

Australians at War Film Archive

George Luxford - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 **Great. Could you begin, Mr Luxford, by telling us about where you were born?**

I was born in Oakleigh in 1922, the eighteenth of May 1922 in Golf Links Avenue.

Tell me a bit about your family?

01:00 Well, I have two brothers, a younger one who is about four years younger than me, and I've got an elder brother who is about three and a half years older, and then I've got an elder sister who's older again. She's probably about eighty six, I would say. My parents had come out from Albert Park. They had lived in Albert Park in Kerferd Road, and they shifted out to Oakleigh, and it must have been quite a culture shock for them

01:30 because where they were in Kerferd Road, at the top of the street was the train and they came out to Oakleigh and there was no electric light and no sewerage. It was pretty primitive and it was a lot of open country, if you know what I mean. There were no neighbours near. There were several blocks before there were more neighbours. So it was pretty lonely for my mother initially. Gradually in the 1920s the houses were built and

02:00 I can remember about 1926 or roundabout, I would have been about four, the houses had pretty well filled the whole street.

So when you were quite little it was just paddocks out in Oakleigh?

Yes. The back of us right through to the railway line, it was just paddocks and I think there were only one or two houses in all that area. So it was good for us kids as we were

02:30 growing up a bit to be able to explore and play and all that sort of thing. At that time the Melbourne Hunt Club was still in Huntingdale. Do you know where Huntingdale Golf Club is? Well that's where the Melbourne Hunt Club used to meet. I remember them riding across the paddock at the back of our place into the hunt, and they shifted out in about 1928.

And you used to participate in things there when you were young?

No. No we didn't.

03:00 See, when the Hunt Club left I would have only been about six. I remember going up there one day with my father. The Master of the Hounds was a chap named Beasley and he was a friend of my father's. We went up there, apparently just before they left, we went up there to say goodbye to him and the hounds were still there. But after that it just went right back and it wasn't used for much at all until the Huntingdale Golf Club moved in there.

03:30 **Those hounds must have made quite an impression on you when you were little.**

Yes. They were noisy. We lived in that house in Golf Links Avenue until 1926 which was a big weatherboard place, block fronted, and then we shifted further down the street towards Oakleigh to a bigger house. It was a modern house for that time. It was built in 1926.

04:00 That's where I actually grew up...in number 41 Golf Links Avenue.

Now did your father contribute to the building of both of those homes?

No he didn't. The house we moved into first, that was before I was born, was a very old house. It was old even then if you know what I mean. Built about the turn of the century, 1900 or something like that.

04:30 He didn't have anything to do with the building of it. Then the house we shifted into was a house that was about six months old. It was a fairly big house, a big brick house but not a lot of rooms. Soon after we shifted in my father organised to have a sleep out put on the back which gave us a total of four bedrooms. So that was enough for the family.

And what was your father doing for a

05:00 **living at that time?**

My father was a timber merchant, and we were still involved up until last year in the timber industry. But we closed the place in Coora Road last year of course, and my two sons carry on. What they're doing is verandahs and carports in Colorbond steel. So they're doing that now, but they're working out at Pakenham.

05:30 So they've shifted right away. That's where my elder son lives. He lives at Pakenham. My younger son lives at Raybrook, so it's in that area. It's good for them location wise and they're getting quite a lot of work in that area, although they still come back into the city. They've got a job in Richmond. You know what I mean? You've got to go where the work is, and it doesn't take long to get into the city from Pakenham down the freeway now.

So that was quite a long running family business, from your father to the present.

06:00 Yes. My grandfather actually started in the industry. He came down from Sale. That's where my father was born. My father was only a few years old when they came down. His father had a timber yard in Collingwood in Hoddle Street, and they traded under the name of Daly and Luxford. Daly was my grandfather's brother-in-law. They ran that business through until about 1919,

06:30 then my father and two of his brothers moved out to Oakleigh and took over a timber yard in Oakleigh. That's continued on. One uncle died about 1930 and that business had to close down in the Depression because it was no longer a viable situation, and my father started in business on his own as a timber merchant. That's the business that ran up until last year.

07:00 It ran seventy years, so that was pretty good really. It must have been very difficult during the 1930s, Depression years because of the economic situation. It was a very severe depression and there was a lot of unemployment.

How did the Depression affect your family?

The Depression? Well we weren't too badly off. At least we had some income, and

07:30 we always had money for food and that sort of thing, clothing and all that. But a lot of the kids that I was at school with, their families really struggled. They would come to school without shoes and socks and that sort of thing, which is probably unbelievable in this age. But they survived. In the street we lived in, Golf Links Avenue, most of the people were in work. In that particular area nearly everyone had a job.

08:00 Some of them had to go to the country to get work. Our next door neighbour for instance, he had to go away into the country. He would go away on a Sunday or something like that and wouldn't come back until the following Saturday. He was working in the country on some scheme, I don't know what it was, but at least it was work. But it must have been difficult for them because there were a lot of big families in those days too. So they really suffered.

Do you remember any tricks that your mother had to get you through the Depression?

08:30 **Yes. Well it was common with people in those days. They cooked most of their food. They didn't buy cakes or any of that stuff. She would cook most of our food. She would buy a case of apricots and boil it up on the stove to make jam. She would do a bit of preserving as well. A lot of families did that.**

09:00 **In a lot of cases they grew their own vegetables and they had fruit trees in their back yards as well. And people were helpful too, you know. There was more of a community spirit in those days. We haven't got it now. See, I can remember in Golf Links Avenue for instance, I could walk the length of that street; there were sixty odd houses in it by the time I got to six or seven, and I knew every person in that street. But now**

09:30 **we've lived here for fifty years in this house, over fifty, and we don't know many of the people. We know our next door neighbours and the people over the road, but the people down the street, we know a couple of them but a lot of them we've never ever spoken too. No one walks. When I was a kid we walked. We walked down the street, we walked to the station and if we were going visiting in Oakleigh we'd walk, the six of us. It was very different.**

10:00 **I'd like to hear more about some of the family activities that you had when you were a boy.**

What we did for entertainment and all that sort of thing? Well my father was always very keen on football at Collingwood and later at Oakleigh. We'd go to the matches in Oakleigh frequently. It was only a matter of walking down, a twenty minute walk, and we'd see

10:30 the local games. We also played football ourselves on the paddocks and there were plenty of paddocks, as I said. We had a chap living in the area who was a very good footballer, and he lived just about opposite us and he used to play with us and umpire our games, just for the fun of it. We also played cricket on the paddocks and that sort of thing. Then Sunday, quite often, we'd go walking. We'd walk up

- 11:00 to where the Hunt Club used to be and now Huntingdale Golf Club. We'd walk up there and there were tadpoles to catch and all that sort of thing, and yabbies. We did all those sorts of things. My father was pretty good. He would always take us out quite a bit, and we'd always go by public transport. I remember one time he took us yabbing at Albert Park Lake and he took us to
- 11:30 Studley Park, an area he knew very well. We went rowing on the Yarra. You know, real kid things and they were great. We had a pretty interesting childhood and it wasn't really that difficult. It was probably difficult for our parents but we didn't realise that.
- 12:00 **Did you develop an AFL [Australian Football League] team when you were a boy?**
- A football league? Yes, Collingwood has always been our team. That's traditional. My grandfather was Mayor of Collingwood in 1913, and my father had lived in Collingwood and they had a property opposite the Victoria Park ground. A big property there, and he went to school just over the road at the Victoria
- 12:30 Park School. He was always interested in sport. He played cricket when he was younger and he was involved in the Collingwood Club initially when it was formed. He was at the first meeting when they decided to form a football club. I can't tell you the exact date of that but it was some time ago. They had this meeting, I think it was at the Grace Darling Hotel, and they decided that they would form a football club
- 13:00 and joined...I don't know if they formed an association first and then it transferred to the League later.
- Your loyalties run deep.**
- Yes. I remember as a kid, we would go and see the games out at Collingwood. He'd take us out, which is quite a journey from Oakleigh. We got a lot of pleasure out of that sort of thing.
- Can you describe to me what a match would have been like, what a game would have been like**
- 13:30 **then?**
- It's basically the same game as it is today. The big change as far as I can see is the footballers are probably not better physically but they're better trained and they're more skilful. And the game is a lot quicker. It has changed quite a bit. But they had great footballers in those days. I'm sure if they were around today they'd still be great footballers if you know what I mean. I don't think the footballers are any better
- 14:00 really, but they're just better trained and they're in better physical condition.
- What sorts of things could you eat or drink at the games back then?**
- We never had a lot to eat or drink. My father was a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club and we used to go in there for matches. He would go in and go through to the Members Reserve and meet his friends. He'd give us probably threepence
- 14:30 each to buy a Violet Crumble or something, and the money to buy the record, and after that, then that was it. But that was quite a big day out, going to the football in there. Of course he had been a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club since 1928. He got in when the Members Stand was built. I don't know if you're familiar with the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Not really? Well he got in
- 15:00 in 1928. There was an influx of members then. They had the extra accommodation and he got in, in 1928, and soon after that he nominated myself and both my brothers for membership, and I got in as a junior member in 1937, and I'm still a member. The only difference now is after you've been a member for fifty years, you don't pay the full fee. You only pay \$15 a year
- 15:30 whereas a normal member pays several hundred dollars. They probably set that a long time ago, that \$15, and they've never changed it. So I can still go in and have all the privileges. I don't go in very often now because of my age, but I can go in and have all the facilities for just a few dollars. My youngest son is still a member there and he goes regularly. He's there every week.
- 16:00 **What was your early schooling like?**
- Well I started school in 1928 I, suppose. I would have been six. I went to a school which was called then, Oakleigh South. It was a medium sized school. It had about ten classrooms and the population in that area was
- 16:30 growing rapidly in that time after the First World War. There was a lot of building activity in the Oakleigh area and a lot of people shifted out from the inner suburbs. By about 1930 that school wasn't big enough, so what they decided to do was make it into a double story. I think it might have been planned anyhow, so they put an extra story on it. So there were about twenty classrooms in total.
- 17:00 It became quite a big school and there would have been 800 or 900 children there at that time.
- So were you divided by your year or did you have kids of slightly different ages in the classroom?**

No, we were all around about the same age, within twelve months. It depended on when you were born and when you went into school. See, I was born in May so I didn't get into school until the following January when I would have been five and a half I suppose.

17:30 But the kids who were born at a different time might have got in earlier. If they were born in January they would have got in straight away, when they were just over five or six or whatever the age was at that time. One of the things as far as school was concerned, the last year at state school, sixth grade, the classes were quite big.

18:00 Fifty odd children in the class I was in. That would give a teacher a heart attack now if they had that many children on one day. But the teachers coped alright and I think basically they did an excellent job. They weren't highly qualified. They had gone to Teacher's Training College of course. They didn't have qualifications of a very high standard.

18:30 But they coped and I think overall they were very good teachers.

And just the one teacher to fifty kids?

Yes. Fifty five. I'll show you a photo later and you can count them. But now they're looking at classes of twenty one or twenty two. But it's all different. They have to teach so much more and I think they have to have greater skills now, and they're better trained. But some of them still can't teach can they?

19:00 I think it's a bit of an art, teaching I think. Some people can teach and some people can't, and all the training in the world won't alter that. With tradesmen...I remember when I started work in a joiners shop, some of the very good tradesmen were not good with apprentices. They didn't have the patience in some cases and they didn't teach us a lot. But some times a mediocre tradesman would be very helpful.

19:30 **Sort of a gift.**

A gift to teach, yes.

How did you feel about school when you were young?

I didn't mind it. We used to walk to school; it would take about quarter of an hour. We'd walk. We enjoyed it and there was always something happening. Then after school you had the same kids around that you'd play with. You'd play football or whatever you were playing.

20:00 You'd get pretty good friendships out of that. So it was good. And I think the headmaster we had at that time, a chap named Piet, I think he was quite good. He was very strict. He had been in the First World War and the discipline was fairly strict by today's standards, I think. He did quite a good job.

20:30 **How did they go about disciplining?**

Well, there was a bit of corporal punishment about in those days, but that's not on any more. They'd give you lines to write if you know what I mean. Say write 100 lines or fifty lines if you got yourself into strife, and sometimes you would get corporal punishment as well. But it wasn't really severe. I didn't think it was too bad anyhow. It depended on the individual teachers. Some of them were fairly strict and

21:00 a bit harsh on kids I thought. But I enjoyed school.

How did they enact the corporal punishment?

A strap. A strap on the hand, except for girls...the girls didn't get anything. They would just get a good talking too, I think that was about all. But the boys got the strap, but it really wasn't that bad. Then I left school there in about 1934 I suppose,

21:30 and I went to Caulfield Technical School. I was there for three years. Then I started work.

So how old were you when you left school? You must have only been twelve or thirteen.

No no. I was fifteen. At that time you couldn't leave before you were fourteen, except under exceptional circumstances. But I was fifteen and a half actually when I left school. And that was quite normal. The only problem was work was a bit hard to get

22:00 in those times, especially for teenagers. We had problems getting jobs because the work just wasn't about, and they didn't get much in the way of government help, the teenagers who were living at home, and we all were of course. But unemployed people, they used to get some sort of help from the government. Sustenance and that sort of thing and that helped quite a bit and got them through.

22:30 But teenagers, it was very difficult for them. But if you could get a job then the parents certainly encouraged children to leave school and go and get a job, because they needed the extra money.

So they definitely contributed to the family income?

Yes, contributed. Even though you would start working on a very small wage, it all helped.

23:00 I started work at one pound which is two dollars now. But it's relative, if you know what I mean. You

could say that two pound was not a lot of money but you have to realise that things were very cheap. Even say, a bottle of beer would cost about a shilling or something like that. I don't know what it costs now, but it was relative. And the same thing could be said about houses.

23:30 Then, you could buy a weatherboard house in Oakleigh for about £800, but it was in keeping with what people could afford. If people had a job, and they were assured of income, they could buy a house because the deposits were fairly small. The State Bank which we had in those days was responsible for a lot of the houses being built. And there were also Building Societies that financed houses at that time.

24:00 **So about a pound per week you were making?**

A pound a week, yes. And I think I used to give my mother fifteen shillings and I'd keep five shillings. That would allow me to go to the pictures and a few things like that. You could go to the pictures for a shilling or one and a penny. Entertainment was fairly cheap.

What were some of the popular activities for

24:30 **teenagers?**

In those days? Well a lot of them used to play sport, and then there were also dances. In Oakleigh there were lots of dance places. The RSL [Returned and Services League] hall I think, had dances every Saturday night. And there were other entertainment around like the Lodges, the Friendly Society Lodges, and they were very active in the 1930s.

25:00 They would have Lodge picnics and all that sort of thing. I was also going to Sunday school at that time and we would also have picnics. We used to play a bit of tennis because tennis was comparatively cheap to play in those days. Most churches had their own tennis courts. I think they still have a lot of them, and you could play tennis there and I don't think it cost you anything. They would allow you to use the court at no cost.

25:30 That was a fairly good activity. I think most kids in those days, and I think the same applies now, play tennis at some time.

The Lodge Societies that you mentioned, did you have to become a member?

Yes. Lodges were good in those days. You would pay your fee and you would also get medical benefits. You'd get concessions on

26:00 medicines. They had their own...in Oakleigh for instance, they had the dispensary in Oakleigh, a chemist shop. The United Friendly Society Dispensary, and we could go there and get medicines at a concession. Prescription medicines and all. That was a good help. And also at that time Lodges had benefits funds where people who were sick, like if the

26:30 breadwinner was sick, he would get some sort of an allowance every week. It wasn't very much but it helped.

That was from the Lodge Society as opposed to the government. The government was called Sustenance, but this Lodge thing was...

The Lodge thing was separate and it was quite good. It possibly wasn't much money but at least it gave them a little bit of extra.

27:00 **That's interesting in relation to what you were saying about the sense of community. It was quite an area of community focus, the Lodge?**

Yes, yes. Well, I think there were lots of Lodges. There was Manchester Unity; Australian Nature Association; Buffalo; and they all had their own Lodges. They would meet regularly and

27:30 they also used to do charity things. They'd raise money for charity in the Oakleigh area, and that happened especially during the early part of the war. Stalls, and street stalls and special efforts to collect money to send parcels to all the troops. They were very good. There was a community setup. It was different to today.

28:00 **Did you know some World War I veterans when you were growing up?**

Yes. Quite a few. As you know our effort in the First World War, we sent over 300,000 odd men from a comparatively small population. A lot of them came back and they started their businesses in Oakleigh and I knew quite a few of them. A lot of them were friends of my father's.

28:30 He didn't serve in the war because he was medically unfit, but a lot of his friends did, and he lost a few of course. Of course most families were touched by the casualties of the First World War. As I said, there were just on 60,000 killed and most people lost someone, a cousin or a brother or someone. It had quite an effect

29:00 on people.

Did your dad want to go? What were his attitudes towards the First World War?

He was very supportive as far as I know, and his father and mother...his father was a councillor at Collingwood, and did quite a lot of charity work and he would have been involved in that as well

29:30 to raise money for, not only for the soldiers but also their wives and families who were left behind. They had to battle on alone in a lot of cases.

Did he ever receive any teasing or comments from people who didn't understand why he didn't go to the war?

No. I think they understood. I don't think he had any problem with that. His closest friends went and I'm sure he would have liked to have gone with them,

30:00 but it wasn't to be.

What was your impression of the First World War from these vets that you knew?

Well, they had a very severe effect on the people, like with the very severe conditions on Gallipoli and then later on with the trench warfare that went on for years in France. I think it had a bad effect on people, and what happened with this I think, a lot of those

30:30 people who had gone through it or knew about it, when their sons came of age to go into the Second World War they were uneasy about it because of the high casualties of the First World War and the difficult conditions. See, my father wouldn't allow me to join the army. I was eighteen and he wouldn't allow me to join because he said, 'You're too young'. I had to wait. So that's the way it was.

And did you pick up particular

31:00 **information about the war, certain thoughts, dreams, impressions of the war from these men?**

Not a lot, because even though there were a lot of people, neighbours and that sort of thing who served in the First War, I never really got an insight into what it was really like. I would get little bits of information but not a lot. They were reluctant to talk about it that much.

31:30 They looked upon it as a job that had to be done, they did it and after it was over they came home and tried to get back into their normal lives. But some of them were badly affected and when I was a kid there were a lot of people around the Oakleigh area who had lost limbs in the First World War. They had lost legs or lost arms or something.

32:00 So anyhow that was what it was like in those days.

What did they teach in school at that time about the First World War?

Well, at state school, now called primary school, we had the headmaster who, as I said, was a First World War person, and there were also a couple of other teachers who had been involved. One

32:30 had been at Gallipoli. They used to tell stories but they didn't tell a lot. We got the basic thing of what it was about. We learned about Gallipoli and also the battles on the Western Front, the trench warfare and that. But we weren't taught a lot about it. But they'd have a few spare minutes and they'd talk about it then. And they were interesting.

33:00 We learned a bit about it but not a lot. But there were lots of books available and I was always a keen reader and I read quite a lot about it. I still do actually. I still read about the war. Everybody seems to think that every time I have a birthday or Christmas, they should give me a book on the wars. I've got some excellent books that the family have given me over the years.

33:30 I read through them and I pick up quite a lot of information that I had missed out on. Even in the Second World War there are lots of things I've learned that I didn't know about from the books I've been given.

So were you keen to join the army at around age eighteen?

Yes I was, because I worked in a joinery shop, Coopers Joinery Shop in Murrumbena.

34:00 It was a big joinery shop and it was a timber yard as well and it employed just over 100 people. Several of them went into the army very early. Three or four of them had gone into the army and one had gone into the air force at that stage. What happened at that time; everybody had to register, all males anyway, had to register when they turned eighteen. I had registered but I couldn't go

34:30 because my father wouldn't allow it, and thinking about it since, I'm sure he was doing the right thing by me. What happened down there, one of the chaps got his call up who I was friendly with. He said he was going in and I said, 'Gee I'd like to go with you Neville'. I said, 'I haven't got my call up'. He said, 'Go down to the drill hall at Oakleigh', which was in a shop in those days, it was only an office.

35:00 And he said, 'My father's down there, and ask him - he's a sergeant'. He said, 'Ask him if he can do anything about it'. So down I went and I saw him and I told him about it. He said, 'Well you're not really due for call up until next year'. I said, 'You can't put me up the list a bit'? He said, 'I'll see what I can do'. But he said, 'If anybody wakes up to the fact that you're a bit ahead of your time, I'll just have to

admit I made a mistake'.

35:30 Anyhow I finished up, I got my call up and I showed the people at work and they said, 'We can't do anything about it, so you'll have to go'. So I went in on the fifth of November with this chap I was friendly with.

Which year was this?

1941. It was about a month before the Japs came into the war. That was the fifth of November, Guy Fawkes Day.

36:00 **What was it that made you so keen to go?**

Well I think everyone else was involved in some way, and I suppose in some ways we were more patriotic and we wanted to do what had to be done. A lot of them joined very young. See, when I finished up in the regiment,

36:30 when we got reinforcements through, we finished up with fellas as young as seventeen. They had put their age up to get in. Then we had some older chaps who were there and who were over the limit who had joined up at their own free will. I think over all we were more patriotic. I mean everybody wanted to do their bit

37:00 for their country, and that included the ladies because what happened of course, they were expected to work in ammunition factories, and in some cases they had no option, they put them into ammunition factories. And so some of the young people, the young ladies, joined what they called the Land Army and they went on farms. They did quite a good job. They took the place of the men who had been called up for service.

37:30 Some of them became quite good farm workers, and that was a good effort on their part. And also a lot of people, an aunt of mine for instance who was into her fifties, went back to work and she got a job in at Myers as a shop assistant. She worked there during the war years, and even though she was getting up in years, she was quite happy to do that and it probably gave her a few pound.

