

Australians at War Film Archive

Angus Suthers (The Bastard) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **Ok Angus if we could just start with a brief introduction to your story?**

I was born in Gympie in Queensland .My father and mother had both been schoolteachers. I was the fifth son

01:00 of six boys and one girl. I had my initial schooling in Cleveland which is just out of Brisbane, and then I went to Townsville. In Townsville I enlisted in the 31st Battalion in the Kennedy Regiment as a citizen soldier. Now these were the Depression years, I'm talking of 1928 - 1939.

01:30 Money was scarce, employment was hard to get, and anyone who wanted to make a quid could join the army as a citizen soldier. So I joined, and that meant I went to the camp for a week each year. I was paid three shillings a day and that meant I got a guinea and that was a lot of money.

02:00 Comparatively a dozen eggs in those days cost five cents for twelve eggs. It's a bit dearer today. Having been in Townsville, the war came and I was called up. First of all I started as an engineering clerk. I was called up in the first stages of security

02:30 which took place about a month before actual war was declared. I then enlisted in the 2nd AIF [Australian Imperial Force], 6th Division. I saw service in South Africa, Scotland, England, Egypt, and Palestine, Syria.

03:00 I then came back through India and landed in Port Adelaide, and went to Somerset Dam in Queensland. From there I went to Milne Bay and saw action in the infantry battalion in Milne Bay. After Milne Bay we went up to the Trobriand Islands, Goodenough Island and

03:30 we were lucky in getting rid of the Japs off Goodenough. After that we were taken to Oro Bay and then marched up to Buna and together with the rest of the brigade we did the battle of Buna. After that we did Soputa

04:00 then Sanananda, and then we came back to Australia. We had been badly knocked about and we absorbed two more regiments to get us back to strength. We then went back to New Guinea and did the Shaggy Ridge job in the mountains.

04:30 After that we came back to Australia and we started training out at Trinity Beach out of Cairns for amphibious landings for the Borneo show. At that point I developed beri beri and was made B class. I was posted to Strathpine as adjutant of the camp there, the staging camp.

05:00 At this time - it was just prior to the atom bomb being dropped - the word got out that something big was coming up. I got the tip off to get out now because there is going to be such a rush for jobs and houses and things in a short while. I had had the necessary service and at that time the army had introduced the system of

05:30 discharging fellows who had been in five years or more. I came into that category. Incidentally in the mean time, just after I came back from the Middle East, I got married. My bride was about to inform me that she was pregnant so I thought I'll get out now. I then got a job with

06:00 Wakefield Oil Company as a salesman. All my mates had disappeared and my wife was in Queensland but she was a Sydney girl so I went to Sydney. I purchased a business which was being sold by the wife's father, and I became the proud possessor of a baby wear business which was a bit different from the engineering business in the

06:30 the army that I had known at that time. Then we had three kiddies and they are grown up now. We're now in the closing stages and we've been married for sixty-one years. My wife is still happy to talk to me, so I'm happy too. That's about it.

Thanks Angus. Ok we'll go right back to the beginning now.

07:00 Angus you had five brothers and one sister, tell us a little about growing up within such a large family?

Well, as I said previously, I'm the fifth son. I first went to school in

07:30 Montville, and being the sixth son I was down trodden a bit because we paired off. The first two brothers, Doug and Willoughby, they paired off, and the next two Rod and Garth paired off. And the next two were myself and Gordon, we paired off.

08:00 It was a very good life. We had two horses and we had two cows and we were living at Montville right on the edge of the escarpment there. By and large it was very good country life. There were no hassles, not like today. It was a very good life. From there - from Montville,

08:30 we went to Cleveland out of Brisbane, twenty three miles out of Brisbane, at Raby Bay. This was a promotion for my Dad. He had been in a school where he had two teachers under him, and he had five at Cleveland. That is where we really started to take shape. We got our first telephone there.

09:00 We were still on kerosene lights. It was a fruit growing district, and one of the advantages of being a school master was that any fruit that was too ripe for market, as a rule, the farmers would put a case of ripe fruit on the front post of the fence, and that meant that Mum and Dad

09:30 didn't have to buy any fruit for some time. We had all sorts of things from pineapples to custard apples. The same in any country town at that time, three or four people ran the whole district. And that was on every committee, it didn't matter what committee it was, local church, cultural show - the police sergeant, the local school headmaster and

10:00 the priest and the doctor were the four that ran the country town. At this point the three eldest brothers - Doug went to Brisbane Grammar School; my brother Willoughby went to the high school, and my brother Garth went to the high school, and brother Rod started there.

10:30 At this point we had a bit of bad luck in the gymnasium. Brother Willoughby had an accident when he was working on a pyramid in the physical cultural side. He was on the point of the pyramid and the belt he had on broke and he came down and he hit his back on the edge of the

11:00 stage, and that resulted in him being a half cripple for the rest of his life. And in those days it was just thought of as bad luck. Today there would be all sorts of litigation against the schools. However that was a long time ago. Well from there we went to Townsville, Townsville Central Boys.

11:30 And besides a telephone we had gas lights there. This was most unusual. We were a bit in the upper class by this time, having a telephone and a gas light. At this point electricity was introduced and we got electric light. So we had electric light, and of all things we still had a fuel stove, a wood stove,

12:00 and still no sewerage system. It was all an open pan system in the toilets. However that's how it went. So at this stage the brother Doug was learning how to be a teacher in Brisbane, and as we were in the north, he threw that job in and he took up law and he got an articled clerk's

12:30 posting with my uncle George who was a lawyer in the town. My brother Garth got a job at Dalgety. Brother Bill the cripple got a job with Burns Phillip who were island traders, and I went to the local high school, technical college.

13:00 I wasn't very fond of school. It was 1932, the Depression was on and my Dad said, "You're not prepared to study, get out and get a job." So I got a job working in an iron yard, working for an engineering supply company. Now as I

13:30 was required to have a car licence and being a country district, the boss, a fellow by the name of R.G. Steel rang up the local police sergeant and said, "I've got a lad here and I want him to have a licence." So I got a driver's licence while I was under age. My secondary education consisted of just on two and half weeks.

14:00 So that put finish to education. Now at this stage... I'd been born in 1918, and at the age of sixteen, that was 1934. I'm sorry at the age of fourteen...

14:30 In 1933, my brother Don got hit by a log. We were sneaking up out of the river to build a poultry farm. My brother Bill got the sack from Burns Phillip because things were crook. He was the shape of an inverted L. His legs came straight up and then they took off

15:00 at right angles straight ahead. He had a very keen brain though, and later on he proved just how good he was. Now Rod at this time, he also decided to do law, so he put his head down with Uncle George, also as an articled clerk, and he studied law.

15:30 The four of us all joined the army. My brother Doug had qualified as a solicitor and he had gone down to Ayr on the mouth of the Burdekin River to open up a practice. My brother Rod had gone north to Ingham

16:00 and he'd opened up a practice there. Well he tried to. For a year he just sat down in his office and waited for someone to walk through the door. They were rather tough days.

Angus can I just ask you before you all started joining the army, as kids in the various places, what sort of things would you do for fun?

16:30 We played cricket. See there were six of us so we didn't have to go very far to get a team. Townsville had good baths and prior to that we used to go to Coolum Beach. My Dad rented a cottage at Coolum Beach

17:00 which is now a fashionable resort. In those days it cost him six shillings at Christmas because there was a lot of demand for the cottages. Coolum Beach consisted of six cottages in those days, and we played on the beach there. When we were in Townsville we spent a lot of time swimming, and across the way at Magnetic Island.

17:30 We would hop on Hale's launch and get a free ride across there. So we would spend a bit of time on Magnetic Island. As we got older we all joined the rifle club with the army, the 31 Battalion. We did reasonably well there as a matter of fact. We all enjoyed rifle shooting, and in those days

18:00 everyone took their rifles home, the army rifles. At anytime in our time there were four 303 rifles, four bayonets and all the ammunition you wanted because we were in the rifle club. See today they just wouldn't permit that sort of thing. In fact weapons being carried home was permitted up to about 1948 when I was serving with the Scottish.

18:30 Apart from that, answering your question, what did we do? We had two horses incidentally. We used to ride Rocket and Darkey, and for a bit of fun you would try to ride a cow. But as you know, the hide of a cow... the hide of a horse goes fore and aft, but the hide of a cow goes fore and aft sideways too.

19:00 So you've got to be good to ride a cow. Oh, incidentally we all did something in the way of music. I learned the violin, my brother Garth became a singer, Rod was a singer, Doug was a pianist. Music played a big part in our life as a matter of fact

19:30 because a lot of social life centred around the piano. That's about it I think. The local Chinese fruiterer, a fellow called Chung Yin, he reckoned my parents were the luckiest people alive because they had six sons, and each of those sons could earn up to two pounds a week. So that was six times two and that's twelve pounds a week...and he would be the richest man in Townsville.

20:00 **Did you hear many stories about World War I as you were growing up at all?**

Yes, as a matter of fact my uncle Bert, who was at a place called Bambaroo out of Coolbie between Townsville and Ingham.

20:30 Bert had served in the Light Horse Remount section. He had served in Egypt. There was a slightly different aspect...a returned soldier in those days was respected. As a matter of fact, anyone who was not a returned soldier

21:00 got a bit of a hard time because the men folk in the country towns were absolutely decimated with the number of young fellows killed. Yes, we knew about the First World War. We had been taught at school about the battles and that sort of thing. So much so, as a matter of fact, that

21:30 ten years after the war we knew more about the First World War than the current people in 1940... 1950 knew about the Second World War. The Second World War finished in '45 and up to about two years ago my grandson didn't even know where Milne Bay was.

22:00 He had never heard of Buna. So in the curriculum of the schools after the First World War, they taught the Australian history up to the First World War. But here in New South Wales and in Queensland they just didn't do it for some reason or other.

What did your uncle tell you about his experiences in World War I?

Well he had served with the Remounts. They didn't

22:30 see any real action. Well when I say they didn't see any real action they were coming and going and at risk of the German Navy and submarines and so forth. But from the point of view of the remount unit and an infantry battalion, they had a sort of a peacetime war.

23:00 **Did you know much about the trouble in Europe and Hitler?**

Oh yes. As a matter of fact in 1933 I think it was, when the Reichstag fires were on in Germany and the Brown Shirts and the Black Shirts and Hitler were just rising.

23:30 Oh yes, we were very aware of it, and that was one of the reasons why we joined the army. My Dad's brother was Professor Albert Edwards Suthers. He was a professor of the history of religions at the Ohio Western University, Delaware Ohio. He'd gone to the First World War and he had served with the

Canadian Artillery.

- 24:00 And then immediately after the First World War he had gone to American and he followed the history of religions, and he could tell you anything about the Hottentots and the Christians and Roman Catholics and Presbyterians or whatever. All this crowd, he knew them inside out.
- 24:30 Yep, we had a pretty fair idea of what war was all about. We reasoned that war was inevitable because every country...or at least Germany was putting so much money into war industries and trying to reverse the Treaty of Versailles where
- 25:00 she was not to be rearmed... which he did. We knew darn well that something big was going to happen. It was better to be in there and know a bit about it before it started then be caught up like a lot of people were. See up till 1929 there was compulsory training, and because Australia couldn't afford it
- 25:30 it was cut out because they thought they couldn't afford it. In 1935 Billy Hughes, the ex prime minister tried to bring the citizen forces up to ten thousand men for the whole of Australia. Just imagine it. That's how weak the country defences were.
- 26:00 About 1936/37 they had increased the citizen forces to about twenty thousand and the big deal... they called for nominations for a crowd to go to the Northern Territory to defend Australia. It was called the Darwin Mobile Force and there were about five hundred of them,
- 26:30 and that was the real Australian Army. Other than that there was the Australian Instructional Corps and the Australian Staff Corps at Duntroon. But they were purely and simply the key personnel for expansion. In the case of the 31st Battalion, we had an adjutant by the name of Tensing.
- 27:00 He had seen service in the north west frontier in India. The AIC fellows, the Australian Instructional Corps men, with a fellow called McCarthy who had won a Military Medal in France in 1916 and another fellow called Garlick...he was a lieutenant in the Australian Instructional Corps.
- 27:30 **What did you know about the militia before you joined?**
- Absolutely nothing. I knew the militia were an army but that's where it started and finished. In Townsville... my Dad had been posted to Townsville Central Boys school and it was right beside the militia
- 28:00 barracks in Mitchell Street. Now as I said earlier, by joining the cadets I was able to go to camp once a year when I got my annual leave. In those days annual leave if you were in civvy street, was a week's annual leave. And the thought of being fed
- 28:30 for a week and at the end of it you got a guinea in your hand, that was a big deal and not to be sneezed at. But I can remember my mother on one occasion saying if the eggs ever went to nine pence, that's about eight cents...if they ever went to eight cents a dozen she wouldn't buy them.
- 29:00 That was it. Earlier on as kids, I know my Dad would go to Brisbane to buy a lot of shoes, second hand shoes, come home and tip them out on the floor and say, well there they are boys, and we would dive to get a pair that would fit you. Mind you Dad was never actually out of work. How the Queensland government worked things, rather than sack their teachers
- 29:30 because of a shortage of money, they made them work for four months for three months money, get the idea?
- How would they pay them though? Was it just a reduce rate?**
- No, they would just hold the cheques up, that's the easiest way. The teachers would get a cheque. In those days
- 30:00 everyone handled cheques or money. There wasn't this business of having salary paid into a bank account. That was unheard of in those days. You got the hard cash in your hand. I started in 1932 when I was fourteen, I started on five shillings and nine pence a week - that's fifty-eight cents
- 30:30 a week, and that was a forty eight hour week. But a forty-eight hour week was actually seventy. You started at seven in the morning and you didn't finish until seven at night. In theory you were working an eight and half hour a day. I used to go down and have breakfast - a slice of bread and toast, go down to the post office,
- 31:00 collect the mail, ride up to ESCA [?], open all the mail up and put it on the boss' desk, all that had to be done before eight o'clock. And then you went through the warehouse and threw down wet saw dust. You then had to go and sweep it all up because that collected all the dust off the floor. It was a larrikin set up. At any rate the
- 31:30 army in those days was very good to me. I was interested in it and they gave me a few chances. As it was I got a commission in 1938 at the start of the war. I got my first appointment.

Can you tell us a bit about militia life, what that was like?

The actual militia life was

- 32:00 darn good. It was a good fellowship. If you were in the army you always had those bright sparks - when you would ride your bike down the street they would say, "Bang bang, look out, the Japs are coming." These were your mates slinging off at you for being in the militia. I became a cadet sergeant, and then when I was eighteen I had to revert back to private and go for my stripes again,
- 32:30 and so forth. I can remember as a private soldier in 1938, we went into camp out at the showgrounds at Townsville, and in those days the army was all horses. At night the horses were tied to what they called a breast line which was a very heavy rope. The rope came off the halter
- 33:00 and that was tied onto the rope. Anyway this particular night I drew the sentry. I was on sentry duty as part of the guard, and at two o'clock I was posted on the horse lines and I will never forget it. It was a beautiful moon light night and I started to shiver a bit. So I pulled the horse's head down and I put my face on the horses nose.
- 33:30 I was just standing there with my rifle and bayonet and suddenly the horse sneezed, and I thought it was the end of the world. I thought an atom bomb had gone off. I tell you, I never got such a fright in my life. I was absolutely terrified. The small hours of the morning, a beautiful moon light night, I hadn't heard anyone approach me and suddenly this explosion.
- 34:00 I will never forget that. Any way I worked there every chance I got. Whatever was going in the way of schools I would get sent to it. I would get my name down, and I would wangle it to get to attend the schools. I did a gas warfare school at Rockhampton as a corporal in the 37th .
- 34:30 That was a good thing too. I went down on my annual leave so I had my pay from work for a week but then I got this three or four shillings down at Rockhampton, plus all the food, you got your food there. You earned every bit of it though, because you've got to remember with gas warfare it was all done
- 35:00 with gas masks and waterproof capes. Plastic was just starting to come in and we wore the ordinary ground sheets for aerial spraying and that sort of thing. But by and large it was a very good set up. We learned the weapons, we learned rifle, bayonet, grenade and Lewis guns,
- 35:30 which was a carry over from the First World War. Vickers medium machine guns, 3 inch mortars which are still being used. By and large it was a good life. As a matter of fact I've got some photographs there of the blokes from that period, and its good to look back on them. One of the fellows, I will never forget him, Frank Sleeman.
- 36:00 He became mayor of Brisbane later on after the war. Another fellow by the name of Charlie Watson. He lost his life in the Sandakan march the Japs put on. A lot of the fellows I served with of course, they got killed later on in the war.
- 36:30 But answering your question, the life in the militia was pretty good for a country boy. I became interested in the horse side of things and when I was commissioned I got a posting as a transport officer. That was very good because, while the rest of my brothers were walking I was riding. No, it was a good life, and a good friendship.
- 37:00 **Can you tell us what you had to do in the gas-training course that you were doing?**

Oh, well you start off with... you have your clothing correctly fitted. The rooms were made gas proof by hanging army blankets

- 37:30 soaked with water... they were hanging over the doorways and you had to push one aside and then let that fall and then push the next one aside and eventually you go through into the room. The actual gas... we were testing for gas. We would have to put our hands up to the side of our face and pull the side of your mask and breathe it very slowly.
- 38:00 They had mustard gas which was burns. Chlorine... mustard was the worst one. And then to actually make sure you were doing in right, occasionally you would be locked in a room and they would fill it with tear gas and if you weren't breathing correctly, you had a problem.
- 38:30 Oh no it was... incidentally, all that gas training we learnt and later on with the AIF, we never had to use it. We carried those blasted respirators with us everywhere, but it wasn't until we actually got to New Guinea, after carting them all around England and all around the Western Desert... it wasn't until
- 39:00 we got to Milne Bay that we thought to hell with this thing and we just threw them away and that was the end of it. We never had them after that, we didn't turn them in we just threw them away.

What about the gun training that you got. Did you have a favourite rifle?

As a matter of fact I was a bit lucky because I had a bit of a flare for shooting. In 1937

- 39:30 I won the North Cup. This was a cup competed for between 31 Battalion and 51 Battalion in Cairns. It was donated by a fellow called Frank North, a VC [Victoria Cross] winner from the First World War. He was a solicitor in Townsville and he was the local commander of the local

40:00 31 Battalion. Sometimes 'craft' catches up with me. Have you had any craft with any other of the other fellows that you've interviewed?

No

Craft. It's a shocking disease - 'you can't remember a flaming thing'

40:30 but it strikes you when you get on the wrong side of eighty.

Tape 2

00:31 **Angus you mentioned your sister in the break, I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about her?**

Well, she was the last of the six kiddies. There were six boys and a girl. There were seven of us, and when she arrived my old man suddenly found out what was causing them.,

01:00 So that was the end of it, and we only ever had one sister, there weren't any more children. Being a girl and six boys as I said earlier, we sort of paired off but she was common to the three groups. There was no way she would ever answer you unless you called her Thomas.

01:30 She flatly refused to wear frocks and she wanted to be like all her brothers. But she worked for Parling's, the music company in Townsville and when my Dad was transferred down to Brisbane in 1937, she went down with the family to Brisbane.

02:00 And later on, when they started the WAAAF or Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force, she joined them and she was a transport driver during the war. As I mentioned earlier about the brother Willoughby who had the accident, he ended up on refuelling American submarines in the Brisbane River.

02:30 He made such a good job of it the Shell Oil Company offered him a job. He was controlling the supply and the charging, and all this sort of thing. The Shell Oil Company offered him a job which he accepted and then Wakefield the oil company offered him a job, so he accepted that. He was still grotesquely deformed but

03:00 he had a flare for chemistry and he used to be always experimenting with oils and that sort of thing. The result was that the big chief of Wakefield Oil Company wanted to know how was it that at the Brisbane depot, the cost of oil per gallon

03:30 was way below anywhere else in the world. It was all because of the way brother Willoughby had worked out how to store oil. He had a crook heart and he generally didn't have good health. But the big chief in England directed that he be put on the permanent staff. He couldn't pass the physical,

04:00 but the boss directed that he waived and they put him on the superannuation, and he got a thousand pounds for the work he'd done. They put his pay at one pound less than the general manager. The couldn't pay him more than the general manager and he ended up in charge of the whole Wakefield distribution for the east coast of Australia.

04:30 He was a bright boy, a very bright boy. However that's how it is. My sister Gwenda, learned the piano and we all belonged to the church choir. Now in those days everyone belonged to a church, it didn't matter who you were or what you were, everyone belonged to a church.

05:00 You went to church on Sunday and that was the accepted thing. So we all sang in the various church choirs. As we got older my loyalty to the church wavered a bit. Where ever there was a pretty leg that was where I was interested. I became a Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or a Salvationist or whatever.

05:30 So did my brother actually. But you had to belong to a church, and I think in a way we had a better set up and attitude towards your fellow man than today. There was no way a boy would never strike a girl, no way in the world. The rest of us would have flattened them - you wouldn't hit a girl. Girls were girls

06:00 and they deserved respect, and by crickey you made sure you respected them. And as for swearing and using bad language in the presence of a girl - no way, you would be lower than a snake's belly to do a thing like that. And that didn't matter if you were from a well to do home or a battler's home.

06:30 Women folk were respected, there was no big deal, that was the accepted norm. By the same token in Cleveland and, Townsville and Brisbane we never ever locked a door or a window. If you were going into town, you would walk out. And if you went to see a fellow and he wasn't there you would call out. But you would never think of stealing anything.

07:00 That was par for the course. My sister ended up in the WAAAF, and she ended up marrying an air force type, John Cotha. She's still alive and living in Dubbo at the moment. She ended up... she had a family,

07:30 a girl and a boy, and young Rick Cotham - he is a doctor of agriculture and he has done particularly well

for himself curing disease in rice. He earned a year in Holland because of the way he conquered disease in rice because

08:00 the Dutch got interested in Java...in the Dutch East Indies.

Can I ask you about the day when war was declared?

Yes, the day war was declared... at that time I was full time. I had been called up.

08:30 It was rather ironical as a matter of fact. I'd made a hobby of the militia. I had just been commissioned and one day the engineering supply company where I worked... the boss came to me and said, he was a Scotsman, and he said, "Angus you have to report to Colonel North. You won't be coming back, it looks like there is going to be war," and I said, "Crikey!"

09:00 Well this suited me down to the ground because I came to be a full time soldier. And it was just by pure luck that I was picked for that job. There were other fellows more senior to me, and they were working around the town. Perhaps it was because they were married and didn't want to be called up yet. So any rate I was called up, and there were forty men also, sergeants and corporals, and riflemen.

09:30 They were called up too, and I was given the job of security officer for Townsville district which meant I had to mount a guard on 4TO and 4QN wireless station studios in the town. 4TO's wireless mast which incidentally had come from the Cocos Islands where the [SMS] Emden had been sunk in the First World War. So 4TO was in Townsville south, and out at the Alligator River at Cape Cleveland,

10:00 there was the big mast there 4QN, which was the Queensland national mast. And at Sellheim on the road to Charters Towers which would be about fifteen miles out, was the big high explosive dump for councils and people who sold gelignite to all the mining companies. That's where they stored their stuff. So I had a rifle section out there, Also

10:30 Magazine Island, which doesn't exist any more, there was a big outcrop of rock where the Wakefield Oil Company and Shell had the big oil storage tanks out on Townsville wharf. I had a post there and it was my job to make sure these fellows behaved themselves. The beauty of this of course is, in the Australian Army

11:00 it's an army of volunteers. Now sure, the fellows will kick up a row and they will object to things, but basically, they're in the show because they wanted to be in it, or they thought it was their duty to be in it, and although at times there were anxious moments, basically provided you gave the blokes a fair go they backed you up,

11:30 they were terrific. They were good. I was called up and that happened on the night war was declared.

