

Australians at War Film Archive

Brian Walpole - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/482>

Tape 1

00:33 **Could we start off could you tell me a little bit about where you were born and brought up?**

I was born in Melbourne, I was brought up in Melbourne, went to school in Melbourne. I was reasonably bright at school, played a lot of sport I was good at tennis, golf and swimming

01:00 but at school I was pretty bright. I got my Leaving Honours Certificate when I was aged fourteen just short of fifteen and I couldn't go any higher in school. I left school, the idea was I was going to do medicine but I was too young to go to university so I couldn't go to university. Where young people these days they join the hospitality industry or something like that they didn't have it in those days and to fill in time and

01:30 wait I joined a bank, so I worked in the bank waiting till I became old enough to go to university and in the meantime the war started and I became old enough to go to war but not old enough to go to university so I joined the army and I never went back to the bank after the war, I gave it away.

Where were you when the announcement came in that Australia was at war?

02:00 Melbourne.

Do you remember the day what you were doing?

Oh I remember lunch, we were having lunch and I can remember over the over the radio, cause in those days too radio was, not everyone had a radio in those days. It's about a tuppence a dozen these days but in those days didn't have a radio but I remember hearing it announced over radio that war was declared and

02:30 well the voice was very solemn but it didn't mean a great deal to me at the time, I was probably still too young for it to have any impact and it was a was a long way away.

Had you any knowledge of what was going on in Europe at the time?

Yeah I knew what was going on alright as far where Herr Hitler was taking all this, moving and taking this and taking that and the French had their

03:00 Maginot Line [defensive front line] which was impregnable except of course it wasn't impregnable we knew all these things but it was still the other side of the world and in those days it's a long way away. You're speaking weeks on a ship to get there, you're not speaking like you are today, I guess it's another world away and then finally when Australia declared war it still didn't mean a great deal and

03:30 I was too young to join up, still to young to join up in those days but people joined up to go to the war, a lot of them joined up because there was a Great Depression on at the time, there was no work and people were unemployed so they joined up to have a job and also the sense of adventure which is another thing, joining up was to my way of thinking, people who I know going to war to fight for God ,King and country's

04:00 a whole lot of crap. The main reason you that you go to war, or I did ultimately anyhow was the sense of adventure and everyone else was going to the war, you had to go to the war and it was something that you'd never done before and I think the biggest patriotic feeling that came into mind was that you'd rather keep the, you'd rather fight the war outside your own country to keep it away in those days,

04:30 for instance my parents were my main family, you'd rather go and fight a war somewhere else but when the people, when they went to the Middle East early in the piece it still didn't make a great deal of impact at home in Australia, it didn't make much of an impact apart from the the people who had immediate family who'd gone to war and were probably getting killed too the poor bastards, but to everyone else life just went on exactly the

05:00 same way and people joined up and I have a brother three years older than I am and he joined up and

he was in the 8th Division and they sent them up into the Pacific in case the nasty Japanese decided to come to war and then of course when the Japanese came into the war and just went through everything like a pack of salts so to speak, things became a different story in Australia. Everyone knew there was a war on,

- 05:30 the impact on people generally was just just amazing, it was a completely new scene and I can remember vividly the big announcement when the Poms [the English] sent the two biggest battleships the Prince of Wales and I forget the other one [HMS Repulse]. They were two biggest battleships in the world, that they'd stop the Japanese doing this and that so the Japanese
- 06:00 just sank them. The big announcement the English sent these two two battleships they were the biggest battleships in the world. One was the Prince of Wales I can't remember the other ones name and they would just fix the Japanese just like this and
- 06:30 the Japanese just sank them straightaway. They just went straight down to the bottom of the ocean and that just sort of surprised everyone and then of course most Australians were still very English-minded, I mean that's sort of part of the way we were. I mean I'm now
- 07:00 a devout would-be republican for instance, but in those days everybody sort of accepted the British as a big brother or something more or less, and of course the British generally speaking were overall in charge of our Australian forces and they had the utmost disdain for the wretched Japanese as they used to call them, but the Japanese just went right through the British like a packet of salts too, they just wended their way down south and with practically no opposition
- 07:30 at all because the British and even our Australians weren't trained in jungle warfare, they weren't used to these sort of conditions that they were operating under. The Japanese came down and went down and the biggest disaster of all was when General Percival who was the British commander in charge overall of all the British forces and all the Australian forces told everyone to lay down their arms and surrender which they did,
- 08:00 practically a hundred per cent and which was, well shocking, things shouldn't have happened and...

What was your reaction at the time to the force?

Pardon?

What was your reaction at the time to the force?

Well me personally, my brother was in with an infantry battalion in Timor and he was one of the people told to lay down his arms and he got taken prisoner. We didn't hear any more of him till the end of the war and we thought it was just shocking,

- 08:30 all of a sudden all of these people have laid down their arms and there's nothing between where the Japanese are coming down and Australia, there's just, there's nothing at all, all lay down your arms, they're all prisoners and I had just joined the army at that stage, I'd just joined the army and my first impression of the army was it's absolutely incredible that you're
- 09:00 put in a tent, was lit with a kerosene lamp and a straw palliasse is on the floor, not that there's anything wrong with that, but then they wanted to teach you rifle drill, we used to teach rifle drill with a broomstick handle and you can't even see a rifle let alone you know... to look around in amazement. You think, "How the hell am I going to fight a war doing this sort of thing?" and
- 09:30 bearing in mind that we've our warfare'd be in the jungle; well I was sent to various schools I must have been sent to about half a dozen schools, anti-tank warfare, I don't where the tanks were going to be, they certainly wouldn't be in the jungle and gas warfare, all these useless things, but amongst them I was sent to a couple of intelligence schools and I'd heard about what were then
- 10:00 secrets, the Australian commandos being formed, Australian, and I thought well what better place to find out than one of these intelligence schools, I'll see how intelligent they are, so I made enquiries and found out a bit more about these commandos that were being formed and how to join them and the commandos had
- 10:30 their secret training area was the whole of Wilson's Promontory, which is the southernmost tip in Australia and so I deviously found out how to and I applied to join the commandos and I was accepted subject to my passing the rigorous training that they had.

Why did you want to join them?

Well mainly adventure, they were the top, they were the elite, the commandos were the

- 11:00 the elite. They were formed the result of when the Poms got thrown out of out of Europe, [Prime Minister] Churchill had these British commandos formed called independent companies. They were a small strike force of say, two hundred and fifty to two hundred and seventy individuals, all highly trained, they were all soldiers, fighting soldiers, no cooks or batmen or clerks or anything,
- 11:30 they were all fighting men and these independent companies went across raiding Europe. They'd go across and do quick raids in Europe and they were the only thing that kept the war afire in Europe for

the following year, there was commando raids the British launched against the Germans across across the [English] Channel. So Australia started to form their own independent companies to do the same, sort of quick moving strike forces