38:00 But that was one of the things in those days. A lot of businesses who would normally have men on their staff had women. Some country areas for instance, hotels would be entirely run by women. They might have one man on the job to do the heavy lifting, the barrels and that sort of thing. All the people working in the hotels would be ladies. So that was rather interesting.

38:30 **The management?**

Yes they'd run the hotels, they'd run them. The men just weren't around, and all they could get was probably one person to do the heavy work who was probably an elderly person. It must have been hard to run hotels in those days, or any type of business because of the shortages.

Tape 2

00:35 **I was wondering about the role that church played in early life in your family and perhaps other families?**

Church? Well churches were fairly important. They were part of the social life and I think most families went to church or were involved in churches. My own family, my mother seldom went to church but my father used to,

01:00 regularly. And we went to Sunday school of course, all of us, all four of us went to Sunday school from about five or six up until we left school. Then in some cases people would carry on with their church work. Like young people would continue to go to church and be involved in church activities

01:30 because the churches in those days had scout groups and all sorts of things because they had the halls, which meant that scout groups could operate out of church halls. And they also had sporting clubs. There were cricket clubs and all that sort of thing. So people played cricket for their churches. That wasn't unusual.

Were there many divisions between the different Christian faiths? Was there a sense of division between say

02:00 **the Catholic faith and the other denominations?**

Yes there was some separation, probably a lot more than there is today, and the ministers of religion were involved in community affairs as well. I'm a Church of England, or was a Church of England. We knew who the other ministers were.

02:30 You'd go down the street into Oakleigh and you'd see them down there. Some of them would be going around the streets. Father Willis from the Catholic church, you'd frequently see him in the shopping

centre, probably rounding up his flock to make sure they went to church the next Sunday. The ministers, one of them, like the Presbyterian minister, he used to get around on a bike

- 03:00 to go and visit people. He was a well-known character in Oakleigh. The Anglican minister at that time, he was very up market, he had a motor car. So he used to get around in his motor car and you'd frequently see him going around to visit the sick people and giving them a bit of help. So they were pretty much involved in the community. And I don't think there was a lot
- 03:30 of division, say, between the Catholics and the Protestants. I think it was there but it was never that pronounced, or not as far as I was concerned anyway. Anyway, my own father, when they opened the Catholic school in Warrigal Road in 1934, the first school they opened there, he was invited there because of the fact that he was a Protestant, but he was still friendly with
- 04:00 the Catholic priest, Father Willis. They would talk and chat when they met each other in the streets. They had quite a good relationship I thought. There wasn't that much division. I think the kids used to chant at each other and all that, but I don't think the adults did too much of it. We always had friends from all sorts of
- 04:30 religions, including Jewish people, and we mixed in pretty well I think. Oakleigh was a small place in those days and most people knew each other. We had Friday night shopping in the late 1930s and my mother used to go down the street every Friday night. She'd walk down. I don't think she'd buy anything really.
- 05:00 She'd go down to meet people and have a chat with them. We had some entertainment there. The Salvation Army used to be there and they would be preaching and playing on a corner and she used to really look forward to this. She would go down and she might pop into a shop occasionally and buy some item. She might buy some small item, but I think she mainly went down to meet people.
- 05:30 That's what it was all about, and catch up on children and what they were up to and this sort of thing. The local gossip.

Things haven't changed much in that way in that the shops are still a sort of meeting point. The markets are a meeting point.

I mean I can go to the shops here, or I can go into Oakleigh. I go in there to go to the bank occasionally and last time I went there I met a few that I know, but quite often I

- 06:00 go I don't meet anybody. Oakleigh has changed quite a lot. There's a lot of migrant people in the area now. There's Greeks and Italians and all that sort of thing, and most of them have fitted in very well into the community and a lot of them have got businesses. Last time I was over there, that was last week, a chap came up and spoke to me. He was one of my customers and we had a bit of a chat for a couple of minutes.
- 06:30 He was a person of Italian origin. I think all centres have changed, Oakleigh in particular, but I don't think there is a division, do you know what I mean? People don't worry about it, they mix in pretty well. See the reason we've got such a big Greek population is that we've got a Greek school in Oakleigh as well as a Catholic School, and that's brought a lot of people into the area.
- 07:00 They like to be reasonably close to their church. They're keener on their churches than we are, or especially the Greeks. They seem to be regular church goers and they've brought people into the area. So the character of some suburbs has changed because of this.

Now prior to the war, how many people or how many families did you know who were not of an Anglo-Catholic Christian background?

- 07:30 Not very many. Not very many. There weren't many in Oakleigh. There were some Jewish families. But there weren't many of them who weren't Anglo-Saxon type of people. There were a few migrants. There were some people from Europe, European people. There were Italians. There were quite a few Italians in the Oakleigh area.
- 08:00 A lot of them had fruit shops. That was part of the thing they did. They were quite good operators and people didn't discriminate against them. It was just...they probably went to their own organizations and they probably stuck together reasonably well. Like the Italians would meet with Italians and all this sort of thing.
- 08:30 And this is still happening anyhow, to a degree. I'm in a Rotary Club in Oakleigh and we run a Sunday Market. I notice coming down there quite a few people come, like Greeks and Italians, and they will sort of meet together and talk as a group, maybe half a dozen or so. So it's meeting place for them as well as probably trying to pick up a few bargains.
- 09:00 And some of them have stalls too, which has been quite good for us as a Rotary Club. That's where we get our money from.

Now you mentioned how the Anglican priest had a car. Motor cars were quite unusual in those days.

That's right, they were, and I don't know...ministers of religion weren't very well paid in those days. They're much better paid now I believe, and he

09:30 might have come from family who had money. I'm not sure but it's possible that his family had money and he was able to afford a motor car. But it was very unusual because the street I lived in, Golf Links Avenue, in the middle 1930s or up until the time I went into the army, there would probably only be three or four motor cars in the street. A street of about sixty houses. So it was pretty unusual for anyone to have a motor car.

10:00 Well, even councils didn't have motor cars like they've got them today. You know, local councils everybody seems to have a motor car. But in those days at the Oakleigh Council for instance, there was one motor car and that was for the engineer and that was also used by the mayor, driven by one of the drivers when he had to go to functions and that sort of thing. And that was just one motor car that they had at the Oakleigh Council. And the chap who was in charge of the work,

10:30 like road work and that sort of thing, he used to get around the area on his pushbike, to check up on jobs. So it's changed a lot.

Do you think people are less fit overall today as a result of all this driving?

I think so. I think so because we kept fit because we walked a lot of places, but I mean, people don't walk very often now.

11:00 There's still some people who do. I see them up and down this street here. There's sort of an exercise set-up. But I think that's right. People drive everywhere. Even if they want to go and get a bottle of milk they'll drive. Whereas if we had to go and get milk or whatever, we would walk. They hop in their car even if it's a ten minute walk or less. So I think people are less fit in some ways. But then you've got another group of people who are fitness fanatics now.

11:30 You see them out running and walking and this sort of thing. But I think overall I would agree that people are less fit than they were. They don't do the physical things that we did when we were young.

What sorts of chores did you have as a boy and as a teenager?

At home, my father was a very keen gardener and we had a big block of land. He grew a lot of flowers

12:00 and he grew dahlias and roses. And he also had a big vegetable garden he used to tend, and he had a lot of fruit trees. We had a big block of land. It had a sixty six foot frontage, I think it was. It was bigger than the quarter acre block, if you know what I mean. It was a big block and he cultivated most of it, but he also kept WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s for eggs and that sort of thing. They also ate the scraps, because early on in Oakleigh we didn't have

12:30 a garbage clearance anyhow, so we had to dispose of our own garbage, and what didn't go to the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s had to be buried or disposed of in that way. We had to dispose of our own rubbish until they put in a garbage service in Oakleigh and that didn't come until the 1930s. And there was no sewerage, as I said earlier on. Not where we lived anyhow. In Oakleigh proper, the shopping centre was sewered, but

13:00 we weren't far out of Oakleigh, probably only less than a mile out of the shopping centre, there was no sewer until probably the 1930s.

If it's not too crass a question, how was the dunny constructed when you were a boy?

Well that was part of the building. We had a separate laundry in the back yard and the toilet was behind that, and there was a pan clearance once a week.

13:30 It probably wasn't as good as what people expect today, but we got by with it.

Now in those years before the war, what did you hear about the possibility of war, the lead up to the war? What were people talking about?

Well, some people were very much up front with it, like some of our politicians, like Hughes for instance, and apparently he said right back in the 1920s...

14:00 He was Prime Minister of Australia during the First World War, you possibly know that. But he said even in the 1920s that our threat would come from Japan. And people didn't take a lot of notice of it. But during the Depression years, say from 1930 on, Australia cut back on expenditure on the services. The money just wasn't available

14:30 and there were a lot of people that said this was wrong, including Blamey, who you've probably heard of. He had a radio programme apparently, and he would say that we should be doing more. And of course we all know that now but the money just wasn't available. If they gave more to the services then it was less for the community things including schools and hospitals and that sort of thing.

15:00 So the money just wasn't there. So that's why, when war broke out in 1939, Australia and most countries were totally unprepared for war. I think the only country that was really prepared for war in those days was Japan, because they had been fighting a war in China since about the 1930s. So they

- were better organised for war. And I think even...well England certainly wasn't, and I don't think
- 15:30 even Germany or Japan were as prepared as they would have liked to have been. See, when I went in the army first we were very poorly equipped. There wasn't enough clothing and we didn't have the equipment, and we didn't get that until a couple of years into the war, especially those who were in units in Australia.
- 16:00 The priority went to the troops who were overseas. We were fighting a very serious war in the Middle East at that time in the Western Desert and they got priority on equipment and clothing. Things didn't really improve until possibly 1943 when they got war production up to speed and we were producing a lot of equipment, including artillery pieces and all that sort of thing,
- 16:30 and the clothing factories had caught up. They had switched from civilian clothing and were producing uniforms and clothing for the troops. It took quite a while to get that up because it was probably 1943 when the troops in Australia, or some of them, had reasonable clothing. We had a lot of junky stuff that had been left over from the First World War. It had been in storage.
- 17:00 So it was difficult to switch over, and clothing was rationed during the war, you knew that. Clothing was rationed and civilians had to make sacrifices. They had to make do and make do with what they had. It was all a coupon system. I don't know what the actual ration was, but I think the working class people would have really struggled because they didn't have the
- 17:30 clothing to start with, but people that had a few dollars or pounds would have a good wardrobe to start with, and of course meat was rationed, so that must have been difficult for butchers. And then butter and there were other things. You were allowed so much. And petrol was very strictly rationed. There was very little petrol about during the war for civilians.
- 18:00 I don't know what it was. It was just a few gallons a month, so they wouldn't go out every Sunday. They would probably go out once a month for a drive because that was all they could afford as far as the petrol was concerned.

I wonder if you remember where you were when you heard that war had broken out?

Where was I? Strange as it may seem I was at the pictures. I was working at the time, of course, and I had taken my

- 18:30 younger brother to the pictures and it wouldn't have cost me that much. They put the notice on the screen, so that's how I knew about it. And then [Robert] Menzies [Prime Minister of Australia], of course, made the announcement on air. You've heard that speech I suppose? One of his famous speeches. I think it was expected. I don't think it was a shock to people because by this time [Adolph] Hitler [Chancellor of Germany] had
- 19:00 invaded Poland and Britain had said, and France too, that they would stand by Poland, and they stood by what they said they were going to do. They were forced to go to war with Germany at that time. So that's where I was, at the pictures. I can't remember the name of the picture.

How did you and your brother react at that moment?

- 19:30 Well, I would have been....I would have been seventeen wouldn't I, and he would have been about fourteen or fifteen. No, I can't remember how we reacted. I don't think we reacted very much because it was in Europe and Europe was a long way away. In those days it was something we talked about sometimes. We
- 20:00 didn't have any idea of distances and all that sort of thing, which we know now. But we were not much affected by it because we knew we weren't going to be involved for a year or so. But my eldest brother who was three and a half years older than me, he was called up. Soon after war broke out they called up...the initial call ups were all twenty one year olds.
- 20:30 It was mainly for home defence in those days, and he went into a searchlight unit in the Melbourne area. I don't know how long he was in for; I'm not sure how long it was, but they had a period in for so many months and then they would come out and then another group would go in. And then they gradually extended it, the government extended it onward and upward.
- 21:00 If you understand what I mean, they finished calling up...as we got into the war by a few years, they were calling up eighteen year olds and probably people in their thirties as well. Single people initially, and then they called up married men later. Our war effort overall I think was quite good. We put a lot of troops into the field,
- 21:30 and what we did with our limited industrial capabilities I think we did quite well. A lot of engineering places switched to war production straight away. They even used railway workshops to make equipment. They had a big ammunition set-up out at Maribyrnong, and a lot of the younger ladies
- 22:00 had to work there. They didn't have any choice. They had to work in the ammunition factories. They did an excellent job of course. They produced an enormous amount of stuff, then when the Yanks came into the war, the thing changed quite a bit because down where the tech building...you know that building there? No?

- 22:30 Well that was built for a tank factory, they were going to make tanks there. Well, when the Yanks came in they said, 'We don't want you to make tanks, we've got plenty of facilities for making tanks, what we'd like Australia to do is provide food'. That was important. So we finished up getting our tanks from the United States and some of our heavy equipment, including trucks and all that sort of thing.
- 23:00 **I wondered about this period of time early in the war when you were about to enlist and then were called up, did you feel as though you were going to war for Australia or Mother England?**
- Well as I said before, we were more patriotic and we were part of the Empire. As they said at that time, England was in danger so it was up to us to help.
- 23:30 They started off...a lot of people volunteered early, and went in. They went into the air force. England at that time was in strife because they didn't have the equipment and they didn't have the manpower really. After the war had been going a year or so they started the training scheme, the
- 24:00 Empire Training Scheme for the air force and some of our air force chaps went to England to train. England apparently was able to supply the planes OK but they couldn't produce the men, their casualties were so high. They were losing their pilots and they wanted pilots from the Empire. All the Empire contributed, South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. They provided a lot of the air crew.
- 24:30 **So people felt very much a part of Britain as British subjects?**
- Yes, because most of us had British backgrounds. That's what it was all about. We still looked upon England, I suppose, as the mother country. It's changed a bit now but that's what it was about and people were not concerned about that. They thought, 'Well, if England's in danger we'll
- 25:00 help'. I think we pulled our weight during the Second World War as a country. And people were more united as a group. We were community minded as well, and I think that was the only time, or the last time we were fully committed to our country and to each other,
- 25:30 especially after the Japs came in, in 1941. We knew there was danger.
- So you felt as though people really came together as a force?**
- As a community, yes they did, and it was a big effort. I don't think people complained about it very much, having to make sacrifices. Not being able to drive their cars and this sort of thing. I think they were happy to do that sort of thing.
- 26:00 **Before Japan came into the war and before you were called up, do you remember what the sense of threat was to Australia...the threat to Australia as opposed to Mother England?**
- Well, we didn't feel very threatened until Japan came in. When Japan came in
- 26:30 we knew that there was a possibility that the Japs could invade Australia. There were several things that altered that of course; the Kokoda Trail where our troops performed very well, especially the 39th Battalion. They slowed down the advance, and then of course we had the great sea battles.
- 27:00 We had the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942 I think it was, which our ships were involved in. But I think it was more important the battle that took place a little bit later...the Battle of Midway, where the Yanks performed very well against the Japanese fleet. It wasn't a decisive victory but it sort of destroyed a lot of the Japanese fleet
- 27:30 and they were not able to replace it because of their more limited industrial set up...but the Americans were. See, they were able to switch to war production and they were able to build ships quicker and replace what was lost much quicker. And also the other military equipment. They switched their automotive companies - Ford and Chrysler and General Motors - switched to
- 28:00 wartime production and they finished up producing a lot of equipment. And we finished up with some of that equipment. See, a lot of equipment that we had in our regiment...for instance we had twenty five pounder guns which were made locally, and we had artillery tractors which were of English design, but they had Ford V8 motors in them. But a lot of other stuff that came in after
- 28:30 the Yanks came in. We had white scout cars for instance. Our motor cycles for instance, before that they were an English one and they were all sorts of makes and models, and after we went to Western Australia we were fully well equipped and we had got rid of all of those motor cycles and we had Indian motor cycles. The sig [signals] section and the provos [provosts - Military Police] of course had Harley Davidsons [motorcycles].
- 29:00 Then we had jeeps which replaced motor cycles too in some cases.
- I would very much like to ask you, perhaps on the next tape, about the actual equipment that you used. I was wondering, when you went in it was such an interesting time because it was right as Japan came into the war. Can you tell me about the way that people saw that threat? Did they feel it was much more direct now?**

Oh yes. Everyone was quite concerned about it.

29:30 And of course we had problems. We had miniature submarines in Sydney Harbour. You probably know about that. And some parts of the east coast were shelled from the sea. And in Western Australia the same thing happened, and Darwin of course was very heavily attacked by bombers. And also a lot of other places, Broome and along the West Australian coast

30:00 were bombed by Japanese. The threat disappeared on the east coast to a large extent after Midway. They lost a lot of ships and that meant they wouldn't be able to invade on the east coast because the Yanks had more or less taken control of the Pacific area.

Once you were in the army, what

30:30 **sort of news did you get from the front against the Japanese?**

We didn't get a lot. We would get a little bit of news. The only time we would get a bit of news was when we got a newspaper, and we never got newspapers. They never got that far. But every now and again the regiment would put out a news sheet of what was happening. There wasn't a lot of detail. We didn't know a lot of detail of what was happening outside our own area.

31:00 I think civilians would have known more because they had newspapers and they also had radio. But the news they would have got in any case would have been heavily censored. They would not have got the true story, we never do. Even recently I don't think we got the true story from Iraq. They only told us what they thought we should know. Nothing's changed.

31:30 We knew a bit about what was happening in the Western Australian section. We knew a bit about what was happening there. The Yanks had moved in over there and they had a submarine base at Fremantle and there were quite a lot of American troops, or sailors, mainly in the Fremantle area. They provided escort ships

32:00 for our ships that were taking stuff to the Middle East. But there were a lot of Americans in Western Australia, mainly sailors.

I'd like to ask you more about that again as well. There's a lot to follow up on. We've got about five to ten minutes left on this tape. I wonder if you could talk me through the process of once you got your call up, what happened then when you went into training and eventually made it to Western Australia?

32:30 OK. I was called up and I had to report down to Oakleigh. I think there were about twenty other fellas there and some of them I knew because they were more or less in my age group. Then we went by train, there was a chap there to pick us up and escort us, a Sergeant Miller. He walked us down to the Oakleigh Station. We got on the train and we went into Flinders Street I suppose,

33:00 and then we got on the actual train to take us to Trawool. I don't know how many men there would have been on that train. There would have been about two batteries I suppose. There would probably have been overall about three hundred and fifty or four hundred on the train. Then we got to Trawool. There was a railway line running in those days from

33:30 Tallarook through to Mansfield and our camp was actually just over the road from the railway line. So what they did, they just stopped the train there and we all got off and we walked across the road and that was the camp. There had been a group of people who came in before that, and Lou probably told you about this, there were about fifty or sixty and they had been there for about a fortnight or

34:00 three weeks. They had virtually set the camp up. All the tents had been set up and things were there. It had been used as a military camp. There was a toilet block and an officers' mess and sergeants' mess and cook houses and that sort of thing and showers. So the basic things were there. We just moved into tents and after being issued with a palliasse [mattress] full of straw we bedded down for the night. It was an unusual thing to

34:30 do. A lot of us were meeting for the first time. We hadn't known each other before. The chap I went in with, Neville Nevardi, was in the same tent as me and I think people talked practically all night. They never stopped talking. And then the next day they sort of sorted us out a little bit. We got clothing issued and all that and then we settled in. Then they started the basic training,

35:00 which was, they taught you to march and do left turns and right turns and all that sort of stuff, and probably for about six weeks they did that basic training. Then they divided you into the sections that you would be in. They divided you into troops...that's a unit in a battery. They decided what you would do, whether you would be a truck driver or a

35:30 gunner or a signaller and all this sort of thing. And I think at that stage there were a lot of people who were misfits on what they were allotted, if you know what I mean. There were people in sigs who weren't really suitable and some of the drivers weren't really suited for what they were supposed to do. But that gradually sorted itself out. Then after about six weeks, we started more serious training, gun drills and all that sort of stuff.

36:00 In between time we also did physical things. We'd go on marches regularly to get us fit because some of

us weren't fit. I was only light. I weighed 140 pound I think, or less than that. 136 pound I weighed when I went into the army; less than ten stone. There were a lot of us and we were only teenagers, and we hadn't developed

36:30 physically. I think they had to get us physically fit for a start and that took some time.

Tape 3

00:32 **I thought we'd begin this tape by asking you; before the war started or before you went into the army more specifically, what were your expectations of what army life would be like?**

Well I didn't know a lot. My brother had gone in for some training, but he had it pretty easy if you know what I mean, because he was home frequently. They would get a lot of leave and that sort of stuff.

01:00 He wasn't far away. I don't know where he was but in the outer suburbs on the other side of town. Somewhere like that. But they had reasonably good facilities I would say. It might have been a permanent army base, and they would have had a fairly good set-up. And as I said, he was home fairly frequently. So I didn't really

01:30 know what to expect. But some people had gone in before me and they had taken tennis racquets and all their sporting gear. They were told to take that of course, but when we went in we were not told anything like that. We were just told to bring the basic stuff that we wanted without bringing sporting equipment. So I didn't know what to expect, and I suppose

02:00 the things that I missed the most...we lived in a fairly comfortable house there...and not having to have hot showers and all that sort of thing. That was a bit of a turn-off for me. I really didn't enjoy that part of it. But after a while you get used to it. 'Well', you say, 'It's changed a bit and we just have to put up with it'.

What was that first rude awakening you might say, with your showering?