12:00 I was already called up and it was rather funny as a matter of fact, because I was a snotty nose clerk from up at the ESCA and suddenly I was armed with a .45 revolver and the police sergeant said, "Is everything alright with you people?" He didn't kick my tail anymore because I was the boss.

12:30 The funny part of it was, I was commanding fellows who, back in civvy street, were senior to me, you know, in their jobs in the order of pecking things. One fellow as a matter of fact I later commanded when we went overseas was Jack Quail who lives out here now at Paddington. Jack was the local tailor and a men's outfitter.

13:00 One morning he had given me a kick in the tail for walking into his shop and I just threw the envelop down on the counter. He said I was cheeky and he actually kicked my backside, and the next thing I'm commanding him. But we respected each other, and Jack and I served together in the army. He always remained a private, a

13:30 bloody good soldier, and no matter what it was he never argued the toss or queried it. You would tell him to do something and that was in action or patrols or whatever. You could always count on him. By god they were good.

What kind of work were you doing? You mentioned you were rounding up people around town?

You mean Townsville?

14:00 My job was make sure those localities weren't taken over by any of the 5th Column. Well the 5th Column was a set up where Hitler had fellows who were sympathetic to him, and they were living in the cities. They were here in Sydney and everywhere else - 5th Columnists they called them. And they would have a go at disrupting ...

14:30 blowing up or setting the place on fire, or something like that, and blowing up the wireless masts.

Did you ever encounter any trouble with any one in Townsville?

Only one night, and to this day, I'm not too sure about what went on.: It was in the small hours of the morning,

15:00 and there was a fellow by the name of Dick Turpin.. not the highwayman, but this fellow Dick Turpin. I

knew Dick and he worked for AGE, Australian General Electric. Dick was on sentry duty and he swore he saw some fellow trying to get over the fence into the ordnance yard. He challenged him and he took off.

- 15:30 You could just imagine in the town when you start discharging a service rifle. The police wanted to know what was going on, and the colonel wanted to know. Turpin swears he saw someone trying to get in. I have my doubts. I think Dick was a bit bored and he thought he would stir us up. I could be wrong, but that's how it goes.

Was there a sense at the time that joining up and going to war

- 16:00 **was for Australia or for Britain? Was there a sense of being part of the Empire?**

Oh my word! We were very much part of the Empire. The mother country of course, was in trouble. See at that time...

- 16:30 well it goes back a hell of a long time now, you could bet your bottom dollar that one of the parents had been born in England, or Scotland, Ireland or Wales. There were a hell of a lot of Irish girls and Scottish girls, but there were very few from Germany. In South Australia there was a big German

- 17:00 influence and influx there, but that had been from way back. In Queensland, crikey, I have forgotten the name of the town now, but there was a big German population around there. Funny you know because all these fellows they interned them - they interned the Germans purely and simply because they had been born in Germany,

- 17:30 and that carried on up to the Second World War. When we were in England I had a sergeant by the name of Eric Burgdorf, and next thing I had to find out exactly where Burgdorf had been. He'd joined us from the 51 Battalion, a far north Queensland regiment.

- 18:00 They were so suspicious of him that they sent him back to the training battalion as an instructor. He was a damn good sergeant, but they thought it was a bit risky to send him forward. They thought he might betray a post or something, and by that time we were fighting Germans again up in the Western Desert. That's how it goes.

So where did you move from Townsville? What was your next move?

- 18:30 Well, what happened then, at the outbreak of war, I had already been called up. The battalion went out into camp at Townsville showgrounds and they called for enlistments for the 2nd AIF. Now a whole lot of fellows joined up

- 19:00 and I was sent by...The CO [Commanding Officer] he called him in and said I was to take a draft of recruits down to the Redbank training depot which was out at Ipswich...out of Brisbane. So I got a train load of troops and away we went. So I'm a member of the 31st Battalion and I've got a bunch of

- 19:30 newly enlisted civilians all in civilian clothes, and down we go to Redbank. When we got down there I was ordered to remain. I got an order from the camp commandant to say that the military secretary had said I had to remain there as an instructor. And it so happened I was given a Depot Company and in the competition and we came out on top and we won the

- 20:00 best company in the depot which was rather ironical because I had my brother Garth there. He was in another company, and at any rate I was the little brother, but my company did him. It was a rather funny set up in those days because... I will never forget, it was the first time in Townsville.

- 20:30 The battalion was mustered there, and these are fellows from Ingham, Charters Towers, Bowen, Ayr and Townsville. It was roughly eight hundred men now, full time camp. At night time there was what you call a military picket - a sergeant and generally an officer and a couple of corporals and they wear side arms. They just wear a bayonet.

- 21:00 And they are not allowed to use it unless they are going to use it. You don't pull it and threaten a bloke. If you pull it out you use it. It's like the laws covering hand guns now. You don't pull a hand gun unless you are going to use it. In other words you've got to commit yourself and let a bloke know you are fair dinkum. You don't pull side arms unless they're going to be used. It's a wicked weapon a bayonet. It's a bugger of a thing.

- 21:30 Anyway on this particular night I was to commission the local town picket, and the fellows were all from the air detachment and one of them was my brother, my eldest brother Doug. I'll never forget it. I was given this guard and I read out the duties and

- 22:00 and I said now, we had to go here, there and everywhere, and I said the first place we go when you leave here, you go over and check the leave passes of the blokes in Sacks Street. And well... in town in Queensland, all brothels are registered in those days, they still are. And what we

- 22:30 had to do was go through the brothels and check all the blokes leave passes and make sure there weren't fellows absent without leave and should have been back in camp. We had a truck that we used to put them into. I'm looking at them and the sergeant of the guard is my own eldest brother and he said, "Sir may I speak to you?" and I said "Yes Sergeant, what's the problem?"

- 23:00 He marched out and did a number one salute and said, "Look," he said, "You know this business of the brothels, if Mum ever heard of you going into a brothel, oh God she'd die." And I said "Sergeant you get back to your bloody position, I'm in charge of this picket." And the first house we went to there were three or four girls there plying their trade and I said, "Sergeant hold the picket line I'm going in here." Well, he could have cut my throat and there wasn't a thing he could do about it.
- 23:30 His little brother you know, so it was a funny turn out. My God from then on, if you were detailed for guard duty then you did that. You did the pubs and all the sleazy joints around the place. And here in Sydney you had the Palms which was a brothel, and you had a high class pick up joint which was Romano's Night Club. ,
- 24:00 Quite respectable people went there, and all the high fluting girls they went there too. It was a funny set up. I remember one night when I was down here on leave. Lorna... this would have been about 1943, Lorna was going to a lecture with the Red Cross.
- 24:30 She would go and work at St. Vincent's at night. At that time we had had three years of war and I thought this thing has got to finish sooner or later. So I took on diesel engineering and the school where you learnt the game was down on top of Wynyard Station. So I went down there this night, and Lorna had to go to a Red Cross meeting.
- 25:00 Where she went was opposite the old Metropolitan Hotel. At any rate I'm standing outside the Metropolitan waiting for her and one of the girls came up and said, "Do you want a girl for the night?" And I said, "No my wife's over there," Lorna was over there with a couple of her mates, and I just talked to the girl for a while and asked her how trade was and so forth.
- 25:30 Any way, I said, "Listen lass, good luck. I had better go," and the girl walked that way and Lorna said, "Who was that," I'll never forget it. She had her cousin with her and I said, "Oh I don't know what her name was, she's just a prostitute." And the girls said, "What?" I'll never forget it because they had never seen a prostitute and they expected to see a girl with horns coming out.
- 26:00 It was a funny thing and you wouldn't believe that there could be such a reaction. Any way that was a long time ago. The next thing that happened was, back at Redbank, the 2/12th Battalion to which I was to be posted... the battalion headquarters and headquarter company came
- 26:30 from Tasmania. A, B, C and D Rifle Company...no, A Company came from Tasmania. B, C and D came from North Queensland - that was Mackay north. The 2/9th Battalion had already been formed and my brother was in it and that came from all over Queensland.
- 27:00 At any rate we were ordered, all the fellows who had applied to join the AIF, we were all ordered into Kelvin Grove drill hall in Brisbane for interrogation and examination, and find out what we knew about things. So together with about two hundred other blokes I went to the Kelvin Grove drill hall, and the first thing that happened to us, out came one of these Australian Instructional Corp first class warrant officer and he said,
- 27:30 "Right oh, you fellows, you are all students now. Don't mind your ranks, strip." I said, "What's that?" He said, "I said, strip." Well you stripped and I stripped down to my underpants. "Are you deaf, I told you to so and so strip," and here's these two hundred odd blokes just standing around
- 28:00 in the Kelvin Grove drill hall with not a stitch on. Well I will never forget it. First of all they had us running around with not a stitch on and you could just imagine it. Once we were really puffing they had a team of doctors there and they listened to your heart and your lungs. You had to breath in. And still naked, you had to go and sit in a chair and a block had a look in your ears.
- 28:30 Another fellow examined your eyes and the next thing the dentist opened your mouth to find out how many crook teeth you had. I will never forget that, and we were there all the morning. We were allowed to get roughly dressed for lunch and then strip down again and walk around. There was a bunch of officers sitting back at the table,
- 29:00 all senior blokes, watching us. Any rate, the next thing we were told to get dressed again and it was, 'Right, the following officers have selected for artillery.' The artillery blokes were trying to get away. There were Pioneers, Infantry 2/12th Battalion, and I thought, you bloody beauty, I've made it. So
- 29:30 at that point I was in the army. I dropped my militia number and I became QX6040 Queensland Expeditionary Force. They started the numbers for the officers from six thousand up, and I was 6040. If I had been called Abraham or something I would have been QX01. So I was the fortieth bloke to be enlisted.
- 30:00 You always rubbished the bloke with a bigger number, "Oh where were you when the bugle went?"

Did you ever work out why you had to be naked for those tests?

I'm blowed if I know. Well hang on let's stop and think. Well for one thing if... yes I have never stopped to think about that.

- 30:30 At the moment if I stripped off... I've got a gash running from there and right around there. You can hardly see the scar now because I had it done about four years ago. I had a hernia and when the doctor examined me they thought the hernia was here, but when they opened me up it was there.
- 31:00 Now had any of those fellows had hernias they would have been knocked out. They wouldn't have been accepted and where ever else they might have been operated on. Funny thing that business about operating...there was one fellow... later on he died in the second New Guinea show. His name was Willis. He was the son of the commissioner of railways Queensland.
- 31:30 His appendix... I think it is on your right side normally... and his appendix was over on the left. Any rate he was complaining of stomach ache and this that and the other, and at any rate when they opened him up he didn't have an appendix. It had become peritonitis by then, and they thought well where the hell is it?
- 32:00 And they found it right around. You wouldn't credit that. That was another thing that happened back in civvy street. The brother...yes, this answers your question. I've never stopped to think about it. The brother had had peritonitis and he had been selected out here. He had joined the army as a private. And he had been promoted to corporal and sergeant and then he'd been selected to go to... this was 1939 beginning of 1940.
- 32:30 He'd had peritonitis in Townsville, and we were boarding, then. Mum and Dad were in Brisbane. So we thought we would fix him up and we gave him a tablespoon of castor oil. It was the worst thing we could have done, and he's got three holes. He's got one there and one there and one there.
- 33:00 They put tubes into him and in the Palms Hospital, they were dripping into a jam tin, you can imagine the stink. We went up to see him and it was unbelievable.

Can you possibly tell me about when you found out you were leaving Australia and were going overseas?

- 33:30 Yes, in April... We were suppose to go to... We were the 6th Division, and in those days there were four battalions to a brigade, and about that time they reduced it to three battalions.
- 34:00 Now it was one, two, three and four...was the 2/1st they called it. Then 2/2nd, 2/3rd, 2/4th. That was 16 Brigade. Then 5, 6, 7, 8 were the 17th Brigade, and 9, 10, 11 and 12 were the 18th Brigade. Now
- 34:30 what happened in April, I was a platoon commander commanding 13 Platoon, C Company. The company commander was a fellow called Bill Warner. He came from Cairns. We didn't have a second in command, we had another officer with us. I had 13 Platoon and 14 Platoon was commanded by a fellow called Bernie Lavelle.
- 35:00 Now in April, Warner went to Green Hills which is now a suburb and was then an artillery firing range. He went out to witness a demonstration of some of these new artillery pieces, twenty five pounders which were to replace the First World War eighteen pounders. So he went out there and on the way back a fellow called Eddy Peak from the 2/19th said to the driver...
- 35:30 we were just getting rid of horses and into motor cars, at that time...anyway Eddy said to the truck driver, "Move over and let's get a feel of this thing," and he rolled it over and he smashed Warner up, and Warner ended up with smashed legs. This was about a week and half before we were due to board the transport.
- 36:00 So the old man sent for me or I was sent for by the old man, Colonel Field and he said, "Suthers, we have lost Captain Warner," and he told me what had happened, so he said "All the embarkation rolls have been made out and we can't do anything about it now. You're to take over C Company and we will sort it out when we get on board the transport." I said, "Very good sir" and out I went and I am suddenly a company commander.
- 36:30 You wouldn't read of it. So away we went and we went down and there was the blooming [HMS] Queen Mary, a thumping great ship. So I went on board the Queen Mary and there were guides on board to take the troops down to their quarters, and there were other guides to take officers to their quarters and I was given a cabin with a bloke called Pat Rafferty, an intelligence officer. He got killed later in Milne Bay.
- 37:00 Any rate the company were taken down, and it was three days before I could find them after that. But the Queen Mary had been caught in Liverpool at the outbreak of war. She had gone to New York, picked up a scratch crew and come out to Australia.
- 37:30 The troops, the infantry men on that ship, when we sailed, every rifle section of one NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] and nine men, every one of them had a steward. Not every man but every section had a steward, and in our case, Pat Rafferty and I, we had the head steward, a fellow called Ben. I will never forget him, a cracker bloke. So Ben was the head steward on the Queen Mary,
- 38:00 and Ben really knew his way around. And in theory Ben could get you anything. Oh God, he was an extraordinary bloke. My rifle men, every bloke had access to a steward and of course after we went to

England they pulled the guts out of it. Everyone either slept on the deck or in a hammock. Oh no we lived like gentlemen there was no two ways about it.

- 38:30 One of the funny thing at Ingleburn while we were training, we had an Assistant Adjutant. The adjutant was a staff corps fellow called Colin Fraser, who later commanded the battalion and he commanded the Vietnam boys. He ended up a major general. He only died the other day.
- 39:00 The assistant adjutant was a fellow called Sharp, and in civvy street we found out...Like everyone, I had listed against my name, engineering clerk. But against his occupation was gentleman,
- 39:30 and he was one of these ticket of leave fellows who came from an extremely wealthy family and he had been paid to stay in Tasmania. Just what had happened I wouldn't have a clue and he was quite a boy, oh Douglas was quite a boy, you have no idea. And all of the subalterns, country blokes like myself we didn't know beef from a bulls foot.
- 40:00 Anyhow, one afternoon we get the order, "All subalterns are to report to the assistant adjutant." So up we go. He was a pretty powerful bloke in our eyes. He was a captain and we were just lieutenants. "Right now, I'm not happy about the way some of you fellows are behaving. Now we shall learn some common manners," and to our amazement he had ordinary cups, and he said, "Right now each one of you get hold of a cup. Now the way to drink tea is to hold the cup," And the bloody finger...mine is crooked with arthritis now, "...but you have to cock that finger like that and don't drink it down, just sip it." Well we are gentlemen by an act of parliament but by gee we weren't gentlemen by nature. You can imagine. And the next thing, in comes our mess steward and he's got fingers of toast and on each one is a bloody sardine. "Now this is called an entrée. What you do is you take it like this and just bite a bit at the end." So we're eating sardine on a bit of cold toast.

Tape 3

- 00:31 **I wanted to talk to you about arriving in England and what your first impression were?**

Well actually we arrived in Gourock which is the port for Glasgow and Dunkirk had just gone and we were ordered down in battle order.

- 01:00 That is we had haversacks on our backs, we were issued with ammunition and grenades, and down we went to Salisbury. We were the best-equipped troops in England at the time because the British Army had left all their gear over in France. I doubt very much if we could
- 01:30 have fought our way out of a paper bag because we'd been six weeks at sea, and sure we had done physical jerks and all that sort of thing, but we were as soft as putty. But any rate we went down to Loughton Corner. Now it was spring time and all the fields were covered in red poppies. It was beautiful country. We had left Australia in the middle of a
- 02:00 drought - in 1939. Ingleburn had been a dust bowl. We were in Salisbury and all these beautiful green fields. That was very good. Then we had to learn to live dispersed, and I had C Company in a little copse of trees by a Hawthorn hedge.
- 02:30 There was a worry about German paratroopers landing at night, and there was a funny incident. I had two fellows in C Company, one was Dick Condon who became a big name in cattle in Queensland, and the other was a hard case called Bluey Mansfield. He used to have a postal run from Mt. Isa to Camooweal in
- 03:00 Queensland. Well this particular night Condon and Mansfield were on a road block. The road block consisted of forty four gallon drums on end which are filled with earth, and they go half way across the road and then they come half way back, so it forces a vehicle to slow down to come through.
- 03:30 Any rate, in due course along came a vehicle with hooded lights, the black out lights that vehicles used to have in those days. Condon walked forward with a smoky kerosene light and opened the door and put the light to see who was in the back, and it was General Morsehead, Sir Lesley Morsehead, our brigade commander with his brigade major.
- 04:00 And he tapped Condon on his tin hat with his swagger stick, and he said, "What do you think would happen if I had been a German paratrooper?" And to his horror, right down on the floor of the car, he found he found himself looking down the barrel of a Thompson machine gun and Bluey Mansfield said, "You'd have shit your pants."
- 04:30 Well the poor old Brig. Mansfield had this thing, and the safety catch was off at the Brig at a range of about three feet. He was looking straight down the barrel. Well, at about midnight I was sent for... the Brigade Commander wanted to see me and he told me to get back and teach them the correct way to challenge. I will never forget him and the Brig would not have forgotten him either.
- 05:00 Any rate, at that point we went on to training in England and this was the type of thing that happened. We were on night training, and this particular night, it was summer time and so it was short nights you

see. This particular night,

- 05:30 at some ungodly hour of the morning, I was working in the back of the truck and suddenly the blackout, the two flaps at the back of the truck went up, and this bloke Condon and a company runner called Freddie Canard, they heaved a bag in and it went plonk just behind where I was sitting in the company commander's truck. I looked around and they were covered in blood.
- 06:00 Their respirators, their faces, they were in a hell of a mess. I said, "What the bloody hell is going on?" And they had knocked off one of Captain Dalgety's pigs. A little pig and they had killed it. They put it in there and said, "Look after him Skipper, we can use this." Well any way we did eat well for the next couple of days. Rations were a bit short.
- 06:30 But it was rather funny because the flocks of sheep over there... the English shepherd knows his sheep. He might only have a hundred or so but our blokes were used to Western Queensland and bloody great herds of sheep. And if you wanted a sheep you killed a sheep and you used it. So rations were a bit short. Now one of our fellows in B Company was Lofty Cox who's still on deck today.
- 07:00 Any rate Lofty - he was a typical far western bloke. He would get a sheep and go to a field where it had just been freshly ploughed - and all the fields were freshly ploughed. We got there just at the start of summer, and
- 07:30 he would kill the sheep. He would dress it on its own hide, and all the entrails he would bury in the furrows and then he'd reshape the furrows. You could look at that the next morning and all the furrows were there. So there was no way you would know where that sheep's gut was because he would
- 08:00 remake the furrow. It was unbelievable. So any rate B Company always lived well up there. This bloke, he did the same with the cattle up on Milne Bay. He was a whizzer, a good thing to have a bloke like that. But any rate, that was our introduction to Gerry there. Our first battle casualty, first enemy casualty. A bloke was killed
- 08:30 by a German plane that came in over my lines actually, early one morning with a heavy fog. Our job at that time was to provide ground defence for the villages there...the Wallop fighter drome. There were three villages there: Middle Wallop, Over Wallop and Little Wallop, and there were Spitfires there.
- 09:00 Any rate, we were guarding the aerodrome and this morning a plane came in, it was a very foggy morning and he opened up and he killed one of the 9th Battalion blokes, not in our battalion. We always worked as a brigade.
- 09:30 And just after that we went on leave to London for forty eight hours. That was a darn good break after being at sea and training, and they pulled...all officers were taken from their companies and a bunch of
- 10:00 British Army officers took over and a bunch of warrant officers from the British Army took us over. Well they bored it into our blokes while we got bored by the Poms for a week. We learned a lot though.

What sort of things would they be teaching you?

- 10:30 Oh, primarily straight out drill and to smarten yourself up and act like a soldier. But it did us good because we had been at sea for six weeks. They would make us run around and around. But they did straighten us up there is no two ways about that. Each night there was a ceremonial guard mounting at six o'clock each night.
- 11:00 They were really good. They were so good in fact that later on within two months we were invited...well Churchill inspected us, the King inspected us. General Ironside the GOC [General Officer Commanding] British Forces inspected us, and we were invited to mount a guard at Buckingham Palace. There was a lot of competition for that. But
- 11:30 we were pulled out before we could do it actually. But there was rather a funny thing there. All this time I had been acting as a company commander, and the next thing Churchill came and inspected us and right that was right. We had a King's corporal with us, a fellow called Paddy Blake. He'd been promoted corporal by George the 5th in action. He wore crossed sabres across his two hooks and there was nothing they could do about him. The only bloke
- 12:00 who could bring him down a peg was the King. The King made him and no one else could do it, that's fair enough. And the next thing the King came down to inspect us. I have a photograph of the company moving out there...the inspection by the King. And in due course there was an order, "Company commanders fall out." So I was commanding C Company and with the other company commanders I handed over to my second and marched up the front.
- 12:30 And Kempton, he and headquarter company, and Cummings and Gear and myself, the five company commanders. Any way the CO said to King George the 5th, "I would like to introduce Major Kempton," and Major Kempton gave him a salute, and then he came to me and he said, "I would like you to meet
- 13:00 Mr. Suthers," and the King said, "How do you do Captain Suthers?" Well that's really... well I was about tenth in the line of seniority and he said, "How do you do Captain Suthers?" And not a word was said and as soon as we came off the parade the old man said, "Well you had better put a third pip on

Suthers," "Very good sir," and I came through in UK orders promoted a new captain about fourteen days later.

- 13:30 But in seniority I was way down the list, and there were all these other blokes due for promotion. Up as far as captain is by seniority and then major by selection. I was as popular as a skunk at a garden party, you could just imagine.

How did the other fellows react to that?

A bit like the treasurer reacted to the prime minister last night, he wasn't amused.

- 14:00 He had had a happier day, oh gawd that was it.

How did the Australian soldiers get on with the English in general?