- 12:00 that could be mobile and as every soldier was a fighting soldier, extensively trained, they could be put in anywhere and do anything and also as I was to discover, we had automatic weapons which was practically unheard of in those days in Australia such as the American Tommy gun which is better known as, Al Capone the American gangster used to have a Tommy gun
- 12:30 and we'd never, our Australian Army had never heard of Tommy guns or anything like that, never heard of automatic weapons as such, so I went down to Wilson's Promontory, I joined the commandos and I did the six months course and once you hit the commandos the whole atmosphere is completely different. No broomstick handles or anything like that. No anti-gas warfare, school no anti-tank, it was just how to kill people the best and most
- 13:00 efficient way to kill people and rigorous exercise there. The terrain and the jungle at Wilson's Promontory is probably as bad as any jungle that I ever struck in New Guinea or elsewhere, it's an amazing thing, it's away down south, southernmost tip in Australia but it was all national park and it was just dense jungle. It went uphill downhill,
- 13:30 random walks at night time, learnt how to use explosives, blow things up, how to use Tommy guns, learn methods of silent killing, all this unknown to Australians and then it was completely secret. We had to sign the Official Secrets Act and we were told not to talk to anyone. If we went on leave there was no mention of what we were doing, we were with
- 14:00 the commandos. Anyone who didn't pass, they might have been doing the course for three weeks, if they couldn't make it they were thrown out and discarded it was such a rigorous course. It was the most rigorous course I was ever to find, even during my latter years of the army in Special Forces. It was good, I passed it anyhow and
- 14:30 normally when you pass the the commando school and came out as a commando you were posted to an already formed independent company which had gone away somewhere where no-one knew because you weren't told. No-one knew where they were except for instance it was to be found later that there's one in particular was up at Timor that fought a war in Timor for about twelve months after everyone had laid down
- 15:00 their arms they continued fighting up there for the next twelve months. They had no contact with Australia for about twelve months because they didn't have any radio, but that was an independent company, one of the earlier ones. Anyhow I was waiting to be sent to an independent company. Where I don't know and I was called in and told that I'd very well completed the commando course.
- 15:30 I was one of the top six that completed it and I was dished out a little bit of flattery and I thought this is very nice. They said it's so much so that we're not going to send you to an independent company, we're starting a jungle warfare school up at Canungra in Queensland and you'll be sent up there as one of the six people to be sent up there as the first six instructors in jungle warfare up there. I said well, I didn't want to go and they said well you've got no choice, that's where you're going to.
- 16:00 So with five others we went up and we started the Canungra Jungle Warfare School, and not a commando school, it was a jungle warfare school, the only jungle I'd seen had been in Wilson's Promontory but the jungle was jungle anyhow, but we were highly trained and well we were just sort of kids. I was just then I was the ripe old age of nineteen and
- 16:30 the first lot of intake of people came in. They were considerably to learn a bit about jungle warfare. They were all two, three, or four years older and in those days that's huge age difference from a nineteen year old anything up to twenty-three, twenty-four year old, and particularly someone say who'd been out of work for two or three years, that'd be bit hard what have you and the attitude was listen to what you young guys
- 17:00 are telling us no way, we didn't want to be here in the first place and you can go and get stuffed for want of a better word so we had to demonstrate our capabilities and they all finally went through the jungle warfare and completed the course and they they found that we were quite capable of forcing them, they weren't able to stand over us but it was a bit boring teaching someone that didn't want to be there. I mean the attitude; they didn't want to be there.
- 17:30 So the next course came in and the same thing was happening and I think I was a corporal in those days so I was quite unhappy but there was still nothing I could do about it and then we got a visit at the Jungle Warfare School from a man by the name of George Warfe who had just taken charge of an independent company, the 3rd Independent Company which was training
- 18:00 nearby and was getting ready to embark for places unknown and I sort of met Warfe. Warfe had been to the Middle East, he was quite a man, he's referred to even these days as the legendary George Warfe for his escapades and anyhow I praised him, I said, "Excuse me, I'm sort of most unhappy here." I said,
- 18:30 "What would be the chance of me joining your independent company?" and Warfe he looked straight through you and he said, "I'll check you out." just like that. Anyhow a few days later he came back and

said, "Yes, I could have you in my independent company." he said, "But the complement is full." the independent company being about two hundred and seventy-five people, he said, "I can't take anyone

19:00 of any rank." and I said, "Well, what if I revert to private?" He said, "Why would you do that?" I said, "Well, to join the independent company." so he said not many people sort of do that sort of thing so I reverted to private and I joined his independent company and a week later we were sent away, we were at war. We

19:30 set down along the SS Taroona which used to go from Melbourne to Tasmania, and I remember as a kid I'd been on it when I was about three or four. They disguised it by taking one of the funnels out, they thought that would upset anyone that wouldn't be able to recognise it, but that's just how stupid people are and so when we had to board at Townsville of course all the wharfies [wharf labourers] were on strike, they wouldn't load the boat. They were on strike. War or no war they couldn't care less, they were on strike,

20:00 so we loaded the boat ourselves and we sailed till we hit Port Moresby. We got to Port Moresby and we, am I boring you going too...?

No this is good, this is going along at a good pace.

Well at Port Moresby, so we're getting closer to there and air raids coming over at night time and things, you'd see planes coming over and dropping bombs, all

20:30 this was a new experience, we'd never seen this sort of thing and I can remember a lot of the Americans in New Guinea in those days, just transport drivers and what have you and that, driving with their headlights on because they needed their headlights on to see no doubt about that, but as soon as the air raid came over all the trucks would stop, the Americans would hit the ditches and all the headlights were left on, the headlights were floating everywhere, it was quite a sight to see.

21:00 Anyhow we got to New Guinea and we were there a short time, and as I said an independent company was completely self contained so it's there to do anything and we were originally intended to be the spear front for an American division that was going to attack somewhere. We were never told where, they don't tell you these things, and so we had to be a straight out

21:30 strike force, commando strike force, and then things changed at the one of the inland places, one of the inland townships called Wau, W-A-U, Wau was being threatened and there was an air strip at Wau and the Japanese took Wau, meaning that they'd be able to, they were almost at Port Moresby and they'd be able to bomb hell out of Port Moresby

22:00 which was one of our only bases we had in New Guinea left at that time, and the Japanese had nearly taken the taken Wau so they decided they were going to send our company to Wau instead, and the only way to get to Wau was by air, and of course in those days practically none of us had even flown in a water plane, anyhow so we were to be flown in by

22:30 American Dakota transport planes and they could only take six commandos at a time into Wau and Wau is famous for going back to the '30s for its gold mining days, it was made famous. Some intrepid pilots flying all this heavy machinery to mine the gold out of the place. It was still

23:00 only accessible by air, so the the air strip at Wau was I say, it was a strip, not an aerodrome, an air strip was eleven hundred yards long and one end was three hundred feet higher than the other end which meant that the plane had to come in and land going uphill and take off going downhill and there could only be one plane on the ground at a time because there was no room for anybody to park, so

23:30 only one plane and the Japanese had half the air strip, they had half the air strip and so we were told we'd expect once we hit the ground, we'd expect to be fired at, or before we hit the ground we'd be fired at and also the Japanese had by far air superiority at that time. We didn't have many planes in the air so we went up. Wau was,

24:00 well the air strip was four thousand feet above sea level surrounded by mountains, six thousand feet above sea level which meant that the planes had to go over mountains six thousand feet high which were densely fog covered and then descend another couple of thousand feet to come into this dicey air strip, and anyhow so I went in, the plane that I was on we went in and

24:30 plane running uphill, very, very funny experience, the plane just sort of running uphill and you could hear Japanese firing bullets and mortar fires and gunners and God knows what and the Yanks opened the door and said, "Go on man, get out, get out, God damn God damn!" that's all, so there was no-one else to get out so we got out and raced away and we were being fired at all the time, we got out of the plane and I finished up racing over near some

25:00 some tennis courts and we hid ourselves in tennis courts and started straightaway having a fire at Japanese. The Japanese had come ultimately from Salamaua and getting close to Wau they're be quite a few defenders in Wau and there were two tracks, known tracks coming into Wau. Tracks because they're not roads,

25:30 the Jeep was starting to become known. Maybe a Jeep might be able to go on a little bit, there were no

four wheel drives like there are around these days or anything like that, so they were walking tracks or animal tracks, someone dragged a cart along but there were two tracks. One was called the Black Cat Track which is named after a famous Black Cat mine which is one of the mines they had and the other

- 26:00 was called Musabal Track, so the Wau defenders had blocked both these tracks but the Japanese by-passed them and there is a track right in the middle that Germans had surveyed in 1926 the story goes, and some German missionaries were kind enough to give the plans of this track to the Japanese,
- 26:30 so the Japanese came straight down between the defended tracks, or what we very originally called the Jap Track, we named it the Jap Track and by-passed 'em all and hit Wau, but anyhow we we battled round Wau at the time and we we gradually pushed the Japanese back. Must have broken their hearts, not that we could care less about that at all. I had
- 27:00 two experiences in Wau. One guy in a commando unit with me who was probably two or three years older than I was, he befriended me, just a young kid. Bear in mind none of us had seen action before or anything like that, and on the second day I found him lying face down in a creek, all his clothes taken off and both his buttocks carved off.
- 27:30 That gave me an instant dislike for the Japanese. I hated them after that. It was quite a practise, they did that quite a bit. They'd run out of food and they'd carve people up and do a bit of cannibalism and that was that. Anyhow we we were fighting there for ages and with a commando unit such as ours
- 28:00 there are no reinforcements or no-one in reserve and George Warfe who as I say was a CO [commanding officer], George was a fighting man himself, he wasn't like when he was ordering somebody to go out. George was, we called him George or Warfie, not to his face, we called him George or Warfie, he knew that but we referred to him as George or Warfie fondly. He'd speak quietly
- 28:30 and he'd sort of... I'd like you to do such and such and such and such... and so somebody'd just do it because you know that he would do it himself, he'd do anything himself and he was one of the few people that I struck there or any time during the war that everyone respected him, and this is a big thing that people generally with some sort of rank or some sort of
- 29:00 seniority, even in business they use rank or seniority to dictate and tell people that, but they they're not respected by the people. The people mentally think they're a piece of dirt or something or other by virtue of their stature they're they are bound to take orders from but George was someone that everyone respected him and...