02:30 Well, it was just a fairly crude sort of a set-up for showers and that sort of thing and there was never enough hot water, so quite often you would have to have a cold shower. The hot water would run out and all that sort of thing. I think initially too, the cooks that came in...there were some cooks who had had some training, but overall they weren't that good. The food was all just badly

03:00 prepared. So that was a bit of a turn-off too, for a while. But over a period of a short time they brought in other people from catering and they taught the cooks how to cook. That's what it was all about, and towards the end of the war or even after twelve months or so, some of them were quite good cooks. They were quite capable of cooking and they used to turn out some quite presentable meals.

03:30 **I'd like to ask you more about food in a moment. But before you left I was wondering what you packed? What did you get ready to take?**

I don't really know. I probably took the basic things, toothbrushes and toilet stuff and all that. I don't know if I took a lot of extra clothing, do you know what I mean? I took basic clothing and it was a few days before we got issued with

04:00 stuff. Then our own civilian clothes were sent home. I didn't pack anything much. I even took pyjamas as a matter of fact, which was a bit unusual. But apart from that I didn't take much clothing with me because I think we had been told that you would be issued with clothing. Then you get a complete lot of clothing;

04:30 you get everything, like underwear and boots and socks and all that sort of stuff. So after you were issued with your army stuff you had enough clothing to see you by. But a lot of it was pretty poor. It was a lot of stuff that had been in storage for a number of years. It wasn't good clothing initially. The uniform we got was OK, the dress uniform. That was OK;

05:00 that was all new and that was quite good.

Did you need your pyjamas?

Yes, I used them initially. I probably used them until they wore out and then I threw them away. And we used to do that. A lot of the clothing we were issued with we dumped. We were issued with flannels for instance, which I didn't wear. And we had those long underpants and you know what they're like. What we did...

05:30 or what I did, I dumped that sort of stuff because you had to carry it. You didn't want to have any clothing that you didn't really need. So I got rid of the flannels and I also got rid of the long underpants that were issued, to save weight.

What were those long underpants like?

I've got a pair here actually. You know, long underpants that go right down to your ankles.

What were they made of?

06:00 There were made of cotton I suppose.

You didn't like them much?

Well, they were very warm. They certainly kept you warm. One of the other problems you had, you had to wash all this stuff and that was a bit awkward. We had to wash it and hang it out somewhere to get it dry. I think most of them would have dumped that stuff.

06:30 After a few months they would have dumped it because it just too heavy to carry.

And when you were washing it, it was all hand done?

Oh yes. Well, most of the time we never had facilities for washing clothes. The only time we had it was when we were in a fixed camp, and we weren't there very often in fixed camps. I suppose at Tamworth we had good facilities there. They had good

07:00 showers and good facilities for washing clothes and all that sort of stuff. It was a good camp. And we slept in huts there, not tents.

Did you have any personal items when you went away to war? Photos?

No, I never took any of that sort of stuff with me. The only thing...I think my mother bought a watch for me just before I left, which was a bit unusual.

07:30 Not many people had watches in those days, but what happened was, she bought me this watch and I think it cost...which was a fair amount of money to pay for a watch. It was a waterproof watch and...a lot of the chaps didn't have watches in those days. Some of the men would have pocket watches.

08:00 Everyone's got a watch today, a wrist watch, but not so many chaps had a watch. But they gradually bought them because you needed a watch to know where you had to be at what time.

A very special gift from you mum then?

Yes. She bought it at Dunklings I think. She knew somebody in there

08:30 and she went in there and bought a watch just a few days before I went into the army. It was quite a lot of money too. That would have been a week's wages for an ordinary person in those days. Five pound fifteen or what ever...as much as a person would earn in a week.

Well, speaking of wages, what did you go in on with the army?

Initially I went in on five shillings,

09:00 but I had only been in there a short time, I can't tell you how long, but it might have been weeks when it was increased to six shillings. Now that wasn't too bad if you know what I mean, because you didn't have to buy anything, clothing or that sort of stuff. So all the money that you had you could spend on other things,

09:30 tobacco or beer or....you had that five shillings. You could get along fairly well on that. It was enough to keep [you] in toothpaste and all those sorts of things that you need, and soaps. You had enough money to survive. Some of the chaps were fairly well off. As a matter of fact, some of the chaps who worked for companies, and that included banks, they would have their wages made up by the organization they worked for.

10:00 They would have their own army income and then they would have their money paid up, and that was mainly paid into a bank account for them. So they were fairly well off. They were actually getting more money in real terms than what they were earning because they were being kept by the army but they were still getting the same income. And they got wage rises too

10:30 as it went along.

So that was quite an advantage for those chaps who came back out and had bank accounts.

Yes they would have, yes. It wasn't the general rule. Not many had their wages made up. If they worked for a big company, banks and insurance companies and things like that, they would have their wages made up. So they would have come out with quite a decent sum of money I would say.

Now what were you on when you left work

11:00 **to go into the army? Was that less or more than you were getting in the army?**

I'm trying to think what we were getting. We were probably getting about £1.10.0 per week, so I would be getting slightly more in the army. Slightly more, just a little bit more I think. I'm not quite sure what my wages were when I went into the army. But it would have been £4 a week anyhow.

11:30 £4 a week, what's that, about \$8 now. But when I went into the army, as I said, the wages went up so we

were getting £4.2.0 a week.

Did some of that go home?

No, I don't think I sent any money home. I used to spend it on various things.

12:00 I always managed to spend it I think. But I did come out of the army with some money, because there was deferred pay that the army kept until you were discharged, and when I came out in 1946 I think I had about £180. Now that was almost enough money to buy this block of land, almost but not quite.

12:30 Almost enough to buy this block of land here. I think it was a bit over £200 pound to buy this block of land when we bought it in 1948 I think. And then this house was financed by War Service. You were allowed £2000 and the interest rate was very low. It was a very low interest rate, and I think it still is. They call it something else now.

13:00 You could build a house then probably for a bit less than £3000. You could build a house then. So I almost had enough to build a house with the War Service loan. And beside that it was insured by War Service at a good rate. And we've still got the insurance through War Service, because even though you've paid the loan off

13:30 you can keep the insurance, and the insurance is still through...they call it something else now, but the same sort of set-up.

So that was a real helping hand to veterans after the war?

Yes. Well, I think they did that to make up to a degree the wages that you lost over the period you were in the army. So it was a help, and they did increase it too after a while.

14:00 But then basically it was £2000 which was enough to give you a good start.

Well, I'm asking you then about your time in going away. What were you told about where you were going?

I don't know whether we were told where we were going exactly. We knew we would go to the Seymour area because that's where the training took place.

14:30 We weren't sure about which camp we would go to. When we went there initially we used to get home leave every second weekend. When the Japs came in that all stopped of course. Then families were allowed to visit to on weekends, on a Sunday. Families could come up and visit their sons. But my family couldn't get up because they didn't have a car. But some were able to get up and visit

15:00 their sons. But that only happened for a few weeks because the Japs came in early in December, so that all stopped. Everything stopped then. We weren't given any weekend leave, and what they did then, they used to vary the leave. You would get two days off a month for leave, but not always a weekend. Seldom would it be a weekend.

15:30 It was two days during the week or whatever it was. As you know the Japs attacked on a Sunday so they decided we should have troops available on Sundays and they were sort of breaking us into that sort of situation. I think when they bombed Pearl Harbour most of the Yanks were asleep or doing something. So it was a bit of a surprise and a rude awakening for them, and us too.

Now when did you say goodbye to your family? Was this before you went away for training?

Well yes, I was living at home and I said goodbye. It was on the fifth of November, the day after Melbourne Cup day actually, the Wednesday. I just said goodbye to them and walked down to the depot and that's when I was picked up by the sergeant who escorted us to the train

16:30 and so on to Trawool. Do you know where Trawool is?

I know where Seymour is.

Ok, well it's between...do you know Tallarook? Before you get to Seymour, no? Well it's between Tallarook and Yea, roughly on the other road. The road branches at Tallarook. But Seymour was the training area, and Puckapunyal too.

17:00 They had set up Puckapunyal at this time and they were still using all the old camp sites that they used during the First World War which was in the Seymour area.

Did your family give you a little farewell?

No, there was no party or anything like that. Initially we were supposed to go in for ninety days, three months. And then you would have three months out and then you would go back for three months. But when the Japs came in, all that stopped.

17:30 You went in for the duration of the war and twelve months after. That was the set-up. You had to serve for the duration of the war and twelve months after. That was the way it was. I didn't quite serve twelve months, but I served about eight or nine months I think after. Yes about nine months, ten months after.

Just to clarify. When did the transfer come

18:00 **to be in part of the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]?**

What happened was; I transferred to AIF when we were at Tamworth. And that would have been probably July of 1942 or round about. My mother had to sign the form to say that I could.

18:30 As I said my father wouldn't allow it, but he had died in June 1942 and I persuaded my mother...I said, 'If I want to stay with this particular group of people I have to transfer to AIF, and that means you volunteer for service anywhere in the world'. I wanted to stay with them because I had got used to them.

19:00 I didn't want to start with someone else again, you know, another group of people. So that's what happened.

I was wondering more about the training. If I could ask a few more questions about what you actually did and as well how you were selected to go into that area?

Well I started off as a driver because

19:30 there were a lot of people who didn't drive in those days. I had a licence and I had driven trucks and that sort of thing, so I started off as a driver. I did that probably for the first four or five months, then they transferred me to make me a Bren gunner then. Then gradually...I never had a lot to do if you know what I mean. They trained me and gave me shooting practice and all that

20:00 sort of thing. The quartermaster, I knew he wanted another storeman, so I spoke to him about it and he said, 'OK I'll see what I can do'. But this didn't happen then. It happened a long time after. I finally got into the quartermaster's store as a storeman. That suited me fine. The chap who was the quartermaster sergeant was quite a nice sort of bloke.

20:30 He worked in a bank. And also the other chap who was in the store was also a bank person. And those two people had a lot of influence on me really, because of the way they did things. As far as the quartermaster's store, they kept very good records. They had to anyhow, but it was no trouble to them because they had been trained for it. So

21:00 they were good and they were real nice people, you know, decent people. The other chaps were good too. I'm not criticising the rest of them, they were good. And then when we went to Western Australia, when we had been over there for a couple of years, they decided to send some of the troops on leave, and both the sergeant and technical storeman were sent on leave, so

21:30 they put me as quartermaster while they were away. They were supposed to be away for six weeks but it finished up they were away for ten weeks and I was the quartermaster for that period of time. I got another chap in to help me. I had no rank but I was the quartermaster. The normal rank for a quartermaster in a battery of artillery was a staff sergeant. I had no rank but I did the job for about ten weeks. And I never got into much trouble either.

22:00 Luckily at that time the commanding officer of the battery was very good and he used to come down regularly and say, 'Have you got any problems'? And he'd say, 'Well, I'll fix that for you'. So he was very good. He had served in the Middle East. He was a very good officer and he was very experienced and well trained himself. Unfortunately he was killed later in New Guinea.

Through that early experience you felt that you

22:30 **learned a lot?**

Yes, I think I did, and it has an influence on your life. I was in for four years seven months or something like that. It has an influence on your life. No question about that. And I think one of the things it teaches you is to be tolerant of other people. We had a diverse group of people, if you know what I mean. We had

23:00 all sorts of people there in the army. There were a lot of people from the suburban area and we finished up with a lot of farming people from the Mallee and those sorts of places, and also East Gippsland. And you learned a lot from them about life if you know what I mean, because we used to spend a lot of time talking. Especially night time we'd spend talking because you couldn't do much else. We'd talk about families and work and all that sort of thing, and our experiences.

23:30 You learnt a lot from them and as you know, I've still got some of them as friends. Even after sixty years nearly, so that's good I think.

I suppose you were forced to be very organised as well when you were quartermaster? Careful and...

Oh yes, yes. You had responsibilities. You had to look after the troops as best you could.

24:00 But then again you had responsibilities because you had limited supplies of clothing. You couldn't hand it out without recording it all. But by the time I became quartermaster it was a lot easier because

supplies had come through, especially clothing and stuff like that. We were not short of clothing as we were during the first three years we were in the army. We were short of clothing all the time and the quartermaster's job was pretty difficult. You had to sort of stretch it and make sure the troops didn't put it over him,

24:30 getting new clothing and boots and this sort of thing. You had to make the best use of what you had. The sergeant, he was very good. He was a person who had been in the militia and was a very experienced person. And as well as that he was a fair bit older than me. He was about thirty or something. So his experience of life had been

25:00 extensive up to that time.

It sounds as though these shortages affected you quite a bit. Not only uniforms, but was it also in terms of weapons and artillery?

Yes. When we went in first we had eighteen pounders and they had been used in the First World War, and what they had done, they had taken the big artillery wheels off and replaced them with rubber tyres. But the guns were still basically

25:30 the same. But what happened, in the 1930s they had invented the twenty five pounder. We had been in for probably four or five months when we were issued with the twenty five pounder which was the standard field artillery equipment for that time. And they were quite an efficient gun and they were used right throughout the war. Not only with Australian troops

26:00 but all British troops were equipped with twenty five pounders, and they replaced the eighteen pounder and also the 4.5 Howitzer which was used in the First World War and well up into the 1930s, until the twenty five pounder became available. They were English design and apparently by world standards they were quite a good piece of equipment.

How did you get shifted from driving to

26:30 **Bren guns to artillery?**

Bren gunner? Well I had a bit of trouble with one of the officers as a matter of fact. We had a difference of opinion and me being a brash teenager, I argued with him, and he was quite upset about it of course. So he decided that he would give me some sort of punishment. I thought what he would have done...I argued with him. What it was over

27:00 was, I was going down to have a shower one night and he was coming back from the officers' mess and we met on the track. He stopped me and told me that the truck I was driving wasn't properly maintained. And I said, 'What's wrong with it?' He said, 'It has got mud on the chassis underneath'. 'That won't affect the running of the vehicle, I said. So long as it's got oil and water and petrol in the tank it will go'. He said, 'Well I don't agree with that'. And I said, 'Well that's the way it is. There's nothing wrong with the vehicle,

27:30 it's sound mechanically'. Anyhow we had quite a heated argument about it. But the part about it was, he couldn't even drive a vehicle at that time. So he said to me in the finish, 'Don't you talk to me like that, gunner'. So away I went and I thought, 'I could be in trouble for this. I could be had up for insubordination or something'. So anyhow what happened was,

28:00 I finished up, he took it further and they put me on sanitary fatigue, which is cleaning the latrines and showers and all that sort of thing. I wasn't too pleased about that. So I saw the sergeant major and I said, 'I want to be paraded before the officer commanding the battery, Major Connon'. He said, 'OK'. So down I went to the orderly room with the sergeant major and I told him my part of the story,

28:30 and he said, 'Oh yes'. I had been his driver when I first went in so I had a connection with him if you know what I mean. So he said, 'OK, I'll see what I can do about it'. So I said, 'I think I've been unjustly treated'. So what happened was, they decided to make me a Bren gunner. That solved the problem to a degree, but I was still under the command of this officer I had

29:00 had a difference of opinion with, and it was a clash of personalities. We just didn't get on. So it finished up, I was a Bren gunner and I didn't have a lot to do, so as I said, I knew the quartermaster wanted another storeman, and I finished up I was put in the quartermaster's store and I would unload trucks and count stuff when it came in,

29:30 repair boots and help when they did clothing parades and sort this out, and I finished up I did that for the rest of the war, virtually. I was in the quartermaster's store.

So you didn't spend much time as a Bren gunner?

No, although I was quite good at it. I was quite a good Bren gun shot. But someone else took it on and I finished up as a

30:00 quartermaster storeman.

And that carried right through to Western Australia?

No, not really. I didn't go into the quartermaster until we got to Western Australia. I stayed as a Bren gunner up until the time we went to Western Australia, then I managed to get into the quartermaster's store when we were in Western Australia. It was an interesting experience really.

30:30 I think it was good training for me overall.

Do you think in terms of later running your own business?

It probably was. It probably was because it taught you the importance of keeping reasonable records and that means when you started your own business, as you could understand, you have to keep records. There's taxation and wages and all this sort of thing.

31:00 I think it helped. I think all experiences in life have an effect on you in some way. You were going to ask me about the equipment. When we first went in, we had the old eighteen pounders and they were gradually replaced. And the vehicles we had, apart from the artillery tractors, weren't suitable. They were two wheel drive vehicles and they weren't really suitable for military service.

31:30 Gradually we had those replaced with four wheel drive vehicles. The vehicles, the three tonners for transport, were all four wheel drive, and also the sig trucks were all four wheel drives. They were Chevrolets actually. And we had scout cars which was American equipment. They were quite good. They had White motors in them and they were good, the armoured cars that we had.

32:00 So we finished up that we had quite a lot of American equipment. As I say, by the time we got to Western Australia we had jeeps and they had standardised the motor cycles. So that made it easier for maintenance overall, having standard vehicles.

So can you go through it with me. What was American? The jeeps, the motor cycles and what else?

Scout cars, and

32:30 of course the armoured division was equipped with American tanks which we were part of, and they had Stewarts and the heavy tanks as well. And they were all American. Initially I think some of the armoured regiments had British designed tanks. But when they standardised the equipment it finished up they had all American equipment. General Grant was the heavy tank and the Stewart was the light tank.

Did you have any experience directly

33:00 **with those vehicles?**

No, not really, although when we were training in the Mullaley-Gunnedah area we trained with the tank regiments. We did our training there before we went to Western Australia to get the formation used to working with each other. We went out to the Gunnedah-Mullaley area about July

33:30 of 1943, that would be. And we were out from about July through to Christmas time and then we transferred to Western Australia. Now in that time, we stayed in that area all the time. It was really out under service conditions if you understand what I mean. We didn't have tents or anything like that -

34:00 we slept out. And that was a bit of problem too at times, because it could be very cold and very wet there. But we survived. We used to shelter under trucks and all that sort of thing. We all survived. Then we finished up in Gunnedah to go to Western Australia as a complete division. And they started to transfer us to Western Australia about Christmas, or just after

34:30 Christmas, and it took ten days to get to Western Australia by train. It was a long journey. What they did to fill the time while we were waiting, they used to keep us fairly fit actually. We used to march every day somewhere. What they used to do was a standard thing. They would take us all out on a march and we'd march for one hour. We'd march and we'd double march. Do you understand what I mean?

35:00 We'd double march until we were out of breath, then they would march us again, and that would be for one hour. Then we'd stop and have ten minutes off and then we'd do the same thing going back. So actually I was probably at my fittest then because of this physical activity. People have decided that walking is quite good for physical fitness, but the army knew that a long time ago I think. Hundreds of years ago I think. So anyway, the trip to Western Australia.

35:30 We came down through New South Wales and through Victoria and we went down...we didn't go directly on the western line when we got to Melbourne. We went around the loop and we picked up the Geelong line so we went via Geelong. So we didn't actually come into Melbourne. And then we went up...I think they used to join the line at Ararat;

36:00 I'm not quite sure about that. But it doesn't matter much. Then we picked up the train going to Adelaide. We went into Adelaide. We were taken off the train there for a short time. I think we stayed overnight in Adelaide. And then the next day we got to Port Pirie, which is where the junction of the trans-continental line was at that time. And what they did, they split

36:30 the train up because what happened was, our equipment was with us or most of it, the guns and the trucks and all that sort of stuff was on flat tops and the troops were in cattle trucks to travel. We went

from Port Pirie to Kalgoorlie. It wasn't too bad really. It was hot of course, and it took about...we left early in the morning to go to Western Australia

37:00 and we spent that night on the train. They used to stop the train to feed us. They had cooking facilities on the train and then they'd stop the train to feed us our meals. We got into Kalgoorlie late the second night; I would say about nine or ten o'clock. We camped there for one night and I think the next day we went on and we went towards Perth and we turned north

37:30 at Southern Cross to a place called Morawa I think...I'm not sure of that. But it was very hot there. It was January. Very hot and water was scarce. We were rationed very strictly on water. We were only allowed a gallon a day per person. That was drinking and washing, so you could just imagine...and it was of poor quality.

38:00 It was not good and a lot of people were affected by it. You know, it made them sick. So we only stayed there for about six weeks, then they shifted us towards Geraldton at a place called Mingenew. We camped there. We moved into an area there...a big area, it was acres and acres on a big sort of slope, then it sloped down to a dry creek bed.

38:30 The water was better there. There was a more regular supply. We had some farming blokes in our regiment as I said, and they looked around and they said that getting down towards this dry creek, 'You'll find water there'. So anyhow, they dug down and sure enough, water at about three feet. Not really good drinking water but at least we could wash in it. And the water that was supplied by the army we could drink

39:00 and all that sort of thing. So we had enough water there because of this soak that the troops had dug. That was quite good. Another thing that used to happen there was, they used to come around every now and again...they had a mobile shower and they'd set it up and heat up water so we could all have a hot shower. It wasn't very often but every few weeks I suppose we used to be able to have

39:30 a hot shower. That was quite good.

You would have been very grateful for that.

Oh yes. That was one of the difficult things as I said. It was hard to really keep yourself clean or even wash your clothes properly. I think that was the thing that really made it difficult.

Was there a bit of an odour to the men after a time?

What do you mean?

40:00 Well we were probably all about the same so no one noticed.

Tape 4

00:31 **We'll pick up where we were at the end of the last tape. Can you clarify for me; this is your second location camp within Western Australia?**

Yes, Mingenew. I'll show it to you on the map later.

Now when was the stage when you went into the stores and later became quartermaster. At what point in time?

01:00 Well, that's a bit of a difficult question to remember. It would have been a few months after we had been in Mingenew for a while, and then I gradually got into the quartermaster's store. I can't really put much of a time on this when it actually happened.

01:30 I'd been there...you want to know when I became acting quartermaster and things?

It doesn't really matter but I was wondering how long you were in Mingenew and when you went into that role?

