

Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Workman (Ted) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

- 00:38 **I would like to start off this morning if you could tell me a little bit about your childhood and where you grew up.**
- I have some early memories I was thinking about. The first thing I can recall it is being rescued
- 01:00 by mother from a tent in a flood. I must have been about two, I can remember she was carrying me out of this and she was about waist deep in water. On the overflow station near Nymagee near Cobar that is the real early memories and I don't recall a lot of things until perhaps we moved back down to a place near Narellan where
- 01:30 we had some relatives there and we were staying with them for awhile. I might have mentioned we moved around as kids our family always moving from one place to the other. The next thing three cousins, two girls and a boy and we were staying with them at the time and we were playing down in the paddock somewhere it was on a farmlet or a farm
- 02:00 the girls went back up to the house and picked up some sandwiches, they were tomato sauce sandwiches which they used to give us occasionally, and brought them down back to where we were playing around the pond. For some reason or other she had an argument with her elder brother or something and just hurled the lot of them out into the middle of the pond. I can remember he went straight into the pond and he went right out to where they were
- 02:30 and drag them back out again rung the water out of them and gave them to us. I thought these are funny things to stick in your memory, about 3 at the time but I remember that quite clearly. We moved back then to the country for a little while and from there my father
- 03:00 was a worker and would get a job wherever he could. He used to be a jockey prior to him being married and just was moving from place to place and getting work wherever possible. After that I think we went back to Ungarie which is up in the country again and we were only there for a
- 03:30 short period again until we moved then to this sheep station between Grenfell and Forbes, a sheep station called Nagwarrie. We lived there for a few years my younger and brother and sister were born there they were born in Grenfell itself in a hospital in
- 04:00 we were about 20 odd miles out. We lived in a, Mum and Dad had a big tent with a fly on it and we had a tin kitchen made out of wooden slabs and beaten out kerosene tins petrol tins. That is how they used to build things in those days. At the time the Depression was on and the big drought up in the country
- 04:30 it wasn't very good. Dad was trapping rabbits I am not sure who he got paid by whether the Government or the property owner. We used to string these rabbit scalps on wires and every so often they would come round and count them and collect them and he used to get paid 2shillings a scalp. At one stage we were skinning and tanning the
- 05:00 rabbits and they used to be for sale. The skin buyer used to come around once every two or three months but we used to do our own drying and tanning. I suppose they would do more when they got them back into the factories or wherever they took them. My brother and I used to set traps of a night, I was about 4,
- 05:30 I think I was 4 and we used to set these series of rabbit traps that they don't allow these days and we used to get paid for their skins. That was helping something coming into the place. Things were very tough at the time and the drought was on too and the whole country wasn't in very good shape.
- 06:00 Dad was also working at a sawmill on the adjacent property, it was still on this property, this Nangwarrie Station but I think it belonged to somebody else. I don't know a great deal about that but I do remember this sawmill that had this big steam engine that had a big circular saw and they used to cut these logs. Cypress pine they used to cut down and Dad was cutting pine trees there for a long time.

- 06:30 He used to get paid for that. You would have to cut them off and trim all the branches off and the jinkers [timber trailers] would come around and pick up the logs and take them to the mill a few miles away. It was quite a big area. When we first went there, there was only the two of us and we used to live with Mum and Dad in the
- 07:00 tent and use this kitchen made out of the tins and wooden slabs. Mum used to do all the cooking there and behind the kitchen there was a chimney part there was a copper, everyone in the country used to have a copper to boil the clothes in and a big 44 gallon drum we used to clear our water in.
- 07:30 Water being scarce in those days. We had it until the dam went dry and then we had to go and get water out of a spring. At the time we had a horse available to us. There were various horses around there because Dad used to get paid if they got down and couldn't get back up again due their weakness due to the starving and
- 08:00 he used to be paid 1/6d to shoot them and put them out of their misery. We probably did have a couple of horses available there because he used to hook up this sled it was made out of a full tree which was cut specially for that. On this sled was a tank and we used to drive that up to the spring
- 08:30 a couple of miles away and it was normally a very good source of water but due to the drought it was starting to fail too it got down to about 6 feet below ground level. I know a lot of people wouldn't drink it. We would go up there and we would drag the dead animals out of the spring a well in the ground where the spring used to be they dug a well
- 09:00 to get some water collection and you would have to bring the dead sheep and possums out of it because they would be in there trying to get some water and they couldn't get out when the water level went down. We would pull them out and get water and put it in the drum and take it back and put Alum in it and settle the water. You sort of
- 09:30 got used to it, it was just part of life and to us it was the way you live. We just accepted that. A lot of things kids these days wouldn't understand. My brother and I still wonder through the paddocks down there and go through a flock of emus and a flock of kangaroos a whole paddock of them, something you wouldn't see very often these days.
- 10:00 We used to we had all our chores to do we used to try and grow things which was pretty impossible because with no water. Sometimes there was a little bit of water. If you did have a tomato or a cucumber bush it used to get rationed you would put half a cup of water around the stem to try and keep it a live and try and get something off it. To us it was
- 10:30 just accepted it. First of all when there was plenty of water in the dam we used to catch yabbies and crayfish and we used to catch them because they were good to eat. Other than that we used to visit the, my brother and myself
- 11:00 used to go up to the sheep station farm house I think about twice a week and they used to give us a little can of milk, I don't know what else we used to get because Mum used to make bread. Dad used to go the store there was a store 10 to 12 miles away on the main road from Grenfell to Forbes
- 11:30 and you would buy supplies. Bags of flour and tins of kerosene and once a year it was into Grenfell, it was a real big shopping expedition to get the special things, not that he had much money to buy the special things that was for sure. Catching the rabbits, we were quite used to
- 12:00 it. They also used to poison rabbits and that was a pretty big occupation. They used to get quite a few. There must have been a lot there, I remember we got 350 in one night, that was a big haul. Normally there was only poisoning went on for a certain time I don't think, I don't recall as to
- 12:30 why it was. We didn't shoot them my brother and myself, didn't do any shooting but my father did, he had a rifle and shot foxes and anything that needed. We used to eat rabbit and we used to get a bit of sheep meat off the station that is something they used to give.
- 13:00 A truck used to come around every month or 3 months, but this travelling fruiter used to go through the countryside and we would get a few little bit of fruit and vegies for those who didn't have it growing and people like us who didn't have a farm. That was a big treat. We used to do odd things that
- 13:30 we did, tanned kangaroo skins, we used for mats. The feral cats and they used to get in our rabbit traps. They were a nuisance and some were pretty big cats and we used to catch them in the trap and we would kill them and skin them
- 14:00 and make mats out of the cat skins. They were very good; they made a very good floor mat. The foxes we used to sell to the skin guys, they would never buy the cat skins so we used them for floor mats around the camp. The skin buyer used to come round once every so often and he used to buy the skins of the rabbits and the foxes, that is the sort of things you did to keep going.
- 14:30 Dad used to get paid but he would cut a tree down, each had a certain mark and the inspectors would come around and they would put their stamp on the butt the stump of the tree and then he would get paid for that tree that kept us going there. The schooling there consisted of

- 15:00 correspondence from Blackfriars Correspondence School. I don't know how often we would get it, I think probably once a month we used to get some in the mail and Mum used to put us through out lessons. We used to do our lessons in our little tent. After we were there a little while Dad built this cabin that my brother and I slept in and then they had the other two
- 15:30 kids there, the younger two, my younger brother and my sister, so they were in the tent with them to start with. It was a big tent with a tent fly on it and it was comfortable for those days. They were in cots in there until they were a bit older. By the time they moved out we had moved on to our next stop which was our uncle's farm at a place
- 16:00 called Duck Creek. It was in the vicinity was called Trundly Hall that was the locality name of the place. From there that is where I first started actual school where you had
- 16:30 teachers and pupils and that sort of thing. That was a bit different, we went to this school and they start you off and because you had been on correspondence school they didn't count that they just put me in Kindergarten. In the first year I went through 1st, 2nd and 3rd and finished up in 3rd class the first year I was there.
- 17:00 A bush school. We started with Glenelg which was between and it was about a 7 miles drive in the sulky [horse drawn cart]. I had 2 cousins that were still going to school and they would start off in the sulky every morning and
- 17:30 off to school and spent the day at school and back home. Dad was just probably helping on the farm at the time. We had a few adventures there. I was out one day and walking with my two girl cousins, one was about my age, Thelma,
- 18:00 and Doris was a couple of years older than my elder brother. They had two boys that were already working on the farm so they weren't going to school then we used to go with the girls the four of us used to go they had finished by then. We used to go to this school which was great as far as we were concerned
- 18:30 and one of the things I did there, we were out walking around and I tumbled over this cliff and went down to the bottom and finished up with my knee cap sticking out from my jean. I tried to walk and I couldn't, so Doris carried me back to the farm
- 19:00 house and it was a Sunday and there was a tennis comp [competition] on there. I can remember Elsie the oldest sister of that family she was engaged to one of these fellows and he had a car so that was great and he took me straight into Temora to the hospital, that was about 21 miles.
- 19:30 I had about 15 stitches and 3 steel clips put into it to hold it together and it healed up and didn't do any damage. I don't know how long I was out of action with that. It doesn't take you long when you are a kid to get
- 20:00 on track again. That is one thing I have always had, I heal up very easily. No matter damage I do to myself I seem to be able to heal up straight away. We moved from there to a place called Gidginbung that was only about
- 20:30 10 miles out of Temora on the railway line. The name Gidginbung it is its native name it is actually Gidgin Gidginbung lightning and thunder, that was the name of the place and they only used the one Gidginbung on the railway siding there that had a name.
- 21:00 They had another school there and we were about a mile or so from the school so we used to walk. My elder brother and myself went to that school. There were a lot people there were Germans in and around Temora generally,
- 21:30 there was a big influx of German farmers came there in the wheat growing and there was names like Heindrick, Stopey and Oust and names like that they were more common. There was Darcy O'Connor which was an Irish, a couple of others but most of them had German names, it was funny.
- 22:00 Our teachers name was Tom Fardy[?], English, I think most of the teachers were in those days and he had a daughter going to the school as well. We were in this little
- 22:30 bus we were given there. When we were in my uncle's place we lived in the barn where they used to keep stuff prior to us going there and that was our home while we were there and Dad must have got a job at Gidginbung for something to do and we moved into a house, not what most people today would regard very highly as a house but it was a real house it had rooms and
- 23:00 a kitchen inside the house without walking out the backyard which was the normal thing prior to that. My brother and I both liked school we loved going to school. We used to be real annoyed when it was holidays because there was no school and
- 23:30 we must enjoyed doing it and done it right because they had a school examination in two sections like 1st to 3rd which I was in and he was in 5th, 4, 5th and 6th and he came top in that lot and I came top in the other. I suppose that is

- 24:00 we did that. We had an old swaggie used to live in the back of the house he lived in the stable at the back of this house
- 24:30 he was there and he used to have a horse and sulky I don't think we had one there. Dad might have had his old car, a Willis Overland but this bloke had his horse and sulky and he used to go into town, it was about 10 miles in but
- 25:00 I don't know whether he got his pension but he used to get full at the pub and go out and get into his sulky and fall in and the horse would bring him home. We used to often pull him out of the sulky and drag him into his bed in the stable. That is how well trained that horse was he used to come out the main road and 10 miles and turn off this lane where we lived and around the back
- 25:30 and we would unhook the horse and drag him into his shed. I don't know whether my Dad was working but the property owners their name was Lamont.
- 26:00 they were the station owners. That was the next school after that my adventure at that school was playing rugby league, I got a spear tackle or something and finished up with a broken
- 26:30 arm, I had 2 elbows. Into hospital again back into the Temora Hospital. They patched it up but they didn't do a very good job on it and the bones weren't lined up and they were about ½ inch out of alignment, and they were healing up together but I wasn't going to do anything about it
- 27:00 intentionally but in the mean time we moved to a place at Grogan which was 12 or 15 miles out on the road to Young, but I soon fixed that one up I climbed up a tree shortly after that and fell out of the tree and stuck my arm out to stop
- 27:30 falling and broke it again. When I went back this time they put the alignment right and fixed it up. The right arm and it was equally as strong as the left one and I never had anything done to it and that worked all right.
- 28:00 That was early there and I finally got round to school at Grogan School and that was a 4 mile walk each way to the school we did that every school day.
- 28:30 We used to do odd jobs around the farm. The farm belonged to another German family sheep and wheat farmers called Winky[?], that was their surname. Harold Winky was the eldest boy and Ella and Stan and Albert were the younger fellows we got to know a bit.
- 29:00 One of my jobs there was tar boy in the shearing shed. They always had a tar boy in the shearing shed because if the shearers cut a sheep badly they would hollow out and you would race up with your pot of tar and I don't know if that was what it was,
- 29:30 it had its healing properties and you would slap this tar all over the wound and protect it and sanitize it and let the sheep go. They would quite often nick them, not bad ones. I can recall this first sheep station we lived on
- 30:00 the shed there one day, the electric clippers and went straight through the sheep's front leg and cut its leg off, they can't do anything about that, but only mostly minor cuts something you could patch up with the tar.
- 30:30 Dad only had a bike then because I remember him being away for weeks around the countryside looking for work. Sometimes he would do relief work and that would only last a few weeks and he would get a bit of money and have some food again
- 31:00 for awhile and I don't know whether he did odd jobs on the farm. We used to get little jobs sometimes but not much we could do we just went to school and came home. The drought was over then and we would be growing our own vegies and things like that so we would be doing
- 31:30 those sort of things.
- It is very interesting to hear about your childhood growing up through the Depression it seems you had to be quite resourceful, what were your or did you know about the war at all?**
- It wasn't on then I had heard about the First World War
- 32:00 because I had an uncle who was there. My little adventure there was another disaster I used to borrow my father's bike
- 32:30 and ride it and I was about so big and the bike was this big and it got away from me going down a steep hill and I got tangled up in the wreck and smashed my ankle, mangled it. It was badly shattered but they didn't know it at the time we didn't go to the doctor's or anything like that
- 33:00 they put fennel where the blood was coming out to stop germs and wrap it up in bandages and I would hop around on a home made crutch until it got better. I can remember

- 33:30 that sort of thing and being knocked and I knew my ankle was pretty sore and sorry, it got patched up again and Mum was good. She did her best at the time and it got better. I will tell you about it later
- 34:00 I went through with it and it was still all right. For some reason or other we had to keep moving I suppose Dad getting jobs or didn't have a job, they would probably turf you out or something and then we went
- 34:30 to Temora only a few miles out, only about 5 miles and went to a new school and it was called Glenburn. We went to this school at Glenburn and we had this little cottage I don't know who that belonged to or what
- 35:00 it was, only a little shack but we lived in it and we were about a mile or so towards the town. I didn't always get to school because quite often, Dad got this job clearing land, because I had to go away and help
- 35:30 you would have to go and forget about school because they needed help in the camp, so I used to cook the stuff that we had to cook and help stacking the bushes on the stumps to burn them out. We were clearing land for the farmers and we used to get a £1 an acre for clearing, from cutting the trees down to gathering the timber up and burning the stumps out and
- 36:00 that was it. They regarded that as a job and you were getting money and you buy food and I can remember many times we were pretty short but Mum struggled on and I don't know how she did it, but she did. You would buy a bag of flour and she would make bread.
- 36:30 She would buy flour and salt and we had camp ovens where you put the ashes round the lid and stick them on a fire it was nice. Visitors later on, Dad would always want Mum to make bread so visitors could taste her bread. I was pretty happy
- 37:00 that was there I was in 4th class there it was probably only in the vicinity of about 12 months because we then moved back into the town
- 37:30 on this little farm owned by the Royal Hotel. It had a farm that they used to grow fresh produce on. We had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens] and turkeys and we used to grow lucerne for the horse because they had a horse coach they used to take up to the railway station to pick up passengers to take back to the
- 38:00 hotel and we used to have horses and also something for the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and turkeys. There was a shed down the back, we used to have a stack of bran and pollard and they used to have these fresh eggs and Dad used to
- 38:30 clean the poultry for them for the hotel. From there that is when I started at Temora into high school at the time. That was 5th class. We used to walk in, it was only a couple of miles out of town so it was an easy walk. We were there
- 39:00 both 5th and 6th class and finished my QC [Qualifying Certificate] and started high school but half way through high school they needed me to leave school and try and earn money for the family
- 39:30 I am not sure why we left that farmlet but we finished up in a place right in town part of the town called Newtown and I was still going to school there I was just about finished school and then we moved to this place in town and I had to start work then because we must have lost the
- 40:00 farm. That is when I started looking for jobs. I did a few odd jobs one of them was working for a fruit shop and Italian fellow from Griffith came over and started a shop in Temora I don't know how I got onto it
- 40:30 but I started there with him setting up the shop and I was getting a little bit of money for that and then I went out selling, hawking his goods in town to get him known so people would know what they could get. I was selling stuff around the town I had beans and peas at different times a penny a pound.
- 41:00 that was the price of things. I was working for the Chinese grocer. I did odd jobs in shops and helping around the place and at one stage I worked in a cycle shop doing
- 41:30 bicycle repairs and those sort of things.

Tape 2

- 00:34 **You have just given us a very great description about growing up around Temora but I was wondering if you could tell us what you knew about the First War? You said you had an uncle who was in it.**

I didn't have a great knowledge about the first war you hear a few little things at school but my uncle

didn't tell me much about it, we had to find out about it pretty well everything,

01:00 genealogy and about the family other than that we had little knowledge of anything like that. We were pretty remote, we weren't much up on world events, although my uncle used to get magazines and papers sent

01:30 but that wouldn't tell us much what was happening in Australia. She used to have rels [relatives] there and they used to send every so often but I don't know what the magazines were, but they used to have a comic section and my brother and I used to look forward to that so that was something just a bit different.

