short name, instead of Abyssinia! You could tell how long that took and I'm slung down behind the wall and it's cold and the wind was blowing. I'm wondering when I'm going to get home. My dad was a fanatic, at that time, he was really seeing the light, and he was advertising the fact that we should lay our hands

off of Abyssinia. He did things

04:30 like that you know. He always had, when he went out. Another time I remember down over at Glebe, we came down Johns Street, Glebe, down into Wentworth Park there where the dogs are, and there's a big area where the roads meet, the T, the junction of the roads. And he had his white cross paint and everything and he painted a huge sign right across, took him hours to do. And I'm standing over by the

05:00 telegraph pole.

What did he write? What was the sign?

Something about Spain then I think it was. Abyssinia had fallen. That was old news. Spain was on the go now and that's where he got the, he went to Spain himself afterwards and that was in the early days of Spain and it was something to do with the fifth column and all that sort of thing in Spain, you know. Some message he had on Spain. I don't know what it was. I remember vividly the Abyssinia one, 'Hands off Abyssinia',

05:30 but the one on Spain, it was big, it was his masterpiece.

What year was that?

That would be around about 1937 I should imagine, 36/37, yeah. He was six foot three. He used to fight in Sharman's boxing tent and things. He was a pretty good fighter.

Did you ever go and watch him fight?

No, no, I never, he never ever took me.

06:00 for that reason. I would probably if he'd 've taken me. But I'd know from other people, Big Bill Young, you know what they used to say, Big Bill's down there fighting in the tents. Used to get a pound a fight, a pound a fight eh.

Did he ever talk about the Anzacs, or take you to Anzac Day ceremonies?

Yes, yes, he did. Now funny you say. I was nearly going to talk about that once. I remember going down George Street to Martin Place. And we were running late,

06:30 and suddenly, that must have been around about 1934, something like, I was only a little fellow. And suddenly the clock started striking in town. Well, the trams stopped, even the tram conductor got out in those days, no messin' around, they got out of the tram, and they stood to 'tention. All the people stopped and even the horse and cart stopped, you know.

07:00 Dad stopped, and I'm looking up and thinking what's goin' on here. I said to me "Dad, what's going on here?". He said "Shush, I'll tell you in a minute. And that was the eleventh of the Eleventh. Now all they know about the eleventh of the leventh is that it is the time that Gough Whitlam got it in the neck, you know. They don't know, well, they don't think about it as the armistice, it's old hat. They don't think about it now. In 1934,

07:30 the whole city, even the tram conductor getting out and the tram driver getting out of the tram, wasn't enough for them just to stop the tram. It was quite a, it's a memory that I've, stuck with me, it's stuck with me, the unusualness of it. Cause everything else was on the go and as soon s that clock struck, everything stopped. But he did, he took me along. He took me to the movies a couple of times.

08:00 He did the best he could. He had a pretty hard life himself I imagine. He was one of their front line fellows who took the bashings because he was a bruiser. Yeah. And he'd put himself in the way of a bullet too. He was the only one of the Australians who got killed. I don't think he'd be shirking the job. He was one of those blokes that what he believed in he believed in.

08:30 He went all the way with LBJ sort of thing. A lot of people do it, a lot of people.

So he went on to serve in, what happened, can you talk about that.

He went to Spain. All I know

Do you remember him saying goodbye to you?

No, I only remember he bought me a new suit I can remember feeling so proud of it. But it was short legged suit and I did want

09:00 a long legs, and he said "No, you're a big enough larrikin". He said, "Later on you can go long trousers." But he bought me a new suit and a new overcoat and I thought I was just the bee's knees. Then my grandmother came over from Tasmania. I still didn't know anything about anything. And they took me down. They said they'll take me down to Tassie with Nanna Tot, you see. Nanna Tot's a big woman.

09:30 That's where dad got his size from, his mother. They took me down to the wharf and the last I saw was my dad waving to me on the ship 'cause he had all the intentions of going away himself. He was a big man, a very big man, and the only thing I know about his adventures is what I read in the Herald about Big Bill Young being stowed away on a ship.

10:00 and the stokers, when they saw him come from behind a heap of coal on the ship, and so the stokers, when they realised he was going off to Spain, they fed him and treated him and looked after him and he got to England and a party of them then got across into France and walked across the Pyrenees, the mountain ranges, and they got down to near Barcelona and at one stage I got

10:30 a letter from him and from one stage he was a lance brigadier, but I find that in Spain that's a lance corporal. It's not a brigadier like we have.

Can we go back to the international brigade

11:00 **nobody knows about that, I have no idea about that.**

There were volunteers going over. There were three of them were in that group that went into Spain, into France. I think my father was on his own when he stowed away on the ship to England. But from England they got there where they were organising an international brigade. A lot of Americans. A lot of other people.

11:30 Americans, there were lots of Americans. They had a system where they led them across to France across the country. I don't think they had passports or anything like that. Across the mountains and down. He only was in the one battle I'm almost sure, because the letter I got he said he's washing

12:00 his clothes and he's looking forward to going in for a swim as he believes tomorrow they're going into battle. And I think he was killed in that battle. He was on a machine gun they told me. That's about all I know about what actually happens as far as he was concerned. The only other references, I bought the book, it tells, all it is, it says that Bill Young died, got killed in

12:30 battle.

Did you know why he was there at the time?

Well, he believed implicitly in his communism, in his community beliefs, beliefs of a community of nations and a community of endeavours. He believed strongly in that, very strongly, didn't always. He was a rugged individualist, right up til he had, as I say, he and his brother ran a billiards saloon, they were SP bookmaking 'n'

13:00 they ran a two-up game, I mean, he had the size to withstand, you know. From being that, somewhere along the line he got interested in that as a philosophy, then as a belief and then as a member. I'm sure myself that he was wrong. But there's so many people wrong in so many other nice organisations, acceptable organisations to us. You know, "acceptable".

13:31 So it's not up to me to judge. All I know is I loved him very much and I missed him. And I do know too that he had a very difficult and hard life, making decisions on the run and sticking up for other people. He used to often come home, black eyes, and bruised, cuts, you know. Where obviously he'd been attacked or attacking or something like that, because

14:00 they used to have these regular punch ups, things like that, with the New Guard, whatever. You know, members of the New Guard and people who had opposite views to him. And with the depression deepening and people not having jobs and the worry of it. He used to always be going around, used to go 'round with the billy cart and go round to the different butchers shops to get donations to give to the other people who were literally starving.

14:30 They'd been tossed out of their homes. Round Ultimo and that I'm talking about, and round Pyrmont. I can remember as a kid, four or five of my particular friends who had been subjected to evictions, and that's hard for a kid to understand. I remembered the family next to us, Salmons. I remember the police raiding their place.

15:00 Two storey units, terrace places we had. I remember a machine being tossed over our fence from their fence, and the smell of lead and that. It was a counterfeiting machine for making two shilling pieces, and I remember the fellow, I think his name was Chris, the young fellow, he jumped to his death from the top rather than the police get him, you know. How mad. Irishman and that sort of thing. These are the sort of things that happened down in

15:30 Ultimo in those days, because people were hungry and they were wanting to find a way, and incidentally to that, I was only reading the letter that I wrote this morning. There was a fellow used to come around every New Year's Day I think, I was, New Year 's Day yes. He had a, one of those old fashioned, well it wasn't old fashioned then, one of those square sedan cars, a Daimler or something like that, I forget now.

16:00 It was chaffeur driven. He had a good heart and good intentions, that was for sure, because he would come around and every year, he obviously had bucketfuls, brand new pennies, they were all brand new and all had the new date of the new year, so obviously someone with influence to get that, to be able to organise that. And he would come to every street corner and he would toss them out and we would chase after the car. Every street corner, you know, trying to keep up to get more pennies and get…

16:30 So as I wrote, now one day a little while back there was a letter in the paper and the man Runhide or

something, it's there somewhere, the letter. He wrote how his dad used to throw pennies out at that time. So I wrote a letter telling him that his dad not only did a good job with the pennies but he also helped us health wise as we chased his car, very good. So to find after all these years someone who belonged to that man.

17:00 That's one of the nicer part, as against the evictions, and the not so nice parts of the depression. But as kids, that went all over our head, we still was out for enjoyment, and life, we lived life.

How did you find out that your dad had died?

Oh someone told me. Very nice people came and saw me and explained it. It didn't come home to me much at the time

17:30 'cause I hadn't seen him for a while, being a good age. And even during the times, there would be times when he was up cane cutting or he was up fighting 'round with Sharman's tents or somewhere like that where I wouldn't see him. Ma Jepson and Pa Jepson were the ones I would associate in a bonding process at that time, you know. So there wasn't the same spirit you would

18:00 have with your mother or father or your father that you communicated with all the time in the natural course of events as childhood relationships, you know. So I would say it was odd, very odd. My father must have been like Paul on his trip to Damascus it must have been lightning that hit him when he was converted to his communism because he became all out, that was it.

18:29 He put his body more than once in line, to defend it and in the end he went over to Spain, and gave his life to defend it. And I often think now that it was a good job that he did because it would have killed him to find out these people what mongrels they were, Stalin all those millions of people that was killed and things.

Was there a big communist movement in Australia at the time?

Oh yes, yes, yes, like everything else

19:00 when you're winning. When the winners, when your team's winning you go and watch it. You do the things, you sing out hurrah, you cheer for 'em, you donate, you buy your raffle tickets you do everything, just when your particular sporting team is on a rise. Soon as it goes down you leave it away. During the depression, of all the starving people

19:30 and hungry and deprived people around in places like Ultimo and that's where communism spread of course, like a disease does around the drains, unclean drains. Communism and fascism and all those things get on the deprived and the people who wanna get revenge and wanna get things better, make things better one thing at all its a combination of things, a need, envy, pride n

20:00 greed. They all amalgamate. It's like when we paint, you know, us when we get our charcoal out and we just do our drawing and that's all we want people to see is just that drawing but when we want more detail we get to water-colouring or we get to painting. And when we start out we get with red paint and with yellow paint and we get with blue paint and a bit of black and a bit of white and we think my word, life's great and then we start to mix them up and we finish up with

20:30 millions and millions of colours and hues all out of that one thing. And then we put them all back together and they all become black or white again. All those colours, just bang 'em together and that white light that we see, that we shine up, and we think that's it, whether it's religion or politics, that light that shines so bright, it's also full of all those colours, the browns the greens the greys, the hues. You pick them out. People like the reds or

21:00 they like the yellows they like the greens and they're affected by them, because they are the emotions, like if we had a palette in our emotions we'd have red for danger, green for envy, black for death, different colours would affect and that would be the emotional colours that make us up. Thus ends the lesson.

A good lesson. Just

21:30 **on your dad a little bit. Was he a very authoritarian person, was he violent with you in any way?**

No, no, no. The opposite. It would have been better if he'd 've been more authoritative. I would get away with anything. I'd get away with not going to school. I'd get away with someone who was trying to chastise me. My dad'd pick 'em up. "You leave my boy alone!" I've seen him do those things. "You leave my boy alone", you know, "or you'll have me to answer to" and they'd look at Big Bill and they'd "I rrrr aaahhh rrr sss orrrr dccc,

22:00 I thought the boy was on the wrong". I'd been sitting there, "Ha ha ha, I've got m'dad". But when m'dad went, I didn't have m'dad.

So you could look after yourself?

Well, I had to in the finish. But that was the only thing I owned, my dad, you know. And no brothers and sisters, no mother.

Do you ever think about them?

No not really. I'm not the morbid type or anything like that. You go with the flow. Things have happened to me

22:30 since. Of course if I'd sat there in Ultimo and stayed there all the time perhaps then I would've got mopey and full of self pity and stuff like that, so very easy to. But no, no, I think occasionally when someone asks me about Mother's Day I say "Well I'd love to've had a mother to send a present" But probably if I had a mother I'd be cadging off her for a fiver or something like that. You never know. You'd like to know you'd do the right thing, but

23:00 not knowing, not knowing the experience, not having had the experience, you can only surmise and you are always a bit biased in your own surmising on your own side, you always think, "Oh I'd do the right thing", you know. So, yeah, I miss them of course, surely, but I don't know what I'm missing, that's the point. I've never experienced it, only the dribs and drabs of my dad

23:30 at different times, when he'd come around. When he had time to look after his boy. Of course, you think why could people who would be affected by a philosophy which in their opinion was the best, which would grow up and make the world a better place, why do they neglect those that are around them, those that need them the most.

24:00 Like the bloke that can't see the forest for the trees, they can't see the philosophy for the people, you know. That's the only explanation I can make of it, it's difficult isn't it? To try and analyse something which is gone and which you've only been on a peripheral on a side, you know, you've only been a casual thought. My dad was so wrapped

24:30 up in his beliefs and his thoughts and that, that his idea of taking me out was taking a pot of paint with him so that he could paint some political slogans up on the wall and things like that. He didn't realise that. He didn't do it purposefully of course, it was just blindly.

Did he let you paint. Did you paint when you were young?

No, no, no, no.

25:00 No, no, no, but I didn't do much when I was young, except going off to fight one thing or another like that. You didn't get involved, funny thing about that when you're young. You do miss out on that growing business, that natural growing business. The interaction between brothers and sisters and family and mothers and fathers and irrespective of how cruel they may be or how indifferent they may be or

25:30 loving may be or over protective they may be but in the final analysis the little bits that come off it, the little bits that break off it and come on to it and mix up with others, that is the important thing. I often think the important thing is, we get away because we're getting technologically clever with our computers and all that and think that we're home and hosed

26:00 and we start to get a bit stand-offish. But we fail to forget that as we were evolved from the primeval slime of time we're still depending on the mass, and not on the privileged few. You don't get genius from the privileged few, you don't get genius from Einstein's children for instance, if he had any children. You get genius, generally speaking, from out of the mass of people, the hopeless people, the people of

26:30 no-hopers, the people you wouldn't like to be seen with. Out of those people come your ideas, come our evolvement in progress, not out of the middle class or anything like that. They're nice, I'm not knocking or anything like that. I like being middle, I like having the things I've got, but if I want to wait around for someone to develop, I'll wait for the people to develop out of the ordinary mass of people. It's mathematically,

27:00 it's right too, because there's more of them.

Is there one moment when you were growing up. What was the first main big decision you made in your life?

The big decision, ah, most of them was thrust upon me. Joining the army. People say you're patriotic. We like to get getting there now, getting a habit now I notice, an American habit of putting

27:30 our hand over our heart. This is to let everyone know that we're being patriotic. These are all short cuts that we take. It's a lot easier. They'd say to me "Why did you join the army?" expecting me to put my hand over my heart and say I was patriotic. I wasn't. I was hungry. I wanted a feed. The rest followed. They fed me. In religion, Jesus fed them and so the people followed him for that

28:00 reason. Having that reason it gave him an audience for him to preach. Not that I'm a Christian, but I do read the bible a lot. I read and analyse why they accept him and things like that. And before you can tell anyone a message you've got to get them interested, you've got to get them to come to you, and things like that. And so it was when I joined the army. I didn't even know what patriotism meant and I certainly couldn't've spelt it in those

28:30 days.

But did you know about the Anzacs?

Well I knew from my dad and I knew occasionally, my grandfather had been in the Boer War. I think it was my grandfather or my grandfather's brother, one of them was in the Boer War. A couple of my father's cousins were in the First World War, one of them was killed. We did our bit as far as giving our people to the war. And yes, we did have a knowledge.

29:00 I think it is a natural thing in Australia to have a knowledge of Anzac Day, it's almost as important as knowing your football team members, almost, I mean I won't go overboard, I don't want you to think I'm an extremist. No, but I have a great patriotism for my country, now. A great love for it.

At the time though, did you feel much allegiance to Britain?

Well, no, well, it wasn't an allegiance to anything. My allegiance when I was

29:30 a kid was Woolwarra Road, Ultimo. For the simple reason, that outside of Woolwarra Road and a few other streets, up to Pyrmont and down to the museum with the old museum down in College Street, no, down here in Ultimo, I forget the name of the street, that museum that was there and school there. That was our area. Now if you go into another area and you walked along, as long as you

30:00 walked quietly and didn't go over to the other kids and try and interfere, you'd probably get through there, but you had to watch your Ps and Qs. That wasn't your own territory. Ultimo was my territory and until I moved away, I moved to Glebe at one time and Glebe became my territory. We're very territorial, we are as people. Look at what we're doing in Iraq and other countries. We're making sure the territories are coming up to scratch. And so that was what

30:30 it was for us in our district. Of course when you're insulated from that with nice homes, nice streets, nice tree lined streets, nice police force, protection, you don't need that, you don't worry about that. But when you're in a time like a depression when the whole world is worrying and grasping and striving, and dying, you know, you got into your little sets, your little

31:00 cliques. So you didn't go out of anything else. You didn't know much about, you knew about the King or whatever, and they were away over there in Britain and they were a lot of buggers. Most people thought that you know.

Did you know of Hitler?

I did, but mainly from my father. What I did know, I knew politically, my dad made sure that politically I knew who the goodies were and who the

31:30 baddies were, you know.

Did you know where Japan was?

Oh yes, I knew the Mikado and place like that, I knew Japan. I was a very avid reader ever since I was a little kid. I was fortunate in our house, particularly in the time when we lived in Woolwarra Lane, it's not called that now, it's called some other name I noticed. They've got a cheek. Changing my street. In Woolwarra Lane our little house had a balcony and I used to sleep

32:00 up there. And the street light was just nearby. We had no electricity in the house in those days of course. And the street light gave me all the light and I'd be laying back in bed and I'd be reading away, you know. As soon as I'd hear a noise and under the bed with the book and I'd be sound asleep, well they thought I was sound asleep. I used to do a lot of reading. I was fortunate that I had this curiosity. I've always been curious, I wanted to know what was going on everywhere. So that was that,

32:30 but patriotism and things like that grow on you, you don't acquire them. When you see people for instance in the army dying, people cop a bullet beside you, things like that, you soon know that there's got to be something, associations and that, and that gives you a greater awareness, a greater sense of belonging, you know. So yes,

33:00 **You must have had some travel yearning because you did leave these places.**

Well, no, not for. There again, those restrictions of areas, they played against a lot in forming cities and towns and keeping people in one place. The terror to begin with of the unknown or the wild animals kept you into a town. The terror of marauding bandits make you put a wall 'round

33:30 it and gradually it built like that, up until the towns got bigger and burst outside the wall, but you've still had your local area, like Ultimo, Woolwarra Road. I was as safe as all git up. And when there was a few of us kids together and a stranger came up if he came over to us, what in hell are you doin' here, where are you from, and we wanna know about it. It was similar all over the place. You stayed in your own area generally through the day unless you made a forage out purposely,

34:00 going out to sell fruit or whatever, in the daily course of work

I believe that you were a push-bike rider. You mentioned before that you were riding across the Nullarbor Plain, can you tell us about that.

I didn't make the Nullarbor Plains.

Well, how did that trip start?

Well, we wanted to go round Australia and we'd been planning it for a good while. Finally, I had no one to stop me and Don didn't so.

34:30 eh, we went off. At first it was great, great. We met good people on the way, it was tickled pink with kids riding round Australia, looked after ourselves fairly well. We got to Melbourne and we got a job there. Of course the war'd started and they'd take anyone. I had a job, it was a monotonous thing too. It was a metal press. And my job was to stand there and make sure that these belt buckles or whatever

35:00 for army uniforms, whatever, when they came through that they were pressed properly and none of them jumped out, if they did I had to pull this lever, very important job it was for the war effort you know. I don't know how many belt buckles would have been broken if I hadn't attended to me duties. There I was 'hoop, yen, hoop, yen, hoop, yen', all day long.

You rode from Sydney to Melbourne, where were you heading for, just around Australia?

Around wherever.

35:30 Imagine we should get away, get away from restrictions, get away from the cities, get away from., just boredom. We'd saved up a bit of money I was making at that time, just over two pound, at Bradford Cotton Mills. Work at night. Put my age up again, put my age up, had to be 18 to work the night shift, so I put my age up at Bradford Cotton Mills and I worked there for, ooh, about three months. Saved a

36:00 fortune in that time, you know. And we set sail. We took two or three weeks or so or more, five weeks, to get down to Melbourne and we board a little boarding house there in North Melbourne. The address we gave as our auntie's, our aunty, our fictitious aunty in the finish. Near the markets it was. There,

36:30 we got a job, just down the way as I say, Jackson Springs I think it was called, the company. This metal press. I'd stand there for a couple of weeks, well I worked there for four or five weeks I s'pose. Then we went off down to, down the coast of Victoria, we rode the coast all the way. We wanted to do the coast. Then we went down past Mt Gambier and they said "Look

37:00 you'll never get down" and the policeman down there said "If youse try going any further lads", he said "I'll have to stop you. Confiscate your bikes and all", he said, "Ee won't let you go any further. You're just not equipped". Whether he had the right to do it or not I, but he was a big copper. And in those days the law was on their side if they were big enough. So we came back. And by the time we got to Melbourne my bike had collapsed

37:30 into it. I got hit by a car, I didn't, but the bike got hit by a car at one stage just out of Melbourne and, any rate, we got back into Melbourne, we hadn't eaten all that day. Oh, we had a couple of a, there was an apple tree, I remember, and we leant across the fence and pinched a few of the fella's apples. They were green old apples. Floury ones, big ones they were.

38:00 and we ate those. Before we got into Melbourne there was a truck and we got a lift. We said "We were going back to Melbourne, can you give us a lift?", so he gave us a lift in the back of the truck and by George it was cold, it was cold, it was about two, three, four o'clock in the morning. About four in the morning he let us out, as far as he could take us. It was down near Spencer Street station and,

38:30 so we waved to him our fond farewell and off we went on our road to adventure. Jumped the cable tram and got down almost to Flinders Street station before the conny come along and, we never had any money of course, so we had to dive off there. The recruiting office was just next to the GPO and so we dived in there hoping to get a feed as soon as they opened up. They were

39:00 closed when we got there. But we didn't get a feed until, oh about two or three o'clock in the afternoon it was.

You were with Don at the time?

Yes.

Did you discuss joining the army or was it just a spur of the moment ...

It was Don's main idea. He was a little older than me, about a year. He'd be sixteen I think. But he was a more worldly fellow than me, lets put it that way, you know. He said "Look if we get into the

39:30 army they'll give us a feed". We saw a sign at one stage, on the way, 'Join the army'. We saw it a couple of times as a matter of fact. And we talked about it. I said "They wouldn't let us in, we're too young". He said, of course, we're fairly big, I'm just the same size as I was. People thought I was going to be like my dad, six foot odd, but being a prisoner of war, of course, I didn't grow then. So we said, oh all right. I said "I'll go along". I didn't care.

40:00 I'll join the army or join the AWAS [Australian Womens Army Service] for all that, as long as I got a feed. That was all I was interested in, getting a feed. And so we joined the army. And they went on, didn't they

carry on. Sit here, do that, still waiting a feed, no food in sight.

40:27 End of tape

Tape 3

00:54 Could you pass me that top little book, my book of poems. I'll give you one later.

01:00 My feeling for Woolwarra Road, Ultimo

This is a song you wrote recently or something you sang at the time?

Oh, just a few years back I wrote it. I've only just decided to print some of them out, just as a little thing for friends. Ah, ah,

01:30 I'm taking up your time, wait a minute, it must be around, I s'pose I have. Oh, isn't that dreadful.

\n[Verse follows]\nWant to boast, I've been to Gold Coast,\n or fished the Barrier Reef, but where I want to be is Woolwarra Road Ultimo,\n Woolwarra Road Ultimo. Now that suits me,\n how

02:00 about me, lets go on to Ultimo, Woolwarra Road, Ultimo.\n

Don't want a peach on Bondi beach, or surf the Malabar,\n where I wants to be is Woolwarra Road Ultimo, Ultimo.\n Woolwarra Road, Ultimo.\n

There you are.

That was great.

That's the European song of the year.

We'll go back to the GPO and joining up because

02:30 **that's another story, we can go back to it in a minute, but we're going to jump forward in time if you'll let me. Forward to when you signed up, after your training in Bacchus Marsh in Melbourne, you'd gotten on this troop ship and you'd arrived in Singapore. Tell me a little bit about that.**

Can I tell you one instance on the troop ship going over. All my life up till

03:00 that time of course money was scarce, a few shillings was a fortune. Aboard the troopship going over there was a big gambling assembly place, where crown and anchor, two up, cards, everything was played. And one night I got involved in a card game and I had four fours amongst other things, but in this particular hand I had four fours and won.

03:30 I finished up winning a hundred and something pound, a hundred and something, which was a way out fortune, so you can imagine the amount of comics and lollies and stuff I bought with a hundred and something pound. A fortune, it was amazing. I don't know what it would be related to now, it would be thousands of dollars. Five shillings a day was our wage.

You're on a troopship in the middle of the ocean on your way to war,

04:00 **what would you have done with your hundred pounds.**

Well, you could make, you pay your money in your pay book like the sign of a bank and you could draw it out. When we got to Malaya there was Change Alley in Singapore, you could buy anything from a pin to an elephant. It's no longer there unfortunately. But in those days the magic of the East incorporated. You walked down this long

04:30 alley and there was shops on either side and people coming out and dragging, “Come here and buy. Hello Joe” and all that sort of thing. You could spend your money like you've never seen before.