We stayed at Mingenew for several months. It was probably one of our longest stays in West Australia, and

02:00 after that we went down to Rockingham, and did another lot of different training because there was an artillery range close where we could practice firing and all that sort of thing. And also we did training there...you don't know Rockingham anyhow. It's quite a city I believe, but in those days it was really out in the bush. We did training there and

02:30 it was firing practice which was one of the main purposes of us being there. And also while we were there, what happened, we were shifted up to Point Walter and we had training...you know, landing from barges and that sort of thing. Point Walter is on the Swan River and there was a big sort of a lake and we did landing from barges and transporting vehicles

- 03:00 by barges and all that sort of stuff. Also we did specialised training in unarmed combat and physical stuff as well. Somebody named McKissick was in charge of that section of it. But that was his job, he was in charge of it. They used to rotate regiments and units through this. You would probably be there for two or three weeks doing that specialised training.
- 03:30 After that we went back to Rockingham. Then we went down to Collie, which was down south of Perth, and we did jungle training down there. Training in forests and all this sort of thing. Now General Bennett had set all this up and had done a lot of work on training.
- 04:00 As you know, he was in charge of the troops in Singapore and he escaped after the surrender, and he came back and he was in charge of Western Command. He had two ordinary divisions under his command and also an armoured division, so he would have had at his disposal for the defence of Western Australia, he probably would have had 60,000 troops. He decided they should be trained in all facets
- 04:30 of warfare just in case. You never knew what was going to happen. Even though an artillery regiment we could have been later on or at some stage called upon to work as infantrymen. So that was one of his things and we went down there. I went down as a storeman for the
- 05:00 sergeant. Everybody had to do this training, cooks and store people and everyone. Every person had to do this training. Anyhow we had been down there for about a week or so. I was going off for the afternoon session. You wouldn't dare miss a session because you would be in real trouble if you didn't turn up. So I had taken my rifle and all my equipment and I was heading off to the assembly area for the
- 05:30 afternoon sessions, and the quartermaster sergeant came running after me. 'You've got to come back', he said. I said, 'Why'? He said 'We've got to pack up, we've got to move'. I said, 'I can't do that. I've got to be on this parade'. Anyhow, he finally convinced me that he needed me to help pack up. So what had happened was, off the Western Australian coast
- 06:00 a United States submarine had sighted a fleet of war ships and they reported back that it could be an invasion fleet but that the Japs were coming down from Indonesia, as it's called now, but was called Java in those days. They wanted the troops all ready. You know, to put them onto a war footing. So
- 06:30 what happened was, we packed up and we moved back to Rockingham because that was where our equipment was, all our guns and trucks and everything was there. We got back and it was in the evening. We had to pack up and load all the trucks and then early the next morning, I should say around about five o'clock, we left to go north of Perth. A whole regiment of artillery
- 07:00 on the march with a 150 vehicles, and some of them very noisy, went through Perth. We were going through Perth...it was daylight but it was probably about five o'clock in the morning and all the people were out, civilians. What they did, they stopped all the traffic; the military police
- 07:30 and the others stopped the traffic at every intersection and we went through non-stop. All the main roads, the cross roads they blocked off. We finished up, we got to Moora probably mid morning which is roughly a 100 miles north of Perth. We pulled into an area there. We issued all the troops with ammunition, small arms stuff like rifles, and
- 08:00 made sure that all the machine guns were loaded and all this sort of stuff. And then we just waited. After a couple of days they found out it was a false alarm because the ships that the American submarine had seen were British ships, and the Yanks were never very good at identifying other people's equipment, as we know. So we just stopped there
- 08:30 for a while, probably a couple of days, and then we shifted out and went to a place called Dandaragan towards the coast and we went into a camp there. Now Dandaragan is not that far from Jurien Bay and there were a lot of troops out in that area. They had brought them all forward from wherever they were, in Perth or wherever. We were at Dandaragan because, at Jurien Bay there was
- 09:00 a place that the Japanese knew very well. During the First World War, Japanese ships escorted our troop ships going to Europe and the Middle East and they had a naval depot there at Jurien Bay, and after the ships had left Albany and places like that, the Japanese would come out and they would give them
- 09:30 naval escort across the Indian Ocean. So they knew the area and seemed to think that that's where they might come in, in that area. Only a maybe, of course. Anyhow we went out to Dandaragan and we just resumed our normal training and we settled down again and waited.

And how long did you stay there for?

Probably

- 10:00 three or four months. Some interesting things happened there. At one stage we got very heavy rain. It rained and rained and rained. And when it rains in that area it goes everywhere if you know what I mean. One of the interesting things that happened there, or I thought it was interesting anyhow...the cook house was short of wood, so they sent a truck out to get some wood or whatever they could pick up around the place.

10:30 The country was so wet that this three tonner, which was a four wheel drive thing, it got bogged and they couldn't move it. So what they did then, they decided they'd send out an artillery tractor to pull the truck out of the bog and bring it back to camp. The artillery tractor went out and it got bogged. What they did then, they sent out a tank, they sent out a Stewart tank and they said, 'Well that will fix it'.

11:00 It got bogged as well. Then they just abandoned the whole thing and waited until the ground dried out and took them back to camp. So that kept us amused for a few days of course. It was a bit of a diversion I suppose.

I wonder what you were hearing during this time. What you were hearing about the war with the Japanese?

Well we knew about the main battles I suppose. And we knew about

11:30 New Guinea, and we knew about the Battle of the Coral Sea and also Midway. We would get that sort of information, but we never got a great deal of detail of what it was. We'd get some of it. Some of the camps we were in, we did have a wireless set, and we could pick up the civilian news, but they weren't given a lot of detail either.

12:00 We had a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] chap there at one stage, and he had a van which had an amp system, and he could put the radio through his system. So in the camp we could hear the news reports but there was not a lot of detail.

Was that frustrating for you at all?

I suppose it was to a degree. We used to get a little bit of news from home but they didn't know a lot either.

12:30 My own parents used to write regularly and they'd send me letters, and one of the things they used to send me was the Sporting Globe. The Sporting Globe was a publication put out by the Herald. It would be published Saturday night and it would give all the sporting results: racing and football and that sort of stuff. So what they used to do, they would cut it back as much as they could and post it to me. I would probably get it weeks later but it gave

13:00 me details of race results and football results. Football did continue during the Second World War but it was restricted. Football was restricted and the Geelong team went into recess, actually. They didn't field a team during the war and their players transferred to other clubs. And the racecourses

13:30 were curtailed quite a bit because Caulfield racecourse was used by the army so that was closed, but they still had Flemington and I think they had Mooney Valley as well. But see, a lot of places were taken over by the services. The air force I think had the show ground and also I think the Exhibition Building. The Melbourne Cricket Ground was used by the Yanks as a camp. That was one of their camps because we had a lot of Yanks in Victoria.

14:00 What sort of war news did you hear from your family or your mate's families?

No. We'd sometimes get news of where their brothers were and what they were doing, but not much apart from that. I don't think we had a lot of information, or I didn't anyhow. But my father used to write to me regularly, and my mother used to write, and my sister. I

14:30 had cousins that wrote, so I got quite a bit of home news if you know what I mean, but not a lot of war news. They only got a censored version of what was happening in any case. Every thing was fairly strict and all our letters that we sent home were censored, and we weren't allowed to mention place names, for instance, at all. If you mentioned place names they would cut it out.

15:00 They would censor the letters and they would cut it out altogether. So they didn't know exactly where we were. They probably knew we were in Western Australia. They would have known I was in Western Australia because when I was in Perth one time, I had a few days leave in Perth and some of my mother's cousins lived in Perth, and I called them and they would have communicated back and told them where I was. So they knew roughly where I was.

15:30 They knew I was in Australia but not exactly where.

How did censorship affect your letters that you were writing back to them?

I think after a while you got used to this and you didn't put anything in that would be cut out. You wouldn't put in place names or anything like that. You'd write about your friends and maybe a bit of information about their families so they could hear about what sort of people you were with. And I think overall I was pretty lucky.

16:00 I was with a good group of people overall. They were easy to get on with people. We used to have our rows but I think overall, when you consider how diversified they were, we got on well. We had people there, I mean, we had the son of a State Governor in our regiment, and we also had people who worked in big business, as well as banks and

16:30 that sort of thing. And of course some of them after the war, they did quite well. One of the chaps from our regiment became Government Solicitor, another one became a judge, another one became a priest

and another one became a Baptist church minister, so they finished up very diversified people. And some of them did quite well when

17:00 they came out, especially as I say, one became a judge and one became a senator in Parliament. So I was never famous but I knew some famous people. That was good. And then after the war I suppose most of them got back and settled into civilian life and they went back to their jobs. It took us a while to settle. When I came out

17:30 it took me about four weeks to sort of settle down. I got out in the June and I didn't go back to work straight away. But what we used to do, there was a pub in the city...and I can't think of the name of it now, it doesn't matter...where our group used to go. And I would go in there and most times I would meet somebody there from the regiment and we'd have a couple of drinks and a bit of a talk and that sort of thing.

18:00 I gradually got myself back in. As far as I was concerned...I also did a little bit of work for my brother who was running the timber yard. I would help him by driving trucks and that sort of thing, and so I gradually got back into it, and I suppose after about four or five weeks I went back to work in the joinery shop. I think most of them had trouble settling back after being away for four and a half years or what ever it was. It took a while to get used to it.

18:30 **And it's such a different life. Such a different kind of life.**

Yes. When you're in the army or air force or navy, your life is all organised for you. You've got to get up at six o'clock and all this sort of thing. You have to have breakfast at a certain time, be available for training and all this sort of thing. Your days were organised. So when you suddenly became a civilian you didn't know quite how to handle it.

19:00 Especially in my case because I was only nineteen when I went into the army, and I was nearly twenty three when I got out. So it was quite a chunk out of your life. So it took quite a while to settle.

And in what ways did people try to settle? What did they do to help them settle?

Well some of them didn't handle it very well. I must admit a lot of them

19:30 drank more than they should have. And some of the chaps that I knew from my regiment, some of them became alcoholics and it took them longer to settle down. Now, I think there's lots of reasons for this. It would depend on what sort of family background you came from. I came from a stable family and it was probably easier for me to settle down and become

20:00 a civilian again because of support from family. I had gone back to where I had lived before so that meant I knew most people in the area. It was easier for me I think, but some of them had it tough I think and couldn't handle it. And this was unfortunate in some ways. But over all most of them turned out good people, and we still have, as Lou probably told you,

20:30 we still have an annual lunch. This is a bit unusual. There's not a lot of units who do this still and we've done it for sixty years. What we do now, we have a lunch down at the Mentone RSL, and wives and all of course, and we go down there and have lunch together. A lot of people look forward to it. Even wives, some wives...

21:00 Peg Heeney is one of these people. She's really keen on it, you know. When we're at the reunion she says to me, 'Now when will the next one be?' and I've got to work out and give her a date when it will be. And we all keep in touch by phone still.

What do you think those reunion groups provide for people?

The reunion? See, being together twenty four

21:30 hours a day for years, you know these people very well. You know about their families because we used to spend a lot of time talking. Some of them were very interesting, especially some of the farmers, you know. They were very interesting talking about crops and all this sort of thing, and how they lived in country towns. So it gave you a good insight into

22:00 their lives, and I guess we contributed too, even the city people.

Later on, why do you think people wanted to go to those luncheons and reunion groups so much?

Well I think there's a lot of people who do this. Schools have a back to school thing now and again because people like to meet together and talk about things that happened

22:30 fifty or sixty years ago. As a matter of fact I had an experience just recently. They celebrated the 150th Anniversary of Oakleigh, and I went over there and they had the churches open and the RSL hall and the park and they had entertainment and stalls and all this sort of thing. I went into what is now the Uniting church and it was the Methodist church in the old days.

23:00 I went in there and I was just looking around and a lady came up to me and she said, 'I remember you'. I said, 'Do you'? She said 'Yes, you were in my class at State School sixty years ago, or more than sixty

years ago, in the early 1930s'. She remembered me but I didn't remember her. I wouldn't have recognised her. And I found that was very interesting. We talked about the kids we knew, and most of them are dead now of course,

23:30 because they've gone eighty. I found it very interesting talking to her. We talked about who married who and all this sort of thing because in those days quite often you married someone who lived reasonably close to you or maybe from the same church or something like that. So it was interesting.

Just going back to Western Australia, I'll ask you more about your later life a bit later on.

24:00 **So just going back to Western Australia. I was wondering, during this time what were your impressions of the Japanese as an enemy? What did you think of them?**

Well, we knew of course that they were very skilled and highly trained, and the way they got through Malaysia and came down there and captured Singapore, and people were under the impression before that

24:30 happened that Singapore could not be taken, but the Japanese proved them wrong. And even though our own troops and the allied troops did the best they could, they were probably under-equipped, our troops, and probably not properly trained. It was a surprise for them, and the Japanese...as I said before they were a country who were really prepared for war.

25:00 And the same thing happened in the Philippines. See, they defeated the Yanks in the Philippines and the Americans did not last long there. And also we had problems initially in New Guinea. They were more skilled fighting and they were better equipped than our troops. And until Kokoda of course was one of the turning points, our own troops, including our own Victorian

25:30 battalion, they retreated and gradually they got closer to our own supply bases, and the Japs were extending theirs, and they finished up that they couldn't keep the supply up to their front line troops. Whereas we had shorter lines of communication and we were being reinforced by troops from the AIF, who

26:00 were experienced. So we got better equipped. We got more planes in. We had very few planes in New Guinea at first. They were no match for the Japanese Zeros but gradually they got Kitty Hawks and planes like that. And the Yanks of course, with their air force, that made the difference.

So when you were in WA [Western Australia] you had developed a certain awareness, or even you might say, respect for how tough the Japanese were as an enemy.

26:30 That's right. People used to say they weren't that good, but the record proves that they were well trained and very dedicated. They were fanatical, I suppose. They would take risks and even put their own lives in danger. They wouldn't think anything of it, and we were probably not quite as fanatical as that, as fighting people.

Did you get the sense that people in Perth and also back in Melbourne

27:00 **were quite afraid of invasion?**

I think more so in Perth than Melbourne. Melbourne people seemed to think that they were quite safe despite the fact that there had been attacks on Sydney and that sort of thing. Melbourne people were not so much concerned. But they were digging trenches and all sorts of things, and air raid shelters. But in Perth they were more afraid,

27:30 the civilian population, because that coast was very exposed and there was no way they could patrol all of it, and they can't even do it now. But the Western Australian people were very tolerant towards the army. They were very friendly, always. They had a very high opinion of General Bennett and some people didn't have a good opinion of Bennett.

28:00 But the West Australian people, the civilians did and they reckoned he was a good person and he was doing his best to prepare for the invasion if it ever came. So he was popular in Western Australian with the civilian people. They had a lot of respect for him

And what were your interactions with the civilian population during that time?

28:30 Well I never...apart from my relations over there, the only time we saw people were when we were on leave in Perth and that wasn't very often. We were mainly away. See, at Mingenew and places like that there was no one there. No civilians in the area. There were a few scattered farms around the place, but very few civilians, and we never went into Mingenew, for instance.

29:00 We couldn't go into Mingenew because we were confined to camp. There was no way of getting there. We were several miles out and we had little contact, if any. I didn't have any with civilians while we were in the Mingenew area, or any of that area in Western Australia. Apart from when we were down at Rockingham, we did get leave into Perth at regular intervals, and we'd go in.

29:30 They'd truck us into Fremantle and then we'd go on normal transport. We'd go by buses or train into Perth. That was about it, and we'd have one day there and then we'd come back at night. The only thing

was that in Fremantle for instance there were a lot of American sea people, sailors and that sort of thing. And I was always a little bit

30:00 afraid down there, coming back through Fremantle late at night. I was always a bit worried with all these Yanks around that I could get myself into trouble. So we would travel together if you know what I mean; two or three of us together. But we never struck any trouble. We'd get down to Fremantle late at night about twelve o'clock and then our own trucks from Rockingham would take us back to camp.

30:30 **What sort of reputation did the Yanks have?**

Well, they were probably more appreciated in Western Australia by the civilian population because they knew that without them we didn't have much hope. But I think it was a bit different in the other capital cities because I think they always had more money than us. They were well paid and well

31:00 dressed. Some of the girls were attracted to them and a lot of them, as you know, married American service people. Some of these marriages worked out and some of them didn't. But that was the same as all war-time marriages. See, even in our own regiment, some of the chaps who married before the war and during the war, the marriages didn't last because being separated for so long,

31:30 it's a strain on people. So I think there was a certain amount of jealousy, and there were some pretty serious brawls in the capital cities between American troops and Australian troops. It happened in Brisbane and it happened in Melbourne and it probably happened in Sydney as well.

32:00 But we never had that sort of thing in Perth that I know of. There was no friction between the Americans and us. I mean, quite a lot of the Americans that I had spoken to, we would have a drink together and that sort of thing. But I think in the eastern states it was different because of that sort of thing.

But when you were travelling you felt a bit concerned about getting into a brawl or they

32:30 **might pick a fight?**

Only in Fremantle I thought it might happen. I wasn't worried about it in Perth. It was only the numbers of people who were in Fremantle and it was late at night and it was blackout. The lighting was very poor, because as you know during the war all cities were blacked out. We had very poor street lighting. It was all dim and dark.

33:00 But frequently over the years while I was in the army, I would go into a pub with a couple of my mates and there would be Yanks there and we'd all have a drink together and a bit of a talk. I never had any problems, but it did happen.

What did you feel was their role while you were in WA? Not so much reflecting back on the war later, but while you were in WA what did you think to yourself; 'Well they're here because they can achieve - what'?

Well,

33:30 they made a great contribution. Fremantle was a United States Naval Base and they had a lot of ships there coming and going, and a lot of submarines. And they used to supply escorts for our ships as well. See, when that group from our regiment in Western Australia got leave they came back by ship on the Duntroon.

34:00 And what happened, they boarded a ship at Fremantle and the ship went out to sea and it had escorts, probably American submarines and aeroplanes until they got well clear of the coast because that was looked upon as a battle area, if you know what I mean. There was always a possibility that there would be Jap submarines around. And what they did as far as the Duntroon was concerned, when they

34:30 cleared the coast and they dropped off the escort; they went due south down towards the Antarctic. I wasn't on the boat of course but chaps have told me, it got very cold. They went hundreds of miles south so they would be out of range of Jap submarines and they came back in a big sweep and they came in at Adelaide. Then they went by train, some of them...we had South Australians in the regiment and they would stay there and the others would

35:00 go on to the eastern states, mainly Melbourne. Our regiment was mainly based on Victorians. People from all the other states but mainly it was Victorians. It was a Victorian regiment.

Now you mentioned the one officer who was difficult to get along with. Were there other officers who you had quite negative or positive feelings about?

Not really. But the funny part about it, after the war

35:30 we both matured a bit I suppose, me in particular, and meeting him at reunions and that sort of thing, not a problem at all. We got on quite well. But I'm not blaming him. It was probably because I was a brash teenager that caused my problems. You don't argue with people when they've got power over you, or you shouldn't. But he was

36:00 very good. As a matter of fact, as you probably know, we run the reunion now, Lou and myself and

- another chap named Harry Mold. We'd be running a raffle or something like that and he'd come up to me and say, 'Look George'...he'd offer me money and say, 'Put it into the fund'. And I'd say, 'We don't need it. We're financially OK'. And what we used to do, we ran a sweep as well on the Melbourne Cup,
- 36:30 so what we would do is give him extra tickets in the Melbourne Cup to cover the money that he had given us. But we didn't really need the money because we had it set up in such a way that the reunion would cover expenses and have a small profit so we could set it up for next year, for postage and stamps and stationery and all that sort of stuff. We always had a surplus. Well I've been involved in it for about
- 37:00 forty years I suppose. I'm supposed to be treasurer or something I think. But we always had a surplus of money after we paid out all the expenses. As a matter of fact, when I took over as treasurer, they had had a reunion before that which was a financial disaster, and a chap named Ross Watson who was a major in our regiment, he was quite upset about this. So he decided that the reunion would continue,
- 37:30 and he contacted a mate of mine, a chap named Allan Smart. At that time Ross had a pub in the city, the Batman's Hill right opposite the railway, and Allan Smart worked in the railway offices and we used to go there for a drink. They were talking one day and they decided they would continue the reunion. So anyhow, Allan got in touch with me and said, 'Would you help'? And I said, 'Yes I will'. So I went in and we met him at the pub one Saturday, I suppose it was,
- 38:00 and we decided we would keep the reunion going. Ross knew a lot of people around the place and he said, 'Yes we can do it'. So he said. 'I can get the Waterside Worker's RSL hall' - down in the Flinders Street Extension we used to call it in those days, right down the end of the street. He said, 'I can get the Waterside Worker's RSL hall',
- 38:30 and he said, 'I'll supply the beer and the supper'. And he said, 'You two can get the notices out. There's the list; get the notices out'. And he said to my mate Allan, 'You'll be secretary, and you Luxford, you'll be treasurer'. Anyhow, that's how it happened. What we used to do after it; Allan
- 39:00 used to come out here and we would have our meal together on the night of the reunion, and his wife would come and they'd over-night, he and his wife. What we used to do, we would do a rough balance in there to make sure we had covered the expenses. And then we'd pay Ross off for the beer and the supper and then we'd come back out here, like the next morning when we settled up the money, and decide on how much money we had from sweep prizes and
- 39:30 how much money we would have over. So anyhow it was never very much. We were quite happy to make it pay with just a few dollars over. So what we'd do then, I'd ring Ross up and we'd tell him and give him the detail of what it was, the money and all that sort of thing, and I'd say to him, 'We've got (so much) over', and I'd tell him...on the first occasion, I don't know how much it was but it was some sum of money. And I said to him, 'What am I going to do with
- 40:00 it'? He said, 'You keep it for the time because you'll have to set up for next year'. And I think the next year we started a bank account close to where he was. And I used to get the money into him somehow and he would bank it and within two years we had money in the bank and we've still got money. It's still rolling along.