How close did you work with George?

Very close, he put me in what

- 29:30 was called the ISX, an intelligence section which consisted of three of us, and it meant anything at all. Going out and getting information, bringing information back or going out on patrol or anything at all. To give you one instance, he realised that while his patrols were out that there were no reserves to send out, to
- 30:00 leave a section of the people who'd been been continually fighting for a week or so would need a rest but we had no-one to send out to relieve them, so at one stage he got a patrol together himself, of which I was one. He got twelve of us to take the patrol out himself and in those it was common to go without food for two or three days at a time, we had very little food. Anyway George got this patrol, there were the twelve of us and we went straight down this
- 30:30 Jap Track it was, cause would that be the worst one, so we went straight down the Jap Track and we killed a lot of Japanese and we went on. We lost contact with anyone and we went out for nearly a week and we hadn't had any food for about three days and we came to this higher spur and we looked down and this whole team of Japanese cooking a meal and George sent the word around,
- 31:00 "Let's just wait, we'll wait till the bastards finish cooking their meal then we'll kill 'em and we'll eat it." and we waited an hour while they cooked it and we killed them and we ate it. It was the best meal that we'd had for a long time except it was crap, you wouldn't eat it normally but better than nothing.

What was it?

that's part of the legendary George Warfe.

How long were you in the vicinity of Wau?

- 31:30 Probably about a month and we pushed the Japanese back and they said Wau was now safe, Wau was now safe, so they sent us further up in the gold area to a place called Bulwa and they wanted us to
- 32:00 climb over this mountain and wage guerrilla warfare against the Japanese, behind Japanese lines and so we had a look at the map and we were going to a place called Misim, which is pidgin English for mission. It had been a mission, a German mission or something like that, mission, pidgin. The natives there spoke pidgin English there so it was eighteen miles
- 32:30 as the crow flies that we had to go to this Bulwa, to Misim, but in between was this placed called Double

Mountain which is the most heart breaking, it's been reputed as being the worst territory that any Australian forces ever negotiated, this Double Mountain, and it was called Double Mountain because you get right up the top of it and it just went straight up, straight up and

- 33:00 right to the top of it and you think it's the top but you're not, there's another peak and it was just straight up but there was no track at all, it was called Double Mountain and it took us four days, it was ten thousand feet high it was known to snow at the top of it. We of course had no clothes, get up the top it was freezing cold, so you go down it was jungle heat ,
- 33:30 the perspiration used to start to freeze up and you get up the top there, every night at five o'clock it would rain and you'd get earth tremors and you'd look at the ridge and the whole ridge'd just shake like a jelly. Wouldn't collapse, it would just shake like a jelly, it just looked weird and it took us four days to get up,
- 34:00 to get over the, to give a an idea of the terrain, there were no Japanese there fortunately. Either they didn't know about it or they thought no-one'd be stupid enough to climb the mountain and that. We all climbed it and to give an example when we were there we had the fuzzy-wuzzy carriers [indigenous carriers] to help us carry stuff. We didn't have them in Wau but we had some fuzzy-wuzzy, not that we had much stuff to carry
- 34:30 because we hardly had any food anyhow, but it took us four days to get there and then when we got up there ultimately which is further along the story, we started to do some more fighting, it took six six days, it took sixteen stretcher bearers six days to carry one wounded person back over this mountain and the turnaround time for this, just eighteen miles, the turnaround time for the
- 35:00 natives who were more sure footed and quicker than we were was ten days. Took four days to get there, six days to bring stretcher bearers, stretcher laden back, and it's likened to be about sixteen stretcher bearers, and was likened to Kokoda which is better known, they needed eight stretcher bearers at Kokoda. It was way, way worse than Kokoda and so we got to the other side and ultimately we start to
- 35:30 attack the Japanese which they weren't suspecting us you know. In those days they had dogs, they had these huge, huge bloody dogs. About five o'clock at night sometimes if they were going to attack you'd hear them, it started to rain and the earth's tremoring a bit, you'd hear the dogs howling and you'd hear
- 36:00 the voices screamin' their heads off and probably an officer and seemed as though they were all trying to get a bit of Dutch courage up or something, then down the track they'd have this stupid bloody Japanese officer waving his sword around and dogs screaming their bloody head off and all you'd do is kill as many as you could and hope the rest'd go backwards which they did and then after a while the dogs seemed to disappear and we thought maybe the Japanese ate them, maybe they
- 36:30 got hungry or something like that but we pushed on from this and we then started to be supplied by what we called 'biscuit bombers' and the 'biscuit bombers' were ordinary Dakota planes came over and they'd try to push food out the door, they'd just fly as low as they could and push the food out the door and land on the ground. Just try to make sure that it didn't land on your head or something like that and
- 37:00 it'd land on the ground then we'd break open, get some food out of it and we were operating on the ridges, on ridges you see a stream or a river careering down below and you might be short of water and it was about half a day's walk to get down to the creek and half a day to get back up again so you used to have to go without water, and of course being on these ridges it was hard for the 'biscuit bomber',
- 37:30 we called them 'biscuit bombers', they were just generally known as 'biscuit bombers', would drop the food with accuracy. They dropped it on the Japanese sometimes which of course it later on they they made what they called storepedoes and they made proper containers and put a makeshift parachute on them and pushed it out the door and the food was getting a little a little bit (UNCLEAR)
- 38:00 so we pushed on and with our guerrilla warfare, and we came to a place called Bobdubi Ridge which overlooks Salamaua which was the main base. Port Moresby is on the southern southern coast of New Guinea and Salamaua was on the northern coast
- 38:30 of New Guinea and Salamaua was the main Japanese base at the time. It had a submarine base there and was the main base in which all the troops were being supplied. Now we attacked, of course we get to Bobdubi Ridge and sort of cut the Japanese off then we'd be able from Salamaua, and we upset them greatly ,so we'd had casualties ourselves and
- 39:00 we'd had some reinforcements but had a lot of casualties and we'd been half starved because we didn't have any food, very little food. We were used to that and we had no anti malaria drugs or anything at all. They'd given us nets but no-one uses nets because firstly they get rain soggy and they became heavy and you didn't want to be in a mosquito net if some Japanese came looking for you, so no-one used the mosquito nets, they were
- 39:30 useless and of course we had friendly leeches and ticks that would attack you from anywhere. You wouldn't know you got a tick or a leech sucking away at you, the only way to get rid of them was a two man affair with someone, the way we used to do it was someone would light a cigarette, would touch the leech on the tail and it would drop and we'd stamp on it or

40:00 touch the tick on the tail and it would start to burrow backwards and you'd get rid of it. Couldn't just grab and pull a tick cause half the head stayed inside and kept on burrowing so you get them in there and of course the ticks carried scrub typhus which wasn't very pleasant.

Tape 2

00:31 **Brian we were at was it Bobdubi Ridge?**

Yeah well Bobdubi Ridge was about two miles long which is a huge area for a unit such as our size to sort of attack so George Warfe decided that he would simultaneously have about ten small groups of us attack it from different directions

01:00 and in the one evening and screaming our heads off see if we could terrorise the Japanese, if we all hit them at the one time they'd think we were a far larger force than than we were, so we did just that and finally we got rid of the Japanese off Bobdubi Ridge and George was very pleased about that. We could see Salamaua,

01:30 this is very, very vital, where we overlooked Salamaua then and they also had a couple of mountain guns that they could fire at us with these mountain guns. We had no retaliation to this whatsoever but for George attacking this with a small

02:00 number of people which he was always allowed to use, he was told not to take any risks and we could see the Japanese bringing up reinforcements, we could see them visually getting ready to come and attack us again and so we decided to withdraw and sure enough as we as soon as we'd withdrawn they attacked us with about twenty

02:30 dive bombers where we had been, about twenty dive bombers and a whole lot of fighter planes and blew the shit out of the place, but there was no-one there, we just watched them do it, there was no-one there and eventually they came back and they reclaimed Bobdubi Ridge, there's nothing we could do about it and then they come over and they bombed their own troops just for good measure and we laughed our heads off at that because, well very funny. We had no aeroplanes in the sky at all in those days, was no air force at all.