Oh, all right, they tolerated the Poms though. They were okay. I will never forget Reg Cutler. He was a schoolteacher back here but he went on leave to London,

- 14:30 and two British Red Caps came along and they looked at him. Our blokes all wore tan boots but in the British Army the private soldiers wore black boots. No one other than officers wear tan boots, and our blokes had tan boots.
- 15:00 And the Red Caps said, "Are you an officer?" And Reg said, "No," "Take those boots off." And Reg said, "Go to billyo (or words to that effect)." Any rate the copper grabbed him and Reg hauled off and hit him and flatten him. And Brown, the sergeant who was with him, well he flattened the two of them cold.
- 15:30 Well that was it, and then the boys took off. Well these bloody coppers were certain.... And the next day they were down at the camp and they suddenly realised that all the people around them had got on tan boots. It was unbelievable and this was the sort of thing that happened you know.
- 16:00 We didn't have an Australian flag with us, so Blackey Maxwell decided that he would get an Australian flag. So he went around to Australia House and he said he would like to have a look around and, oh yes, that's okay. There was an Australian flag on the mast. So some attendants
- 16:30 showed Private Maxwell over the building sort of thing, and Blackey said, "Oh I just want to have a look around from the roof, I'll be right you go on." And he took the flag down and he has still got it today. It went everywhere with us after that. Later on I got a red one but this was blue. The one I've got is red, but by God he was a funny man. A good bloke Maxwell.
- 17:00 Then the next thing was we were given six days leave and Garth and I decided that we would go to Scotland to dig out where our ancestors came from. And we arrived up in Glasgow and there was a little tiny short fellow there, very well dressed with a bowler hat on. Garth and I get off the train and
- 17:30 I've got these three pips up, and he's got two up, and this bloke came over and he said, "Hello, whereabouts are you from?" and I spun around and I said, "Blow through. Where we are from is our business and not yours." He said, "Oh I should have introduced myself. My name is Forsyth,
- 18:00 the Chief Constable of Scotland." You talk about Scottish hospitality. Then we said, "Have you got any identification?" And he pulled it out and showed us. He was the chief constable all right, and he said, "Are you up on leave?" and he said, "I served with the watch in the First [World] War and we fought with the Australians, I've got a lot of respect for you fellows."
- 18:30 Gawd we're living on the deeds of the race ahead of us, you know. Well that's very nice and out we wen. He lived at Battlefield Road, Cathcart, a suburb of Glasgow. And Maureen and he gave us a daughter each and a car and there was petrol rationing. Don't talk to me about Scottish hospitality.
- 19:00 "Oh high tea will be at five o'clock." What's this bloody high tea business you see. And at five o'clock they have cucumber sandwiches, a cup of tea, little scones and this sort of thing. And after that you go and have a bath or a shower and then you get dressed for dinner and dinner is half past eight.
- 19:30 But you have hight tea at five o'clock. It was unbelievable, and talk about boys from the bush. Any rate the next day, we had the two girls, and we had this motor car, and away we went to have a look at Scotland, and talk to me about Scottish hospitality, it was unbelievable. Any rate the second or third night we were there, the first raid on Glasgow happened.
- 20:00 The sirens went and the first German raid on Glasgow took place. We all went outside to have a look and the two girls were a bit frightened so we comforted them, "Darling we'll look after you." It was a funny turn out. But at any rate we went back to Salisbury.
- 20:30 Two of my blokes, Grabner and Dale they disappeared, and under the army law if they were absent with out leave for twenty one days they were deserters. So on the twentieth day they came back and promptly got locked up in the battalion lock up. That night they talked their way out of the lockup and blew through again for another twenty days. Oh they were buggers.
- 21:00 And what had happened was, somewhere after Manchester there was a publican and the publican was very keen on one of his bar maids. And Dale got very keen on the publican's wife and Grabner was given

the job of running the till. Those blokes would have got away with bloody murder.

- 21:30 Any rate all the time we were in England I never saw the buggers. As soon the time was up they came back. They were shockers. I had an orderly room corporal by the name of Bill Briskey, and his mate was my quartermaster sergeant, a bloke by the name of Andy Hardy. Sounds like the fellow who used to in films. One night Hardy and Briskey came to me, and Briskey was the wardroom corporal. He knew more about the company than I did.
- 22:00 He was like the boss' secretary. He knew all about everything. Any rate they marched in and stood to attention, and Hardy being quartermaster sergeant - he was senior to Briskey of course, he said, "Sir I've got a problem," "Yes?"
- 22:30 "Do you believe in the hereafter?" and I said, "Christ," and I said, "Yes, and I advise you that if you believe in the hereafter everything will fall into place." He said, "Good sir, well we're here after leave."
- 23:00 I said, "Away you go." But at the time it was summer time and they have long evenings in England in summer, and I'm out with Lavelle. By this time he was my second in command. He was a platoon commander earlier on. Any rate we were out doing some reconnaissance for some stunt
- 23:30 we had to for night training the following week, and we're standing at the side of the road and along came a hearse. And in the back where you normally keep the coffin ...you've got glass panels on the hearse... here's Briskey and Hardy sitting in the back of it like this and waving.
- 24:00 What had happened was the hearse had come along with a coffin and they... they were going down to Portsmouth, and they wanted to go to Portsmouth and they said "How about a lift?" and the bloody driver said "Righto." Underneath that viewing platform there is a space and they pulled the bloke out and put him under there, and Briskey and Hardy hopped in the back with the coffin.
- 24:30 Fair dinkum some of the things they came out with, you wouldn't believe them.

Did you ever have to discipline these fellas?

Oh too right, and the best thing you would give them, "Righto you can have three days confined to barracks," and that was one thing they hated because if you were confined to barracks,

- 25:00 whenever the bugler blows the defaulters you've got to be with the bugler... The orderly officer usually makes it a minute, half a minute, or two minutes depending on the size of the battalion area. And you would say to the bugler "blow defaulters", and if you're not there within the thirty seconds or a minute or whatever time he has arranged you would have another day of being confined to barracks.
- 25:30 Oh the blokes hated it and they would rather have a fine any day. You would fine them five bob or something.

Did any of the fellas run out of money?

Oh no, see they had a system. Although everyone got paid individually,

- 26:00 everyone shared their money. There was one bloke there, I've forgotten who he was, the blokes had run out of money and this fellow was always a bit cautious with his. So they conned him into lending them some money for betting on horses. But at any rate they blew the lot. As a matter of fact the story is in those books there.
- 26:30 They said, "Sorry about that," and "Oh well that's the way life is you know." They were very fair with each other. They played but oh gawd, they would never let a mate down no way, they were very good that way.

Did you see anything of the blitz?

- 27:00 Gawd did we ever. Yes as a matter of fact one night they came across. Our lines were here and the 2/9th Battalion lines would have been round about where Northmead is, down the end of the road there. And this particular night this flaming bomber came over and he dropped three bombs which landed
- 27:30 on our the battalion lines and he also dropped a Molotov bread basket. A Molotov bread basket was a thumping big bomb full of incendiaries. And what happened was they let this thing go and a little bit on the way down, there was a propeller business on the front, and that would undo the casing of the bomb and all these little
- 28:00 bombs, these phosphorus bombs fell out. Well there was only one way to put them out because and they lit up the whole area like a search light you know, there were hundreds of these blooming things. And the only way to put them out was to take a shovel and cover them with earth, to cut the air off and they would go out. My brother Garth realised what had happened and he got his platoon out. He had a platoon by this time, the 2/9th.
- 28:30 He got up on the hill to a place called Milking Corner where this bomb was lighting up the whole area for miles. So he got up there with his blokes and they got stuck into them with shovels and covered

them with earth. It was hard, hot job and dangerous but Garth did a bloody good job that night. Any rate at this time I was ordered to

- 29:00 attend a fortnight company commanders school down at Chichester, and this was run by the British Army, and the fellows attending had already seen service in France. Well next door to where we were there was a place called Ford.
- 29:30 Ford was a Naval air station and they had a lot of aeroplanes there. On this particular day a plane came over and dropped a bloody bomb fair on top of the school. We were in slit trenches beside the school and there was a hell of a loud bang. And what had happened was the plane itself had been bit by an anti aircraft gun,
- 30:00 and down the plane had come and blown itself up. And up in the tree above... The slit trench was down here but the tree was growing up and I looked up and there was blood on my tunic. And I thought what the bloody hell, and the pilot's leg
- 30:30 was up in the tree. And the bloody thing was straight above me and I thought, bloody hell. Anyhow, Rider, a fellow called Major Rider from the Scottish Border Regiment he said, "Get up there and get rid of the bloody thing." So I climbed the tree and he said, "Can you climb the tree?" and I said, "Yes I can climb a tree," and
- 31:00 he said, "You get one of the blokes to climb the tree, you don't climb it yourself, my God." So anyway I climbed the tree and I got this darn thing, blow me down he still had the German parachute release thing on him and I gave that to my grandson about a fortnight ago.

How much of the pilot was left?

- 31:30 His leg, well this section of his leg. He didn't want it any more. Oh no it was a bad time but it was rather funny because once they blew the school up we got four days leave until they could get reorganised. So away we went and we went to Midhurst and that was a town near by. The pub there
- 32:00 is called The Spread Eagle, a magnificent old pub. You went in and there was a staircase going up and the stairs went to the right and to the left, with this landing half way down sort of thing On there was a bit of platform and on it was standing a suit of armour with a bloody great sword. Now these fellows
- 32:30 who used to wear armour, they weren't big men, they were only little fellas, it was extraordinary. So we got a few sherbets across our chests and someone said, "Hey listen Gus do you reckon you could fit in that?" I thought, I'll fit into that bloody thing. So at any rate they took this suit of armour apart. They took the helmet off and the chest piece and they stood me up in this bloke's pants, the steel pants.
- 33:00 But on the toes of the armour...the armour came forward and there was a long sharp pointed bit on each toe. Well that's all right if you are on a horse, but if you try to walk in them. Any way they put that on me and then they got the chest piece on me and it had leather straps on it. But there was a gap here of about six inches or so and then they put this bloody helmet on me.
- 33:30 Just as they did that the goddamn siren went. There was an air raid, and the next thing bong all the lights went out. And without thinking I went to step forward and these great bloody long pointed toes you can't walk in this thing. It's alright if you are sitting on a horse. And so I went clunk, clunk, clunk down the stairs. Gawd, well people were yelling out "What's going on?"
- 34:00 And then the boys ripped my head off and got me out of it. But I had sword and we went outside and we laid down in the ditch and along came a truck. So we thought blow lying here any longer, but the all clear hadn't gone. But this truck came along and we wanted to go back to where we were stationed in this school. So the bloke took us
- 34:30 and I woke up next morning in bloody bed with this bloody sword. And I brought it home with me and I only gave it to young Stewart the other day. It was a beautiful weapon. But any rate the next thing was, there was a fellow doing the school from the Norwegian Air Force. His name was John Schou. He was a Norwegian pilot and they had lost all their planes. So
- 35:00 they were turning them into infantrymen. His name was John, and John and I took off and we hired bicycles and we went to have a look at the south coast. Well the law was never take your dog tags off and we'd taken ours off,
- 35:30 we had gym shoes on, you know. They were ordinary sand shoes on, shorts and no real identification as to who we were. So we went down there, and the nearest place was Bognor Regis. That was the name of the town. It was a village on the water front. It was just on the Dover Straits see. So we rode around and had a look around and
- 36:00 the next thing we could hear someone calling us. I looked around and here's a ruddy English copper with the English policeman's helmet on, and I sort of said "Hey how you going mate?" And he said, "I want to talk to you." I said, "Hey John there is a copper behind us, we'd better talk to him." So we just pulled up and sat there until he rode up.
- 36:30 He was puffing a bit and he said, "Where are you from and what are you doing here?" and bloody John

went and said "I'm, I'm, I'm.." and he sounded for all the world like a German trying to speak English. He had this guttural pronunciation. He was speaking mangled English. And then I bought in and he looked at me and he looked at John, and he said,

- 37:00 "You two come back to the station with me." So around we go and the bloody Pommy police sergeant looked at us and he said "Lock them up." There was no identification and everyone had to have identification and like I have my identity card there now. Any rate we sat in the cell and the next thing... there's a little peephole in the door...
- 37:30 and a bloke came along and I said, "How long are you keeping us here?" We told them where we were from, Shropwith House they called it and we waited and we waited, and the next thing the flap at the bottom of the door opened and in came two plates with a bit of tucker on them. That was our tea and next thing through the same hole came a blanket. And a voice said,
- 38:00 "You can share that between you." They had rung up Shropwith House and asked for Rider, the instructor bloke and he told them who we were, and said "Oh that's where they are. I'll come and get them in the morning." So we spent the night locked up in this bloody little cell. God it was cold, I will never forget it, and every now and again a copper would come along and have a look.
- 38:30 Oh it was a funny set up. Any rate from there we were ordered... Oh before that. We had to do night training and the army... fair dinkum I will never forget this, some of the bright ideas they had. One day, see the nights were getting very short, very short and we had to do night training.
- 39:00 so the army gave us welder's goggles, you know these... and we had to put these on. It was daylight and you would put these black welder's goggles on to give the effect of night. But it doesn't always work that way because on the blackest night there is always a little star light and you can see an outline, something you can relate to. But with these... and you put on these bloody welder's goggles and try to walk around.
- 39:30 God knows what it cost the government but there were blokes walking around bumping each other and we couldn't see, no one could see. At two o'clock in the afternoon we're suppose to be doing night exercises wearing these bloody goggles.

What sort of things were they expecting you to do with them on?

Well you had to dig a hole,

- 40:00 march down the road and you couldn't see where the bloody road was. When you do... at night time, and you can try this anywhere, when you walk outside at night you can see something. Sure it's black but you put on goggles and you can't see a bloody thing. You just can't see the wall there.
- 40:30 I mean if you wear welder's goggles you can't see. So the army bought hundreds of these bloody goggles. Honestly some of the things that happened. It was pathetic.

Tape 4

- 00:31 About this time we were equipped with Thompson sub machine guns and we moved across to Colchester. Now the Royal Tank Corps came down to see us and give us a demonstration on how tanks work and how infantry work with tanks and so forth. Our
- 01:00 transport platoon was given the job of playing enemy for the day and these brand new tanks came along and we had the Tommy infantry and our blokes got down, and the theory was you let the tanks go through and then you take on the infantry coming up behind them. And our blokes said, "Oh well we can do a bit better than that."
- 01:30 And so in inspecting the tanks they realised that the tanks breathe... that the fellows in the tank breathe via a pump that was driving air in. So they had a couple of smoke generators and as these tanks came up they just pulled the pins on the smoke generators and put them on the intake valves and the tanks filled up with
- 02:00 smoke and the poor buggers inside couldn't breath. They had to stop, open up and get out. The smoke's pouring out. I will never forget it. There was a Pommy major there and this is a brand new tank and he said, "Oh I say old boy that's not cricket."
- 02:30 And Danny Low said "We're not playing bloody cricket." But thank God the Pommies did it because they immediately rang up army headquarters and they got on to the fellows building these tanks, and they said, "Now look we have got to have a different set up. We can't have the air to keep blowing it out. The air will find its way in."
- 03:00 But my God it was unbelievable. And they were going to show us how good these tanks were and they were bloody hopeless the way they were then. Later on of course they were very good. We had job of

defending the east coast of England from Colchester. Now Colchester is a permanent garrison town and they normally have the Coldstream Guards there.

- 03:30 We were given Seton barracks. Now in the British Army the regimental parade ground is a most sacred place and you never cross it, you walk around it. And the only time you walk on it is when you are ordered on to it. That's part of the tradition of the army. Our blokes didn't quite see it that way because they couldn't see any point in walking all way around this bloody thing. The barrack master,
- 04:00 who had a permanent army posting there - they have what they call a barrack master and he is a Pommy army bloke. He wasn't amused. The first thing we found when we went in was each platoon was given a brick building enough to hold... There was a room at the end for a sergeant and there were forty beds, twenty down each side. And down the other end there was a bathroom
- 04:30 with a bath and a shower over it. That was very good, except the windows of the place had been painted up for generations and the bath is full of coal because there was a fire there and that's where they kept the coal, in the bath. They wash their wrist and they wash their face and they never had a bath.
- 05:00 The blokes went around with their bayonets and cut all the paint off and they got off the paint from years. They opened the place up and they took the bath outside, and it rather upset the barrack master because there was this bloody coal scuttle, this big scoop affair, and they emptied the bath and got rid of all the coal.
- 05:30 And by this time the Pioneers had seen what was going on and they pulled a few pipes out and they just had open showers outside in a possie where you could have a shower, and couldn't be seen from the street. It was alright in summer time but bloody cold in winter. Anyway, our job there was to spend seven days out on the defences in concrete pillboxes. These would have been
- 06:00 about six inches above the ground made of concrete and wet inside and bloody awful and cold - holy mackerel they were cold. That was our job to man these defences. We had to put out wire and anti tank mines this sort of thing. We were training to do a job at Dieppe. The Canadians did it later on, and they really
- 06:30 got knocked about. Thank God we weren't there. Any way we were ordered to join up with the rest of the Australian forces in the Middle East which was very good, except in the meantime we had been introduced to a new weapon - the sticky bomb which was a glass container about six inches. It was a ball about six inches in diameter.
- 07:00 The outside of it was covered in sticky resin and covered in stocking net stuff over the outside of it. The whole lot was carried in a metal carrying frame. The idea was you took the cover off the sticky bomb and you walked up to a tank and you stuck it on to a tank and you
- 07:30 went for your life, because in about five seconds the sticky bomb would go off and blow the place up. It was all very well in theory but my God, have you tried to do it? You have no idea the near misses we had with that thing. Any rate that was part and par for the course. We learned how to handle sticky bombs. There was only one thing wrong with them.
- 08:00 They were full of phosphorous and when the bang went off they sprayed this phosphorous everywhere. When we were training there was a bloke from the 2/10th came over to us and he had a brand new cap - he had bought a brand new officers cap. And when this bloody phosphorous bomb went off a bit of phosphorous came flying across to us and landed on the top of his cap.
- 08:30 There is only one thing to do. You had to put it in the dirt to kill it. "Hey your caps on fire!" He took it off and his cap's on fire and by the time he put it out, a hole had been burnt in his cap. So that was our introduction to sticky bombs. So we knew damn well not to get near a sticky bomb. If you ever got that burning phosphorous on you by gee it would have been an awful way to go.
- 09:00 That's how it went. That was that.

You headed off to the Middle East soon after that?

Yep. We went off to the Middle East - except Kimmins, KPJ Kimmins was ordered to take the brigade transport up to Scotland and load it on the [SS] Nieuw Holland, a Dutch ship, a big thing it was.

- 09:30 And he took off and at some town on the way up though he had a little Charley. So he knew the battalion would be at least a week behind him so he decided to have a couple of days with this little girl - except that night we were ordered to scramble and get out of the country and we got up to Scotland before he did. The next ship, he was on his way home, his services were no longer required. He was sent home. That was KPJ. That was his war service.

10:00 Because he had two nights with a girl?

Yeah, he was kicked out and he went back up to work up at Atherton. We got on Nieuw Holland with a lot of Pommy people. I was short of money so I decided I had better do something about it, so I set up a dartboard. The Pommy's are very interested in darts.

- 10:30 So I set up a dart board and I put a ten shilling note sterling on the board, just tucked it under the wires. I've forgotten the distance now but there is a line you draw on the floor and you go flick and you put the darts in the board. And so I said, "Ok, there it is and there is a ten shilling note, and for two bob you can have it if you can put three darts
- 11:00 in it. But you start off at the line and you take one long pace forward and then you take a short pace back from there. And if you get your three darts in the ten shilling note, you can have it." Oh it would have been six inches by two and half, or something like that.
- 11:30 Well so help me, Bob, it's amazing. A fellow who could play darts, he would throw from that first one and the bloody dart might hit there, but very few of them ever got it on the board, and this went on and on for a couple of nights, and I was getting a few quid I tell you. And they would say "I'll do this yet," and they would give me another two bob. They could nominate what segment they would put the dart in
- 12:00 and they would put it though the thing, but the third one always fell short. However, one night, a Pommy air force, a Spitfire pilot - he was on his way out to the Middle East. He was sitting down there and minding his own business reading magazines and so forth, I've forgotten his name now. I said "Hey Jock.." what ever his name was, "how about having a go." "Oh no," he said "The odds aren't good enough."
- 12:30 I said, "What?" And he said, "I'll have a go for fifty quid." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "If I put the three darts in that, and say we make it about an inch group, I group them at one inch." And I said, "Fifty bucks righto."
- 13:00 Well so help me Bob he got out of the chair and he went dunk, dunk, dunk, and the bloody thing, he did about a quarter of an inch grouping right in the middle. He was a champion bloody dart player for the air force. He knew more about darts than I ever thought of and I had to pay him fifty bucks. I will never forget that.
- 13:30 Never play darts with a Pommy mate, it's a religion with them. This bloke flattened me. God it was unbelievable and the blokes they roared, "Good on ya, got ya Suthers you mongrel." Any way about this time - or just before Freetown that happened. When we were in Freetown...
- 14:00 Back in Colchester we looked like being there for months, so I got a letter from my brother with a photograph where he was cuddling my girl. He was cuddling her back here in Sydney, and I thought, oh gawd. It will be ages before I get home so I said to the batman, "Look I'm going to get engaged," he said "What do you mean?" I said "Look at the brother, that's my girl."
- 14:30 I said, "I'm going to send a telegram and ask her to marry me and get engaged," and he said, "Oh don't Skipper," and I said, "Yes, I am but you ask me tomorrow morning if I want to go ahead with it." So he said, "All right." And the next morning he said, "How about that telegram, are you going to send it?" And I said, "Yes, righto Mick, Mick Branch his name is, you send it." So he sent off the telegram
- 15:00 to Lorna proposing marriage. So about four o'clock that afternoon we all got called up to Battalion Headquarters and ordered to scramble, we're going to the Middle East. Oh God strike me. I had already sent this telegram and it wouldn't be fair going into action. But at any rate she sent a reply back,
- 15:30 and I got that reply in Sierra Leone. The mail boats came aboard there and they brought our mail. She had sent it to England and that's where I got the reply. So that night I fronted up and I told Steve Hodgeman, the second in command, that I got engaged and he said "You didn't get permission. Oh God, there was some rule about active service, if an officer wanted to get married you had to get the CO approval.
- 16:00 So I said "Well you had better arrange for me to get it," which he did. And that night we had a game of rugby in the lounge. The rugby ball was a life jacket. Oh gawd what they did to that lounge was no ones business. A couple of bits got broken and they went straight out through the black out curtain and over the side and the next thing the guard was down because someone had reported we were smashing furniture.
- 16:30 "What's smashed?" "Nothings smashed down here mate." So that was how we celebrated Lorna's engagement. Then we went down to Durban, up to the Suez Canal and into Alexandria. The old man sent for me and he said "Son, I want you to..." He gave me a map of that part of Egypt.
- 17:00 He said, "There's Ikinji Maryut and I want you to go and have a look around, and the Second will go also. I want you on a motorbike and Major Hodgeman will have a car." "Yes sir." So we had to go out to allocate areas for the battalion when it moved in. I kicked this motorbike over
- 17:30 and away I go, and suddenly I realised that the bastards were trying to run me down. In Egypt they drive on the right of the road. They're back to front to us, and I'm driving on the wrong side of the road, get the idea. Talk about lucky and I got out as far as Ikinji Maryut and there we established ourselves.
- 18:00 The next thing was we were digging weapon pits and the next thing, a bloke came along and he said, "Hey Skip look at this." He had a piece of paper. I've got it here somewhere, I tried to find it last night. It was label of a parcel addressed to me containing chocolate, a balaclava, gloves and so forth. They had been sent by the mother to C Company AIF abroad. It had gone to the Middle East,