Tape 5

- 00:32 **So if we could just go back again. I was just wondering what you knew about the Japanese before the war?**
- Well, we didn't know a lot. We did trade with them and at that stage Japanese goods were looked upon as lower quality if you know what I mean. They used to supply us with toys and other things, but they were not good quality items.
- 01:00 We thought that what was made in Europe was superior. I think they were probably producing stuff that they had to be competitive with, so therefore the quality was down. And I'm talking a lot of toys and things like that. There were no Japanese vehicles here or anything like that. That was about it. We still got a lot of our stuff from England
- 01:30 and from Europe. That included items like I know about, like hardware items, tools and that sort of stuff. We got quite a lot of it from England and some of it came from the United States...Stanley and those sorts of brands, and then we had the English brand of tools like Moore and Wright and Raybone and all those sorts of countries.
- And once they entered the war what did people know about them as a nation?**
- 02:00 I don't think a lot was known about them in the general public. We knew they had been fighting in China for some years, but we didn't know a lot about the Japanese. I hadn't even spoken to a Japanese. I never ever saw one I don't think.
- And what sort of things were being published in the papers about them?**

Then?

Yes, just as they entered the war?

02:30 Well not a lot I don't think. Some of the people in our military and some of our politicians were always concerned about what they were likely to do in the war. You know, there was some fear that they wanted to expand. Their main problem was that they didn't have oil. That was one of the things they wanted and that's why

03:00 they wanted the Dutch East Indies, because that's a good source of oil; still is of course.

Do you remember any of the government's early educational programmes about the Japanese? Whether there were posters and things like that?

What, after they came into the war? Oh yes, there were lots of posters about. They would have big posters of Japanese and the Rising Sun flags and all that, and they'd say, 'They're coming south'!

03:30 Big posters that they used to put out at that time. Probably trying to get the civilian people more focused on the war effort.

Were there similar things in newspapers?

I don't think so. I don't think there was that sort of thing, but in the newspapers themselves there would have been a lot of writing about it. But as I said, we didn't see many newspapers

04:00 during the war, we just didn't get them.

I was wondering also what you recall of newsreels at that time?

The newsreels were quite good because at that time when you went to the pictures, there was always a newsreel on before the main picture. And that would include world events, including of course, in the late 1930s there was a lot of war stuff in that.

Do you recall any of those particularly?

04:30 No I don't really. I can't remember because I went into the army in 1941 and they were just winding up the propaganda set-up then, and probably after I went into the army there was more of it and it was probably more for propaganda purposes than anything else.

How would people react to those newsreels? Would there be cheers or anything like that?

I think they were concerned. In my view we almost lost the

05:00 war. I don't know what other people think about it now, but I mean it was pretty close and it was only because England, for instance, was able to hold out against Germany. I think the Poms did a marvellous job, not only with what they could produce, planes and equipment...

05:30 because they had lost a lot at Dunkirk, so all that had to be replaced and it had to be done fairly quickly. So I think the English industry responded very well. See, they could out-produce... after they got settled into it a bit, after or at the Battle of Britain, their production was far ahead of the German production. See I think the Germans were only able to produce about 150

06:00 planes a month, whereas England was able to produce about 400. So they were replacing the equipment they were losing better than the Germans.

Were you aware of how close it had come at the time, or is this after the event perspective?

Yes, I think we were fairly much aware that if England went under it would be end, even though they said they would go to Canada

06:30 and fight the war from there. But see, they got great support from the United States, even in the early war years, and the United States supplied England with a lot of destroyers and that sort of thing. And they also later on supplied them with quite a lot of planes and all that sort of stuff that England was not able to produce quickly. I think they were producing them fairly quickly but just not enough.

I'm wondering also about the recruitment drive in those early years?

In Australia? Well, by what I've read since, they decided fairly early after war broke out that they would send troops overseas, and they decided to raise one division initially, the 6th division. But it took them quite a while to get the people in. It was

07:30 some months before they had...they wanted 20,000 roughly, and it was quite a few months before they got 20,000 men, or 20,000 volunteers for the AIF. I think this was partly caused by family resistance, because the First World War was very much in their memory and they remembered Gallipoli and France of course with the trench warfare, which went on for years. The parents were reluctant to allow their family to go, especially

08:00 those who were under twenty one. So it took them quite a while, and then of course, when it got into

full swing, they seemed to get plenty of volunteers especially after the Japs came in. They got more volunteers for the air force than anything else. Army recruiting lagged a bit. Anyhow if they couldn't get into the air force they had to go into the army. See, Harry Mold

08:30 for instance, wanted to go into the air force and he would have been good, but unfortunately they decided they didn't want him. They said he had flat feet, but I think he would have been quite a good person for the air force because he was very interested in planes and that sort of thing. I'm sure they could have used him.

Were you personally interested in the air force?

No, I wasn't. I didn't have any preference,

09:00 and in the end I didn't have any choice. But I didn't really have any preference. See, some of the chaps, when war broke out, or before war broke out...a few weeks before, the navy had called up some of the naval reserve people and they put them into a facility down there at Port Melbourne. One of the chaps who finished up in our regiment was called up; he

09:30 was a naval reservist. He was plonked down there at Port Melbourne and he was very unhappy about it. He really hated it. He said he hadn't come into the navy to sit at a desk down there. He said he wanted to go to sea on a ship. But he couldn't get a sea posting. Now the reason for this was we didn't have many ships. There just wasn't the place for him, so what he did, he stuck it out for about two years I think

10:00 and then he finally got transferred to the army, because that way he had a better chance of getting overseas. He finished up being in the artillery training regiment at Puckapunyal and then he came to our regiment as a reinforcement. Even though he was in the services for all those years...he was in before the war broke out and then when he got out, was discharged, he said, 'Well, I've been in uniform

10:30 for so long, I come out with nothing'. He said, 'I have no rights or pension or anything like that'. He wasn't eligible to join the RSL at that time. He was disappointed in it all.

Were there many others who were disappointed about their locality and where they were taken?

I think overall, yes. Even our regiment; they were always saying, 'When are we going'?

11:00 There was talk at one stage when we were in Western Australia that they would send the armoured division to fight in the Western Desert, but it didn't happen. And just as well they didn't because they were really needed here, even though they didn't have any action. They could have been used if, say, the Japs had invaded down through Indonesia,

11:30 because Western Australia was suited for armoured and tank units, whereas New Guinea was not. They didn't send many tanks and that to New Guinea. They just sent a few because the place wasn't suitable for that type of warfare. It was jungle type warfare and what they needed was infantry.

Once you were in Western Australia were you able to apply for transfers?

12:00 Yes you were, and some of the chaps did transfer. Some of them transferred into a forestry unit and went to New Guinea, and some of the others were transferred and they finished up in New Guinea too. Some of them were transferred out because they weren't suited for an artillery regiment but they were quite good as infantry and they got transferred to other units and quite a few of them went to

12:30 New Guinea and they saw action there with infantry battalions.

Were you interested in transferring?

No, I never really considered it. I thought, 'Well, I'll just take what comes'. We thought, 'Well maybe something will happen over here', but as it turned out it didn't.

I'd just like to go back again to those recruiting drives.

13:00 **Do you remember, was there any official advertising or recruiting effort?**

Yes, as a matter of fact they used to send people out - army personnel - to country towns to help with the recruiting. They were serving people. This was quite frequent that they'd send them out. They would go into a town and set up and try and encourage people. Yes, this was quite common.

13:30 And also they used to send troops out from time to time to help sell war bonds. They'd go into the streets and this was one of the things that happened. And of course, while we were in Sydney at St Ives, which is not that far out of Sydney, we did all sorts of things there. Some of the chaps went down and worked on the wharves because the wharf labour was often on strike

14:00 so they used to put troops on the wharf to load supplies for New Guinea. You've probably heard about that. That was quite a common occurrence. Quite often we would have some of our troops on the wharf loading ships. I was never involved but some of the others were.

And again, before you were personally called up do you remember any posters for recruiting?

No, it didn't appear to be so urgent.

14:30 It became urgent after the Japanese came in. They advertised a bit, but not to the same extent. After the Japs came in there really was a big push to get everybody involved. And they were quite successful of course.

And was there a large amount of social or peer pressure to enlist?

Yes I think so. In my case when I was working down at the joiner shop,

15:00 several people had gone into the army and one had gone into the air force and that created quite a lot of interest and some of them, before I went into the army, they had already gone overseas. But there was only one who went into the air force to my knowledge, but there were probably five or six who had gone into the army and had gone overseas. And as far as I know they all survived.

15:30 **Would people sort of suggest to you that you ought to enlist?**

No, there didn't seem to be that sort of pressure. It seemed to be far away and I had cousins who had enlisted, and as a matter of fact I had one of my cousins who went into the air force and he came to our place just before he went away. He had to go to England and he was bomber crew,

16:00 and he knew the dangers, and he said to me as I was saying goodbye to him, 'I don't expect to be back'. And that was true. So that was sad.

Did that occur to you when you were hoping to enlist as an eighteen year old?

When I went into the army I didn't think much about it.

16:30 There was no real sense of danger as far as I was concerned. See, when I went in, it was before the Japs came in and there was no actual threat to Australia. Of course we had had ships sunk in the Pacific and that sort of thing by German raiders, but there was no real sense of danger or fear as far as I was concerned. And I think most of the chaps I was in the army with

17:00 initially, they never thought about it that much because they didn't think it would happen. But when the Japs came in that changed our outlook completely.

So before that were you getting news of casualties, or [did] any of your family friends have any impact?

Yes. Casualty lists were published. A full list of casualties were always published in the paper. But compared

17:30 with the First World War our casualties were not great. In the First World War I think we lost 60,000, but in the Second World War overall the total figure was less than 40,000. You've got to realise that 60,000 in the First World War was a fairly high percentage of our population, but by the time the Second World War came along, 40,000 of a much bigger population didn't have the same impact.

18:00 But then again there were some families who lost...one of the families in Oakleigh had two sons and they both went into the army and they were both killed.

Did you notice that impact before you went away?

No I didn't really, but it was a while before casualties came up. We lost quite a few in

18:30 Greece and Crete and the Desert too for that matter, Tobruk. But it didn't seem to impact as much because it was a small percentage of the population compared to the First World War when they were losing hundreds of people in a day on the Western Front. That didn't seem to happen in the Second World War.

And when you were away in Western Australia how would news reach you

19:00 **about casualties or news of other services?**

Well, if we managed to get a newspaper, occasionally we would know about the casualties. And sometimes letters from home would say so and so has been killed or wounded. So we would get that sort of information from letters from home. But we wouldn't see a lot of...you know, a big block of casualties. It was only people my family

19:30 knew, and they would tell me about it in letters.

So letters from home could be quite sad as well?

Yes they were. But they were important. I was fairly lucky really. My sister used to write regularly. I had a cousin who wrote regularly, and my father used to write. My mother wrote but she was not a regular writer of letters if you know what I mean. But I would get news from home

20:00 on a regular basis, and they'd send parcels over from time to time, mainly puddings or cakes which they used to send in a round cake tin. We used to get them fairly frequently. A lot of chaps would get them

and we'd share them. Cut them up into eight pieces and whoever was in the tent, we'd share them when they came through.

How would they survive the trip?

20:30 Well what they used to do, they were in a round cake tin. They would pack them and wrap them in cloth and sew them together and then they would take them to a post office and put stamps on them and they'd come over that way. The ones I got were quite alright. They weren't damaged in any way.

What other sort of parcels were the men sent?

Well occasionally they would send writing material

21:00 and things like that. They might send writing pads and envelopes and that sort of stuff. We could get that as a rule because most units had a Salvation Army person or a YMCA, and they used to supply paper for writing and envelopes, and then you had to buy the stamps which were one penny each. Postage to and from service people was only

21:30 a penny. Normal postage was twice that during the war.

Did you enjoy writing letters?

I'm not a great writer of letters. I didn't contribute much to Lou's book. I'm not a writing person if you know what I mean. Some people can...you know. But I couldn't. I was never keen on it. It was something I was never good at, writing letters. In business, of

22:00 course, I had to get business letters written, but that's different if you know what I mean. I knew exactly what I was writing about, and I'd write the letters and somebody would type them before they went out. June used to type them for me actually. But I would actually write them longhand and she would type them for me.

When you were in Western Australia, what sort of things would you say in your letters?

Well we'd talk about...we were pretty limited as to what we could say.

22:30 As I said before, locations we could not mention. So we'd talk about or write about people we were with. There were a fair few people from Oakleigh. There were several people from Oakleigh and they were in the regiment. We used to write about them. When the letters got back there was contact made between the families to sort of get the information all together.

23:00 I knew quite a few. By some strange coincidence, when I was in the army and we went to Tamworth, I went into the mess hut one day and I was sitting down having a meal and a chap sat alongside me who I had never seen before. We got talking and asked where we came from. I told him Oakleigh, Golf Links Avenue and he said, 'I used to live in Golf Links Avenue'.

23:30 It turned out he lived next door to me at one stage. So that was rather a strange thing. A chap named Tom Massey. He had lived next door to me but it was when I was fairly young. He was a little bit older than me. I would have been about seven or eight when he left and moved somewhere else. Or his family moved somewhere else. So that sort of thing, if you had something in common then you could talk about what happened in Oakleigh and what was happening in Oakleigh. He had moved away.

24:00 I think he moved down to St Kilda or somewhere like that. So he was out of touch. But some of the other people I finished up in the regiment with, some had come from Oakleigh and I knew them quite well. As a matter of fact, one of the chaps, his wife was working at a fruit shop in Oakleigh and it was June's uncle. I didn't know June in that time. We hadn't met, but they used to exchange news and all this.

24:30 It would get back to the family. They were kept pretty well up to date about what we were doing, especially about our health and that sort of thing. We'd write and say we weren't feeling too good. We had had a cold or something like that. I was pretty lucky really that I never got sick very often. I only got sick once I suppose. That was when we were at Trawool. It was a very wet cold period.

25:00 It was May actually in 1942 and I got hit with flu. I went down to report sick and the doctor wasn't there. He was on leave or something but they had medical orderlies there and also the padre was there. They took temperatures and all that sort of thing. So what happened then was, the padre said to me, 'You go back to your tent and stay in your tent. I'll be up to see you later'. So anyhow he came up about an hour later

25:30 and said, 'Your temperature is alarmingly high'. He said, 'I'm concerned about it; I'm going to have you sent to hospital'. So I said, 'OK'. The ambulance came from Puckapunyal. We were up on a bit of a slope, up a hill a bit, and the ambulance couldn't get up the slope because it was greasy and wet, so I had to walk down. I got carted off to Puckapunyal Hospital and I think I had pneumonia really.

26:00 When I got over there they examined me and put me in the ward right alongside the nurses station, because my temperature apparently was pretty high. I was there for ten or twelve days. They didn't have a lot of good medicine if you know what I mean, in those days. They gave me tablets and all that sort of thing and after about twelve days they sent me back to the regiment. Under normal circumstances I would have been sent to the convalescent home

- 26:30 in Ballarat and they would have kept me there another week. So they didn't do that. They sent me back to the regiment and I was put on light duties, whatever that means. It wasn't much different to anything else really. I had come good but I was very sick and I had lost a fair bit of weight. So that was a bit of a worry. But I think the reason they didn't send me to Ballarat
- 27:00 was because they knew the regiment was going to move to New South Wales and they kept me there so I could go with them. If I had gone to Ballarat for instance, I would have been away for about another fortnight and I could have missed out. That happened to Lou actually. He got sent to the convalescent depot at Ballarat and he didn't get back in time and so he didn't rejoin the regiment until a month or so later, after we had shifted to New South Wales. He missed out on Tamworth
- 27:30 altogether. So we were there about six weeks and Lou didn't see that. I don't think he did.

What did you have in the way of medical help in Western Australia?

Well with the regiment we had a doctor. We didn't always have a doctor but we were supposed to have a doctor. Then there were orderlies, medical orderlies. In the regiment there was a sergeant from the medical corps

- 28:00 and about four corporals who had had very basic medical training. They could attend to cuts and bruises and those sorts of things and give you Aspros and that was about their limit. They weren't well trained at that stage but they gradually got better like the rest of us.

Did you require their help at any stage?

No, not apart from that time. Not really. I had stomach upsets and

- 28:30 dysentery but nothing of a serious nature. As a matter of fact, overall the troops' health was fairly good. Even though the food was not well prepared, it was a good diet. It was a balanced diet and I think that kept people healthy, and not only that, a lot of them were getting exercise. So they kept fairly fit. We never had a lot of serious illness.

29:00 **What sort of illnesses might they have got?**

Nothing very serious. They would get stomach upsets and that sort of thing, but not a lot of them were sent to hospital. They might be put on light duties or no duties at all and they had Aspros and they'd give them things to settle their stomachs and all that sort of stuff. We didn't have a lot of sickness over all. I thought the health of the troops in the time

- 29:30 we were there was pretty good. We did have some accidents of course. When we were at Trawool we had one chap killed by lightning, but that was all. We had a couple of others injured. Then we had a couple hurt in accidents, falling off motor cycles and that sort of thing. We had a couple killed in vehicle accidents.

- 30:00 As a matter of fact, one was run over in Brisbane when he was on leave. But overall we didn't have anything of a serious nature.

Now you mentioned the Salvation Army before, what contact would you have with them?

Well, when we went in at Trawool, we had a big marquee type of thing there and they had writing paper and pens and all that sort of thing.

- 30:30 They used to have concerts there in this big marquee. There used to be one concert party which would come up from Melbourne; Mrs White was the person who organised it. They'd drive up and they would bring up probably half a dozen people to entertain us. There were girls who could sing and chaps who could sing, and girls who could dance and that was very well received. It was quite a diversion because

- 31:00 there were no pictures or anything like that. There were concerts and they'd come up about once a month. And also within the regiment we had a few people who could entertain. There were quite a few who could play musical instruments and they had brought them with them. There were piano accordions and things that were portable, banjos and all that sort of stuff. And we had a couple who were quite good entertainers in their own right. We had one chap who, after

- 31:30 the war, had his own radio programme. This was in the early 1950s I suppose. He used to play and sing popular songs of that time. He had a radio programme. I think he used to be on a Saturday morning for an hour. He had quite a good voice and he still sings a bit but he's sort of got a bit rusty I think.

- 32:00 But what he's doing now, he's a choir master. He's a choir master for several Masonic lodges. He still sings a little bit. He's eighty one I suppose, and he lives down in Anglesea most of the time, but every now and again the RSL will say, 'Will you come along Tom, and sing a couple of songs for us? We're having a special night'. So Tom does that. But he doesn't sing

- 32:30 on a regular basis.

Did the Salvation Army provide entertainment in Western Australia?

No, but in Western Australia within the division there was a concert party, and they would come round

and visit all the units in turn. They'd bring a portable stage and some of them were quite good. We had tap dancers and some quite good musicians.

33:00 And some of them were fairly good singers. They had some really good singers. And some of them became professional entertainers after the war. So they had talent.

What else did the Salvation Army provide in Western Australia?

Well one of the other things they used to do was...the people who were with us, he had a van and in Western Australia, he used to go around the picket lines at night

33:30 in his little truck and he'd give us coffee and biscuits. Not only our regiment but all around that particular area where he was. He would go out every night and give coffee to those who were on guard duty.

How was that received?

Oh that was good, yes. On a cold night or a cool night it was much appreciated.

Did he have a bit of a chat as well?

34:00 Pardon?

Did he serve the purpose of someone to chat too? Did he come around to have a quick bit of a word, say g'day?

What do you mean, sorry?

Well, he was providing tea and biscuits, but do you think that perhaps part of his job was to be someone to talk to?

Yes I think so. And also on his van he had a public address system. In the morning he'd play

34:30 records which would be amplified all over the camp, and that was good. He'd play popular songs, and sometimes he'd put the news service on that he had managed to pick up from a radio station, maybe in Perth. So that kept us up to date a little bit with what was happening in the real world.

That must have been important to you?

Yes it was. He was quite popular. Actually he only died a couple of years ago.

35:00 A chap named Porter. I've forgotten his other name. But he provided a service.

And you mentioned the YMCA as well. What did they provide?

Much the same thing. The Young Men's Christian Association. They did much the same. They supplied writing material and also I think they provided books for reading and that sort of stuff which was important. When we were at Helidon for instance we were given a

35:30 great big box of books which came down through the army services. I don't know where it came from. It might have come from the YMCA. It was a box of books which the troops could borrow to read. We used to read quite a bit when we had books, and some of us still do I suppose.

Do you remember any of your favourites back then?

Books, no I can't remember. I can't remember.

36:00 That's a long time ago.

In terms of someone to talk too, who did you have in the officers or the padre?

Yes, well you see we used to have quite a lot of lectures on the army as part of our training and that often used to happen at night. The officers would give talks on various things;

36:30 on artillery and what was expected of us. We also had other officers who would talk a bit about signalling and the details of what had to be done. Because in the regiment that I was in, our colonel, and maybe others did the same thing. He would try to make things varied so if we had to we could...

37:00 you know, a signaller could become a gunner. He wouldn't be able to do the gun laying but he would be part of the gun crew. And if they were short on a gun crew, especially when we were training with live ammunition, they would probably get a signaller to go on the gun crew to make up the numbers. And this used to happen to me as well when I was in the quartermaster's store. They might be out on a live shoot somewhere and they were short of someone in the gun crew, so they'd put me on as one of the gun crew.

37:30 There was one sergeant in particular who, if he was short, he would always try to get me out of the q-store. Sometimes the quartermaster was a bit difficult and would say, 'You can't have him because I need him', and Bill Chapman was pretty persuasive. And the sergeant would say, 'Well alright, you can have him for a couple of days', and I would be part of the gun crew.

Did you enjoy the change?

38:00 Yes, it was something different and they were all good company and I got on well with them, so it was good.

Did you at any point wish you were doing something else, like being on gun crew or something like that?

No not really. I was quite happy to work with the quartermaster. That was OK and I liked that.