03:00 So we withdrew from Bobdubi Ridge and then the commanding officer of the overall situation had changed became a Lieutenant General Savige who was a Middle East veteran and quite a popular soldier, well known soldier, and also been George Warfe's commanding officer in the Middle East so they sort of had some sort of rapport together and George,

03:30 he was told that his next step was to cut off the supply line from Salamaua going through to a place called Buro where the other troops had been fighting, that we were to cut off the the Japanese supply route and completely and this is one of my jobs. George says, "Wally." he called me Wally in those days I don't know why. When I was to leave the 3rd Independent

04:00 Company I was never called Wally ever in my life again but I was called Wally in those days. He said, "Wally I want you to go and find a way we can get to this Kaiapit Track to cut it so that we can cut off their supplies completely." There's not much you can say he just

04:30 told me that and you knew that he'd do it himself, there's no risk about that so you just had to do it and the only way I could do it was to go through virgin territory. He said, "You can take two commandos with you." so I got two to come with me and we have jungle knives and so forth we can cut our way through, but you can't use because they make too much noise and the noise in the jungle travels so far

05:00 noise travels so does smoke, you couldn't smoke of course, the smell of smoke would travel, and one of the things the Japanese for instance, they would let us know, we'd always tell where the Japanese had been because they used to wear these two-toed boots like the present day thong type of thing with the big toe round one side and round the other side except it was a boot and it'd be an imprint in the mud two-toed boot, so you'd obviously know

05:30 the Japanese had been there. Anyhow he told me to go and find this good spot and, "I don't you to get into any trouble, I don't want anybody to see you and I don't want you to be firing any bullets or anything at all, all you've got to do is find the track." So we set out and all we could do was bush bash as we call it, just straight out bush bash, you physically pushed your way through the bush which you've got to be very careful you don't get lost because

06:00 you stick into spurs and if the spurs go round and round it's not hard to get lost and go round in circles. Took us a day and a half and finally heard voices and crept up and found this place overlooking this Kaiapit Track, a staging camp, a Japanese staging camp and there's about thirty-five of them there merrily cooking away, eating a meal and talking their heads off, having the time of their life and

06:30 just having a bit of a rest before they went on to fight the war somewhere else, wherever they're going, so we watched them for a while and I thought straightaway thought back to George's thing at Wau where he'd wait till the Japanese cook their meal and we'll kill them and this was an ideal spot. All I had

to do was roll a couple of grenades down the hill could have got the whole lot of them but I'd be in all sorts of shit with George if I'd have done that

07:00 so I didn't do it, we didn't do anything. We watched them and waited, waited till they left and we went back and I'd sketched out the whole of this map to to George, and bear in mind I don't call him George to his face, I mean he was always referred to as George

What did you call him to his face?

Oh maybe a Sir or something, there was no saluting, I hadn't saluted for ages. No, no saluting or anything like that but he did most of the talking anyhow

07:30 and we came back and I told him. I said, "I've found this place right?" I'd sketched it out for him and I said, "You'd have to call it Good View Junction because it's such a good place, it's a Good View Junction, such a good view of these Japanese." He said oh well done which is good coming from him, that's a big deal, and

08:00 he said, "Right thanks Wally, good work and have two days off." and I said yeah sure and ultimately it was on the maps, it was called Walpole's Track to Good View Junction which was to get quite a lot of publicity actually, there was an awful lot of fighting went on at Good View Junction not at this stage but later on so,

08:30 oh that's good, two days rest in the jungle was still two days rest, so the following morning George sent for me again and he said, "Wally there's some Americans landing at Tambu Bay." which is on the coast way over the other side of the track that I'd just already been, that's all we knew because we'd never been over there anyhow. He said, "There's some Americans going to be landing there and we're to send someone over

09:00 to liaise with them." he said, "I want you to go." and he said, "But you have to go on your own I can't afford to send anyone with you." and he said, "How do you get there?" and I said, "How would I know, I've never been there before." I said, "Well I'll go down that track that I found." which became Walpole's Track. I said, "I'll get down there but..." I said, "I won't be sure I won't be seen when I pass

09:30 over the track." and he said, "Well that's alright." but he said, "Don't come back that way because we may have started an attack there and all hell will break loose." he said, "You'll have to find another way back." and he said "If you leave." I've got my two days off but he said, "Two days off in the jungle didn't mean very much." It just meant you didn't fire any more bullets or a couple of bullets so anyhow he said it would be alright to go this morning.

10:00 I suppose that was the end of my two days off. I said yeah so I just took emergency rations with me cause you can't light a fire or anything so I just took some emergency rations and away I went and he said, "Oh, I'll give you a letter of introduction to whoever it might concern." He said, "See what you can find out about them." I said yeah so he said, "You should be back in about a week." He said, "Say two days there, two days back and three days there." something like that so

10:30 this is all unknown territory. I got to where was to be called Good View Junction and sure enough there's another lot of Japanese there having a ball and I waited till they left, crossed over the track and went on and it's pelting rain, the rain just never stopped raining, you're saturated all the time and I came up to a track which I knew in which general direction I was going anyhow,

11:00 and was to the side of the track and I kept going and around a corner came these two bloody Japanese talking their heads off and I thought, 'Oh Christ!' but they saw me and anyhow so I shot them both and dragged them off, threw them down the bottom of a dead tree so that their friends couldn't find them and fortunately they were just two walking on their own.

11:30 So I went on and on and on and on and on and about a day and a half later I heard more voices and I could hear this 'Goddam', that was the biggest recognition of all, 'Goddamn Goddam' every second word's 'Goddam' you know, so I stuck up and sure enough, coming up to this Tambu Bay where these Americans are and I'd seen beforehand, I'd seen a lot of cleared ridges,

12:00 ridges where you've got dense jungle are just absolutely clear of any jungle whatsoever and I couldn't work it out, but anyhow I came across this Yank [American], I'd seen this Yank sentry and I thought if I sort of say, 'hey I'm here' sort of thing he just might have a pot shot at me because he'd be trigger happy. He'd probably been told anyone you see out there who's a Japanese kill them sort of thing you know, so I looked around and I saw a couple more sentries

12:30 and I thought the best thing I can do is probably by-pass the sentries and get into amongst them and sort of talk to them so I did this, I by-passed the sentries and I thought God, sentries, if they were in our unit they wouldn't have lasted five minutes so I got in and there's a team of them talking there and I just sort of joined them and here they are all clean-clothed and everything and here am I all bedraggled, filthy, with a Tommy gun, a pistol and a knuckle- buster,

13:00 a knife on my belt. I mean I'm quite a contrast and I looked around and I just said to one of the Goddams, I said, "I'm supposed to liaise with someone here, I'm Australian." "Oh yeah, well we'll get the major." he said so they go and get the major and, oh yeah, the first thing they say is "Have you seen any Japs?" I said, "Yeah quite a few." "Yeah, where are they?" "They're out there." They'd always ask