That's something I want to ask, you never been much away from Australia, you'd been in Ultimo most of your life. Suddenly you are on the other side of the world. It must have been an amazing experience.

Amazing, amazing,

Can you remember the day you arrived?

Oh yes. Well that wasn’t

05:00 so important cause they whisked us straight off. There was an interesting facet of it. It was an unusual thing in those days. The groups of people from the little islands as you’re coming in to Singapore that apparently made a living out of it. They would swim out to the ships and sing out and you would toss

money or whatever down to them and they would dive for the money.

05:30 The interesting thing about it, interesting to us, not to the divers, was the number of people who had limbs missing because of the sharks that had taken it off them. I believe now it's prohibited and they're not allowed to go into the water. But they used to put their life at risk, theses young children, going in, diving for money off the ships knowing there was sharks that could come and, and did do. Some with legs off and arms off, things like that.

06:00 That was just an interesting little introduction to the East for you. As soon as we got on, when the ship was docked we were straight into trucks, because the British for instance didn't want us Australians dirtying our island of Singapore.

We'll go back to the troopship, back to Fremantle.

06:30 **You mentioned during your life story that you went AWL in Fremantle for a while**

When we went there they gave us a terrific day on our legal day. We were given leave and it was legal for us to be there and they gave us a welcome. We had march and there was some lovely people, so lovely we wanted to go out again and so did hundreds of others. And out through the port holes, it was a high wharf,

07:00 or a low tide it must have been, I should imagine, and the port holes were underneath the wharf and as you looked along here's bodies squeezing out through the port holes all along, hundreds of us got out through the port holes. Made our way through underneath on the piles. There was cross-timbers and things you could get out through, and off we went. We had a marvellous time, had a marvellous time. I was so innocent I held

07:30 hands with a girl and then later worried that she might have got pregnant. That's how innocent. We really were innocent like that. Young people, you know. No sex education or anything like that, only conjecture about how babies were born and things. I heard marvellous ways that they were born and all of them were wrong. So you hear about tough guys and things like that but they're really ignorant. Ignoramuses.

Did you get a bit of sex education in the

08:00 **army from the other soldiers?**

We got, and there again the army wasn't very well informed. I was reading a cartoon a little while back, it's over in that cupboard as a matter of fact, a coloured one, Herman. I don't know whether you know Herman, one of my favourite cartoonists. And he's got this fellow and he's sitting watching the Principal and he's saying “I think it's a waste of time, we've told our boy all about that, you

08:30 know what, and all those sorts of things and the birds and the bees and that” and he ends up with, “and I refuse to have him come here to have sex education”. He thinks he's getting to know. Well the army's similar to that. I laughed. I thought, well I can remember our army doctors saying “Lads, don’t sit on toilet seats and don't do this” holding up a picture of someone with venereal disease and holding up a picture of something weird and wonderful, it could have been anything, it could have been the eclipse of the moon. And they'd hang it up and they say “This is hmmm hmm hhheehmmmm”

09:00 and that'd be it. But no, my greatest sex education there and I think it put me off sex for a long time. In Johore Bahru, the city of Johore Bahru, a real Asian city, crowded and in parts dirty, especially the parts where they have their brothels and that. And they had such a bad reputation. Some of the blokes were coming down with some dreadful sexual diseases, so they, we supplied

09:30 a picket to picket the brothels and that. Each group would take it in turns to picket the brothels. I remember the first day, going in as a young fella, picketing the brothels. And the smell and the look and, as they came out and washed themselves and things, the ladies, all in the dirt of the yard and the rooms.

So who was going into the brothels?

Some of our fellows, some of our men. I remember once

10:00 there they had an exhibition, intercourse on the stage. They had it like a movie, you could go in and sit. And this great big black fellow, oh, huge fellow, he mounted this girl and everyone cheered and one of our blokes got up on the stage and pushed him off

You were a fifteen -year-old, you'd just arrived, you'd never seen any of this before, what did you think?

The thing about it is

10:30 we're pretty tough down in Ultimo and Glebe and places like that, but we were prudes. People didn't swear in front of women and get away with it. Not around Uncle George and them. You got a biff under the ear. We didn't call older people by their first names it was always Mister or Uncle. So in that respect we could've taught the modern generation a lot in manners and courtesies. And this is coming from people, Pop Jepson for

11:00 instance, was a jockey in England. He was a Cockney. He'd broken his bones that many from crooked races and that, his legs, bandy legged little fellow, wasn't very big. a jockey, broken nose and everything. In the finish he became a horse trainer, an animal trainer in a circus in England. The circus came out to Australia and went broke. In that circus

11:30 Ma was a trapeze artist, the tattoo lady and something else, oh the fortune teller. She had a few real tattoos, but the others were all stuck on. When she wasn't the tattoo lady she was a fortune teller, and in her younger days, she had to give it up, she was a trapeze artist. Well, Pop and Ma married, and had two boys. So that was the

12:00 influence of, they were great people. They looked after. we had the boarders that we stayed with. We had Wingey, who had lost an arm in the First World War, we had Les who'd been gassed in the First World War, We had old Harry the seaman who'd been torpedoed about four times in the War. They all boarded with us in Ma Jepson's in Woolwarra Road, and also, we moved, as the depression

12:30 strangled the commerce, so we had to move from bigger houses to smaller houses. Our big house was huge, had a big quadrangle, stables. I remember going in as a kid from the home, from Seven Hills, the home there and going into the quadrangle and here are all these carts in line with their shafts sticking up, all in line, and the horses, their heads sticking out of the stables.

13:00 Everything was so busy, and that dwindled down and deteriorated until that was all empty and then gone and they couldn't keep it up any longer and they moved into a slightly smaller house and then Uncle Sam died so they got smaller and it went on. In the finish we ended up in this little house in Woolwarra Lane which was just a slum.

There were a lot of interesting people there but you classified yourselves as prudes.

We were all market people and

13:30 I can remember, one of the best memories I have, I got up this morning and I had my billy cart, my four wheel billy cart and I looked down towards the market over the bridge down there and there's smoke going everywhere and it's the lolly factory, so I whizzed down, it's all down hill all the way, down Harris Street, across the bridge, down, and I get right to the lolly factory and I'm out

14:00 side the big, they had the windows, the old fashioned ones, in all those little squares, rather than big plate glass and the weight of the water on the inside had swept all these cartons of lollies. Came right through these big windows and fell at my feet, near my feet. Those big long musk sticks, musk sticks, you know those musk sticks, those clinkers, all these lollies,

14:30 boxes, all glued together in most cases, you know. I got a truck, me barrow, so I loaded me barrow up, six foot high, tied it all down. Oh I was the most popular kid in Ultimo for ages then, living off these burnt lollies and sticky lollies.

How old were you then?

When was that fire? They built the market on it, the new market there and now your entertainment centre's now built there on that spot. It used to be a lolly factory,

15:00 then it became the new market and then that was pulled down and then, now the entertainment centre. It'd have to be around 1935 I suppose, something like that. That was a great day that. They don't come there much. People don't burn lolly factories often enough when you are young.

So you had seen a bit, when you arrived in Singapore and you'd never been overseas before...

15:30 The most amazing thing was, the place was full of foreigners, everywhere, foreigners. We were the only ones there who weren't foreign. And this was an amazing thing for a young bloke. It seems silly now and we laugh about it. But it was the most noticeable thing. Everywhere you went they spoke foreign languages, they looked foreign, they acted foreign, the rickshaws, the colour, the glamour, there was no getting away

16:00 from it. The different aspect, palm trees, coconut trees, oil trees, go on ad infinitum. Everything's different.

A beautiful place, Singapore, did you think, when you arrived?

Singapore was more attractive tourist wise in a tropical sense than it is now, the same

16:30 as Darwin was more attractive than it is now. Now it is a lovely town, but it could be down here somewhere and you wouldn't notice it. Same as Singapore. Singapore is a metropolis now. I'm not running it down, don't be offended, but back then it was a foreign place and a place of exotic tropical nature. There was

17:00 the parks around there, the Indians, workers round there had a kind of a scythe on a long stick and they swing it round and the scythe comes down and cuts the grass. They just walk along slowly and swing this in their hand, there's a knack of course and the stick with the scythe would come down and it would cut the grass as they walked. Rickshaws going past,

17:30 monkeys around, things like that. Indian sheiks with great big turbans on and stars and uniforms and then other Indians with hardly anything, just a loin cloth or a g-string on, things like that. People with no shoes on, people with kind of thongs, big wooden ones they used to wear then. All that sort of stuff. And the food. Outside there were carts of all descriptions

18:00 where you could get bits of meat on sticks and bits of rice and bean soup and different types of soft drink. They all had different big jars and they'd tip it up and when you have it at first you tip it up and think geez a nice cool drink'd go good and the darn thing's luke warm, and so sweet. I mean fancy me going crook about being sweet, when I've got a sweet tooth, now really. Sweet, and lukewarm of course but,

18:30 and of course there were other places where they would be cool. I can remember going, one of the embarrassing places we went on leave, the great world and the happy world of the amusement places. Not like Luna Park but something like Luna Park. Luna Park in the extent that they had a few amusements, merry-go-rounds, stuff like that, not many, but a cross between that and a King's Cross. Have dance floors where you have tickets and you get dance

19:00 girls and can dance around, they had theatres, Chinese theatres, stuff like that and they had big open air restaurants and they were like a carousel, big tent on the top 'n' props holding them up an' the flat floor, an' tables six or seven inches off the floor and cushions, and you squatted all round. We went to one and there's one there with a couple of cushions, three of us I think there were,

19:30 and we went round and we sat down and we waited and we're looking around and there were chop sticks all set out and this pommy officer came along and said, "I'll say old chap, I think you've got the wrong place, this is a private wedding." Oh yikes.

So did you get into much trouble in Singapore?

I didn't, I was too amused. I didn't need to get into trouble because there was that much that kept you amused. You only get into trouble from boredom when you're doing the same old

20:00 thing, in Woolwarra Road, you know. This wasn't Woolwarra Road.

Did you have much recreation time in Singapore?

We did, but there again you didn't notice it so much a lack of, because everything was interesting. Our training down the bull ring. You were fit and you were well and you wanted to get into it. You could almost imagine that you were in the football team and the crowds ready to cheer and you love it, you know. And then when we knocked off you went down to the

20:30 Tampoi, was the name of that village, Tampoi village. It comes back to me like a song. You'd go down to the village and there would be the people playing mahjong and eating and that, real Chinese restaurant.

Did you have to be back by a certain time for lights out?

Oh yes, what was the time? No, no, no, don't hold me to it. About ten o'clock

21:00 I think the last post went, or the call to barracks went. Then you were AWL and you got into trouble.

Was the discipline strict?

It was, no not really. F''rinstance, there's another one. General Bennett's coming out to inspect the camp an' everyone's alive and I'm on guard duty.

21:30 We're on honour guard see, with a 303 rifle, they're a pretty big rifle. And to get the ceremony part of it up to scratch you let your clip out, your cartridge clip, you let it out, the clip, so that it hangs out a little bit. So when you bring it up to present arms and you bring it up and your hand comes around and you hit the cartridge clip, see, and it goes "prliing",

22:00 and it goes, a lovely sound right through, you know. But when I brought it up mine fell out, the clip fell out and they rolled along and General Bennett walked across it as if it hadn't happened, being the soldier that he is. The lieutenant of the guard looked round at me and I knew I was in for it. I got two weeks CB, confined to barracks.

And what did you do during your two weeks?

Oh, I washed up every dish and I peeled every bloody potato

22:30 in the place, cleaned out the latrines, all the jobs they could find to give you when you're on CB, confined to barracks

Did you get a lot of those jobs because you were the youngest?

No, that was because I'd erred. When you're in trouble. I never got it for being young, no. I got well looked after when I was in.

The other soldiers didn't treat you like a young kid?

Well, you know, funny, you could say that. When I was a youngster I was cheeky.

23:00 and being such could I use the word likeable in conjunction with that. And you always had a godfather who looked after ya but also bashed you up if, and Paddy O'Toole, my dear old cobber, he was like that. If someone came up and said something to him, Paddy'd say, “What the heck's it got to do with you son, git out of it”. And if I said something he'd clip me over the ear'ole you see, but no

23:30 you have your fairy godfathers, we all do, but I had one more than I deserved I should imagine

You might say you found some older brothers.

Older brothers, and they taught me. It was through them. You learn, like little birds do and all the other animals, we learn from association. Where I hadn't learnt from parents, which I would've learnt probably, all the little niceties, the manners, the courtesies, the give and take, I learnt it there through Paddy an’

24:00 the old Regimental Sergeant Major. He was up here the other day from South Australia. Poor old fella, cut, bit by bit off him. He's got an ear off from cancer and his eye out from cancer, bits and pieces. He's 80 odd now. I said to him. “I said to someone the other day, we were talking, I said the old sergeant major I said, he's not a bad bloke” and I looked at him and said “Bloody Hell I'm surprised If anyone had told me when I was a young bloke that I'd reckon you were a good bloke”..

Tell us about

24:30 **Paddy O'Toole, when did you meet him?**

In the Battalion, yes, Paddy was at Muar, him and Bob. I was in his section when we re-formed. When we re-formed down at Sultan’s Palace. Sultan’s Palace in Johore Bahru is worth talking about really. It's not like your imaginative palace to the Sultan, no turrets and minuets, and that sort of thing. It is just a square block that comes up. I don't know who

25:00 the architect was or the taste of the Sultan. To my mind it is not a home, it is like an office building. We weren't allowed to shell that in the war, even though the Japs were using it as an observation post. We were given strict orders that it wasn't to be touched. It belonged to the Sultan.

At that time it was still held by the British.

Yes, oh yes, yes, yes, yes. So we formed out beside the

25:30 Sultan’s palace and Paddy and them, when I came down from Muar I was in their section, Paddy took me into hand. He put me in the trim, put me on the way.

How did you meet him? Do you remember?

I don’t, it just happened, I just happened to come in. Formed a section with a bloke, it was just by chance. They say, we'll put him, him, him, him, him in B section, A company or whatever. I was in C company. Mull Bowran was our, and he was another,

26:00 he was a big bloke who won the military cross up at Muar. He was a bad tempered bugger and he could uh, uh, and he was big, great big. Well, he was very kind to me too. He knew that I was only a lad. I used to play on it of course I suppose. I got a good deal from all of them. I had no qualms or quarrels. When I got punishment I deserved it, that's for sure.

Did anyone know your real age?

Afterwards when it was too late, like

26:30 when I was a prisoner of war of course and that, they

At this point they believed you were nineteen.

Well, I tell you one of the funny stories, it's in my book as a matter of fact. When we joined up, we're getting ready to take the oath and they took us into this great big room, books all up one end, big desk over there. Sergeant is telling us how disgraceful we were, which they always do,

27:00 and in come this flamin' great giant. He was a big fellow, I tell you. They had him specially there for the occasion, I'm sure, medals all over him and guns rifles, revolver. His hand was so big you could hardly see the bible he held up. He said, “I'm going to swear you lot in”. And he told us what the army was and what we're goin' in for and what we're signing up for and all that

27:30 sort of thing. What we could get drawn and quartered for and then he finished up. He said “Some of you blokes look young, underage even”, he said “You may think you can fool us, you may think you can get away with it, but you're in the army, we'll find out and you'll do time in gaol”. So he said “I'm warning you, now's the time, before we take the oath, for you to own up”. And this

28:00 bloke stepped out, he had a pork pie hat on, we envied him, here we are, bushies, with nothing on, dirty old, this bloke, pork pie hat, black pump shoes, nice sports, oh, bees-knees. He stepped forward, he said “Please sir, I'm only seventeen” and off he went. And we stood there and, but other than that, that's the

closest we ever got to querying with him. The young bloke,

28:30 he went out, but us older fellows, we, that was in Melbourne, yes. But no, I was fairly. I do look young, but there's a

We will definitely take that picture to put with the archive. You're

29:00 **looking fresh faced in this photograph.**

I'd just had a wash and everything, that was to take my photo. I really

Good looking young man.

Young man any rate. No it was a, I don't know whether that looks young or it looks old or it, I'm the same height as I am now. I never grew anything.

So did you know what you were going to do when you were stationed in Singapore?

29:30 Oh no, the threat and that, was, I don't think anyone believed the Japanese would come into it. We were so brainwashed with our sense of superiority, so brainwashed with our immensity of size, with our armies and our strength and our history and all these things. We believed

30:00 implicitly in what our intelligence officers told us about the inadequacies of the Japanese. They couldn't see, they were all blind. Their equipment was bad, well, it was made in Japan wasn't it. We'd all laugh, we'd say we went all the way with that. So with that attitude you're defeated right from the start if the bloke comes up the weight and you're in a fight. If you go in thinking you're an easy beat and he's a reasonably good fighter and you don't know about it,

30:30 it's up to you to find out what your adversary is like and we didn't. We didn't and we had years. And that's an amazing thing about it. All those years China [Japan] had gone into Korea, took over Korea, Manchuria, China, all the little islands about, you know. All those years and we had no dossier on the Japanese at all. No, it was a crime.

Did that make you angry, later on?

31:00 Well, anger is not the word really, it's just a sense of frustration. What's frustrating is that we're not learning from it I don't think. We're not really with it. I don't know what the analogy is really. It's like we're advancing and we're leaving the things that advanced with,

31:30 go, before we're completely sure of the rung we're holding on in advance, whether it'll break or whether it is strong enough, things like that. We don't seek out the strengths of things. We fail to see that a lot of things. I think for instance one of the great mistakes we made in Iraq, and I think it were a country that certainly wanted, have something dealt with them. I think the great mistake was

32:00 that we've gone about it illegally, in the sense that we have gone away from the mass of opinion, going back to what I was saying about the mass of opinion. Yes, the United Nations fumbles and rumbles and bumbles and don't do everything we want, but the point about it, like parliament, like all democratic things, there are lots of other better ways of doing it in that analysis, but in the

32:30 whole thing we lose our liberty, we lose our life, we lose our means of developing and everything with it. Unless we go along with the pack, going along. It's like as if we're always at war, and we have to go along at the speed of the slowest ship in the convoy. Otherwise the whole convoy is attacked and is in danger. And what we've done now, we've gone away from the convoy, sure we're powerful,

33:00 sure it can take on the world, America, sure they're going on with this rubbish that they're the strongest nation ever, which is ridiculous, because they have to wait another five hundred years to prove that because the Romans went for five hundred years. The Greeks went for fifty years or so. You are making assumption out of what you are now. The future

33:30 they tell me, there's a book of science over there that I was reading, and we're probably ten to fifteen billion years old. That's our past but our future's infinite. So we've got tens and tens of fifteen billion years ahead of us. It's those things that are

Talking about learning things from the past, do you think the commanding officers of the British in

34:00 **Singapore were very influenced by the First World War, were their ideas out of date at the time?**

Oh yes, oh yes, all of our influences were. We base our assumptions on the past, and providing our past has been adequate and is capable of seeing us through into the present, we don't come to harm with that thinking. But up when we come up to things like the Japanese, when we do with the Japanese and things like that

34:30 then it gets us into a lot of trouble, you know.

When was your first experience of combat against the Japanese? This is the moment this

would all have come apparent, take that moment, tell us a bit about that.

We had five Titchy Bennetts, five Bennetts not Titchy, there was one Titchy Bennett, five Bennetts in our Battalion. Two of them got killed on the one day.

35:00 One Titchy was badly wounded, three of them, six Bennetts rather, and three of them died in a prisoner of war camp. So five Bennetts died out of six. So the Bennett family contributed tremendously to Australia. Titchy Bennett, the one that was wounded, was down on the left side of me when a bullet went through his body, this was at the landing

35:30 at Kranji. The Japs had landed and they'd bashed the 22nd Brigade and they had annihilated, killed hundreds of our men, and they lost a thousand of their own they say, in their literature, and then they started firing at us and the mortars come over. It all happens so suddenly. Bang! They're at it.

36:00 They came through so, no one thought, there was a hundred and twenty thousand of us troops, English, Indian and Australian troops on that island. And thirty thousand Japanese took that island. They had sixty-four but they only needed thirty thousand. The sharp point of an attacking force, if used correctly, only that sharp tip of that attacking force need to come into

36:30 the action. Providing it's done, the penetration's made at the correct places. And that's the theory of attacking warfare.

You were in the infantry, defending Singapore when the landing of Kranji happened. Take us through that.

Well, Titchy Bennett got his bullet straight through him and they put him on a stretcher and I thought “By George poor old Titchey's had it”. He hadn't. He lived, the bullet went right through him without hitting a vital spot

37:00 but then the next thing a bullet hits a tree. I'm on a machine gun, I'm number two on a machine gun. Dave Holden was number one.

So what do you do as number two on a machine gun?

Feeding, doing all the important things that I told Dave, like feeding the ammunition, and watching out for snipers. You've got your rifle with you. A Lewis gun. I'm behind this rubber tree and Dave's at the side with the gun and the bullet

37:30 comes across my head and lobs in the rubber tree and blows a hole in it a couple of inches. They must've used dum-dums or something because the hole, the size of it. Another one came, and another. If it came any lower I wouldn’t've had anywhere to place my hat. Paddy O'Toole sung out and says “I can see 'im, 'e's up a rubber tree” an' he turned his gun on him and got that Jap. Now that Jap was behind us and he was in this rubber tree

38:00 only a hundred yards away from us. All this is after, all these little Japs who had photo shops around Singapore, they must have been all fifth column because almost from the moment the Japs started landing and all these Japs, these bullets, and as I say these three bullets. From then on we had mortar bomb. At one stage there, I'll always remember this, I have a very vivid memory, where our little

38:30 group, like we are now, and this six inch, they had big mortars, the Japs, six inch mortars. This six inch mortar landed right in the middle of us. And here we are, looking at it, and here it is, sticking up at us, great big aluminium coloured it was, I remember looking at it. About ten minutes too late I dived down into the ground. Didn't go off of course, and we're standing looking at it and Paddy saying something to the effect, it's a good

39:00 job that's been badly made or something. Then we had to go in the finish because they started opening more with their mortar bombs. But their balloons that they had up there, their observation, their intelligence was so spot on. They just had us sitting. They sat up on those balloons up there just at the back of us, huge balloons, and they obviously had wires or a line going down to the Ops [Observation Posts], the other OPs,

39:30 they had binoculars. You just had to move and there would be Zeros or mortars landing, and their mortars were so good, they were spot on. They could put a mortar in anywhere. They put a mortar into our group and fortunately it didn't go off. It would've killed the lot of us. We were all close together, we were just about to withdraw when that went on.

Then you did start to withdraw?

We withdraw into the swamp by the Changi River and we got lost in the swamp for a while

40:00 and I can remember the darn mosquitoes in there and the leeches. And we wandered around the swamp 'til night time came and we got out of there. I remember that very vividly. We were sitting down under a tree and an officer came along. I don't know whether it was just after, I think it was just after the swamp. And the officer said “You see that hill up there, it's vital we get some information”, you know, go up there.

40:30 He said “We want two volunteers to go up”. Dave Holden who was on the gun said “I'll go” and he said

“And Billy”, he said, “You'll come with me won't you?” And I said to Bob Shipside, our corporal, he had a tommy gun, and it was just like the one Jimmy Cagney used to have in his movies, you know. I said to Bob, “I'll go up if you lend me your tommy gun.” So Bob said “All right. So Bill Young, ‘Cagney’ Young went up to get

41:00 the dirty rats sort of thing. We sidled up the top and we looked down the hill and there's the Japs down by the swamp where we'd come out of, you know. And the next minute their mortars coming down towards us and Dave said, “Gee the buggers have seen us” he said. Funny, very funny fellow he was.

41:25 End of tape

Tape 4

00:34 **You were saying, with Dave Holden.**

Dave said to me, you can imagine, we're on this hill, we're lookin' down at these Japs, and all of a sudden there's a ring of mortar bomb fire, they're ranging fire, they're trying to get our range down. They're not quite on to it. And they're coming down the side of the hill at us, or down the other hill an’ they're fading along the way

01:00 and I'm lookin' at Dave thinking when's he going to let us get out of it. And he said, “All right Billy, we can go now. We can always come back later and catch the rest of the show”. It was very dry humour. If you've got the spot. Here we are, the shells exploding, the Japs down there, we're on our own, and then Dave comes out with this dry rejoining, “We'd better go now, we can catch the rest of the show later”.

01:30 I was laughin' all the way down. I've got the sense of humour to go with it. It tickled me. Poor old Dave, he died up in the Burma railway.

So you were frightened? What was the main emotion you were feeling?

No, no, you're looking down at the Japs, you're looking at this, and you're thinking very long, soon they'll get our range

02:00 they're coming down these, whatever size mortar they're using. And I'm lookin' at Dave and I'm not going to suggest to him because he's the boss. I'm thinking it's about time, we've seen everything we can see, we can go back. He said “Well, we'd better go now Billy, we can always come back to see the rest of the show later.” I scurried down. No, fear is not, I think it's something to do with ignorance as well. When you're ignorant

02:30 of the extent of what could happen you don't have fear in that sense. Fear of that type comes with the knowledge if you've had a mortar, seen something, when I got shot that time, got wounded.