38:30 It worked out quite well because he was a person who was a little bit short, I suppose. If he told you to do something he would expect you to start doing it right then, and once you got used to that you knew that if he told you to do something, you did it and it had to be done as soon as possible. I got on quite well with him, and as a matter of fact I met

39:00 him several times after the war. He took me out playing golf one day up at Huntingdale. I visited his family. He was married of course, and had children. He was living in Carnegie and I visited them a few times. But as I said before, when I was in the quartermaster's store it was good because they were bank people and they were very

39:30 thorough in what they did. They wanted things to be just right. So it worked out all right for me because when we came back to Sydney, we were out at St Ives, and they sent sections of the regiment all over the place. Some of them stayed there and then they sent one troop of artillery to Kanangra to the jungle training course which you've probably heard about.

40:00 They were sent up there to help train the troops and they were supplying the live fire over the troops as they went through the jungle. All the time they kept ahead of them and they didn't get hurt in any way. But it was to give people a realistic idea of what it was like to be under gun fire. They were up there for some months, and what happened as far as we were concerned, they

40:30 were setting up a working party to go to Helidon in Queensland for an ammunition depot.

Tape 6

00:35 If you could just go back to the story we had on the end of the last tape?

Oh yes, when we were at St Ives. They set up a working party to go to Helidon, which was an ammunition depot, and it was 100 men. There were three officers, a warrant officer, one sergeant and

01:00 a sergeant cook and a couple of other cooks. It was a neat little unit on its own. We even had a corporal there from the medical corps so it was a unit self contained, more or less. What the idea there was, it was a big ammunition depot and a lot of the shells and artillery stuff that had gone to the islands had been affected by tropical exposure. They brought the shells back in there

01:30 to Helidon, and what they had to do was fit them with new fuses because in a lot of cases the old ones were corroded. So initially what they would do, the people who worked at the depot, the professions who were familiar with this sort of thing, they would take the fuses out and then they'd hand the shells over to our workers. They would clean them,

02:00 paint them and relabel them and then the last thing was they put the new fuses back in. They sent me away on that working party. I went as quartermaster for 100 people. I didn't have a lot of things to do. It wasn't a very busy sort of a set-up. What I had to do was go into Toowoomba...not every day -

02:30 only six days a week for rations. We'd go into the supply depot and I would pick up the rations. I also had to go to the butcher shop. They had taken over a butcher shop in Toowoomba, a big one. The army had taken it over. So I would go to the butcher shop and I would pick up the meat, and pick up ice if we needed it, and also anything else. I would do a bit of shopping for the chaps if I could.

03:00 It was also used to bring back our canteen stuff, and a mate of mine was in charge of the canteen. He would have to go to the brewery to get the beer and the canteen depot to get the other stuff which consisted of toothpaste and soap, soft drinks and that sort of stuff. Then we had a canteen set up down there at our own regiment and

03:30 this chap, Jim Holden, he actually ran the canteen. But I would go down there every afternoon. I would help him set it up. Get the beer barrel up on the counter and then I would serve the dry canteen part of it...the sweets and soft drinks and cigarettes and that sort of stuff, and he'd serve the beer. Then what would happen...I would

04:00 have a couple of drinks...I didn't drink much, and I would go back to my tent. And then I would go down there when he closed the canteen and tidy up and clean up and he would have to write up the records of what the money was...he had to check the money. And the beer money had to be kept separate from the other dry canteen stuff. So he had to write it in a special book and the next morning he would take it to an officer and he would check it to make sure it was all OK and it balanced.

- 04:30 He did quite a good job on that, of course. A funny thing happened ...I used to go down and help him clean up. On the night of his birthday, he got drunk. I went down after he had closed up and I helped him clean up. He counted the money; even though he was drunk, he counted the money. I checked it
- 05:00 and it was correct. He had counted it correctly. I didn't write it in his records book because the officer would have picked up the difference in writing. I said, 'We won't write it in the record book tonight, we'll do it tomorrow'. So I wrote it on a note pad of some sort. Anyway, when we woke up next morning - were in the same tent, it was part of the quartermaster's set up - I said, 'How are you going Jim'? He said,
- 05:30 'Oh not bad'. And he said, 'I think I'm in a bit of trouble'. I said, 'What's wrong Jim'? He said, 'I didn't write up the book last night and I don't remember'. I said, 'Well actually, you had counted the money; it was correct'. He said, 'I don't remember doing it'. He was a bank person and counting money is sort of automatic to those people.
- 06:00 And even though he was pretty drunk he still got it right. Anyhow he just filled it in and took it to the officer and everything was OK. But I thought that was pretty good, you know. A person who can count money when they're drunk or doing anything. He wouldn't have passed the driving drunk test I don't think...you know, when they test you with the breathalyser I think he would have been well over the limit.
- 06:30 **Was there much of an opportunity to get hold of a few beers? Were you able to get alcohol?**
- Yes sometimes. When we first went in at Trawool, that was a dry canteen, there was no beer there. But when we shifted to Tamworth there was a canteen right across the road from where we were camped, and there was also a picture theatre alongside it. You could have a drink there, beer. It was not a problem. After that when we were out at
- 07:00 Narrabri on manoeuvres and that sort of thing, we'd get beer occasionally but it wouldn't be a regular thing. Sometimes you'd get beer and sometimes you wouldn't. It wasn't guaranteed that you would get it. You were supposed to get a bottle of beer a day or something like that but it didn't always happen. I don't think it worried people that much. A couple of days without beer wouldn't hurt anybody, would it?.
- Would you drink them daily if you got them daily? Or would you save**
- 07:30 **up a couple at a time?**
- Well, mostly I think we drank them pretty well on the day. We'd share a bottle out between us and we might drink it over a couple of days or a couple of nights. You know, they were all pretty good. I remember my 21st birthday at Mingenew. We all had a drink together...the chaps in the tent...we all had a couple together and they sang happy birthday
- 08:00 to me and it was my 21st, so I suppose it was important. And then we all went to bed and that was it. And there was not much else beside that. Of course we used to play cards quite a lot. That was popular, and two-up of course, which was not supposed to be played, but that was played on a regular basis. I think most nights there was a two-up school somewhere you could go to. I wasn't a gambler so it didn't really worry me that much.
- 08:30 **Were you a drinker or a smoker before you joined the army?**
- No I wasn't really. I came from a family of non-drinkers. My own father for instance, didn't drink in spite of the fact that his first job in life was at a brewery. When I say he didn't drink that wasn't quite right. Sometimes in the evening he would have a glass of sherry or something like that.
- 09:00 But it was not a regular thing. If he went to the pub with his friends, he'd have lemon squash or something like that. But we always had alcohol at home. There was always some beer there and whisky, so if someone came in he could always offer them a drink. But he didn't really drink himself apart from the occasional sherry. I didn't drink when I first went into the army because beer wasn't available. It was a dry canteen. But when we got up to Tamworth
- 09:30 I used to go over to the canteen over the road and probably have a couple of beers, and I also started smoking after we went to Western Australia, and I smoked up until...I gave up smoking about fifty years ago I think. So after Noel was born, who is my youngest son, I just gave up smoking
- 10:00 because one morning I got up and said to June, 'I don't feel too good today. I've got a bit of a bad cough. I don't think I'll have a smoke today'. I didn't quite make it the first time I gave it up. As a matter of fact we went for a holiday down to Apollo Bay. I was down there and I said to June, 'Excuse me, I'm going back to the room'. I went back there and there were cigarettes there and I had a smoke. So I smoked for just a short time after that and then I gave it up.
- 10:30 And I've never smoked since. Although June only gave it up ten years ago and that's because the doctor said she had to. They couldn't operate on her, so she didn't have any choice. She rather enjoyed her cigarette.

Do you remember taking it up? Do you remember what motivated you to start smoking?

Well it was when we were at Morawa. It was when we first went there was when I started smoking. It was probably boredom to a degree.

11:00 Everybody else was having a cigarette and I thought, 'Well I'll try this'. It was roll your own in those days. There were very few made cigarettes and I used to roll my own cigarettes and I kept it up for quite a while. But I was never a very heavy smoker and some people...they can have a cigarette every now and again and it doesn't worry them. They can have a cigarette while they're out having a

11:30 drink with someone, and that's the only time they have a cigarette.

What was the ration of cigarettes like?

Well while I was in the army it was reasonable. You had enough to keep you going, and when I came out of the army, tobacco and cigarettes were hard to get. But I managed to get enough to keep me going, because I wasn't a very heavy smoker.

12:00 Sometimes you would have to travel a short distance to a shop that had it. But cigarettes were in short supply.

And in the army did you have much experience with trade of cigarettes? Did people use them? Perhaps non-smokers using their ration?

Oh yes, they'd give them away if they didn't want it, if they weren't smoking. They would give them to their friends. They would share it out.

12:30 But I suppose in those days the majority of the people in the army smoked. There weren't many non-smokers. And not many non-drinkers towards the finish. But everybody had tried alcohol. But some of them...there was one chap in the Army, a chap named Bob McPhee, he didn't drink or smoke. I talked to him one day I remember, and apparently

13:00 his father was a heavy drinker and his mother made him promise when he went into the army that he would not drink. And he kept it up, he never drank. He never had a drink. And the same thing with Harry Mold. That's his book there, actually. Harry's only had one drink in his life. He's never had a cigarette, and the only time he had a drink was at his daughter's wedding

13:30 and he had half a glass of champagne. That's all he had and that's the only drink he's had in his life. I think that's a bit extreme. I think most people enjoy a drink.

In those army years, was there much pressure on non-smokers and non-drinkers?

No I don't think so. I mean you had to join in with the people you were with,

14:00 whether it be a gun crew or the people in your tent. We'd have a drink together or a smoke together. And if somebody was out of tobacco then you'd share around. So if somebody wanted a drink or a smoke, it was always there. Maybe somebody else would share it with you. That was a good thing. They were good at sharing.

And so the non-smokers and non-drinkers, did they get left out of things?

14:30 I don't think they really did. See, we had a group of people completely different. It was a cross section of the population. We had some people who had unusual religious views and political views for that matter. We had all sorts of political people and all sorts of political parties. We had at least one communist

15:00 in the regiment and he used to try and persuade some of them to come around to his way of thinking. I don't know if he was successful, but they would try. And then there were some who, when they initially went in, were vegetarians. There was one I remember who was a vegetarian but he found he couldn't survive. He had to end up eating the normal army rations which included meat of course.

15:30 He used to do the best he could but he just couldn't hang out. He just wouldn't have had enough to eat because there wasn't enough in the vegetables to keep him going.

Was he a vegetarian for religious reasons?

No I don't think so. I think that was just his belief, that you shouldn't eat meat. And also he was a bit different as far as religion is concerned. He was what he called a Liberal Catholic.

16:00 I don't know exactly what that means, but that's what he was. And there was a church as a matter of fact down at Gardiner here, a Liberal Catholic church. But how that differs between a normal Catholic church and the religion he believed in I don't know. But that was just someone different. We always had those sorts of people. Their views on things were entirely different to mine. But we got on and that was the main thing.

16:30 **How else was there for example? What other sort of standpoints or positions were there?**

Well we had...I don't know if I mentioned it earlier in the tape, but we had all sorts of different religions, and even some Jewish people. But they never pushed it, if you know what I mean. We never had

arguments about religion. That was just a no-no and it just didn't happen.

17:00 We just didn't argue about religion and I think we had respect for each other's views on this. From the time I went into the army I wasn't a religious person. I had gone to church until the time I went into the army, but after that I sort of lost interest and I never went back to it. I never go to church now.

What role did the padres serve in your time in the services?

17:30 He was there and people would go to him if they had problems with their families, marriage or any of those sorts of things, personal things. And he would counsel them. As a matter of fact the padres we had were quite good. The early one we had was a chap named Padre Lindsay. He was a Presbyterian really. But you could go to him about personal things, be it marriage or whatever it was.

18:00 They would counsel you, and over all they did a good job I think.

And would people talk to one another about those sorts of things?

Yes they would. We used to spend a lot of time talking and we got to know a lot about other families, especially those who were living on farms and all that sort of thing, and how they got along.

18:30 What was happening in country areas. This was a good thing. But we never ever had any serious conflicts. Sometimes we would have arguments, but it was never serious. We got along reasonably well together.

Did you feel there was some sort of controlling force there, or did you just work things out for yourself?

Yes, we sorted it out for ourselves.

19:00 We became tolerant - and I think that's the way you would describe it - of other people's views and you'd argue with them sometimes but it wasn't a bitter sort of thing and it wouldn't go on. You'd forget about it by the next day.

You mentioned before about taking up smoking partly because of boredom, What else did the boredom bring on, do you think?

Well, it meant that we had to find our own

19:30 amusement, and we did that through playing cards or something like that. We probably played cards several nights a week. And then sometimes we would just talk, on all sorts of subjects.

So a lot of time spent together in each other's company isn't it?

Yes, but it developed a good bond between us.

20:00 The ones that still come to our annual luncheons or whatever it is, and their wives come of course now. Even the wives have become friendly to each other; even now we give each other support when they've had a loss in their family. If they've lost children or something like that....and this has happened quite recently.

20:30 We ring them up and do the best we can. June writes letters to some of them when they've lost their wife or husband or something like that, or a daughter. There was one just recently where the daughter of one of our members died very suddenly. She was only forty three, and had a brain tumour and died within a very short time, and that was a shock. June just wrote a letter off

21:00 to her last week. And of course Lou had the same thing. Did he tell you? I suppose he did. He lost his son and that was terrible. Yeah, that was hard. But when we meet together at our annual lunch

21:30 it's really great you know. We tell stories about things that have happened and things we wouldn't want our wives to know about, for instance. But it's a real good get together, and I think we're really lucky that we still have this ongoing thing.

What sort of things would you talk about in the tents at night?

Well we would talk quite a lot about sporting things you know. About

22:00 how the football was going in Melbourne, or the races and that sort of stuff. Not that I was very clued up on races. We'd talk about those sorts of things, and we talked a lot of about family as I said before. Many, many hours we spent talking about our own families. That meant over a period of years we knew quite a lot about each other's families. We knew

22:30 how many children they had and what brothers and sisters they had. We acquired all this knowledge and it was all very interesting because as I said they were from a diverse group. They were all sorts of people. It was very interesting.

You were a bunch of young blokes, you must have talked about girls a bit as well?

Yes, girls a bit.

23:00 Girls a bit. Some of them married actually and some of them were engaged to marry. But by the time I went into the army I never had a girlfriend. I had taken girls out a few times but there was nothing of a serious nature. When I came home on leave I would get in touch with someone, maybe a girl I knew at school, and we'd go out together. We might go to the pictures or something like that. There was one girl I took out a couple of times,

23:30 she was in the air force and she was down at Melbourne and I took her out once. But after the war, it was possible that by the time I got out of the army she would have been married, and I never had contact with her afterwards. But one of the chaps who was in the army with us, he got out early, medically unfit. And he finished up manager of the State Theatre which

24:00 was a big theatre in those days. I'd ring him up and tell him I was home on leave and I wanted to bring girls to the pictures. He would say, 'Come to my office and I'll give you the best seats in the house'. I'd go and it wouldn't cost me anything. And he didn't only do it for me, he did it for dozens of people. You would only just have to ring up and say, 'I want a couple of tickets for the pictures' and he would say, 'OK, come in and I'll fix it'. Then some other times I'd go in there

24:30 on leave in the afternoon and we'd go across the road to the pub, the Duke of Wellington, and have a couple of drinks together during the day. You know, I kept up the contact with him, but he's since died of course. He was a good person and he was pretty generous with his theatre tickets. Anybody who wanted a theatre ticket would get them

25:00 at no cost.

That must have impressed the girls.

No, not really. I probably wasn't ready to be interested really, with a relationship. I took out these girls at various times and when I was home on leave I probably took out three or four different ones. Because sometimes when I came home, that girl who was in the air force, for instance, she

25:30 wouldn't be able to get out because she was on duty or something like that, so I'd ring some one else up and I'd take them out. Not always to the pictures, but to somewhere. I had the use of my brother's car too. He had a car and he would loan it to me. It's in that family history thing, a little Vauxhall. So he would loan me that and I would take them out somewhere.

26:00 I never had any firm relationship with anybody, and as nineteen year olds I don't think you really...I don't know about now but in those days you weren't really serious about getting married or anything like that because we couldn't afford it anyhow. We never had any money, or not enough money to get married.

How did the men deal with being apart from women for so long?

26:30 Well, some of them didn't cope with it too well and I think they were quite lonely. Letters from home were most important to them from their wives. But they coped and then sometimes when we were in towns where girls were available, they would take girls over there, or wherever we were. I think everybody knew it wouldn't last anyhow. It was just a matter of ships that pass in the night.

27:00 But some of them probably got married while they were on leave, and I think they felt it quite a bit. They probably had about a week or so of married life and then they would have to go back in, back to their unit and I think they were fairly upset out it. And also when their wives had children, and they were away. They would

27:30 be pretty upset about that.

I'm sorry George you've just got your hand on the mike.

I'm sorry I'm doing that. Is it alright? Are you hearing it alright?

Yeah, sure. It's easy to forget you've got one on. Do you think it was harder for the single men or the married men?

The married men, because the wives were home on their own and in a lot of cases they had children

28:00 to look after, and that's not easy on your own. You need the support of a husband or somebody to cope with that sort of thing. But I would say their own families, their mothers, would have given support. It would have been very necessary.

Do you feel you missed out on important years being so long away from women?

Yes, I suppose you did.

28:30 But see, I got out of the army at twenty three, so that was still comparatively young. I didn't meet June until a couple of years after that. But I don't know. When I came out of the army I took out a few girls even then, but no one I thought of as a permanent sort of thing. We used to go out

29:00 sometimes and we'd play tennis and that sort of thing with a group. There would be girls there. I wasn't really ready I suppose and I was actually twenty seven when I got married.

A lot of soldiers were inexperienced. Was there much talk from the experienced men, the married guys giving advice and that sort of things?

29:30 No, not as far as I was concerned, but it would have happened of course. And see, some of the chaps who married during the war, those marriages didn't last. They had only been married for about a week and they would have to go back to the regiment, and some of those marriages didn't last. It was probably due to they would find somebody else, and

30:00 straight after the war there were a lot of divorces. A lot of people were divorced. This wasn't uncommon. As a matter of fact some of the officers in our regiment who had had legal training, or were lawyers, they would help with the legal part of it and they would do that as a friend thing. They did it at no cost and they would help sort out their matrimonial problems.

30:30 It was a difficult time for families.

I was also wondering if there were any cases of homosexuality amongst the men so far away from women?

There was rumours of it, but I can't say it ever happened. I since know now that at least one fellow who was in the regiment... I didn't find out until years

31:00 afterwards, after we came out of the army, that he was a homosexual. But it was really frowned upon in those days. I mean people didn't come out of the cupboard I can tell you, or they would be in trouble. And that happened with the civilian population too. Homosexuals were frowned upon whereas in some cases it's acceptable now, isn't it?

And a rumour like that

31:30 **would be difficult to have. Were there rumours about specific people or just the act itself?**

I don't think it was specific people, but there was always a whisper now and again that it happened. But as far as I know I have no knowledge of it at all while I was in the army. No knowledge at all, just that somebody might have said something. Whether it was real or not we don't know.

32:00 It might have been just something they thought might be happening. But as far as I know in my own regiment, it didn't happen.

Just while we're talking about relationships, did people receive letters saying the marriage was over?

Yes, some of them did and in a lot of cases it didn't really happen until they came home. They had been discharged from the army

32:30 and then they found out that the marriage wasn't working. Then they got divorced and in most cases they remarried and the second marriages were quite successful.

We've heard stories of people getting letters saying a wife had gone off with an American soldier. Did that happen in your experience?

Not in my experience, but it did happen and

33:00 I mean, it was just one of those things. Being separated for so long, and in some cases people were apart for say two years, and that's a long time. They would look for somebody else or maybe someone else would come into their life. But most of the marriages in the regiment I was in lasted, and people got back together and just picked up where they left off and

33:30 went on with their life.

It's an amazing achievement isn't it?

Yes it is.

And I suppose you would have heard quite a bit about those wives from the men who were already married?

Yes we did. As I said they talked quite a lot, and they talked very frankly if you know what I mean. They didn't hold anything back. They would tell you the whole story

34:00 and it was very interesting. But I think overall there wasn't a lot of marriages that broke up because of war service, but there were some. And as I said, there were a few in our regiment and that was pretty sad. That was just one of those things. They were separated for so long and people attempt it. I mean they can't go without female company or male company

34:30 for that matter. They want some sort of relationship. It must have happened in a lot of cases that the partner didn't know anything about it anyhow. If it finished when war finished and they got back

together again, who was going to tell?

Did the married men worry about that?

I don't think so. I think basically overall they expected their wives to

35:00 do the right thing, and I think the wives expected them to do the right thing. Sometimes it didn't happen that way. And I know a case where a chap had relationships with other women when we were in places far away, and when after the war they got back together with their wives and they just went on, and I don't think anyone was the wiser for it. What you don't know can't hurt you, can it?

35:30 How you going over there?

Sorry, I wasn't sure if it was a thirty five or forty minute tape. You mentioned before about the men talking very frankly about the married life, was that quite an education to you?

I suppose it was. Yes, it would have been. I mean all these sorts of things are of interest because it gives you an insight into the person and what they're like.

36:00 It was very interesting, and we used to talk for hours and hours because we had nothing else to do sometimes. We'd talk about politics too for that matter, but not seriously. We'd talk about it but we wouldn't argue about it. We'd also talk about

36:30 religion sometimes but it was never a serious thing, and if their religious views were different to yours, you just accepted that. And we all got on well together, and that was the most important thing as far as I was concerned.

I was just wondering what the army provided in terms of sex education?

Nothing. No they didn't supply that sort of thing.