- 18:30 and part of the law then, if they couldn't deliver it they gave it to the nearest unit. So I wasn't there so someone got a Christmas pudding, and one thing and another, and he had actually buried the cover that Mum had sent the parcel in, and as fate had it, my company had been given the same area and the blokes had dug it up. The 2/2nd Battalion it was and some bloke had got it.
- 19:00 Any rate then the brigade were ordered to take Qarat Badr which is a oasis which is about two hundred miles inside the Qattara depression. We were all ready to go and I get a call.
- 19:30 "We should have a training battalion," and I said "Yes, so what?" This is the colonel talking to me, and he said, "You've been selected to be Adjutant of the training battalion." I said "God we're going into action and I've had the company ever since it has been formed." he said "You have had some good training and you will make a good job as adjutant." So what happens?
- 20:00 Harry Ivy and Gategood... Gategood was a company commander, he was pulled out. Harry Ivy was second in command and he was pulled out, and I was pulled out. And a number of bloody good sergeants. And I suddenly realised we were going with a bunch of bloody fellas. So we were sent or we had to report to the brigade, and we linked up with the 2/10th and the 2/9th blokes. And the way it went right through to the end of the war.
- 20:30 The 10th provided the commanding officer for the training battalion, 9th provided the second in command, and 2/12th provided the adjutant. I was the first adjutant of this blasted thing we had to get established in Palestine. So back I went to Dimra...(UNCLEAR) it was first, a little town just up from Gaza. Gaza was the nearest big centre.
- 21:00 From there we went down to Dimra. I was Adjutant of the training battalion. I got sand fly fever while I was there and I wandered off into the desert and if it hadn't been for the batman who had his wits about him I would still be walking out into the desert. You go completely kook coo with sandfly fever. Bloody awful it is.
- 21:30 **What are the symptoms?**
- Much the same as malaria. Do you know dengue fever, you get in the north? Like that. Any way I got it and I was crook as a dog, and I was in hospital. Then I was ordered to provide... after we had been there for awhile...I was ordered to provide a guard for the junior staff school which
- 22:00 had just been established up in Jerusalem in the Hebron Hills behind Jerusalem. This was Tom Blamey's baby. He had his own staff school and they called it the Junior Staff School. It was distinct to Duntroon which was just the senior one. I was told to provide a guard and we had coming back to us, what we termed (UNCLEAR). These were fellows who had been with the battalion, had been wounded or sick and had been
- 22:30 evacuated. They came back through the battalion and then you put them back on the line. Anyhow this is all very well except these blokes have been there for as long as you have been there and they know as much about the game as you do. The raw recruits arriving from Australia they know nothing, but these blokes have been with you right from the word go, and they really know you.
- 23:00 One of the fellows who had been wounded and was on his way back, was this bloke Mansfield who earlier told the brigade commander what he could do with his pants. So I get a subaltern, a sergeant, corporate and a dozen blokes, and this bloke Mansfield was one that I picked. Now I said to the guard commander
- 23:30 I said, "Go out there and establish a guard post for the junior staff school." His training had been to defend the place. So therefore he organised a straight out area to be defended. Tom Blamey though wanted something for ceremonial purposes. He wanted a ceremonial guard not a defensive guard.
- 24:00 So next thing Tom arrives with his red and black pennant on the mud guard, and Mansfield is sitting on the side of the road with a rifle across his knees and he sees this car coming. Bluey had never seen a GOC's flag on a car before, so the car pulled up and he said, "What's the bloody flag for mate?" and
- 24:30 Blamey's in the back seat, and he said, "Who are you soldier? Bluey said, "I'm the guard, and who are you?" Bluey had heard about Tom Blamey but he didn't know anything about staff things. And Tom says "Get up or get out of the way," or something and Bluey said, "Look before you start anything,
- 25:00 have a look over me shoulder there and you will see a bloke with a Bren gun aimed at you." Bailey had put two blokes on. One to do the examination but he also put a Bren gunner back there giving him a bit of a chance. If anyone was coming the Bren gunner would have picked him off just like that. Well wasn't there a row. The phone goes, I'm sent for, get up here. I was the Adjutant of the Training Battalion.
- 25:30 Gawd, I went up and Tom Blamey told me off. He didn't raise his voice. I had to listen to him. I had to listen carefully to what he was saying. But boy did he tell me off and I had to go out for the rest of the day and get them back from defensive duties to ceremonial duties. What did Tom say to me? Oh gawd bloody disgrace to the AIF,
- 26:00 and this and that. He really tore into me because he thought that I told him to do it. I told him I had told

him to provide a guard. I said I wasn't told to provide a ceremonial guard. He said that was beside the point. Gawd Tom really told me off. Gawd I will never forget that. On the way back to Dimra I called into the canteen, and they had green Cascade ale from Tasmania.

26:30 It was the first time I had ever tasted it, it was rather potent stuff and that was that. The next thing was, I was relieved at the training battalion.

Actually Angus I have heard quite a bit about the brothels that Blamey set up and..?

Oh the brothels.

27:00 Oh the brothels in Alexandria, and in Tel Aviv. In Alexandria it was... Alexandria was Mary St, Aleppo was Sister Street, Bombay was Grant Road.

27:30 It's a bloody long time ago, yes. The way that that worked, it was rather novel. There were various values put on girls. If you were most delectable you were on the ground floor. If you getting on a bit then were on the second floor, and the old ones were right

28:00 up on the top floor. It was most extraordinary. The way it worked was, the girls were registered depending on the number of customers they had that and the number of customers they satisfied. That was what their pay was worth. But

28:30 this was all very well, but they introduced a system of chits in the messes, in the 18th Brigade. They were disks, a red one was worth twenty cents and a blue forty cents or whatever. But these were the same coloured chits that the girls were using to say that they had earned so much you see. Say a girl got a black chip for a bloke. If a bloke stayed all night it might have been a green one. Five hours it might have been a white one.

29:00 It was quite a complicated set up. When our blokes might pull a few bob out of their pants, other might say, ...hey don't you want them? "No, do you want them." At any rate our blokes were pretty popular of course. It was a funny thing. Although the blokes went to the brothels, very few

29:30 actually hopped into bed with the girls. All they wanted to do was talk with the girls. It's funny, you would bust into a room to examine a bloke's leave pass and he'd be sitting up there fully clothed and she would have a lot of clothes on if not all of them, and they would just be talking. All he wanted to do was talk, to hear a girl's voice, it was an extraordinary thing.

30:00 I mean, don't get the idea that every bloke who went over there was having sexual intercourse all the time. No that was not true. The majority of the blokes all they wanted to do was get some humanity back, it was as simple as that. That was that one and the other one.... The one up in Aleppo, the one the 2/9th Battalion were involved in,

30:30 there was a book. Madam Lola's was one of them. Anyway I've forgotten. Any rate it might have been Madam Lola's in Aleppo. Any rate, they had a book, an ordinary exercise book with the girls names in it.

31:00 It became interesting. The boys wanted to know just how many men a girl could satisfy in a night. So they decided to knock the book off. Well there were a couple of Czechs and a couple of Frenchmen in the bar this night so they said to these Czechs, and a couple of Australian blokes, we want you to start a donnybrook.

31:30 And once everyone is watching you, we are going to get that book. So in due course the Frenchman said something to the Czech bloke and they started a free for all, and when every one was racing over, a 2/9th bloke, a fellow incidentally who died recently, he grabbed the book and ran.

32:00 It was unbelievable and that book today is in Brisbane in the 9th Battalion records.

So what did they discover in the book?

The capacity of the girls to keep customers happy. One girl there could keep 20 blokes happy in a night, others just 1 or 2.

32:30 Oh no it was a different life.

Did you ever have to patrol some of the brothels that weren't registered looking for fellow?

Oh yes, I'll tell, don't wake that up. In Durban, Cape Town.

33:00 Number eleven district or where ever it was. That was completely out of bounds to Australian troops, all of them. It was a black area and of course as soon as you put any area out of bounds the blokes go, "Why is it out of bounds?" And the want to find out why. Towards the end of the war the army started to wake up and nothing was out of bounds.

33:30 Look, we used to have cafés and things, and 'for officers only', FOO. Where's my pencil? Sometimes you will see a thing like this. And that became the name FOO. It had a positive sign

- 34:00 and negative. And under that they would have FOO, for officers only. Now that was a funny thing in Aleppo. The brother's there, That must have been Madam Lola's, I've forgotten.
- 34:30 In Aleppo the brothels ran from six o'clock at night till ten o'clock at night and they were for troops. From eleven o'clock to dawn they were for officers...for officers only. And the troops used to laugh and laugh about it because they reckoned the officers were batting on a wet wicket,
- 35:00 you wouldn't read about it would you. Oh gawd they were larrikins, but they were bloody good fellows though. The next thing that happened we were sent up to Syria to the Turkish border. Well first of all we went to Baalbek. That's where the Temple of Venus is.
- 35:30 The first thing that happened, the old man said, "Suthers I want your company you to make a hard standing for the battalion transport," and by that time we were fully motorised. So I said "Ok, roughly in what area do you want it?" And he said, "Up there." He just waved his hand up there, and I found an area of ground in Baalbek in Syria.
- 36:00 The ground was littered with big roots of trees lying around. Some of these things were nearly two foot through, bloody great big poles like this. And I thought, bugger it, there's only one way to shift this and that was to
- 36:30 use circlets. A circlet is a fuse from which a number of sticks of gelignite come from. You connect them up, go back and push the plunger and boom. So at any rate I rang up the Pioneers, and told them I wanted them to bring up some circlets. But at any rate I blew all these roots of trees out
- 37:00 and the blokes started to tidy up. The next thing though the local Abbot of the monastery that was near there, the Baalbek monastery, he's coming down with all his bloody friars and priest blokes with him.
- 37:30 And they're as mad as a hatter and they were really going crook and they were obviously so bloody crook, I said to Frank Moody who was the quartermaster sergeant at this stage, I said "You grab a bloody Tommy gun and use it to keep these buggers in order." He came down and jabber, jabber, jabber, I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. So in the end I just yelled out 'shut up!' They shut up and I said "Any of you bright sparks
- 38:00 speak English?" And one of them did and I said, "What's your problem?" Then the abbot started and told him to shut up again because this bloke isn't allowed to speak. So what I had done was...they made a special sort of liqueur there and these were grape vine roots that had been growing for bloody centuries and I had blown every one out of the ground - well except for a few of them,
- 38:30 right at the back. But basically I had wiped out their bloody grape vines. It was wintertime and winter was coming on and there was nothing on the grape vine. They had all been pruned back so I blew them out. I had come from North Queensland and I had never seen a grape vine in my bloody life. The other odd bods I had were Tasmanians,
- 39:00 they don't grow grapes in Tasmania. These had roots like this. It was unbelievable. But at any rate it took of a lot of talking out and the political blokes had to come up. At any rate the next thing is I was ordered to take the brigade transport up to Aleppo. For some reason I got the easy jobs, they might have wanted to get rid of me out of the camp. But any way I had to take the anti tank guns
- 39:30 and the mortars and the machine guns and all of this sort of thing and I had a rifle company load them on trucks and away we went. And I have still got some of the maps there except they were made by the French and all the language on the maps was written in French and I couldn't understand French.

Tape 5

- 00:31 **Angus when we finished talking to you before lunch you were speaking about Syria and...?**
- Oh yes that's right. We moved from Baalbek to the Turkish border, well no actually to Aleppo first. We were quartered in the Ottoman Barracks, the old French barracks above the town.
- 01:00 We were there for a week or so when we were ordered to take over from the Czech Battalion out on the border. It was quite an interesting take over because in the Czechoslovakian language there is no such word for bully beef. Now these people wanted to do the right thing by the company coming in and when I checked where I had to go, I spoke to their
- 01:30 company commander, and he spoke to his quartermaster, a Czech, and suddenly he smiled and he said bully beef. He was checking to see what they could offer me for lunch and it was bully beef. That was quite good, we got on quite famously with the Czech crowd. The company area then stretched for 80 kilometres along the Turkish border. So you've got
- 02:00 about a hundred men and you have to control an area eighty kilometres long and about twenty miles deep and you've got to do it with a hundred men. However, at the time Turkey was neutral and they were allowed to bring their troops from Turkey down the railway line towards Aleppo,

- 02:30 to a place called Aq Durin. At Aq Deran they headed back out north east back into Turkey. Although Turkey was neutral she was sending troops through one of the allied countries and we had to make sure the Turks didn't get out and suddenly switch over to the Axis and so forth. So Turkey was sitting very pretty.
- 03:00 She was getting help from the allies and she was also getting help from the Germans - to what extent we weren't too sure. But then one morning at my company post at El Hamam, the sergeant rang up to say there were German troop carriers opposite him and they were full of Turkish troops. Turkey was getting German troop carriers from Turkey and using them against us.
- 03:30 The work itself was quite good. We had to check the trains at Jerablus where you come from Turkey down into Syria. Our A company had a post there and they used to lock the train doors, whether they were cattle trucks that they were using to transport the Turkish troop or whatever.
- 04:00 I had to check all those seals at Aq Durin and then root them out to Captain Swan's company where they checked them again to make sure no seals had been broken. It was interesting because you got in and you examined the troops in the train, and let's face it you had about twenty men available and you had a train load of highly trained Turkish troops.
- 04:30 However we did the job satisfactorily. I had my headquarters at Azaz and that is on the Syrian side of the border opposite the Turkish town of Killis. The town of Azaz was ruled by a Khymerkam. Now a Khymerkam is the boss of
- 05:00 six muktars and six muktars are the boss of sheiks. So on the change of command the muktars were the big boys in the present set up. He had a colossal capacity of eating cheese, so we had to keep the cheese up to him. There were great blocks of cheese and he must have weighed all of twenty-five stone. He was a monster of a man,
- 05:30 a great, big, fat, gross fellow. And he had fought against the Australians in the First World War. At any rate everything went all right. Katma Tunnel had been mined by the Turks in the First World War.
- 06:00 After the war they had taken the explosive charges out of the tunnel so our job was to repatch them with explosives, mount a guard, and had Turkey come into the war against us it would have just meant we could have just connected the detonators on to the charges and blow them. By and large we had a pretty responsible job.
- 06:30 At the El Hamam there was a rather novel set up in that you had to go into Turkey to get back into our post. It's very hilly country and so the road runs up to the border and goes around the hill and back again, and our post was at the re-entry point. So to get there you had to go up into Turkey and back out,
- 07:00 it was a matter of a hundred yards. It was very interesting checking to make sure that everything was all right. We were suppose to be looking for drugs and none of us had ever seen drugs in our lives and we didn't know what we were looking for. But if there was something that looked suspicious we would take some action against it. After we had been there for a couple of weeks
- 07:30 we were sent down to a town called Idlib and this was... Oh before that I had had a problem. Part of the arrangement of our being permitted to go into Syria was that we not we not interfere with any Syrian churches or schools. Well it so happened that the feast of Ramadan,
- 08:00 which is just over now, was on when we arrived. Well I went to see where my headquarters were and there was a school there and I thought this will do. So I had a look around - I don't know if you've ever seen a Moslem toilet - it's two foot prints and a great hole between it and this was the toilets of the school as well.
- 08:30 It was all right except they hadn't been looked after very well, they were a bit of a mess. So I said to my driver, Squizzy, I said, "Put a can of petrol down that and set fire to it and clean the place up a bit," and he said, "A whole can?" I said, "Yes, don't argue the toss put it down," never thinking for a moment he would do it.
- 09:00 But however he poured this can of petrol down the hole and he had enough brains to realise that if he put a match to it he would go up with it so he ran a trail back across the school ground and he touched it and the next thing bang, it lifted the roof off the toilet, it broke
- 09:30 a rock wall that was there and this took place about three o'clock in the afternoon. Now at the feast of Ramadan in that part of the country they have what they call 'tells'. They're man made hills made by the Romans actually, and on Tell Aziz which is the hill of Tell Aziz, up on the top of it, they had an old canon and under Muslim rulings, the people are allowed to eat when the
- 10:00 Muslim tells them. And what he does he lets off the cannon just on dusk, and this great clap of gun power that echoes all over the field goes off. And they come in and start to eat. But up till that time they weren't allowed any food what so ever, only water. So I caused this commotion and this thing went off,
- 10:30 and they said, "Oh good oh they have given us a break", so every one knocked off work and they came in and started to eat. Well was there a row, the next thing around came the Muslim bloke with his green

patch around his fez to prove he had been to Mecca. I had an interpreter with me who could speak Turkish. He could also speak Arabic.

- 11:00 The Muslim was also having a holy war right on the spot, but when Leon explained to him what had happened, thank God he started to laugh and all his followers started to laugh. So we were off the hook. However next day up came a fellow called Clark, a captain from the British political wing and he wanted to know what had happened. It had cost them a packet in food and so forth.
- 12:00 Well about this time Syria was very poor in food and Australia became involved in a thing called the Spears Mission where we sent ship loads of wheat to Syria for free. But the Australian Government said that they must improve their agricultural methods.
- 12:30 Okay so they sent over a whole heap of Mitchell Shearer disk ploughs and in due course these things arrived and I got a signal to say I was to use Bren gun carriers attached to my company, we had to use them as tractors to drag these ploughs up and down, and plough the ground which was good. So one morning out we went and I said right ho fellas as far as you can see...
- 13:00 there were no trees or anything like that... I said, "Go as far as you can see up there, turn around and come back and plough the ground," which was all very well. And the next thing down came this Muslim bloke again because in the Koran it says you can only till the ground the way Mohammad says. You can have a wooden plough but you can only scratch that much of the surface of the ground. Well we had all these ploughs so what happened, I rang up battalion and they said to stop it.
- 13:30 And the orders came through, well leave the ploughs where they are and they are there to this day. God knows what it cost the Australian Government. Any rate we were then ordered down to Idlib and we had a bit of a problem there. There were dogs with rabies, like all the dogs got rabies. So the acting Battalion Colonel, Colonel Arnold
- 14:00 who later came to command us up here in the islands. Wilfred his name was and the boys called him Wolf. Wolf ordered these rabies prone dogs to be shot, so the company snipers were given the orders to get out there and get rid of all these rabies dogs. Crickey these blokes could shoot. They were doing that sort of thing before the war. They were dead shots.
- 14:30 We cleaned that town up and we got rid of some mangy mongrels. They were all full of rabies according to the medical people so we shot them. And then at that point I had a bit of a problem myself in that one of my officers, a company officer had won a Military Cross and I sent him into Aleppo this particular night with his platoon
- 15:00 to be part of the town picket. At some ungodly hour of the night I got a ring from the CO. I had to get up to Aleppo and get hold of this Sullivan and bring him back. What had happened was, he was enjoying the fact that basically he was back in a peace area and with his platoon sergeant they got a little bit shot and they started to play William Tell.
- 15:30 William Tell shot the apple of the boy's head, you know that story. So what they did, the sergeant would place a glass of beer on his head and stand very still and the Sullivan would come along plunk plunk with a pistol. You can just imagine, so help me, Bob. He was a colossal fella, a colossal bloke.
- 16:00 He was as game as Ned Kelly, and he had the respect of the troops and he had proved himself in action. But he was then court martialled and sent back to Australia where upon he promptly re-enlisted as a private and came out on the parade down in Tasmania. He came out on his first recruit parade wearing a Military Cross whereupon the depot commander slated him and this that and the other,
- 16:30 and told him to get rid of the thing. Lindsay said, "You touch that on my chest and I'll have you up for damages." He said, "I have just won that while you have been sitting here on your tail in Tasmania," And then of course the truth came out. However we then went back to the border and of all things I got a ring to say your relief is on the way, you'll be pulling out
- 17:00 tomorrow. I said, "Who is it?" They said, "He will be there shortly." And they hung up. In came the relief and it was my own brother and I hadn't seen him for a couple of years - brother Rod. He came up with the company officers and I said, "Righto son, we had better check the stores first," And he said "No." He said, "Is everything all right here?" And I said "Yep," And he said "How about the out posts?"
- 17:30 I said "They are all right" and he said "Ok we'll have a quick whip around the out posts and then we will have a few drinks, " and he said "If there is anything wrong or anything short I will take it out of your hide when we are back in civvy street." So any rate the next morning I expected Rod's company to march in but it wasn't, it was the 2/17th that turned up. There had been a change in organization.
- 18:00 Any rate the skipper of the relieving company said "Your brother says every thing is all right here" and I said "Yes it is." So he said, "Ok that will do and I will sign for it" and he signed the book. We then pulled out of Syria and it was a beautiful sunny day. We were dressed in khaki shorts and shirts. Half way back down to Palestine down came the filthiest windy snowstorm you've ever struck.
- 18:30 I was sitting in the front of the truck and of course in those days we didn't have any glass in the windows on the trucks because they flashed light to aircraft you know. So I didn't have a blanket and the troops in the back were exactly the same and by the time we got to Palestine near Tel Aviv,

- 19:00 I had pneumonia. So they tossed me off the convoy and into the 104th British General hospital. And by Lord Harry, I was crook. All I wanted to do was die, but anyway they put me on the seriously ill and dangerously ill list and all this sort of thing. Then I heard that the Battalion was under orders to move, to go back up the desert, and I thought
- 19:30 I'm not lying here in hospital if they are moving, so I skipped hospital. I got out on the road and waved a truck down, and it was handy having a bit of rank. I ordered him to take me down to where the battalion was camped at Coral 89. And there was McNaught one of the subalterns and he was very busy giving orders, present, fire, and I suddenly realised that they were conducting training for a funeral.
- 20:00 I said "Mac who died?" and he said "Oh I'm taking this for your funeral." I'd been on the dangerous list and they knew I was going to croak. Any rate the old man was very decent to me. From commanding B Company up in the border, he then gave me A Company and off we went back down to Suez. And all that way he let me lie down in the train. God he looked after me, that was the colonel. From there we went to Bombay. Now this time, Singapore went and we were in Bombay actually and we were to go down
- 20:30 to Colombo and to Java. Fortunately ...oh we had a week in Bombay, that's where you want to see brothels. Oh it was a shocking set up. All the girls are in cages, unbelievable. Big enough to hold a single bed and that's it and they're locked in a cage and when they are in business they pull the curtain across.
- 21:00 It was unbelievable. Anyway we transferred from the Nieuw Holland, the ship we were on, on to the [HMT] Dilwara which was a British trooper - like it had been a trooper for years carrying troops back and forth to England. Any rate we set sail from Bombay down to Colombo and at that point the Japs had over run Singapore,
- 21:30 and they were landing in Java, and thank God they ordered us to come home. We were ordered to Fremantle where our machine gun battalion who was just a day ahead of us, they got caught in Java and spent the rest of the war as prisoners of war with the Japs. My God we were lucky. So then we touched into Fremantle and then we went around to Port Adelaide and up to Sandy Creek.
- 22:00 The 2/10th Battalion of the brigade was then given leave. They were all South Australians. I was a Queenslander and all the 2/9th were Queenslanders, and we had the Tasmanians. We went into this camp and I had a second in command, Stewart Pixley, and I was marching ...we had been sent ahead
- 22:30 to do a reconnaissance for the battalion. I spoke to him about something then I realised that he didn't hear what I said, and I said "Stewart did you hear what I said?" "Oh look," he said, "See that hill, wouldn't that make a wonderful lambing hill," This fellow was interested in lambs in Tasmania, and when he looked at the country he thought what it looked like for blasted lambs. It was a very interesting place. It was the first time that I had seen the Battalion cry.
- 23:00 It was the first morning that we were there and the bloody magpies started to sing and a couple of kookaburras opened up and after you've been away for just over two years, by gee it shakes you. Any rate, I got ordered to take the brigade heavy baggage...They gave me a train and on that I had all the Bren gun carriers and anti tank guns
- 23:30 and the Vickers guns and all that type of thing and my own company. We took off from Sandy Creek and got across as far as Albury. Now by this time America had come into the war and there were Yankee troops going down to Adelaide and across to the west, and they were going that way and we were going against the tide to come this way. So we got as far as Albury,
- 24:00 and at Albury there was two gauges. One for New South Wales and one for Queensland and Victoria and all this sort of thing. So we had to muck around there and transfer all the blokes and put them on another train. I had orders to talk your way up to London Bridge, a spot just outside Tenterfield. So any rate after about a week
- 24:30 I managed to get the train up as far as Tenterfield and there we unloaded and went out to London Bridge. And from London Bridge we went out on leave. And on 2nd of May 1942 I got married. I rang up my girl the night before told her I would be down and she said "How about your best man?"
- 25:00 and fortunately one of the subalterns was standing beside me and I said "Clark what are you doing on leave?" and I said, "The first day there you are my best man right?" and he said, "Yes sir." Then on the way back there was another very good bloke Bill McFarlane, and I said "Bill Duncan's going to be my best man, you are going to be my groomsman aren't you?" He said "All right" because he was going to go home on leave too.
- 25:30 Patty was waiting for Duncan, and Connie was waiting for Bill but they were very decent and they saw me over the hurdle. I got married at St. Barnabas Church by Grace Bros where Lorna's parents had been married. We got there a bit early, and I didn't know St. Barnabas but across from there there's a Roman Catholic church and I went in there. I've forgotten the saint's name of it and fortunately the priest came out and I said "I'm here to get married "
- 26:00 and he said "Not here this afternoon" and I said "Yes I am, is this St. Barnabas?" and he said "No, no

come here I will tell you where St. Barnabas is,' and he took me across the road and showed me where St Barnabas was. Any rate I wanted to spend a penny just before the ceremony and I went down to the toilets and these blighters grabbed the door and they wouldn't let me out. So one thing led to another and eventually I got married.