When did the knowledge start to dawn on you that the Japanese were dangerous and that Singapore was probably going to fall?

The knowledge of it being dangerous comes the first time a bullet, when that bullet whizzes across your head, and

03:00 it’s a sense of, I don't know what it is, bemusement, horror, bewilderment. Bewilderment! Yeah, bewilderment. There's some devil out there has got the audacity to try and hurt Mrs Young's little boy, Billy. That's the sense that comes over you. You think, actually think someone's shooting at you! That's when you realize what's up for grabs is your life.

So all the training you did in the bull ring hadn't

03:30 **prepared you for that, at all?**

Well, it's a game, see. You go out there and you train and train and train, but it doesn't prepare you for when the team gets defeated. You come off the ground demoralised. Say, “Where did we go wrong, where did I go wrong?” and the coach comes out and he says “Well I told you to do this” or “You do that and you didn't” or what and next, and during training next time. We didn't get a next time

04:00 obviously. There were a lot of things wrong. You could see there was no preparation, lack of intelligence, lack of motivation, there was all sorts of things, and you'd have to read the history of the whole thing, and whose history would you read? That's another decision you've gotta make. No, fear is something that you, fear is fear of the unknown and it came out in those photos of those poor

04:30 people who were captured by the Iraqis and shown on television. You see the Rambo stuff when there's no actual knowledge of what's going to happen or whether it's an actor acting in a movie and they can be very brave and all sort of incredible things happen for it, but when some poor devil gets caught like that and they've been brainwashed to assuming that they were going to be badly treated, which they weren't, but they weren't

05:00 to know that. And so you could see the fear. I think that came across didn't it, ordinary fear, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's more natural and more believable and its something that you should take notice of more that all those heroics of Rambo style people.

Which is interesting. Those soldiers hadn't been told what to expect, whether it was wrong or right, but had you, in Singapore, been told anything about what to expect if you were captured?

No! We were fortunate, in that sense, in that

05:30 sense they didn't tell us, the dreadful atrocities that they did in Nanking and places like that. We had a vague…, but they were only little fellas. I mean, why should we, you know, we were very, very, very brainwashed in that sense about our European Caucasian superiority. That is something that was more definite then. I think it is getting erased now, particularly with the advent of all our migrants,

06:00 Asians and all that, good for us. I noticed when I was a prisoner of war and I was in Outram Road gaol, and they started to put us into just a few cells to keep us up because they had it in mind they were going to kill us all so they got us up into, instead of having one in a cell like we were for eighteen months, they suddenly started to put us into and in the finish we got into three cells an all. And I had at one time I had a Chinaman, an Asian, I had a

06:30 Sihk at one time. I had two Tamils, they were coots of blokes those two, too, two Tamils. And after a while you don't notice any colour or distinction like that. You only notice what's wrong that's affecting you, whether some bugger's trying get your rice, or that. Whether he's white or black doesn't come into the equation. It's only once and I can remember it. I've told this a few times.

07:00 and I don't know what analyst would have made of it, but I was in with a Tamil and they're black, black as your, purple black. And we'd just started to be put to work digging some, digging. When the Japs started to lose they put us to work doing some. And the sun started to burn me a little bit, brown me a bit, and when in the cell you've gotta sit squat legged and he's sitting there and I'm sitting there, obviously he'd

07:30 spent some time cogitating on the whiteness or the wrongness or the rightness or the whiteness of Europeans, or of me in particular and he looked across and he said “You blokes say you're white”. He could speak a little English, not bad English, Manka his name was, like the cricketer, you know. He said “That is not white colour” like that, and we had just a pair of Jap shorts on and a shirt, see.

08:00 And without knowing the diff I went like that and went ‘choonk’ and I said, “That's white”. An’ look, it was glaring white. And he looked at it and he had to look away and he sulked for the rest of the day. That really shocked him. I didn't mean to or anything, but the realisation that the whiteness was there and of course they'd probably been brought up all their life until then that we were superior types or something. I just assume that, I don't know, but in some way, unconsciously or

08:30 something like that it's built up in with all of us the same way of our superiority is, the opposite may be built up in them. I don't know.

That turned out to be a real problem because you assumed you were superior and you weren't.

Oh yes, and we worked and we were, from being pukka sahibs, just before the end of the war

Pukka sahibs?

Pukka

09:00 Sahib is Indian of course, Hindu. Sahib is Lord and Pukka means really true, Pukka Sahib. You say Pukka Sahib, really. I was in, I told you, I was in with two Tamils right at the end of the war, and they were buggers of blokes, they really were. We're sitting down there and I looked out. Oh no, what happened? It was the fifteenth of August. Now that's the day the war

09:30 ended, we didn't know. And a plane, they used to have the aeroplanes flying across, our planes, and the Japs would answer with ack ack guns. Generally they wouldn't let it go across without at least a machine gun firing at it. This day this aeroplane flew across. They were reconnoitring it to make sure that the Japs had put their surrenders, you know. There was sixty thousand Japs on Singapore Island and us prisoners of war and they knew that it wouldn't take much for the

10:00 Japanese to massacre us and in fact there were orders to do just that, specially with us in the gaol. They did massacre some of us, the day before. But when the plane went backwards and forwards and we, the three of us and the Indians knew, they're not silly you know, specially the Tamils, very clever, and they're looking up at the sound. That's all you go on in the cell, the sound of the plane. And there's no ack ack. It flew across

10:30 and it flew back, did it for about half an hour. And I said “I believe the war's over“ And they look. “Me too Sahib”. I got called Sahib. Later on I got Pukka Sahib. And it's almost a bowin' and scrapin' to me, you know. Later on that afternoon, the Japs are funny n’ this peculiar, not, funny's the word but one of the peculiarities and one of their strengths when something happens, they have a special day.

11:00 You'll get some rice cake, that's burnt rice, that's the rice that's left on the wok after the rice is cooked,

you know, that hard piece and they give you a slice of that as a present, on some particular day. And some, I assume was when some big battles, like em, on Phillipines, things like that. They've given us a bit of this without telling us why, well on that day the e fourteenth, we all got a little panik, a little bowl

11:30 of milk, condensed milk, made up condensed milk you know. And we used to send messages, morse code through and the walls and the morse code messages came through that the Jap prisoners upstairs didn't get any of the milk. We got the milk. So, so I'm happy, you know. Pukka Sahib, the Indians, ohh, we're friends for life, you know.

We'll come back to the end of the war in a minute, I've just got to look back in. We'll just finish it up then

12:00 **and I've gotta go back then.**

Ah, the next day it's all quiet, it's nothing, it's just the flip flap of the guards thongs as they walk up and down in the inspections. So I start slipping, I'm no longer a pukka sahib. And the next day, still nothing. And I've gone “Right, I'm a white bastard now, I've got the treatment now”. And the next day the cells opened and they let us out and I

12:30 didn't want to see those two buggers again for any time in my life. The thing was that the treatment of what we believe and what happens.

So you were back to Japanese invading and that week that you retreated. You didn't say you felt fear yourself, but did you see other soldiers who were

13:00 **frightened.**

You know, funny enough, our battalions, when we say there were seventeen , f’’rinstance, they say there were 15, 000 Australians on Singapore Island. The fact that there were only two brigades of Australian fighting troops which is say 7,000 troops, 7,000 see, but we were trained at that. We'd been trained. We knew the bullets,

13:30 we'd been trained under bullets, under machine gun fire firing over our head, while we were running, we were used to that sort. We were trained with, did a lot of training with gas masks I can tell you, back to the old war, oh, yeah. Trench war all that sort of training. We would've been beaten the Japs hands down and done the right thing and dug a trench across the Malayan peninsula and dived in and gave us a show with gas and things. But they didn't do it that way, orientals, of course.

14:00 and, but as far as fear, I did see it in the end but not in association with the fighting. When I was wounded, we had a shell shock bloke with us in the ambulance.

What about cowardice, was there any cowardly actions by the retreating troops?

I didn't, I never saw a scrap of it, not a scrap of it. And when the Wavell report, you've heard about the Wavell report, came out they said some dreadful things. They said some things

14:30 that were so wrong. It was an insult. They said the Australians were the last into battle and the first out, which is obviously wrong, demonstratively wrong because the Japanese landed right where we were. We were the first into battle. We weren't last in the battle because we were still fighting as a division of fighting troops when the British surrendered, you know. They were still fighting. What happened of course this,

15:00 we had too many, top heavy with auxiliary, and we generally are. When the Japanese, when they say they’ve got 60, 000 troops, you can bet your bottom dollar 55, 000 of them would be fully trained fighting troops. The rest would be reasonably well trained. But they'd be ambulance, hospital and clerical, but very few of them. But when we say we've got 60, 000 fighting troops we would be flat out

15:30 finding 20, 000 out of 60, 000fighting troops. The rest of them, take our current debate here, one just a little while ago, was that out of the 60, 000 or whatever troops, over half of them were office-wallahs. Our defence force here. So when we think we're nice, cosily defended, we have this huge army, whatever, we haven't. We have these specialised

16:00 troops, very good. And that's how it was on Singapore. We were stationed where we were stationed, which was exactly the narrowest point of the straits, by far the narrowest. At one point along where the British were it was miles across, or half a mile a cross at least, or a couple of miles across. Where we were it was hundreds of yards across. Then behind us, we fell back

16:30 right into the city itself and the wharves. Now all our auxiliary troops were behind us, all our auxiliary people, our accountants, our barbers, our cookhouse and our mobile bath people. I don't know what they were, there were thousands of them. There were 15, 000 of our people who became prisoners of war, yet there were only 7,000of us in the two brigades, you know, that were actually fighting. Now those two brigades,

17:00 I didn't see any of them. I should imagine that when the Japanese army went through the 22nd Brigade after they were shelled for five hours, six hours straight. The whole place was erupting. I was looking across but I didn't have enough nous to feel fear. It wasn't happenin' to me it was happenin' to them. That's the ignorance of it, you know.

How does the command structure work,

17:30 **when this is all obviously it's confusing...**

It doesn't work, it doesn't work. Our brigadier was told later that he inadvertently withdrew our Brigade back at the wrong time. This is part of the history of course which doesn't go over well. Brigadier Maxwell, he was an old fella from the First World War. What his thinking was, he's dead, he's gone long time ago, whether it's written or whether it's been discussed I

18:00 don't know, but I've never been able to fathom what they were about. Any of them. I just don't see it.

As a troop on the ground though, how did you get your orders?

Suddenly, out of the blue, like the fella come along, like I was tellin' you, we went up on the hill, me and Dave. We come out of the swamp, we're sittin' down havin' a bit of a rest. Bob's sayin' I don't know, I think our company's over and he's workin' it out with Paddy. I don't give a bugger I'm just relying on them I know they'll

18:30 come to the right decision because they have so far. I know 'em enough now to trust them I know they're good and they've been up the Muar an' they've been under fire and they came out well, so I'm not worried. This bloke comes along, this officer, an' he says “Look, we want this, it's important for this reconnaissance up on this hill”. I don't know what sort of importance. When we got up the hill all we could see down there was this swamp. We saw the Japs down there and when we came back, as we

19:00 said when we got back to the men bustin' with news, bustin' to tell them we saw these Japs here, Paddy and that says “Where the bloody hell have you been, Youngie, come on now, we gotta clear out, our Battalions withdrawing. We've gotta fight rear guard now, we've been waiting for you two, what'd you have up there, a picnic?” Now this is the extent of the, the officer comes along and says it's vital, he's willing, not that there's much danger, I'm not implying that, but there could have been. He was willing to risk

19:30 a couple of volunteers going up, you know, it was vital, so he said. It was vital to know an' that and he said “I wouldn't ask otherwise”. Dave said “All right, he's number two if you come along with me Billy, we'll have a look”. Now when we got back all we got was curses from our blokes because the Japs, we were being surrounded you see, we had to withdraw. With Maxwell withdrawing our Battalion,

20:00 Brigade, so it comes out now, course after the races you can see it. The Jap, one of the Jap generals who was looking for an opening to put his brigade in, was going up and down and couldn't see a place. He came along as we were withdrawing. He had his glasses on and said “Ooh, here's the opening” and came in there. Came through us and the Malayans and the Indians, so it left that

20:30 spearhead through there too, and that came on to the point of surrounding us, we had to withdraw altogether then.

You found yourself behind the Japanese advance.

We did, we did, because we, as I say, because of this business of going up vital information, we were late getting back to the company. I got wounded then. Shell hit the tree and blew it off and a bit of shrapnel came into

21:00 m’thigh, it wasn't much, I thought I'd lost m’leg.

Tell us just go back to that moment when the shrapnel hit the tree.

Well, we were, we'd been dodging and firing at some Japs over on the side and when we had ta come outta that. We were digging trenches all the time, every time we got to a place there, their spotters would see us and send teams over and shell us and mortar us. You just didn't have a chance to settle down any time.

21:30 So any rate, we got under this place, under some trees, first time we'd had a bit of shelter from the Zeros. We thought this is beaut. So I dig a hole, you gotta dig 'em deep 'cause everyone wants to fire at you. The next minute, the shell whatever it was, mortar shell or one of the Zeros, went over, it hit the top of the tree and the whole tree or the top of it disintegrated.

22:00 It killed, I think it killed a couple over from us, a couple of our blokes, or badly wounded them. ‘Cause the pettsitrays[?], this is all in the drama, all the smoke an the trees and bits of trees is falling on you and I put my hand here and something hit me on my leg and I didn't know if it was a tree fell down and landed on it and I pulled it back and cripes, my blood, and I said, “My bloody leg” I said. Almost became a pacifist right then. Anyway, Paddy

22:30 he's a funny fellow Paddy, he came over and he put, you have your field dressings with you, and he put the field dressings round and he said “You were lucky Billy, it didn't get your middle stump”. And then he reached over but he says “You'll be all right” He always had a way of putting things in their right perspective. ‘Cause I thought I was going to be a cripple for life and had visions of being one legged and all sorts of things. It wasn't anything at all. As a matter of fact it probably wouldn't have mattered much, but for the next, oh

23:00 twenty, thirty hours we were marching around, I had this great lump of shrapnel in me. Didn't know, you know, it was working around, it was sore, but yeah. Just after that we went into this paddock. We couldn't move, we couldn't get anywhere without them seeing you, we got out of the trees we were going across and this was the most miraculous thing. I was right in view of them as we came across. Here we are out on

23:30 this paddock, a whole platoon of us, whatever, 30-40 of us, and a couple of Zeros came in, I think there was three all told, I'm not sure. And they came in straight. They looked like they were coming straight at me, and they're firing and the bullets are coming straight along and the ground, you could see 'em coming in the ground. And I said, they're be on to get me. Fear wasn't in the equation. It was just the fact. This is it, Mrs Young's goin' to lose her little boy sort of thing.

24:00 You wouldn'tg credit it, here we are, six feet or so apart, in line abreast, and the bullets went right through the whole of us, lines of bullets, went straight through and didn't hit one person in that mob. And yet another time there'd be one bullet fired and one bloke'd get killed.

How do you explain that luck at the time?

We're all, we just talked about that

24:30 for a while. Paddy said “I thought we were all goners”. We just couldn't believe we could be so exposed out in the open. Of course they had these bloody balloons and of course they're watching us with binoculars obviously or something and as soon as we get out, and they've had these Zeros flying around probably. I'm just surmising I don't know. But the next minute, as soon as, all the time we're in the trees we're all right but soon as we come out of that trees, there's these two or three Zeros

25:00 and they're firing I don't know, what have they got, four on each, two on each wing or something, I forget now. Four lines, four lines, going, right along.

What does a Zero sound like, coming at you so low?

As a matter of fact, at that time, they were almost unnoticeable because of the noise they were continually making. There was continually zipping and zooming

25:30 of noise of aeroplanes and at that occasion, on that day in particular, mortar bombs going on and stuff like that, their mortars and stuff. It was just one canopy of noise. It was something that when you got out of it and they ceased the silence would be more offending, more offensive to you than

26:00 the noise you know, in that respect. But no, I've never worked out how a mob of us could go through that paddock and have the guns and not one of us was shot.

When did the order to surrender come through?

Well, I was in hospital.

So you went to hospital because of your shrapnel wound?

Yes, also, see, we got

26:30 cut off from our Battalion altogether in the finish, rear guard. By this time we'd run out of food, we'd run out of ammo. I had one hand grenade. I think I had half a clip for me rifle and never had any bullets left for the Lewis gun. And I said to Dave “Why don't we throw the bloody thing away, we've got nothing to fire it with”. He said “No, we're going to carry it”. So we had to carry the darn thing.

27:00 We carried, we had orders, if ever we got any mess up, we'd all made for, our coordinates were Bukit Timah. Which is in the middle of Singapore and it's a hill there, a hill. That's where they had their last battle. Bukit Timah. When we got to Bukit Timah fortunately it was night time. The night had fallen. Bukit Timah was ablaze and we could see by the blaze that the Japs already had the place. There were Japs everywhere.

27:30 an’ then their tanks came along, along Bukit Timah road. An there's a big drain, fortunately, falling down, big storm water ones, big ones, so we dived down into the stormwater drain and… can I move over there for a moment to get that? Yeah, just walked off screen. That's us in the drain, that's not a very good drawing of it. There's the tanks and there's

28:00 supposedly the dark A's coming the Japs.

Just describe that scene for anybody who can't see this picture.

Well the drain was a stormwater drain over in the tropics where they have lots of water and lots of need for run off and water. The drains are very big, six foot deep, ten foot wide perhaps, our drain was and it had concrete sides and we were crouched beside the sides as the Japs’ tanks went by just a few feet away from

28:30 where we were crouching. The soldiers were walking down and riding push bikes down and one thing and another. It only needed one of them to look down or to come and have a pee, or whatever, you know, curiosity. But in the blackness we were pretty safe until they put the flare up and that's that photo is. It

shows the flare going up with the tanks in silhouette with us crouched beside the tank and then the big shape comes up with the sword and that's the dark A's that we were

29:00 going to experience, see. Well, we were in there for some time. We didn't know it but they were coming round and they made their front up on the top of Bukit Timah Hill and they put their artillery up there and they aimed it all at the city and sent down a notice of capitulation. Unless we capitulated they were going to open fire on Singapore city, see. They had the heights, from

29:30 Bukit Timah Hill. Well, that's what we're doing, here we are, in this little drain and they're going by yabbering away. It's funny the tanks were noisy things, but the most unusual thing that happened that night, of noise concern, was we heard this unearthly noise coming along. And we thought by God they must have some tank, this is a decent tank. We'd heard the others go by. And it was about two hundred Japs on push bikes with bamboo wheels. An' they're all riding along sedately.

30:00 Of course you wouldn't go very fast on those kinds of bikes and they all had a kind of a bambooed tyred wheel or something. 'Brmm brm brm brm brm' and you magnify that two hundred times in the night. And we're wondering. In the dark we couldn't see anything. We were peepin' over the edge. What is it? What is it? We were expecting this great mechanised monster and it was about two hundred of these Japanese soldiers riding these bikes.

30:30 Way down from top of Malaya, right down.

What did you do?

There wasn't anything we could do. We only hoped they'd ride on by. We were down in the drain. Then a couple more of our blokes came along. An officer was with them. The poor fellow was badly wounded. He died there shortly afterwards, about an hour afterwards. There was a sergeant

31:00 with another fellow with another Lewis gun. They came with us, then some Indians came down there. They thought we were Japs and they were going to surrender to us. We told them they didn't have to surrender to us. And they were all millin' around. Then Paddy said to Bob "What'll we do now?" So Bob said "What we'll do, we'll take our boots off." 'Cause we had to sneak off across near where Japs were. He said, "We'll take our boots off and sneak across, if we can get over

31:30 into the bush" he said, "we'll be pretty right". So he said, "We'll dismantle the guns first". To dismantle a Lewis gun to get at the body locking pin you gotta press the trigger. Well, when you're dismantling the bipods, instead of tripods you've got bipods, you got just two legs. You turn it like that. Now you're not supposed to put your hand

32:00 over the muzzle when you do it, but everyone does. There's not supposed to be a bullet in the spout, there was. Of course, in the black of night, when Dougie and them are undoing their gun, the bullet explodes, goes right through Dougie's hand, hits the concrete, goes into the shoulder of the Indian. Well there's Doug tellin' God all about it and there's the Indian telling his God all about it in hindu

32:30 yellin' out. So there was no need to quieten, there was no need for any of it, so we just had to dive out of the trench. So I'm helping the Indian who had a bullet in his shoulder. So he's screamin' like mad and I'm tryin' to help him out and I had a hold of Dougie on my other side and my flamin' boots fell off. I had them tied on the side. So the rest of the night and the next day I walked on every sharp

33:00 object there was on Singapore Island, guaranteed. My feet were in a mess as well. An' my thigh was all over the place. The piece of shrapnel came out and when I got out of the RAP, the doctor pulled it out there.

And you arrived at the 13th AGH[Australians General Hospital]

The 13th AGH. There's an interesting thing, too. When we were at the RAP, the Regimental Aid Post, the doctor said "If you can't walk go into that ambulance on the right, an' he said

33:30 "And if you can walk, walk over to the one on the left". I hummed and hahhed about it, I thought will I be brave or will I let the buggers carry me in. So I said I'd be brave so I walked over to the ambulance on the left. That took me to the 13th AGH. Then ambulance on the right took them to Alexander Hospital, the 10th AGH. That's where the massacres, they were all killed, so you make a decision, you go one way, right you die, left and you live, and you do that all through

34:00 life, you cross the road and if you don't look out you'll get killed.

For a young lad who didn't have any religious belief at the time. You weren't religious.

Oh no, but I went to a few churches when they had the decent Sunday school picnics when they had the picnics.

Suddenly were seeing Zeros strafing you and missing, and turning one way and

34:30 **living and the other way and dying. Did it make you think maybe you were chosen by God or you had a lucky charm or a lucky star?**

I dunno, if you took that surmise along, whether it was God, there's a helluva lot of faithless in the

world, believe in everything but God. I know it could be a trigger of course. I know people who did it. I know people who turned to Hindustan, hindu religion, while we were in Outram Road

35:00 gaol, because one of the Indians in there said he was a Guru. And they wanted something to hold on to and some hope and of course in that respect as long as it does 'em some good it's all right.

So what did you hold on to?

I always blessed, its not a blessing no, but I've always had a peculiar and perverted sense of humour. It's got me out of a helluva lot of trouble.

35:30 Something humorous occurs or looks I've got to point it out. I can no sooner let a humorous moment pass by than I could jump. It's in built in me. I don't know whether it's going with my dad while he painted his signs up, and things like that, but I can't, I've got into all sorts of trouble. I fired at the jam tin at the sergeants feet, because someone said it would be a bit of a joke,

36:00 got into a helluva lot of trouble with that naturally. Things like that. I don't know. I have a belief of course, I have a spiritual belief. I have a belief in the power of advancement of attainment. Not necessarily of what's going to happen to us. I think we might go the way of the

36:30 dinosaurs. An I think we have been given some notices, for example when that junk went into Jupiter that time. It showed us how close that the world could be destroyed. And it could be destroyed if we don't do something about it. And we've been given the brain and the ideas to do it. Dinosaurs were given three or four hundred years to develop into something. They didn't, and eventually one of those

37:00 things bashed into the world and wiped them out. And in time something could wipe us out. And we're frivolous, having fights with one another and using our techniques and our knowledge to do frivolous things, you know.

Did you start to want to return home, after the war.

Well, I had a vague sense of home, but I didn't have it well developed, no. I wanted to get back to Australia. By then I was an

37:30 Australian. I loved it, first time home to smell the eucalyptus. Oh, that's great. Now, I was over New Zealand the other day. You didn't call that overseas. No, I go to Borneo and places like that a few times now, I'd much rather stay home and go to a different place in Australia, now. I think when you're young to go overseas.

Do you think that made it easier to be in Singapore and to be a prisoner of war subsequently in

38:00 **Borneo not to have a family to have been an orphan?**

Oh, it would have made it easier yes in that respect, but then again, it would have made it difficult if you were trying to have some attachment. And I think some people got by having an attachment, by having a religion or something like that. That saved them from the quandary. The interesting thing is, I can't think of anyone who committed suicide when they were prisoners of war, but I can think of quite a few who committed suicide when they came home.

38:30 And there's a thing to cogitate on, the fact that when we have so much , we find that so many people commit suicide. And when death is fearful and so near to you, the last thing in the world, the last thing you want to do is give up you're life. You'll fight for it, you'll do anything for it. Because life is precious.

39:00 when life is in abundance and everything is made easy for you, it's not worth hanging onto.

Did you ever think about suicide when you came home?

Ooh, no, no, no. But I knew a couple of my friends who were older and couldn't cope with. The difficulty was, now my dear old grandmother, we called her the Admiral, the granny type. She was a nice old lady.

39:30 but after I was home two weeks, she said, “Bill, you've been home a couple of weeks now, don't you think you'd better go to work?” She was right. I went back to work, but there was a lack of understanding, of feeling. We never had the counselling or anything like that and whether we needed I don't know, that's another debatable thing. But we never had it anyway, the debate. We never had anyone to hold our hand or things like that. We had the most stupid tests. One test they gave us if you saw a

40:00 battleship going across some land, what would you do, stuff like that. Which was, I don't think it was adequate for people who had just come out of prisoner of war camps.