02:00 **Before you joined the army what did you know about the life of a soldier or whether from your uncle or things you have heard what did being in the army mean?**

Nothing absolutely nothing. I don't think I ever gave it any thought, it wasn't anything to do with the things I was doing or the people I was associated with so I just didn't

02:30 know really little about it.

Can you tell me about when you heard the Second World War had been declared?

After where I left off before I went droving, I became a drover

03:00 and that was a pretty interesting job and it was not easy, I was about 16 and I did that for a while so then I went working on a farm and this was where, but my first introduction to the

03:30 war was, I don't know when war broke out but about that time we were listening to a radio and it was some declaration or some news about the war and there was a World War I digger [soldier] in the room with me and I suppose I was enthusiastic and they said

04:00 recruiting, and I said, "When I am old enough I will be right, I only have a year to go." This bloke stood up and turned around and lectured me and I don't blame him because he had been through hell in France. What he told me, he started to tell me what

04:30 went on at war and what it was and he really sat me down but it didn't alter my enthusiasm, I still had the same idea because at that age you are totally different, you look at things differently.

What did he tell you about?

About young men not much older than me

05:00 laying on the ground with half their guts shot out and calling for their mother and all that sort of thing, he had been through it. I can understand how he felt, he thought he was doing absolutely what he should, I wouldn't do the same thing now. At that age your outlook is totally different

05:30 and he had been through it and he really knew what was happening and all mine was fantasy as far as I was concerned, that has been in my mind ever since, something like that you can't forget that. That was my first real acquaintance with anything to do with the war.

06:00 I was just sort of watching what was happening and waiting for the time I could get in and that is one of the things, as soon as I was 17 I decided I would come down to Sydney and join the navy. I came down to Sydney and tried to join the navy, they had a recruiting office somewhere down the bottom of Pitt

06:30 or George Street and I went down there near the Quay. I went in and they gave me this medical exam and I did the written exam and that sort of thing and then came to the results at the end of the day and this bloke said to me, "Sorry son we can't accept you

07:00 you have got flat feet." He said, "Come back in 12 months time." Then it sort of stumped me, I looked about 12 or 14, I looked younger than I was and I was 17 and I must have looked about 14 or 15 and they must have reckoned I was cheating with my age

07:30 that sort of thing. That was a funny thing, "You have got flat feet, come back in 12 months time." That was my introduction to the navy.

Why did you want to join the navy?

Because that was the first thing I could get into to, you couldn't get into the army until you were 18 and I was 17, you could get into the navy. I got a job down

08:00 somewhere at Lidcombe recycling fruit cases, I wasn't doing it a bloke was doing it and I helped him. I joined the Air League I thought, "This will do I will join the Air League." and I seemed to be getting nowhere with that either, so after awhile I packed that in and decided I would send my papers in to get called up. I told them I was 18.

08:30 Anyhow I got an answer back and I got my call up and I was still just about 18 by the time they got everything fixed up, I just turned 18 by the time I got into Bathurst camp and I was pretty happy about

- that. That is where I met a couple of mates, we were a real trio there for awhile, we had a great time,
- 09:00 we did all sorts of things and had a lot of fun. We did some pretty hard training at Bathurst camp and that is when they called for volunteers for paratroopers and commandos and that sort of thing
- 09:30 and each of us went for different things. Wally, he went to the 7th Division as a sniper in the infantry and I got into the commandos and another one of my mates got into the paratroops. Two of us got into commandos
- 10:00 and strangely enough went in the same unit later I went to this school at Grogan one of the boys who was at that school finished up in the same unit as me. Another odd thing.
- You said these great mates at Bathurst. How easy was it to make mates in the army and**
- 10:30 **what sort of things would you get up to?**
- Pretty easy, we just needed to enjoy ourself without doing anything, we weren't heavy drinkers or anything like that, I didn't even drink at all I think, I did, I would have one a month or something like that. Wally used to but I don't think
- 11:00 Pat didn't worry much about it, but Wal used to enjoy his drink occasionally, he wasn't a heavy drinker but he used to enjoy a beer like a lot of them did. I was also a non smoker and I wasn't interested in smoking. It wasn't as though I hadn't been introduced to
- 11:30 it but in the country they used to go to country dances and before they would go they used to have a wine and they would give you a little bit of wine and you could have a drink of it as long as you didn't have too much, it wasn't as though I had never touched it, I had a few drinks, tried beer and wine, not spirits
- 12:00 I tried them but I don't want them. The same thing with cigarettes at school, that was the thing you were supposed to do. You always had to go and steal or buy a packet of 6penny cigarettes and race down the park and sit there puffing, that was the great thing to do. I could not see much gain in that so I never....
- 12:30 **What sort of things would you and your mates get up to?**
- Only what you would do normally. We would go into town and look at the shops and have milk shakes and buy some food that you couldn't get in the camp and just generally go to the movies or something like that, just do normal things. The fact that you were out on your own you could do them.
- 13:00 You didn't have to do anything wrong to enjoy yourself, just behave yourself and enjoy everything that was there. Pat, the little bloke who got drowned and he was a good piano player and he used to play the piano and we would sing along. We used to enjoy that, have sing songs and
- 13:30 other than that I can't think of much else. We used to be in whatever you could. I played hockey in the army, in Bathurst I was the hockey team captain and I used to play a little bit of baseball. Whatever you could do for recreation you would do it. Training was pretty hectic,
- 14:00 a lot of marching and mountain climbing and whatever else you needed to do in those days.
- You mentioned earlier that you tried to join the navy that you had put your papers in early. Why did you want to join the forces so desperately?**
- Just to go overseas and do our bit, most of us did. That was just enthusiastic,
- 14:30 the right thing to do, something you think it was the right thing to do and you just do it. Then came the next naughty thing we did we decided to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] because you couldn't do that unless you got your parent's permission so we got together and we got the 3 sets of papers and I was his
- 15:00 father and he was his mother and we just signed the papers all round and sent them in and they just got accepted, they were all signed, they didn't go back to the parents and say was this your signature or things like that. The next thing we are in the AIF, instead of having N [NSW prefix] numbers we had NX number, we had to do that before we could join,
- 15:30 you couldn't volunteer for the commandos and you weren't allowed to have dependants to be able to join. We were right.
- What was it about the commandos that attracted you?**
- I just wanted to do it. It was as good as you could get.
- 16:00 **What had you heard that they did?**
- I don't precisely know but they were always up there, their role was different to most of it and it was definitely all front line work and it was a pretty important job. I just wanted to do it.

- 16:30 I can't say precisely why, the spirit of adventure and all these sort of things and all work together and make you do these silly things.
- We talked about when you heard the war was declared but when you heard that Japan had entered the war can you tell me a little bit about that your response or how it changed things?**
- 17:00 I don't think it did, I don't think it made any difference, if they were enemies of Australia we were there trying to protect Australia. It didn't matter if it was Germans or Japanese or whoever they were, they were just another one of the enemy. Consequently
- 17:30 just take it accordingly.
- I heard there was quite a great fear when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and they were coming down New Guinea, there was this great fear that Australia would be invaded.**
- Yes I guess there was all sorts of plans in mind if that happened but you just hope that you are going to stop that.
- 18:00 That is what you are trying to do. The best line of defence is attack, that is what we had in mind so that is what we did. I have probably forgotten a lot of the feeling I had at those stages of why and
- 18:30 about certain things. You sort of, it gets into you really don't think very much good of them, you are taught to hate them or whatever, it works anyway.
- 19:00 **You said there were a lot of Germans living around Temora, how did they go when the war broke out?**
- People seemed to understand it wasn't them doing it. When war broke out I was with this German on this farm at Thuddungra and it didn't really make any difference. There may have been a few fanatics just because their
- 19:30 neighbours were German, they had been Australians for years and they had nothing to do with them, it wasn't their fault that it was happening. Unless they were sympathisers with Hitler no one would hold anything against them. They weren't treated any differently at all.
- Can you tell me....**
- 20:00 **you mentioned that you volunteered to join the commandos, what kind of training did you get to prepare yourself for the commandos?**
- You get the best you can possibly get at Canungra. I have books that give you a little bit of the background of Canungra. The training there was
- 20:30 tops, I don't know that you could better it anywhere. The independent companies had been trained similarly down in Victoria prior to Canungra opening but it was a specialised school in training commando work. It was just the best you could get as far as I know, maybe somewhere else
- 21:00 was good. I know how fit we were there when we went out of there. You understand when you see, you take it and all getting fitter and train very hard and you accept that for a certain job but then to realise how much fitter you are than the others who are also
- 21:30 doing infantry training as well. The sort of thing, one day, this put it in my mind how different the training must have been. You would go out on patrols every day doing training and the infantry would do the same thing. You would be in single file going up jungle track and up hills and this sort of thing and
- 22:00 we came to some fairly steep climbs around Lamington National Park near Canungra there, the front of our column got just at the foot of this hill, got to the foot of this hill as the last of the infantry men got onto this track, by the time we got half way up the hill the last of our blokes were
- 22:30 in front of their fellows. They were training pretty hard too. One of our fellows used to walk right across the creek, there is a wire rope and you hook your legs over it, and get hold and go across like a monkey, we were fit. I know
- 23:00 when we got to the tablelands we did a 40 mile hike carrying 70 pounds and your rifle and that just tells you, what is that in kilometres?
- 23:30 **A lot, about 80.**
- Well that was a day's march carrying all your gear. I can remember getting back and starting playing pranks on the others, we got back a bit early so we would do things we shouldn't. You can get the training and what you can do if
- 24:00 it made you very alert and we used to practice things that the others probably wouldn't. Admittedly in

the army you used to do unarmed combat, but you would see this Judo only taught you to defend yourself and hit and do this sort of thing. Everything you did was meant to

24:30 kill or hurt, there wasn't any play. We did things differently that way.

What training would you get that was similar to the other troops?

Marching and carrying loads you have got to do that. The way you do the fighting

25:00 you would be blindfolded and they would make noises and you would have to point your machine gun or rifle or whatever you had, you would have to point it in the dark, that probably wasn't normal training. In case it was totally dark you had to be able to point your weapon straight at it without mucking about you

25:30 do learn how to do that. Little specialised things like that.

Were there people who were dropped or would drop out of the commando training?

I don't think so. We had a few of the blokes who were from the original unit. We got transferred into this

26:00 the 6th Division Cavalry Commando Regiment but it was made up of these two new commando companies the 9th and 10th plus the 7th Independent Company. When we did this training, the forced march the 40 miles with the 70 pounds pack thing, a few blokes pulled out, it picked a few out but they probably got put back to headquarters jobs or something like that.

26:30 I think most of them were from the original unit which was a Middle East unit which they didn't go through the specialised training that we did. I don't think that any of the volunteers that did, perhaps there was some, I didn't know everybody.

Apart from the blindfolding and firing the shots, what was some of the other

27:00 **specialised training you got?**

Mainly how to kill people, everybody got that. I did a certain amount of training in the infantry training camp but then what went on further camps after that I don't know because I went into the commando camps from there I don't know what they got later.

27:30 **What were some of the ways they were training you to kill?**

It depended on the circumstances you go through all sorts of things. With guns and knives and bayonets or whatever.

28:00 You had a hand if you had to. It was just part of survival, you kill to survive, it wasn't a game. I guess everyone got some sort of training like that. We didn't go into....

28:30 **I guess as a specialist unit how they were teaching you to do these things.**

We had the blokes that were specialists in the training in the areas the other units wouldn't have had that they would have probably got a general outline of everything it was good because you had a lot to learn in a short time

29:00 **What were they telling you about where you were headed?**

They don't tell you anything. You are not allowed to know that sort of thing. I think we found out on the ship because no one can let anyone know so then it is quite safe. As far as I recall

29:30 we didn't know about it, whether the commanding officers knew about it I don't know. I was only one of the lower ranks at the time.

I have heard that Canungra from regular infantry is very difficult, but what was one of the hardest things you had to do at Canungra?

It

30:00 would be hard to answer. Just having to go harder and faster than anyone else. They would probably be normal marching and we would be forced. Like against walking and power walking, that sort of difference in, everything you did, everything was emphasised harder and faster,

30:30 and better that is all, and you just did it. When you reveille early in the morning whereas the others would get out of bed and have their wash and shave, [we would] jump out of bed, half mile run down to the creek or off this tower, have your

31:00 dip and then grab your gear and half mile run back to the thing and have your breakfast and have your training. That was one of the differences. The others would just get out of bed like normal people, have their breakfast and then start their training. It was hard that had a lot to do with it. I think it was harder and faster and that was it.

31:30 I couldn't compare it to the others because I didn't do the other.

Was there any a real sense in the unit that you were the elite force?

I don't think you were, I think that you felt like you were part of a good unit. I don't think we made a show of it or strut like a rooster or something.

32:00 It wasn't the thing.

What did they tell you at Canungra about the enemy you would be facing the Japanese and what you could expect from their fighting?

I think they told us a lot of the tricks they might use and that would be basically we would be told where they would pretend to be dead and lay on the ground and wait until somebody

32:30 came and just quickly roll over and shoot them. Have a grenade under their body or something like that, when you turn them over the grenade would go off, all these sort of things. The other ones do this sort of thing, and if you were advancing they would put a couple with a live grenade ready to go off

33:00 when you got to them. That sort of thing you would have to be watching out for. Be wary of them. They had their different disciplines they were absolutely stood over by the officers whereas our attitude was totally different to that, they were

33:30 our mates and our officers and we got treated like that. A lot different to the English Army. Where you had to show some one of respect, it was real respect not pretend. Yes, you had to,

34:00 the Japs were very cunning and we knew that and they had been well trained for a long time and they were dangerous and you had to understand. Dirty fighters or something like that but all fighting is dirty.

34:30 They were taught it was a dishonour to be a prisoner of war or anything like that. We picked up one one day, a couple of big gashes in his head and half his hand missing where he had decided to turn himself in to

35:00 surrender and his officer just pulled out his sword and went to chop his head off and he put his hands up to protect his head, he still had the big cuts in his hands and half his hand and we took him and put him in hospital and fixed him up. That was their discipline, that was the way we did it. We did get prisoners occasionally, we needed them for

35:30 intelligence work, we had to do that. Generally speaking we couldn't take prisoners, we had nowhere to keep him. You weren't going to take one home and put him in your tent with you. We didn't have barracks or anything like that, we were out on the loose, we were mobile, there was no way you could do that. They didn't intend to either so you knew that.

36:00 I think they were terribly surprised when they did get taken prisoner and the way they were treated, I don't think they could believe it.

How did you maintain the unit if the officers are off with your mates?

You did what they told you, they didn't care if you

36:30 were his best mate and he was the officer and you did that and that is normal army discipline but you had a different feeling about it. You would do it with enthusiasm or whatever you want to call it. That was his rank and that was his job and not because he was so much better

37:00 they thought they were so much better than you, it is just they had a job to do and if this was your job you knew that is what you did and you did it. I don't know whether all units were like that but that is how ours was. I think that is why in so many cases the Australian Army did so well

37:30 compared to other countries and other armies. I think it was the same thing in France in the First World War, it was a very similar attitude, totally different from the enemy and even the British Army it was

38:00 a hierarchy sort of thing. There weren't many officers that they didn't sort of obey out of pure wanting to, not because they had to purely out of doing the job because you wanted to do it.

38:30 You mentioned that you were in intelligence, what kind of specialist training did you get to do that role?

It was mainly in map reading and making maps and working out problems and specialising in a few things. We understood demolition and a lot of things like that. Mainly in

39:00 information how to get and understand information you got. Just getting information isn't anything unless you know how to deal with it. I can recall the wording of intelligence may be defined as 'an accurate knowledge of all relevant information,

39:30 the ability to appreciate its ultimate significance' so that explained it. You have got to have the information and then you have got to have the ability to appreciate what it means and that is the sort of

- thing they taught you. My job was liaising with the officers and
- 40:00 communication and various other things like that. Drawing maps of where we were and what we were doing and showing what could be done and couldn't be done. Keeping a diary of events and information that sort of thing. You knew what was going on so you could work out with your officers
- 40:30 what was happening and work on it. The only time I got back to Aitape from one of our outposts they sent out a call for a couple of prisoners and I got them back. They sent these army ducks [land/sea vehicles]. We were down the coast from Aitape and we had to get these
- 41:00 back so I took them back. We got back there to the base with them where they did the interrogation. I got to meet an American from, his name was George Mackassar and he was an American/Japanese and he was a very good speaker, warrant officer or something, but I took these
- 41:30 to him for him to interrogate them. Another funny thing happened there I took them back, I was given little information, I took them to meet in there and when I would be able to get another vehicle to get me back to my unit, I delivered these prisoners to this bloke and
- 42:00 wasn't given much information.