have you seen

- 13:30 any Japs yeah and so they got the major, Al someone, major so and so call me Al. "Where you from, where are the rest of you?" I said, "I'm on me own." "On your own! Goddam why on your own?" I said, "Well because there's no-one else to send with me see?" "Have you seen any Japs?" "Oh yeah, quite a few I'd say." "Goddam!" they'd say so anyhow they took me in and to make a long story
- 14:00 shorter they gave me a meal which I couldn't eat because my stomach had shrunk. Anyhow they've got fresh meat, ice cream mixes there, they even had lights, they got portable generators and really had it made and they had three Howitzers which are short field guns and they were sort of advancing generally towards Salamaua and what they'd been doing was,
- 14:30 Al asked me what I'd been doing and I told him what we'd been doing, he said, "What do the commandos do?" and I said, "Kill as many Japanese as he can without being killed himself." He said, "I'll show you what we do in the morning." So what they've been doing is standing. Al he said to me, "You see that ridge over there?" I said, Oh yeah." He said, "Well someone said they thought they saw some Japanese over there." he said, so he just blasted away at that ridge with their Howitzers, cleared it like dust
- 15:00 and there's nothing there. He said, "Yeah we think they're all gone now." and they sent a noisy ten man patrol over there just to sort of to have a look at it doing that. We would have sent a two man patrol over to take it in the jungle, I mean it was just simple as that. "What do you think of that?" and I said, I wasn't game to tell him and I said, "Well, seems everyone seems to be happy I s'pose that's something isn't it?" and so I mean the Japanese
- 15:30 would have just run for their lives. There wouldn't be any Japanese there, they had more brains than that and he asked me how I got there and I told him that I'd by-passed his sentries. Didn't even worry him at all about me by-passing the sentries and I thought, 'God!' so I spent two days with them. I found out what they were doing and I went back and I came back and I got to this Kaiapit Track, the main track in question and I thought,
- 16:00 'What am I going to do here? I can't go back the way I come because I was told not to I don't know what's happened I don't know what happening.' so I just have to find another track, so I had a good look around. I waited till the following morning and I had a good look and one of the part of the track went to Salamaua, towards the Japanese main base and I walked down a little bit and walked round one bend and walked round another bend and there's another bend here, I'm glad I didn't check that, so I came back and
- 16:30 so I waited for awhile and I thought, 'Well I'd better go. Once I get across the track I'll be right.' So I took off to cross the track and once I left the jungle and the side I was on the track to go over, I was almost committed and I just walked and around the bend and in the track from the Salamaua end was what must have been around the bend that I couldn't see,
- 17:00 what appeared, a whole tribe of Japanese with three dogs leading them, talking away, laughing their heads off and having the time of their lives and I thought, 'Oh shit!' So I didn't want them to know where I was going and I couldn't escape cause they'd see me so I emptied my Tommy gun into them and I heaved two grenades into the mix of them and I took off for my life and I heard some of the dogs yelping and
- 17:30 a few screams and as I was taking off I heard this voice, this Australian voice say, "Over here mate, over here!" and I looked around and saw an arm waving and I thought, 'Shit!' so I got down, waddled over, crabbed, and bullets firing over my head and I came up to this makeshift trench and there were three Australians in it, not commandos, they were doing long range from
- 18:00 further down, infantry people and I got up out of the trench and a guy said almost admiringly he said, "Gees, I've never seen anyone move so fast." He said, "You got two of the dogs and quite a few Japs." He said, "We got the other dog." and he said, "But they've pissed off around the other bend." Excuse the language that's exactly what he said, so we got talking you know. This guy Don Rose from Melbourne, I became very friendly with him after the war and so
- 18:30 they were Middle East veterans, they were an infantry battalion where we'd been trying to cut off their supplies so I didn't couldn't tell him much of what I was doing but I said I want to get into that other side of the track without the Japanese knowing where I'm going. They said, "Well we'll wait here until you get across and if they appear we'll blow their heads off. We've done what we wanted to do. We're just going
- 19:00 back home anyway." and so I got into the other side and there were no shots fired and they must have shot through but I never know what the Japanese would think when they came round, there was no-one them waiting for them they probably wondered what happened to them I don't know, and I made my way back finally and to George, and I told George that I'd got to the place
- 19:30 evaded their sentries what have you and I told him about the Howitzers blowing the bloody thing off. I said, "They got it made, they're doing bugger all." and George said, "Yeah, that's what we thought, that's why we sent you over there." Anyhow I found out that poor old Al apparently got removed very smartly. They got put under a new command, the whole of the Americans they came under Australian command there, so George said,

- 20:00 "We're about to launch our attack on Good View Junction." and I said oh, and I thought, 'Well obviously I'll be going because I was the one that found it.' but he said, "I'll let you have a holiday Wally, go up to Salamaua OP (being Observation Post), go and have a holiday there." and I realised he didn't want me
- 20:30 on this attack because I knew the place, I mean other people could ask me about it and best they didn't know anything about it, so he got rid of me, so I went to the Salamaua OP which was a holiday for about a week and that was up a tree a hundred and fifty feet high up in the tree overlooking Salamaua and it was manned day or night, not by the couple of commandos there but was manned by about eight people. Had a radio there
- 21:00 and radioed back all the Japanese movements, shipping movements that they could see out to sea and you climb up this hundred and fifty foot high tree with a knot just cut into the tree trunk and pull yourself up with vines all the time, anyhow I got up there and I had two things. One when I was up there I found that I had ringworm tinea around my waist from my belt,
- 21:30 ringworm tinea just comes up like great big wheels and things and I found some over strength iodine that I almost burnt if off with this, burnt this thing off the skin but I remember I was up, my turn up this hundred and fifty foot, high up in the OP watching through powerful binoculars which brought it up, you almost touch everyone there and I remember watching rotten bloody Japanese coming out of what was apparently their
- 22:00 officers' mess drunk to the eyeballs and go out and pee against the side of the building and I remember saying, "The dirty bastards, too lazy to use a latrine." you know there was nothing I could do about it. I remember thinking that sort of thought. So then I thought well I wasn't happy there being such a shortage of commandos that I thought I'll soon get the message
- 22:30 to come back because George, he'd get, and sure enough the next lot of supplies that came, about a week, I was only up there about a week and it was mentioned for me to go back so I went back and George said, "You've put on weight Wally, you look fat." and I said, "Yeah a week, I'm not fat at all."

Had they attacked Good View Junction?

He had attacked n that week and there was big write-ups about Good Junction, he got a decoration, he got an MC [Military Cross],

- 23:00 the five of them got decorated for it and in the official report it said that the forward scout went down Walpole's Track, Good View Junction, the start of the ball rolling, he rolled a grenade down into these people and I thought I was going to roll three down there, but yeah they attacked, the five of them got decorated for it and it was quite a write-up in the paper, Good View Junction, so there at least I found it
- 23:30 anyhow and so we we just harried the Japanese. We had ambushes and yeah George made the announcement that we had the honoured Damien Parer, the famous photographer, actually he was going to come and live with us and make a documentary
- 24:00 on us which he did. Fabulous guy, real intrepid person, and he he made this made this film called 'Assault on Salamaua' which was supposed to be about our commando units and was shown in the theatrettes as they had in those days, great big war booster about these things, but he used to carry stuff with us and so forth and in his film he'd go out unarmed and just in cross fire
- 24:30 till ultimately he got himself killed somewhere filming a landing, somewhere he got himself killed, I mean he had a charmed life.

Could he keep up with you?

Yeah he'd lived with us, he was quite a guy yeah.

He must have been very fit then?

Yeah and George was very impressed. He wrote a letter to Mr. Curtin who was the [Australian] Prime Minister about it ,

- 25:00 got publicised, thank him for sending him up there but our own patrols had been cut off and we had to try to get food and supplies through them and Damien Parer, he'd help carry some of this stuff. He'd stop his film making and help, just become a labourer. He wasn't armed or anything like that but he was with us for quite some time and then
- 25:30 finally we were still niggling away and found out a lot of these things, you sort of find out after the war but we didn't know at the time, but found out after the war that two things. Firstly the Japanese thought that we were a force of five or six hundred people, that's what that's what they thought, which of course we weren't. We were way down in our two hundred and seventy odd numbers
- 26:00 and the Japanese commander there had received orders from Tokyo that he was to hold Salamaua at all costs, to the death, cause it was the most southern base that they had and he was to hold Salamaua to the death being the words, so we were sort of still out of Salamaua and we thought we'd

- 26:30 go into it. We also found out that instructions were issued that we weren't to enter Salamaua, that we were to keep fighting to attract as many Japanese reinforcements as we could from Lae which was further up the coast and the reason being that we know now, because there was going to a huge combined Australian/American landing at at Lae, Nadzab
- 27:00 at a later date and we were getting these people down of course, were just going to help make the landing more easy for them. Stuff us, they weren't worried about us, which was to make the make the landing a lot easier for them and well, they did this anyhow and finally one day we could see from where we were just down Bobdubi Ridge, we could see for miles, it was such a high place, this invasion
- 27:30 came in about three hundred odd planes, was the biggest allied plane thing that ever ever been on in the South West Pacific. Three hundred planes came in and they landed a regiment of American paratroopers that took the airfield and then they landed the whole of the Australian 7th Division by plane there in Lae and Nadzab and this is why we're supposed to have pulled most of these people down, and according to figures we did too, we pulled about over three thousand reinforcements
- 28:00 at Lae area down and that's sort of demoralised the Japanese that, well I s'pose I couldn't give a hang about demoralising 'em but must have been a bit unsettlin' for 'em and we could hear them at night sort of leaving Salamaua, departing by boat. There was nothing we could do about it and then they had huge barges that they used to tow,
- 28:30 about seventy or eighty Japanese per barge, tow them out and we just used to hope that there'd be some navy outside there waiting to sink them and then we gradually moved into Salamaua and there was no-one there. We took it.

Was that a surprise?

Well in the end yeah, they just left one night. We're fighting this night and the next day we moved in and it's all gone so.

How long

29:00 **did you stay there?**

We stayed there because everything sort of happened at at once. Oh, the units had a lot of accolades written about it, famous never before as such, I've still got these things written right left and centre that never had so much been done you know, and we had the highest of priority to

- 29:30 be evacuated as a whole unit which we were, we were evacuated down the coast, what there was of us. We started off with two hundred and ninety when we hit Wau and we lost sixty-five killed, about a hundred odd wounded and a couple
- 30:00 of hundred evacuated through illness and the only reason that we were still operating was because we'd had reinforcements, because that adds up to a lot more than two hundred and ninety and there were only thirty-four of us who left Salamaua and who landed at Wau rather, thirty-four that still made it and so there we went oh long story we're...