We'll talk about coming home in a minute again, but we have to change the tape.

40:16 **End of tape**

Tape 5

00:31 **Bill, I might go back this morning over some details. At the time of capture, can you cast your mind back to that moment, moment when you**

When the

01:00 ambulance took us down to the 13th AGH, which is down near where Changi is, and when I arrived there of course everything was cockahoop, because the sisters were just leaving. I was fortunate enough to get there just as they were coming out through the passageway there and they were kissing goodbyes. It was quite an emotional thing. And I wondered what, here I am laying waiting to have

01:30 some attention and the sisters were coming along and some of them were crying. They didn't want to leave. And the authorities thought it would be much better for them to be out of the place before the Japanese took the place which was obviously going to happen. So several of the sisters gave me a kiss on the cheek. And I wondered and I said to one of the fellows “What's happening?” and they explained that the sisters were gong aboard and those sisters were the ones that unfortunately were bombed and massacred and one thing. Not many

02:00 of them ever arrived back home in Australia, so perhaps it may have been better if they hadn't been sent away, but that's another thing. Well, when they put me up in the ward, it was upstairs, oh and the commotion. The Japanese were just advancing. Our ambulance was probably the last one to get into the hospital before the Japanese came charging in. This happened on the fourteenth , that's the day before the official surrender.

02:30 Outside the hospital there was great commotion. They'd killed five of our blokes, they had bayoneted them. They were tied up, their hands behind their backs, these five.

Did you see that?

I saw the action, what was going on you didn't know. I knew by the screams and shouts and “Banzais” and all that what was happening, of the Japanese. There was a whole commotion going on around this, more the noise than anything. I'd have to think carefully to say

03:00 whether I saw it. I saw the action of it. It made us worried. We thought, “Hello, is this going to happen to us.” And we hadn't heard about the massacre at the 10th AGH, which had taken place about the same time.

How did you find out about that?

Not 'til I got back to the Changi, later, they told us that the guys that went on the ambulance that was on the right when I left the RAP

03:30 station, that ambulance on the right that went to the 10th AGH, and they were all killed. I went on the other ambulance of course, fortunately.

Did you have a choice of which ambulance?

Well, the doctor said to me he said, I'd been wounded in the thigh, and my feet were all a mess. And he said if you can't walk you will go in the stretchers to the one, that ambulance on the right, but if you can manage to walk, take the one on the left. So I thought

04:00 a bit and I thought, “Will I make the bludgers carry me”, sort of thing, young bloke thinking. Or will I be a hero and walk. So I thought, oh, I'll walk, tough guy. So I walked, an' that was the right decision. That's how close, that's the sort of decision you make, you go one way an’ you die and you go an' make a decision another way.

When did you reflect first on that decision?

Oh, when they told me about that massacre. It was so close you know. Only just happened and I remembered

04:30 distinctly the feeling of bravado when I thought “Oh, I'll walk”. So I walked across. There was no effort really, but you gotta make a little bit of theatre out of it when you're young.

Do you remember specifically that that decision saved your life at that time?

Oh, well, when they told me, oh yes, I said to the fellows, I said to Paddy and them, there you go, you make a, 'cause it had happened to us a few times during the battle, when the mortar bomb didn't go off,

05:00 right in the middle of us, just a few inches away from my head when it landed. If it had hit me it would've killed me, but it didn't explode so it didn't hurt any of us. When the sniper had me at the tree and he fired three bullets and each one of them went across my head, across the back of my head, the sniper was the back of us. Situations like that happen so many times that you don't even notice in the finish. It is not bravado, it is a mixture of, a little bit of a, a little bit of

05:30 ignorance and a little bit of, mainly, you were that darn busy.

Did you think about the other guys that went in the other ambulance?

That'd been killed. You think of them.

Did you know any of them?

Well, no, no, I didn't. I mainly, most of them were badly wounded and they were all wrapped up and blankets over them and things like that. There was only a couple of them that were

06:00 like me, iffy cases. One fella who could've come with me but he decided to go into the other ambulance with the stretchers. But I don't know who he was. Haven't got a memory of him really. Only have a memory of how clever my decision was. Given myself a pat on the back that I'd made this right decision.

Do you remember the names of the nurses that said goodbye to you?

No, no, because it came as surprise.

06:30 I would look at a list and say “Oh, they were there, I didn't even know” I remember one rather attractive nurse, a blonde, well that's a natural reaction, a young fellow, notice a blonde, a brunette'd go unnoticed. The point and going into the atmosphere of the ward in those moments

07:00 before the Japanese captured the hospital and surrounds well, one of our doctors went out later when the Japanese had passed by for a while. We had all Red Cross signs and all that so the Japanese knew it was a hospital. So they did steer clear of it. Fortunately for us, not unlike what they did at the 10th AGH. When the doctor went out, he found the sixth fellow. There was five of them dead, and the bloke underneath, had his head

07:30 almost severed, but he was still alive. It was a sword that did this they thought. It obviously had hit a rock or something an' stopped, and the sword must have curved round or something in the jar, 'cause it cut him right round and right round here. He literally walked into hospital holding his head. They carried him in, but he held his head over to stop the bleeding and everything like that. He went over with us.

08:00 I think his name was Cook.

You saw him come into the hospital?

Oh yes, yes. He came over with us to Borneo and he died in the death march, after all that. So that was an the other memory I have of that time, the 14th February 1942, the Japs finally came into the hospital, and a squad of them marched along and as they came into each ward one of 'em 'd drop off

08:30 as the official guard of that particular ward. When they came through our ward this fella stopped with his back turned to us. Obviously he was going to be our guard. Well, he turned around and he was the most hideous looking poor fella. He had a hair lip that went right up. Oh, oh, it was a very gross disfigurement. It showed his teeth and his teeth were all black. And in my innocence I

09:00 thought I hope they're not all like this, but he turned out all right. It was just a disfigurement.

Was he the first Japanese soldier you'd seen close up?

It was the first Japanese close up. This was our moment of being, officially, prisoners of war. And the first thing he did, which is a typical, it became a typical action, we weren't to realise it then, he counted us. From then on for three and a half years, I'd like a dollar for every time I was counted.

09:30 “Ichi, ni, san” whatever the numbers were, you know. Yes, he went along, and I can remember him, he had his rifle, and he glared, and he was obviously a slow counter but a sure one. He pointed his rifle, “Ichi, ni, san, sui ko, ro” and he went right round the ward and got all the numbers and how many he was supposed to take. Every day we would be counted up then.

Were you scared?

10:00 No, well, when the reaction, we didn't know about the 10th AGH or the massacre, anything like that. Those things we didn't know of. I would've been worried if I'd known what had happened there. But no, it was the strangeness of it that got you. You were laying in bed and looking outside your blanket and you're trying to look, you're worried, I should imagine, if you guys were there to take our photos

10:30 I should imagine it would be very much like those newly captured Americans that were on the TV the other day, when they didn't know what was going to happen. They'd heard all these stories, things like that. With us we hadn't heard those sort of stories. We hadn't been frightened the life out of us. Stories about bayoneting, an heads cut off and all that sort of thing. Which I think the Americans had expected a lot more harsher

11:00 treatment than their prisoners of war did get. So we had something like that, something of a worried look on our faces. Some of us did I think.

Did you feel guilty that you'd been captured?

No, more indignation that we'd got captured. When we got back to the Battalion afterwards, a week

later when they we were trucked in to barracks

11:30 Paddy and all of the guys they were so indignant of the fact that we had surrendered. We had no knowledge that we were going to be a surrender. Our battalion, the 8th Division, that is, the trained soldiers of the 8th Division, the battalions and the regiments, and the artillery, they were all fighting as a unit in one particular section behind Singapore city. And when the orders came through

12:00 a lot of them were very surprised and some of them were quite hostile to it.

Your war was over, how did that make you feel?

I think by then I'd had enough of war. The fact that it wasn't glamorous had by that time soaked into me. The comic book aspect, the Rambo aspect of war soon left. When you join up at first and you get a

12:30 uniform all you can think of is the glamour and you're going to win medals and you're going to do this and you're going to do that. It doesn't come out exactly, it's not like what's in the comics and it's very difficult to describe the feeling. When you first get a bullet goes past and you realise there's some horrible person out there who's actually trying to hurt you. The fact that you're trying to do the same to him doesn't come into your head so much then. It's just the

13:00 feeling, actually someone's there trying to hurt you. It doesn't come up to you until that moment, until the moment you're starting to get attacked you think “My word, they're fair dinkum, they're trying to damage me”. So you react, some people react in other ways.

You're trying to damage them back too.

Oh yes, oh, yes, but you don't think of that. It's the first reaction, well, to me, especially that tree when the sniper was on to me,

13:30 an’ the bullets were hitting the tree and I'm down as far as I can get in that hole we dug and the rubber tree wasn't very big and besides it didn’t matter because this fella was at the back of us. Wasn't supposed to be there, which was another bad thing for him, to do. And that's in the way you reason then you know. We still reason like that. We reasoned that the Japanese shouldn't have attacked Pearl Harbour without declaring war. The niceties of war.

14:00 **I'd actually like to know that moment when you actually fired your rifle in combat.**

Well, I was feeding a machine gun was the first time I fired. As a matter of fact I didn't fire the rifle much at all. I fired a few shots, but whether it hit anyone I don't know. Because in the jungle and in rubber plantations in particular it was mainly, I remember going through the rubber plantation

14:30 the day I was wounded.

Could you see who you were firing at?

You could just see shadows of people and of course they're as careful as us to try and not get shot.

Did you aim your rifle?

Yes, oh yes, but you weren't quite sure if it was a tree or a Jap you were firing at. And you didn't have much time. Particularly my impressions of the battle

15:00 were, the couple of days I was in it was one of confusion more than anything. It was all brought about by the fact that they had ascendancy of the air. We had no aeroplanes at all. They had these balloons up, observation balloons, and they had people with binoculars in there watching every move we made. It was very frustrating.

When you were firing your Lewis gun do you remember seeing the people you were

15:30 **firing your Lewis gun at?**

Oh yes, yes, you, when we were coming out of the swamp that time, we fired, we had, we had a couple of, they came, one group of Japs come into the field of fire. The Lewis gun has a fairly wide scattering, it's not like a bren gun. It's not an ideal gun where trees and that are because it scatters the bullets.

16:00 and there we had a bunch of Japs came through there, whether we got any, there was a few of them shot of course, a few of them fell down and there were screams and things like that, but there was a lot of people firing at them.

Can you describe that moment when you were firing at them?

Well I wasn't firing at them I was feeding. Dave Holden was the number one of the gun. My job was to feed the bull and also I had the

16:30 rifle and if I saw anyone come along or if I saw any opportunities you would fire at them, but there wasn't very many opportunities. And another thing that was frustrating was no sooner would you get into a position and you knew the Japs were coming. In one instance I remember well, they were coming up the side of the draw and we, we thought“Well now it won't be long before they'll be in range and

they'll be right where we want 'em", you know, "We'll get stuck into them, we'll get a bit of

17:00 pay back", you know.

What are you thinking about when the Lewis gun is firing?

You don't have much time to think in terms of us sitting here now, thinking what are we going to think about. It just happens. It 's a reflex. That's where your training comes in. That's why you're taught that when something happens you dive down. It doesn't seem a very big thing to fancy training men to dive

17:30 down on the ground when a shell goes off or anything like that. And when the instructor blew the whistle, you're supposed to dive, hit the ground but if there was water there or anything. And some of those sadistic instructors, they'd blow their whistle when there was some water to make you dive. But this was so essential for you to react in those sort of ways.

This is all over for you now, once you're captured, this excitement. Your war is. Take you back to when you were

18:00 **captured, this excitement is now finished, your action is finished.**

Well, it was limited for us in the hospital. We were in the hospital, coming around dressing our wounds, things like that. The normality of the hospital still kept on. The only difference to that was the guard at the door. Hair lip and all he turned out to be quite a reasonable sort of fellow. Long as he counted and the count was right he was okay.

18:30 **How did you communicate with the guard?**

Not much, the only thing was on the first time he went around if you had a watch on he'd take it off you. Things like that. They did that. I didn't have a watch, mine had broken down, so they didn't take anything off me. And I had no money so they didn't harm me much, but any of the guys who had anything, they took those but they didn't, they just took them as their right. That was part of the war ethics, as they had it anyway.

19:00 No. I, when we were in the hospital it wasn't very little difference because of the necessities of dressing wounds. Male nurses we had then because the females had all been sent away. Unfortunately they were bombed. Their ships were sunk. Those that lived through it spent the rest of the war over in Sumatra.

Did you know any Japanese words?

19:30 No, no, no. We, look, our information on the Japanese were woeful. It was most inadequate. Especially in the sense of know your enemy. If you're going to have any chance you should know their strengths and their weaknesses.

If you knew your enemy you might regard them as human beings how would that affect your fighting them?

Well, you're in a fighting mood you've been trained to fight you've been trained to kill.

20:00 The whole training system is centred around making you a soldier, so I should imagine those training methods have been designed to obliterate any of the humanity side of you, as much as possible. And the more effective it is the better you are at keeping alive, at diving when a shell hits, things like that. As soon as a machine

20:30 gun opens up at you, if you stood there amazed, and wondered and said what is going on there, you're dead. But if you do what you've been trained to do, and you dive down, whether there's mud there, you go face down into it.

Can you tell us more about when you left the hospital. Can you tell us more about Changi and what Changi was like?

Well when I first went to Changi it was a place of beginning. They were starting to, eh

21:00 become organised, to wonder how they were going to cope, wondering how long the war was going to be. For instance, nearly every time there was a storm, lightning and thunder, that was the Yanks landing at Penang, or landing over at Kota Bharu, or landing over at Johore Bahru and places like that. Now optimism is coming back.

Now, where does that come from if you were in Changi?

I said when there was ever a storm on in Changi. If there was a storm come about, an' the lighting

21:30 and thunder, you'd have people saying "Oh, the Americans are landing over at the strait". Our optimism was coming back. We were going to. This was only a momentary lapse. This is how naïve we were and how brainwashed we were about the superiority of us, as against the oriental people and others. It was deep-grained. It was uh

22:00 something that you couldn't, I always remember Peter Sellers' record I had and he's describing the humble servant, who was sick, and his Grace came in and saying that how he sat up and hit his head

when he was knuckling down to bow to the Grace, and he was the fella who was dying with sickness but he still couldn't get out of the habit of subjecting himself to his superior, bowing and giving the knuckle to the forehead,

22:30 and it is ingrained in most of us in those senses. In the army we get ingrained the urge to kill without thinking about the human side of it, the grace

What was your impression of Changi when you saw it?

Firstly of course it was the novelty of us being trucked in from the hospital. We had the Battalion, our friend like Paddy an' Bob and Dave and them all comin' over to welcome us back in the Battalion,

23:00 and the novelty seeing what they'd done and how much they'd organised. As I said, the, when we got throughout the men were all at that moment were putting the barbed wire round and making it a prison. We had to do that ourselves with the barbed wire. And the barbed wire was the very barbed wire the British general Percival refuses

23:30 and that was a bit of a.

So you made your own prison?

We had to make our own prison, and with the very barbed wire that we needed so desperately and was refused, and the Japs captured it with the same trucks that was hidden when they trucked it over to us.

Did you know that at the time?

We knew, we were soon told that it was the same barbed wire. You know the story about the barbed wire? Well,

24:00 Brigadier Simpson, he was the leading defence general of Percival's. He was the designer of the fortifications and all. He came over to where our positions were on Kranji and on the beach there and he saw how inadequate, there was no fortification, there was no barbed wire, nothing. So he recommended that certain things be done to help. And he said I'll

24:30 send over as much barbed wire, rolls of barbed wire and stuff, oil to put in the water to set fire when the Japs landed, stuff like that. We had none of those sort of things.

So the barbed wire was stock piled and then it was used to make Changi prison.

Anyway, we got five truck loads of barbed wire and stuff and sent them over to our line. They just got over to our lines and we were just about to unload them, and all this barbed wire fencing and that, obstacles.

25:00 Easiest and best obstacles to stop an invasion, invading people, especially on a beach. No sooner got there and an order came from Percival saying he needed the wire himself and to bring it back, so they took the five trucks back to Percival. And the Japanese captured the five trucks, still there, still loaded with the barbed wire, and unused. And it was used by our blokes but

25:30 history tells us that, the sequence of events. He said he needed the wire. Okay, we could have gone along with that, said oh well, it was their barbed wired and they needed it. They needed it that much that a week later, it was more than a week, this was a week before the Japs landed that the barbed wired came in. We had a few days to put that barbed wire along as a defensive measure along.

26:00 Help, perhaps may not have helped, but it may have created a terrific difference. We never know, it's part of conjecture now. And yet that barbed wire went back and then we had to turn around and the Japs came and we had to build our prison with the same barbed wire. So there's story of the barbed wire. It's something that's always stuck in my gullet.

Changi, what Changi?

It was the barracks,

26:30 what was the name of the barracks? Selerang. It was a British army barracks. Real British army, the permanent army were there then. Argyles, his regiment's all there. Big barracks, big buildings all around the square. Asphalt square where they used to the colours and do

27:00 all their ceremonies. So this is what we took over. There was another barracks, Robert barracks over from it.

Who was organising you?

Brigadier Gallagher, was our, Colonel Gallagher he was then, 'Blackjack', 'Blackjack' Gallagher. He was our, oh he, not right at the start, he became leading officer, but he was the leading light in formatting Changi and the rules and regulations and everything.

27:30 And they did a very good job of it. They made Changi into probably the model prison camp in the Japanese experience. It was the central holding camp. It became the central holding camp. If the Japanese wanted 1000 slaves to work over there, or, 2000 odd of us went to Borneo, eventually. 1500 of

us in the first batch and 700 or so later on.

28:00 They'd get them from Changi mainly.

How long were you in Changi for?

I was in Changi for six months the first time and then at the end of the war.

So for the six months in Changi were you ...

Well, Changi, that was our base camp. We were sent out on to work on the wharves to loading the plunder on to the ships and trains to be sent back to Japan

28:30 and places. We worked on that, we worked on Thompson Road to build the roads into a big monument on Bukit Timah Hill, where the Japanese had a monument to their dead. They lost a lot of people in the war at Bukit Timah. That's where we were in that drain that night. We did quite a few different, work like that. There were work parties all over the place. They, work

29:00 parties started the first, turned the first sod on what is now Changi international airways, airfield. The initial part of it, structure of it, was built by our fellows for a Japanese airfield then. So all those sort of things took place. Changi was organised into a…They were able to do it because Changi was in Singapore was a central position. It was in the eyes of the world were on

29:30 it. So the Japanese had to behave reasonably well on Singapore itself. As far as prisoners of war were concerned, in some respects, because they had the international Red Cross, the Swiss, and the various embassies of the axis, Germany an' Italy and places like that, they had embassies that in Singapore and as a consequence our people were able to get

30:00 a certain amount of latitude. They were able to grow vegetables.

Did you get news from Australia?

No, not news. We had unofficial secret radios where they got news from, but they had to be careful how they dispersed the news. So the Japanese wouldn't wake up to the fact that we had secret radio. I did send a letter home. It was a

30:30 one of those more or less one of those compulsory letters. I am well, hope you are, sort of thing.

Who did you send that to?

To my grandmother. Yes I've still got that letter. “Dear Nanna. Hope you are well, I am well. Japanese are treating me well”. I don't know whether I wrote that over in Changi. No, I think I wrote it in Borneo, in Sandakan. But, in Changi itself,

31:00 the six months I was there they had concert parties. They had all sorts of endeavours. They had factories where they, any old jumpers they would take the wool out of it to make yarn and knit it into things it was needed for. They used to extract vitamins from different vegetables and things like that. They had a wire factory where any bits of

31:30 wire they got they would make into nails and things like that so they could use in repairing building, whatever.

Were you working in any of those facilities?

I worked a couple of times just as a labourer. They'd want a group. They'd say “You group, we want eight men to go to so an so and bring these vegetables across”. The main job I had when I was in Changi itself was in the transport division. That’s where they had this cut

32:00 down army trucks, just a tray of a truck and four wheels and a little swivel they'd made, the engineer made, and they had long ropes, and we were roped to those, these carts and we would transport all round. It's a big barracks of course with roads all round it. And the buildings and there was thousands of us there, 15 000 roughly. So the life

32:30 of the Changi would go on inside here and the Japanese were outside the wire. Providing we didn't go outside we existed without much to do with the Japanese. Occasionally a patrol of Japs would come through. They tell the story of ‘Blackjack’ Gallagher bringing 'em to attention and going crook and making them go back because they weren't dressed properly. He was that sort of

33:00 fella. He would do it too. I should imagine it's a true story it's been told that many times. So they had concert parties, quite good concert parties. We had a cricket match. Ben Barnett, who used to be the wicket keeper. Australian wicket keeper in test cricket during Bradman's early days, before the war, he captained our team against an English team.

You played in the team?

Oh, no,

33:30 I was a spectator, but I can remember the match. I remember it very well. An the rah rahs had a game of football against the English football team, and we had Aussie Rules games of course between ourselves, all in Changi.

Did you play Aussie Rules?

No, no, I was more interested in getting outside the camp, outside the wire and getting coconuts and stuff like that, an' charging around, you know.

Did you sell that stuff when you were in the camp?

Oh no, it was only for ourselves,

34:00 our own group, you know. Our own battalion. I'd get coconuts and sweet potatoes and stuff like that.

How were goods exchanged?

Outside, no, no. Well, we had a little bit of money we'd buy some stuff with, but mainly we used the money. Actually the people in Singapore were very good, excellent, especially the Chinese. They were good to us. They would help wherever possible. They'd give you food, and

34:30 invite you into their place some of them. I remember one fellow he lived in Great, what's the name of the road again, Great World Road, something like that, and he was director of Hume pipes, this Chinese gentleman and his family. And they were Catholics, I remember that, because the fellow I was with he was Catholic and they got talking about church things you know.

35:00 He fed us up like anything and it was quite a risky thing if the Japs had found out. And he did that. I forget his name. I can always remember the fact that he was the local director of the Hume Australian Company, Hume Pipe Company. I can see him now. Elderly fellow, big family of grandchildren and children, all lived in this big house in

35:30 The Great Road, or the Great World Road or something it's called. It is one of the big roads there. So you meet people like that. And you'd use your money to make contacts. You'd buy something and through the buying you'd get to know the safe way to get things. And coconuts you'd get for nothing and sweet potatoes grew everywhere.

Did you use the so called invasion money?

Oh, in those days I'm talking about we had our

36:00 own money. They hadn't got the invasion money out at the time. Early in the piece we still had our own dollars that we had in our pockets, you know. Our pay and stuff like that, so we had that to use. Some had quite a lot of money and they used for a fair while, in the early days. It was mainly just to get out and do the things. You don't realise the danger or anything like

36:30 that, it don't enter your head. As a matter of fact, it saved my life in the finish of course. Over in Borneo, being caught outside I was sent away from there and of course they all died, they all died.

So you were outside Changi essentially not

Behind the pipes, there was big pipelines going up. It was very awkward place for 'em even with barbed wire fences. There were big fences but they were

37:00 it was very, almost impossible to police the whole lot and it was quite easy to get outside.

You were sneaking out.

Sneaking out.

How did you sneak out of Changi?

Out through the fence, burrow underneath. We had places you know. There were, like all the topography and land and there's little hillocks and there are little indentations in the ground. You find out. It's, you, talking about an area of miles round.

37:30 Changi barracks. See, Changi gaol was never in our equation until the last few months of the war. The civilians were in Changi gaol itself. We only went there, our blokes only went there in the last bit.

What would happen if you were caught outside the wire?

Well, at first, I never got caught fortunately, touch wood. At first they, I might get mixed up here between our camps

38:00 out at Thompson Road or out at the wharf, but invariably if we were caught doing something wrong, the Indians, the Indians had gone over to the Japs. The Sikhs, the big blokes with the turbans and the beards, they would put you in gaol or in their holding camps. One holding camp that they had that I just missed out on being was a tennis court. And you had to stand in there all the time, eight days, nine days, whatever time they'd put 'em in there.

38:30 for.

The Sikhs had gone over to the Japanese?

Yes, at that time of course the happening of it. There was a big agitation for independence in India. Ghandi and all that. And it was quite strong. Ghandi, while he promised to ease up while the war was on, there were a lot of other stronger communists and all sorts of people like that

39:00 that were agitating for a free India. And of course Japan, like any country would, said to the Indians "Oh, we agree with you, the first thing we'll do when we win, we'll give you people freedom". So a lot of the Indians, or particular groups of them, went straight over to the Japanese.

They were soldiers from the British army?

Soldiers, oh yes, from the British army, yes. I don't have

39:30 any problem with that. They were fighting for the freedom of their country and I suppose they have a right to do that. It's something we don't like of course, we'd like them to keep and do work for us and be our servants. I always remember a letter in the paper.

Bill we might have to stop there, we've run out of tape. It's a good point, to pick up on.