37:00 That was not part of their role I don't think. In my generation for instance there was not a lot of sexual education. It's taught now more in schools and that's how it should be. It should be taught by professional people instead of finding out behind the shelter shed or something like that when you were at school. I think this is important that this is happening.

Did they warn against venereal

37:30 **disease?**

Yes, we used to have talks on that of course. They wanted you to be sure you did not take chances. They would supply condoms of course, but they did warn you about that. But we didn't have much of it in our regiment. I only remember probably one or two cases, which was pretty low. Not many people contracted that.

38:00 I think in the general community it was around. I think people were always aware of it and they took their own precautions of course, or they should have. They still do I think.

Or they should.

Yes they should.

I was just wondering what the political views were. What did people think of the government?

Well what had happened...

38:30 when war was declared of course we had a conservative government in power, and Menzies was voted out a couple of months, I think, before I went into the army. And Curtin became Prime Minister...yes, I think it was Curtin. Now that was an unusual situation because what had happened was, there was a bad air crash out of

39:00 Canberra and several politicians were on that plane, and I think this would have been a couple of months before the Japs, or maybe longer than that...quite a while back...I can't remember the actual date. So Menzies lost a couple of his senior ministers in the House and that meant he had lost very experienced people. Gullett was one of them, and there was an election

39:30 to replace them, and a couple of Independents got in and they more or less held the balance of power. Menzies was spending quite a lot of time in England with the British War Cabinet. He had sort of lost touch with Australia to a large extent. Artie Fadden was Acting Prime Minister,

40:00 and I think the people decided it was time for a change and then the Independents who held the balance of power voted him out, and then we had a Labor Government for the rest of the war and right through to 1949, I think.

00:34 When the Labor Party got into government, just a short time before I went into the army if I remember rightly, and Curtin became Prime Minister and Chifley was his Deputy, and I think Abbott was Minister for Foreign Affairs. Curtin was a very popular Prime Minister. I think he did a lot to sort of

01:00 carry on. Menzies had put the basis down for our war effort I suppose, and Curtin carried on and he became quite an effective Prime Minister. He was the one who really appreciated the help that was given to us by the United States. We got away from England to a large extent because they weren't really able to look after us, especially after Singapore, and people had really lost faith in them

01:30 in any case. So we were leaning towards the United States and Curtin really pushed that, and as you know MacArthur got out of the Philippines and came back and he became Commander in Chief of the forces in the Pacific area. He was stationed in Melbourne of course, and I don't think he knew quite what was happening

02:00 in New Guinea. I don't think he understood the jungle and the type of warfare that was being fought up there and in some cases he was critical of the effort made by the Australian troops. I think his criticism to a large extent was unjustified because they were poorly equipped and not properly trained. And I think under the circumstances they did quite a good job to slow down the Japanese advance on the

02:30 Kokoda Trail. They allowed us to regroup and get some of our more experienced troops who had come back from the Middle East into New Guinea to sort of bolster up the troops who were already there. So that was very important. As you know there were thousands of Americans in Australia, and as it turned out we

03:00 couldn't have survived without them, especially their navy and air force because they had the equipment more than anything else and they were able to replace the equipment that was lost.

Did you feel at the time that Australia was moving towards an alliance with America?

I don't know so much an alliance, but I think we realised

03:30 at the time that they were the people who could really turn the tide of war because of their industrial potential. I always say that battles are not always won on the battlefield, they're won on the home front, and that means what's produced in the factories and the food that's produced and all that sort of thing. That's important for the troops in the front line

04:00 because you've got to have a good base. I think if you look back in history, it's been mainly the countries that have been able to keep supplies up to their troops that won wars. I don't know if I mentioned earlier on but the Yanks said they would supply the heavy equipment and the military equipment and planes that we needed and we would be expected to supply food. And I think we did that reasonably

04:30 well.

Just to backtrack a second, do you think in your regiment there were more Labor or Conservative affiliated people?

I don't think there was a lot of difference. I don't think it was much different to what it is now. Now for instance if we had an election, you would have about 45% of the electorate who would vote Labor come hell or high water.

05:00 Then you'll have about 40% who will vote Liberal Country Party. And it's the swinging voter in between who will decide who will be in government, or maybe some of the minority parties. I don't think it was much different to what it is now. We would probably have had 45% who would have supported the Labor Party and about 40% who would have supported the Conservative Party.

05:30 That was only my view and that's only a guess. I don't know for sure. I don't think I ever asked anyone what political party they supported. I never did that and I don't think anyone ever asked me what political party I leant towards. That was the way it was. But I don't think it's any different to the way it is now.

At the time did you have faith in the Australian

06:00 **war effort?**

Oh yes. I think the war effort of Australia compares very well with other countries. For a small population I think we made a good contribution to the Second World War, both from the number of people we had in uniform and also later

06:30 on, from 1941 when the Japs came in...also the civilian population. We really got behind it as a nation. I might be a bit biased, but I really think our war effort overall was quite good.

What did the men think of Blamey in your regiment?

Well that varied quite a bit of course. As you know he was kicked out of the police force

07:00 in Victoria in about 1935 I think. They had to get rid of him because he was very much into wine, women and song. I think that's pretty well documented by most people. At that time, Bennett expected

to be given command of the Australian troops that went away...the first contingent that went away.

- 07:30 He had had a very good record in the First World War. He was promoted a Brigadier General in France and at that time he was the youngest Brigadier General in the British army. He was only late twenties, and he had a good record of service. And Blamey of course was on Monash's staff, and when Blamey got the troops under his
- 08:00 command in the First World War, they were fragmented up until that time until about 1917 or something like that. They were fragmented and they were part of the British army. They weren't a united force and Monash finished up that he had all the Australian troops under his command. Blamey was his...he might have been Chief of Staff or something like that. Apparently he was a very good organiser
- 08:30 by all accounts and that decided, as far as the Menzies government was concerned, that he was the most suitable person to be in command of the Australian troops. But as far as...and this applies particularly to Victorian people, they did not respect him because of his behaviour.
- 09:00 As I said he was dismissed from the police force, and the police force was corrupt, and I think they still are for that matter and always will be. What the Victorian government did, they brought out an officer from Scotland Yard. They didn't give the job to anyone from Australia, even from the other police forces. They brought out a chap from Scotland Yard to take charge of Victorian Police, a chap named Duncan, and
- 09:30 it was his job to get the police force back on track. And apparently he did quite a good job. But as far as Blamey was concerned, even in the Second World War, even when he was in the Middle East, he still liked the good life, you know what I mean. They were concerned about this at one stage over there; his lack of physical fitness because he was getting up a bit in years as well, and he was overweight
- 10:00 and someone, a senior person from the medical corps apparently said to him, 'If you don't get yourself fit and take off weight and all this sort of thing, we'll send you home'. He took the hint and he did. He decided he would have to mend his ways quite a bit. And they also allowed his wife to go over, which was unusual. That was a no-no as far as taking wives off to war. But she went over
- 10:30 and whether she helped straighten him up a bit I don't know. But he managed to get himself fit and concentrate on the job. He was just one of these people who was a very good organiser and a very good desk person. But whether he would have been better than what Bennett would have been we'll never know. But Bennett was a more conservative sort of person,
- 11:00 a very serious person, and there was always great jealousy between Blamey and Bennett. Of course Bennett was put in charge of Western Australia. He had three divisions over there as I said, and he came back to Melbourne at one stage to see Blamey and he wanted an active command. And Blamey flatly refused. He said, 'No you can't have it'.
- 11:30 So soon after that Bennett resigned from the army and went back as a civilian. But all I can say about Bennett is...well, they say he got out of Singapore...well so did MacArthur get out of the Philippines. I think the troops...he was on the wharf when the troops came back from Singapore, and they gave him quite a good reception. They reckoned he did the right thing.
- 12:00 But he will be judged by history I suppose.

Did you have nicknames among the men for these people?

Well, General Robertson he had red hair so he was known as Red Robbie. I think a lot of people had nicknames...nicknames were not unusual. That goes right down. We had one officer we called Mad Carru.

- 12:30 We had other people...unusual nicknames which really didn't fit in if you know what I mean. You wondered why they had them. We had one chap in the regiment who was named Moncrieff. He was called Gladys... Moncrieff. Now the reason for that was, in the 1930s, one of the stars of musical comedy and stage in Melbourne was Gladys Moncrieff. I don't think he liked it particularly much.
- 13:00 Some others for some unknown reason...there was one chap...he's mentioned in Lou's book there of course. Nigger Bolton. He always referred to himself as Nigger Bolton. I don't think he liked the name he was given. That was Cyril. Everybody referred to him as Nigger. He would write a letter to somebody and he'd sign it Nigger Bolton. And in some cases you didn't know what their name was.
- 13:30 Lou might have spoken about this. He probably did the other day. Another one was Col Parry. And I thought it was short for Colin, but apparently when he went into the army he was a great football supporter of Collingwood, and they started off by calling him Collingwood, but that got shortened and got down to Col. They called him Col. They didn't call him Collingwood, they called him Col.
- 14:00 And he kept that name. Lou rang me up a couple of years ago and he said, 'Do you know Col Parry'? And I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'Do you know that Colin is not his name'? I said, 'No, I always thought it was. I thought Col was short for Colin'. He said, 'No, it's short for Collingwood'. He said, his real name is John. And there were quite a lot of things like that. There were also other names, Blue and all this sort of

thing. And Snowy, that was quite common.

Did you have a nickname?

14:30 Yes, some of them used to call me Snowy, and some of them used to call me rude names as well, but I won't go into that. But there was one group who called me Snowy because I had fair hair, and I had hair too, in those days. That was quite common. Or you would call somebody Darky or something like that. And they were not offended by this as a rule. But occasionally people were. There was a chap named Lynch.

15:00 Kevin Lynch and they used to call him Lightning Lynch...just a play on words sort of thing. He didn't mind it when he was in the army but when he came out of the army he really resented it. I think his wife resented it more than anything else...him being called Lightning. It finished up we had to relearn and call him by his proper name which was Kevin. There was

15:30 another chap too. His name was Len Aubury and they used to call him Bull. He was a solidly built man you know. He didn't mind it at all, but his wife objected to it. So we had to call him by his Christian name. So I think a lot of people had nicknames, if you get a group of people together. It happens in factories as well. They're given a nickname and sometimes the nickname

16:00 becomes their accepted name. A lot of people were called Mick. They weren't Michael or something like that, they had had entirely different Christian names to that, but that was the name they were called.

I was wondering about whether you had much sport over in Western Australia to pass the time?

Yes, depending on where we were. In some places, Mingenew for instance, they used to play quite a lot of football because it was clear

16:30 ground and it was easy to set up a football field. We used to play football there and we used to play against other regiments. I was not in the team of course. They played football. And then we also played matches between the batteries and the troops, if you know what I mean. We had football teams. So there was quite a lot of football played. And also they used to have athletic meetings. They'd organise that and we'd have

17:00 running and jumping and all that sort of stuff. Relay races. Just like an ordinary sporting little Olympic I suppose you could say. And we produced quite a lot of good athletes out of that. They were quite good. Good at high jumps. The football team was very good. They had some very good players and some played league football when they came out.

17:30 Then some of them came out who were good footballers. They had played football in junior comps you know, and they got married and that was it. They just didn't play football at all. And they were good enough to play at least association football. They just gave it up. Some of them had long engagements and all this sort of thing, so they got married and they started their families and gave their time to

18:00 their families.

And what else would you do for fitness?

Well as I said, we used to march regularly. We used to have physical training, and we also played a bit of basketball. Basketball was fairly popular because in some areas it was comparatively easy to clear an area big enough for a basketball court. So we'd play basketball.

18:30 And then in some cases of course we were able to play cricket. At St Ives, just out of Sydney, we were at the St Ives showgrounds and there was a cricket pitch there, so we were able to play cricket there. And some of the cricketers were quite good cricketers. At least two of them played interstate cricket for Victoria. So you know, that was quite good there. We had good facilities there for all sorts of sporting events.

19:00 And the beaches weren't that far away either. So we could go swimming.

We haven't talked that much about your leave time in W.A. Did you get into Perth or anywhere like that?

Yes. We used to go into Perth when we were down at Rockingham. We used to get day leave. We'd go in in the morning and we had to be back at midnight that same day.

19:30 We'd go into Perth. I even went to the races one time which was on New Year's Day. I went to the Perth Cup. Of course in those days if you were in the army it never cost you anything to get in. If you were in uniform you would get free admission to the race course. And the same thing happened here too. I probably went to one Melbourne Cup when I was home on leave. Not that I'm terribly interested in

20:00 racing. But it was probably something to fill some time and I probably went with a few of my mates.

What would you do on that day in Perth?

It depends. As I said before, I had relations in Perth and I used to visit them. Then we'd sometimes go to

the pictures, and there were dances on of course. Probably drink more than we should.

20:30 That was quite common. We'd fill the time in pretty well. Sometimes we'd go on little trips on the buses or something around town to see what was happening. But a lot of people had relations in Perth and they used to visit them. We filled the time in pretty well. I don't know how often we got leave into Perth. I think it might have been once a month or something like that.

21:00 Maybe twice a month. At Rockingham we were close to the beach. We were in walking distance to the beach, so that was fairly popular. We could walk to the beach in ten minutes from the camp.

Were you able to go fishing and do things like that as well?

No, I didn't. No, I wasn't interested in fishing.

21:30 I don't think anybody was interested in fishing. You didn't have the equipment of course. It was only an extra thing to carry so you wouldn't want to be burdened down with fishing equipment. And there was boxing matches too. There was boxing from time to time. Some of them were quite good boxers and they used to

22:00 indulge in boxing. And there used to be army competitions, like outside the regiment. And we had a couple of chaps who were quite good boxers. They had some success. They would go in to wherever it was, where a boxing ring was set up and they'd have a boxing competition. One of the chaps was quite a good boxer actually, and he won the championship in his weight division of the group we were in. It might have been a brigade thing or something like that.

22:30 And there were punching bags and punching balls available to those who wanted to exercise. All that was available. Basketball was quite popular because as I said, it was easy to set up and it's only five a side, and we

23:00 didn't have any guernseys or anything like that to wear. What we used to do, one team would play in shirts and the other team would take their shirts off. The two teams were 'shirts' and 'skins', and that's the way you knew who was on your side. Football, especially the regimental team, they were better equipped. They had football guernseys and they were pretty well set up

23:30 for that. The other sporting things we just used to do amongst ourselves, like basketball for instance. We would just organise that late in the afternoon. You just got four or five of your mates and you had a basketball team, and we'd say to the next troop or something like that, 'What about a game of basketball'? So that was quite good.

24:00 Was basketball that popular before the war?

No. Basketball was hardly played in Melbourne pre-war. And as far as I know there was only one person in the battery I was in who had played basketball. And he had played it in one of the churches in Fitzroy. I think maybe in the inner suburbs of Melbourne it was played a little bit in the church halls, but it wasn't popular. Not like it is now.

24:30 I think the big games that people played as a social thing were mainly tennis, and they also played football and cricket. But tennis was always fairly popular. There were a lot of tennis courts about. I mean, all churches had tennis courts and then there were tennis clubs. The local municipal council had tennis courts. Also there were private tennis courts that you could hire.

25:00 You'd get a group of four or five, and you'd go down and play tennis and you'd hire the court by the hour. I don't know how much it cost but I don't think it cost very much.

Could you play tennis when you were serving?

No, I didn't play tennis during the war. No, I didn't. I played tennis a little bit before the war and then I played after the war. I never played competitive tennis. I just played social tennis,

25:30 and the only thing I played...I played competition badminton after the war at the church, which was just one street away from where I lived and soon after...when would it be? About 1946, 1947. I had only been out of the army for a year or so, and my younger brother used to [play] badminton at the church hall at the back of us, and he said to me one time, 'Why don't you come and have

26:00 a hit', so I did. I took it up gradually. And also they had a sort of social thing, this badminton club, because we used to go on picnics. What I used to do, I would get one of the trucks from work, put a canopy on it and we'd go off on picnics, or to the beach or we'd go to the snow. We would go all sorts of places.

26:30 I used to drive the truck and they'd all come and sit in the back of the truck. They were under a canopy of course but no great comfort. We had quite a good social thing going. That's where I met June actually. She played badminton. She was a better player than me, and that's the way it turned out. I didn't know her even though she lived close to me. She only lived one street away from me,

27:00 about 400 metres, but I didn't know her. We went to the same school but she's four years younger than me, and four years when you're twelve is quite a gap. I knew her father and I knew some of her cousins

but I didn't know her until I started playing badminton, even though she lived just a few hundred metres away.

Just going back to Perth. I was wondering, do you remember

27:30 **any of the films you saw at the pictures?**

Yes...oh God I don't know. 'Shining Victory' was one I saw somewhere. And that was another thing that happened. The army also had a film unit. They used to come round to the regiments and they would bring their own generator and projector. They'd put a screen up and they'd show films.

28:00 It didn't happen often, probably every month or six weeks by the time they got around all the units. It was a pretty big circuit. But we used to sit out and watch the films, like a drive-in almost.

Were they pretty popular, those screenings?

Yes. Nearly everyone in the regiment would go except those who were on duty.

28:30 You'd finish up...out of the 700 odd in our regiment you'd get most of them there apart from those who had duty, like a guard duty or something like that. But nearly everyone else would go.

What type of films were the most popular?

Well...who was around in those days? Sonja Henie. You don't know who Sonja Henie is?

29:00 She was an ice skater. She was an Olympic ice skater pre-war, and she made ice skating films. Esther Williams, who was a swimmer; she made films too. I saw one of her in Cairns as a matter of fact. What its name was I can't remember. It might have been 'Bathing Beauty' or something like that. I saw that at a civilian theatre in Cairns.

29:30 I don't know why I was in Cairns but I was, and I went there and saw this film. I think it was 'Bathing Beauty'. It's a long time ago. But that was an unusual place to be, in Cairns during war-time, as you probably know. The number of troops that were there in the area, and what used to happen there, if you went to the pub for a drink, you had to supply your own drinking utensil.

30:00 The troops had broken most of the glasses I think, so I finished up, I think I had a pickle bottle. I'd go up to the bar and they'd fill it up for something like a shilling, and that was your drinking utensil. You had to supply your own glass. It could be an army mug for that matter.

Was it a pretty rough place then, Cairns?

Not while I was there. I wasn't there for very long,

30:30 probably only a couple of days. Probably when I was going through to the Tablelands. I was there for a couple of days waiting for the train to take us up. No, Cairns wasn't bad. It was a pretty orderly sort of a city, or I found it was. The same thing applies to Toowoomba for instance, where we used to go on a regular basis when we were down south. That was a pretty orderly sort of a city. There were a lot of troops there in the area including

31:00 air force. But it was not ...there were never any problems there. There were no riots or that sort of stuff. But as I said before, the pubs in Toowoomba for instance, they were run by women because the men were either in the army or essential services. There

31:30 was one pub there we used to go to on a regular basis. They used to set the beer barrels up on the counter, on the bar, and they'd pull the beer straight off the wood. It didn't go through any elaborate cooling system. And what we used to do when we were in there, we'd go in there...the pubs used to open at about ten o'clock...we go in and the lady would say, 'Would you help us set the bar up?' And we'd help lift the barrels up on the counter. They went into a

32:00 cradle so they wouldn't roll, and then they would always give us a couple of drinks. And we said it was just to make sure it was for human consumption. So they were pretty good, and they were good days too.

Did you have much to do with men from other services?

No, not a lot. We'd have a bit to do with people from other army regiments, but never had a lot to do

32:30 with air force, and nothing to do at all with navy people. We used to meet the other regiments from time to time for football matches and those sorts of things, but we never had anything to do with air force or navy. Only the occasional football match against another regiment which we would be involved in, and that was about the limit of our meeting with other people outside the regiment.

33:00 That was the way it was.

Was there much in the way of rivalry between the services?

No, I don't think so. There was rivalry between regiments, especially our regiment which had a good football team. There was a lot of rivalry between our regiment and the other clubs we played football

against.

33:30 The team from our regiment were pretty good footballers, and at one stage they had won forty odd consecutive matches. When we were in West Australia...the 10th Armoured Regiment was a West Australian regiment and they always reckoned they would knock us off but they never ever succeeded. Our team always managed to beat the 10th Armoured Regiment, and there

34:00 was keen rivalry between us. It's carried on of course with West Coast, hasn't it. It's still keen.

Was there some sort of idea of what the guys in the navy or air force were like, or what their experience was like when you were serving?

No, we didn't know a lot about them. A lot of my friends had gone into the air force. I don't know of anyone

34:30 who went into the navy. But a lot of my friends had gone into the air force. I've met them since and they remain friends. But there wasn't any rivalry I don't think. As I've said before, we were pretty united during the war. The navy was a bit different because

35:00 they were away if you know what I mean. You wouldn't see them at all, much. They were on ships. We'd meet air force people in Perth and places like that. We didn't have a lot to do with them. We didn't know exactly what they were doing. Although when we were at Helidon, the ammunition depot there was an air force

35:30 group next door to us. It was a bomb depot. It was a few mile away. We had a little bit to do with them because we were doing similar things, so what used to happen in those days was when we were going up to Toowoomba to get supplies, the army would supply the truck one day and the air force would supply the truck the next day. So we just did three days a week.

36:00 About the only one we had contact with was the chap who was their quartermaster and the driver from the air force. But apart from that we never had much to do with them during the way.

We're very near the end of this tape. I was just wondering, again to backtrack, when you were watching the films that the army put on with the projector, did people yell out things...

36:30 **was there cheering and commenting on the action?**

Oh yes, that's right. They'd make remarks of course.

What sort of remarks?

All sorts of comments, especially if there was a love scene going on or something like that. Or maybe a cowboy or Indian sort of thing they would cheer and clap, but nothing much, you know. Although I remember one time I went to the pictures in Perth...I had gone down to Perth, I was on leave or something and

37:00 I was walking along the street there and a couple of our provos came towards me. I knew one of them and they had one of our chaps. They had arrested him. He was drunk. The chap who I knew said to me, 'Will you take him off to the pictures? The main thing is, get him off the street'. Our divisional provos, they were most helpful.