30:30 **Were you wanting to be evacuated at this point?**

Well we were a bit scruffy. We hadn't eaten, we'd been starved you know. You see all these people sort of eating, you're not used to, you hadn't eaten, we hadn't eaten. We used to go three or four days without food you know and it's very difficult under those circumstances and continually wet, had this ringworm tinea see. Disease, we had nothing

- 31:00 for malaria and it was bloody awful. I mean didn't realise, skinny as rakes you know, I mean what do you expect? They talk about our casualties, you know all the casualties we had and ask, well we needed a good feed you know, and still had the clothing and your clothes were rotten. We didn't have any new clothes and still had the original guns. The main thing was looking after your weapons all the time, make sure that your weapons were...
- 31:30 your weapon was a bigger friend than than the food and you sort of you don't need the food so we gradually came home and got on a boat, we got taken up to the Atherton Tablelands and we were fed reasonably well there. Of course there's a lot of locally grown food but we couldn't eat it, just couldn't stomach it, your stomach had shrunk too much, you just couldn't eat a lot of it, but gee, you just couldn't, not that you disliked
- 32:00 it, you couldn't have it, your stomach wouldn't take it, and they decided to send us all straight on leave.

Did you go back to Melbourne?

I went back to Melbourne, on a trip back to Melbourne on a train. Got to Melbourne went to see my people and lived it up. Girls, girls, girls, everywhere it was absolutely fantastic and a month's leave and oh God, everyone worrying, one of the main troubles that I found

- 32:30 was people want to know what you've been doing in detail and you found it sort of, a bit not coy but didn't want to be boastful or anything like that you know, it was hard to talk, you're speaking to

someone who wouldn't know what you're talking about anyhow, like the the dogs barking at you and all that, see there's a few stories like the two Japanese that I shot, you know the pelting rain, heat belting down and ten feet

33:00 down a rotten tree sort of thing, like that's all part of it. A bloke got his buttocks carved off, still never forgiven the Japanese for that. Never forgotten them for that carving, he's just one I saw that I happened to know who it was, and so I finished up my father had taken me out to meet a few of his friends and I started to do it in reverse, I'd call my conversation piece and I'd get in first, say something. 'G'day, how're things, what've you been up to?"

33:30 and I'd been reading the paper, I'd say a few things from the paper and change the subject about it and then that upset them for a little bit and 'Assault on Salamaua' came out and that of course really upset them. "Oh you should go and see 'Assault on Salamaua' that's all about our commando unit." and that was that.

So were you allowed to talk freely about what you'd been doing?

Oh basically even though we'd signed

34:00 the Official Secrets Act it seemed to be a little bit more forgotten, after all I mean they were desperate times put it that way, they were really desperate times. Even the people back home before as I said, with the war in Europe hadn't affected Australia but this had affected, everyone had someone at war, had a relative or someone and they had food rationing that sort of hit, food rationing, clothes rationing, they knew there was a war on

34:30 and they were worried about all their loved ones or relatives that were doing something and had sort of really hit them, but I think it initially it got really crook. I think people don't know how bloody close the Japanese came to getting to Australia you know, how ral people don't really realise this, I don't think like the Battle of Coral Sea and so forth

35:00 which stopped the Japanese coming down. They were primed you know. Anyhow we didn't' talk about a lot, a lot of people apparently, I wasn't one of them, a lot of people apparently from the unit and I only talk about unit because that's all I had anything to do with, the 3rd Independent Company commando unit, I didn't know anyone in other units because I hadn't been in any other units,

35:30 a lot of the guys there just wanted to get back of leave or stuck to themselves when they found they couldn't mix with people. I didn't have any trouble with that at all, mixing with people, but you just sort of you know sort of talking and with 'Assault on Salamaua' OK, that was a good, how you going to go, want to go and see that, I'd say and then after about oh ten days, one morning I didn't appear and my mother came in and couldn't wake me

36:00 and didn't know what had happened but what had happened was I had death threatening malaria at the time, I was really crook [ill] so an ambulance came and took me to hospital, out to Heidelberg Military Hospital. Malaria hits different people in different ways. It hit me going completely out to it, you're shaking well you don't know this, I've seen people that's how I know,

36:30 you're dead set out of this world but you shake uncontrollably, you're so cold then after a while it breaks and you sweat like a pig, people trying to sort of give you liquids and wipe your body down and yeah what have you and it takes as I say, wearing, as in weight loss and all this sort of thing. It takes a lot out of you cause you're not eating

37:00 for a couple of days and you used to take, cause this kept hitting me for ages, lasts for about five days at a time or did with me and...

How long were you in hospital?

Oh I was in hospital for about the next ten months on and off but this was in January, went away October, we came back, I was in hospital for about, oh in and out till about July next year, eight, nine months

37:30 and it affects people different ways and I kept getting it but I was in hospital when I was out, sort of came out of it, they put me in a in a... what is... they had an internal radio station and they wanted me to help out there which was quite a nice little job. You just go down and help out at the radio station. They had their own

38:00 theatrette. I remember singing a song there once, used to help organise the artists for, the whole Heidelberg Military Hospital was like a little city, it was such a huge place like they had Concord [Hospital] here I think it was Heidelberg in Melbourne and now I get another attack and another attack and another attack and then one day I'd had an attack I was in bed, and the doctor, a Doctor Marks they used to call him, came in and said, "There's a big march through Melbourne next

38:30 next Thursday or Friday." whatever and I said oh yeah. He said, "Think you'll be going." and I said, "Sure, sure, sure." and he said, "Yeah, well you will." I said, "Who's going to carry me?" He said, "Oh we'll carry you." Anyhow so had this march, the first march through Melbourne, the 17th Infantry Brigade which these three guys that that I'd met, they were from the 17th Infantry Brigade and our commando unit,

- 39:00 what was left of them was marching through Melbourne, big march through Melbourne and so anyhow came the morning of this march and they did me up and put me on a thing and made a sign, 'Brian. A commando from the 2/3rd Independent Company' on the head of my bedstead and this guy said, Sandra a young nurse, "Sandra's yours for the day today Brian." I said oh, she was a lovely bird too but she had some lunch made and they gave me two bottles to
- 39:30 pee in, in case I wanted to pee which I needed later on, I had a few drinks and there was six of us went in it. I didn't know who the others were, they weren't from my unit and bunged into an ambulance and Sandra kept saying, "You alright Brian, you alright?" I said yeah. Ambulance siren goes, into Melbourne and next thing doors opened, two lady drivers, cause they were all female drivers in those days, put in front of the Town Hall there and all the dignitaries there,
- 40:00 "Hello Brian." they've got your name stuck up, read your name off and anyhow they had the march past and there's Sandra screaming out, "There's your mob Brian they're coming now!" bands playing and what have you and I hear the loudspeaker say, a couple of people in front of the Town Hall or something, and so the march finished and a couple of people came over and some of them handed us drinks
- 40:30 "You had a drink?" "Yes sure." Sandra said, "Do you think you can drink?" and I said, "Yeah of course." so I had a few drinks and the next thing I hear this voice, "What the fuck are you doing here Wally?" and it's George Warfe. He'd marched with the 3rd in the march and...

Tape 3

00:38 If we could just pick up the...