39:52 **End of tape**

Tape 6

00:31 **Just if you could tell us more. So there were Indian troops fighting with the British in Singapore that and they eh...**

Well, the Japanese, when they came in, I haven't bothered going into depths about it and I'm not sure how many, we had about 20 000 various groups of Indians with us in

01:00 Singapore. Now it may have been more, it may have been more like forty or fifty thousand, now some of them, the Ghurkhas and that were very loyal and very dependable and very good soldiers and a lot of the other Indians were too, but I think it was the Sikhs who were very, very well developed sense of independence, and they'd follow that line and when the Japanese said

01:30 "We will support your move for independence. Will you come over and be guards for us?" They did guard duty and things like that. How many thous, I think there was quite a big proportion of them, battalions of them that went over to the Japanese.

So you were guarded by Indian troops who were fighting on your side?

Only in that sense when I told you about that, that was only when we were caught outside. For instance in

02:00 Thompson Road, a lot of the guys were caught outside on a particular, I'd like to talk about that after, about this particular escapade we all had when we all went into Singapore and when we came back a lot of them came back too late and they got caught and they finished up in the tennis, caught by the Japanese guards who came along. I'd have to tell that story to get the sense of that. So a lot of the guys that got caught, they were put in the tennis courts. And it was the Sikhs that

02:30 guarded them, you know. And they were about eight or nine or ten days they were, out in the open, in the rain just in these big tennis courts, had big netting round them, they were ready made holding pens. So the Sikhs used those.

Were they armed?

Oh yes, they were in their proper uniform, still in their British uniforms and everything like that.

03:00 Over in Thompson Road, the camp, when they decided, the Japs built this big memorial up on Bukit Timah Hill, 'cause they'd lost so many of their men on there. They thought this will be our point of reference, a memorial for the whole of the area, so it was a huge, huge undertaking. Our part of the undertaking, hundreds and hundreds of Australians, thousands possibly, was to build this road through the jungle up in

03:30 to Bukit Timah Hill.

You worked on that road?

Oh yes, yes, for months, and they commandeered all these middle class homes of the British hierarchy. Civilians, and the road was called Thompson Road, so the camp became the Thompson Road camp. It was very loosely guarded if at all, few Japanese guards round, because it had no fences

04:00 or anything it was more or less an honour system. This was early in the piece. They fed us well, we had

food there and things like that, and then we'd went off to work along into the jungle and build this road through to the monument. Well, one day we used to go out on scrounging trips, Harry Longley and I on this particular occasion and we out and we went into this Chinese, we came upon this little

04:30 Chinese village and there was a coffee shop at the corner and we're going past and here's these Jap soldiers and they're sitting in the coffee shop and I said “Gee, what's going to happen here?” and Harry said “We'll give them a salute” and as we went by Harry said "Eyes right" and we went past, this is fair dinkum, this happened, eyes right and we saluted them and they all stood up in the coffee shop and they returned the

05:00 salute. We went on and met some other Japs and did the same. When we came back to camp we said to our fellas “Something wrong here, all new Japs and we just saluted them and nothing was said”. The next day we went down into Singapore and for eight days roughly, no, four or five days, hundreds of our people went down to Singapore and the people

05:30 just took them to their heart. That's where I met the old gentleman that was the director of the Hume Pipes. He fed us and one thing and another. And what we think happened was that the fighting troops had moved out and the garrison troops had moved in at that time. The garrison troops didn't know the legality of how camp was.

06:00 so consequently if we gave them a salute they thought to themselves they must have been fair dinkum on our side, so they'd give us a salute back and we'd down, and. Oh, we lived like kings down in Singapore. Hundreds and hundreds of people would remember this story that I'm telling you now.

Had the freedom of Singapore.

We had the freedom of Singapore and the people of course a lot of it was instant generosity another lot of it too

06:30 was their belief that we must have been winning the war. Why else would we be all coming down and be living like kings. So the population were happy too just for those few days.

Did you have any discipline or order?

No, we just walked out and went down and came back and they said “Where did you go?” And some went down to the brothels and some went down to happy world and went to the restaurants. We went various places.

07:00 You'd talk about, what'd you do today. Funny thing. It seems to be that there's a guiding hand somewhere, but when we came back to our camp, Thompson Road this afternoon, Harry Longley and I. It was Harry Longley and Joey Crome I think. I forget now. I know it was Harry and I, we always went, group of us together, you know.

07:30 Paddy O'Toole might have been there. I forget now. When we got back to Thompson Road we looked along and there was a squadron of Japs marching along, all business like with their rifles and everything. So we nicked across the road back into our housing section and the Japs formed a line right along, and everyone that came back then, actually, the timing was right, I swear. It was so

08:00 coincidental that we should be, at both times at the start of it and the end of it, to be there right. We crossed the road just as the Japs came along and they stationed people all along, and we just got across. Oh, they got dozens of them that came back.

What happened to them?

Well, they put them in that tennis court and the Sikhs guarded them and they were in there for about eight days I think. And finally ‘Blackjack’ Gallagher, he was our

08:30 commanding officer, he negotiated with them that they release them back in and promise that they would never do it again. I think, too, that it was the Japanese sense of face. The Japanese had lost face, it was their fault. See, their, the occupational forces, when they took over, by not guarding us correctly and by allowing us to go down

09:00 they lost face. So they'd lose further face if they'd done anything drastic to us. This is the way of them, this is their way of life and I've seen that happen time, saved my life in Borneo once, saved me from a tremendous bashing.

Did anyone escape during this time when you weren't being guarded?

Ah, my friend, Crooky, I can't think of his first name now, Cruickshank.

09:30 Poor old Crooky tried to escape and I think he was shot swimming across the straits, or drowned.

Did people try and swim across the straits?

Oh yes, in all sorts of ways. When you're having a go, you have a go you know. You don't realise some of the currents and tides and things like that. But they said he was shot some of them, some of them said he was drowned. He was never found. There was a couple of them escaped. There were a lot more

10:00 too. There was an officer, Penrose, Dean. He was a lieutenant, in the machine gunners, West Australian machine gunners. He escaped at that time with a couple of others. He finished up in Outram Road gaol with me, that's how I know that they escaped earlier. A few others did escape got up amongst the guerillas an' that,

10:30 fighting you know. But generally,I don't think there were any escaped and got out to freedom. Most of them were caught and killed, things like that. The only ones that managed were those that got in contact with the Chinese guerrilla force, got out that way. But generally speaking it was very difficult, the swamp and the jungle and the environment and the Japs were so brutal in their approach to the

11:00 civilians, the civilians, most of them daren't do too much to help you. It was one of those things.

Did you see them being brutal to the civilians?

Oh, when we were working on the go downs and that, like, the wharves down in Singapore, it became blasé to walk past heads stuck on stakes on the side of the road. It became similar to electric light poles and that kind of sign, signery of the road, heads were

11:30 When you first see it it's a shock. When they sent us in when we first went in there, we were in trucks, they trucked us in. When we got out of the truck I had my back to the other side and one of the blokes said "Holy Shit" he said, "Look at that". I said "What?". I looked around and here is a row of heads, these three heads on bamboo posts. They were all fly blown and what have

12:00 you. And the shock of that then, oh my goodness. But after a while, you.

Did you find that. How did you react to that at the time?

Well, you react. When you first see it you react quite strongly. Some of the guys were sick and things like that you know. But after a while you see so much of it that you just, you know I should

12:30 well, aahh

Does it become humorous?

Oh, sometimes, yes. Sometimes it does, as a matter of fact. Your reactions to it vary according to the, what's on the edges. It's like you put this green patch behind me. You put that there because of a certain reason and it, and you get a certain reaction from it. You put something else there and you get a

13:00 different aspect. It's the same in life. When we saw those first three heads. I just turned around to see what he was howling on about and oohh, it was a dreadful sight. But after a while you just wouldn't bother looking at them. You knew they were, there wasn't anything you could do. We were sitting down on some bags of rice. It was lunchtime and we had our little whatever we were eating.

13:30 rice and stuff and the gate at the side there was a Jap guard and he was looking. Every truck that came in he'd look at their papers and things and he would let them go by. There was a truck pulled up and he was looking, he was on the other side of the truck, the guard, and he was looking at the driver's credentials. And a Chinese fellow came pulling a rickshaw he didn't see the guard, and he came through this side, and he went into the compound. Well the guard

14:00 saw him out the side of his eyes, and the next thing he shouts "Koora!, koora!", great Japanese sound that is. They always went "Koora! koora!" He rushed over to the Chinaman and he smashed the rickshaw to pieces, and also the poor old Chinaman lay dead. He smashed him up, just like that. This is a peaceful scene, we're having our lunch,

14:30 alls well with the world, lovely view. The water, the waterfront, all the activities, people going about their business. Here's this truck pulls up, Jap guard's looking at him, this little old Chinaman comes along with the rickshaw, he doesn't see, didn't know about it. He's quite innocent, he just went through, an' then the next minute everything's smashed up. And then the Jap went back over there as if it was nothing and continued with his work.

He killed him?

Oh yes,

15:00 his body was still there when we left in the afternoon. There was another time, Harry, Harry, Harry eh, dear oh dear. Harry and I we went up to where there was a Chinese cemetery at the back of Thompson Road. The idea was, sometimes when there's a burial, the Chinese leave little bowls of food, that sort

15:30 of thing. We thought we'd go up there and see if we, what food's left up there, if there's been any funerals. There hadn't been any funerals but there was a gate there and as we were standing there and as we were standing there along come this great big council truck with green sides up, and there was blokes standing, obviously loaded, blokes up on top, and they had pegs on their noses and when they got past the smell was dreadful. Well, it was full of dead bodies. Well, there was a Eurasian doctor was in the front and he got out.

16:00 We said to him, we said "What's this?" And they said "The duty of this truck is to pick up dead bodies that are thrown out all over the place". "How many? How often is this?". He said, "Now, with the

Japanese, we get one of these nearly every day”and now, what was, caused us consternation. There was a stretcher and there was a hole already dug. We didn’t twig we,

16:30 there was this great big mass grave, great big hole dug, and beside it was a stretcher, and Harry said to me “That'd be all right to sleep on you know”, we wash it, bit of blood on it and one thing and another. We slept on the concrete floor on these houses. We were going to take this stretcher with us. It was the stretcher they were using for these bodies. Put a body in, take it round and dump it in, bring the stretcher back. Rake out another body, put in on. We left the stretcher there. That's how close

17:00 life is in those days, in those times, and gradually of course you went along with it and your humanity lowered and became extinct in the finish. You just existed, in Outram Road gaol all you existed. When you were eating your little bowl of rice, a little drop of rice'd fall down in the slime and filth and you'd say “Oh, it's only a grain of rice, I'm a man I won't”, but you had to pick it up and eat it, you couldn't leave it there.

17:30 You just dwelt, it become great in size, big as a football, in your mind.

It must have been comrades of yours that died at that time. Did you have burial service for your troops?

Oh yes, oh yes, yes, yes, we still had the ceremonies, specially in Changi where you were allowed to have that sort of thing, ceremonies and concert parties and discipline was always.

The burial ceremonies.

Oh yes,

18:00 they had men whose job was to make the crosses and write the names on it. These were all in the fact, Changi was organised to the ninth minute degree.

Did you go to any of those ceremonies?

Oh yes, yes, oh yes. When your own people died of wounds, things like that, mainly wounds with our blokes, that was with the aftermath of the battle, that was in Changi. And

18:30 they had a group of people used to make a very nice cross. They'd plane up the timber, saw it, paint it, paint the sign on it, beautiful job. Make coffins, that sort of thing. In Changi, in the factories. Had a university, I think I read somewhere the work they put in the university was accredited at university here when they came back home.

19:00 Had some very competent people who had to run those things in Changi. That's why I was a little bit disappointed when they brought that show out, Changi, they kind of made it into a Rambo session instead of emphasising the points that would've needed emphasising, how the people organised this into such a camp that was able to exist and help the people.

When you were there was the university going?

19:30 Oh yes, they had started it. They had people who were like minded who wanted to go. They had discussion classes and all this sort of thing going on all over the place.

Did you go to any of them?

Noooo. I wasn't at that time I was still indicted [?] to not going to school and not. I was impatient with stuff like that. I regret it, I wouldn't recommend it for anyone else to do, but no, I

20:00 there was far more interesting things to do, in my mind, then,

When you were outside did you go to the brothels?

No, no, no, no, no. I'd been trained off of them when I went on picket duty on the brothels at Johore Bahru. The brothels were dreadful there. So much, to such an extent that the army said the only way to keep some of the men out of it,

20:30 some men have no compunction to go anywhere, anyway, they said “We'll have pickets go in and we'll put pickets around these brothels”. So everyone copped picket duty every now and again. When my turn came I went in, thought this'll be okay, we'll walk around town nothing to do sort of thing. And we went into these, and oh dear it was so dirty and so filthy, I didn't

21:00 see any attraction in it at all. And of course I was young then, I wasn't sewing my wild oats in that direction, so much. And that turned me off just seeing the action in the brothel. So whenever brothels are mentioned I don't see the glamorous brothels all the velvet lounges and lovely girls in their short mini skirts

21:30 and stuff like that, I see that brothel up there, those brothels over there in Johore Bahru and I smell the stink and I see them washing themselves and that after their performances. They used to have exhibition of the act on stage and you'd see, oh my God, I only saw it once I went in it was a waste of money I thought.

22:00 I could use my money better than going to see that trash you know. That's why I think I told you, about this great big black fella and one of our blokes went up and pushed him off. Pushed him off, you know. That was good training for me as a youngster. It was better than holding up the toilet seat like the doctors did when they were talking about venereal disease. All those sort of things.

22:30 He showed you pictures. I had my own private training when I was on picket duty, looking through those. I can see it now.

After Thompson Road, what happened?

Well, I, I, what I, I got malaria or something in Thompson Road, or dysentery, I forget now. An' I got sent back to Changi. When you got crook you got sent back an' exchanged.

23:00 When I got back, better again, I was working on the transport at Changi for a while, week or two, and then they already sent one group away, that was A force, up to Burma railway. The Japs'd come along and say we want, like they did with Thompson Road, so many men to go out and build a monument in Singapore, Thompson Road. Then they come an' they said we want another force to go up

23:30 to Burma.

Who organised the forces?

Well, 'Blackjack' Gallagher was the commander and he would get it started. Who actually did the nitty gritty bit I don't know, but A force went, couple thousand people whatever, they went off to Burma. Then they came along, an' our blokes believed them too. The Japs come along and said look, "You're too crowded here" you know,

24:00 "We're thinking of you people". It was applied psychology. They said, "In order to alleviate the crowd situation we want 1500 of your men to go over to Borneo". They said "It's a lovely camp there it's paradise". You'd have no work to do, nothing. So as a consequently when they picked the 1,500 up they picked up a lot of sick people

24:30 and one thing and another, and so we were designated B force so off we went to Borneo. That was a different kettle of fish there. They put us on a little ship an' the trip itself, if what happened hadn't've happened, a lot of people would have been writing books about the trip, it was eleven days of hell and by George it was

25:00 it was a, 1500 of us in this little tub, rusty tub, and there was 850 of us down in the stern hold and we had a makeshift toilet that they'd built overhanging the deck and the side of the ship. It was up and a bit of a plank. There was four seats, four, and there was 800 odd of us. And they fed us this lime green rice.

25:30 Twice a day they'd bring it down and it was all bad, it was dreadful stuff, and of course everyone got dysentery and there was only five, five eh, poopers up on deck and there was a steel ladder you went up, just an ordinary steel rung ladder, and most of the blokes were too crook to even try and we were all too weak to even lift some of them. So consequently the hold became the sewer, for eleven

26:00 days. And of course, being in the tropics the heat down there was something else. And when we got to Miri, that's a small town, on the west coast, an oil town on the west coast of Borneo, for whatever reason I don't know, they stopped there for four days and for four days we were stopped still and the heat, down there, not allowed to get out, it was something else I can tell you.

What was the name of the boat?

26:30 The Oki Meru. Joey Crome and I we snuck up on deck, we went up to the toilet, and when the guard wasn't watching we got behind this box see. And when night came we were going to swim across to Miri. We're lookin' across and we're saying "Well it's not that far, we can swim that all right Joe". What are you, an' I'd say "I reckon all right". We're geeing one another up you know. And it got night came and it got dark. We were waiting for it to be dark

27:00 so we could lower ourselves into the water and we're almost ready, we've almost geed one another up and okay, we'll go and the Japanese cook come out of the thingo and he had a big bucket of swill and he threw it overboard and up in the tropics the fluorescence in the water just lights up, you know, any movement, and all of these fish came up after this swill

27:30 and all of a sudden, this flamin' great search light of a thing came up. It was obviously a big shark or something, so we crept back down into the hold that night. We always remember that. And we got to Sandakan. Little wooden ship, wooden wharf. And I didn't see this myself because I was kept that night in the ship, but the rest of the guys

28:00 all went out and they head up on to a park and they kept them there, housed them for few hours or a day and a night I think. In, on the side, they had a punishment. Whatever the Chinese chap had done I don't know. But they'd pierced his ankles with wire, right through his ankles, right through, the blood was coming out and they strung him up by his ankles, from a tree.

28:30 and he was hanging there, just hanging by a wire through his ankles. That was our introduction to the Japs in Sandakan. Never found out what heinous crime he had done to deserve that. Well, when we got

out to the camp itself it did look like paradise itself. It had been a, the area itself was an experimental farm and it still is a college there, now.

29:00 When we went up. The camp itself had been built by the British to house an Indian regiment, for the coming conflict. Then circumstances took over and it was used to house German and Japanese internees. A very short while unfortunately. Japanese, six months after that the Japanese used it for us.

29:30 And we went into this little camp. And our duty was to build an airfield down there. We had quite a few deaths in the early part from the event of the ship and the trip over, the older people. We went about, fourteen died from the boat.

What happened to the bodies on the boat?

No, they didn't die on the boat, but we got 'em out to the camp, but over the next week or so we lost a few, quite a few. A lot of them were very sick. A lot of them were never able to work

30:00 again. They didn't last that long, they just wandered around with berri berri, and dysentery, anaemic dysentery and stuff like that. But we had one fella there who had been a prisoner of war in the First World War, and we had a few fops, 54 years old and stuff like that. One fella who drew a sketch that's been shown of Sandakan camp, a lot of books it's shown there. He was 54

30:30 when he drew the sketch. They had a hard time, people that age, where

Did you know the man who'd been a prisoner in the First World War?

I knew him mainly because of the novelty of it. They said there's a fellow up in the hut, up near one of the top huts it was. They said there's a fellow up there Proverb. His sons have written a book about him, it's quite an interesting

31:00 book too. They said he was a prisoner of war in the First World War, well, well, we're goin' up and have a yarn to this bloke. So we went up an' had a talk to him an' that, just to see what made him tick. Very nice bloke actually. But other than that I didn't know him, no. Very interesting fellow. Reading the book by his sons. They never knew much about their dad at all. On the death of their mother, or grandmother,

31:30 there was a trunk in the home and in it was all their father's papers an' that. He'd joined the army as a young fellow, underage. He was one of the first to join the airforce that they'd formed there so he was a pilot. He was shot down behind the German lines and a prisoner of war, in Germany. He'd came home, he'd gone wandering, shearing and all sorts of darn things, an' they've got it all in this book, which is very

32:00 interesting. An' then he'd come to the death march of course.

What did you talk to him about?

Well, I forget now, there was so many interesting people there. I remember only because of the fact that he was silly enough to be a prisoner of war in both wars. The oddness of it, was the attraction, like it is mostly. You go and look at an ordinary person, but if you see a nice blonde walking by you might glance at it, or see someone, a

32:30 deformity, might get you in, all depends on your particular tastes, but it has to be something different. An' it was a difference there. We had another in our Battalion. Plunkett, for instance. He had thirteen or sixteen bayonet wounds right through him. None of them had killed him obviously. He died on the death march of course. We used to go over and see him when he was having a shower so we could count these darn

33:00 stab wounds that went through his body. You wouldn't think that a person could be bayoneted so many times and the bayonets not to hit a vital spot. And that is the novelty of that. That you go and see. We had a few people like that, a novelty. In the camp in the early days we had a rather difficulty

33:30 for the sick people. The hut we had for, put in as a hospital was only a little atap hut. So our blokes, our officers said to the Ossigina an' they said “Will you let us build a decent hospital?” He said”Yes, providing it doesn't use any steel”. So we built this hospital. I worked as a labourer on it. I wasn't a carpenter then or any

34:00 thing. It was interesting to see the way it was built, it was beautifully done, it's the only, you can see in the photo taken now of the aerial photos, it's the only hip roof, hip roof as against a gable roof. All the others are gable roofs. This is a hip roof, built in the proper British style, they did a beautiful job. To start it off they had an arts and crafts

34:30 exhibition. They got permission from the Japs and this day off we had they had the arts and crafts. An’ the different things that was brought out. It was amazing, I was amazed by it, all the carvings and different things it was beautiful. The article that won the prize, the first prize, it was a work of art, it was amazing. It was a birdcage all carved out of this one great teak log. An the chains from it were hanging down were all

35:00 individually loose, and yet they were all originally a part of that whole log you know. How he did it I

don't know, but he did it over time. Had plenty of time of course, and little tiles and everything, and that won the first prize. Ossigina, he came over and had a look at it and he went back to our officers and said “Will you keep that open?” he says and “I want to bring a couple of people” and he brought the Japanese governor up and a couple of other people and they came and had a look at

35:30 the art exhibition and he awarded us a dugong. Very appreciated it was, and we had a dugong for our meal, as a reward for the art show. And I'll tell you another interesting one too. Remember when the submarines came into Sydney and our government cremated the remains of the Japanese that they got, they,

36:00 the dead Japanese they'd found. And they sent the cremated remains back to Japan, you couldn't do a nicer thing as far as the Japanese are concerned. They are very ancestor-minded and cremation is the way they go about it. Well the ship with those cremated remains called in to Sandakan. When Ossigina found out what we'd done that, they gave us

36:30 a day off and a dugong to eat, as a special. That was a way, they did have at certain times, sense of occasion. And for them that was such a fantastic gesture on the side of the Australian government.

Did you know why you had been given a dugong?

Oh yes, he made a big. Ossigina said to our officers, said “I'm most appreciative of the Australian government” he says and

37:00 “When we win the war we'll take that into account, what they did that“ So there's a couple of little incidents. There's another one I remember,

Can you tell me what a dugong tastes like?

Very much like red meat, very much like beef. As a matter of fact unless you had a piece of beef beside you to compare you wouldn’t know, you'd think it was a piece of meat, and into a stew it's beautiful. And of course us

37:30 at the time, with no meat and stuff like that, that sort of hunger, oh it was marvellous, marvellous. You don't consider the beast itself, or that part of it, it's the eating of it, that you.

And you found out about the attack on Sydney harbour from that boat arriving there?

Yes, well, Ossigina when he told, he explained that they were very appreciative and he said when we win the war, when the Japanese win the war,

38:00 they're take that into account, and they won't be so harsh on the Australians because they acted with decency. Even though they killed millions of people they expect us to act decently and they appreciated that we did on that occasion. So, the Japanese point of loss of face comes into those sort of

38:30 things and it takes some understanding. Joey Crome and we used to go outside quite often. We lived down on a swamp, and incidentally they used to call us dead-end kids, there was about five of us. We were down right to the last hut down by the swamp, an' they had, it was British built and along the swamp they had two barb wired fences with concertina wire in the middle, real pukka British style.

39:00 Then big six foot cyclone wire fences running round, up above out of the water, then they had a, outside along the swamp they had a wooden ramp and two observation posts, but the Japs never used those, very rarely. But we used to get under, it was quite easy. It was water and all that, an' you'd get underneath and go under the water. This fella came down to us this day, Snowy, out of the

39:30 18th Battalion I think, and he said, “Will you take us out with you?” he said “I wanna learn the ropes”, so we said, “Oh, sure. Well, we got out, that was in the afternoon and we're going along this track and all of a sudden, ‘ping’, ‘ping’, an' some bullets coming over our heads and we look around and there were some Japs back there. They must have been in sight-seeing themselves in the kampongs so we're off for our life. When we stopped and looked around this bloke,

40:00 Snowy, wasn’t with us. We waited for a while we said “He'll get hisself back to camp, eventually”. There wasn't anything we could do about it. So we got up round, we loaded up with different things, sweet potatoes. Tapioca grows wild around everywhere. That's what mainly we're after, tapioca, beautiful, makes good chips, like potato. You cut it up into chips and fry it up in your coconut oil, terrific, terrific. Get some snails one thing and another, add them in with it, beautiful.

40:30 Swamp snails. So when we got, started to get dark then. We got back near the camp an' there were Japs everywhere. An the Japs with torches. It took us about an hour getting around through it, there were that many Japs around, and we had to go through the swamp. Fortunately the bags we had with us had coconut with it and they kept it afloat a bit, we used them as camouflage. As the night got dark,

41:00 it was really dark, so it wasn't that much stuff. And we got under the ramp. And the ramp, there was a couple of Japs sitting on the ramp above us and they were smoking and laughing and probably talking about the time they'll have when they find us guys.