Tape 3

- 00:34 **I understand that there are 3 Commando units in a cavalry. Can you tell me what the function of a commando unit is?**
- Basically they are independent; they don't have to go with other units, they
- 01:00 take on jobs that require smaller units to do a certain job. In infantry they have a brigade which has three battalions and they combine and they all work into the one with the cavalry commandos, the only reason it is cavalry commandos is they because they don't have a use for the cavalry any more
- 01:30 and they did a similar sort of a job prior to the jungle warfare, but they had the ability to do very much independent work and that sort of thing. You are not depending on other units all the time to be part of your job, you are doing you are just doing it as a small unit. Even when we went as, say the 10 Squadron
- 02:00 for instance, we would be split up and would each do a separate job A, B and C troop. A troop is about 30 odd men. There would be no connection with them, maybe an occasional communication but not fighting with them or anything like that, occasionally we would be all back in the one area but very seldom. Sort of very versatile and
- 02:30 they could move quickly, do a lot of damage and get out. Move around. Hit pretty hard when they were needed to, that is why they were so different to other units.
- How did you respond to the chain of command in the 2/10th?**
- 03:00 I am not quite sure I understand that?
- How did you find, like you said you were asked to act fairly independently, how did you react to the orders that you were given?**
- You were given whatever order you were given, you tried to carry it out to the best of your
- 03:30 ability. It depended on the circumstances, sometimes things change, that is one of the things about being an independent unit, you change according to the situation. We wouldn't have to be thinking about what the people on our flank were doing, what are they doing what are these doing, it was us and we did what became necessary. That is basically the difference I think.
- 04:00 **Can you describe were there any activities that you were not allowed to do that you were prevented from doing?**
- I can't think of anything.
- From what you have just described you could go out and if the situation changed, can you describe a situation where**
- 04:30 **that happened and how you responded?**
- You were sent out to say, attack an enemy area and it didn't work out that way, you could go somewhere else and do something different, or hit them from another direction, but you wouldn't have to be concerned what other units were doing because they weren't there. There was only your little group and you were doing what you were supposed to be to the best of

05:00 your ability, whatever was the best thing to do at the time. Whether or not it followed strict orders like that because they knew you had an object to do, so you did it the best way, whatever circumstances came you would adjust to.

05:30 **It sounds a fairly responsible position and possibly quite dangerous.**

It was dangerous. I would say training and ability had a lot to do with it. We had

06:00 63 definite proven kills before we lost one man in our unit so that was fairly good. These are only ones that we were absolutely certain about, but we did have a lot of casualties later because it was a fairly long campaign and a high casualty rate in that sort of action. It doesn't matter how good

06:30 you are, certain things are going to happen all the time, you can't do the impossible.

Could you take me back to when you completed your training and you were posted to the 2/10th. Can you tell me about that time?

When we finished training at Canungra we were posted up to the Atherton Tablelands

07:00 continued with the training with the officers and NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] from this 6th Division Cavalry Regiment that we had been integrated with and it was a matter of getting to know each other and then going on with the training as a unit, two separate lots of

07:30 people. There were some ideas in what we used to call the old fellows, we were thinking some of them were nearly 30 and we thought, "Look at all these old blokes!" That changed a bit, they still often refer to us as the young fellows. Even now,

08:00 "Oh yes, you are one of the young blokes." We were also known as the Canungra Cannibals, they reckon we would eat anything that didn't get away from us. Everything we could, see if it didn't escape we would eat it. Admittedly we had pretty good appetites. When you are fit and doing so much you just have to replace the energy you use, so to do that you just eat more.

08:30 to get the energy. We used to amaze some of them, the food we could pack away. That changed in the islands a bit because you got what you were stuck with and what you could get. A few times we were pretty short on rations. The longest was about 3 days without anything to eat, that seems a long time

09:00 in those sort of circumstances, it would just catch up with you.

I understand that you were quite a good marksman.

Yes I could shoot straight. There were a lot like that. Remember I spoke to you about this young lad from Grogan

09:30 I met and came to our unit, we call him, a lot of the country people were good shots because they used to have to shoot, it was part of their job. We went onto one of these practice ranges, you had to do every so often, you had to do it to get it marked in your pay book whether you can shoot straight or otherwise. You get,

10:00 targets are set up and you get 3 rounds of practice. A lot of them are getting inner circle, one bulls eye and one inner circle and you have these 3 practice shots and they then say, would you like them to be marked on your score and then you get another 3 shots and 3 shots you get the second time are counted on your score. They would do this, they would ask people

10:30 and say you had a couple of outer rings, I won't have them I will have another 3. This Bobby Forsythe, the guy I told you about, he had 3 shots at the target, 3 bulls eyes and the officer said, "Would you like them on your score or would you like 3 more?" He said, "No don't count them I will have another go" That is how confident he was. There were plenty like that. This other friend, Wally Lutton,

11:00 he was a sniper and just excellent shots. I think you get used to it probably when you are kids shooting rabbits in the bush and it comes out later.

What skill do you think now looking back that you really needed

11:30 **in the commando unit?**

You nearly needed to have the lot, you don't want to be lacking in any. You would want to be fairly good at most things.

You have mentioned

12:00 **you were handling intelligence and maps and information, when the 2/10th received orders to go to New Guinea I am wondering how much you knew what was going on with the war at the time?**

We knew very little overall. The intelligence, my part of it was

- 12:30 purely unit. Overall maybe we knew a little more than other people, they weren't greatly concerned about that. When I took these Japanese prisoners back to headquarters and we learned a little bit more than other people would have known, but not a lot. My main thing was to make sure we got the right information, read the maps right and I produced the maps that they wanted and this sort of thing.
- 13:00 That is probably all. I used to have a lot of maps, I have one portion of one there. I did get access to things that a lot of others wouldn't, like stereo photographs there and this sort of thing so we could pin point positions and things in the jungle, stuff like that.
- 13:30 That wasn't general use that sort of thing, a few little things like that that is all.

How confident were you going off to New Guinea?

100%, you wouldn't want to be otherwise.

What made you so confident?

A lot of people would probably say because I was young and silly,

- 14:00 I don't know, you have to be confident, if you haven't got confidence how are you going to win? That is what you have got to do. I don't think that there was any that didn't know the risk and you saw cases of that, they knew well and they expected it that they were,
- 14:30 what was going to happen to them, some did, but most of us it will be somebody else not me. That is the attitude you have got, I am going to be there at the end of the day. When it happens to you a few times you get more confident all the time. It
- 15:00 can be anyone or anything or the forward scout, you understand that is the most dangerous job anyone could do in the army. Strangely enough the commandos were not all big muscly blokes, a lot of them were smaller little blokes that were tougher than the big ones. Our
- 15:30 Jackie Windsor, he was the forward scout on so many occasions we lost count, he hand to hand killed 13 Japs and never got taken and finished up with a Military Medal. He came here and died naturally years ago
- 16:00 but that just shows what can happen. How many dozens and dozen of times he would have been right up front, the first man to meet the enemy, that just shows what can happen and there is our RAP [Regimental Aid Post] and our medical aid bloke, Morrie Upton, he was
- 16:30 at the back of everything and so the day I got hit he copped it and got killed, he was a medical bloke. Forward scouts right up the front were all right, that is the fortunes of war.

We would like to come back to that story but before we

- 17:00 **do can you tell me you have showed me a couple of photographs, can you describe how your uniform distinguished you from other units?**

It didn't. The uniforms were all the same, you had to know the colour patch to know who anybody belonged to, we were all dressed the same. The only thing in uniform, that was what you only used that occasionally you didn't use it

- 17:30 up there. The distinction was the black beret with the large Australian Army badge on it and it is the only unit in the 2nd AIF that had that on it. As to whether too many other people would know that. Every
- 18:00 one thought their unit was the best one in the AIF. There was no other way unless you knew the colour patch and knew what they did. The commandos' double diamond is well recognised but we didn't get that when we formed as commando units, but they decided to mix us up with the cavalry regiments and instead of being an independent company they then became part of a regiment,
- 18:30 the colours of the regiment they went in to, that was the way it was. We never got the double diamond although we still use it as our symbol on the NSW Commando Association. The colour patch used is the original double green diamond which is the first
- 19:00 independent company, it is used Australia wide now to represent the commandos. Some would recognise, ones involved in it recognise the other one as well the round, red/green patch of the 9th Div [Division] and 6th Div they got the 3 colour where most of the other patches are only 2 coloured.
- 19:30 Maybe some people recognise that some don't. I don't think anybody went out of their way to try and make it recognisable any different.

Can you tell me about the trip to New Guinea, I believe you went on the HMAS Katoomba. Can you tell me about that trip?

- 20:00 It was fairly crowded, fairly comfortable, we almost went a few days before, but a fire broke out on the ship and they had to cancel our trip until they got things under control and repaired the damage. It was

while they were in the harbour at Townsville. It was quite uneventful once we got on it, it was just a sea trip. There was,

20:30 I suppose they had a few competitions and a few games of two up to try and fill in the day and there wasn't much training went on. I think maybe when we got nearer, when we were allowed to know where we were going they would have told us about it. I don't remember much information on the boat we probably did, but most of us were out looking out over the boat

21:00 and looking to find flying fish and all sorts of things like that. Other than that there was nothing spectacular happened on the boat, it was just the trip up there. I don't know whether there was much speculation on the trip up there, when we got there we knew we would be going into action, we didn't know where and how, just wait and see.

21:30 **I am wondering how ready you felt and your unit felt.**

We felt as ready as we could possibly get and we continued our training and pretty heavy training in the Tablelands while we were waiting for the embarkation. We didn't feel any lack of confidence or anything else, we were ready and willing

22:00 that is how I felt and that is how I felt others felt.

What happened when you got to New Guinea?

In what respect?

Where did you go?

We landed at Aitape which was still under control by the American Army but they had a lot of units there and we had a

22:30 period on there getting used to the island and the living conditions and this sort of thing. We didn't do much training there, there wasn't a great deal of facility, we just got ready and got organised to move down the track and start making contact which we did. I think the first place we went to

23:00 was Babiang that was one of the main places we got stuck into. We moved on then to various places down to the Danmap River. Then there was the Danmap flood was the big event up there, that was quite a surprise.

23:30 We were making contact with the enemy on various patrols and we got 63 of them before old Normie got shot. Norm Labrum he was one the oldies. Our first one was accidental, a bloke called O'Brien

24:00 went for a swim and went out at the end of the jetty at Aitape it was only shallow and he broke his neck and died. That sort of thing used to happen occasionally. It was basically patrol contact and short contact of the enemy before we started to move inland and go down to, we went down to the

24:30 Babiang and we moved them back from the coast a bit and we got settled in there and then we got down to the Danmap River which was a move, but before we moved up into the mountains up into the Torricelli Ranges that is where we went, out towards the Sepik River, we went inland up over the Torricellis we went down

25:00 camped at the base camp at the Danmap. There were a lot of units there. There was some infantry and gunners and various other people and a particular troop had been given orders to go, to leave that night, to go up into the mountains and we left in the afternoon

25:30 and it started to rain and tropical rain is pretty heavy at times. Normally it goes for an hour or half hour and stops. This time it didn't stop and we just pushing up and up into the hills and the rain was getting, it seemed to be just as heavy the whole time and we thought we have got to stop the night.

26:00 The place we had to go to, we had better camp for the night and we are watching the rain and the river rising as we are going up, so we decided we would move up from the river. We must have been, we found a ledge, it was fairly steep on each side of the river and we climbed up about 60 or 50 feet above the river level and there was a little ledge,

26:30 I don't know how wide it was, maybe it was a short 20 feet wide or something like that. It had a path going along it, the natives used to use and it flattened out and went up again. We set ourselves up there and we used to have these two man tents or single man tent that you would use and swing this hammock sort of thing and try and

27:00 sleep and as there were paths and we were in enemy territory we booby trapped the path on either end and settled down for the night. About 1 o'clock in the morning the booby traps went off, a condensed milk tin with a grenade in it, and it bumped it and it fell out and it went off. We all

27:30 jumped out quick, you are pretty alert and it doesn't take you long to get into action and sort of jumped up and jumped our feet into water. Suddenly realised what had happened, there was no Japs coming but something had upset the booby traps, it was water. We hollered out to each other to get up and start moving up the hill

- 28:00 from about 60 feet below us up to where we were and by the time we could grab our gear and get our things together it was up to our waist. We went up the hill probably a couple of hundred yards, certain enough to stop there for the night. We just had to sit there and wait for daylight. We didn't lose anyone there
- 28:30 but where the two rivers met, the Danmap and the Danmul and they met there if you could imagine these two jungle streams meeting at this point, it just caught these infantry men and machine gunners and blokes, we had left a base back there and it just caught them by surprise, it came down and
- 29:00 probably 20 or 30 feet in a couple of minutes. Washed the whole camps out. There was blokes up the top of palm trees and I don't know how many, but a lot drowned. People escaped in various ways and several of them we picked up the next day, they sent the army ducks out, one of our blokes Joey Mehans, was 3 miles out to sea
- 29:30 still hanging onto something, a lot of blokes didn't make it because they couldn't find anything decent to hang onto. That was what happened there. We continued on the next day, we were stuck there for a while, we couldn't go any further because we didn't have any food with us we were supposed to get it air dropped to us when we got up to the place we were going to and
- 30:00 we stopped that for some reason or other and we didn't go any further until they sent a patrol up about 3 days later with food for us and we got that so we could go on to where we were going to, because there was no food where we were going and we had to take full rations with us and we didn't have any to take, so they thought it would be better for us to stay where we were on this hillside rather than go up there with nothing and then have to send some up
- 30:30 all the way up and they might not be able to get the food drops in which they used to do. Half the time you would have to fight the Japs for the food, they liked it too. If they were a bit off course, well the enemy, they would get it. There were a few squabbles over that sort of thing too. We finally got to our destination and undertook our campaign and did what we had to do.
- 31:00 **Now you are in the Torricelli Ranges that is where you are setting the booby traps.**
- Not quite, we were going the villages we had to go to. We were at a little village called Koalagin[?] and we were at a lot of the other little villages.
- 31:30 We were sent up there and we were C troop and B troop were sent to another area below us we could see where they were but we could really see each other from there but it was a pretty heavily held area
- 32:00 and we had to clean them out. We used to do patrols into their territory and they would attack us and that sort of thing and it was a bit of a scrap for quite awhile.

How could you estimate where your enemy was and what their condition was?

Their conditions weren't good I must say,

- 32:30 because they had been there a long time without reasonable supplies because they were cut off. There were quite a lot of them and they were still around and still in a fighting mood. They would attack when they could, when they thought they could take us by surprise or try and overrun us, that sort of thing.
- 33:00 they always failed fortunately. That went on for quite a while there. We were pretty short of food but we used to get air drops and the natives who, most of them were on our side, would help us if they could and the only thing you had to be cautious of was
- 33:30 that they weren't on the side of the Japanese too, and not all of them were. There were far less on the Japanese side, I don't know why some of them were, because the Japanese hadn't treated them very well either. We consequently would rely on them for a lot of things. Particularly water carriers, they used to bring us water if there wasn't rain, you just had to, but mostly you could catch something if you,
- 34:00 because it used to rain fairly regularly but not always and sometimes you got short of water they would bring up these bamboo poles full of water. The way we used to do it and you would go out to the edge of the jungle and put up your hands and holler, "Fellow water boy he come!" at the top of your voice and you would hear a response
- 34:30 from down the bottom somewhere and a couple of them would come up with some water. We used to try and give them something now and again and occasionally we could give them some bully beef and something like that which was appreciated. Mostly we didn't have anything to give them but they were pretty good, they would bring us whatever they could in the line of food. As I say,
- 35:00 the air drops used to help us.

You mentioned that your purpose was to flush out the Japanese when on those patrols, how successful were you in doing that?

We had a lot of skirmishes but we finally got them all.

Can you describe a typical patrol?

- 35:30 A lot of the times we knew where we were going and the Japanese camp and we would go there with the intention of wiping it out. You would do that. We had small mortars and guns and they had similar things, grenades and grenade launchers and that sort of thing. You just,
- 36:00 what you thought was the best thing to do and you would attack it from a different point. That was probably one of my jobs, I used to draw the maps of the things we knew of, so that things could be checked out and people wouldn't go down the wrong path and also for giving indications if we got air strikes and that sort of thing.
- 36:30 Where we could indicate where the plane should strafe and bomb. Other times they were just fighting patrols and you just went out and shot them up or you got shot up. Often mostly it was with an object in mind, a certain village and mostly when the
- 37:00 Japanese were in the village the natives weren't, so you didn't have to worry about shooting innocent natives if there was any of the natives in there, they were the Japanese friends. I might mention if you saw a Japanese patrol with a native leading, the first one you would shoot would be the native. That was the best thing to do then.
- 37:30 In other words he was a traitor and more dangerous than the Japanese. It was just a continuation of that sort of thing until we finally had none of them left. You were never sure how many you killed each time,
- 38:00 they used to drag their dead or wounded away, that is when they attacked us I mean, and we used to find them in the huts and bodies, you didn't want to count, we didn't have time to do that sort of thing.
- 38:30 I used to have to give some indication of how many we had killed to send back for the information, it was never real accurate because you couldn't tell for certain.

I am wondering how you coped with being frightened?

- 39:00 I don't know that I was frightened, it was something that you just, I don't think you are frightened, you are cautious, you have to be very careful but if you were frightened you would be useless. People have got different reactions. I will tell you one of our,
- 39:30 talk about not being frightened. Say we had an enemy attack and it had been for half an hour or something like that and they finally stop shooting and you would wonder whether they had withdrawn or just playing a game and you would have to be very careful for a while. Arnold Holdsworth our,
- 40:00 after one of the attacks I sort of saw him and wondering if we could get on or do something and he just stood up and said, "It is all right, they haven't shot me they can't be here." He wasn't frightened, that sort of thing. A funny little fellow, I don't know if he was frightened. It didn't matter what happened, he wanted to throw a grenade.
- 40:30 He used heave a grenade if he thought he heard them, it might have been a possum in the bush and you have got to check it out first, but he would want to throw a grenade. You can't be doing that all night. The officer put me in the trench with him one night just to calm him down, to get him used to the fact that you could have things happen without
- 41:00 them being an enemy attack. You would be still about one o'clock in the morning but you wouldn't want to be throwing grenades and shooting then, because a possum might have fallen out of a tree, but that often happened. I know it sounds silly that you should be cautious, but that is still wasting ammunition and doing something unnecessary.
- 41:30 You didn't open up, let fly, just for the sake of doing it unless you had a target and you knew you should be in the right direction, that was a waste of ammo. Blokes with their sense of humour. There are a lot of fireflies around that area and at night they are cruising around in the trees and around your camp and
- 42:00 you get quite used to them.