Yeah we were just having a drink there and the next thing I hear's, "What the fuck are you doing here Wally?" I looked up and it's George Warfe and he said he'd been leading the march. He said, "I heard them muttering about there being a commando here." He said, "What are you doing here?" and we chatted

- 01:00 for a while and Sandra and all the onlookers when the march had finished they perked up they were given their value listening to the conversation. We reminisced about a few things and he had a huge flask that we had a couple of drinks and few more drinks and he said he'd recommended me to go to officer training course and very heavily he said, "I recommended you go to officer training what's happened?" I said, "Well I'm here." and
- 01:30 he said, "Oh well, you will soon be going because I put in the highest recommendation for you to go to officer training course." so he hung around a while and said, "Wally I've got to go," he said, "There's all sorts of aftermath meetings and this sort of crap I've got to go to." I said alright so we said good bye and that was that and Sandra and the onlookers their eyes opened and we we took it and we had quite a few
- 02:00 more drinks with the people. As I say just as well they'd given me two bottles to pee in because I needed it, I was thankful for it, and back in the ambulance and the sirens were screaming back to the hospital and I kept getting attacks for some time until I was told that, Doctor Markey, was the doctor superintendent treating me, he said, "We decided to send you to the convalescent depot up at Ballarat." He said, "They've got a camp hospital
- 02:30 and also a general hospital if you still get crook." and Ballarat is a very cold, country town and they thought the climate sort of might be good I s'pose, that's their story anyway. So I went up to the convalescent home and found my way around, went into town and had a look around and I had a ball in between still bouts of
- 03:00 malaria, I had a ball because I realised that there were no eligible men in Ballarat. They'd all gone to the war and you got wives, widows, fiancés, girls, girls, all girls and no blokes and invitations were just absolutely enormous and I had a ball, girls everywhere and that's not part of the story is it?
- 03:30 **It's all part of the story.**
- Well I mean anyhow I had all these girls that it got such an extent that the colonel in charge of the convalescent depot, he told someone one day, he said, "Look you're too sick to go to this party that Mrs so and so's rung me up and said she wants you to go." he said, "So I s'pose I'll have to let you go." that's the sort of place it was.
- 04:00 Anyhow I spent a couple of months in Ballarat and I have written that it was just hectic what's going on. I had so many girls it was just unbelievable I'm not, there were no blokes there, that's what it boiled down to, didn't matter the girls and they didn't know each other so you're flitting from here to here here and the invitations everywhere until finally
- 04:30 I was classified medically (UNCLEAR) I was classified medically to from A1 to B2.

What does that mean?

Well A1 of course is A1. B2 is downgraded your medical category A categorisation, it means you're not fit to do all sorts of things, no it means I wasn't fit for action again and means I wouldn't be going back to my unit

- 05:00 and they also told me that I wouldn't be going to officer training course because there'd be no point me going there seeing they were downgrading me to B2.

What were you hoping to do at this point?

I was going back to my unit to the 3rd Independent Company, I was going back there ultimately and so that just hit me, just really hit me and I didn't know what to do and I thought I

- 05:30 can't stay here, and I'll be crude when I say this, because I've written this in my book word for word and this is how I thought that two things. One I was fucked, because there was nothing more that I could do and two if I stayed in Ballarat I was either going to fuck myself to death or drink myself to death or both and that's what I've written. Not being bad language that's exactly what I thought. I thought well I just have to do something so what can I do, and I thought well no point,
- 06:00 I can do in the army, that's had it, so I decided I'd try to join the air force and they had a recruiting depot in Ballarat so I applied to join the air force. Filled in all the forms and cheated a bit, manoeuvred a bit, and...

What could you do about your medical classification?

Two different services, I don't know, I don't know, I'm trying, I'm trying, I'm trying, they don't know

- 06:30 you've got to take it on, but I went to the recruiting office with my application form and if you ever had malaria was one dead set question and I thought well if I lie I'm going to be in strife so I can't lie so I put yes, and then it says, have you still got malaria, has anything happened, and I thought, oh Christ so I didn't put any answer down you see and when I gave it to the the clerk at the recruiting office he's going through different papers
- 07:00 as typical clerk sort of thing and he said, "You haven't done this properly. You've had malaria, that's alright." he said, "Well you haven't got malaria now have you?" and I said no and I didn't have malaria either right then so he he ticked all these things himself so I'd filled in the thing and I hadn't told a lie see, not basically, so I filled that in and just had to wait so then I got
- 07:30 told they were sending me back to Heidelberg Hospital in Melbourne because I had some new treatment and so back I go to Heidelberg Hospital in Melbourne and my attacks are starting to wane and they give me some new treatment and they saw that it was doing some good but I thought that time itself, I'd been having it now for nine months, that time itself it was starting to wear out a bit or out of my system a bit and I resumed my own associations with the
- 08:00 at the hospital with the staff. I had a little nook there that I used to be able to carry on with and had quite a ball in the hospital and then finally I was told that I was going back into the real world, into the army, but I was transferred to Victoria Barracks

How did you get transferred from the air force to the army?

Oh no I'm still in the army. I've applied for the air force.

Oh I see, sorry.

I've applied for the air force. I'm still in the army. I've applied for the air force I'm still in the army. I've been transferred to Victoria Barracks

- 08:30 which is the end as a clerk or some bloody thing, so I get to go to Victoria Barracks. So at Victoria Barracks, just there for a short time and I hear from the air force, come and see them, I'm accepted into the air force and I'm accepted into the air force A1 category, fighter training, fighter pilot only, which suited me fine, I thought that's marvellous, training fighter in the war, right so this is good. Just got to wait
- 09:00 till all the papers come through and there wasn't any difficulty unless some snag comes up, they don't exchange records this is the whole thing. They don't exchange medical records for my new application.

Would the army let you go?

Yeah oh I was useless, I'm useless.

They didn't want to hold you as a clerk?

No oh that should be alright. Anyway so I'm still in the army and I'm accepted into the air force. So then one day at Victoria Barracks this guy Tony Ruth came to see me. He

- 09:30 called round, nice guy six foot six, big guy, parachute wings. "Brian how are you?" he said, "What are

you doing here?" and I said, "What's it look like?" you know and he said, "George Warfe told me I should see you." and I said, "Oh how is he?" and exchanged notes and he said, "Look have you heard anything about special operations?" and I said, "No not much." and he said, "Well special operations

- 10:00 we do special things and what I hear from George you'd be ideal for our type of work." and I said, "Well tell me more about it." He said, "I can't until you join us." he said, "I can't tell you anything about it it's as simple as that." I said, "Anyhow, you talking about the jungle?" and he said yeah and I said, "No," I said, "I've had my bit of the jungle." I said, "I've just been accepted into the air force, I'll fly planes, go home every night, drink grog [alcohol], girls," I said, "Marvellous, thanks very much."
- 10:30 see, so he said, "Oh well." he said, "I'll tell you what. If you ever change your mind here's a phone number, it's a secret phone number you can ring it twenty-four hours," he said, "If you change your mind let me know." I said alright so he took me out and had a couple of drinks and that was that. Got into the air force, discharged from the army B2, joined the air force the following day, exactly the following day, continued service, A1, kitted out in the air force uniform I was sent
- 11:00 down to Point Cook with the air force so in the air force they went easy on me with rookie training because I'd been there and done that. They knew that but anyhow I'm there for four weeks and we was all trainee pilots, I was a training pilot. I won't say they're younger than me but they looked younger than me because I looked like an old man at this stage and
- 11:30 we got called in and all air crew training had been stopped, no air crew training and I could convert to join to form general duties, ground staff duties you see, and I said no, I only enlisted for air crew. You either enlist for one or the other they can't compel you to do the other one. I said, no I'm not going to bloody ground staff, wasn't what I wanted to do and I called into the
- 12:00 CO's office cause I wore a ribbon, got to have bloody ribbons now, don't have them but I had a ribbon to distinguish myself that at least I wasn't a rookie airman that I'd been somewhere you know and done some, and the CO, he was obviously a returned bloke himself, he had pilots wings up and he said oh ,talking to him he said "Would like you to go over to
- 12:30 ground staff?" and I said no. He said, "What are you going to do?" and I told him about this guy Tony Luth who'd come to me to go as special operations and he gave me this special number if ever I changed my mind. I said, "I think I might ring him." and he said, "Have you got the number with you?" and I said yes so he said, "Well ring it." gave me the phone and I rang. Got straight through no problem and I got onto Tony Luth and he said, "Are you
- 13:00 sure you want to?" sort of and I said yes. He said, "Alright you are you with the CO?" Yes. Put him onto the CO they had a talk together they both knew various things in the Middle East though one was in the army one was in the air force they had similar things in the Middle East and Tony Luth, said "Yeah well don't worry, you'll be out, we'll have you back in a couple of days." Two days later I'm back in the army A1 and I'm in that special unit.
- 13:30 **How far advanced was your training in the air force then?**
- Hardly at all, most of us, I hadn't flown a plane, my category was AC2 which is air crew, AC2 pilot, fighter pilot that's on my papers so no I didn't fly a plane no, so I was in back into the army and to special operations see
- 14:00 so I had to meet Tony Luth at a place in Domain Road in South Yarra Melbourne and it was a house they had called Harbury, the next day which I did so I called in there. Good to see you and different world too, oh well to most services. I'd been lucky during my whole time in the service I had no yes sir, no sir, crap anyway and I got used to that
- 14:30 and so he said, "What do I know about it?" and I said no so I didn't know anything. He said, "Well we operate generally behind Japanese lines and try to create similar to the special operations executive that the Poms had in Europe, operating behind the enemy lines to try to create mayhem by whatever means we can, whether it's guerrilla warfare, sabotage, inciting the locals do any dirty
- 15:00 tricks as we possibly can." and oh that's alright. He said, "You have to sign the Official Secrets Act." and I said "Yeah well I've been there and done that." and he said, "Yeah well we're fair dinkum about the Official Secrets." which they were too and so I said that's that's no problem so I signed the Official Secrets Act and he said, "We have several cover names." and one was Services Reconnaissance Department
- 15:30 SRD or Z Special Unit and called different names in different places, depends where you happen to be at the time and so he introduced me to a couple of people and we went out and had a couple of drinks and he said, "Well the first thing, we've got places all around Australia, we have a base up at Fraser Island on the Queensland coast." I said, "I've heard of it but I've never been there."
- 16:00 and he said, "We have a jungle school up there, jungle warfare school but we'll send you up there to start with, but we won't teach, they've got commando training up there, listen we won't teach you any of that cause there'd be no point in that you've been there and done that but there's a lot of new toys that we've got and things that you might learn, languages, things, and see what you think of it and we'll send you up there to start with." so