- 26:30 Then I reported back to the battalion and we were sent from London Bridge to Kilcoy in Queensland where the Somerset Dam is now. The country we camp on is all under water now. There we were introduced to jungle war fare and we did the training for that on the Blackall Range and the Jimna Range which is behind
- 27:00 Kilcoy, the Kingaroy area. We were part of the Brisbane line, now you will hear a lot of people say that the Brisbane Line never existed. Like hell it never existed, we had our orders for it. We did exercises all over the place. We knew the carrying capacity of every bridge and every culvert. We knew it backwards and the line... actually the Brisbane line
- 27:30 was the line basically of the Mary River. But at any rate we trained on the Brisbane Line. One of the memories of that place, I sent a bloke called Col Elkinstone to do a camouflage school down at Toowoomba. Col was a quiet sort of bloke and the CO said "Righto Mr. Elkinstone, I want you to
- 28:00 tell what you know about camouflage," and so Col stood up and said "Well I went to camouflage school and it's situated on the hill in Toowoomba. It is very nice, and the whole thing is outlined in white stones. All the buildings have gardens around them and they are all outlined in white stones, and there is a big garden there spelt out in white stones, Camouflage School."
- 28:30 You could imagine, and this was basically was the attitude back here in Australia. They just weren't awake to the dangers, it was unbelievable. The other thing, the sort of bloke you were handling. There was a fellow called Roney, and Roney was A Company's cook
- 29:00 and he come from out the back blocks of Tasmania and he would always get his words mixed up and they were for ever pulling his leg. This particular night I was wandering down the lines and I came to this camp fire which they had going and Roney was there and the boys had been merciless in pulling his leg and I said "Oh don't worry about it Roney,
- 29:30 you're all right," and he said "Sir I treats them with the cement they deserve." So much for his contempt. At the moment action started there was no way Roney would cook. He was a Bren gunner and by gee he was a very good man, a very good man.
- 30:00 Any way in due course we were ordered to go by the [MV] Anchung a Chinese riverboat. We were ordered to go from Brisbane to Milne Bay. Well it was a flat-bottomed Chinese riverboat. It had the main deck and one below it and the headroom was five foot six, you can just imagine. The cooking facilities were a great missionary boiling pot. About 40 or 50 gallons.
- 30:30 It was filthy and it had an open fire going on it. The toilets consisted of two planks on the back deck pushed through and weighted down with sand bags. A plank across
- 31:00 tied on to the two planks running that way, and if you wanted to go to the toilet you hopped over the rail on to the thing and you squatted on this plank. Now that's all right if you had a head wind, it wasn't so good if you had a following wind. And that was the toilet facilities of the Anchung, that blasted thing. And on one occasion just before we got to Milne Bay
- 31:30 we went all day and we went backwards a mile. The current at that time happened to be from north to south and we marked time for a day. Eventually we turned into Milne Bay and the intelligence officer on this particular day was standing on the bridge. Pat Rafferty was his name and Pat says "I've had a look at the chart and there is something
- 32:00 wrong." So the skipper who was a reserve Australian Navy bloke said "Well just where are we?" because ahead of us there was a destroyer dropping markers. He said "Well according to my chart we are about five miles inland. " And see, we had never had done anything prior to this in that area. Lever Brothers had a plantation, a monstrous place,
- 32:30 but other than that they knew absolutely nothing about that end of New Guinea. So we went and went and eventually we pulled into a place called Gili Gili which was the wharf. We went ashore and found the 7th Militia Brigade - that was the 9th and the 25th and 61st Battalions from Queensland
- 33:00 were there, and there was a company of American engineers. There was the advance guard of 75 and 76 Squadrons RAAF - and it rained and it rained and it rained, you just couldn't credit it. Day and night it rained. There was no such thing as roads. There were roads that Lever Brothers had put in for their coconut
- 33:30 Plantations. So we were ordered to get cracking and make it into a defended area. The orders also said that we weren't allowed to cut down a coconut tree because if we did the Government had to pay Lever Brothers so much for the coconut tree - you wouldn't believe it! They were putting in fighter strips there for the Air Force and

- 34:00 every tree they cut down to get that strip in they had to pay Lever Brothers. I mean its crook but it's a fact. Any rate, we were then ordered to find out where we were on the ground. So I sent out patrols and I took out a patrol myself and we were just having a look around to see what the hell was in the place.
- 34:30 There were no maps, just what we learned ourselves. I have a map there that they eventually gave us, but the first map they gave us showed Gili Gili wharf and the mission further east and written across the middle was "little known of this area". Unbelievable. Any rate
- 35:00 in due course the Jap landed, and at that time the three CMF [Citizens Military Force] battalions...two of them were strung out, right out to East Cape to give early warning of any landing. And sure enough when the Japs landed - I have forgotten the date now,
- 35:30 about the 26th August or something like that, 1942. The Japs landed and the 2/10th Battalion of our brigade took them on. They went out as a fighting patrol with a full battalion as a fighting patrol, and unfortunately they didn't take any anti tank gear with them
- 36:00 because they didn't think the Japs would be using tanks in that country. The Jap was using tanks in that country and the 10th had a very busy night there one night. They lost quite a few blokes. But fortunately the tanks got bogged on the... it would have been about the 31st August we got orders to counter attack.
- 36:30 Jeff Swan of Don company he crossed number three strip first. Now the night before we crossed, the Jap were very active trying to get across the aerodrome - number three strip they called it - trying to get at us but the American engineers had mined it. And also with 25 Battalion CMF, they
- 37:00 held the strip that night. But the following morning, well one o'clock in the morning first, we were all called up to Battalion headquarters and Colonel Arnold said "Righto we are going to attack. The order of march will be Don Company, you are the vanguard. You'll be followed by B Company, followed by A." So we discussed about ammunition
- 37:30 and that sort of thing. And at one o'clock in the morning...no it was two o'clock in the morning it was all finished, and we had to go out and it was raining cats and dogs, I will never forget it. As we went to go out through the black out curtains, Jeff Swan turned to me and said "You know Gus you are going to make a beautiful looking corpse tomorrow aren't you?" I said "Thanks a lot." It was father funny. The next morning
- 38:00 they... Don Company were leading, Jeff Swan was leading, and they managed to get across that strip without losing a man. But on the far side they really ran into it, and there had been a lot of Japs killed there during the night. But there were a lot of other Japs lying down pretending to be dead and they suddenly came to life in the middle of our blokes and started to shoot our blokes down and Jeff Swan was yelling out one thing or another
- 38:30 trying to get things moving and he took a bullet through the mouth. It creased his tongue and took a couple of teeth and come out the other side. Well at this time he was across the strip and I hadn't even started to move across. B Company had followed and C Company had gone and when I got across there one of our Bren gun carriers was coming back,
- 39:00 they had a stretcher on it and one of the stretcher bearers said "Hey Captain Suthers, here's something for you" and he threw me a pistol, a .38 Webley, and I said "What's this, who belongs to this?" and he said "Captain Swan," the bloke who reckoned I would be a good looking corpse. He was a good bloke and as a matter of fact I named my first, my eldest lad after Jeff.
- 39:30 Swanny was having a shot at me but he bought it first. So that day we pushed on and most of the work was done by our D Company, the lead company. They were darn good. About four o'clock I got orders ... there was Don Company and B Company and C Company and I was to leap frog C and
- 40:00 D and join up with Don Company right up the front.

Tape 6

- 00:05 Just prior to receiving these orders, one of our intelligence personnel had come back, Col Brewen was his name and I said, "Col what's happening forward?" and he said "The track is clear up as far as KB Mission," and he had no sooner said it
- 00:30 that there was a burst of fire from my leading platoon and they had come on a chap setting up a machine gun to pick us off. Any rate, our blokes got in first so there was no problem. I then went up the Girua River - Bill Kirk had B Company there,
- 01:00 and I leap frogged him and went on to KB Mission. Now just short of KB Mission was where we came on to our first atrocities at a place called King Point. The Roman Catholic church had had a mission there and they've still got one there as a matter of fact. These bloody Japs had

01:30 got hold of two white nuns and they had really knocked them about. Unfortunately people talk of rape in the sense that it's all sexual intercourse. That's a lot of bloody nonsense. A woman who is really raped, they really mutilated them. Any rate these poor girls were there and a couple of native girls and a native boy.

02:00 They pegged them out on the ground and they disembowelled them. It was crook. Any rate I pushed on and linked up with Harry Ivy who was now commanding Captain Swan's company.

02:30 Harry had done a colossal job that day. He was later awarded the Distinguish Service Order. He was soldier right through. Any rate we were ordered into a defensive position for the night. That night the Japs had a number of goes trying to break into us.

03:00 Each time we were able to knock him back. The following morning I had a little lad called Oscar Grindle and at stand down I went down and here's Oscar. He was in a weapon pit and up to his shoulders with water and he had his rifle on the parapet of the fox hole he was in,

03:30 and he was sound asleep - you wouldn't credit it, that a fellow could be in the water up to his shoulders and rain coming down like no ones business. Anyway that was Oscar. One of the problems there was having fought Europeans prior to this, you respected the Red Cross.

04:00 A wounded man was looked after, whether he was your wounded or his. But the Jap Navy people particularly...not so much the Navy but the Japanese marines - they were mostly big men. They were just animals, they were lower than animals. But at any rate, my company was given the job of holding this area

04:30 with the remnants of Don Company, and we were able to. The 61st Battalion had occupied this prior to the Japs landing and we found some of their gear. So we were able to get a bit of clean gear for ourselves. We were still operating thought in the desert uniforms, shorts and shirts and so forth. We didn't have a mosquito net between us

05:00 and we were getting eaten alive by mosquitoes. Of course everyone got malaria as a result of that, but that was part of the game, you couldn't do anything about it. The following day we pushed on as far as the 4th ford. Everywhere a creek crossed a road it was known as ford and you counted the creeks.

05:30 It might mean, go up as far as the fourth creek cuts the road. On the following night I got orders to mine the fourth ford. So we got the mines and away we went. I didn't go, I sent Hosier, the sergeant and Jimmy Smith. They were ordered with their platoons to lay these mines.

06:00 Now it was all very well except where we had orders to lay these mines it was one of the few places up there where the ground was as hard as a hob's hell. So there wasn't any mine laying, we couldn't lay mines. So we put it off and we weren't going to give it to the Japs for a present that was for sure. But it rained so hard that that patrol came back through our Don Company lines

06:30 and past my headquarters not more than 10 feet away and we didn't see a thing. We were all pretty nervous because the orders were, if you were on a patrol all the patrols knew where it was going out to, and roughly when it was due back, so that avoids shooting your blokes But other than that anything that moved was shot.

07:00 Any rate Smithy and Hosey came right back through the lines and not a soul heard. And just by luck Hosier spoke and Sullivan who later got killed, he recognised his voice. It was a most extraordinary night. But the rain, you have no idea, it was bloody terrible. Fortunately we had command of the air with 75 and 76 Squadrons. Now

07:30 without the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] there we wouldn't have lasted five minutes. Oh God those blokes! Any time we asked for help they would come and give it to us, they were good. One of their top line blokes was a fellow called Peter Turnbull and they named one of the airstrips after him.

08:00 These fighter blokes would take off from number one strip where they were coming from, and they no sooner got air borne than they were dipping their nose down and strafing. About the fifth day of the fight we were without any air force at all because they had to fly back to Moresby to get refitted with barrels for their machine guns. They had worn the barrels out. Now you imagine, they reckon the life of a barrel was something like

08:30 a hundred and fifty thousand rounds, so you just imagine every one of those had eight guns - there were four guns on each wing, and you just imagine the amount of ammunition that those fellows poured through those weapons. They were good. We had a few accidents. On once occasion we had a patrol out and the signal was

09:00 that the RAAF would strafe at a certain angle from where a red viri light went up. That was alright, except back at battalion they decided they would fire the red very lights and they were about three or four hundred yards behind from where we were. So down it came. It was unbelievable. It taught me one thing though don't count too much on air strafing unless you

09:30 know exactly what's going on. On two occasions we were strafed and we had a bloke wounded. One bloke had the heel of his boot shot off, but apart from that we were lucky we didn't get anyone killed.

About the 5th I suppose it would have been the 2/9th leap frogged us.

- 10:00 They went on and finished the job off. That's where John French won a Victoria Cross. About the same time, we got word that there was a Japanese force - they couldn't put it passed that in information, was operating to the north east of us up in the foothills of the Stirling Ranges which is the backbone of New Guinea coming down there.
- 10:30 I was ordered to take the company to go out and find out who was there and clean it up. I came to a clearing and had a look around. At the far end of the clearing there was a group of huts and I called the C Platoon commander and said "Look, company headquarters remains here and I will go with an advanced headquarters."
- 11:00 I said "We'll work around the edge of the scrub, no going out in that open country, you'll be sitting ducks. We'll all move forward to the other side to make sure there is nothing around here." Now Keith Brown was commanding one of the platoons and when he got up to the huts, he was going to sew them up
- 11:30 but he thought I had better not start up with a machine gun, not spray it because it is possible that could be natives frightened and hiding in there. So good old Keith said I'll go and have a look and see what's there. Well he kicked opened the door of one hut and they blew his head off. There were four Japs inside with a machine gun and when he kicked the door open Keith was
- 12:00 killed. So you know there was that, and there was one other odd bod we picked up, but that was just bad luck. If Keith and sewn it up with a machine gun before he went in he would have been okay. But he was a decent bloke and frightened that he might hurt the natives. So in the meantime the 2/9th and the 2/10th had been fighting. About the 6th we had orders to
- 12:30 burn all stores that we found. The raw rubber - there was a rubber plantation there. I don't know if you have seen a rubber tree? They carve a circular thing around it and it leaks out a white sap and that's pure rubber. Well they had
- 13:00 quite a few tons of this raw rubber so we set fire to that, well holy mackerel the bloody stuff burnt for weeks. We pushed a patrol right through to the east cape but there wasn't anything there. There were signs of where there had been Japs. We kept on picking up odd Japs for a week or two after that.
- 13:30 The Japs had evacuated the remnants of their force on about the night of the 5th I think it was. I'd have to look it up in the book, I've just forgotten the dates. Any rate having done that we were then ordered to go back to a place called Route 7. All the various roads had a route number.
- 14:00 As a matter of fact that was where on the night of the attack when the Japs first landed, I was ordered up this road and it was raining and no one was too sure what was going on. And I said to the old man, "How far up are we?" and he said, "There's a squadron of artillery up there and there would be at least four to eight twenty five pounders.
- 14:30 Go up and give them protection." Well, it was raining and as black as sin, you couldn't see anything, so I just said to the platoons, "You here, you there, and hold tight till first light then we will be able to see where we are." Well about half an hour these guns opened up and we were
- 15:00 no more than fifty feet in front of them. Holy mackerel, you get in front of a field gun. It was unbelievable and the muzzle blast on them. Any rate we smartly moved a bit forward of them. Incidentally on the day we went up to do the job, as far as KB Mission we got out of range of our twenty five pounders. They couldn't get up because of the swamps.
- 15:30 But the 3.7 anti aircraft guns they could - Their range was such that they could still give us fire support. So they said on the radio, "Look, pop a round...oh what have you been firing on?" "We've been firing on eighteen thousand yards" for argument sake. No, it wouldn't be as far as that, eight thousand yards. "Well look, put it at eight thousand one hundred"
- 16:00 and they would fire a shot. "Now cock around to the left about fifty yards," and they'd work out the range, so many minutes and so many degrees or whatever and then they would fire a round of smoke. "Yeah, you're right on it" and it would be boom, boom, boom. They put in the high explosives, but it was just making the best of the tools you've got. The field artillery just got out of range of their guns.
- 16:30 That particular night, the first night when we were there when the fight was on - the main fight that night was back at the Girua River that I had crossed in the afternoon, and that night we only lost something like perhaps a dozen men and three hundred Japs. That was our
- 17:00 B and C companies, and I was A and I was up at KB Mission. On about the fifth night we were there, a Jap cruiser came and the Anchung was tied up at the wharf, the Chinese riverboat that had taken us up there. This cruiser went boom boom put a couple of rounds at the Anchung and sunk
- 17:30 her and we said hooray we won't have to go on her again. But the same night the [HMAHS] Manunda the hospital ship, she was there fully lit - a white ship with a big red cross painted on the funnel and so forth. Now give the Jap Navy as distinct from the Jap marines...give the Jap Navy commander his due. He did not fire a shot at that ship. He had her there.

- 18:00 They had search lights and the Manunda was wide open if he had wanted to attack. But against that you had the shadow of the [HMAHS] Centaur a couple of years later on up here off Stradbroke Island - that Jap commander in that submarine had not had a target on his whole time out and did not want to go back full of torpedoes, so he slipped a torpedo into the Centaur.
- 18:30 That only came out a few years ago as to why was the Centaur sunk, particularly after the way that the Japanese Navy had treated people as distinct from the Marines and the army. No the Jap was an animal. You might recall at Biak I think it was, he slaughtered a lot of our nurses. My God I will never forget it.
- 19:00 We'd been fighting Europeans and these bastards shot our girls, I will never forget it. Reg Hussey was my company sergeant major at the time and he came to me and said "Skipper, the blokes want to talk to you" and I said "What's the problem?" he said "I think you had better talk to them because there is no
- 19:30 way we are going to take prisoners, after what they have done to the girls, we are not going to take prisoners." Well that went and from then on, so much so that when we wanted prisoners they just wouldn't take them, they wouldn't take them. But any rate after Milne Bay we had to form the area into a fortress area.
- 20:00 Incidentally it was the first time the Jap had been defeated in the whole of the push down the Pacific. I like to think back to that night when George Wootton gave us our orders, Colonel Arnold, Wootton said, "Gentlemen there will be no bloody Tobruk here.
- 20:30 Either you fight and die here or you can forget it. There is going to be no Tobruk," that's why we had orders to get things ironed out there.
- Did you know at the time Angus how significant the fighting that you were doing would be?**
- Well at that time we new damn well that if we lost Milne Bay they would automatically have Port Moresby. See they had outflanked Moresby.
- 21:00 They were already landing in the Solomons and it would have given them an air base. Oh yes we were fully aware of that. But God they were bastards. Any way we worked to get the base fixed up and the next thing we were ordered to go to the Goodenough Islands.
- 21:30 The Japs had had half a dozen barges for troops coming down to Milne Bay and the RAAF had caught them in the open they had put into Goodenough Islands, and they were caught there, they couldn't get off. So we were ordered up to the Japs on Goodenough Island and it was one shemozzle of a thing to start with.
- 22:00 We had to take enough ammunition for a week. Every man had to have... we were on iron rations at this stage. Every man had to carry his own three days of rations. The landing had to be done at night, and so therefore the
- 22:30 army in its wisdom sent the company commanders up to have a look at the job. So they sent us up in one of the Boston bombers. Now these bombers had a full nose of Perspex and the bomb aimer laid down on the Perspex and the pilot's feet were up here. Like, he was lying down on the floor and his feet were up here behind him you see.
- 23:00 Well we were ordered to go up in the position of the bomb aimer - the air gunners had to be there to protect them. So the bomb aimers stopped behind and the company commanders were put in these bombers to have a look at the job in hand. Well I'm lying in a Perspex bubble. Well that's all right if you are trained for it, but you lie in a Perspex bubble and you go racing down a run way
- 23:30 and you have just got a little bit of Perspex around you, and whom, away you are up in the air and about five minutes out all of a sudden the thing practically stops because he had to test his guns - he's got eight guns. So to test them he just opened them up and the recoil... well up we go and next thing we he's talking over the intercom, "Yes, yeah, yeah," we can hear him talking over the
- 24:00 head set, not a nice one like that but an old fashioned one. So he's describing areas on the ground on the headset, and the next thing I what are those little red flashes down there?
- 24:30 Well, I'm look straight down at heavy machine guns firing up at us. I had never done a spotter's job in an aircraft. I tell you what, you feel awfully naked. All you've got is a bit of glassy stuff around you. But this bloke was an air force type and he just put his stick down and went, fired guns, and the Japs stopped firing.
- 25:00 Oh God the next thing, swoop up and I nearly fell out. Fair dinkum I was never so glad to get back. So then we went back and my company was on the [HMAS] Arunta - well the whole battalion was on the Arunta and... what do they call them? The mechanical engineers crowd,
- 25:30 They took barges up. They had repaired Jap barges at Milne Bay. They got the engines going and the pumps and they'd gone up the seventy mile to Normandy Island which is just across from Goodenough. They landed up there and when the Arunta with us on board went up, they came across from Normandy to load us and put us ashore on Goodenough...