Tape 4

00:33 You were telling us about the fireflies.

The fireflies, it is quite normal to see them buzzing around the camp and they are nice to watch but we had this attack shortly after dark one night and they were using tracer bullets and one of the fellows, Mo Martin was his name, we used to call him Mo.

- 01:00 He had a little mo [moustache], I don't know his real name, he said, "Gee those fireflies are moving tonight aren't they?" I thought it was good for a bloke to have a good sense of humour. Like when Arnold stood up and said they must be gone they haven't shot me.

01:30 You can't lose your sense of humour, you have just got to keep it up.

Can you tell me about arriving in New Guinea at Aitape, if you could tell me about the very first patrol you went on?

Not really I can't,

02:00 they were about all the same.

The first contact you had with the Japanese?

I don't even know that I could pin point that, it just happened so many times and so often that it was part of the scene all the time. I don't think I could specifically sort of say

02:30 that, you just made contact, you went to ground, you had a scrap [fight], you either won it or had to get out, there was little else. That was more or less the situation the whole time. The only difference was when you were dug in like we were in

03:00 this place like Koalagin that was our base, the only difference you were being attacked from them instead of you out attacking their villages. That was basically the difference we were in contact with them from Babiang onwards. Not all the time. After we came out of the Torricellis

03:30 when we had done the job there we moved back to Karawop on the coast there and there was still some in that area because that was getting down to Wewak and that is where we made the final thrust down there but there was still contact every so often. I don't know that anything was specifically different. It was with some but I don't know,

04:00 a corporal we had, McPhee, what you can't understand sometimes, but he didn't do it every time, but he was killed on this patrol and normally you would send their closest things back to relatives and back to headquarters, we came and went into his little tent and

04:30 he had all his personal gear stacked on his bed with the things that you needed on top, I hadn't noticed that he did that every time he went out, whether he had a premonition that day I don't know, but that is how it was, it was just unbelievable to go there. When someone was killed you would get their personal items and send them back to their people and the necessary

05:00 papers for the army, their passbooks and things like that and they were all there ready. It was just one of the strange things. Another one is something Keith Noakes he just said, "If I get

05:30 clobbered I hope I get it through the head." and that is what happened not long after. You wonder about things like that, or is it a real strange coincidence? Other than that it is so routine after awhile, it is just what is happening, it is just happening.

06:00 You have your patrols and you do this and you do that and you get a break sometimes and you got to the coast and then you go back into the mountains again. I think you just accept what is happening.

Apart from gathering up their belongings as a commando unit what would you do with casualties and...

You would try and get them back to hospital

06:30 you didn't always have that at Babiang we had the operating theatre was another tent. I know that because I am always inquisitive and I can remember this from a time when I was a kid in Temora hospital

07:00 I spent all day round the back of the theatre, there was a hole, somebody scratched some of the paint off the windows and I could watch the operations, I thought that was good but also when we were at, they had this tent set up to do emergency work in, and not all the time but I just happened to be there and watched them do an operation,

07:30 it was one of our officers got grenade fragments in his stomach. I wasn't squeamish but some of the things the chaps did annoyed me, I think it upset a lot of other people too, when you know you have killed a few of them and you have got to withdraw and you would come back and you would go back the next

08:00 day and they would not have dragged their mates away and buried them, they would have come back and cut a few steaks off their backsides and in a couple of cases they would split their skulls open and they would use their brains. They were starving or pretty close to starving, there wasn't that much food around, we didn't like to let them get much,

08:30 the natives weren't giving them any but cutting their own mates up and eating them, they would do all that. If we had an abandoned man which you seldom did, it was sometimes better to leave a couple there than all get killed, so you would have to withdraw and you would go back and they would have hacked into them too. We didn't like that very much.

- 09:00 We knew that was the case and that was it. A couple of odd things we found, I remember this was up in the Torricellis, this was up in the Sepik [River] where the mud men, I don't know whether it was theirs or the Japanese but we found a whole hut full of skulls
- 09:30 but it could have been the Sepik mud men that put them there, I couldn't think that the Japs would have done it because I couldn't see what point there would have been, they did some yukky things but I think it must have been from the tribes.

Were they native skulls?

Didn't know the difference, they looked the same to me. They were just skulls, you would see plenty of them. If I had known,

- 10:00 if I had been an anthropologist I would have known what their nose shape would have looked like, what the space for the nose was or the eye bulges but I didn't know and they were just a heap of skulls and we didn't have time to worry about them, we had too many other things to do than play around with them.

What could you do when Australians in your unit had been killed?

You would bury them

- 10:30 that is all you could do. A bloke that tells anyone you didn't necessarily have anyone with you specialising with religion or anything, you would just dig a hole and bury him. The same as we would do with the Japs, we would pick up round the camp after
- 11:00 an attack, you couldn't do anything else. If we had to evacuate somebody down to the coast, the native carriers would do that, the fuzzy wuzzie angels. We never did it ourselves and we didn't have anyone who could do it, we didn't have any RAPs,
- 11:30 ambulance people with us, we were just totally isolated and we would have a RAP man and not necessarily a doctor, he might have had a little bit of training, initially they would have had some training but you didn't have too many doctors with you or qualified nurses or anything.
- 12:00 You did the best you could with what you had. If they were bad enough you would try to get them back to base or back down to the coast. We had what we needed, a cook, Tubby Forbes was our cook. We had two, Tubby and Darkie,
- 12:30 they did very well with what they could get. They had a job on their hands, mostly it was only dry rations but in the air drops, you wouldn't get any luxuries in that. They used to try and get a bit of tea into you occasionally and something to
- 13:00 a few matches and things and that sort of things. They did the best they could.

Did you know anything about jungle food or anything you could eat to survive on?

Yes. We would eat the fruit if it was there to eat. There was very little there to eat, there was taro which is a sweet potato thing, but it was only normally grown where there was an established

- 13:30 village, a garden area and that sort of thing. Coconuts you could eat that, green coconut that is all right to eat but there is little or nothing. There was no banana trees or pineapples and things growing there, there were a few down on the coast further down towards Madang
- 14:00 not where we were. There was sac sac swamps, sago swamps and you have got to know what you are doing to get the sago out of the trees, they are palms. There are processes to get the sap out of the palm then try it and do something with it, so very rarely we could do anything with that. I remember once we had a real treat there
- 14:30 we shot this funny looking bird, it was like a toucan, half way between a toucan and a pelican, and we cooked that and it was tough as an elephant, it wasn't much good, I think we got some sort of soup off it. We thought we were in for a real treat, other than that there was bully beef and biscuits, dog
- 15:00 biscuits we called them. I don't think dogs would eat them. The bully was all right we all liked that.

You mentioned the food drops before. Was it dangerous for the food drops, would it often cause trouble, would the Japanese know where you were?

They knew where we were so it didn't matter. It was just a matter of

- 15:30 getting it before they woke up what was going on, that they didn't drop it closer to them than us that sort of thing. They couldn't drop it on your camp or they would kill too many people and smash the place up but they did the best they could, it was reasonable. That was one of the things when we went up there, remember I said we did this forced marching
- 16:00 and got caught in the rain, we had nothing with us, what happened there we had packed all our gear and it was sent down to the airfield to be dropped to us when we got to this camp, we didn't have anything with us, we were doing this forced march and they were going to air drop to us but this flood

changed everything. Instead of being up where we were going where they were going to do the air drop

16:30 we weren't there so they couldn't drop our stuff there when we weren't there because the Nips would have soon found out where it was and got it. It was just the way it happened.

How often would you be days without food?

Not very often, just occasionally you got short, about 3 days was the longest that was that time before they got a patrol through with food an infantry patrol got some

17:00 food. That tasted pretty good even if you didn't like bully, you liked it then. That was probably the longest and we were probably short of food most of the time, but you get hungry. I think the oddest thing that happened about food, I think might have been when we came back from there and we

17:30 thought we would get back down to the coast again and probably get better supplies, somehow they got this crate of eggs and we didn't have a skerrick of salt and we were all looking forward to having a fresh egg. Have you ever eaten eggs without salt and pepper, even

18:00 though you are really looking forward to it they don't taste very nice? It might be all right for some people but a lot of us didn't think very much of it. I wanted to tell you about when I was doing the scrounging job, I took these prisoners back to Aitape

18:30 having that opportunity I thought, "This is great, I will get round and get a bit of stuff." I didn't smoke but nearly everyone did and they would like some cigarettes and tobacco or some little luxuries or whatever we might be able to scrounge. I got back with these prisoners, reported in and did what I had to and I wasn't given any more information, just that it would be about 10 o'clock next morning

19:00 they would get me another army duck to take me back to my unit. I said, "This is an opportunity." and there were a couple of air force stations in the Aitape area, I will hit them, they will have some decent food, because they were looked after a bit better than the army were normally. I went out and I got round the place

19:30 and finished up staying at one of the air force places that night and got all the stuff I could get, matches, sweet biscuits and lollies, tobacco and cigarette papers and cigarettes and all sorts of things I put them in my pack and filled them up with all the goodies I could scrounge round the place.

20:00 I went to the army camp about 9 o'clock the next morning to wait for this duck to take me back to find out I was on a charge of AWL [absent without leave]. I had to go up to the senior officer and said, "What is going on here, I wasn't given any accommodation or anything?"

20:30 he realised they hadn't done anything, he hadn't told me about where I was to stay or what I was to do, when they did think about it later they couldn't find me so they put me on an AWL charge, he dropped it. I thought that was funny, being charged with AWL in New Guinea at night. I get in this duck,

21:00 the driver is a Negro bloke and we had to wait for a while for something and he is sitting there and he is showing me, he asked me, we must have been talking about firearms or something, and he had this big 45 strapped on his hip and I was talking to him about that and he said, "Would you like to have a shot with it?" I said, "Sure." We go down on the beach

21:30 and where we are going to do no harm to anybody so I was going to have a shot with it. Oh boy, it nearly pushed me back, I didn't realise how much they would kick, we didn't have Colts or 45's. We had used most other weapons but not 45's, it gave me a bit of a surprise when I fired this thing. It is like somebody kicking you in the fist

22:00 they were used to them, they used to use two hands, cowboys, bang, boom, nearly pushed me back to the wall. That was the start of it, we eventually got in this duck thing and I took my pack off and I was always taught never let your weapon away from yourself and I had it

22:30 I had my arm through the sling and it over my shoulder and about half way down we had to cross a river, it looked a bit rough for them so we had to go out to sea and go round and as we got half way out the big surf came and we sunk. I got to shore with my rifle but all my goodies

23:00 had gone down with the machine out to sea. Disappointed, I had this great heap of things to distribute to our fellows when we got back and I had nothing. That was the sad story about a hard try, I didn't get anywhere.

How did you find the Americans and

23:30 **the contact you had with them?**

We used to get on all right with them, we didn't have much, we only just saw one or two back at Aitape when we were there and it wasn't that often, it was the sort of a base with army headquarters and the American hospital and the American Army headquarters. I got to know the Americans in the

24:00 hospital, I finished up getting what they call coral ear, diving straight into the water I didn't worry about anything. Apparently if you are in the coral you can get sort of a disease off the coral and does it hurt. I

can remember I was in our own sort of

24:30 stage station for a while and they couldn't do anything for it and they were doing what they thought was right and they finished up sending me to the American hospital. I didn't have any sleep for about 4 days. It is impossible, it is like someone having a hammer inside your ears banging all the time, your pulse was apparently doing that.

25:00 That was painful but they finally they had a cure and I met a few of the orderlies in the hospital and a few blokes. I was surprised there, it was nice to get their food but I couldn't quite understand it, this tray of food came in for my lunch. It has got

25:30 meat and vegetables and peaches and something else all in together. That is how they used to eat it, they wouldn't have their canned peaches after their meat and vegies they would put it all on the one. That was the custom but that is how they served it in hospital and they said that is how they eat it. It was pretty good to get it.

26:00 That was that lot and I got out and got back to where I was going again.

Did you have much to do with Americans while you were on patrols or operations?

No. Nowhere. They had finished when we got there, they didn't go out again, when we were there we took over totally from the whole area. There was only their base headquarters and a few of them there but they didn't go out of there

26:30 they didn't leave camp at all. They were still doing training and various things. They had these army ducks and few different things like that we didn't have they used to help us with occasionally.

You mentioned taking the Japanese prisoners down. I have heard from some of the

27:00 **guys that it was very hard to find prisoners for transport because people just wouldn't take them.**

They couldn't. If we were told to take prisoners we got some because it was necessary, other than that you are just killing each other from one side of the creek to the other, or across a ridge or something, there is no prisoners in that bit.

27:30 You are either dead or alive. If they were wounded and badly wounded and not dead we couldn't do anything for them because we didn't have anyone to treat our own people, so you weren't going to try and take wounded Japanese back to your camp, there weren't any survivors, you were either

28:00 survivors and disappeared or they were just dead.

I have read that not only were the Japanese obviously the enemy but there was a hatred towards the Japanese a lot of the time.

We certainly didn't think much of them. I guess we had heard about their exploits where they had been in China and the things they had done

28:30 and didn't think they had much ethics in any direction whatsoever. You are more or less taught to hate them; I suppose that helps in a lot of way. If you didn't, once you started feeling sorry for them you would finish up being the casualty yourself.

29:00 I don't know that it made any difference except to dislike or hating them, you still had to kill them otherwise they killed you, so it was not much difference how you felt about it and that it was just

29:30 survival, you did what you had to do to survive. Say we didn't ill treat them when they were prisoners, we were always, right from the start that they had rights, prisoners of war, and you were to treat them fairly, that is what we always did. I

30:00 know they didn't do that to a lot of ours. I don't think we knew about it at the time, about that we had heard about how they had fought in China and they weren't very nice, they did a lot of things we wouldn't think of doing ,but we heard they were pretty nasty types and you just got the feeling of what must have been hatred

30:30 more than just dislike, it takes you a long time to lose it then. I couldn't even understand how after the war anyone could even touch or look at anything that came from Japan. Not long after they started bringing in all these Honda cars and motorbikes and

31:00 stuff made in Japan and I thought, "How could you touch it even?" a different attitude I suppose, but it changed over the period too. I sort of got that out of my system, I have even had Japanese students in my home. I belong to Rotary and we do

31:30 a lot of that sort of thing. I suppose that gets it out of your system. It is amazing even sometimes, even hearing Japanese voices and even seeing their flag, it still gets you like that straight away, that reflex is still there.

- 32:00 I am afraid I never got over the whole thing; I have got it under control. Talking about instinct and that sort of thing and it is amazing how long that stays with you. The funny thing about that is when I said
- 32:30 there was a few Americans back at this camp and we came, occasionally you would get back there, you would go back to headquarters at Aitape just once in a while you would be there for something. One of the times we had been out for quite awhile and we went back there, I don't know what we were doing but we lined up for breakfast as you always do with your army,
- 33:00 file past where they are dishing out the food and you get your food. We all lined up this morning this must have been the first morning we got back and the Americans still had this firing range just close handy to the camp, whether we knew about it and forgotten about it I don't know, here we are lined up in this queue for breakfast and they
- 33:30 opened up in this firing range. You could tell who had been in the jungle, they were on the ground about 10 feet away except the blokes who had not been out anywhere. You would see these blokes who had just come back from the jungle, I reckon within half a second they were on the ground looking to see where it came from. We didn't have any weapons with us so
- 34:00 we couldn't do anything but you still go to ground and take cover, just total instinct. You are like that for a long time even after you have been back for quite awhile, you probably wouldn't do that but if you know something was going to happen but we didn't know, it was just unbelievable to see this line of blokes just zap like
- 34:30 that. That is your instinct and that is what you had to do and if you didn't do that you were a target or a sitting duck as they call it. That is one of the things.

You were talking before about the

- 35:00 **Japanese and coming home. How did you go from not wanting to touch anything Japanese to letting Japanese students in your home? What could you do to break it down?**
- I suppose you, first of all you start thinking that nobody should touch anything Japanese, I don't really know how
- 35:30 I did, but just slowly it sort of broke down and I forcibly made myself accept these Japanese students to do it and I didn't feel any hatred towards them at all. It wasn't them who were up there, the people we were up against.
- 36:00 I know a lot of them had terrible times in the war too but that wasn't the point, I think it just took a long time, just slowly, you can't do that overnight no matter how you do it, it just took a while. Your instinct and things like that, I
- 36:30 can point to a case of that and this is quite a while after I was discharged, we were in Temora and I bought this business at Ungarie, I can remember one night I just went to sleep, I slept on a verandah on a bed out in the open verandah and apparently
- 37:00 I suddenly woke up and nearly grabbed for my weapon and heard some breathing, just breathing that shouldn't have been there and it was a stray dog that had come in on the end of the verandah and I could hear it, it was amazing, I just
- 37:30 heard it and knew it was wrong and just jumped up ready to shoot it, that is your instincts. I gradually got out of that and I would sleep right through but I think you do have a lot of times when you wake up, not really nightmares.
- 38:00 You suddenly, you are trying to work out what is going on something that shouldn't be and it ought not to be there but it is, you have still got the instinct there to find out quickly and work out what is going on, just nature's way of doing it.
- 38:30 **Were there other times that you really surprised yourself, I guess after you have come home your senses were still attuned?**
- Yes I don't think I expected it but it didn't concern me, it takes a long time to get out of your system and I really don't know when it gets entirely out of your
- 39:00 system I suppose it is there, I don't think I was trying to work out that sort of thing, how long it took or didn't take, I started to get on with things.