37:30 Their job was to direct the units when they were on the move and all that sort of thing. So there used to be a few of them in Perth on duty when we were near Perth, and there were also the provos from the Perth area. The area ones would run people in if they were drunk or something like that. But our provos would try and save them, if you know what I mean. As he said to me, 'Take him to the pictures and he'll be right. By the

38:00 time the picture finishes, he'll be sober'. So I did. That was an unusual thing. Another time I remember going to the pictures in Perth and there was a lot of civilians there of course, as well as army personnel. One of the chaps had been asleep and he woke up at interval and he looked around and he said, 'What are all these women doing in here'? He thought he was still in an army picture show.

Tape 8

00:32 **You mentioned earlier that your father had passed away during your service time. Can you tell me about how you learned the news?**

His health was never very good. He was unfit for service in the First World War. He was never a well person if you know what I mean. He always had bronchial trouble or something like that. What had happened was...when was it? It must have been about

01:00 June 1942. They had had a big parade over at Puckapunyal, the armoured regiments and our regiment, and Blamey was there and reviewed the troops. I got back that night to Trawool and they said to me

that my father was ill, very ill and, 'You're to go home immediately'. I said, 'OK', and I packed up and got myself dressed and into uniform.

01:30 They said, 'We'll take you by truck to Tallarook'. That was on the Hume Highway. There was no transport available. No trains or anything like that. They said, 'We'll take you to Tallarook and then you'll have to hitch-hike down to Melbourne. That's the only way you can get down there'. Anyway, I went over to Tallarook. I hadn't been there very long on the side of the road, and a car pulled up. There was an army officer in it and his driver. They had been to the parade at Puckapunyal.

02:00 They drove me down and they dropped me off at Coburg, at the end of the tram line there at Coburg. Then I got the tram into the city and then the train out to Oakleigh. By the time I got home my father had died. Sad.

02:30 Anyhow I got leave of course. I rang them back at the regiment and they gave me...I don't know if it was a week's leave or something like that, and that was about it. That was disappointing for me. But there you are, that's the way it is, isn't it.

Had your mother and other brother been with him?

Yes.

03:00 The whole family was there. My mother and brothers and my sister, they were all there. But I was just a few hours late. So that's about it.

Thank you for sharing that. I know it's really hard to talk about it.

Yes. It's difficult.

One of those extremely frustrating things about service life.

03:30 **People couldn't get where they wanted to be.**

Yes that's right. Quite a few of the chaps who were in the army with me, they lost either their mother or their father while they were in the army. Sometimes they were able to get home, depending on where they were...home to the funeral at least. And I got home for that, so that was something.

04:00 **I wonder if anybody took the time to talk to you a bit when you got back later....have a chat, the padre or a friend.**

No, they didn't, because it was just about the time we were ready to shift to Tamworth. They were all pretty busy getting set up. They actually left for Tamworth a few days after I got back. So they were pretty busy packing up

04:30 to get ready. But there you are.

I suppose your mother must have worried a bit more about you being away after that.

Well my two brothers were still at home. The youngest brother went into the air force later and my sister lived not that far away.

05:00 So she got good support from family, and friends too which was great.

What was the weather like in Western Australia, and did that affect your work and training?

Well, when we went there first it was very hot, and what they did there,

05:30 we'd get up early in the morning and then we'd have breakfast straight away and then we'd start our training or do maintenance and then we'd do that through to twelve o'clock. Then we'd have lunch. Then there was a break of four hours.

06:00 And in that four hours we had to stay in the tents in the shade. We had to stay out of the sun during the heat of the day, and then we'd start again at four o'clock in the afternoon and do a couple of hours of training and then we'd have our evening meal and that would be it. It was very hot. I mean, it was the hottest weather that I had ever been through I think. It was about forty degrees,

06:30 I think. Now the weather was fine and in the time we were at Morawa I think it was, I don't remember it raining. I don't think it rained in the six or seven weeks we were there. When we went across to Mingenew I can't remember rain there either. Of course you get dry spells. We've had it here of course, but they used to have real dry spells and one of the major problems was fresh water

07:00 with no rain. So that was pretty difficult. Being young, the weather didn't worry you that much. You just took it and that was it. Kids are the same. They don't worry if it's hot or cold. It's only when you tell them that they start to worry about it. It's just another day as far as they're concerned. But I think basically overall the weather in West Australia was good. But

07:30 they got very little rain in the areas we were in, and that affected the water supply of course.

How did that weather compare with your experience in Queensland when you were in jungle training?

It was different. See at North Queensland, I wasn't there very long because the war finished rather suddenly.

08:00 And the weather up there, we got a fair bit of rain. It was always sort of overcast and drizzly. That's up on the Atherton Tablelands, but down in Cairns the weather was far more stable. They'd get rain down there and of course when they get rain down there on the coast, it's generally very heavy. Up on the Tablelands, we'd get rain but it wasn't very heavy rain. It was just sort of misty rain quite often. I didn't mind the weather up there.

08:30 It was quite alright, although down in Cairns, even in June you could get some quite warm days. It would be quite hot.

Did you notice a difference of how the weather up in Queensland affected your equipment or your uniform or your skin?

No it didn't really, no. It didn't affect that really at all. I wasn't up there very long in North Queensland. I came

09:00 back from the ammunition depot at Helidon...that was a working party of 100, and we rejoined the regiment, and when we got back there the sergeant said to us, 'They're breaking the regiment up. We've got a fair bit to do. We've got to return all the equipment, and it's all got to be checked in of course'. Then soon after that, it might have been just a few weeks afterwards

09:30 they said, 'You'll be sent down on leave, down to Melbourne'. Now the army people knew that the war was just about finished, even without the atomic bomb. And while we were coming down on the train between Cairns and Brisbane they dropped the atomic bomb, and then a few days later or a week after they dropped the other one...the first one on Hiroshima and the next one on... wherever it was, I've forgotten,

10:00 and the war was virtually over. By what I've read since, the Japs were just about ready to toss it in in any case. They were exhausted. They were short of food and they were being beaten on all fronts. So they would have given up even without the atomic bombs I think. They would have finished. They would have got out of the war.

What did you know of, or what were you told of the atomic bomb at the time?

Well we didn't

10:30 know anything about it until... how powerful it was or how effective it was. But by the time we got back to Melbourne on leave it was in all the papers in more detail then. We went down to Melbourne but we couldn't be discharged. Now the problem was, when the war finished, I think in uniform in Australia there would have been something like 600,000

11:00 personnel, like male and female, and they couldn't let them all out at once because industry hadn't fired up and they wouldn't be able to have work for them. What they did, they had a point system. What you used to get, you would get two points for every month of service, but married people would get three points. And the higher the points the sooner you got out...with some exceptions.

11:30 Farming people got out very early. They were discharging them straight away because they wanted the food produced, and some people who had a job to go back to...like their industry was still working. But as far as I was concerned, I had a pretty low priority as far as discharge was concerned and I wasn't discharged until June 1946...the second or third of June.

12:00 And then I went back to work, soon after, about a month after. I sort of lost myself a bit for about a month and then I went back to work.

I wondered, given that you didn't get sent overseas, what did you feel when the war ended?

Well that was a bit of a problem because if you hadn't seen overseas service, there were a lot of benefits

12:30 you couldn't get. The RSL didn't want you anyhow. They wouldn't allow you to join. It was Returned Soldiers Association and you had to be 'returned'. But what happened at about the time the war finished, there was an armoured regiment at Southport, the 2/6th Armoured Regiment I think. They decided there that they would form their own association, and they called it the Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association,

13:00 because there was no ex-service association that we could belong to, even though we wanted to be involved with people still. So they called a meeting early in 1946 down at the Pump Road drill hall which is now the Alfred Hospital car park. They called a meeting down there and there were hundreds turned up...armoured people, tank

13:30 regiments and also people who had been attached to the armoured division. We all joined and they set up their own association. That association still functions and we have annual dinners every year. Initially they used to hold them in Melbourne at one of the hotels or even at a drill hall. They'd have an annual

- dinner. But over the last four or five years they've held them at Puckapunyal,
- 14:00 at the 1st Armoured Regiment sergeants' officers mess. I went up there a couple of times but I haven't been up for about three years. It's too far to go. The couple of times I went up there they put us on a bus and they used to pick us up at the drill hall out at Carlton, one of the Light Horse regiments. And there would be a bus...you'd drive your car out there and there'd be a bus. You'd go by bus and then they'd bring you back to the depot.
- 14:30 But it was a pretty long day if you know what I mean. I haven't been for about three or four years.
- I wonder if you knew men who were upset or disappointed at the end of the war, that they didn't see action?**
- Yes, that's right. One of the major things that's come up in recent times is this Gold Card which you've possibly heard of, and that gives you concessions on rates and motor registration and all sorts of concessions.
- 15:00 But we're not entitled to any of that. The unusual part about it is, when we were in Western Australia, I told you about the group of people who went home on leave on the troop ship Duntroon. They went out from Fremantle and they actually went into a war zone. So they qualified for a Gold Card even though they were in a war zone for only a couple of days. They all qualified. So that means about a third of
- 15:30 the regiment that I was in qualified for the Gold Card, but we can't get it. You wouldn't get any money out of it. I wouldn't get any money because I'm a self-funded retiree, but you get concessions, as I said, on various things. So that's disappointing. Another unusual thing that happened; the people who qualified for the Gold Card...
- 16:00 when we were coming down through New South Wales we went through Geelong and back up to the main line going through to Adelaide...some of the chaps dropped off the train there. The train stopped there for coal or water I suppose, and these chaps went home for a few days. They took a few days leave. Anyhow they got rounded up or they reported back in, and they were sent to Sydney.
- 16:30 They were put on the Queen Mary, the troop ship, and they went back to Western Australia by sea. Now they qualified for the Gold Card because they went into a war zone when they were going back. But the only reason that happened was because they were AWOL. And Lou has tried for quite a while to find out who they were. There might be half a dozen or ten of them but no one will own up as to who they were. It would be in army records if we
- 17:00 wanted to look it up, but as he said, I've never found anyone who said anything about that. But there was a few of them. There might only have been ten or something like that. But they got the Gold Card and the rest of us didn't. Although some of us have got a...I've got a disability pension because of my hearing which was due to the blast from the guns. But I will get a small pension. I haven't got it yet but I will get it.
- 17:30 It will probably amount to...I think it's about \$60 a fortnight or something like that. But there's no benefits attached to that. It's a White Card. The only thing I've got...if I have to have a hearing aid later on, that will be OK. But no other. It has to be connected to hearing. I will be able to get some help with a hearing aid if it's needed. My hearing's reasonable at the moment still,
- 18:00 but I have to have the television turned up a bit louder than what other people are comfortable with. But I can hear reasonably well. Sometimes when you've spoken to me I've missed a word.
- How do you feel you were treated by the government at the end of the war?**
- Well, Bruce Ruxton...I'm sure you've heard of Bruce Ruxton, he's been fighting for years that all volunteers should get the Gold Card.
- 18:30 But it hasn't happened yet. I don't know if it will ever come through. But those of us who haven't got it would like it because it could be helpful, because concessions on rates and motor registration and that sort of thing can be quite a bit of money, and it would help some of them. But I don't know if it will ever happen. If they wait a few more years there won't be any of us left.
- 19:00 See, even one of the youngest in the regiment, that's Harry Mold, he'll be eighty in August. There may be a couple younger than him, but mostly they would be late seventies and into their eighties, and some of them well into their eighties, and they won't get that benefit I don't think. But you never know.
- How do you feel you were received by the general public?**
- 19:30 When I came home? Now, I think after the First World War the returned servicemen were very well received by the general public and got a lot of support if they were returned servicemen. After the Second World War it wasn't so different because there was thousands and thousands of people who were in the army or air force or navy
- 20:00 that never saw overseas service. You know, there wasn't...we were not looked down upon I don't think. I've never felt that at all. I'm now a member of the RSL because they changed their ideas about it, and I'm a member down there at East Malvern. I go down there and I'm received quite well. Not a problem.

20:30 There were so many of us who never saw service overseas, and couldn't join the RSL initially.

Did you hear or know any men who didn't cope so well with the news, as you did, and felt more upset or disappointed?

Yes I think so...I don't know if I told you about Ken Nelson early on who was in the naval reserve...did I tell you about that?

21:00 He was a chap...he was in the naval reserve before the war and he was called up as soon as war broke out...I think I told you about that. Yes, he was disappointed. And I think he had every right to be disappointed because he always said, he was in uniform for longer than Blamey and I get nothing. So he was disappointed.

21:30 **Do you look back differently to the end of the war period, knowing all that you've read now, than you did at the time in terms of the atomic bomb and the end of the war?**

Well I've read a lot since. I didn't know a lot when I was in the army about what was happening. But I've got books now that I've had given to me or people have loaned me, and I probably know more about the war now...a lot more about it

22:00 because I've read the books. And I'm still reading books. As a matter of fact my granddaughter gave me one at Christmas which was interesting. And I've read that and it goes right back to the Boer War. And that's a very interesting book. I've read that, and it was my birthday a few weeks ago and Noel gave me a book on the

22:30 various campaigns, the desert campaigns, Greece and Crete and also the Pacific. There's sections on all of it, and I'm about to start on that. And I'm sure it will give me a better insights into what really happened because when war finished there wasn't a lot of books published on the war. Now there's more coming out all the time.

23:00 They've got access to a lot of information that wasn't available say fifteen or twenty years ago. So the books that are being written now have got a lot more detail because they've been allowed to look at the records, the people that write them. And some of them are very good books.

Has all that reading changed your opinions any?

No I don't think so, because we had sort of a rough idea of what was happening.

23:30 Reading these books now gives you a lot of detail. The one I've got out there has a section on Tobruk and all that sort of thing. That will give me more detail about what they really had to put up with. It was a very difficult period for them and they were lucky to survive I think.

Do you think there is more interest in the Second World War now

24:00 **than decades ago?**

There certainly is. I'm a bit surprised, particularly amongst younger people, and how interested they are. Like my granddaughter for instance. When we meet we often talk about the army and all this sort of thing because she was in the army for ten years. We have a common interest. As a matter of fact, June always said that I was the one who was responsible for her joining the army

24:30 because I used to talk about it so much. When she left school she was quite a smart kid. She was the best student in primary school in the last year she was there and she is quite bright. She could have gone on to university and she should have, but she decided against it when she left school. Somebody had been out from the army to talk

25:00 to them when she was at high school, so she decided she wanted to join the army. As I said, she did ten years. She met her husband, he's in the army of course. He's probably been in for about fifteen years or so and he's stationed in Canberra. He's going along quite nicely. He's got reasonable promotion and

25:30 by the time he comes out, he'll come out with a reasonable sort of pay out and pension.

After the Second World War finished, did you talk about your experiences?

No, I didn't that much, no. Not with family. June probably knows very little about the time I was in the army. I've never talked to her in detail about it. The only time we might talk about it a bit is after our annual lunch or something like that.

26:00 We'd talk about individuals or that sort of thing, but I've never talked about it really. She's not really interested in it. Maybe she's interested but she's never asked me anyhow.

What about your kids?

Well my own sons, no. Noel and John. They've never talked to me very much about it, but by the same token when Noel buys me a present it's generally a book about the war.

26:30 I've got quite a good selection of books on the war, like that one I got just a few weeks ago. But he's

never asked me either. I think there are a lot of people who are very, very interested. People probably in your age group. They're very interested in it and they like talking to people who are my age about it. They find it interesting. Well, it's an important part of our history.

27:00 **Do you think that the Melbourne you came back to was different to the Melbourne you left?**

No, I don't think so. Melbourne hadn't changed very much in the four and a half years I was away. It hadn't changed very much. There weren't any new buildings gone up or anything like that. All building stopped as far as commercial stuff was concerned. The building industry virtually closed down as far as

27:30 commercial stuff. They were still building army camps and that sort of thing. But it was very difficult to get a permit even to build a house. Not only that, the material wasn't available to build a house easily during the war. I suppose there were a few built, but nearly all saw mills were closed down for instance, and those that operated would be supplying either the army or army establishments.

28:00 **So Melbourne hadn't changed in other ways that you noticed?**

No. But when the war finished it changed very rapidly especially areas out of Melbourne a bit. This area for instance. When we came here first fifty odd years ago, there were only about three or four houses in the street. Now it's full. And right out as far as Glen Waverley.

28:30 There's not many vacant blocks, and the same thing can be said out the other side of town. The development's gone ahead and it's going ahead very rapidly now. We're a bit amazed as a matter of fact. We go out to Pakenham fairly regularly, and going out in that general direction, there's places like Hallam, Berwick, Beaconsfield. The number of houses that have been built out there is unbelievable. I say to June sometimes,

29:00 'Where are they going to get the people to fill them'? But apparently they're selling them so they'll keep on building them.

Do you think that the war changed you?

Yes I suppose. I must have. I went in as a teenager and came out at twenty three or whatever it was. Yes, it did change me, quite a bit.

29:30 It gave me a different sort of outlook. Whether this would have happened if I hadn't have been to war I don't know. But I think mixing in the army with the great variety of people, sort of taught you quite a lot about how the other half lived. There were so many different types of people.

30:00 One of the things about it that I think was a bit sad in one way, was that a lot of the people I was in the army with were very intelligent but they had only had a basic education. They had gone to school and had got out of school at about fourteen or fifteen and were working on the farm, or gone into a factory somewhere. They had got a job, and we were an uneducated generation because people just couldn't afford to

30:30 send their kids to school. And as I said, there were some very talented people who finished up with a very basic education and I think that's sad. But we've overcome that now. They educate everybody, whether they want it or not, and whether they're worthy of it in some cases. A lot of them seem to be going to school and they stay there too long because they're never going to get any better. Some people might not agree with that.

31:00 We're probably giving some of them an education who can't take advantage of it now. That means our resources are wasted to a degree. People who have been at university for years and years and years and they just haven't got anywhere. They're quite happy to stay there doing new courses all the time. So that's a bit of a waste of resources I think. They would probably be better off if they were kicked out and made to go to

31:30 work. Younger people may not agree with that.

What would you say you learned from your war experience?

I think the main thing you learn is that you learn to get along with people, and that's fairly important that you can get on with a group of people who are very different from yourself in outlook and background.

32:00 You learn to get along with people and I think this helps us quite a bit as you go through life....to get along with your neighbours and other people. So I think it taught me to be tolerant of other people and their views and ideas. We can all learn from this.

A kind of an education that you didn't expect, I guess.

Yes.

32:30 And in some cases the chaps that were in the army learned new skills, especially those who became motor mechanics in the army. They learned to be motor mechanics and then when they came out of the army they didn't have to do very much to qualify as a tradesperson. They had the basic training in the army. Because in the army we always had our own motor mechanics and that sort of thing.

33:00 So a lot of them would have learned basic skills that they would have been able to learn in later life.

And some of the skills you felt you learned in the stores?

Yes I should say so, because I finished up as a retailer more or less, so it taught you to sort of do the best you could with the ability you had.

We wondered

33:30 **what you missed most when you got out of the army?**

When I got out? I missed the friendship, I really did. After being associated with the same group of people for all those years, and suddenly you're out and you're back into civilian life. I missed them quite a bit and that's one of the reasons why I'm still so keen on reunions, even if we only meet once a year. Even though I ring quite a few of them

34:00 from time to time. But that's the thing you miss. The mateship I suppose you would call it. The relationship that you develop living side by side with people for all those years, it becomes a very close relationship. As I said before, we know all about their families and all this sort of thing, and knew their problems. You really do miss it. In some ways the relationship you have

34:30 is closer than marriage in some ways. You're in their company twenty four hours a day, and you just had to sort of get on with them as best you could.

Was there anything you feel you lost in those four and a half years?

Well I suppose if you don't work for four and a half years

35:00 you have a financial loss. You didn't earn much money in the army. So when you came out you had your deferred pay and that was about it. So you lost those four and a half years when you could have been earning a reasonable amount of money, and I think that puts you back financially. That was made up to a degree with war service loans and those sorts of things.

35:30 You'd get some advantage out of that. You'd get the actual loan at a pretty cheap rate of interest. So that helped a bit. But I don't think it really made up for what you lost. So I think anybody who went into the army in those days would have been worse off by quite a bit financially, apart from those that worked for big companies and they made their pay made up. They were better off financially.

36:00 But the ordinary person who went into the army was worse off financially when he came out. He hadn't saved that much money. And see, I was twenty three when I came out as I said. But we survived.

Were you part of the repatriation scheme at all, or by going into the family business you may not have needed to be part of that?

No, they did have training schemes when

36:30 we came out. They trained all sorts of trades, building trades in particular. What I got out of it...if you were a tradesman or a apprentice tradesman, you would get an allowance which was ten pound and that was for you to buy tools. Ten pound may not sound a lot of money now, but ten pound in those days could buy you quite a lot of tools. I bought levels and clamps and things like that that I really needed.

37:00 I think I've still got the stuff, some of it. I still use it. So I did get something out of it that way. And that wasn't a bad amount of money. Ten pounds would be the equal of say nearly two weeks wages from the lowest paid people. So that wasn't too bad. And that helped people quite a bit. They were able to get their tools and that sort of thing and either start a training scheme

37:30 in the building trade or training in something else, and they had the basic tools that they would need.

We're just at the very end of this tape, is there anything that we haven't covered or talked about or touched upon that you'd like to say?

No, not really. As I've talked amongst my mates since; we think that being in the army was a great experience and we

38:00 all feel that we got something out of it. It developed us as people, and not too many of them have said to me that, 'I'm sorry I went in the army', because they feel they got something out of it...most of them. There were some disadvantages. But overall it made us better physically and

38:30 probably mentally by associating with such a diverse group of people. Ok?

That's fantastic George. Thank you so much.