- 26:00 which was all very well. 'It shall be a silent landing, yep! There is an enemy post at so and so, and this will be taken out by the lead company. So the blokes were given sand shoes so they wouldn't go clumping around, and they were given cane knives to go in and take the Jap sentries out. Well to start with I was the reserve company for the landing.
- 26:30 The commando platoon was to land first followed by B Company followed by A Company. So away we went. We pulled in, it was raining and away goes the barge with the commando platoon on.
- 27:00 The next thing B Company went in and then it was A Company's turn to land. So I go in, I go down, I've got the platoon there and away we go chug, chug. And at that moment... we had been drifting and suddenly the skipper realised
- 27:30 the Arunta had never fired her guns in anger. She was a brand new ship and so they just dropped the anchor. Well if you have ever heard a destroyer let go an anchor and just let it go because they wanted to get the pick down into the mud quickly - the roar of those steel chains going out through those pipes, holy mackerel you have no idea. So this silent landing was
- 28:00 you know rather pointless wasn't it? Then the next thing we hit the mud bank and before I can do anything at all, the ship's doctor - this is just how unorganised we were and lacking in training, the ship's doctors was the beach landing master. He was the big boss cocky, the bloody ship's doctor. He was the beach landing master and I have a copy of the orders there.
- 28:30 It was unbelievable what went on that night. Anyway we choof, choof, choof and went in and the next thing the Doc who was the beach landing master, we hit the mud back. We pulled up because we knew we had hit something, a bank of mud. There was a falling tide but although the front of the barge was in the mud
- 29:00 the back of the barge was in thirty foot of water, and the doc said, "I shall check the depth" and he stepped over board and ...this is in the middle of the night.. and he bloody well disappeared. So we dragged him back on board and before we could do anything he said " I'll try the other side and went," . That's the truth. It was unbelievable. any way then we realised that we were on the mud so they
- 29:30 put the front ramp down and the blokes staggered ashore. One bloke stepped into a hole and were nearly drowned. And Clark, that's young Clark who was my best man, he was the reserve platoon commander of the reserve company. So his platoon was the last in other and other than the commando platoon, he was the first man ashore because in the dark the tide had taken things and it was a bloody mess.
- 30:00 So eventually we formed up and away we went. I suppose...it was just a very narrow track and after about five minutes it became an absolute slippery slide, very steep country and for every pace you went up you went one and a half back. It was mess and I will never forget, right in the middle the bloody Bren gun went off. God, the bastards had set up an ambush for us.
- 30:30 What happened the leading Bren gunner had knocked the safety catch off. He had it cocked but he had knocked the safety catch off. And he let go this burst. Well by this time the Japs was up and very much awake. And as I say I was Reserve Company. We should have been in action about five o'clock in the morning...at first light we should have been in position,
- 31:00 but we were so messed up and it was after ten o'clock and we still hadn't made contact. We were hours out. On the way across Clark, rest his soul, spotted in a flash of lightning, he spotted a radio and he realised he was looking at the battalion's what they call a 108 set that kept us in communication back at Mud Bay
- 31:30 with the rear guard that was left there. So Clark picked it up... well he didn't pick it up, he got his platoon to carry it. So away we go and eventually it started to break down and we came to a river. The bloke's weapons and the rifles were covered in mud so everyone stopped and washed their rifles, washed the mud off. The ammunition was wet, and oh
- 32:00 what a mess, bloody awful. Any way away we went and the next thing we hit the Japs. He was waiting for us, was he ever. Any rate one thing led to another. I told Jimmy Swift to find out where the Japs flank was
- 32:30 but he couldn't find it. As soon as he moved he was fired on, so I turned to Duncan... God that Clark was a pompous bugger at times, but by God he had guts. I had a go and I couldn't find it. I picked a bunch of fellas and I had a go. So I said "Duncan we know the flank isn't there," and he said "Give my love to Patty and he took off."
- 33:00 He knew bloody well that he was going to get killed or there was going to be a fair chance of him getting killed because the Jap was very much awake at this time and on the look out. Anyway he had a go. He lost a couple of men but he himself fortunately was able to hold it. By this time it was getting on dusk.
- 33:30 so that night the colonel ordered us to drop back about half a mile to a hill on the coast flat. So we went back there and there were orders that any man who moved during the night would be shot. If any thing

moved you shot it. Any rate, oh some time just after midnight the bloody Jap had a go at us and what they didn't realise was that anything that moved you shot it.

- 34:00 He really took a hammering. The following day - he pulled back to his position - so the following day we straight on a two company front to see if we could find anything and there was not a bit of resistance. The Jap had sent a destroyer in during the night and taken them off. Thank God he did. So at any rate we then...
- 34:30 the companies that we had around at Loleba Bay had taken a bit of a thrashing and we all then went back to Mud Bay and formed a battalion camp there. George Smith who was one of our subalterns found a Jap and we hand cuffed him to
- 35:00 what they call a dixie box, a box about the size of that chair and it used to hold two dixies to keep them warm. I don't know what he had heard about the Australians but he chewed his tongue out. You have a go chewing your tongue out in lumps. Oh they were a bunch of bastards.
- 35:30 Any rate then we got a new chaplain. The chaplain, Padre Blake had been mortar bomb carrier for us. He was the padre but he used to cart the mortar bombs up for us. See Japan was not a signatory to the Geneva Convention, so we armed the parsons and we armed the doctors and we armed the stretcher bearers.
- 36:00 We then got a new parson, Roy Watton. He's ninety odd now, terrific. He's a bloody good mate of mine, but in those days he was as green as grass only greener. He had been on the Kokoda Track, got crook and was then sent across to us, down at Milne Bay and Goodenough.
- 36:30 He was to replace Blake who had got crook - he was being pulled out. In the army there is an authorised form of service for church parades. So it doesn't matter what your religion is, the hierarchy of all the religions have all agreed that for a church parade, that's it. So Roy was High Church of England which is basically the same as
- 37:00 Roman Catholic except for the confessional. Clark was an extreme red hot extreme Presbyterian. I will never forget this. I must have been asleep because I didn't anticipate it. This particular day after Roy arrived there was a church parade and the normal procedure is, the battalion is drawn up in a hollow square
- 38:00 and the commanding officer takes over the parade and hands the parade over to the chaplain - so it's the chaplain's parade. Now, we're all lined up there. The RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] calls the battalion to attention and hands it over to the adjutant. The adjutant posts all the officers to the company, and the battalion commander takes over and turns around and says "Padre your parade."
- 38:30 Roy had marched on to this parade and you know these incense burner things with smoke? Well he had these things going. Well this was like a red rag to a bull to Clark. But it's still the CO's parade while Roy is walking on and he's got these things. Well help me Bob, the moment the CO said "Padre it's your parade",
- 39:00 Clark let got this roar. You could hear him back in Sydney. "About turn, quick march." There was no way he was going to let his blokes listen to a service that was not authorised by the army. Oh God, Clark would rather have a fight than a feed. I thought what the hell is going, what the hell is wrong with Duncan. This is the man who had been my best man.
- 39:30 We'd been in a fight together and we knew each other. There was Duncan, "Left, right, left, right." Any rate I took off and yelled out to my second in command, "Take over" and away I went. I said to Duncan, "What the bloody hell's wrong, why are you behaving like this?" He said, "That bastard is not giving us the authorised form of service and I'm not having anything to do with it." I said "The old man wants to see you. He's ordered me to tell you to come back." So off he goes, number one salute and so forth. The old man says, "What's wrong Clark?" Duncan says, "Sir, I'm only required to attend a service which runs to the authorised service. I won't go and I won't ask my men to have anything to do with this bloody nonsense." The old man said, "Alright Mr Clark." And so Clark went back to his platoon and I went back to my company and we had the church service. We marched off and the battalion runner was waiting for me when I got back to headquarters. "The CO wants to see you now!" When I got up there Clark was already there and Wolf hit the roof. Did he hit the roof, my God. Any rate I said, "Look sir, I think the best thing we can do, so far as I'm concerned, I'm not prepared to accept criticism, I would like to be paraded to the brigade commander." He started to think, gawd what happens then. You see, my brother Rod who was a solicitor had much the same problem in the Middle East. He had a parson who used to go on and on and on and on. But Rod, the way he handled it was, he said, "Battalion," he had already handed the parade over to the padre, "While the padre looks after our soul, it's about time we got on with some military training. March off." Well the padre complained to the chaplain's board and Rod looked like losing his commission.

Tape 7

00:31 **Ok Angus I was wondering if you could tell us about your experiences of Buna?**

Yes. We left Goodenough Island on Boxing Day 1942 and proceeded to Oro Bay, and then marched up to the Buna Mission area.

- 01:00 The 2/9th and 2/10th Battalions had all ready been in action there in the middle and last part of December and they had cleaned the Japs out of the area east of Giropa Point and south east of Giropa Point which left the area on the east from Simemi Creek to the west on Buna Mission proper
- 01:30 including the airstrips which were still in the hands of the Jap. Now the Jap had been there for a couple of years and he had fortified the place by having forty four gallon drums filled with sand three deep, and in front of them there were palm tree logs laid length way
- 02:00 and the whole lot was covered with earth. The defences actually were sited for attack from the land. There were none or very few facing towards seawards. The top of the pill boxes had smoke vents to allow smoke out.
- 02:30 Now in the two years the Jap had planted a lot of stuff over these pill boxes so they blended in with the rest of the country, and in the lessons he had learned from fighting the 2/9th and 2/10th it was his routine to put snipers up the coconut trees and they would hide in the fronds that hung down
- 03:00 along the length of the trunk. Now these fellows up the trees were very good and they were practically indistinguishable because the way they were tied in up there. So the result was when we went to attack they gave us a thrashing. Now the attack that the 2/12th was involved in,
- 03:30 the actual proper attack started on New Years Day 1943. Zero hour was 0800 and at twenty minutes to eight or zero minus twenty, we had twelve Vickers guns shooting up the right flank and they were
- 04:00 supported by four mortars, three inch mortars. And shooting up the length flank of the attack, up the length of the strip, the same thing, six Vickers machine guns and three mortars. On top of this the artillery had a gun called Carson's gun. Carson was the sergeant in charge of this gun and they were
- 04:30 shooting over open sights...25 pounders shooting over open sights up the length of the strip. There was one particular gun the Japs had called a Chicago piano. It was a three barrel machine gun and it was a murderous thing and it would chop you in half if you got anywhere near it. Well the attack commenced on
- 05:00 the morning of the 1st and in due course at 0800 the battalion moved forward over open ground against these very strong pillboxes. They were met by a pretty murderous hail of fire and the fellows were completely in the open but they kept going.
- 05:30 It must have been about nine o'clock or half past nine - at the time I was commanding headquarter company and my job when there was a fight on was to make sure all the supporting arms were where they should be and the necessary arms and ammunition was kept up to them and filled in where required. It must have been about
- 06:00 half past nine and the colonel called me and said "Angus, the forward companies are out of contact, we've completely lost all contact with all the rifle companies, I want you to grab any odd or sod around here and get in there and sort it out and let me know what's going on," They were the most liberal orders I had ever received in my life. Any rate I raced around and I
- 06:30 got transport drivers and cooks and the odd batman and the odd signaller. Any one that wasn't doing anything important I said "You're it, you're following me," and I ended up with about fifty bods all told. I took them in. I saw that
- 07:00 D Company... Captain Murray of A Company had been killed, Captain Kirk of B Company had been killed, Major Gategood of Don Company had been badly wounded, Captain Curtis had been wounded and the majority of subalterns had been wounded,
- 07:30 and by and large it was a pretty rough set up. On top of that we'd lost roughly sixty men. Now I said to the fellows that I had "Ok I want two volunteers to come with me, and we'll get this show moving again" and
- 08:00 Who those two blokes were I don't know. Any rate I had a couple of blast grenades with me - that's four pounds of ammonal on the end of a hand grenade and I rushed the first big rocks and I managed to get one of these blast grenades down the smoke hole in the roof.
- 08:30 In the mean time the transport officer, Lieutenant Bill Bowerman with his transport platoon which I had brought in, they got busy on the... Where the companies had been going up, I went up between the forward company on the left and the forward company on the right, and
- 09:00 when I was almost at the beach I had swung east to take these pillboxes from the rear if I could get it. I thought if I tried from the front you were never sure. The trouble was, each pillbox was connected to its mate with a crawl trench. That's about four feet deep that you could crawl along and be safe relatively.
- 09:30 Any rate, we got busy until about five o'clock in the afternoon and I knew I wasn't going to finish it off that day. I spoke on the phone to the Colonel and asked him for some reinforcements - to see if he could

get me reinforcements from anywhere. And shortly after this two platoons from the 2/9th battalion were given to me.

- 10:00 They were commanded by two colossal bloke, Thomas and Tibbert. Now this bloke Tibbert I had known before the war and he was a beautiful physique of a man. He got his blokes into action and unfortunately he took a slab of shrapnel down his back.
- 10:30 Each side of his spine ...there's a muscle on either side of the spine and his were very well developed and this slap of steel just chopped one of them in half like a butcher opening up. Any rate he was knocked over but he stood up and kept going and he wouldn't go out. A most extraordinary bloke.
- 11:00 Any rate it was getting on towards dusk and so I pulled... I gave the orders to pull back one line of palm trees. The idea being that in the night it would give us...but they would still be within range for hand grenades but not so far that we couldn't control them to some extent.
- 11:30 So any rate during the night it rained, God it rained, and the Jap counter attacked. One rather amusing incident was, as I mentioned previously we armed the doctors and the stretcher bearers and the chaplain with arms and Roy Wootton was one. He was our chaplain and he had a Tommy gun, and to his amazement in the middle of the night a Jap decided to hop in the pit with him but fortunately although he was the chaplain he had a Tommy gun,
- 12:00 and the Jap shortly after ceased to be any threat. It was the most extraordinary thing you know when you see the chaplain ...we couldn't see him but we knew where he was. Once again the lessons that we learned at Milne Bay stood us in good stead in that after dark you don't move, you don't move whether you are sick or dying. You don't move out of your possie. If you do you will be shot,
- 12:30 and it can't be impressed on blokes too much. The following morning the tanks...oh we had tanks and it was the first time we had worked with tanks. The 2/6th Armoured Squadron was working with us and we were lucky in that the tanks...We could indicate a target to the tanks by firing a very light at them,
- 13:00 and the tank would then engage it with a two-pounder gun or with a Browning machine gun that it had mounted on the front of it. They were very very handy I tell you. The trouble was there was so much bloody row, so much bloody noise...gawd it was, the bloody noise was unbelievable. There was one fellow called Roy Rogers, B Company.
- 13:30 His section - he was a corporal, his section was in trouble and he actually climbed on to the back of the tank onto the turret - there's a little window on the back of those tanks and he was able to pass them a written message. There was no use trying to talk to them, you couldn't make yourself heard. And he passed a message to the tank commander telling him just what his problems were, and the tank turned around and gave Roy a hand. It was very, very good.
- 14:00 One tank unfortunately got onto a tree stump and bellied up a bit and couldn't get off until the fight was over. But eventually we go up as far as Simemi Creek when to my horror suddenly I've got the colonel beside me. If there was one bloke who was important in a thing like that it was the big chief and I didn't want him in my area,
- 14:30 and I told him so. I said, "Look sir you can't be here, we're depending on you too much." But at any rate at that moment on the other side further...on our side of the creek but further down from where we were, a couple of Jap staff officers appeared all done up in their regalia you know, gold braid and tabs and all this sort of thing. He had his sword out, you know these big Japanese swords, and he went swish down on a palm frond that was near by
- 15:00 and shaved all the frond off it. He made signs like come here and we'll have a fight. I said to the colonel "Like bloody hell I will give this bloke tender or surrender." And by that time we had orders to get a prisoner. So I thought I'll try to get this bloke as a prisoner and if he doesn't, I'll shoot him. So I counted to ten and ...
- 15:30 In the meantime I had sent word to Freddie Holman, a top line sergeant I had. He was on a Vickers gun, and I said "Freddie you bring your gun up here." And he put his Vickers down and I said, "Now see that bastard, look I don't know what's in the scrub behind but if he doesn't surrender take him out, and really beat up that scrub behind him." See we were on the creek itself. Although the plantations was comparatively open, the creek had all this undergrowth on it.
- 16:00 So any rate Freddie very smartly got his gun into action and he gave me the nod and I counted one to ten. He didn't surrender and Freddy took him out, and basically that was about the end of the fight that day. The following day about eight o'clock in the morning, one of our bloke's got killed.
- 16:30 Fortunately one of the fellows spotted this sniper. He was up a tree. They had examined this tree all the previous day and they couldn't see a soul and that bastard was there all day and all night and the next day he took out one of our blokes. By God they were patient and they were treacherous bastards. So we then had to get busy and
- 17:00 do some tidying up around the battle field. The Jap had tried to get out during the night. The water was very smooth. The ocean that is. It was oily smooth under the starlight. You would see a break in the surface and there was some bugger trying to get away. So we caught quite a few of the Japs.

17:30 **How were they trying to leave?**

Swimming. They would get out in the water and swim passed us. As a matter of fact it was funny on the day previously. On that morning actually I finished up and I wasn't too sure were the 2/9th was. You couldn't see you see.

18:00 We knew it was on Simemi Creek but the maps we had showed the creek running out to sea. But being a coastal creek and the tides and one thing and another, there was a continuous breach and the mouth of the creek was sealed in. So we didn't know exactly where we were relative to the ground. We knew roughly and I didn't want to go mortoring and of the 2/9th blokes. So any way I got on the radio and called up the 2/9th Battalion,

18:30 and the commander was a fellow called Bill Parry-Oaken and I had known him for years at that time. I knew the sort of bloke I was dealing with and he knew me and so I asked him exactly where are you? I said "Look I'll give you a round of smoke and I'll be able to see where that comes up and you tell me where you are relative to that."

19:00 So I said to Les Ready the sergeant, "Sergeant see if you can bring that barrel back." I said, "What are you on?" He said, "We're on about three hundred at the moment." I said "Look bring your muzzle back as near to perpendicular as you can." He said, "What?" I said, "Yes, because we will put up a round of smoke and we'll just see where

19:30 that falls, and the 2/9th will be able to tell us where they are relative to the smoke." Any rate, Les pulled this muzzle back and back and back and the next thing I said "Give them one round of smoke." And away went this ruddy ten pound mortar smoke bomb. I said "Gawd that bloody thing is going to get blown back."

20:00 And the next thing the wireless starts to crackle and Bill says, "Christ you nearly put it in my basic pouch." The bloody thing had come down and just missed him. It was unbelievable, but when the smoke came up I said "I know exactly where you are." And he said "Fair enough," and then we were able to use the mortars around a bit, dust up the country.

20:30 And just after that the whole thing folded. Well then of course there was all the normal tidying up, but one of the pill boxes that we had taken out had seventy Japs in it and I said well these blokes are all dead. At any rate and we went to the end and we sealed the end of the pill box up like a tomb. That afternoon

21:00 we are sitting down on the ground and the old man was giving us our orders for the next move and to my horror and I looked across and on the top of the pill box was a hand coming out and this blasted Jap had been lying amongst the dead all that time. He was inside and wanted to get out. So at any rate the Brigade Commander

21:30 said there is a fortnights leave for any man who can get him as a prisoner. So I said, without thinking I suppose, I said to Freddie, I said "Freddie take a couple of your blokes and deliver him back to brigade headquarters, there's a fortnight's leave attached to it." Anyway away they went and

22:00 there were a few shots going off and the chatter of the machine gun - just normal after scrap sounds. And the next thing Freddie came marching back and I said "Gawd what's happened, where's the prisoner?" and he said "God you wouldn't read about it, we just got in the swamp and the bastard fell off the stretcher and broke his neck." I said "Like bloody hell, oh right oh."

22:30 There was no way they would take a prisoner. You couldn't kid them into it. So one thing led to another and we then we got orders to move around to Soputa much to the disgust of the blokes, because Tom Blamey and Eichelberger the American commander came around to see us after Buna. And it was all, "You're good blokes you know, you won,"

23:00 and one of our fellows, I'm not sure who it was, but Blamey was saying "Right jolly good show, jolly good show. You fellows are a credit to the AIF you know. Your forebears will be most proud of you." This voice came out, "Never mind the bull shit when are we getting our leave?"

23:30 Oh Gawd, I mean it was a fair question too. The same bloke years before in England when rations were so scarce. The first morning when we got into Salisbury and we were given thumping great big china plates, colossal things and in the middle there was about two inches square of bacon, and that was breakfast.

24:00 General Morsehead arrived at the company line just as the fellows are given this plate, and he said "Ah.., we're going to have breakfast," and there was this little bit of bloody bacon and Morsehead said "Lad, how's your breakfast?" And he said, "You call that breakfast!" And the Brig said "Well that's all I'm having" and he said, "Yeah well that doesn't fill up my guts does it."

24:30 And the Brig said, "We'll try and improve matters," and he said, "By gawd, you better. A man can't work on this stuff." Gawd they were wags. But then we were ordered around to Soputa and to my horror we were given some reinforcements.

Why was that a horror?

- 25:00 Well these reinforcements had been in the army at that time... they had seen the end of '39, '40, '41 and this was New Years Day '43. And the majority had never fired a rifle, they had never thrown a hand grenade, they had never seen a field gun fire and they'd been
- 25:30 at battle stations down at the entrance to Port Phillip Harbour and here at Georges Heights. They used to work nine to five and go home at night. It was unbelievable and they sent them up there. So what was the result?. A group we got in one night, there were thirteen that came to us. The following morning there were four dead and the other nine were wounded. There was one bloke who came in there in one draft...
- 26:00 We had a sign up that said 'duck your nut' because we knew damn well that there was a sniper on this position, and if you ducked down you were under cover. But the stupid bastard said "Why?" He never found out why because he had no sooner said why than he bought it. They hadn't been told anything.
- 26:30 Oh Gawd we took over from, I suppose one of the best battalions that fought in New Guinea and that was the CMF 39th and don't you under estimate the CMF. That 39th they were basically butchered. They weren't given the proper training they should have had but they were the first ones to meet the Jap after he landed at Buna.
- 27:00 That bloke Pixley who had the lambs on the hill, Stewart was the second in command of the battalion after he left us. When we came back from the Middle East they pulled a lot of officers and sergeants out and they sent them across to the CMF, and Stewart went to the 39th of all places. And the next thing I was taking over from him up at Soputa. But at any rate , the country from Soputa through to Cape Killerton, Sanananda and that area was
- 27:30 just bog, sheer mud and when I say mud I mean real mud. So much so that if a man was wounded and he fell face down in it he just drowned. It was that thin. It was bloody awful. My job then... I had headquarter company, and my job was to make sure there was plenty of ammunition coming up. On one occasion
- 28:00 I wanted four second grenades, that's with a four second fuse. I said gawd the 9th should have some of this. So I went across to the 2/9th and a fellow there called Hamilton who was the quartermaster. I worked with him and known him for a couple of years and I said
- 28:30 "I want some four second grenades what have you got?" and he said "I'm looking for mark eight," Mark eight was for the Vickers guns and I said "Well I've got plenty of that, but I'm not going to trade it out unless I get some hand grenades." So he organised for me to get a hundred hand grenades and I organised for him to get a few cases of
- 29:00 stripless ammunition... stripless being - the belts were all ready to put on the guns but instead of having the strips of brass that the normal things had, it was disposable. You used it and threw it away. So I was able to organise this stripless for him. Well 50 years later I was up at... he lived at Trinity Beach up at Cairns, and fifty years later I was up there and I called around to see him. I could see him
- 29:30 down the end of his veranda. I didn't tell him I was coming and I went up one end of the veranda and I yelled out "Hamilton what will you give me for a couple of boxes of stripless?" And he said "Gawd I'll give you all the bloody grenades you want,," He remembered from all those years. Any rate ...
- 30:00 Soputa, on the 13th we tried to attack there, and the same bloke Clark he had his platoon, and oh he must have got thirty yards forward, his platoon was just about wiped out and he got clipped and he fell down. But where he fell, there was a bit of a slight mound
- 30:30 in the contours of the earth. And the Japs tried all day to shoot him. His haversack was just above the line where the bullets were going in and that night he came back to us. His haversack consisted of the two straps that go in here and they chopped the bloody thing off, but they didn't get him. That bloke on the evening of the 1st of January '43,
- 31:00 he took a bullet right here and it went straight through his head. On the morning when they attack faulted he took one sideways right down there, and on about the 16th up at Santayana he took one straight across the back of the head here. That really knocked him out but he didn't get killed.
- 31:30 The troops used to love it. They would say, thank God it was an officer. They have such thick bloody skulls you can't hurt them. But Clark got three in the head in a month and lived to tell the tale. A most extraordinary bloke. He could be bumptious and obnoxious at times but by gawd he was a bloody good mate and he was a bloody good soldier. But at any rate while we were held up at Soputa...when we started to move at Soputa
- 32:00 just up from there was a place called Huggins Road block after a Yank captain who got through there. And... oh incidentally at that point, the first time we tried to move, we lost a tank. The whole lot of the tank crew were incinerated the poor buggers. They couldn't get off the road and it was only a corduroy track in any case. At that point we...
- 32:30 there was a bloody water hole there and for ages we had been filling our water bottles, and one night there was a bit of a storm on and someone dropped a grenade in the hole and the next morning there

was a bloody great Jap. He had been in there under a tree or something and he was bloated up and he had been dead for about a month or more and we'd been drinking the water. No wonder why you get crook in the guts.