Are there ever times now that it still happens that you get twinges?

No I don't think so.

- 39:30 I can't recall anything. Whether I can still sometimes go like that when I hear something that isn't normal but whether that is from that or whether it is the natural thing to do.

What were the things when you came home that would trigger it?

Just something like that,

- 40:00 just the nearly asleep and hear this breathing that shouldn't have been there and just suddenly spring up and almost automatically grab for a weapon or something that sort of thing. I would say sure if you heard anything like a gunshot that would be a long time.
- 40:30 Explosions or gunshots alerted you and put you on the alert very quickly, that would be a long time for that. I don't still have that, but I don't think that is unnatural a lot of people do. I don't know whether I would be that way if I hadn't been in the army.

Tape 5

- 00:33 **I would like to start off by asking you if you could tell me about your hospital trip that you mentioned?**

It was a bit unusual in a couple of ways, I had various things, malaria was one of them and some skin infection that you pick up in the tropics was pretty severe

- 01:00 and I had to be sent down to Lae hospital and they cured it down there. I cured the skin rash and while I was down there because I was getting a bit of acne on my face and they decided the best way to cure that was to pull each whisker out individually, which they did and it was quite a
- 01:30 job. That is not the unusual part, the thing was that I just happened to be walking across from one building in the hospital to another and I ran into my elder brother who was down there from Moratai, that was a pretty rare chance to meet somebody like that. I didn't even know where he was
- 02:00 and he didn't know where I was and he happened to be in Lae hospital which was miles from where we were stationed on this day, I thought that was a rare and unusual thing to happen. The other thing was that I went across and I had to report into the orderly room for information and the chap there, the duty officer, started asking questions,
- 02:30 "What unit, what were you doing and how old?" and I said, "21." and I said, "Today." he said, "Congratulations." that is about the only one person that knew about it, that I had my 21st birthday in hospital. These sort of things happen and I thought it was just
- 03:00 good. Eventually I was discharged from Lae and I got a lift back to Aitape and on the way back I decided to get a few things and I was going to drop a few things off the unit, I think they might have been at Karawop at the time, I told the pilot to go low over Karawop and I dropped some stuff down to our army camp, which was also a bit unusual.
- 03:30 They used to fly the old DC3s, the Dakotas, and the door was open on the side and you could throw things in and out of that and he decided that would be OK and we tossed this stuff out of the plane onto the ground in the camp and they got it I found out later when I got back.
- 04:00 **I am interested to hear that your brother was also in the service. Did you know at the time which battalion he was with?**

He wasn't in a battalion, he was with Corps Sigs, Corps Signalman, they are there with anybody, anytime he wasn't with any division or unit just the corps which means the army

- 04:30 and they were just sent individually wherever they wanted to send them. I wouldn't know where he was and he wouldn't know where I was. They didn't tell you those sort of things.

It is a very unfortunate place to be spending your 21st birthday in hospital in the middle of a war.

I suppose it was. It was good to have it, a lot of them didn't get there.

- 05:00 I suppose that was a big advantage.

Can you tell me about Atebrin and the Atebrin parades?

We used to have the Atebrin parade every day, you used to stick your tongue out and they dropped the tablet on your tongue. I don't think there were too many who wouldn't take it any way, because malaria was

- 05:30 not very nice and if there was any way to stop it, you would do it. Even with Atebrin you would contract malaria at some times. It was good to a certain degree, maybe if you got overloaded with the stuff you would beat the Atebrin, and it used to make you a pale yellow colour, not quite the same colour as the tablet
- 06:00 but close to it. You used to get a yellowish tan in the tropics, but it would have been bad not to have it. Atebrin parade was when you were in headquarters, but once you were out on your own you had to look

after yourself.

06:30 That was only a ceremonial way of doing it but once you were independent on your own you took it for your own good and hoped you didn't forget it. It was like the quinine you used to have to take, the cure it was worse than the Atebrin, a nasty taste but quinine is very bitter, it is

07:00 not easy to take.

What did you know of malaria before you got it?

We were probably all told about it and what it could do to you and how it made you feel. I don't think you understood that until you got it because you get malaria, you wonder how sick you can be without dying. That is the feeling

07:30 It is an odd sort of thing because when you get it one day you feel terrible and the next day you are right, I am over it I am not getting it, and then the next day you were sicker than the first day and then the fourth day, it is going to come back on you the following day and that is one of the things it used to do. It was pretty easy to tell when you had

08:00 it if you got it again. I don't know how many times I had it. Most people had it quite a few. I had it several times when I got home but they wouldn't believe that for the first few years. Once you have had it you know when you have got it and they used to tell you had the bad flu or you can't have malaria, there is no malaria down here.

08:30 It lived inside you and they didn't know that you could get re-occurrences of it. They were pretty hard to convince and they wouldn't believe it, although they did for the six months they would believe it, but after that they reckon you are bunging something on and you got something and you thought it was malaria years later they found out that it was. It must have taken a few people to convince them

09:00 and take some proper tests and find out that it was. That went on for many years. I had another dose of it later, there are a few different types of malaria and I went over to the Solomon Islands with Rotary doing work over there and the doctor that I had the local GP [general practitioner]

09:30 decided that the tablets I had been given the script for weren't the right ones and he gave me some other ones, "They are not the ones you want, you need these." The ones I took over weren't any good he said, but the ones that were prescribed for me were right which he didn't give me and I went over there and I finished up with malaria.

10:00 I don't know whether I still have any in me or not.

When you did get malaria and when you went to hospital how did you find the nurses?

The nurses were all right I never had any complaints about anything. It was luxury

10:30 in hospital to what it is out in the jungle I can't see how you could complain much. The nurses were great they did a pretty good job.

What type of other injuries did you get from being in the jungle?

11:00 You can get a lot of tropical ulcer that is not hard to get. If you get a graze or something and sweat or perspiration in it, it won't heal and it gradually gets worse. You have to get treatment for it they can be fairly bad. Just about everyone got those at some time or other.

11:30 Various things you could get, not everyone got everything but most people got something most of the time. It was just part of living in the jungle under fairly primitive conditions a lot of the time.

What about things like snake bites?

There weren't very many deadly snakes up there in New Guinea, they are fairly moderate snakes

12:00 there are few of them around, not a lot. One story about snakes, one of our chaps was called Scotty Blackwood because he was a Scotsman, he came out here as a young child, of course everybody used to have a go at him because he still spoke like any Scotsman, Scottish.

12:30 Everybody used to try and have a bit of a shot at him and he was only, I don't know how much before the war he came out here but he still wasn't quite used to the Australian ways and he really got stirred up with us because he got a snake in his trench or something and he

13:00 called out to Bill, "What do I do, how do I know it is." The Australian sense of humour, he said, "Are they deadly or not?" and one of the blokes said, "You will know if it bit you." and he said, "How?"

13:30 "Well if you live it is not deadly and if it is deadly you will be dead in half an hour." That really got him up, he could not understand how people could say things like that. He went through the war all right.

14:00 The closest encounter I had I was on sentry duty one night and when you are on sentry you don't go making noises and I was laying back on a bank and with the Owen gun in my lap and it was fairly dark, I

was watching the track and I sort of heard something and I looked down and here is a snake coming up over me

14:30 the best thing to do is not move, so I just stayed as I was and he slid straight over the top and he just kept going. That was a close encounter with him but he was just looking for something to eat and I just happened to be in the road. I knew if I didn't move or anything he was going to worry about me so I just let him go over. I thought that was pretty close

15:00 I didn't have any worries. I guess I would have had to find out like Scotty if it bit me to get some treatment for it.

Because we have been talking about injuries and what can go wrong, can you tell me what happened when you got shot yourself?

15:30 To me?

Where were you and what was the patrol doing?

We went up to meet the Japanese in a village and there were bullets going everywhere at times like that and I could see them digging up the dirt and that sort of thing and at least one went through me and I

16:00 got a couple in my haversack which I had on my back because it got the stuff knocked out of it. I got back to the RAP bloke and the poor bugger copped it in the chest so he wasn't able to do anything. Somebody else put a field dressing and put it on me

16:30 and that is all you could do. I just stayed there and kept on going. I heal up quick so it doesn't matter. I don't think you would even find a scar there. I have always been like that, I just heal up straight away and it is pretty handy.

17:00 **What did it feel like, how did you react?**

Just like I was supposed to I kept still and to see what was going on. I realised it couldn't have been bad because I was still able to move. When the skirmish was over I went back and got a bit of a

17:30 dressing on it.

This might seem like a crazy question. I am thinking about the guy who was frightened of the snake. How would you know that you were shot?

You can feel it, there is not much doubt about that. If you have a slug through you, you know that you have got it but

18:00 you don't really know how bad it is or anything like that, I was just extremely grateful it didn't do any damage, a quarter of an inch further it would have gone through my spine. That is just the luck of the draw. The funny part of it I don't know how the shirt could have been on me because it had

18:30 a hole in the shirt there and another one there. If you put the shirt back on me it would have had a hole in the middle of me. It went in there. I must have had my shirt scrunched up. I kept that shirt for a long time but it eventually went like everything else. The haversack had holes in it

19:00 and the rations, a tin of bully beef had a hole through it and I threw it away and got chastised by somebody after that for throwing it away, the boongs [natives] would have loved that even though it had a bullet hole in it. I threw it and other things had holes in the,

19:30 a couple must have gone close.

You mentioned that there was bullets flying everywhere and then you copped one yourself. What did you do, did you fall back to the RAP?

No not until we quietened down and then I

20:00 went back to see what was happening, that is when I saw the others had been hit. With action going on like that you don't know where individuals are and what has happened to them, you find out later. Especially in the jungle and places like that, it might be all right in the open fields but it is not like that in

20:30 the jungle. You find out later.

How much blood loss did you suffer?

Not much apparently. Remember I said I split my knee open from there to there and like right down there was a great gap with just the

21:00 bones poking out and I hardly bled on that. I have always been like that which is probably good. I certainly wasn't worried about loss of blood or anything like that.

It sound like a fairly tight spot you were in, what happened and how did you get out of there?

I think

21:30 we got all the Japs and probably burnt the hut or village down so they couldn't get in it again. You didn't have time to worry about things like that. You would probably count them so

22:00 you could send a report back of how many Japs you have got.

Where did you go for treatment to the wound?

That was it. I would have had to gone back to the coast and there was no one going there and there was no way of getting there so I just, I suppose they looked at it again and checked it and

22:30 there was no problem. They probably got Morrie Upton back but he died not long after.

Do you recall having the bullet taken out of you?

No it went through.

23:00 **Where did you get hit?**

Just there through there and out there, only through the muscles and meat and it didn't do any damage. You don't know exactly what you get sometimes, I had an x-ray once up there (throat) and there was a lump of shrapnel there and it was pretty tense at the time there was a lot going on

23:30 and you don't know what has happened. I think I still have it in, I didn't get it taken out when they took the x-ray they wondered what it could be and worked it out it was a small bit of shrapnel.

24:00 It stung a bit on the way in but you get hurt and stung all the time in the jungle. I heal up straight away, I might have wiped some blood off and said, "I wonder what that was?" it would have healed up and that is it.

24:30 Lucky all that it was.

That was a very lucky escape that you had.

My brother said I thought that he had a live grenade shot off his belt, we used to carry grenades like that from the

25:00 belt he had one shot off and it didn't explode. Had that happened, if it happened like normal they were ready to throw and they have got the detonators and that just happened normally, a shot like that would send it off

25:30 lucky it wasn't, I don't know whether we used to call him Lucky before or after that but it was a good name for him. There were a lot of people had lucky escapes and near misses there were plenty of those.

On the subject of being lucky I am wondering if you had a lucky charm.

26:00 No didn't believe in those things.

Perhaps

26:30 **when you got shot was that before the Dog Bay landing?**

Yes that was in the Torricellis up near the village in Nilu that you may hear about in other reports that was a long time before.

27:00 **I am wondering if you were able to get any time off when you got shot?**

No, you don't get points or time off you just keep going. If you are hit bad enough you get time off in hospital.

27:30 **I am wondering if you could tell me a bit about the kind of spirit that you needed because from your stories there is a bit of a larrikin element that you needed to get through.**

It helped but I don't think you had to have it

28:00 there were some very serious people. I don't think I ever tried to be a hero I was always very cautious I wouldn't do anything I thought was stupid I would do whatever needed doing. I never had a

28:30 thought that I might die I might get killed, maybe I would have but what is the good of thinking like that? I never had any pessimistic thoughts or anything like that just keep going.

29:00 I didn't think anything about lucky days or lucky charms or anything like that it was just what happened and you just did what you thought was the right thing to do. If you thought it was best to keep your head down you kept it down, if you thought it was all right to stick it up and have a look you did. Sometimes you were wrong.

29:30 That did happen.

What was your best weapon do you think?

For me?

For you.

The Owen gun was probably the best gun we ever had although I didn't always have one. Sometimes you were restricted and if I wasn't up the forward scout or something like that.

30:00 When I was in intelligence I used to go on a lot of patrols but I wouldn't be put up front, there wasn't a lot of difference, but I would be at the back of the patrol but it was still a vulnerable point but the officer would want me at the back because I had the information and things like that, you would get put on forward scout.

30:30 Sometimes I had to go out with every patrol which meant a lot more times you would go out. If there were three section patrols I would go, I was the officer, so I suppose in some ways it evened out

31:00 I was further back than the forward scout and I went on three times as many patrols as he did, that was the way it was. I think I had that idea if it was my fate to get killed I get killed if I don't I don't, I am right. I wouldn't go out and deliberately

31:30 tempt fate put it that way you wouldn't do something stupid. I thought it was a good idea. I used to say to the blokes, "It is better to be a live coward than a dead hero." You don't want to be a coward but I couldn't see any point in doing something stupid if you could do it another way and it would be safer.

32:00 **How would blokes tempt fate do you think?**

These fellows who win VCs [Victoria Crosses] and that sort of thing. They would probably do things that if you really thought about it, it would have been much more sensible to do it and still achieve what you were trying to do. That sort of thing, it is hard to tell on those scores,

32:30 there is a lot of blokes have a different outlook on a lot of things. I suppose it is great to have people like that in your company, with you in the army, but overall the army not just your own unit

33:00 but in other units. There is always people like that, there is always people the other way. We didn't strike many of them.

How did you find your officers that you worked with?

Quite OK. I didn't have any problems with them. We used to make fun of them.

Can you give me

33:30 **an example?**

One was we used to call him Pee Pee Ewing, he was a nice enough bloke but we always thought he was a bit of a dill [fool] and Pee Pee in New Guinea means rubbish. Some of them used to call him Peewee but it started off as Pee Pee. There was another one of the

34:00 officers called Lollywater. That was their name for him, Lollywater Woodhouse and Pee Pee Ewing. They were not in a real derogatory way, they were fun names. We had one Lieutenant Martin, he was Granny always Granny Martin. That sort of thing.

34:30 I don't think we called anyone their right names. The fellows were known by their nicknames, at least half of them would have nicknames and you would never know their name. You would go to find out something about them and you would try to look it up. So many Snowy and Blueys. Snow, Blue or Shorty or something.

35:00 A bloke, his surname was Tall, he was Shorty Tall and this sort of thing. We found it difficult when you got out of the army when you tried to remember their correct name so I went to see a bloke in Concord hospital and one day I went in there, "I would like to see Mr Wilson please, could you tell me where

35:30 he is?" They said, "What is his name?" and I said, "Oh, Porky." and they said, "What is his real name?" I said, "I don't have any idea."

36:00 We have 3 of them. I had never heard a name and that is when it gets difficult. I finally found him and they checked them all out. We didn't have any problems with our officers or our NCOs we just got on with

36:30 it. I think when you are a smaller unit you are more of a family type of thing. Much more so than a bigger unit.

What was your nickname?

I didn't have a nickname. I was just Ted always except when I was going to school and when I

37:00 first went to school at Temora I was Eddie at Temora school friends there. Ted at home and with all the
rels and that sort of thing. Not unless you had a name like Jack or Bill or something like that you most
likely stay that way.

37:30 I didn't have red or blonde hair so I wasn't snowy or bluey and it wasn't curly so I wasn't curly. That is
the sort of things that used to happen. If you are real short you would be called 22 short or Shorty. I
suppose if you are long enough you would be Long un. I didn't

38:00 get a nickname.

Why do you think the nicknames were important?

They just started off in fun and they just stayed that way. I don't say they were important that is what
they were called and that is what we knew them by. Everyone just got used to saying that.

I was wondering

38:30 **about the mateship.**

That is very strong. It is pretty hard to explain how such a strong bond is formed except the fact that
you trust them with your life and they trust you with their life and that is a pretty

39:00 important thing and it gets that way and that is how it is and that is how it has to be and I think that has
to make a strong bond with you. Maybe you are alert to more things in character with people because
you were so close to them bound to them, you had to live with them under all sorts of circumstances

39:30 you get to understand them and know them. That could have a lot to do with it. How many other people,
you wouldn't have the same circumstances you are constantly with somebody you have to live with
under all sorts of circumstances, even life threatening circumstances and this sort of thing. You do with
your army mates and it must go a long way to creating that bond.

40:00 That is the only way I can see it. You still have a strong bond with some of your best school friends. You
go to school with hundreds of people you single out maybe up to half a dozen who are really ongoing
friendship with them for the rest of your life.

40:30 It is like that except with the army it is almost the whole lot are put in that category they all seem to be
your real close top friends that you don't want to leave or lose contact with that is probably what it is.
Circumstances do it that would be the whole thing.

41:00 **I really agree, I think when the chips are down you want to know that your mates are there.**

That you can rely on them.