41:15 End of tape

Tape 7

00:30 **We'll just rewind. You've sneaked back into the camp and you've left Snowy behind.**

It took us a good hour to get back into camp. All sorts of things happened trying to get into camp. We did, we finally got into the camp, evaded all the Japs, we got back into our hut. I can see us now, throwing, the hut had, long hut about three rooms. And each room held about fourteen, eighteen people,

01:00 an' there was a ramp on each side where you slept, in each room. I threw all this coconuts and potatoes and everything anon and I said well we got through we can have a decent banquet tonight. And an' officer came in, a lawyer here for a good while, a blonde headed bloke. He said, "Are you the blokes that were outside", and we said "Yeah". "You've gotta give yourself up". "Why?" He said "Well they've got Snowy and they're going to shoot him if you don't".

01:30 I think, "Oh, this is a turn off, oh". An' in the pitch black goin' up to the hill where the big tree we had where the parade ground was and we marched up. Ossigina wasn't there an' a bloke we called Jimmy Pike, a little Jap interpreter, he was in charge. An' he was there an the sergeant of the guard was the big bloke we called the big black bastard, and of all the Japs you didn't want to have in a situation like this, oh my God

02:00 we're gone a million here. Corfall was there, Jack Corfall. I forget now which one, but I know the big black B was there. We marched up and made as big a front as we could. "You're looking for us Jimmy Pike". He said "Are you the fellas that got outside the camp even though my guards are there to stop you". We didn't know what to answer to him. An I'm thinking "We're goners, we're goners" from here. And then he

02:30 said, "And you got back into this camp even though we trebled the guard?" And we looked down and said, "Yeah, I s'pose so". He said, "You may go". Took his sword off and he hit the big black B, and the big black B hit the corp and then, they told me, all night those guards got thrashed, because they'd lost face. If we'd been caught outside the wire, we'd've been the ones that copped it, but we got back in and we got through 'em even though he trebled the guard, and that

03:00 shows you the extent, what they mean by the loss of face, or partly what they mean, or what I think they mean when they say loss of face. They have another funny.

What happened to Snowy?

They let him go, they let him go.

Did Jimmy Pike speak good English?

Oh yes, yes, quite good, quite good. He was a little fat. He died on the death march too, you know. The Japs killed him. He's a Jap, he's a Japanese officer, or. No, they have a

03:30 funny set up, there's a military system and then there's a quasi military civilian style. And while Jimmy Pike had no rank he still had a fair amount of authority. For instance he had the authority to hit the sergeant. He was in charge there because Ossigina wasn't there. So it's a queer sort of authority but it is there and he had it. And little bow legged fellow was a ideal to be called Jimmy Pike 'cause Jimmy

04:00 Pike was a well known Australian jockey at the time. Naturally we called him Jimmy Pike.

Could he speak good English?

Oh yes, yes, quite good. He was the official interpreter. Not that that always signifies but it did in this sense, he was quite. And he was aware of the idiosyncrasies of our people and that. He had the little in kind of jokes and that. As a matter of fact he did have a sense of humour, the little fellow. And one of the fellas told

04:30 me that on the death march he fell too, and they killed him. Anyone that fell they killed on the death march.

Their own?

Oh, yeah, yeah, he died. He died on the death march.

Bill, all right Bill. We're just going to move forward in time. Not quite so chronologically, and Rob's going to come back and speak to you about

05:00 **Sandakan. I want to talk about after you'd been caught outside the wire at Sandakan, you'd been to Kuching and the military trial, after all that, you've arrived in Outram Road, I want to talk about Outram Road for a little while. 'Cause this was a feared place.**

It was fierce, it was unbelievably so, you just couldn't describe it not really without getting terribly emotional and wound up in it. It was. For the first

05:30 thirty, forty days, something like that, I got it down to thirty-eight days, something like that. I just sat in

the cell. The cell was just, I could stretch my arms out like that and that was the width of the cell. It was twelve feet long, there was a light globe that burnt all night long. It was a hundred years old of course, the building, it'd been condemned. It was full of

06:00 cracks and vermin. Ah, insects of all description, scorpions, you name it, it was there. It was all wet with humidity, green, discoloured, had been painted over time, dozens of times, with lime wash, white wash and it was all flaking off and then the walls were cracked and things like that. Now that was the atmosphere, it was a concrete floor and we had, there was three boards.

06:30 and a wooden block with a little curve in it for your neck. I never ever used it myself, I slept without a pillow, and there was a little bit of a cotton blanket that you had. And you had a pair of shorts, Japanese shorts on and a shirt with your number, my 510, joakajukal, the Japanese. The cell door was in front, you sat cross legged with your hands on your

07:00 on the floor, your hand on your knees and you looked at the cell door. The door was a thick wooden door, about three inches thick, with steel ribbing across. And there was a slot in the middle, where they pass you your bowl, a little bowl of rice. There was a little peep-hole as well, swivel. The Japanese guard could swivel and look through the little peep-hole at you. And there's

07:30 a steel ventilator at the bottom, and that's the door I looked at, or the type of door I looked at for two years and one month.

Were you in, did you move cells very much?

Every month. Every month. They had a system. They are very systematic the Japanese. In as much as they, when they get on to that system. F'rinstance, we were searched, even in

08:00 Borneo it was the same, in Kuching and the other gaols and up in Jesselton, that's now Kotakinabaloo, the gaol there, as we came down. Every time they'd search you, you'd be naked. You'd put your shorts in that hand and your shirt in that hand, that's the sequence of it, and you'd wave them up and down when they said “Duraid, consai duraid”, you know. And then you'd jump a stride

08:30 and you bend over and they'd look up your backside, things like that, make sure you didn't have anything secret. And you'd go back into your cell with anything you could bring in that was small enough to fit in your hands. In all the time I was there I never ever knew them to look into people's hands. We could hold a shirt quite loosely like that and the trousers quite loosely and if you had some cigarette butts whatever you found along the ramp, following the guard, you'd have 'em in your hands. You'd shake the, and you'd go into the cell,

09:00 and you'd have all these good things. And of course our walls of our cells were our wall safes. All the cracks and things you could put the stuff in, and the lime and the white wash was all so yukky that you could grab a big bunch of it like putty, and you mould it up and stick it over whatever you wanted to hide, cause they'd come in the cell. Well, actually they didn't come in very often with a cell wash, because the gaol at that time was lousy with

09:30 scabies. I remember the first few days I didn't sleep at all, I scratched and scratched and scratched. You wonder what is going on. And then it was about 38 days, suddenly the door was opened, and we were told “coochi coy”, come out. We came outside and there's the eight of us or that was original, eight of us that come over from Kuching.

10:00 and they marched us outside and there was the greatest shock we ever got in our lives. I've never forgotten it. We thought we were thin and we thought we were badly off. We were introduced to the inmates. They brought them out for an hour in the sun. They were all squatted in a line on the concrete outside. And they were so thin and they were all full of

10:30 sores, scabs an' that. Apparently it was scabies that was the trouble. I knew and I was itching myself. And they had pellagra, vitamin deficiency, their eyes were all running with pellagra, pus was running. Over on the side from them, there was this big hip bath. If you had it today it would be worth a fortune. Because wherever

11:00 they got if from I don't know but it was a beautifully built hip bath which ingrained into it, embossed into it was all these Egyptian hieroglyphics round it, you know. It was a work of art. They'd scrounged it from somewhere and they used it. The ceremony was it'd be half full of water and the guard,eventually we're sitting down. We're wondering what the hell is going on. You're not allowed to talk or anything like that. And you're sitting down and you're wondering,

11:30 holy, and the smell of it, these blokes, and the guard holds up a swan ink bottle, swan ink. Remember. Do they still have swan ink? Well this is a good advertisement for swan ink. But it was full of disinfectant. And he'd hold it up and he'd, quite a ceremony and he'd ahh, pour it in and he had a big stick and he'd swirl it around. Well, one by one, and then, oh, no, that's right, and they'd all sit there an' we're wondering what's going and then

12:00 all of a sudden, ‘Yeoofs!’ And everyone stampeded see. Now before this goes on, this poor skinny fellow that I'm sitting next to, and I never met him before, didn't know who he was. Everyone, after a while you got used to it you talk through without using your lips, I can't do it now. In those days I could talk like that and not move at all you know. He says, “Where'r you in from, what battalion?” Obviously an

Aussie,

12:30 his name's Kenny Bird. He said, I said “What's going on there?” He said that's the scabies bath. He says “Now, when he says yeoosh, his nibs say yeoosh”, he says, “for god sake get in quick” he says, “because three of the Indians have got syphilis”. The Indians and that there. That was a lovely introduction, an' I said “What!””, then all of a sudden the Jap guard says “Yeoosh” and everyone

13:00 the Aussies and the British and they're all diving to get in front. Blow me down and if I didn't miss out and I'm behind the Indians and I'm wondering which one of them's got syphilis. Well when it's my turn to get in the water the water's just filthy, scabs and all that sort of, and you've gotta get in! There's no beg your pardon, well that was the scabie bath.

Did they do this every month?

This

13:30 every day, it was happening, from then. We weren't allowed out but it had been going on. For some reason we were in quarantine for that time. They did that with anyone that came in, they didn't let 'em out amongst us. But for that hour. What happened before then they weren't allowed at all, it was solitary confinement right through. This is the great thing about scabies and we should remark on it as a democratic system. Scabies

14:00 are not racist, they eat the Japs as well. When they started to eat the Jap guards, they realised they had to do something about it. So they'd only not long been going on with this scabie bath. That's what it was all about, because the Japs, scabies were getting spread everywhere.

Did you catch it?

Oh yes, at first I wondered what it was, I was scratching, I couldn't sleep. Then later I started to get pellagra, different vitamin, we had no vitamins,

14:30 scurvy,

Take you back just a second, just before that day when you went out and saw all the other prisoners. You hadn't seen anyone else in the other prisoners? How did you arrive in Outram Road?

In a truck, from the boat. We were in the horse box the whole time in the boat. Then they, they, the crane lifted the horse crates out, lifted us out, and when we got on to the wharf they opened the horse box, we came

15:00 out and there was an army truck, closed in one, we were put in that. We were sent round the back of Outram Road gaol, the military section not the civilian section, and then for that 30 odd days it was the most frustrating time because, occasionally you'd hear English voice, Australian. The trustee was an Australian,

Outram Road had three storeys it was a big,

15:30 **what floor were you on?**

Oh, yes, big, I was on the bottom. The Japs were on the second floor. The third floor wasn't used. Our block was huge, it was hundreds and hundreds of cells. Each one, we went up to 200 and something of cells on our floor, another two hundred and something, another two hundred and something, close to a thousand cells in the one block. But as I say, there was only part of it used. There was a hundred odd

16:00 of us, down the bottom and there were so many hundreds of Japs of all distinction. As a matter of fact at one stage they had a Jap general, and they shot him, they shot him right outside my cell

Just explain, this prison was run by the Kempetai?

The Kempetai, and it was for everyone, anyone and everyone. As I say, a Japanese general and they shot him in there, they shot him outside my window. They dug into the bank to

16:30 make a proper shooting gallery and when we came out, we were working, this is near the end of the war, we were working out, digging tunnels and that for their defences. Seats and that had been arranged, some armchairs had been arranged for the higher office and ordinary benches were across for the others and they dug in this place where they shot him.

17:00 The Japs, all we'd do, we'd hear them in the morning and they'd open their cell and they'd come out and they'd number, everything's done in numbers, ‘ichi nee san’, right through their numbers and they'd march them down and out. Whatever they did we don't know through their exercises stuff like that working I don't know. Then they would come back at night and we'd hear them and we would call them phantoms of the night,

17:30 faceless voices.

What did they sound like?

Well, these sounds, we didn't know what was going on the first thirty odd days. We'd hear the occasional slam of a door, and then occasionally we'd hear Dean speaking. He was an ex-intelligence officer as far as, and also, no, he was a machine gunner Western Australian, and he was,

18:00 he had a fairly good grasp of Japanese language and we used to hear him talking in Japanese. Also in English and different ones. He came into us and spoke to us through the hole, just for a moment, and explained who he was and what was going on, but he couldn't talk for long because the guards are there. You'd hear these sounds and you'd wonder what and the time would drag. When you're young thirty odd days, that's a heck of a long time. And

18:30 finally they let us out into that.

Just talk about the thirty days because is must have been a terrible, long, experience for you.

Oh, it just dragged. Especially for myself, I was young then and knowing how impatient young people are now as an old person and I can realise now how one sided it was as far as I was concerned. The older people it wasn't I don't think quite as dragging. I wanted to get out and I was always used to being outside

19:00 and to be closed up and not have anyone at all and not knowing what was, it's the unknowing of it and the uncertainty and that is the big thing.

So what were you told, what orders were you given by the Japanese guards?

Nothing. You learnt the hard way, if they said 'sumorit', that was hot, an' you didn't 'sumorit', bang, the whole thing'd be on the ground, so you think 'sumorit', an' things like that you know.

19:30 Gradually you learnt your number, '', an' that was all you worried about. So the Japanese that appertained to my welfare I know, like 'Coochikoi, Mortikoi, drrr, and sumorit, an' sekoti', words you know.

So what did they get you to do, in those thirty days, did you have to sit in a certain position,

No, no, no, the only thing is you sat cross legged an' there was one guard in particular we used to call the post man,

20:00 he was very, very particular about it. He'd open the door and come and bash you if you weren't sitting properly. An' you're sitting there all day, and I tell you, there's a lot more hours in those days than there were hours in these days.

Was there a window?

There was a window barred, right up the top, you couldn't see it or anything and to restrict it further out from the window was a steel

20:30 shelf so you couldn't see the sky or anything like that. So for over two years we didn't see the sky, didn't see the night, didn't see the stars,

How did you keep track of time?

We had little marks on the wall. And providing you didn't forget your calendar was quite, and you had, and you hoped your calendar was right. And then later on we went out gardening. When they got really desperate and the food run out we had to get, they brought us out

21:00 and that ends eight months of solitary confinement I had. And then the war situation was getting bad for them so they used us for labour whenever they wanted and out on the gardens.

So when you first arrived did you count 38 days?

Yes, it's on the thingos. On the lime wash. People used to write poetry and all. Some of the poetry was quite big and I learnt quite a bit of it.

Were there

21:30 **already marks on the walls?**

Marks and deaths and someone had been executed and this one had died and that one, all this sort of graffiti. And you'd have an interesting time. It was an interesting thing about going into each cell, 'cause each cell you'd have a fair amount of time just looking at the graffiti.

In English, Japanese?

Oh yeah, all sorts of languages, Dutch, Spanish, Malay, Chinese, and all that, all together, oh yes

22:00 a lot of poetry. Everyone was a poet or they knew poetry. Quite reams of it right down.

Do you remember anything particular you read on the walls of any of the cells you were in? Do you remember anything that sticks in your mind?

Oh yes, when Hatfield was executed, an Australian sergeant, and they wrote rest in peace, S Hatfield,

and his regimental number, and

22:30 underneath it was a poem. And I remember the whole poem, it's quite an emotional poem of that style, suits itself.

\n[Verse follows]\nWhen you're lost in the wild, scared as a child,\n and death stares you bang in the eye,\n when you're as sore as a boil, it's according to Hoyle,\n to cock your revolver and die.\n Well a code of a man, says to live while you can,\n self disillusion

23:00 is barred, in hunger and woe,\n

it's easy to crow, itsa keepin' on livin' that's hard.\n You'll had a raw deal, I know, but don't squeal, buck up, do your damndest and fight.\n It's a ploddin' away that'll win you today, so don't be a piker old pard.\n

Aah

23:30 over sixty years and this happens every now and again. A certain thing will click with you, you know. It's just the memories of that. It's funny how that. You think you've got yourself in hand and all of a sudden it will come on to you. I can see that on the wall.

24:00 Yes, and there were other poems, one not understood, we move along asunder, our paths grow wider as seasons creep along to years. We marvel and we wonder why life is life and thus we rise and fall an' live and die, not understood. It had a lot more of it but. So, poems like that and you had plenty of time to remember them. You'd sit back and go over them and then you'd turn away and num num num,

24:30 not understood we move along asunder. Go back and have a look.

Did you ever meet the men who wrote these poems?

No, no, no, that could have been a poet. I don't know the origin of the poems. Some would be originals some would be poet like our dad's and that work, Lawson, people like that. John McKenzie, he wrote a book when he got out, he was one of the older people he was forty or so when he

25:00 was a prisoner of war, which was old for me then. He was a signals and he taught us morse code to knock through the wall. We used to knock hard and a scratch was a dash. A knock was a dot, bu bu bu.

What was his name

McKenzie.

How did you first hear the morse code? Did you hear knocking on the wall one day?

Yes, a message coming through and providing you had cells where you had English or

25:30 Australians you could do. If you got an Indian in there then you got a language difference.

You had no signalling experience.

No, well you do it. A B C D E F G I'm doing it from sixty years ago and I haven't used it since. And then you use semaphore and you used morse code because you couldn't talk. Now this John McKenzie,

26:00 if you could get next to him and his cobber's over the way and you want to signal, he could send morse code by blinking. He was a signaller of course. Now he wrote a book called Blood on the Sun, yeah, Blood on the Sun. It's over here, I've got it here. And in the back of his book he's got quite a few of his poems that he wrote while he was in there. So there's a lot of poems and we had all sorts of people

26:30 that, drawings, you could do scratch drawings, bits of charcoal I'd get.

I just want to clear something up about the organisation. The cells were

Five foot so, six foot wide

And the walls between them were quite thick?

Oh yes, it a hundred odd years old. This, the gaol.

And across the corridor,

Which was quite wide, it was a big, oh, twenty, forty feet across and the whole width running

27:00 through. When you came in you could have a couple of football games going and it was all roofed over the top.

If you went to the hole in the door of your cell

You could see a little bit that way and a little bit that way. You could see a cell that side and a cell that side and a cell in the front.

Would you see other prisoners through their doors?

No, no, you could see the cell doors and you'd know they were in there but other than that

27:30 you would have. No, there was no communication other than morse code through and that was for the first twelve months or so and as the war developed and they needed labour they used us and we went out on jobs and I was out there on the 4th of November which happens to be my birthday. I turned eighteen that year, or nineteen, no, I turned nineteen that year, it was near the end of the war. The Yanks came over

28:00 a hundred and twenty odd aeroplanes and bombed the hell out of it. It was nice of the Yanks to do it on my birthday I thought. But I was out in the garden that day. Oh, this is an incident, this actually happened. We had a fellow we used to call him little Hitler, a little fat chap, guard. And he was a coot of a bloke, real vicious type. Always skiting about the “Boom, boom Darwin”. We used to say, we always got 'em. You'd scratch on the floor an you'd say

28:30 “Darwin, Darwin” and we'd say “Japanese boom boom boom, Nippon boom, boom, boom. Ooh, Nippon Boom boom boom, we go on “Shirley Temple boom boom boom” and he'd go “Shirley Temple boom boom boom”.

Just before you go back and tell this story, when did you get the opportunity to talk to the Japanese guards.

When you were on a work party. And the thing is this, you never spoke first. If they said

29:00 “Goackagoogow”, that was my number, 510, I'd say “Yoosh” and you're supposed to bow and salute, and we used to always give them the thumb salute, we'd come up like that. That's giving the thumb salute. We had certain ways we'd get back at them, like that, that was one way, and you'd come back and you'd have to, you'd want to go for a wee for instance and you'd ask them if you could go for a wee and when you'd come back you'd say “Goackagoogow”, and he'd say

29:30 “Yoosh”. You'd wait for the yoosh, and you'd say “joshayurimasa”, but we'd say “you'resuchanornybastard”. You know, the kick we'd get when he'd say yoosh. He'd agree with that. That was just the silly things we did but it lifted us up a bit. We had little things like that we would do all the time. So humour was never lost, it was never lost, but that was the way we talked about them, and we'd always

30:00 as I say draw maps on there, draw a map and you could always get a joke out of it. Jimmy Pike bombing or something Darby Munro, you'd mix them with towns, it was silly things but it satisfied your needs.

Did they laugh with you?

Oh, no. They didn't know it was a joke.

They didn't know it was a joke.

They haven't got much sense of humour. No they didn't know it was a joke. The joke was on them. You couldn't even laugh yourself of course.

30:30 When you bowed down like that it had to be a private joke, a very private joke.

So, what were the personalities of the guards. Do you remember any particular people?

One or two were quite reasonable. But very rare, very rare, most of them were strutty, coots of fellows. One of the things you had to watch out, like everyone else, we all have a

31:00 tendency to exaggerate, and we exaggerate our national abilities. With the Japanese that I met, most of the guards, they all were judo experts. They weren't of course. Like everyone else that wants to play cricket here who thinks they're a cricket expert. But when they started to talk judo you'd have to watch out because you knew that sooner or later he'd try to trip you over with a judo hold, you know. The worst

31:30 thing you could do was to have him fail, because of loss of face, but if you allow him to do his judo trick you might even get a puff of a cigarette off him. We had a bloke, Spike Jones, he was an Englishman he was the heavy weight champion of the English army in Singapore and that, permanent army fellow. I was in the same cell as him for a month, got to know him very well and

32:00 Big Spike, he, being a big bloke he was a magnet for any of these little Japs to try out their judo. We'd be standing there and we'd be watchin', we'd know what was going to happen. Finally they'd get themself worked up into a frenzy the Jap and they'd come chargin' at Spike, and Spike'd do a somersault 'cause he was used to doin' it in the boxing ring when he took falls and things like that you know, and he'd take it and he'd lay down on the floor an' he'd look up and say “Aah, Nippon

32:30 jodo”, you know, Japanese very good, and the Jap'd strut and he'd probably get a cigarette or something out of him. He used to do it so well and we'd all be trying to stop laughing because is it was so obviously put on. The Jap never realised it.

Did you ever see anything that you would say is kindness from the Japanese guards?

Yes, there was an old Jap came in.

33:00 Funny thing the hierarchy of the Japs. Now when he came in to the gaol he was a sergeant. Now they had the brown stripe. The blue stripe is officers, blue or gold. Blue is a lieutenant, captain and that. And the gold is field officer, equivalent to major, things like that, but a brown with pips on it means if it's got two pips he's a corporal, three

33:30 he's a sergeant, so old pop, this grey haired old fellow, he was really old. We used to call him pop, or I used, unintended, like silently to myself. He saw the mess we were in. He got us outside, I remember this day, he got us all together and he led us, couple of guards with us, and he took us outside, and outside down, little school down there and there was a

34:00 creek running round and there was some vines and he went down, down and he brought us all down and he looked at the vines and he got one and went “num, nyum, nyum” and he mimed for us to eat them. And horrible tasting things, but he told us, “Eat them, eat them”. And it was vitamin C, 'cause we were breaking out in scurvy and that you know. He stood there watching us and I remember looking up and seeing him, and he had compassion you know. He was a caring sort

34:30 of person. Well he got us, got the cells, got, gave us all buckets of disinfectant to clean our cells out. That was where the scabies bath was useless because as soon as you got back into your cell you got a return visit. So he got us washing those out and I can remember the first time in twelve months, or in ten months anyway, that I ever slept, I'd gone to sleep. I don't know what the phys,

35:00 what the medical condition is that warrants it, that no time, honestly, never went to sleep at all, at all. You're not doing anything physically, you're just skin and bone and thin. You saw how Betty Sharp was there, well most of the guys were like that .

In the period of time, before you started going out of Outram gaol on working, you were just inside

35:30 **your cell and once a day there would be a scabies bath?**

At that time there was. They brought it out once a day. When they first started, then pop came along and washed it out altogether eventually. It was a losing battle. You'd have about an hour it was. You'd all march out the lot of us, there's about sixty something, seventy, eighty of us, there were a couple of Chinese, a few Indians,

36:00 a couple of Dutch men, some British, some British Indians, some white Indian nationalities, and Australians, and they take us out and we all sit in a line along on the concrete and we'd go through this ritual of the scabies bath.

When that wasn't happening what were the events of your day?

Just sit there cross-egged, and we had one guard you looked at

36:30 some of the guards you knew were lazy or indifferent and you could get away with standing up, resting your legs out, reading he graffiti, morse code. An there's some guards you would never send a message or anything like that, you'd never read graffiti and you'd never not sit cross-legged, and the worst one was the bloke we called the postman. And sometimes, I know

37:00 on one particular time, probably one of the first times I was caught by him. I didn't realise he was on duty. I'm sitting back, with my back on the wall with my legs stretched and I'm shaking them and one thing and another, relaxing, and I heard the knock and that was the signal, only one knock, bang, just one knock like that, there was about two or three minutes, which seemed to be hours

37:30 in time, and you knew he was outside, you knew. Now after that you'd hear the key'd go in the lock, now it wouldn’t turn you'd hear the key go in the lock, and then for another two or three minutes there'd be silence, but you'd know he was outside there, and then he'd turn the lock and you'd hear it turned and there'd be nothing else. Two, couple of minutes. And then all of a sudden, bang! The door'd be slammed back, frighten the life out of you.

38:00 and there would be the post man. And they all had swords. But the key an old fashion gaol and the locks were great old fashioned and the keys were great old fashioned things. And he'd come in “Ah Gowackacoojo, tooboolino, ah”, he's telling you 510, and you'd be looking up and you'd be at attention, as if you were like that all the time, you're willing your hair to grow a bit thicker because you know what's coming.