33:00 It was an extraordinary set up. Any rate Normie Sherman who was our assistant adjutant, he was sent down to the Japs line and he said the buggers had been practicing cannibalism. They had got on to some of the 7th Div [Division] Cav [Cavalry] boys who were on our left. They had been wounded and they ate the buttock and the calf of the leg. I mean you tell people that and people don't realise just how dangerous the bastards are, or maybe

33:30 I have a thing about them, but gawd ah... oh fair dinkum.

Did you actually come across ...

But at any rate we eventually broke through to the beach and the area that I went through ...we were down at this stage to about fifty blokes in the battalion. A battalion was eight hundred strong and we were down to fifty men. The order came ...and A Company had three men in it instead of one hundred and eight like they should have had.

34:00 They were still A company but only a remnant of it. But anyway where we broke through to the beach. I went through a Jap hospital and on the operating table... it was only a thatched roof, canvas roof., They had one stiff, one chap on the table and he'd been left there and they had all cleared off.

34:30 But beside him was a surgeons kit in a box, not unlike yours. It was an extraordinary thing. It was a Jap Navy set up. It had the Jap navy anchors on it, you know how they mark their stuff. And it had legs that opened out underneath it, and a bit bigger than that box.

35:00 Anyway you opened it up and it was lined with blue velvet and there were retractors, scalpels, pliers and what ever you wanted, everything a surgeon would want was in that box. So I said to my orderly, "See that, that's mine." I said "If anyone tries to take it or pull rank on you my order is to shoot them, it is as simple as that. I'm holding you responsible and if you loose it I'll shoot you."

35:30 "All right," he said that's ok. I could see a couple of instruments on the table they had been using them, and I said "See all those holes in the box, fill them up with the correct instruments." Anyway I went on and the next thing there was the beach and the beach consisted of a bit of cleared ground. At

36:00 low tide it might have been ten foot wide, and then the scrub was here. Any rate the next morning I was just lying back in the scrub and someone said "Where's Captain Suthers?" and a bloke said "He's in there" and I look up and I stripped off to my underpants because we had had our shoes and socks on for so long or our feet had gone all white, oh bloody awful it was.

36:30 Any rate this character said there were two blokes and they had on 7th Div patches on their hats, on the puggaree of their hats. I said "G'day Doc, what do you want?" He said, "I believe you have got a surgical kit?" I saw red a bit and I said, "Doc if you want anything of the spoils

37:00 of war get rid of that bloody medical patch and put on an infantry one. Yes I've got it and you're not getting it," and he said "What are you going to do with it?" and I said "I haven't got the faintest idea." I said, "But I know that there is some trade value in it." He said "I could use it," but I said, "But you're not getting it." I said, " tell you what I'll do, I'll give you a week's leave."

37:30 the doctor could give any one leave. Any rate I said "Like hell, what's the chance of that happening?" and I thought well what the hell am I going to do with it? What the hell am I going to do a surgical kit? I said, "Look, never mind this week's leave." I said "For three weeks leave okay," and he said "No, a fortnight."

38:00 I said "Okay a fortnight. For a fortnight's leave it's yours." So we shook hands on it and that was it. And we went on and the next thing we were pulled out. The whole battalion was pulled out on two jeeps and trailers...a jeep with a six foot box trailer behind it. There were two jeeps and a box trailer

38:30 and that lifted the whole battalion. Just imagine, there were about twenty-seven of us all told, all packed on it. It was unbelievable. So beside the twenty-seven of us, left behind in what they called a LOB group - Left Out of Battle. They leave out Bandsmen, not all bandsmen because most bandsmen

39:00 are stretcher bearers. And they leave out a nucleus of sergeants, corporals and officers, the lot, and they go to what is called B Echelon. Any rate this group...the group I was with which was the A group, we were the fighting section of the battalion, the sharp end of it.

39:30 There were about twenty-seven of us I think it was all told, we were lifted out on two jeeps and trailers. And every one was carrying a pistol and everyone was carrying some sort of automatic weapon. Everyone had two grenades on their belts. You got awfully bloody nervous and you weren't taking any chances. How ever that was that. At the time I was very heavy.

40:00 I was down to seven stone. When I had gone in at Milne Bay I weighed twelve. And when we got back to Soputa, I'll never forget. Jimmy McDonald the doctor. "God look at that bloke. He's skinnier than Dick Jud." Dick Jud was the mortar officer and Dick was as skinny as a rake handle. Any rate this bloke

turned around...he was stripped down and having a bath in the river. And blow me down, it was Dick Jud. It was incredible that anyone could be alive and be so thin. He was like a bloke out of Belsen. He was in a hell of a mess. So much for Dick. Then we went back to Koitaki which was out the back of Port Moresby, and they gave us a rifle company from one of the CMF battalions and the battalion went to be. The Colonel said, "I want all you fellas in bed and I don't want to see you for at least 3 days." I didn't wake up for 2 days. I didn't wake up to have a wee or have a drink or anything. For 2 days I slept. You wouldn't credit it. All the blokes were the same. And then, righto, there's going to be a battalion parade. Give the fellows their due, they turned out and their boots were like bloody guardsmen. By gee it was a credit to them and the Brig commented on it.

Tape 8

00:39 **Angus you were going to tell us about Sanananda. Could you give us some details about it?**

Well actually Sanananda was the final part after Soputa. From Soputa we went up to Cape Killerton and Sanananda.

01:00 Actually the fighting around Sanananda itself was absolutely filthy because really there was really no bottom to the swamp. As I said earlier if a man was wounded and he fell down, well he was dead, he drowned.

01:30 Other than that it was just filth. There was nothing much there. There was no town there. What can I tell you about Sanananda? Well I can tell you we lost a lot of men there. It's just one of those things and by that time the fellows were getting very browned off. Everyone of us had

02:00 some sort of sickness. As a matter of fact towards the end an order came down from battalion to the doctors that any man who has a temperature of one hundred and four for more than twenty four hours was to be evacuated. But they would hold him for twenty four hours with a temperature of a hundred and four. In those days you were in real trouble if you had that sort of temperature. I don't know what it is today.

02:30 I think a normal temperature in those days was ninety-six but I would stand corrected on that with all this new fangled metric. But as I say, well answering your question, I don't think there is much more I can say about Santayana. Two funny things happened with my mates. One of my mates, he's now gone. He saw his... I'll tell you who he was.

03:00 As a matter of fact you might know a Doctor Renouf - a doctor of Law. He was the Australian Ambassador to France and he got Whitlam into China before Nixon. Well this mate of mine... the other mate is Bill Quilty, he saw Alan Renouf hit in the head,

03:30 and knew he was dead. And Bill went about his business and a couple of days later Bill himself was wounded and evacuated back to Dobodura which was the place where the aerodrome was. He was lying there in a tent one day and waiting to be evacuated back to Moresby. And who walked in to see him

04:00 or walked passed the end of the bed was Renouf. Well he got the shock of his life. He knew Renouf was dead, but in action what he'd seen was a bloke with a near miss and badly pierced. And at the time Renouf was under orders to come back to Australia. So they just held him there and sent him back here. Renouf himself is a bloody fine man. Since then of course

04:30 he's become a figure in the world politics and he was head of our foreign affairs department there for a while, Alan Renouf.

Can you tell me I guess your interactions or impressions of the American forces?

Yes, I can tell you this. The American forces... I can only speak

05:00 now of the Montana Regiment because that's the only one I worked with. They were led by a bunch of officers who were professionals but an absolute disgrace to any army. Generally if you found the American private soldier or the corporal or the top sergeant, he was running the unit.

05:30 The private soldiers of the American Army were neglected. They were obliged to wear filthy clothes. There was no insistence that they smarten up. The crowd that we tangled with at Buna, the officers were always a mile back behind them.

06:00 I mean we used to think back to the early days when we were first soldiers and at least we expected our officers to be with us or ahead of us for that matter. But the American soldier in the Montana Regiment they were betrayed in my book by the officers. Their officers were not worth a bumper. As a matter of fact that's reflected up the line too.

06:30 I tell you, at one stage MacArthur said to one of his commanders come back and tell me that you've got the objective what ever it was. Well he said, you needn't bother coming back. He knew in his own heart that they weren't being led with any vigour. Oh crikey...

- 07:00 As a matter of fact there is a story which I can vouch for. We had a bloke called Clary Moore and Clary... he was a dead shot this fellow, he loved a Thompson sub machine gun. Any rate, when we were there we were going in and there was a Yank on the side of the track and he said "Listen Aussie we have been here for six weeks,"
- 07:30 and Clary said to him, "Listen buster in six hours I'll come back and tell you that it is all cleared up." Well it so happened about five hours later when we had the thing a bit under control, Clary Moore realised that we were going to win, and as he was carried out...he's another bloke who I thought was dead .
- 08:00 I thought he had been killed in action but he had been saved. The Yanks pulled him out and as we went out he saw this Yank and said, "I told you six hours and we got it." The yank couldn't believe that our blokes would go in the way they did. Actually those leading companies, A company, Alex Murray had and Duncan Clark ended up commanding it,
- 08:30 that was... and the other company, B company run by Bill Kirk...they were two blokes... they were real bloody soldiers and the blokes respected them and they only had to ask for something and it was done. Any rate that was about it for Santayana.
- 09:00 We went back to Koitaki and the first thing back at Koitaki before we went to bed, they gave us a loaf of bread. We hadn't had bread for six months, and I can remember now hanging on to the loaf of bread and the blokes pulling out the bits and chewing on it. So that was it and then we came back and we went to Ravenshoe and we were sent out on leave. Was that good.
- 09:30 My good wife and friends had just bought a cottage down at Whale Beach, down near Palm Beach, and down we went, and on the first night I got a bout of malaria and oh gawd did I get crook. So much for my leave. Any rate the following morning she went around to Palm Beach and rang up the hospital,
- 10:00 Concord Hospital and after a bit of talking she conned them into sending out an ambulance for me. So they sent an ambulance out to Whale Beach. Well what's going to happen to her? She said, "I'm not stopping here on my own" so against the law she packed her bags and locked up the cottage she borrowed from this friend of hers and she came back into Sydney town where she could get a bus and go out to home at Dover Heights.
- 10:30 I was then admitted to hospital and I was put on a high vitamin diet and right or wrong I didn't want to do anything like that. I was so skinny and weak and so forth I didn't want anything. So I was ordered to drink a bottle of beer a day and I had more friends in that hospital.
- 11:00 It was issued every day and the sister would come along and give me a bottle and I had to drink this bottle of beer every day - and they were buying it of course. But at any rate, one morning I'm lying in bed and along came a bunch of doctors under the charge of a very senior looking doctor.
- 11:30 He was explaining this and explaining that and I suddenly realised that this was something that I had heard about, where the doctors who had been away for a while, they used to pull them back out and put them back in a teaching hospital and teach them all the latest drugs and all this sort of thing. Any rate... the sort of thing such as penicillin. Penicillin was brand new then and on the night of the 1st January I had Sergeant Reddy, the fellow who put the mortar bomb up
- 12:00 and he used to bubble blood out through his chest, and Jimmy McDonald said, "Look he is so crook that the only thing we can do is try this new stuff we've got called penicillin." So they tried it out on a wounded bloke and I suppose it would have been a roll of Life Savers or something like that ...
- 12:30 about a bottle that size and he just poured it into the wound, and in the morning Les was still alive and he came back after the war. No it was very good.

Can you tell me Angus about your next encounter which was Shaggy Ridge?

- 13:00 After that first show we'd been so badly knocked about in the first New Guinea campaign that we absorbed the 5th Motor Regiment. These are fellows who used to be the 5th Light Horse. They turned them into a motor regiment and then they turned them into ordinary foot slogging infantrymen... this is after four years of war.
- 13:30 They had never heard a shot fired in anger you see - by gawd some of their organization was crook and it was the private soldier who eventually paid for it with his life. Any way these fellows turned out to be top liners and what they did at Shaggy Ridge was unbelievable. We went back to New Guinea.
- 14:00 We went down to Pom Pom Park and Bootless Inlet which is to the east of Port Moresby about five mile out I suppose, and then we had to be flown back across the range to Popondetta and Dobodura. They were the two air strips on that side. I think it was the 2/33 Battalion
- 14:30 who were getting ready to go off just before us. They went a couple of days before us, and they were on trucks all lined up ready to go down to the planes, and there was a thumping great Flying Fortress loaded with bombs taking off. Of all the places to put the staging camp. It was at the end of the airstrip.

- 15:00 Bloody fool of an idea. But any way this great bomber went up, just got airborne and it went klunk straight down on the trucks loaded with D Company from the 33rd. Well they lost ninety men killed on the spot. It was unbelievable. Gawd I will never forget that night. We had just gone to bed and this bang.
- 15:30 It had kept on going for another minute or two it would have fallen on us. Any rate well they did knock it about, it knocked the 33rd about, and it so happened that one our fellows, Red Seddon he got cracking,
- 16:00 and they just kept the planes coming and the battalion moved out as thought nothing had happened. They had to get across because there were other units on the far side waiting for back up, and so across we went to the Ramu Valley. Then we had to do a reconnaissance of
- 16:30 the place, Shaggy Ridge. There were no maps of it. We got air support photographs. They put Mitchell bombers up with cameras in them and photographed the land underneath. They were photographing from ten thousand feet and that sort of thing. There were lot of clouds, so they photographed the top of the clouds. I've got one there as a matter of fact showing the thing, and the average one had
- 17:00 'covered by cloud and nothing known of this area', and that's where we had to fight from. You had to do your own reconnaissance, but however the photograph there proves it was hopeless because we didn't have any maps. They did a lot of mapping and it was only recently
- 17:30 that they fully mapped Australia. They used to take photographs of the country on an oblique angle. If you photograph that at an oblique angle you get an entirely different perspective than if you photograph vertically as it should be done. But there was no ground control on the planes to make sure where they should be. It was a bit crook.
- 18:00 At the time of going to Shaggy Ridge we had a couple of English officers attached to us from the Indian Army. They belonged to English regiments and they had been sent out to us for training and experience to see how these Australians defeated the Japs at Milne Bay. The blokes in Siam
- 18:30 Burma they weren't doing so well so they sent a lot of their fellows for us to break in. And prior to this, in Christmas '43 we were at Moresby waiting to go across to the Shaggy Ridge job and we got Australian comforts fund parcels and every man got a little
- 19:00 Christmas pudding and a little Christmas cake. I will never forget one of these Pommy blokes yelled out "Charles have you got your Christmas cake?" "Yes, and my little Christmas pud too!" We did the Shaggy Ridge job and we had to crawl
- 19:30 up four thousand feet to get to the blokes. We were very lucky. The Jap reckoned no one could attack him from the angle we took him and in some of the climb up the mountain our Pioneers went ahead of us and dropped ropes down so you could pull yourself up on the ropes. Well I have got photographs there. The Shaggy Ridge job, the country was practically vertical. Oh it was a bugger of a thing.
- 20:00 The nearest water when we were up the top was a thousand foot below us, and you had to go down a thousand foot with all the water bottles and lug all the water bottles back up. It was a larrikin turn all right. As a matter of fact there is still a bloke comes and talks to us, a Jack Russell. The first time he met me...He always says, "The first time I met you, I had just got up Shaggy Ridge and you said soldier drop your gear, get those water bottles and go down and you'll find a spring about a thousand feet down, fill them up and bring them back up again."
- 20:30 He said "Have you ever tried to carry ten water bottles and climb a thousand feet? But I did it." The fellows that did that job - the mortar men, they had a base plate for a mortar. It weighs forty kilograms or something like that, they put it on their back and up they went. That was why a lot of them just dropped dead after the war.
- 21:00 However any rate we did Shaggy Ridge.

Can you describe the actual fighting at Shaggy Ridge, how it happened?

Well what happened was our commanding officer was up with the leading company. I think I mentioned I was headquarter company commander. They have what they call a forward battalion headquarters.

- 21:30 They have a machine gun officer, a mortar officer and a CO right up there. But they have rear battalion headquarters that does the paper work and that sort of thing. And the headquarter company commander in battle becomes rear battalion headquarters commander. I was rear battalion headquarters company commander going up this blasted mountain,
- 22:00 and I've got eight hundred troops ahead of me. You can just imagine the condition of the ground and that sort of thing not. Not that it was very wet in the early stages. It wasn't as bad as right down at the coast. But the next thing the word comes back down, "Suthers is required forward." "Oh Christ." I am about the last bloke of seven hundred fellas climbing up the bloody mountain.
- 22:30 "Suthers is required forward. " So I took all my equipment off, tucked my pistol in my belt and I gave my equipment to my batman and said "Take your time but get this stuff up and come up and find me,"

and away I went. I'm saying "Hang on Jim I've got to get past you, hang on." "Who the bloody hell are you?" "I'm Suthers, get out of the way." So it went because the word had come down by word of mouth you see, you are wanted forward.

- 23:00 So up I went, and in the meantime I had heard gun fire and realised that the leading company was up there and fighting. When I got up there, blow me buttons, here's the Commanding Officer Charlie Borne, he's sitting on the side of the track and the doc was with him. There were a couple of stretcher bearers there and Charley's got his pants open and his shirt up to here and he's got this great shell dressing stuck in his belly,
- 23:30 and I said, "What can I do, what do you want?" "Angus you are to take over from Colin Fraser. You're Battle 2IC. I thought, poor devil he's crook, I'm not the senior bloke now, because there was a major who had come to us from the motor regiment, and I said "Hang on sir, I'm not arguing but how about Major Cameron, he's senior to me?"
- 24:00 He said "Let him earn his spurs." He had never been in a fight Cameron, and he didn't know how he would behave once the muck started to fly - and the muck was flying by this time. So I said "Very good sir," and I took over as the battle 2IC [Second In Command] forward as the commanding officer. And just as we got to the top there was mountain gun there that had been sighted to shoot along
- 24:30 the ridge at the 2/9th Battalion because the Jap reckoned that no one would try to attack us up a slope like that. So we caught them with their pants down and one of the motor regiment officers who was now a platoon commander - his name was Braithwaite. He was the subaltern on this gun when it came into action. The Jap was pretty good, he was using his head.
- 25:00 He couldn't depress the gun enough to shoot directing into us. He was shooting at the trees just above our heads. The shells were exploding and all the shrapnel was coming down on us. At any rate Braithwaite came in with the platoon with their bayonets and there was no mucking around. He cleaned it out and he got the gun. That gun today is up at the training
- 25:30 school up in Canungra War School up in Queensland.

Can I ask you about all of the campaigns - was there a sense that they were unnecessary?

In retrospect of course once the hierarchy knew about the atom bomb coming on, in my book they should have just said we will hold what we've got and don't waste men unnecessarily from now on.

- 26:00 But although they knew they were going to have the atom bomb eventually... that was known by the leaders of the nations. Gawd bless my soul can you imagine the Americans in Saipan, they lost thousands just before the atom bomb. All the blokes we lost basically after Milne Bay. If we had just sat tight at Milne
- 26:30 Bay and not worried about following them back across the Owen Stanleys. If we had said, right mate you can come as far as Owens [Owers] Corner or wherever it was where they got down to just short of Moresby, they could have left the Jap to worry about the long haul over the mountains. The hierocracy must have known at least a year before that this bomb was in the making and they were going to have an atom bomb
- 27:00 that would soon bring an end to the war. So answering your question. Mind you this is only what I think and what do I know about it. But what I think is, from what I have seen of war, it was a waste of men and a waste of resources, and unbelievable. It's crook as a matter of fact. It's almost treason that blokes can be treated that way. Oh dear however.
- 27:30 Any rate after Shaggy Ridge we came back to Australia again and it must have been...oh what we did, we went down to Lae and boarded at Lae and came back around and we landed in
- 28:00 Cairns. We went up to Kiari and we went on this training for the next job in Borneo. I was out on the training field one day and I woke up back in my tent and I said "What's going on?" And there was a doctor at the foot of my bed. It was just like being in Sydney. It was a peace time camp. And I'm lying on my bunk
- 28:30 and I said, "G'day Doc, what the hell has happened?" and he said "Well you passed out, and how do you feel?" and I said "Well I feel a bit crook but I'm alright." He said "How's your foot?" and I said "My foot's all right," and he said "Have a look at it," and so help me Bob, you know the probe they use if they are trying to dig a bullet out of you.
- 29:00 He had one of these probes and it was about a foot long and he stuck it straight through my foot here and he had another one straight through there, right through my foot. I said "Holy hell, gawd what happened?" He said "Oh you've got beri beri" and in beri beri you lose all feeling. If you have an arm like that and you press like that,
- 29:30 that hole stops in there and you can see it here. This isn't beri beri, but if I press that... the circulation, oh its coming out again, but normally that hole stops there, but with beri beri you can go like that and there is still a hole there, an indentation you know. But at any rate I was in B Class and

- 30:00 I was sent down to the adjutant to Strathpine staging camp which suited me because I had a pregnant wife - yes she was pregnant then, she would have been just pregnant. So she came to live in Brisbane at my parent's place and every chance I had I was out there
- 30:30 after her. The next thing was down at Cowra here. There was a break out of Japanese prisoners and the brother Garth was somewhere down near Cowra at the time and he was put in a plane spotting to find these Japs that had got out in the country side. He had been to an intelligence school and on the way back he called into Brisbane and I happened to be
- 31:00 in Brisbane this night at Strathpine, and he said "Listen to me mate you have had more than five years service. They are bringing in a scheme now where if you have had more than five years service you can get out in to civvy street." And he said, "I don't know what's on but there is something big on and this war is going to fold up very rapidly, shortly." He said, "We had a couple of Pommy intelligence types come to talk to us and the way they were speaking
- 31:30 something big is going to happen. I don't know what it is but it is going to affect the whole of the allied services." I said nonsense, or words to that effect and he said "No, you can get out, so get out and shortly every one will get out and they will be wanting a job and that sort of thing." He said "You get out." Any way he went back and I thought well I will give it a try.
- 32:00 So I wrote to the military secretary and said I was applying under the new regulation whatever it was, and to my bloody amazement they said okay away you go. So the next thing I was out. No, you had to have a job to go to or something and a friend of mine arranged for me to sell oil for Wakefield and it doesn't matter what you sell if you know your product you're right.
- 32:30 So any rate I got out and I went back to my old job - I went back to ECA [?] first to see if I could get a job and they started to go crook because they didn't know how they would absorb all the men and the law said they had to take them all back. So said, "Oh forget it, I'll go down to Sydney." So Lorna and I had a yarn and we went to Sydney.
- 33:00 All my mates were far and wide and I said "Oh why don't we go to Sydney. So I came down to Sydney and started... well I bought the branch of the main business that her father had. It was a very good business in Newtown and he had this little one in Burwood and he said "I will sell it to you but I won't give it to you." He said "If I give it to you, you will ruin it and you won't appreciate it, so you've got to buy it." I said, "That's all right I'll buy it." So we came to an arrangement and we bought the Burwood business
- 33:30 and we were there for another thirty four years. From a little baby shop we had quite a respectable set up, so much so that the English manufacturers used to come to us before they went to David Jones to get our opinion. Oh gawd it was funny. At any rate, after that we were asked to go back and start up the
- 34:00 Interim army and I re-enlisted with the 30th Battalion, the New South Wales Scottish which had a pretty good report. They were a good show, a bloody good regiment, they still are. Then I did other things. I joined the Chamber of Commerce at the instigation of our Brigade Commander, Sir Frederick
- 34:30 Chilton - he was then Brigadier Chilton. I started an old boys association. Where we used to get about a hundred fellows turn up we are now down to about five. All the rest have gone to the big bivouac in the sky somewhere.
- 35:00 But ... I joined the Masonic Lodge, the Chamber of Commerce and the RSL [Returned and Services League]. Lorna joined Quota and I joined Rotary first...or I was invited to join Rotary. We had three kiddies and they all worked hard and they have all done particularly well in fact.
- 35:30 The eldest lad is with Visypak now. He was with Rheem, and then he went to white goods people down in Melbourne and he then started Fisher Paykel here in Australia.
- 36:00 The arrangement on a handshake was that he would be the boss for Australia, and they said well we are a Kiwi company, we think a Kiwi should be top. So he said "I'm the top bloke," and they said, no a Kiwi. And he said "Well if that's the way it is I will give you three months notice to replace me," and I thought he was a bit generous and anyway they gave him three months
- 36:30 notice, and they gave him a year's pay and he travelled around the world and took his wife and two boys with him. Now he's spending a colossal amount of money on behalf of Visypak setting up new manufacturing for them.
- 37:00 **Can I ask, having a job to go to and a wife at home was it easier to settle in once you left the army with those things?**
- Well actually I was very lucky I had a darn good wife. Honestly she was a bottler. The reason that I know that is, see in the
- 37:30 army we had to censor mail. Every night when you finished your work, there would be a dozen letters or more and you had to read every one of them to see if blokes weren't spilling the beans about something that they shouldn't have. Now some of things that went on at home, the blokes that were married, honestly it was crook. Many a fellow got home and went down to see his wife and

- 38:00 she hadn't been there for the last six months. She'd taken off with a yank or something. It was unbelievable. Oh crikey, the blokes would come... and these were bloody good riflemen and machine gunners, and they would come and say "Skipper, that wife of mine she's left me" or "My best mate has got in under my skin." That's not quite a fair question because I was lucky. I had a girl in a million,
- 38:30 and whatever I wanted..., well we worked together, for six years we worked together. We never had a holiday. Sundays and holidays we worked and we worked and we both fell down and we both got real crook. We had built the business up a bit by this time. I actually used to carry her down to the beach, she couldn't walk. And then I got crook and I had to
- 39:00 stagger down. After that, when we came back, the girls had been so decent that they had put the figures up, so I said from now on we're having a holiday every year come hell or high water - which we did. And the girls, every time we went away they would work like... and the next year they would be up again, and I used to say, "Gawd are you knocking it off in the meantime."
- 39:30 No, we were lucky. We went through a lot of girls until we got the ones we wanted. But by jingo we had some fine girls. I never sacked a girl. Oh one I did. The little one who refused to speak to her mate because she wasn't playing speaks with her. I said, "Jan you make up your mind and tell Robin that or you can grab my hat." And she said, "Right, I'll grab my hat" and I said "Okay, away you go darling." But no, we ended up with seven on the staff there.
- 40:00 Every morning I got out of bed, I was up for wages for seven before I made a quid for myself. But no by and large we were very lucky weren't we Mum? Yes we worked hard. Our daughter fortunately married a Kiwi actually, and she has produced three good kids.
- 40:30 Three very good kids and the little fellow, the last bloke, he's with the education department. He started off in the normal run of things as a school teacher and so forth and now he is where they arrange policy. He works from home now and his wife is also with the education
- 41:00 department. She's at Macquarie University and has a doctorate in education. Alan's only got a masters degree.