Tape 6

00:33 **If you could describe for me, you have mentioned Dove Bay and the landings there. I was
wondering if you could describe them. What you did in the landing.**

We didn't do a lot in the landing we did a landing, we were off loaded from the ships out onto the barges
and

01:00 one of the first things we did was put one man up with each American on the .5 guns so we wouldn't
shoot the wrong people. That was definite and we were pretty certain we needed to do that, they were a
bit wild this friendly fire bit and we had a few damaged by friendly fire up

01:30 by aircraft of some of our troops around Aitape around there, we had to be pretty consistent in wanting
to do that and each one of our men stood up with the machine gunner on the things with the machine
guns. The beach was blasted pretty well before we came in and there was not a lot of resistance

02:00 we just did a normal plan, barge gets in as far as it can, they drop the front down and you jump and go
up into the shore and it is pretty swampy at that particular spot. We didn't get a lot of resistance there
but when we first started going up the beach they started shelling from up in the mountains, the
mountain goats they had

02:30 there and that sort of scattered us for a bit. That is when I found out how good the Owen gun was when
you hear the shells coming you hit the ground quick to make lesser of a target. You went straight down
we were on the beach so you naturally go down on the sand the Owen guns got full of sand

03:00 that we hit the beach with all you had to do was shake it out of them and you could fire them they were
so reliable so good that way, one of the really good weapons. They are far superior to the American
Thompson machine gun The Yanks used to use it because they could jam up on you under any excuse.

- 03:30 The Owen was always fool proof it was easy to whack a magazine into and everything was good in it it was just so reliable. We went inland probably only a quarter of a mile or so and set ourselves up in a base camp there and we worked from there and started our patrols. We had a few attacks
- 04:00 there but we just kept moving forward and finally we did a pincer movement down at Wewak and the infantry came down the other side and we just joined out the back of Wewak. We had a few skirmishes before that and they used to come in of a night
- 04:30 sort of nuisance raiding not as a big attack we also got shelled and mortared and that sort of thing. Eventually we joined up and that is when the surrender that was officially taken place but
- 05:00 the news came over about the surrender but not all the Japs knew about it but they didn't have much communication from the mainland so there were a few casualties after the 15 August that was all right for people in headquarters and places but it certainly wasn't in the jungle. They didn't know the Japs didn't know. If they came in firing you would have to fire back because you couldn't say hey wait on
- 05:30 it is not quite like that. That was a bit unfortunate that there were casualties after the official war end. After it was over, I didn't get to the official surrender but Ron did, I think he may have told you, he was involved in that, he was down there I don't know if he had a part in it but he was there.
- 06:00 It was pretty good feeling except we knew you had to have points and there was a point system in the army of how long you had been in the army, how old you were and that sort of thing and we used to have jokes about the aircraft carriers that were coming to pick us up there were all sorts of rumours going around that
- 06:30 the aircraft carrier so and so is coming to pick you up. There was the HMAS Impossible, the HMAS Invisible all these things they were the ones going to pick us up. They all arrived too, the HMAS Unbelievable and all this sort of thing. You have to make fun out of everything or you would go silly. It was pretty good it was over
- 07:00 I just don't remember the exact felling you feel pretty relieved you start getting back. We got another stint to Rabaul to look after Japanese prisoners over there. Some got that and others got home
- 07:30 our unit was one of the first into action and we had a lot of men who had done a lot of war service with several years in the Middle East so they were well up on points and naturally they get them home they deserved it. That was the situation there we got over to Rabaul and we went down to Kokopo to keep an eye on the prisoners in the prison camps and that.
- 08:00 That is where I had another funny snake story there. We decided we had a few days off and anytime you had a bit of time off you made the best of it and you had as much fun as possible and we found out if you get the tube out of the tail wheel of a plane, the Wirraways, and a shell
- 08:30 you used to be able to make diving masks. You would scratch all the back off the mirror and you would cut this piece out of the tail wheel tube of a Wirraway and it made a good mask and you could go diving in the coral. There was some beautiful coral around the island there. I went down doing some diving, just natural diving we used to go down
- 09:00 and unless you had a mask you couldn't see much and I went down and stopped and there was a black and yellow snake he is looking at me and I am looking at him and I just stayed there and then he just swam away. Then I realised it was a coral snake, one of the deadly ones. I didn't have anything to protect myself under there, 12 or 14 feet
- 09:30 under water in amongst the coral. That was another incident I had with snakes up in the islands but I came out all right. That was there we were there but one of the other funny events that happened there it was the first time I had been in an earthquake, there was an active volcano but it was going
- 10:00 there used to be some bit of rumbles. One morning it was a real good one because the old coconut palms were going from side to side you could hardly stand up you would have to hang onto something the ground was moving that fast, it probably lasted minutes with a few after shocks but it is
- 10:30 a sensation when you are in amongst it. The sort of thing was not normally damage in those sort of quakes because it is all bamboo and palm wood and that sort of thing and it is flexible. The old huts were going from side to side and the coconut trees were nearly hitting the ground from one side to the other I was lucky I was near one to hang onto something tight.
- 11:00 Trying to hang onto something that wasn't moving otherwise you would fall on the ground. It was an experience. Another experience.

Just before we move on I just want to know about the patrols you would go on and a forward scout. Could you describe for me how many people would be in a patrol and how they would be set out?

There is

- 11:30 8, 9, 10 or a dozen, these are the ones we used to go on there are bigger ones and sometimes smaller ones. Sometimes you would have a reconnaissance patrol and they might only have 4 or 5 men they would be specifically looking for something or going to check the enemy out or something like this. If I was going it would probably be 10 or 12. You would have your machine gunner and you would have your forward scout
- 12:00 and you would have an NCO, at least one corporal or sergeant and sometimes an officer but not always because sometimes you only had one officer to the troop but he couldn't go out every time he had to be watching other things that would be going on. It wasn't a set amount of people every time it would depend on the job that you had to do
- 12:30 If you had a village that you knew about 20 or 30 Japs were entrenched in you wouldn't send 3 or 4 blokes out to try and wipe them out you would probably have a bigger more equipment, maybe mortar, which we didn't often have because we had to travel light and fast all the time. It did vary
- 13:00 according to the circumstances. The troop was around 30 odd men they would be in 3 sections and each of them would take their turn in patrolling. Sometimes you would do a troop action 30 of you a bit of the show on the whole lot of you, you would all be in it.
- 13:30 30 people involved.

How long would the patrols normally last is there an average length?

Most of the day usually. You wouldn't be doing one this morning and one this afternoon. It would probably take you the whole day in the preparation and going and coming back and ironing things out when you got back

- 14:00 and there would be other things to do as well. When you first get there you have to be digging trenches and foxholes and those sorts of things and put up some sort of shelter for yourself when you can, setting out your sentries and booby traps there is a lot of other work involved. You have got to be
- 14:30 taking info and getting it back to headquarters and seeing what they have to say. You have your sigs, signallers, the wireless people and they have to get the information in and send it back and you have your medical bloke if you are lucky he usually has other things to do other than patch up bullet holes. There is a lot of things happening in the tropics
- 15:00 ailments and things you can get up there. Your cooks and that is about all. Everyone is armed in those sort of units there is no good going out without weapons. They have to stop and do the other job but they would take their part in the rest of it when it happened
- 15:30 **Can you explain the process of setting booby traps and putting up someone to watch could you describe the setting of the booby traps what you would have to do?**
- Any obvious track path they could come in you would have to set the trip wires onto the signals or grenades
- 16:00 in milk tins. Condensed milk was one of the things we used to get if you were lucky. Condensed milk tins were the right size and you would put a very precarious position, just balanced somewhere with a string across. You can't see a string across in the night time, mostly you can't, you would have to be holding a torch and that would be a pretty good give away
- 16:30 so they were pretty effective that way. Sometimes animals set them off and give false alarms. Usually if the Japs set them off you would know because you would hear the ting sort of noise, metal thing falling out of the can and you would hear boo, boo, boo them going like mad, you knew they were about then.
- 17:00 Shortly after that there would be some bullets come whistling through your camp. They were traps you would have to set up every night. In the mean time you would always have sentries around watching every direction if it was possible. Although they were good some of those Japs how close they could get sneak up on you at times. We got one, I reckon it wouldn't have been 20
- 17:30 metres away from us up the top of a coconut tree, he didn't stay there we found him, they were good in that sort of thing that is why you had to be so careful so vigilant.

How often would they be treated by the Japanese at night?

I don't know I lost count.

Was it a regular thing the attacks?

- 18:00 It wasn't unusual, it wasn't all the time but every so often. The danger of it was always there but it happened or not, you might go a week and nothing happened but that is not to say that something wasn't going to happen the next night that is the way it was, there was no way of telling that.
- 18:30 When they got there and they had it in their head they were going to attack they did. It was a matter of as long as you were ready on the night. They seldom attacked in the daytime, it did happen but not as much at night because they thought they could

19:00 be disguised better at night. They thought they would catch us unawares at night. We used to go out in the day and get stuck into them it was a bit of pattern that way but it did not mean it was always going to be like that it could change at different times. If you

19:30 get to that phase you have got to expect the unexpected and that is the way to stay alive in that situation.

Was there ever a time that they did get past the guard and people were unawares at night?

No, not at night but they got very close at times but they didn't quite make it.

20:00 There were times when they got into the perimeters in the daytime. I mean they killed a few fellows getting right on top of them or anything like this, machine gun fire and grenades.

20:30 They did with mortars and shells and that sort of things as well at different times. It doesn't matter how alert you are if an artillery shell lands in the middle of your camp in the middle of the day you are sort of off guard, early morning or evening, it does happen and you get casualties you

21:00 can't stay in your trench for your whole life either. You have got things to do you have to do them it is only when there is absolute imminent danger you get in your trench otherwise you have got to operate in the morning and do things as normal.

Given this kind of

21:30 **threat all the time was there ever a time that you could feel safe and relax?**

You would relax as much as you could. I don't think we were off our heads with tension all the time when you have driven them off and you waited a little while you would relax and you would have a bit of a rest for a while.

22:00 I think your patrolling, unless you are stuck into them or something you would feel fairly relaxed on the way back unless you had been cut off or something you would be alert for that all the time. You would go out and do a successful patrol and intercept them and then you have got to make your way back and you have to hope they haven't gone around and cut off your path

22:30 you have just got to be alert all the time. You have to relax you couldn't live otherwise you had to take it for what it is.

You hear about the extreme conditions in the tropics with the wet and the disease and the kind of fighting you were doing, was there anyone who just couldn't handle that,

23:00 **cracked up?**

None of ours. I heard there was one bloke there was a rumour that this one young bloke, which I found very hard to understand, he committed suicide because he thought he might have to go back into the jungle, I couldn't see any point in that, if he wanted to do that he could go out and earn himself a VC.

23:30 Get in amongst them, whether that was true, he might have gone a bit off. Pressure might have got at him and if you would do that I suppose you would do any silly thing. I didn't see much of that sort of thing nor did I ever see anybody saying I am not going out, I am not going out that sort of thing.

24:00 Even when that bloke must have known thought he was going to get killed he still didn't hesitate he packed his things up to be sent home, that is the only sort of thing we saw, I am not saying there wasn't that sort of thing.

It is amazing hearing you talk about

24:30 **it what keeps you going, what is it that keeps you fighting everyday when you know it could be your.**

You believe in what you are doing and you believe what you are doing is necessary and that is the way you have got to do it. It is proved in most cases

25:00 it is necessary if an enemy attacks another country the people in that country have got to go out and defend themselves. You can't say let them take it but that would be all right except we believe that if the Japanese had overrun Australia there wouldn't have been many Australians left. They didn't stick to the rules of the Geneva Convention or anything

25:30 they were doing that in other countries why wouldn't they do it in Australia, just mass executions that is a pretty good incentive to not let that happen, not only yourself but your family at home. You are so strong in your belief in the cause and what you are doing and you don't think any other way about it.

26:00 I never considered anything that would be different we shouldn't be doing it this way or maybe we ought to go back and have a rest and hope that it would turn out that way but you just kept going and did what you had to do. I don't recall of ever talking about any difference anyhow.

26:30 There was no morale lapses that I know of in the morale it was there all the time. Things went bad at

times you would understand but you still had that feeling you were doing the right thing, you were on the right track and you should be doing it. That keeps you going.

What were you hearing about while you were in New Guinea

27:00 **what was going on at home?**

Nothing, little or nothing. They don't tell you anything. I suppose they have their reasons for that, there are good reasons. Although I think perhaps if there was a major thing like the Coral Sea or something like that, I think that sort of news would get through because that is a

27:30 morale booster, and the atomic bombs when they went we did hear about that, things like that. Generally speaking no Australia knew very little about what was happening. I was reading an article about my mate Wally's battalion they were at Moresby when that American transport plane crashed on them when they were getting ready to go out

28:00 The people, no one was informed of that in Australia, only headquarters and the Prime Minister and people like that but no one else, and they said it was only after so many people got the notice at the same time about their loved ones accidentally killed overseas they said what is this what is going on

28:30 they got info but they still wouldn't let it out but they think some of the badly injured ones got back to Australia and they told the people what happened. They don't tell things like that it is not good for the morale.

How often would you receive mail or ...

Fairly regularly,

29:00 they were pretty good with that. Everyone used to look forward to your letters from home because both ways would be censored so you could only see the good things it was nice to have the contact. I got a letter from home I got a letter from Mum or Dad or somebody like that. I suppose the only letters I got were from Mum

29:30 I think that would be right. Dad never wrote but I am not sure. My brother and sister were a bit young, they may have. I used to do scribble drawings and send them home to the kids at times.

What would you draw for them?

Anything,

30:00 natives or a bit of scenery or something like that. I was quite good with a pencil back then.

What would your mum tell you about was going on at home?

What the kids are doing at school and what happened about the town or some news that might be of interest but overall I really don't

30:30 remember. I got letters and I appreciated and that but what was in them I couldn't say at all I could only surmise that is what she would write about the mundane things that we were able to write about. I don't know what they could have told us that the army didn't want us to know but they probably didn't try

31:00 they would tell you anything about family or friends what was happening in the town that was about all you could do.

You mentioned early you made friends in Bathurst and you kept in contact with them during the war.

Yes. Not that we could ask each other where we were and what we were doing, you would still get it but the army would handle the whole lot of it and you wouldn't know where they were or anything.

31:30 It firmed a stronger association with a few of them and not with the others but you got on with the feeling of the comradeship in the training camp not nearly as strong or widespread as when you got your own unit but you thought of it that way you are getting your own big family but the ones that you

32:00 kept in contact with you did. After the war there was several of them, some of them we kept in rough contact with and others you were very close to all the time. Wally Lutton and Pat Kennedy we were the real trio and we had a very strong bond it was pretty

32:30 strong. Pat got drowned and Wal and I have kept together ever since. We have been associated with each other's family ever since and still are. Then you get the ones, these are the training ones we are talking about, then you get the fellows you went overseas with and campaign with well you

33:00 had a lot of them and you got a very strong bond with a lot of people. It is hard to keep up with all of them and I suppose you select sort of a hierarchy and these ones you really make contact with, the others you do as much as you can and others occasionally and others you sort of not very often it is like that you can't possibly

- 33:30 keep full contact with all of them. It is even hard enough to keep contact with the close ones that you want to. You have all got your life to live and a lot of things happen and a lot of things happen in your life style and who you have to deal with. Special school friends you have got the 2 or 3 really top ones and then
- 34:00 others you like to know about and a few of them you have almost totally forgotten. I remember him he was so and so I haven't seen him since I left school that is the way it is there is a grading down of your friends that you can. A lot of them moved so far away
- 34:30 it makes it difficult to do that. Ones that you were fairly close to and now live in Western Australia it isn't easy to keep up with them, South Australia, and then the ones who live around Sydney that is easy but still with a lot of them up around the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast because the people here tend to travel a lot between here and there
- 35:00 and you keep contact with that group other than that a lot sort of fade off and a lot have fallen off the perch since then so it is getting less and less all the time.

In your unit when you were losing people in

- 35:30 **patrols or skirmishes were the people being constantly being replaced by new recruits?**

Yes you have to, not necessarily constantly, not one for one but if you got low on people they would have to send you reinforcements.

How did it go with a group of people who were quite closely bonded having new recruits come in?

They became part of the family. Mostly,

- 36:00 not always because some towards the end who came in before the end you just didn't know them as well and had little to do with them because you might have come in another section where previously you were in close contact with them doing certain things just over here not far away you just got to know them vaguely and not
- 36:30 completely because you don't have the same strong bond. You don't like them any less but you just don't know them because you haven't had the contact. We have got some there that came in fairly late but you are still fairly close to them but not all of them because some you just didn't get to know and if you don't know somebody it is pretty hard to feel the same way about them
- 37:00 as somebody you know like a brother. That is how it was. Unfortunately there was a little bit of, in some cases, a them and us feeling when we joined up with this cavalry, because they were real old. Some of them were nearly 30, consequently that upset a few people and they
- 37:30 had strong ideas about that shouldn't have happened. They were a bit against it and they never tried to make friends with them and that is one of the things I spent a lot of time on after I got out of the army. When I got out of the army I was totally
- 38:00 wiped the whole thing from my mind that was my object when I got out I did everything to wipe it. I don't know how it changed or why it changed but I still contact my real good mates and I finished up I
- 38:30 then started to try and heal the rift in between the two factions and that is when I first started arranging functions at our home and making them all come and that changed the whole attitude it
- 39:00 there maybe one or two a few odd ones still have the feeling they don't want anything to do with the young fellows and they don't want anything to do with the old blokes but not many it almost disappeared completely which I was very pleased to see. After being trying to totally trying to wipe myself
- 39:30 out of the whole thing then I sort of got back into it and I have been involved ever since in keeping them together. It wasn't that I didn't want the friendship of the people but I wanted to try and wipe the war and all it stood for and all the wrong things that happened.
- 40:00 **When the new guys would come to the unit, you would have been one of the old guys are you had been there for awhile, would you tell them anything about what to expect when going out on patrols or what to do.**
- Probably not, you wouldn't give them a lecture or sit down and talk to them. You might mention a few things as you were going around doing your job and when it came to a point
- 40:30 this sort of thing be careful about this, or this is what you ought to be doing, only casually over the period. I can't remember getting somebody aside and saying this is what we do and this is what you do and nothing like that you are going to find this but as things happened and went on you would help in any way like that. That is the only thing I can think of.
- 41:00 I don't remember anything else. You just help as much as you could and hope they would catch on and do what you thought they should.