38:30 and he'd stand just a little bit behind you on the side. Not much room between you but he'd get there, wasn't a very big bloke actually, and then he'd be giving you a lecture or something like that an' all of a sudden, while he's doin' this he raising this flamin' great big key and then ‘bang’ down it comes, and oh, God, flamin' lump or a cut sometimes blood'd come down, and you couldn't do anything and you're sittin' there and the tears'd come into your eyes because when you've lost all your weight, your food,

39:00 your muscles go down it's not only mentally everything goes down too. Your resistance goes down. Your resistance to pain, your resistance to everything. So consequently the build up to that was tremendous, it was gigantic. From the moment that knock on the door, so as a consequence, you did your best. The

first one that saw the postman on duty would knock on the wall and hopefully as many walls'd

39:30 go down. Of course he used to sneak around too, that was another thing. You never knew when he was around. Some of the guards they'd flop, had those thongs on, big thick and they'd flop, flop, flop. One guard in particular, the mopoke, had big thick glasses on, tall bloke for a Jap. He was a funny fellow, never knew which way he went. Well he'd get into a rage sometimes and biff ya. But he had these big gla, and he had the and you'd hear this comin' roar

40:00 round the concrete as he walked up and down the concrete and you'd say, you didn't have to look through the peep hole, you'd say “Oh, the mopoke's on duty”. And there, again, he's on duty and I was very thirsty, you only get a flat a, a little thin bowl about that round, they called it tea, and I think they might've boiled the water or something. They'd come around they had a watering can, they'd tip it into this little container. I said to the mopoke,

40:30 I was dreadfully thirsty, and I said, “Temaia”, and he said, “Oh, you're thirsty”, and I said “Yeah, could I have?” and he got the whole thing of water and he filled it up and I drunk it and he filled another one up and I drunk it and he filled it up and I drunk it, and he said “Oh, you very thirsty” That was the sort, then the next time you see him he'd bash you up sort of bloke. But he wasn't bad, he wasn’t bad, the mopoke. But then we had a few others.

We'll just stop to change the tape for a second there.

40:57 **End of tape**

Tape 8

00:31 **All right, we'll continue talking about things about Outram Road.**

Mopoke, one of the, about that time it was mopoke that brought it on us, the Jap guard that was called mopoke. We was outside at the scabies bath one day and one of the blokes said to me, we were talking to the Jap about the bombing and one thing and another like that.

01:00 We used to use that as an aside so that we could also get a word in to one another. I'd say to the Jap, “Jimmy Pike bomb down there” and then I'd say out of the side of my mouth whatever message I wanted to whoever you know. And one of the blokes in the conversation, the mopoke was a pretty easy going guard at the time and he was in a good mood this day so we got talking generalities. And one of the fellas said to me “What do you reckon Youngie?” as a reference to my name,

01:30 sometimes Youngie, sometimes Billly and the mopoke said to me “Unda numa Youngie, is your name Youngie?” And he laughed like mad, thought it was a great joke, “Youngie, Youngie” and he never said any more. So a couple of times, later, the guard'd come out instead of saying my name, “Goagochoogow” they'd say “Youngie”, and laugh every time. And I found out it was Jap for goat.

02:00 And that's their type of humour, actually it was a great joke. As a consequence of that, one of the consequence, I should imagine, Jimmy and a couple of others of them, I was picked amongst them to be a binki togan. Now in the morning they'd open our cells and they'd have a tray, one at each end and you'd get to a shaft at each end of the tray, you'd get the toilet buckets out of the cells and you'd take ‘em out and wash ‘em and put them back in the cells.

02:30 and it got you a little bit of a break out of the cells. So Spike, Jones and I and a couple of others, and we're down one day and one of the fellows said there was a pilot down there and gave us the number of the cell, see if you can get some news from him. And when they opened the cell I, we arranged a bit of a smash, all the toilet

03:00 bucket lids got bashed all over the place, dropped them and they scattered all over the place. Rushing around and the old Jap guard's going crook and while he's racing around I dive into the cell where the pilot was and I had a little bit of paper and a pencil. Poor fellow he was up in the corner and he'd been burnt an' that, had bandages all up his arms and that. I said to him, I

03:30 said, introduced myself. I said “I can't stay long, I haven't gotta moment, gotta take your toilet bucket” I said “Now here's a little bit of paper, for God's sake don't lose it, I want it back an' this bit of paper and I'd like you to write name and your news, whatever news you can give us. Now I can't stay, I'll be back with the bucket will you have that done?”. He looked up, you know. So later on I got the bit of paper from him, went in.

04:00 Never saw him again. He said on the bit of paper my name is Habby, my name is and I couldn’t quite, little pencil it must have been quite difficult for him, because the name was distorted. It said ‘My friends called me Habby’, and the name was emphasised. He said ‘I'm a New Zealand pilot I was flying from an aircraft carrier and I was flying

04:30 a Hellcat fighter on a raid on Pellambank, an oil raid, the oil wells at Pellambank. The news is such, this.

He gave us the news of D Day, it was our first news of it. Now the story behind him is they had sentenced him to death for indiscriminate bombing, because he was flying a fighter plane not a, but at the end of the war on the 17th,

05:00 the day before we got out. I heard these much going on down the cell, the Kempetai officers were going in and out and they wear a darker uniform than the others, and very strict and very military bearing they are when they've got them. They're like colonels and that they were, lieutenant colonels and that. And I'd never thought anything about it and when I came home over the years I tried

05:30 desperately, well not desperately, but I tried to find out who Habby was. And then I found out, a friend of mine found out a couple of years ago. His name was Hatfield a New Zealand pilot and what had happened on the 18th these Japanese Kempetai came in and dragged nine fellas out, nine pilots out and dragged them down to the beach and beheaded them.

The 18th of August 1945

Yes, three days after,

06:00 three days after the war. When they were doing it, apparently the general in charge of Singapore, the Jap general, he came out in a towering rage. He said, “You'll get us all shot”. He said “The war's over we're honour bound to do the word of the Emperor”. He said “We can be shot now for war crimes”. So they concocted a story whereby they said these guys

06:30 escaped and they got in a boat and the boat hit a mine out at sea, that's how they got killed. And that's what they told the authorities except that later on two of the Kempetai committed hari kari, they committed the ceremonial one, taputi or whatever you know. This is where, it's real ceremony, it's really religious suicide. And when they commit taputi or whatever,

07:00 they've got to write down to their family what they've done and anything wrong they did and two of them wrote and told the story about how they had killed the nine pilots, so that's how we found out about. There's a memorial now in England for the nine people. I knew Habby and I'd only seen in the distance the others.

When you got this news from Habby

07:30 **on the piece of paper about D Day you must have had a pretty good idea that the allies were winning the war?**

Oh we knew then by the attitude of the Japs. Some of the Japs were treating us a lot better then. Some were worse, all depends on their support. Also the types of jobs they were giving us. Outside we were working in trenches on digging fortifications and in tunnels, and everything you know.

How did that make you feel, were you?

08:00 Well, it made us feel, oh, we were outside, it was great to be outside. We could scrounge, scrounge from Betties and that occasionally, things like that. Made life a lot better for us as far as that was concerned.

As thinking that the war might be over soon, did you often think about the end of the war?

Oh yes, I was very optimistic, I was always saying the war's over. This is it. Every sign that came through. As a matter of fact, I think I told you that

08:30 the day the aeroplane flew over and I had the two Indians in the cell I knew straight away that that was it, over. But then I also knew straight away that it was over about a hundred times before then too, so eventually I

Can you remember one of those false alarms?

Well, your remember vaguely. Now false alarms come in also with the noises. It's funny how they click in. We were only in Outram Road gaol about three months,

09:00 I think about three months. All of a sudden the mass executions rose up. Every time we would have a mass execution we would get a rice biscuit, as a reward, a celebration. And all of a sudden the mass executions, they'd been levelling out, they rose up again, must have been hundreds and hundreds of Chinese were killed, mass executions at that time. After the war, years, just a few years back

09:30 I wrote a, read a book by Lynette Silver, on the Krait ship that went to war, went up to Singapore, well on that date when all the noise was going on that was the Krait blowing up all these ships in the harbour. I remember all the Japs rushing around and everything. Now the itty gritty part of it is, how our decisions, the consequences our decisions make. The authorities

10:00 back here decided to stay mum and not say who did that. There were so many ships sunk. It was a very successful raid. So the authorities, they didn't say anything about it. The Japs who were scouring about, the Kempetai, trying to find out who it was, naturally assumed it was the fifth column inside Singapore, spies, so consequently all these executions, as a consequence

10:30 of us not saying that we did that, hundreds of Chinese civilians were killed.

So while those guys got out alive, there were hundreds killed because of it.

Oh yes, because of it. See the two things, they didn't figure to me until I was reading Lynette's book. I was reading Lynette's book and that, I said now, well that about figures, they didn't, that noise there was search lights and guns, or there were explosions.

11:00 Outram Road gaol is right near the water, you look right down on the docks there. And so I thought oh yes. And now, Lyn in her book remarks how the authorities decided not to say a word about it, and keep in, well they did go back a second time and that was disastrous. They didn't say a word because they wanted to leave it open, so if they wanted to do

11:30 it again. And as a consequence, how many poor devils up there in Singapore died as that consequence. So that was another noise that came on, something that happened.

You said that you got some rice biscuit when the Japanese was

When there was mass executions, yes.

When they killed some people. What did you get fed generally?

A little bit of rice, a little bit of rice with a little bit of something on it, not too much mind. Couple of little bits tubes of potato, like a tapioca, something like that.

12:00 It was not enough.

Once a day?

No, three times a day. Three times a day, but it was just a little bit of rice and a little bit of this an' it came in. They were as regular as clockwork as to what they did. They were very regimented in everything they do. The Japanese like things orderly. Like for instance, they never let any blokes die in the gaol, very rarely, one bloke died in my cell with me. But

12:30 generally if anyone was deemed sick enough that he was at risk of dying they sent them out to Changi. ‘Cause it interfered with their records you know.

What kind of bowls did they get served?

It was a little aluminium bowl left over. What the authorities had used before, one of those white aluminium bowls, the small one, and you get a bit of rice and on top of it would be

13:00 whatever, a bit of vege, a bit of tapioca, something like that. And that was it.

Did you ever find messages scratched on those bowls?

I've never heard of that one, but I should imagine some of them would do that for some reason or another. They might have wanted to get in touch with Penn, Dean outside or something or one of the Indians.

13:30 And when Penn left the Indians took charge of the rice.

So you were obviously very hungry.

Always. I'm a young bloke growing up you know and against everything else getting thinner and skinnier and taller. Or whatever, not taller, didn’t grow so much. Your mind is mentally attuned as a young person, you're greedy, youth is greedy, greedy for things. Yes that's all I thought about was food, food, yes.

14:00 Hunger. Your scurvy was all round you, your pellagra, your eye, your hands were all just festers, little, I don’t know what that was caused through, but the whole of the palm of the hands and at one stage there they were so sore, I had little wooden chop sticks, couldn't use them, used to have to put the bowl to my mouth, eat like that, or put the bowl on your leg and trying to eat it, 'cause they were that darn sore, all the

14:30 little festers, little, really white festers. You used to have a little bit of, and your job for the day was de-festering your hands. You had a little sharp bit of wire. People had, some had fish bones, you'd have your own favourite tool and you'd go around and you'd empty that, so you could move your hands. That'd be your morning job. Overnight they'd come up again, that's how you'd do it. So whatever the vitamin deficiency

15:00 was, that causes that. It would be interesting to find out what causes the palms, just the palms right around. You don't get none of that type of ones, little round festers just little round ones.

Did you have any other ways of supplementing what you ate. Did you get any other food or

When you are out in the garden. You went out and you had the toilet leavings. Some

15:30 of the buckets of toilet. You'd pour 'em into big containers and you'd slop it around, all the muck in the toilet. You'd go out with a ladle and you'd put it on whatever, the vegetables. Now if the guard wasn’t watching and there was something down there like a bit of sweet potato sticking out or something,

you'd grab it. You'd just wipe the shit off the, as much as you could and then you'd eat it you know. Consequently when we came home we were riddled with hook worm and stuff. Took a long time to clean us out.

16:00 and then the worst example was one day the guys were talking to this Jap, keeping him busy talking about how Nippon is bombing this and bombing that and there is a garden shed and I nick into the garden shed an I look around and down in the corner there is a box of seeds that look like almonds seeds, an I put em in my mouth and I'm swallowing them down.

16:30 They were castor oil seeds. And my stomach and that, for a week or a fortnight or that I was quite sick. And it was years before I could think of an almond seed. They look exactly like almond seeds. Whatever it was, someone said it was castor oil seeds or something. It must have been. It was dreadful.

Did you ever get sick, was that the sickest you got?

17:00 **Did you get other sicknesses?**

Well, you'd get, no. You'd get malaria and dengue fever was the worst of those sorts of things really. Dengue, it's goes right into the bone joints. With malaria, unless it goes into the brain, you more or less get used to that but dengue, dengue's a very painful. And of course, dysentery you get very weak, you

17:30 just lay there. You get those sort of things. But the human body is so immense. Now you've seen Backie Sharp's photo, you know, seen that. Now when they told me he'd died, I just naturally assumed he had died. He was four stone. Four stone and he was a fairly tall fellow. Now four stone, that's just bone isn't it. There's nothing else to weigh in a.

18:00 person, and yet here he just died recently at eighty-eight. Now once you get over it your body can lift yourself up. It's amazing how strong a body is and how we can survive with nothing.

Lets talk about the end of the war for a moment. You were in Outram Road you told the story of the planes coming over and you realised the war had ended. Just tell us about

18:30 **that moment where the guards came and released you.**

That was tremendous. That was one of the great feelings of life. When they let us out the door. As soon as I saw them without swords. None of the guards had a sword on, and even the warden didn't have a sword and I knew then, I said to my cobber Jimmy Brown, he's a pessimist, I said to him "It's finished now Jimmy this is it" and oh, he said "No" he said

19:00 "You've been saying that for a couple of years now". And when they led us up and said "We're going to send you back to Changi". It was beautiful, it was beautiful. And even at the end I can. There were some Yankee pilots and they were down to be executed and the war had finished. They were outside and I said to them, "You blokes are lucky it's over" I said "You were down to be executed soon, 'cause the guards had told us". Any rate, over from us was a

19:30 paw paws growing, paw paw, little, lovely big paw paw on it, so I grabbed a paw paw and put it under me shirt. The flamin' guard saw me. I thought "Oh God I'm goin' to get a wallop, and right at the end", but he just took it off me. He took it away, "coo bibibi, rruuru", to himself.

Even after the war ended the Japanese guards were still there?

20:00 Look, there were 60 000 Japanese on board. Now I told you what the Kempetai guards did, the colonels did with the pilots. They brought them out three days after the war had finished and they took them down to the beach and cut their heads off. Now there was lots of Japs like that that were so upset about all this, surrendering, their pride had suffered such, and only the word of the Emperor.

20:30 And we were getting messages. They were dropping messages down saying "For God's sake don't try and lord it over them." Different things they were telling us see.

Dropping messages?

Our planes, our planes. Right from the start. We'll take a week or two before we can organise a take over, and they needed someone in authority to keep law and order, so the Japs were officiating in the ordinary level. They were still around the camp and

21:00 that but they didn't have their guns or rifles. And we were told, "For cripes sake don't try to bash them up or anything", retaliation, 'cause there were sixty odd thousand of 'em and the orders we found later were to kill us all. So for a week or so,

Did anyone disobey those orders and seek revenge?

No, no, 'cause we all kept our eye on one another. If you knew anyone who was a bit of a rat bag and a bit of a nutter, you'd keep an eye on him and say to him "For God's sake don't", we don't, until the proper turn over an they'd been disarmed properly, it was weeks.

Were you free to move around the prison?

Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. As a matter of fact I ended up, I was privy. The first night out was most. It was

a beautiful night. And we hadn't seen the sky or the stars for two years, and we went down to the beach, there was a little beach at Changi.

22:00 at the gaol, and we went down and we sat there all night, we just sat there, the group of us. We just yarned occasionally and just looked and there was the stars and this huge moon come up, and the ocean was at peace as well and it was just lapping into the shore on the sand and we just sat there all night, that was the most perfect night. It lasted so long, all through the night. It wasn't just a moment. It was a whole night, and

22:30 it was beautiful. And to be able to just walk around and do what you wanted. And we walked in, Joey Cromer and I, no, not Joey Cromer, Jimmy Brown and we I went down to the wharf and I really remember. This was about a week afterwards and the ships were starting to come in and the soldiers and that. And this little ship came in and they were unloading stuff and there were big cases

23:00 of M and V, meat and vegetables, army stuff. There was a guard there and we come up, skinny little blokes. We come up and we said “Can we have one of those mate?” He said “Take the bloody lot mate”, he was almost howling. So we took a case of that and we took it round and I ate a tin of it. Of course it made me so sick, my body wasn’t used to it. I ended up back in the stretcher then.

How old were you?

23:30 Then? I turned 19 then, that's when I came back to Melbourne on the ship coming back and when we were coming off the gang plank the announcer fellow was interviewing us as we came off. He said “How old are you?” I said “Nineteen”. He said “Oh, you're one of the crew are you?”

Did you look like you'd been in, you were obviously very thin.

Oh ah, I was thin.

Were you as thin as that picture

24:00 **of Betty Sharp we were talking about?**

Oh, by that time. It's amazing how quickly you fatten up I tell you. Because they gave you the diets and that. We came back on a hospital ship. We stopped at Darwin, they had a picnic and we stayed there a couple of days, then we stopped every now and, and then we came back through Thursday Island then down Barrier Reef. We stopped at Brisbane, we stopped, and all this time they're feeding us up and we been, fed us up that week or so while we were waiting in, so we're starting to get some puffy weight

24:30 back into us. Then of course I had berri berri myself, the fat and that, you can press it all in. Yes.

The allied troops. Was it American troops that finally arrived to relieve the Japanese guards?

Australians, Australians. And British I think.

When they arrived, what happened then, what happened to the Japanese?

Oh well they would be put into

25:00 camps themselves and put away. I don't know what the procedure was and I wasn't worried about it. But we had a visit from Mountbatten, Lord Louis Mountbatten and them. As a matter of fact I was under the shower when Lady Mountbatten, it's a funny thing, she come around the corner. We're all having a shower. There were just a bit of water, pipes coming down you turn it on, stand under it out in the open, and of course everyone's diving for cover

25:30 Her and her entourage come around, all these other ladies. Well a couple of years later she come back down to Tasmania and I was in the hospital then at the time when she came and visited, and I said “We've met before” I said “Over in Changi. I wasn't dressed for the occasion” but, and I explained to her I was one of the guys under the shower when she came around the corner. She seemed to be a good sport, she laughed and took it as a joke.

26:00 **Did you ever, I know a lot of prisoners of war I've read were involved in identifying war crimes after the war?**

Yes. My friend, Jimmy Brown did, who was with us and a couple of others. I was pretty crook at the time and I

26:30 the last thing in the world that I wanted to worry about was identifying anyone. I dropped right out of army and everything I never went to Anzac parade, never belonged to RSL club, until about twenty years ago. I right out of that, I, I, ah

So what did you do. I know a lot of people wanted to go back home to their family.

I went to my family, to my grandmother. I'd never had a home

27:00 before and she wanted me to come home to them. I went home to my grandmother and I became a carpenter.

Lets try and go back to that moment when you arrived home to your grandmother. What was that like?

It was great, it was great, it was good. And me relatives, uncles and aunts, to belong, it was good. I told you about the time with the cigarettes. I think I told you yesterday.

Did you feel, after spending so long on your own,

27:30 **did it feel a bit strange to be around people again?**

It takes a lot of adjusting of course. You live for four and a half years under a discipline which is entirely masculine, and suddenly women come in to the equation and cleanliness and neatness and all that. We had cleanliness, but neatness the way that families like it and sharing and things like that are something that you've

28:00 got to become adjusted to. It was a learning process for all of us and when you haven't had it for a while it takes a fair bit of adjusting.

Did it cause problems this adjustment?

If, more so because I kept it deep-seated. As a matter of fact I was telling you Lady Mountbatten came to the hospital. That was an outbreak I had. I was cabinet-making at the time and I

28:30 suddenly just blew up. Threw a hammer through a wardrobe I was making and just pulled out. A bit of a break down I suppose and a bit of a coming to terms with adjustment. It happens and it was in a convalescent place at Clairmont. A lovely place there on the Derwent River. Oh for a month,

29:00 a couple of months, so adjustments like that were necessary.

Did you feel let down in some ways. Did you feel by let down by the people that went home and didn't experience this?

No, no, no, not at all, no. I was, all up, as far as the experience side of it, happy's not the word. It,

29:30 you've got it so you are with it. People say to me at times, they say, “The experiences you've had Bill, bet you wish you hadn't joined the army?”. I say “No, the contrary, I wouldn't be here and I wouldn't be the person I am without it”. Of course for other people it might have been their destruction.

But they're not experiences you can deal

30:00 **with very easily. Do you feel sometimes you’ve had your youth taken away.**

Oh yes, for those twenty years, or thirty or forty years, whatever it was, when I was out of contact with the associations, like I never went to an Anzac march or anything like that. I never belonged to an RSL club. In that time, that need for that association was buried. And as I told you before, when I

30:30 started writing my own little book, and researching it and that it was therapeutic. For me it was like lifting up a heavy load, a dark load. You don't realise it's there until, it's like the woman who didn't realise her husband drank until he came home sober one night. Similar sort of thing. You don't realise you've got this weight down on you, this whatever, this shadow that's on to you

31:00 you know, until something starts to lift it for you. For me it was getting interested in the war and getting interested in other people. I went to the Anzac Day march and met my friends and talked about it. It brought it out, talking about it.

Did you know that you had a weight on you? Did you just not want to talk about it?

No, no, no, the doctors might have thought so because

31:30 because a couple of occasions like when I had the breakdown and put me in Clairmont, a few weeks, the doctors asked me questioning and one thing and another, to see if there was anything there, if they could do anything. And I think your own pride and stubbornness resists the thought, even the thought, I have something wrong with me, never. You just don’t accept it that way. The rest of them are out of step, but I'm in step sort of thing.

32:00 It is only now that I'm able, realise now, yes there was something I needed work on.

Did you ever have, did anything ever suddenly bring back memories for you. Did you ever have bad dreams about your experiences?

Not bad dreams, but certain things like, for instance I'm never ever sure if something, when I'm talking, something doesn’t trigger like it did when I was talking about the poem, what

32:30 I'd have to explain exactly what it was that caused it. But some things like that. Not only that, it's happened to me, sometimes I can go and talk to a group of kids and joke and laugh and not have an emotional pause where I've got tears in my eyes. Then at other times, like this, something'll trigger, some memory, when I'm talking about something you know.

33:00 They are very deeply embedded, some of these things I've been talking to you about, the poem, because, it's associated with the rest in peace. The bloke went out, they executed him, so there are also other associations like that where something harsh happened. Something terrible, in most cases, happened.

33:30 I have a dear friend I had in. Peter, Peter Van Helmet. He was a Dutchman. He spoke perfect English. He was a Dutch Eurasian. Indonesian, Javanese, Javanese Dutch. Major in the Dutch army he was. His family were quite a distinguished family in Batavia. Had sugar mills and all that sort of thing. He'd travelled the world, all that sort of thing.

34:00 and we used to sit in the cell, we're watching the door to make sure the guards weren't there. He'd be talking to me, the culinary delights of the pea soup of Holland of the Peking duck in China, which he'd all prepared, he used to be a gourmet cook of some kind himself. We used to have these banquets of the imagination.

34:30 we drooled over them. And then. I don't know whether I'll get through this story. And then he died. It's time like that that get you.

35:00 I can very, never ever tell that story, but I can write it, which I have done. About two o'clock in the morning poor old Peter's breathing started to go. At any rate, he died at about two o'clock in the morning. And I put the

35:30 blanket over him and I waited until breakfast came so I could have his meal as well, and we sat down. And that's the only banquet we had. I sat down and I ate his rice and I ate his, and I went over and called a Jap and I said

36:00 “Peter's dead”. And it was little Hitler as we used to call him and he wagged his finger and “tiddibully now”. No talking to him. And he went away laughing like anything to himself about this joke, “tiddibully now”, that was his way. And they come along and a couple of the Chinese trustees come along and wrapped him up in a bit of matting.

36:30 that's sixty odd years ago and it still affects you. It still affects you.

Do you sometimes feel almost guilty that you were not one of the men who died, that you survived, that you made it through?

37:00 Yes, that's the thing about it, you wonder. You think about all the times that you were close to actually dying. With Peter, it was berri berri, but the berri berri went to his lungs, and he actually drowned in his own juices. You could hear the gurgling just as though he was drowning. The moisture was there in his lungs, and he was unfortunate. If he'd just survived a couple more months

37:30 medical science would have fixed him up in all probability, they did with Betty Sharp. It went to his lungs poor ole fella. I sat down there with him I nursed his head and I listened to his gurgling as he died. But there is a lots

38:00 of ways like that you know, that you see which are very sad and they do affect you, an' over time, when you try to think about it you know. When you're trying to talk about it, that's when it gets you, it does me.