Tape 9

- 00:33 **Angus I would just like to take you back a little bit after you came back from the Middle East. You mentioned to our researchers that when you were in Tenterfield that there was a spot of trouble up there?**
- Oh in the dance hall? What happened there was...you can just imagine, a brigade
- 01:00 plus attached troops which would be roughly about three and half, four thousand men - well we hit Tenterfield, we were suddenly dumped at Tenterfield. Our unit was stationed at a place called London Bridge, and with all these troops in town, what the hell are they going to do?
- 01:30 Now all the churches decided one thing they could do, the civilians, they decided it would be a good thing if they ran dances at night for the benefit of these troops. And each battalion or squadron or what ever was allocated a night that they could go into Tenterfield. Other than that they weren't allowed to go in there. So if you were
- 02:00 Battalion 1 and you could go in but Battalion 2 to 10 couldn't go in. But the night you were on then that town was yours and all the blokes would stand a good chance of getting a dance with a girl and get to know people. This thing worked famously. Any rate one night one fellow, one bright spark decided to rape a girl.
- 02:30 Well wasn't there a flap on about that, and weren't the blokes mad about it because every one with the colour patch that he was wearing was a potential rapist. Well no one knows what happened but he wasn't alive the next day. The blokes just wouldn't tolerate it, as I said, in that day no one touched a girl or woe betide you.
- 03:00 To my mind it was the best way to have it too. Girls could walk down the street at nine o'clock at night, midnight, no one would attack them, no way. A bloke might say see you home to make sure you got there safely, but no one would think of touching a girl, you just didn't do it.
- 03:30 It was much the same in the ordinary home. There was a rifle in every home. Every home had a twenty two rifle in it, or a 303 or what ever. But if you got into an argument you didn't go and get a rifle and shoot a bloke, you had it out with your fists. It was a different set of values.
- Do you think it had anything to do with coming back from the war in the Middle East**
- 04:00 **and the experiences that some of them might have had over there, changing them a little bit?**
- I doubt it, I think it was more the fault of the fellows of my age in that we had been away from home for

so long, it was good to be home and instead of belting our kids occasionally we let them get away with it.

04:30 And that was it, because when they grew up they let the kids get away with anything. Now if you talk to my boys they would say I was a bit tough. If my boys stepped out of line they got a back hander. One night my eldest lad was cheeky to his mother and I took him outside and I really thumped him.

05:00 My age group coming back still expected a bit of respect, a bit of discipline but when they grew up, the kids... And I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that there is no community sheet anchors the way it was. The community anchors were churches. Every bloke realised that he had feet of clay.

05:30 Like you have feet of clay and I've got feet of clay, and sure today we get a few compliments and one thing and another, and you've got a tendency to get a bit big headed. But oh no, it's the old thing: 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave'. I forget who said that - Moore, I think. Sure there's an attitude in society

06:00 also today that talks about human rights. In my book the only right that any man has got is the right to help his fellow man not to take him down. Take the current set up we've got in law, the way the magistrate... and they just

06:30 pander to the criminal. It's absolutely criminal the way some of them go on. A fellow can basically get away with murder today. It doesn't mean a thing. We're just too easy. There is no real discipline. The kids themselves...there's an element of kids that

07:00 are very good. You've only go to look at engineering and the professions and the code of building... the lads that become carpenters and builders, they are all good. But there's an element out there that's dragging the whole group down. The law courts, instead

07:30 of saying right righto, you've stepped out of line, you are going to be smacked down, they just don't do it today. You take the current set up in Redfern where there's police... the New South Wales police are scared to do any thing to an Aborigine. It's so damn stupid. If an Aborigine wants to smash up a white man's place

08:00 lock him up. There is no way that you would be game to walk down some of those streets tonight as a white man... boy you'd be history.

If I can just take you back to Tenterfield, was there also a shooting incident between a sergeant and a warrant officer?

08:30 Yes there was, where did you hear that? I never mentioned that? You've got that from someone else.

A researcher you spoke to up at Orange, I think it was Brett or Brad?

Yes there was a warrant officer. I think he was in the 2/9th . He got shot.

Do you know what it was about?

09:00 No, I don't know. I don't know if he was shot or ended up with a term in Long Bay. But he was a warrant officer who got shot.

You mentioned it in passing and it sounded like an interesting story.

09:30 I've just forgotten the locations of where those battalions were. But as a brigade group we were all in the Tenterfield area.

You mentioned before sort of almost in passing about some of the fellows not having a good time and sort of dropping dead after the war. You had quite a good home coming because you

10:00 **had a wife to come back to. Did you see much of any fellows who had a hard time settling back in after the war?**

Oh quite a few of the blokes found it hard to settle it but after a while they settled in all right. There was one of the signallers. He walked out on his wife

10:30 just for no real reason. There was one of blokes, a very good fellow, his wife walked out on him and went with his mate. You would credit that. His mate let him down and went and took his wife.

11:00 Generally our blokes settled down. I'm just trying to think back on it. I know the sig and Tubby... No generally our blokes all settled down. Off the top of my head I can't recall, other than those two blokes. I can't recall anyone being divorced

11:30 I think they were all okay.

That's actually good to hear. We hear a lot from a lot of fellows we talk to about how important mateship is, in terms of getting you through. I mean was that the same in your case with all your experiences?

- 12:00 Too right! The fact that you were in a battalion or a company, the fact that you belonged to that Battalion, you were part and parcel of the life of it. In New Guinea
- 12:30 there was no civilization so when you were out of action you couldn't go out to the local town like you could in the Middle East. When you were out of action your home was the regiment or the battalion, and in my case it was the 2/12th Battalion - its regimental title being the Launceston Regiment. Now that was my home.
- 13:00 If any one at all who wore a white over blue patch, well crickey, he was one of my mob and you would do anything for him, and he would do anything for you too. Oh yes mateship is a wonderful thing. At Buna there was an incident there with two fellows that I know. One fellow said
- 13:30 "I'm not coming through tomorrow," he had a premonition, and he said to his mate, "Look I don't want the Japs to get me and mutilate me. When I get hit," he said when, not if, "will you make sure I get a decent burial?" And his mate said "Yep." And the following day his mate got it
- 14:00 and he had a decent burial too. I suppose the hard fact of the matter is that the two of you at some time or other had been so damn scared you and you had both come through it, and you think let's stick together in case that happens again. And of course it's going to happen again. So you're a good mate.
- 14:30 Oh yes, mateship is very much... I'll tell you, here's an example. On the night of the 4th May 1940 the battalion attacked a German position in Tobruk. The battalion
- 15:00 did not get the objective it wanted and it was pulled back. It was the first time we had done a night fight. One of the Lieutenants stopped to make sure he was the last man in from the forward post you see, and low and behold he was just going to say they were all back now,
- 15:30 when he suddenly looked and thought my God I'm a man short, and this man who had been wounded walked up out of the darkness. This Lieutenant said, "Righto so and so I'll see you back to the lines," and so he guided him back through no-man's land and put him in the lines. This bloke was put out into hospital eventually... he had been badly hit
- 16:00 so he was discharged. The war finished and this bloke now is a very well to do Queen's council in Queensland, and a fellow was up on a charge of attempted murder, and this Lieutenant by this time
- 16:30 was a Queen's council and he went out to Roma where the court was..., this fellow was in the bush and he went out to Roma to defend him. Well to start with things were a bit dicey because the towns folk, the country folk couldn't quite get the right idea that the Queen's council who had come out to defend this bloke was having lunch with the prosecutor and they were laughing away.
- 17:00 Of course they were two legal types and they weren't in court, they were friends, they were just behaving like two normal friends do. But, this bloke was a guilty as hell, no two ways about that, and according to Jim, "I knew bloody well, well I thought I would give him a couple of years, ten years something like that." So at any rate the jury retired
- 17:30 and the jury should have been back in half an hour, and so the judge had to adjourn the bloody hearing until the following day and the following afternoon the jury reached a verdict, so back they came into court. "Foreman of the jury have you reached a verdict?" "Yes." "Guilty or not, not guilty?"
- 18:00 "Not guilty." Well Jim said he nearly fell over. What the bloody hell? And the prosecutor said, "Well how the hell did they work that out?" It was trial by jury and the jury said not guilty. So Jim retired and with the prosecutor they went over to the local pub and they're having a beer and one of the jurymen come up and
- 18:30 said, "You don't remember me do you?" and Jim said "What's your name?" And the fellow said, "I was in your platoon on the night of the 4th May in Tobruk." And Jim said, "Were you?" And he said, "Yes Mr Douglas and I swore then
- 19:00 that you got me out of trouble that night, and I swore that if there was anything I could do I would do it. It took me a day and a half to make those bastards change their minds but your bloke won." Now that's mateship boy and that fellow had only been with the unit for a month or more. He was a reinforcement that joined the unit and got wounded that night and Jim saw him out of a tight jam, and this bloke remembered.
- 19:30 When he was on the jury and Jim was defending this bloke! Jim said he was so guilty and they just couldn't make it out but anyway the jury came in and said, on the evidence produced this man is not guilty. If anyone wanted to do anything about it then it was up to the prosecutor to appeal, but at that time they had spent so much time on it, Jim won the case and that's a fact.
- 20:00 **That's incredible.**
- Yep and he went on to become a judge in Queensland that bloke. He was loaned by the Queensland government to the Northern Territory just before the Territory became a separate set up. He was loaned to them as a judge. He was a good bloke Jim. I called in to see him you know in the middle of the fifties and he had chambers in Brisbane.

- 20:30 I thought oh bugger it I'll go and see what Douglas is doing. So I wandered into this place and went into his office and there was a girl there and I said, "I would like to speak to Mr. Douglas if he is free." She said, "What name?" And I said, "Chumley Churnside." And she said, "I beg your pardon?" And
- 21:00 I said, "My name is Chumley Churnside." "Suthers you bastard!" Jim could hear me and he used to call me Chumley Churnside or I would call him Chumley Churnside. It was the best part of ten years and he said, "Suthers you bastard."
- 21:30 Oh no, a friendship goes on. I hadn't seen the Tasmanian blokes for I suppose thirty years when I went down to Tasmania. Yep thirty years and crickey, the welcome I got down there was unbelievable. Oh no those blokes were good.
- 22:00 **Angus, given that mateship was such an important thing during way and to get you through. How would you cope in a place like Buna and Santayana and Buna where there were such heavy losses and you were probably losing mates?**
- Well that was the problem. You were losing you mates, you were losing them. All told,
- 22:30 I suppose... personal mates... every one that had the patch on he was a mate, but personal blokes that I knew well... well we slept together. One of my machine gun sergeants, he finished up as an inspector with the taxation department here in Sydney.
- 23:00 He called into the shop one day with his wife and he introduced his wife to me and she said, "You two know one another," by the banter that was going on and I said "Good god girl, I slept with him before you did." You should have seen the look on her face. And I had too, he and I had shared a blanket. Too right we had. He was one of my sergeants. I don't know where he is now. I haven't seen him for ages. I don't know if he's still on deck.
- 23:30 **How would you cope with losing those mates?**
- Well the thing is this old boy, you just gotta forget. There is a job to be done and you've just got to go ahead and do it. I think I mentioned last night or this morning...
- 24:00 After Buna, that was the first time I had seen or heard of an Ecumenical service where all religions get together, and you know just how stupid people can get, you know the fanatics, the fundamentalist where I'm right and you're bloody wrong. You know this attitude where you get these fellows up in the Java
- 24:30 at the moment, at Bali. You know, the fundamentalists who say we are going to destroy America, and they murdered eighty or ninety Australians up there. People that they had never seen. What's wrong with their bloody heads. They are just fanatics, they are extreme. But there is one thing about it boy, war knocks all that out of you.
- 25:00 God... holy mackerel. I mean, I was brought up as Methodist, but the fellow who saved my life, literally saved my life at Somerset Dam when I looked like drowning was Tim Logan. He was an Irishman and so wide eyed Irish that it wasn't funny, but before long we were the best of mates. The war soon knocks all those silly bloody corners off you.
- 25:30 **Were there any fellows that you saw during that heavy fighting who didn't cope with it?**
- I had one soldier, he had his sixteenth birthday on Shaggy Ridge. We'd been badly knocked about as you know at Buna and at
- 26:00 at Ravenshoe I'd been left to look after the rear party while the unit went out on leave. When the unit came back I went out on leave with the rear party. I came down here and that's when I was crook and I got the leave pass. I told you about being on the ward at Concord. So and you know I got leave and
- 26:30 then I went back to the Battalion and at the time I had Headquarter Company, so I wandered down to the Q Store. I reported into the Battalion Headquarters and then wandered down to the Q Store, and here's this bloody kid and he's got a Vickers gun spread all around him, all the bits and pieces and he's cleaning it and he was obviously a little boy, although a fairly well set up kid,
- 27:00 and I hit the roof. I said "What are you doing here?" and I really blew the tripe out of him and I knew that he was some local farmer's kid who had wandered in there and was taking the gun to pieces. He stood up and said, "I'm one of your soldiers sir." I thought Christ we are scraping the bottom of the barrel sending soldiers the size of this kid up.
- 27:30 His name was Kenneth James Whiting Molbey, and Kenneth James Whiting was the brother of Ronnie Molbey who was a sergeant that I had had in C Company and he was still with the Battalion. And this little brother of his, when he heard that he had put his age up and got in the army - he was a kid from Bowen, a farm kid, a well set up kid, but he hadn't had a shave in his life. Well Peewee, the boys christened him, and eventually I made Peewee my batman.
- 28:00 I thought I could keep an eye on him so that he wouldn't get into too much trouble. So Peewee was my batman and we went to do the Shaggy Ridge job. He'd gone ahead, oh that's right, I had made him a runner from headquarters when we were doing this assault. He would run up there and be coming

down the mountains all the time. But he walked straight

28:30 into that bloody mountain gun together with the leading elements. And as I said, the CO had got hit and Peewee hadn't been far from him. Up on that ridge in certain places there were trees, old trees and they had had great flanged roots that came down - oh it was like ten foot up the trunk, these great roots came down like that.

29:00 And Peewee was there and he had his head stuck between the two of these but he was forgetting that the bloody shells were bursting above him. Well any way his backside was in the air and I gave him a wack and I said "Shift your backside and get further up the ridge,"

29:30 which he did. But you know answering your question, yes. I had one sergeant, a bloody good sergeant, a top liner, and before we went into attack at Buna he said "Skipper I don't want to go in first. I want to go in about half an hour afterwards." That bloke was a top

30:00 line fella, he was a decorated man and I said "Gawd," Well at any rate I thought I could do this. I put the bloke on the stores and I said, "You stay here for thirty minutes," and he was right after that. Once the fight started he was right, and oh gawd when you look back

30:30 it was a funny old war.

Looking back on it Angus, after all these years do you feel the war and your experiences in had a positive affect on you or a negative affect on you or a bit of both?

It taught me tolerance of men, I think I am a better man for having served.

31:00 **In what way?**

Well see it comes back to leadership. When you're a corporal or a section leader or a platoon commander, or a general - unless your leadership is right you will have trouble on your hands, real trouble because the blokes will say bugger you, I'm not doing that.

31:30 You can't go bang bang and you can't go around shooting people like that. Now the big thing is, I can remember hearing an address by...do you remember the fellow who became our Governor General, Field Marshall Sir William Slim? He was the governor general of Australia after the war and he was the bloke who said the Australians are feeding the Japs at Milne Bay, and if they can do it we can do it too.

32:00 He said "We put the Pommy tails up in the air a bit." Now Slim point out that one of the things leadership teaches you is, if you are going tell a man off really tell him off, keep your voice down. He'll remember it because the look on your face is what he remembers and the fact that you are not pleased with him.

32:30 Occasionally, sure something goes wrong and you yell out, "What the hell are you doing there Smith?" But if you really want to tell a bloke off, have Smith paraded to you and tell him off quietly, because outside the orderlies and the runners are waiting to hear what you are saying and they don't hear a thing. And when Smith comes out he's got the message and they wonder what the hell has gone on in there. The other thing is, what did the war teach you?

33:00 It taught you the importance of integrity. You know integrity isn't a ninety nine percent thing. Integrity is all go to woe twenty four hours a day. The blokes have got to know that not only is your word your bond but you'll make bloody sure if necessary you would be prepared to die for it.

33:30 In the leadership you've got to be able to... when you plan, when you are doing a deliberate plan you have got to make sure that it's a bit flexible because things can happen that you don't think is going to happen, and unless the plan is a bit flexible the fellow who gets killed is the fellow with the rifle and bayonet - sure an officer gets killed too, sergeants get killed, but it's always the fellow right up the sharp end that get knocked about.

34:00 The other thing leadership tell you is that before you go to sleep, plan tomorrow. If you go sleep and you wake up in the morning and think what the bloody hell am I going to do today, you're no good because by the night you'll be saying God I should have done that today. You should have thought of that last night.

34:30 So asking what did the war teach me, well yes, I reckon I am a better man for having served.

I have two questions Angus. The first one is one that we generally ask a lot of fellows, is if a young fella came up to you today and

35:00 **was looking for some advice about going into the service, wanted to join the infantry because there was a war on, what sort of advice would you give him?**

Yes. Go your hardest because you will find - and this is one thing that war teaches you - you say oh so and so is better off than I am or such and such a unit isn't doing it as tough as I am. Over a period of time

- 35:30 you will be bloody lucky that you are not in that unit, and this happened at Shaggy Ridge. At one stage our Battalion was crooked because the 2/10th Battalion had a day off on Anzac Day and the 2nd had to work. The 9th had to work on Anzac Day but the CO of the 10th ,
- 36:00 for some reason said these blokes could have a day off. This was in the very early days of Ingleburn in '39. In '44 at Shaggy the 2/10th were down on Canning's Saddle, and they had had a hell of a lot of bombing and the result was the trees had fallen, they had crisscrossed, and you try and attack through a forest that has been felled. The trees are all shapes and sizes, and all over each other
- 36:30 and you have to get through there as quick as you can, and that's what the 10th had to do. And we were sitting up on the ridge saying thank Christ its those poor buggers down there and not us. It teaches you that your lot isn't as bad as you think it is and in the long run it's probably a lot better. Now give us this last one this will be the curly one.

How do you make a Lady Blamey?

- 37:00 You take a beer bottle and at the base of the neck where it becomes the main part of the bottle you tie a piece of string, using if possible, something that has been soaked in methylated spirits or kerosene, or something like that. You light the string. Now if it is methylated -that's the better thing because the flames goes around quickly, .
- 37:30 but if it's kerosene it takes a while. After a little while you plunge the bottle into a bucket of cold water. The glass around that string is the hottest part and the moment you put it in the water the glass will crack. You are left with the bottom part of the bottle. The lip is a bit rough so you rub that
- 38:00 on a concrete floor or road or anything that is a bit rough to grind it down, and there it is, you've got your glass. Everyone had a Lady Blamey.

Do you know where it got its name?

Olga, Blamey's wife. They named it after Olga, oh yes, Olga from Tolga.

- 38:30 There is a joke about Lady Blamey. We were at Kiari and Tolga was at the officer's club. Now the officer's club was a little pub and its still there. Officers from certain units were allowed in each night, and the night you could go in you went in and had a beer and a meal.
- 39:00 One night I went in with the padre, Roy Watton who's retired now. We were celebrating with Jeff Mishkee a fellow who had been awarded the Military Cross, and we were having a few beers and a meal and that's it. The army had girls, they called then WAAC, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp [? Women's Royal Australian Army Corp - WRAAC].
- 39:30 One of there girls was mucking around with Mishkee. She was going upstairs and as she went passed she gave Mishkee a dig in the ribs. Now she was a private soldier sort of thing and that's besides the point.
- 40:00 Mishkee was making a bit of a pass at her so she gave him a dig. I said to Jeff "Well you asked for it mate," and he said "Oh I will get her when he comes down." These girls wore a khaki shirt and a khaki skirt and the next thing the khaki skirt and shirt appeared at the top of the stairs and this girl came down and I said,
- 40:30 "Jeff she's coming down now." So this girl came down and we just ignored her and when she got near Mishkee he went like this and gave her a whack on the back side and grabbed the cheek of her buttocks, and it was bloody Lady Blamey, and Mishkee had part of her backside. Well straight opposite was the Provo Marshall
- 41:00 and he was the boss cocky for the Division, for the police. Well, he was over like a shot and grabbed Mishkee and Mishkee had just been decorated. He had won the Military Cross, and he's got the Commander-in-Chief's wife by the backside. It was bloody hilarious.
- 41:30 Well at any rate Jeff promptly apologised to Lady Blamey and I said, "Well look I'm sorry. Naturally we wouldn't do anything like that to a commander's wife or any lady, but it so happens there's been a bit of nonsense going on with one of the girls here." Lady Blamey was very decent about the whole thing.

INTERVIEW ENDS