Tape 7

00:33 **I would like to start off by asking you, you are quite young you were away for quite a long time in harsh conditions in New Guinea, how did you and your mates cope with the absence of women?**

You haven't got them that is all there is

01:00 to it.

You showed us earlier on that you had a picture of a pin up girl.

There was a few of those tings around but that wasn't very serious. A sailor bloke I met and I think it was in hospital and he had a few photographs and things like that

01:30 but we used to always joke about the meris, the native women, they get whiter by the day.

Can you explain what you mean by that?

They get whiter every day so we used to joke about that sort of thing.

02:00 I don't remember any having any romantic ideas with the native women but there were plenty of jokes and shots at each other about them but nothing that I ever knew about.

What type of contact did you have with the indigenous people?

02:30 Fairly good because we depended on them for a lot of things like they used to get us food, and the water carriers and they used to use them as carriers for our equipment and scouts and spies and we were quite well involved with them and we were fairly

03:00 close to them most of the time. To a lot of us they didn't get any whiter but to others they used to keep joking about it. They were making out if you stayed there long enough they would look like the girls you missed at home but I didn't have any regular girlfriends before I went I just used to go out and do

03:30 things with everybody and that sort of thing so I didn't have a particular one. I think I wrote a couple of letters to different girls that I wasn't very serious with it was just that sort of thing. Always reckoned I would be home one day to take over and go ahead with what you should be doing.

04:00 **We have heard from others and I have read because most of the time the conditions were so exhausting that you didn't have time to think about sex.**

We sure didn't. No I don't think so only that we used to make jokes about the black women getting whiter other than that I don't think there was much

04:30 it just wasn't, joke about it yes in lots of ways you could make fun of it but that is about all. I suppose people who had a pretty close relationship with a girl before they went away would feel a lot differently about it I don't know, but I can't say that because

05:00 I didn't have that sort of thing.

How would you communicate with indigenous people?

Talk to them in pidgin. Most of them knew a bit of pidgin or if they didn't someone would and you could talk to them. With gestures and sign

05:30 sort of thing if you couldn't make it understood but generally speaking pidgin English was pretty wide spread so we didn't have a lot of trouble. It wasn't easy at times but it wasn't that difficult either.

Can you tell me whether there was anything with your contact with the natives

06:00 **that shocked you or surprised you or anything that you learned from them?**

No I don't think so. I don't think it was anything I would expect there. I had contact with aborigines before I was in the army so I suppose it didn't seem much out of the ordinary to me.

06:30 They were just another people another type of people and they lived there and they knew more about the bush than we did and they were pretty helpful good friends to have there and I was sure glad they were on our side. I enjoyed contact with them

07:00 it was quite good. There is some real personalities amongst them. The same as it is with anyone some of them were much friendlier than others and some of them are real fun to be with and that sort of thing. Talking about the relationship we had was mostly with the men we would just vaguely see the

07:30 women and the meris and the piccaninnies but generally speaking it was with our carriers and water bearers and guides and all this sort of thing and it was fairly constant so we got used to them.

You have mentioned that you were involved in maps and working out the maps,

08:00 **how much did you rely on natives for knowledge of the area?**

It was helpful their knowledge they are good bushmen generally speaking and they could tell you if a track was good, bad or if there might be Japanese there and if there were and they would tell you good information about the

08:30 land fall and that sort of thing which was quite often helpful in making the maps and charts and that sort of thing. I don't know that you could be 100% accurate always but they were a very big help. I used to get a lot, in some cases I used to get a lot of information from the photographs and that sort of thing

09:00 other than that you had to count on what you could pick up from them. Some of the charts were very old of the area, there were some maps that were made from the First World War, there weren't very many but there were odd ones. Most of it had to be taken we had to make our own maps.

09:30 You had to rely on them because that is all there was.

I imagine in that situation there is an enormous amount of trust that needs to take place between yourselves and the natives.

Yes there would have to be, yes. The

10:00 seldom if ever betrayed so you felt pretty confident about it.

You have also mentioned as part of an elite commando unit you were often in a small platoon working on your own. When would you come in contact with either other platoons or other units

10:30 **and other infantrymen?**

Not very often only occasions when we were cut off and we had flood and we couldn't get our air drop that was supposed to take our things there was an infantry section that came up from the coast and brought us up food. That was a contact and the one other time I can remember was when we contacted behind Wewak we

11:00 had come down from Dove Bay and they had come up from the coast other than that we seldom saw infantry. We did occasionally, we had a couple of machine gun people with us but that was probably for their experience to do something for them. Maybe we had a mortar crew once down towards the coast but once we got up

11:30 we were on our own. Often or not even with our own troops just a troop of about 30 men. We didn't camp in any less than that normally that wasn't the thing to do. If a patrol got out and they were cut off and they had to delay or something they might stay away

12:00 for a night or something but you wouldn't do that as a regular thing they would go out and come back to the base in a day. We didn't do much in the night patrolling bit we didn't think it was a very good idea. You would do reconnaissance sometimes or if you really needed to find something about something or

12:30 fighting patrols every day but not night patrols. That was basically what we were doing with usually an object in mind and we knew where they were and we would go out there with the idea of exterminating them. That was the general run of it.

13:00 **We have heard from others who in New Guinea that the Japanese had a reputation for cannibalism, how worrying was that to you at the time?**

It didn't worry me because they couldn't do it to me if I wasn't dead.

13:30 If I was dead what matters. We didn't like the idea we thought rotten, but that is what it was. We were pretty disgusted with it but we were disgusted with the way they treated prisoners of war and that sort of thing too.

14:00 We struck, they had somewhere around their area, we struck their Tiger Marines which surprised us they were all big, over 6 footers and pretty good combatants too

14:30 but they still met their match. This was a special unit up there called the Tiger Marines. I didn't know there was any Japanese that big. We found them and come up against them they were a special unit there.

What was your contact with them?

Just fighting.

15:00 All contact it is just they were different these huge big blokes supposed to be special good soldiers, we

heard about them after but they didn't fare any better than the others, it was quite good.

Was there ever an occasion that you came close to in hand to hand

15:30 **combat?**

No not me because I would be at the back of the section which was 10 or 15 meters back from the front. You weren't going to get much unless everyone up in front of you would be dead. That is the way it was I just didn't, I

16:00 was in my position and did what I was told to do and that was at the back end of the section. It was in the front line but it was at the other end so you don't get hand to hand back there unless somebody sneaked up behind you but you were watching for that sort of thing all the time. You didn't often get caught like that.

16:30 There were people that got close to that on many occasions if they were forward scouts. If they got into a scrap they used to do it. I don't some people wouldn't have looked forward to that sort of thing but that was the situation.

17:00 It wasn't my place to do that so I didn't. I understand that if it was the other way round I would have.

What were you carrying on you personally in terms of arms?

Either a rifle or an Owen gun.

17:30 That is, all the rifles had bayonets but the Owen guns didn't. Some of the early commandos used to carry this long knife but they cut that out they didn't seem to think it was worth while it was something that wasn't being used they changed their rules.

18:00 It is the same with they have rifles with short bayonets we used to have long things that we used to carry and they worked out the better one was the short one that is the Army Headquarters do that sort of thing. I couldn't, the best thing you could have possibly carried was the Owen gun.

18:30 **You mentioned earlier you had a stash of grenades.**

You had the grenades in your belt and your ammunition pouches, I had that but little else. If you were going out for a full day trip when I got hit

19:00 we must have been out but we had rations but if you were only gong for a short sharp you wouldn't carry anything but your ammunition and weapons we didn't make patrols that went out overnight that is the way we were working.

I am wondering if you were able to carry

19:30 **personal effects with you like a photo or a diary or anything like that?**

I used to keep a diary for the unit not for myself. You would probably have a pencil, pen and your dog tags other than that you wouldn't have carried anything. I always had your pay book and your AB83,

20:00 mostly you hung onto them somewhere in case they got lost while you were away but little else. I don't know if I had photographs I might have had a couple or whether I just left them back in my pack because I got a few photographs sent up, probably

20:30 with my sister and brother and their friends or something. I do remember having some so I don't remember taking them so they must have got sent up to me I am pretty sure I didn't take anything with me but I probably would have collected a few things like that I thought I had that one

21:00 and a few more from that sailor bloke, they were picked up along the track the same with the things like Japanese flags and other souvenirs that you picked up like that water bottle but you couldn't catch too much, I had 2 swords and that was even after we had been up in the

21:30 mountains you couldn't accumulated too many you had enough to carry without that you were only supposed to have personal things and the only personal thing you were allowed to have was you were supposed to have was your dog tag. They used to allow other things if you wanted to carry letters from home they didn't object to it but they didn't recommend it.

22:00 I didn't carry any more than I had a lot of the time.

I would like to go back to your operation at Dove Bay. Could you tell us, I understand, could you tell us about the landing and how you got onto the beach?

It was just a normal operation, the landing barges go in as far as they can,

22:30 they let the front down and you just file off and go up the beach. If the opposition has been pulverised enough there is not much there can do you any harm. There can be at times it is totally different but Dove Bay there was little or no resistance when we got there. They had been pummelled with the B52's the Big American bombers had given them a big caning up top.

- 23:00 They did a pretty good job so we had little resistance from people on the shore only from the hills where I said they started shelling and mortaring they could have been anywhere. I think some of those could have been pummelled too because I think the bombers were pummelling the hills,
- 23:30 we had 2 or 3 warships and if ever you have heard a loud noise and they fire a salvo atop of your over your head about 20 feet, if you think I don't know thunder sounds like a whisper when you have been under that. They were pummelling the foreshores and then back as we came
- 24:00 and then we moved in. There was not what you call any worthwhile resistance on the beach head it was all pounded out of them. The fighting started after that I suppose when the Japanese recouped a bit and we started patrolling in to get them.

You have just mentioned that you arrived

- 24:30 **in barges, how many men were there altogether in that landing?**

Probably a few hundred that would be about all. Nearly all auxiliary troops. There was really our unit and then the infantry didn't come in there we did the landing there to cut Wewak off and then they come in

- 25:00 there was all auxiliary troops and supply boats and all those sort of things that go with those landings. Not a lot of men not thousands. I don't think I have accurate figures I only say what I saw there and what should have been there.

How informed were you about that operation, what did you expect when

- 25:30 **you got there?**

Probably we expected a bit more resistance but other than that we were pretty well told the type of terrain and what we would be going into and what we would be doing when we got there but there was not much more they could tell you because it could have been totally different but you are not to know that it could have been

- 26:00 thousands of Japanese there just waiting for something like that they wouldn't worry about a few hundred getting killed waiting for you to come in. They didn't have the manpower there and that was it. They were getting steadily wiped out prior to that.

How was the morale in your own unit?

- 26:30 Same as always, always good that I knew.

I was just wondering because this operation at Dove Bay was getting towards the end of the war.

You had a job to do and you just did it. The morale wasn't any worse or I don't think anyone thought we shouldn't be doing this the war is nearly over or anything like that, that is what we are doing

- 27:00 we are landing to cut Wewak off and that was pretty important to finish the campaign off. Even if the war hadn't of stopped it was for some reason it would have gone on that could still have made a lot of difference to the Japanese forces in New Guinea. It was part of the job to do so we just went ahead and did it. I know there are many statements about the whole

- 27:30 thing being a waste of time maybe it was, but you don't know that, if things had turned out a little bit differently in Bismarck Sea it might have been a total different story you just don't know these things and you are not even able to say that it would have if something did change. I am not going even to try and

- 28:00 work that one out because it may or may not be right so it was our job to do it and we did it and that is the way we looked at things.

There ahs been a lot of reflecting back on whether that particular campaign would be unnecessary.

Yes I know. They talk about things

- 28:30 and how Singapore needed have fallen and how this should have happened and there is no absolute proof that that is right either it is just somebody's opinion and there is always different opinions on everything so maybe, or maybe it wasn't. If it was unnecessary it seemed such a shame for all the people we lost.

- 29:00 We really don't know.

When you arrived at Dove Bay what did you see?

A lot of damage from the heavy shelling and that sort of thing but not a great deal else other than the normal terrain there were swamps on the coastal fringe and then there was coastal swamps then the foothills and then the mountains at the

29:30 back. Normal plantations down towards Wewak just normal things you would see anywhere else in New Guinea. I don't know that we were supposed to see anything else it was just another spot a place in New Guinea. Hopefully one of the last we would have to look at, which it

30:00 was.

I was wondering if there was any evidence of Japanese there or none at all?

Yes they were there all right. There had been some a few dead bodies and camp sites and that sort of thing where they had been but I don't know if they expected

30:30 things that were there but it was fairly, it hadn't been a big base camp or anything like that for the Japanese. They were there, their presence was felt right along that they had been in these places and normal indications that they had been there and they were there because as soon as we settled in they started shelling us and mortaring us and then

31:00 come and attack us at night so they had to be round there close handy to do that. They certainly got pushed off the beach in a pretty big hurry. I would say it was a quite successful move to get them to encircle Wewak and cut it off. Whether that would have had any bearing because as you said just shortly afterward the

31:30 war ended we just had to surrender at Wewak but they had already been cut off and the people in the hills were getting a pummeling and they were starting to get stuck into them so it was a successful campaign if it was necessary or otherwise.

How you react when

32:00 **you have been given orders you are sent on an operation you are expecting really strong resistance and you arrive and there is not much resistance at all. I am wondering was there a feeling what is the point of being here?**

Why would you be, that's good not so many to be fought much easier

32:30 probably a few more of us still alive. We couldn't see anything wrong with it.

You mentioned earlier that it was a requirement to keep a tally of casualties on the enemy,

If we could we couldn't always.

How possible was that at Dove Bay?

33:00 We could count the ones you killed in close combat and estimate if there might have been a few more and sometimes the natives could tell you and then when they did some of the patrols and sorties inland we got more. All you could only do was count the ones you were certain of and the possibles

33:30 you couldn't be perfectly accurate because that was virtually impossible.

How did you know when it was over at Dove Bay, how did you know that you had been successful?

We were still winning and going ahead when the news came through that it was

34:00 over but we could only cease fire and not do any more fighting patrols we still had to remain on the alert and still fight up any attacks but you could only do it that way. It is not like out in the showground and somebody calls out it is all over. You wouldn't know for weeks

34:30 whether the Japanese way back over the hills who had a little pocket of their own who didn't know anything about it. Not certain that, that would happen but it was quite a while after and some of them used to be quite surprised when they found out but there were casualties after the

35:00 surrender but that is to be expected when there is no communication. We had to be on the alert but not on the attack until we finally knew after a period that they felt pretty certain there would be only

35:30 isolated pockets that had deserted or a few little groups and decided they had enough of the war and had gone way back into the mountains but that was all.

When you were in a state of alertness as opposed to attack are you still able to defend yourself I you are

36:00 **threatened?**

Yes. You don't let your guard down put it that way. I don't suppose we felt really safe and secure until a long time after the war, probably weeks.

36:30 **How long did you, if you recall was it until that you moved away from Dove Bay?**

I don't know. I think it was only weeks, it wasn't months not like that, maybe a month or so, probably

- 37:00 no more I am not real certain but I think it has got to be a few weeks to a few months at the most. I tried to lose track of time like a lot of other things I just wanted to forget it and tried to treat Rabaul and that as a holiday.
- 37:30 We would have rather been home we didn't particular want to go over there and do that but that was what we were told so we had to do it.
- What did you have to do with the Japanese POWs [prisoners of war]?**
- Just keep them in the compounds until they were repatriated to their home. You couldn't let them lose on the place or on the natives they might have still
- 38:00 wanted to fight or anything you don't know, you just couldn't let them lose that would be for certain.
- How did you talk to the Japanese POWs?**
- You mean when you want them to do something. You learn a few Japanese words and you make them sound pretty definite
- 38:30 that is all you can do. I knew a few Japanese words things we probably needed to know, most of it I have forgotten. People who need to know do know
- 39:00 and there is still a lot of interpreters available people that were Japanese but were on our side and the people who had been living in Japan and could speak Japanese or for some other reason you could still use those. The chap that I met, George MacArthur from
- 39:30 San Francisco, he spoke fluently in both languages that is the sort of people you have. They soon let you know what you need to be able to say because otherwise they were in this huge compound and we just left them in their but patrolled it constantly with sub machine guns and that and let them know they were under
- 40:00 our influence and under orders. That just kept them in their place.
- How would you talk to each other about the Japanese, what words would you use?**
- How anyone would talk about anything there, just events, maybe we made comments
- 40:30 to each other cut off the steak and blokes with the heads split open and they get the brains out sort of thing, I suppose we didn't make any nice comments about that.
- Can you give me an example?**
- I don't say we would have said anything different. What would anyone say
- 41:00 in a situation like that. You would say, "Come and have a look at this look at these B so and sos have done!" You couldn't let it get you all in a flurry or anything that is what had been done and you had to understand.