Does it make you feel better when these things come up to the surface?

Oh yes, I should think so, it does, it does. I think we all need to have a bit of a cry at times. That was what the book started. Writing the book started that, a type of

38:30 crying, it’s a type of wanting to tell people that.

Did you feel in the years after you came back that you were able to cry about these things?

Oh no, no, no, macho business comes into it. Probably it was the fear of doing this that separated me from joining the club and joining in with Anzac Day, things like that.

39:00 So I should imagine, if it was analysed I should imagine that would be one of the reasons. You would suspect that you would be emotionally, and that didn't fit the macho business of what you wanted to do, just getting married and having children and working around. You had those things more immediate.

Did you ever talk to your wife about it?

No, no. I'm divorced and it probably would have been

39:30 better thing if we'd have talked about some of those things. It's difficult because there again the partner in these things. They've got their problem. They’ve got to adjust and fit things as well, so it's a two way street. How it could be involved I don't know. Two strong people involved I think.

Do you think that that's one of the reasons your marriage broke down?

Oh yes.

40:00 I should imagine, yeah, yeah. Of course, the one thing that people don't think too much about is, in the case particularly of young people going under that, and when, your body when it is subjected to a lack of nourishments and a lack of vitamins it makes adjustments. It looks after the heart. Any spare food goes to the heart.

40:20 the vital parts of your body. Your muscles shrink and everything. And also the sexual part of you is maltreated as well. I was for a couple of years when I came home I had no sexual drive at all. As a matter of fact I was treated for it. The doctors got some stuff imported from America I remember them at the time it was very expensive so make sure it wasn't

41:00 wasted. I got these needles and one thing and another, in the hopes of getting erections and things like that, of this nature. And it was a while. And consequently I'm not, I shouldn't imagine I wouldn't be most satisfactory in the bed as far as any healthy active female was concerned. I'm able but not very. So these are some of the things and in marriage they are a consequence.

41:30 **We'll just stop there just to change the tape, but we'll be very**

41:33 **End of tape**

Tape 9

00:13 **How do you think the experience of being a prisoner of war changed you, when you came back to Australia?**

Well, it changed me immensely of what I know of what I was when I was a youth and what I know of what I was when I got back

00:30 home. Oh it changed everyone immensely. In my case in particular because of my youth and because of the fact that I was an orphan and it was undisciplined and I was running the streets more or less and I had a most unusual life in Paddy's markets, racing around selling fruit and stuff, right from when I was a little fella. Hundreds of incidents

01:00 that would have took me into another world, probably far less a world than I have now. Would've given me, the associations and friendships I have got now would not have been available. There are so many facets of life it affected me. Probably more so than most people, probably more so, because of the circumstances of my upbringing. Which I rather fancy

01:30 was not the norm. Consequently the chances of change would be far greater. When I came back at least it gave me that purpose of doing things. I had ambitions to become something and it gave me a direction, being with people like Paddy and Bob and Ian and Harry, all these people.

02:00 It's given me a reason to do things which I would never have thought of before. Of becoming a carpenter and even getting married and having children.

Did you keep in touch with those blokes after the war?

Well, they die, yes. Poor old Jimmy died not long after the war. A lot of them died. As a matter of fact the death rate of returning POWs in our circumstance was quite high. A lot of them died. A lot of them couldn't adjust.

02:30 Some of them became alcoholics, things like that. It would have been harder for older people to adjust I imagine. People who are married, to come back to a home to a wife and family, would've taken a bit of adjusting I should imagine. And people who are older and not married, to adjust to the humdrum of civvy life. I was still pliable, I was still young, still

03:00 only nineteen when I came home so I was still in the hands of the gardener, I could still be shaped into something reasonably, like a tree or whatever.

Were you still the bit of a larrikin you were when you went away, or were you more serious and mature?

No, you still retain that. Funny thing. The lack of formal education comes through all the time. For instance,

03:30 I write a lot, I do. And I know the spelling of most words, but the words that you spell when you're young still stay with you. And if I'm writing and I'm not aware, I'll say, I knew this fellow, I'll write NEW. I new this fellow. And, I know this fellow, I'll write in O, 'cause that's how I spelt when I was a kid,

04:00 that is. The memory is embedded in you when you are young. It stays with you and some of the things that you do stay with you and you have to fight against coming back into it. The influence of those things that you were a child, while you may overcome them they're still there like a shadow. Like an alcoholic who gives up drink, he can't afford to go back and drink.

04:30 well I can't afford probably to go down the road when I went as a kid a few times. So in that respect yes, it still lingers a bit in you. It's like a language. I was talking to a lady the other day who had been in Australia for donkeys years, but she still had the hint of a cockney accent. After all those years.

05:00 So it's difficult to get rid of them even though you go to all sorts of effort to, like a pearl, you build it over and make a beautiful pearl. But still inside that pearl is a little bit of rubbish.

But that rubbish. You were talking to us yesterday about living in Ultimo. Part of that rubbish seemed to be a love for life. Love the good time and fun.

Oh, yes, those things, they start

05:30 out. There's a purpose. There's a purpose in almost everything we do and everything we subscribe to.

But did that love for life remain the same when you came back from the war?

Yes, oh yeah. It's the humour in my case and more. I have too much of a sense of humour. It distracts from me. I just can't help. I see something humorous I gotta comment on it. I gotta laugh at it, or something like that and sometimes it can be embarrassing.

06:00 **Did you ever have a time when things weren't so humorous when you came back?**

Well, of course there's nothing humorous in getting bashed up, there's nothing humorous in seeing your great friend being killed, things like that. There are those exceptions, generally speaking. I'm talking about generalities, now, not those sort of things. But in generalities I have a

06:30 talent if you could call it that, of seeing the ridiculous in words and in things and in actions, in groups of words for instance, and things like that. I bring that into action and of course it sometimes interferes with the general flow of behaviour, because some people don't see that, don't see the humour that I see.

Did you have any mates like that, especially when you came back from the war. Were there any that just got really depressed?

07:00 Oh yes, oh, got depressed. I have one in particular in Tasmania, he shot himself, killed himself. People don't commit suicide when there's a war. When life is threatening you hang onto life. When life is in abundance you can let go of it in a blink of an eye. Now, when people. The fellow I know committed suicide. Seemed to be as happy as Larry when he went out and shot himself.

07:30 He just made, why he was happy, he had decided, made a decision to do something, that the decision to kill himself was horrifying to us, but to him it was satisfying, quite peaceful, all that load, whatever it was affecting him to that, all the memories of the prisoner of war days and everything was gone. He went off quite

08:00 better than I'd seen him for a good while.

Did you go to his funeral? Was that a bit of a reunion?

Mm. Oh well with us funerals are always a wake. My mother was Irish and I think I inherited the Celtic. We always say “Oh it was a beautiful funeral. There was plenty of grog”.

Did you remember meeting up on a regular basis

08:30 **at funerals or**

No, I didn't regular. One of the distractions of that, of course, is when I go to reunions even now, even with Paddy O'Toole or Bob who was in the section, I'm shut off ‘cause I was in a prison cell most of my time. And the other experience in Sandakan, none of them came out of it alive. I've got no one to associate. All I can hear when they go is the Burma Railway and that's their forte.

09:00 and they had a lot of suffering up there and they’ve got a lot of reason to talk about it and rejoice together that they got out of it and lament the fact that they lost so many of their comrades. I can understand it but you just can't sit on the couch with a beer in your hand and join in occasionally with it. An' you say, back in Sandakan, or back in Outram Road gaol, because there's no one there that was in Outram Road gaol. See there was only a few of us. And so it's limited.

09:30 another limitation was I went to a little state, Tasmania, where I had no friends, I never grew up with. If I'd gone back to Ultimo I would have had those friends, but if I'd've been, I'd've been, the drunkard being introduced to the grog again, syndrome. It's a quandary I tell you but I adjusted all right, I became a carpenter, went into business, one thing and another. Sometimes I was

10:00 successful but most times I wasn't because I'm not a good business man. I run non-profit making businesses, not meant to be but that's how they ended up you know.

You had children.

Four children, yes four lovely children. A boy, a girl, a boy, and a girl. My eldest boy he teaches English in Singapore and he's married to an Indonesian lass, a Dyak girl, she's

10:30 a Catholic, religion. Lovely lady and I've three lovely grandchildren now. I despaired of ever having a grandkid you know. Now I've got three of them, lovely.

How old are they?

About four or five, three and one, something like that. There's photos of 'em there, over there and up there. I took 'em to the zoo here at Christmas time,

11:00 had a lovely day.

Did you ever talk to your son about the war?

I talked to them when they were kiddies. Oh, he got all the stuff. I e-mailed to him in Singapore, different things. I always told him the funny parts, like when we were outside and we got caught. And the time the Jap lost face and let us go, and things that you can laugh about. I didn't tell him about poor old

11:30 Peter van Helmet and his dying, because I break down almost and I didn't want to break down on my boy when he was a little fellow. I told him enough he said to me at different times, you ought to write a book about this. You can only tell them so much, or you become boring. I don't talk really that much. Only to people, I belong to a little association,

12:00 we got one we call it the Sandakan family. An' they're people belong to it, we have a meeting every three months, couple of months or so, in one of the clubs have a lunch, an they're people whose fathers died or brothers died in Sandakan. There's a reason for me to tell them little stories. They want it, they ask me, they pump me. I'm their token.

Let's go back to Sandakan for a moment while you mention it. Obviously

12:30 **after you left Sandakan the death marches happened and so many, well all except the six survivors, were massacred You must have lost a lot of cobbers in that camp.**

Oh yes, the whole hut, the whole hut.

When did you first find out about it?

It was a great mystery of it. It just shows you the great misconceptions, different eras, how we react to things. For some reason or other,

13:00 they decided not to say anything about the massacres. I think they were more concerned about settling Japan down, and not, there was enough brutality around about Japan, Nanking, Singapore, places. I s'pose, in fairness the authorities thought, we'll hose down the situation. I remember when I first come home, and I was saying oh well, when the fellas come home where will I

13:30 we'll have great reunions and all this sort of thing. Nothing. No news at all. And finding out about it was the hardest thing in the world. It was just innuendo and vague aside. Oh, they died of malaria was most of the things you heard of. People I've talked to, all the people affected, they all say they got notification saying their son

14:00 or their husband or whatever had died of malaria, so they carried that on for a good while. It was years and years and years before I found out the true story, and what happened. The fella that was here yesterday, Frank, his father died on the death march and he went over ooh, 1970 odd he went to Borneo. He knew absolutely nothing about the circumstances and in fact it

14:30 was almost a waste of time him going over. He wandered around there was nothing to see, nothing to talk. He went past places he later learned when he went back on further trips with it, after more information. He later learned that he'd been right next to certain where his father had been and he hadn't realised it on that first trip. So this lack information, as you people would know, it's a vital thing to have, information. People want it, they're looking for it.

15:00 **How did you react to that. Did you feel lonely or isolated knowing that these people had died of malaria or**

Well, it happened so, probably, the shock wasn't so great because it happened over such a long period of time before we found out the full extent of it and the whys of it. So that in itself may have been a reasonable reason for it happening.

15:30 That's one of the things you bury in yourself and you don't' realise what reaction should be. It's a no go area, it becomes. And you don't mull about what the consequences were. Only when you get talking about it, with Frank when we get talking about his dad or something. Might get down to the itty gritty of the losses and that you know.

16:00 One poignant story is Dick Braithwaite's story in Long Ago in Borneo. Now he tells how he escaped of the death march. Of all the adventures he had he told of how he had to kill this little Jap, guard, he killed the Jap with a piece of wood, and then he flew up in the jungle, he got lost in the swamp and in the finish all was lost.

16:30 He spent a night being attacked by electric ants, and I tell you they're dreadful things. And there were just millions of them, millions of these ants, he tells in his letter how, when the daylight came the whole floor of the jungle moved as the ants and the insects went back into their nests away from the sun. That's some description when he talks about that. Then he tells how in desperation

17:00 he just ran in one direction through, because he didn't know which direction was which. Fortunately, miraculous chance we're talking about, you go to the right or you go to the left, he went a few hundred yards, only went a very short time and he was on the bank of the river. Now the other way, he found out later, was twenty or thirty miles of swamp, he'd have to negotiate. There he is, he collapsed on the bank of

17:30 the river. And he looked up and here's this little old native fellow in his canoe across the other side of the river and he realised that death was staring him in the face, he had no other chance, he was too weak, he tried to build a raft, he was too weak to lift a bit of timber. So he called out in Malay, in the language, come over here, an the

18:00 old man sat, never said anything. Dick said he thought well this is it, he said I sunk my head into the ground and all of a sudden, he heard the voice, get into the canoe. The old fella had come across. Now that fella took him across to his little village, the sea Dyaks they were. They were on stilts in the water. They took him up and hid him in a place from the Japs. The Jap camp was near by.

18:30 they fed him and when he was strong enough they took three canoes, two as diversions, tactics. They took the three canoes and went through the Jap camp lines and took him out to this little island where this American motor boat came over. It was an American sea plane took him out in the finish. That took him out. All those things happened for that one fella. All those chances of fate he took the right direction through the swamp.

19:00 He happened to go to that very right spot on the river where this old fellow was sitting in his canoe. He got the right fella that came over to him. Another fella may have put him in to the Japs for the reward, but this fella was a good honest fella and he took him in and then took him and fed him and then took him out. All these things happened. He also tells, incidentally, of at one stage there he came into a sandy spot, and in the sand were all these foot prints,

19:30 bare foot prints, big prints he said, obviously Australians or British prisoners of war who had escaped. He said hopefully he said, “I'll meet up with them and I'll have some company”. Well none of those footprints ever got out of it.

Did you ever meet Dick Braithwaite or Keith Bottle or any of the Sandakan

Oh yes, yes. Dick Braithwaite I didn't know. I knew about him. I met his son. He is with the CSIRO, lovely fellow.

20:00 yeah, I've met him quite a few times. I admire his father Dick very much, but particularly that story of his and the way he's written and everything. Just another point in the part of that, just keeping on that story. He tells of when they took 'em out of the Sandakan camp. They were the last of the fit ones. And the other ones who couldn't walk, the Japs said to them, “Well you stay there and we'll come and look after you afterwards”, and

20:30 they marched out and they thought they were being sent back down to the town, ready for freedom. They knew the war was nearly over and town was to the left and when they got to the asphalt road they went right, and they knew they were in strife. And they went along. Each man was given a bucket of rice or something and that was to last them all the time. Cook it in a little pot and they had to look after it. And they said

21:00 a Catalina plane flew over and they could see the crew members at the door of the Catalina looking down at them, almost as if they could reach up. They were that close to freedom. They were that close to rescue and everything. A Catalina. How would it be. The frustration. To be able look up there, there's a crew, your own men looking down on you. There was nothing. All those people died except Dick. He was the only one that got out of that group.

21:30 The people that were left back at that camp, they just shot 'em, cut 'em up.

Does it ever make you angry that this story was suppressed and not told. And people didn't know about it?

Well, not so much angry, you understand how it happened, but it does give you a little despair and that's why I write out. Those little pamphlets, those little articles, you've got one, I sent you one, Long Ago in Borneo. I printed out hundreds

22:00 and hundreds of those on my little printers. I have worn out so many printers doing them. The ink and that. That's my way of getting Dick Braithwaite's an I, getting it different ways across. Eventually people will come to read them and especially Dick's story. You couldn't read that and not be affected by it. So they're the only ways you can do it. So many times people look around and they say “I want to do something. I'm going to fix the world”.

22:30 And they're looking around for something of a challenge that's big enough and of course all the way along the road there are little challenges which they neglect. Now if they started on the little challenges

they could look after the big challenges but they won't look after the big one if they don't look after the little challenges. By writing those little books, I've been doing that for years.

And paintings as well?

Oh yes, the paintings. I go to school kids and I take the paintings

23:00 around. The paintings are great for me because a picture's worth a thousand words kind of philosophy, and I put that on an easel and I say well now this happens such and such. It's also a jog for my memory. I put a painting up and I can say, now this is a scabies bath when Outram Road gaol, and a scabies bath. I can talk of incidents they are interested in. This is my way of spreading the message.

23:30 **And what is your message? If you had something that you wanted to tell people about the war about being a prisoner of war that we can learn from.**

Well, my message is just becoming aware of it. My first responsibility is for people to be made aware of it. Now what you do with that awareness, now that's another facet. Whatever I could be able to do to make you

24:00 more aware and do something responsible with your awareness, that's another facet. At the moment, my limitations, and look. There again, it's not the big things, it is the little things that make up the world. The scientists always thought, and the clever scientists, until just recently, that the atom was the smallest thing there was. Now they find there's these quarks and barks and larks and that, all in the atom, and the atom's

24:30 made up of so many hundreds of particles and all these sort of things. And they're finding smaller and smaller things, infinitely smaller things all the time. The great world and the universe is built up out of it. Until we get an awareness of the small things the big things are hard to fathom, hard to deal with. We're still not doing a very good job at the moment with what we're dealing with.

Do you think there is one small thing that you learnt from your experiences in

25:00 **your life, in your war experiences in your life in general that you think is an important lesson?**

Well, I just keep on harping, it's not penetrating. It's taking the one step at a time and doing the small things. It's like the fellow who said, how honest are you and he said I'm honest. And he said to him, “If you found a million dollars” he

25:30 said “Would you give it back?”. And the bloke thought for a moment and he said, “If it belonged to a poor person”. We're always looking for outs and always looking for little limitations on things, instead of seeing something that needs to be done and doing it. We're always looking for the big thing. We're always wanting to be leaders of the thing without having leadership qualities. That's one of the reason why our leaders were crook in lots of aspects, and they still are in lots of respects too, oh, I'm sorry.

26:00 They get the leadership position without having the leadership qualities and when you analyse the jobs that have been done, you see that the ones that look after the itty gritty pieces of the plan are the successful ones. They become the great leaders. They become the Napoleons, and the Alexander the Greats, the ones that are aware of what's happening. The awareness, that's why I send out those little books.

26:30 around. If anyone wants one I get them one. It's in the hopes that they'll be aware of that, it's supplementary to the other things they are aware of.

Just a couple of last questions, a couple of things not related to each other maybe. Tell us about your tattoo. I can see it in your eyes.

Aahh, that's a memory that I often look at, now as I'm getting older. When I first got to Singapore got up into

27:00 to Tampoi village, into our barracks there, onto our base, I was sitting in our tent and they had charpoys, what they call charpoys, you know, those beds with lace, they're and Indian thing you sleep on. They're made of lace string across a wooden frame. The charpoy. I'm laying on the charpoy and a bloke comes in and a little bottle of Indian ink and a needle and a cork on the end of it so he can

27:30 dab with it, and he started dabbing. I said, “What are you doing?”. He said “I'm making a tattoo, I'm going to put my number on my arm” “Oh” I said, “that's a good idea. If you’ve got any ink left can I do it?” And he had some ink left. My skin was as bare as a baby's bum in those days. So I look at it now and I say, poor wrinkled up old fella, hairy and. But in those days that was as smooth as anything and so I went to town and I worked on it

28:00 and I worked on it, and got it down there. Of course, I'm diggin' in too deep really. An’ it's getting sorer. Then I started there, a little bit there. That was going to be AIF, going to be AIF and 29th Battalion, but I got to that little and I thought, “Oh, blow it”.

That was your number?

That was my number.

We might take a photo of that later, when we take a photo of you I think. Just hold up your arm so the camera can see it now.

The number of people that say were you in a concentration,

28:30 thinking I was Jewish, I say no, these were down here somewhere, little ones.

Interesting, because you did have a prisoner of war experience, but you weren't in the concentration camps. Couple last things just about your attitude towards the war, and towards war in general. What is your attitude towards war?

Well, they're a dreadful thing, everyone agrees with that part of it and because of our stupidity sometimes they are necessary but

29:00 it's very difficult to find out which of the ones are necessary, and which are not. And there again, I've found that different groups will pick that lot as being necessary and the others will pick the other lot. I think all in all certainly we'd be a lot better now if we weren't. We've gone out of the stage war was an essential part of our evolution, man as the aggressor, and developer and explorer, and we've just

29:30 about taken over the world in that sense. It's time we got intellectual and progressive in the things that we want to, where are we going, and think about why we're here, what we're doing here, and is there a purpose of being here, and if there is a purpose, what is that purpose. And there is a spiritual ether, it's like the gravitational pull.

30:00 It's a pull that's on most of us. We don't recognise it as spiritual, because we've been turned of through bad use of religion by some of the churches. And some of the people in the churches and consequently people feel uncomfortable about talking about the spirit, things like that. But I do believe there is a force. We talk about the three forces, gravitational force, electromagnetic force, magnetic

30:30 force whatever it is, electro force. There is this fourth force or fifth force, whatever the number is, and that's the spiritual force. It's the thing that goes with the universe, this thing, whatever it was, and whoever it will. We were the cockroaches when the dinosaurs ruled the world. Now the cockroaches are underneath the floor boards, waiting for us, to see if we are going to destroy ourselves or whether we're going to go on and

31:00 find out exactly what our destination is for the universe.

If we've, as you say, have moved past the age of development where war is necessary, in 1939, or 1941, were we past that age then, do you think that war was necessary?

Oh no, I think that the stage was. We go through phases where we get to a

31:30 stage where we develop to a certain extent and we become reasonably contented. Before the industrial age for instance, if you read the histories of the farming communities and they were mainly farming communities in England and that. I'm talking about the countries that were reasonably well developed. They were well contented with themselves and they were well managed. Some of those farming communities were almost utopian in that sense that they had what they wanted.

32:00 but then of course came the urge. The people, the salesman came out and we wanted more things and in order to have better things you've gotta have more income and you've gotta have, bringing out income. So you develop then a need for, an aggression need. People get more aggressive and aggressive and so the industrial revolution comes on. You go through that and the end of the industrial

32:30 revolution Marx and people like that say, what we can do, we don't want that any more, we want everyone with equality, we want a community isms, or this, or this or fascism, then we, they built up to a certain extent that they get so aggressive that the more placid people, like the British and us, say we gotta stop this, and you have a great world war.

33:00 Now we're getting to the high technological war, where we're miniaturising everything, cameras. Fancy a man, I've got all the modern films on DVD and video, and I own them myself. Gone with the Wind. When I first saw Gone with the Wind as a boy. If someone said to me there'll come at time when you will own that film and you can watch it as much as you like, I woulda thought they were stark

33:30 raving mad. And yet we've got all those things, ordinary things without possibly the philosophical and moral strength to go with it to do something with them. We get people that get blasé and say, "Oh no, not DVD, we're sick of DVD", so they're looking for some other out, and that's our development. And that's not a bad thing, but we've got to try and get

34:00 it into its proper context so we don't go mad with it, build up to another stage where we'll have to, which we're starting to do now, well, Libya's next on our line as being the axis of evil, and Korea, and naturally they do, they're menaces, they've got atomic bombs, you can't argue it, you can justify it. Gee whiz, those weapons of mass destruction we're finding in Iraq at the moment. They found a bottle of chemicals now.

34:30 We're trying to build that up into big enough justification for going in and ah. Saddam, he's a villain of the people, but I can see a lot of other villains just as bad as he was. These are the sort of things we've gotta overcome. We've gotta get on top of this, 'cause one of those days, one of those great big comets

or what have you out there are going to come fair bang into us and smash into us again, like

35:00 they did when they smashed the dinosaurs down. But we had a run in with that lot, Haleys comet or whatever they called those bits and pieces that went into Jupiter. Eight times the surface area of the earth was the destruction of Jupiter. I was reading the other day, Jupiter, for billions of years has acted as a vaccuum cleaner, that has protected us from most

35:30 of the rubbish. Jupiter is almost a sun the size of it, as a consequence it attracts all this rubbish. It can take it, it is only gas mass, and they go into there. But every now and again one of them miss. Now we've been given the technology and the brains to do something about it now. Poor old dinosaur didn't even know about it, let alone do it. We know about it and from that we should be able to think, let's woo a

36:00 bit, let's hold a bit in our building of videos and that, let's have a look and see what we can do to make our world safer. Because there must be something in the time we've got, the scope, the direction, why are we on this direction? What can we do for it, to find out exactly and they tell me now, reading somewhere or other, Hawkings book I think, Hawkings, possibility

36:30 with those black holes. Down at the bottom there's a singularity occurs, what they call a singularity. From that comes another universe. There could be thousands, billions of universes, come popping out, boom boom boom, out of each black hole sort of thing. And this membrane theory they're talking about. All these theories come into it, and they're doing nothing about it. All we're doing is

37:00 going after stupid Arabs and we should wake up to ourselves. I'm not belittling the event, it's important. There's this dreadful pneumonia that's going around, what do they call it? SARS, now that warrants more effort. Yikees, that could go round. After the First World War, that's something similar sort of pneumonia, and more

37:30 people died than was killed in the war, in that one season.

Happens every now and then. I think that is a pretty good point to leave it. I think we're pretty well out of tape. So we're finished, we've just got to take some photos.

Hurray, hurray.

38:02 End of tape