Tape 8

- 00:33 **If being at the POW camp Rabaul given what had gone on in the war was there ever any mistreatment of the Japanese?**
- No. The only ting I did see once a bloke who was in one of the first
- 01:00 units and we were going past a group of them one day in the back of truck and he leaned down and slapped one across the back of the head. He would have seen some pretty rough things and he was in one of the earlier things where they executed people and done all sort of nasty things. We didn't approve it but we thought he just
- 01:30 probably couldn't help it but that was only a slap on the face on this Jap as they went past they were marching a heap up the road. Other than that I didn't see anything they didn't bend the rules and took it out on them for all we knew about them and for what we had seen we were doing it the way of doing it
- 02:00 **What were your orders in terms how to treat the Japanese prisoners?**
- They tell you when you first join the army that there is a Geneva Convention and prisoners are supposed to be treated like human beings. You look after them you feed, them you clothe them and you give them medical attention and that is all there is no grades of it, it has to be done that is the
- 02:30 Convention. We were sort of brought up to expect that we didn't know how badly they treated our prisoners of war, whether it would have made any difference or not I don't know.

Can you tell me how long you were at Rabaul at the camp?

No. A couple of months I think.

03:00 I could look up my army record it was only a matter of months and we got quite used to it after a while.

How anxious were you to get home?

We were all anxious, we used to still make these jokes about the invisible aircraft carriers that were coming to take us, we used to look out into the harbour every morning to see which ships were there. Finally it did happen

03:30 we got a ship going home. We happened to meet the crew of this particular ship a couple of nights before we left, a few of us did and we met up with these fellows and we found out they were going to take us home and something like that. We said, "Oh beauty!" They said, "Would you like to come

04:00 down the crew's quarters down to the mess?" and we said, "Oh boy would we ever!" because they eat pretty well on the ships. That was a bit of a disappointment because we got onto the ship and we were allocated our hammocks or whatever we had, and I was in the centre of the ship somewhere which was a pretty good place to be and we must have had contact with these blokes and when

04:30 there was mess time that night, we left in the afternoon and by the time the evening meal was due we struck pretty rough weather and it wasn't a big ship and it was going up and down and when we got up and met this crew and they took us up to their mess hall it was right up in the bow of the ship

05:00 about a few metres back right from the front and as we were going in this rough weather it was going about 20 or 30 feet out of the water and then bang about 30 feet under the water. They sit us down at this mess table about 3 or 4 of us had the honour of meeting these blokes and got the invitation. We are sitting there and a fresh steak and

05:30 eggs and you wouldn't believe it had been years that I had even heard of one but this darn ship going up and down and I am starting to get terrible funny feeling and I just sat there for a while I said, "No I can't, can I please take this back with me?" they said, "Of course you can." so they wrapped a bit of paper round it or something

06:00 and let me go out and I got back to the centre ship where I settled down for awhile and I was able to eat it. I hated not being able to hoe into it, there it was this beautiful piece of steak and eggs, like a dream it was and this beasting up and down at least 60 feet in the up and down movement it was pounding

06:30 but I got the steak and eggs so I was pretty happy about that even if I had to take it back to the middle of the ship and wait for awhile. That was a close one. That was great coming home on that I think it was June coming down Sydney Harbour it was light sprinkly rain and we are up there with our shorts and shirt leave jungle shirts on and didn't give a damn. It was freezing cold

07:00 because we had been in the tropics but it was cold and windy wet morning we still stood up on the top of that ship and looked out at the harbour it was a pretty wonderful feeling I can tell you that, it was great. That was a little adventure coming home it was good.

Can you tell me when you got on dry land what happened next?

07:30 I don't remember a lot about it I just remember it was so darn good to get home and I suppose we did all the things you like to do. I think we may have met some Billy Foyle, his girlfriend was there to meet us and I think we might have gone and had a beer there at one of the hotels there.

08:00 Something in one of the little cafes there that was the main thing and then after a certain period we got picked up and we finished up at Circular Quay and we were picked up and taken to camps, not all the camps we had different camps to go to.

08:30 You would be assigned to different units. I went out to Merrylands to some unit, it might have been a Transport Company but that didn't worry us because we were back in Australia I didn't have anyone to meet me they were back in Temora that was a bit far for them

09:00 I don't think there was enough time so we would just make the best of it. We enjoyed every minute we could. It wasn't long before I finished up in hospital with malaria. I got sent out to

09:30 Wallgrove, we moved around a bit waiting for discharge they were shuffling you from here to there and I finished up getting my discharge on my birthday in 1946. I thought that was good. I was quite happy about that and a group of us there, I don't know whether we all knew each other or were from the same camp I don't recall now but we

10:00 went straight across to the closest pub and celebrated. Even though I wasn't a drinker I still enjoyed a couple of beers on that discharge and from there I went back to Temora back to the countryside. After, I can't recall exactly, but they had jobs that were available

10:30 the only job available there for me was a fettler on the railway line, they put new sleepers on and fix

that up, between Temora and Rankin Springs that is the bush part of the scrub and with this particular bloke the foreman and he was a bit of a rat bag on his trolley and there were two old fellows

- 11:00 who got a job the same, there was three of us plus this bloke who was the foreman and he used to drive the tricycle thing that fits on the railway lines and has little motor bike motor on it and they go along and you put all your tools in it you push and you stop it and you lift it off the lines
- 11:30 repair the line and go a bit further. This bloke was a rat bag with this trolley he is getting along about 100 kilometres per hour and this rickety bit of gear and these two old blokes were scared and I pulled him down and said, "You drive at a reasonable pace."
- 12:00 He cooled down for awhile but I didn't think much of the job it didn't seem to be much of a prospect so I got myself involved in something else. I think it was £250 you could get off repat you could go in and go into business or a loan to build something so I drew that and bought myself a little business out at Ungarie,
- 12:30 it is half way between West Wyalong and Lake Cargelligo. That is what happened there. My younger brother by this time had become a commercial traveller but he wasn't living at home but my younger sister was and Mum and Dad didn't have any ties with Temora so they
- 13:00 decided they would come out there and help in the business and live there too, that is what happened that was my first start into business after the war. I have never had a job with anyone since.

You mentioned

- 13:30 **about settling your reflexes down and having trouble every now and again what were the other problems settling into civilian life having been in the army for so long?**

I don't think there were any great problems except all I wanted to do was forget about everything, the army and the war and all those sort of things so I completely cut myself off everything except Repat which

- 14:00 is now Veteran's Affairs and kept in touch with them because they were certain things they could do when you needed it this loan to get into the business. I had tried to get, but I still had this job and although I didn't like it and kept doing it I tried to get into a
- 14:30 dry cleaning business and I had taken time off with no cost to them to learn the business and they were going to sell me all their second hand machinery and I was going to look around to where there was no dry cleaning business a good place in Griffith, it was a pretty bright little town at the time and they didn't have a dry cleaner and dry cleaning was getting
- 15:00 popular then. I rented myself a shop and I had it all worked out I was going to get their old machinery and start the business up there but, along comes this big steel strike and it put everything right out of focus and they then rang me
- 15:30 the people who were going to get the machinery for him it would be 12 months and everything had gone bad and it would be at least 12 months if they could get the machinery then. I had to cancel the rent on the shop at Griffith and think of something else and I grabbed at the first thing that came along and it was this hairdressing and billiard room
- 16:00 at Ungarie. I should have got into that in the first place. I had experience in that I used to cut mates hair in the army I learned to do it in the army I had a pair of scissors and I used to do it in the islands. As you can imagine it wasn't easy to get a haircut but I had these tools and I used to do it for them
- 16:30 and sometimes I used to even get paid for it which was great. I bought this place and got stuck into it and had another sideline which is SP [starting price] bookmaking. Pretty illegal but it was a good business. In the billiard room we used to run the dice on the billiard tables
- 17:00 all these naughty things but it was a great little. We did all right there but it was a long way out in the scrub, 47 I got there, after 2 years I don't want to live out here all my life. I had been to Sydney and I thought I want to move down somewhere like that.
- 17:30 My father and I then rented an empty shop and started a fruit and vegies and ice cream, milk shakes and we started a little café in that shop and we started and agency for electrical goods opposite the hairdressing shop where
- 18:00 the SP booking used to be done we got a few things going there and we thought we would move on and come down to Sydney and get something going here. We sold up everything, I thought about it later, somewhere along the line my Mum got 2 bits of furniture and we never had much they never had much in their life
- 18:30 always seemed to be without everything it was what we called the big box a big wooden chest, we called it a chest of drawers, she had these two lovely bits of wooden articles all dove tailed work in the drawers and this

- 19:00 sort of thing we sold everything up and we had a big auction sale and sold all the gear and the shop and the café and everything we had in the house and bought a 4 berth caravan. By this time I had a Ute that I called Moses, it was a Ford thing.
- 19:30 and we hooked this big caravan behind that and came to Sydney. I was in touch with a bloke and he said, "Fairfield, come down here this is the place to live." I had never thought of Fairfield and we got to this Fairfield and went to the caravan park and I thought this is not where I want to live.
- 20:00 The idea the area or anything so we said no we are going up north somewhere so we came up to Avalon Beach and booked into the caravan park there. Found out there was a house up on the hill that the builder was willing to sell it wasn't quite finished but he was willing to sell and I bought this for the right price and
- 20:30 I think we were living in the caravan park for about 6 weeks and then we moved up into the house. This is my Mum and Dad and my sister and myself.

Being so close to your family did they ask you about what happened overseas or did you talk anything about it?

Very little, I don't think they asked anything and I probably didn't tell them.

- 21:00 I know that is not unusual it seems to happen all the time. It is odd but I don't know why you don't want to tell anyone what happened but it seems to be the general thing it is what you hear all the time. That was the start of things the time in the city.
- 21:30 I started moving around doing other things I started doing other things I sold the caravan and started a taxi business and I went over to but how I got these different businesses I will never know but I bought a grocery store at
- 22:00 Beecroft because we had, the only experience was the Ungarie Café and fruit shop but that was still experience in retail and I went and bought this shop at Beecroft and that is where Lola was working when I bought it and that is how that sort of turned out. After a couple of years we
- 22:30 sold the business and we moved into the house at Avalon and I bought Mum and Dad they always wanted to go up to the Lakes on the Central Coast and we bought this cottage up there at Toukley and they moved into that one and we moved into the house at Avalon. Then
- 23:00 we ran a deli [delicatessen] at Avalon for awhile for another firm but we didn't like that and we were just there as managers and we didn't like the way they were running things so we left that.

All these different business you were involved in,

- 23:30 **a young man just out of the army where did you get the confidence to be trying your hand at....?**

I just liked the idea of it and I would have a go at anything. There have been quite a few things since then. We then bought a wholesale sandwich business at Auburn serving all the factories

- 24:00 for 12 months of that it was a lot of long hours and we bought a deli at Gosford and ran that for a couple of years. While we were doing some of those things we lived at Brookland and that was where our first child was born and after that we went up to Gosford
- 24:30 then from Gosford I moved back down to West Pennant Hills where I got started in the drainage, excavation and plant hire. Lola had always had an ambition to be involved in catering and cooking and that sort of thing, we opened a wedding reception centre. We checked out as much as we could.
- 25:00 We got invited to as many weddings as we could and then visited all the others and we checked out what they should be doing and what they shouldn't be and we worked out a good system so we bought this 6 acres out of Dural designed and built this reception centre. It wasn't easy because we tried to buy several blocks
- 25:30 they wouldn't let us. We thought we had a nice block at West Pennant Hills and the owner of the block who was selling it he found out off the Council we were going to put a wedding reception place on it and he pulled out of the sale because he didn't want a wedding reception centre on his land, he was selling it to me. We got one in Baulkham Hills Shire then and I put the application in for it and
- 26:00 they wouldn't allow it because they thought it was going to create too much traffic in a certain area. Castle Hill Road and look at the traffic there now. We finally got this one in Dural. By this time we are getting pretty sick of getting knock backs and we put the application into Council and they said,
- 26:30 "We are building a brand new reception centre." and they said, "There is no criteria." I said, "What do you want?" It has always been a house, someone started a little business and it has grown and there was no criteria of how a new one would start. I said, "Well what am I going to do?"
- 27:00 They said, "Well you put your application in and we will say yes or no." I had to go to the State Council, the Fire Department, Police Department and Roads and Traffic Authority I had to get permission from

all of those to put the application to council to build this reception Centre. The next thing I hear it is coming up again for

- 27:30 review by the Council so I get armed up with all the arguments in the world to stand up and really got stuck into them. I was just waiting for it because something had told me different things they were going to knock it back on, one we had a long driveway down and I got that one fixed I will put traffic lights on them. I had a
- 28:00 answers for all the question before I went there and got there and it came up and it was passed without debate, I nearly fell out of the seat I couldn't believe it. We got stuck into it and built it. By this time I was in this excavation and plant hire business and we had this property at West Pennant Hills
- 28:30 to sell to finance the building of that and to have somewhere to stow the machinery I had to lease a place down at West Pennant Hills and then finally I moved to Dural we had 6 acres and we were going to build the place. We were going to give it 5 years to get it starting and it started and it went so quickly
- 29:00 that I didn't get back to my machinery. There was thousands of dollars of machinery rusting in the paddock but I finished up selling a lot of them. We were very lucky because we built it ourself and I had a dozer and backhoe to do the excavation so it was handy having the gear.

Ted I have got a few questions,

- 29:30 **I was wondering I guess going away to the war and joining the army at 17 quite a young man. How did your service change you or affect you?**

I don't know because I don't know what I would have been like if I didn't go, whether it did or didn't it may not have.

- 30:00 There is no way of telling.

A lot of people especially those who were young, say you develop quickly.

I think you mature fairly quickly you have to. I suppose it is the responsibility or the situation you are in you just have to otherwise you are useless.

- 30:30 **Looking back over the years in the service, is there a moment that stands out as a very proud moment a time when you were proud to be a soldier?**

Yes all the time, I don't think I ever felt any other way.

- 31:00 I can't think of any outstanding difference at any time.

You mentioned after the war you just wanted to forget about it when did you start making contact with the friends from the war and the army again.

Not for quite

- 31:30 a long time, I think I got a bit of contact but I would say it was the late 50's or early 60's before I really got serious about getting involved and getting back in and getting in contact with everyone again, that was quite a while.

- 32:00 Somewhere between 15 and 20 years, but I did keep these real close contacts but for the rest of it I didn't want anything to do with it but that eventually changed.

You mentioned that you catch up with Wally on Anzac Day.

Yes, that is a special but we

- 32:30 visit each other often as we can which is getting less all the time because it is more difficult I haven't been that well lately and we seem to be busy all the time and they live at Mt Victoria which is not just a hop, step and a jump. You have to make a day to do it.

When the two of you get together on Anzac Day what do you do?

Plenty to do we go

- 33:00 Lola and Vivy watch movies all day or go shopping. I am involved in, we used to march but I haven't been able to with my problems so Wally comes with me and I arrange the function around at the Leagues Club for the dinner so I have plenty to do. We go in we leave here early in the morning

- 33:30 and have dinner at the combined services club at Barrack Street and we form up at King Street at about 9 o'clock with the unit and banners and the things they do and we go round to the Leagues Club , NSW Leagues

- 34:00 but there is work to do before the Anzac Day luncheon.

What sort of things do you talk about with the guys in the unit?

Mainly only day to day what they are doing and what you are doing, current affairs and things that happen, people we have met and who we have spoken to and where they have been recently just normal day to day things.

34:30 Almost nothing, if it happens if it is necessary to get some information about something we might ask a certain person for information or something like that but just like anyone else would talk at a function.

35:00 **As a returned serviceman what does Anzac Day mean to you?**

I think like they say it is a day of honouring our comrades, it is not glorifying war, it is not, it should be, it is a perpetual memory of your

35:30 friends mates that you lost. We feel it is pretty important and that is what it is. It used to be a bit of a skylarking day when we first started.

36:00 **With it being VP [Victory in the Pacific] or VJ [Victory over Japan] tomorrow do you do anything to commemorate that day?**

I used to go into the services in Martin Place at times it depends on circumstances to us it is VJ Day. We still remember it

36:30 and there are different functions beside the memorial service in Martin place there is always functions at the RSL [Returned and Services League] clubs you can go to. We do have a few go to it and a few commemorate it, it should be remembered but we also have another day in October,

37:00 8 October which is pretty important to us, Divisional Remembrance Days. There are many days and different ones you have to take into account.

You mentioned that when you had heard that the war was declared the old digger told you I guess. He told you,

37:30 **looking back over your time in the army was there ever a time when you wished you had listened to his advice a bit more or taken heed at what he had to say?**

I don't think so.

Was he right?

He probably was but I don't think I would have altered it

38:00 I think I had made up my mind and I think I did what I should have done. It stuck well in my memory but I don't think it made any changes to anything and I don't say he wasn't doing the right thing either

38:30 I could quite understand that was it, it wasn't to be.

What advice would you give a young man if he came to you and wanted to go off there was a war being declared?

The same as that bloke gave to me. Very much so I think.

39:00 Whether he would take any notice of me in the same way or whether I was saying the right thing. It may have just about the same affect. It is one of these things it is always problematic you don't know whether it is right or wrong some things are

39:30 and some things aren't. That was it. I would give that advice but I wouldn't say that he would heed me and listen to me and do what I said.

40:00 **Before we finish is there anything a comment or anything you would like to say that we haven't covered any final remark about your feelings on your experience?**

I don't think I could add too much to what I have said I don't have any special feelings towards anything, it was pretty nice to get through it and get home.

40:30 The comradeship I have got out of it has been wonderful but it has meant a loss to a lot of other people who have lost something that we can't possibly replace. In one way

41:00 I wished it never needed to happen and I really hope that it doesn't have to happen again.

INTERVIEW ENDS