- 16:30 I said alright and he said, "You'll find a lot of strange people up there." and I said oh well, not knowing anything about it and he said "We've got quite a few people who worked up in various places before the war and as the Japanese came down they left or evacuated themselves down." He said the plan'd be ideal to for them to,
- 17:00 theoretically they know the area, they've lived there, they know the area, know the locals, speak the language and to go back with a couple of guerrilla type of people or something a couple of operatives and do sort of various things they'll be a great deal of help. He said, "So we've got quite a few people up there." I said oh yeh but generally speaking that wasn't
- 17:30 to work out, sounded an ideal thing to work out but these people were generally bloody useless, anyhow so I went up there to Fraser Island and I did find some of these people that they hadn't had any military training and they'd been given some sort of rank which was more than I had, no rank at all but in Z Special Unit you're rank didn't matter that much because if you're going on operation you had the prerogative of refusing to
- 18:00 go on an operation without any causing any sort of strife or anything or damages as I had two two people for proper reasons I said I wouldn't go on an operation with him again in a fit sort of thing you know and for a particular reason I'll tell you about later when it comes to the the time but they had these these people and in the
- 18:30 main they were Poms and not that there's anything wrong with Poms, don't get me that wrong, but there are Poms and Poms and these were sort of the the egotistic, would be pompous Poms, and so forth which to my experience, I did have experience with them it turned out that they were completely and utterly useless. Anyhow went up to Fraser Island and I learnt you know
- 19:00 about our folboats [folding boats] which we had, which were two man submersible canoes and went out on several things with these things. I didn't do any of the commando training because there's nothing for me, their course was pussy foot stuff compared to what we'd had at Wilson's Promontory beforehand which was certainly as I said the toughest I'd ever seen in the army, would leave any of these other things for dead.

What were the new toys he was talking about?

- 19:30 Oh new toys, right, well the new toys, there was one which was plastic high explosive, which was like plasticine, it was very good, we'd sort of only known about TNT and dynamite and these sort of things. Plastic high explosives was just like plasticine, you could carry it anywhere you wanted, blow something up, you could mould it around it but it was very safe. If you fired a bullet into it it wouldn't explode or anything like that and
- 20:00 it wouldn't catch fire and the only way it'd explode was to put a detonator in it and sort of blow it up so it was very safe but very, very powerful and we had other toys, well I'm used to the old Tommy gun which is the American Tommy gun which used .45 ammunition,
- 20:30 the .45 is a very heavy bullet, I mean all the ammunition you're carrying is a lot heavier and it had a lot of working parts a Tommy gun. We had no choice at the time, a lot of working parts and in the jungle you had to keep it meticulously clean, very be very careful no dirt got into it and so forth. Well they had two, one which had a
- 21:00 Sten gun on an Austin sub machine gun and they had the Owen gun which became my baby. Owen gun was invented by an Australian called Owen, a sub machine gun and it had practically no working parts whatsoever and we still keep it clean but it wouldn't jam as much as you'd expect the old Tommy gun which had so many working parts, so the Owen gun and it fired a
- 21:30 nine millimetre bullet which is a far more lighter bullet to carry and that's another toy and the Sten gun sub machine gun had a silencer on it. You could use that if you wanted to but it took some of its effectiveness away from it, but it had a silencer on it, fire a burst just go 'fft' that's all that you would hear. A rod pistol which was a silenced pistol, you could fire that, that's for silent killing
- 22:00 just fire it go 'fft' that's all you'd hear, nothing more than that and oh I'm sorry

I think we've got a good idea

Learnt a couple of languages.

Oh, tell me about your languages?

Well learnt Malay a bit of sea Dayak and a bit of Mandarin, smattering of Mandarin but later I was

- 22:30 to speak Malay and sea Dayak fluently later on sort of thing, when I was on operations I was speaking it all the time and at school I had quite a good ear for languages anyhow and I'd be speaking to the locals and lose a word as long as you got on with the locals presently you'd sort of say something and they'd fill the word in for you help you along with a word. With
- 23:00 the sea Dayak who I was to have a lot to do with later on, only most of them only spoke sea Dayak but Malay was a common language. For instance Malay/Indonesian it's only called Indonesian since

Indonesia came into being, that used to all speak Malay, it was a fairly common language right through the whole of that the area of the islands but there were more secret weapons to come and

- 23:30 anyhow they finished there, the folboats, and I finished there and the message came up that I was to go across to Leyburn Air Base which is out at Brisbane and become a trainee parachutist, so I went out to Leyburn and did my jumping there and got some parachute wounds, so I was told to come back to Melbourne
- 24:00 priority, and we were ready to go out, we already had a secret secret number to ring. If you ever got into trouble anywhere, even when you were on leave or something, a cop picked you up, you could always supposedly say ring this number and get you out of the trouble but I got pulled up in a plane. Plane travel was priority travel I mean planes just not like now I mean in wartime priority planes. I remember once I was waiting for a plane I'd been booked on,
- 24:30 the special unit booked me on and I had all my papers and this colonel with his aide came racing up, obviously wanted to get on board the plane and here I am still only a private; anyhow I had no military insignia and this day he said, "Well we're getting on the plane, simple as that, we're getting on the plane." and the air force people said, "Well the plane's booked out sorry." he said, "Well I
- 25:00 have priority." he looked around, I was the only bunny you see, looked at me and he said, "Who's he?" and they checked and said he has a very high priority and he so he came up to me and said, "What's your priority soldier?" and I said, "I beg your pardon?" you know got more annoyed and repeated himself, "What's your priority?" I said, "I don't know I've just been booked on this, just carry out instructions." so he sort of carried on "And what's your name?" I told him Brian Walpole
- 25:30 "Oh, what unit?" I said, "I'm not at liberty to say." so he carried on. I said, "Well I've been told by my superiors to give you this phone number to ring, you ring this phone number up it'll be explained to you see." Anyway apparently he raced off and I found out later he rang the number and he got himself very, very quickly put in his place. They just had priority here, priority there, anyhow so I got flown back to Melbourne.

You said you got

- 26:00 **injured on the parachute, were you...?**

No, no not injured no, see after I was telling you about the priority that we had...

Oh yeah, sorry

Priority

Sorry I misheard you before I thought you said you were...?

Oh no no, with the parachute I did five jumps and I was issued with my parachute wings and so I walked proudly with my parachute wings on that and cause people would say what unit are you, you wouldn't say that you were in no unit and they'd just wonder cause I still had

- 26:30 as a told you I was still wearing my commando colour patch, he said you may as well wear your commando colour patch cause it's a well known unit, the light blue, it's on the beret up there you see, that's the colour patch that was worn, so I wore that, it was as a colour patch and parachute wing people wonder what you're doing with that you see so I was sent back to Melbourne and I was sort of on leave again, this is nice for a living you get paid
- 27:00 special pay for being in special operations, not that I'd been on an operation and then Tony Luth said, "Brian we've got a new, very, very secret weapon." he said, "This is very, very secret, no-one knows about it." and I said yeah. He said, "It's special, it's a one man submarine and we have another base over in in Garden Island or
- 27:30 Fremantle and we're sending you over there to do this course see." you know I went right, so I went for a long trip to Perth which of course in those days it's a huge long way to travel, and priority travel, I got to Perth and we finished up at Careening Bay which is on Garden Island out of Perth, out of Fremantle
- 28:00 and Garden Island being part naval base but this was a secret special base been built up for this one man submarine and so only a few people there, I met a couple of people going to do the course. None of us knew about it and then they had further tests which they should have done before that, there were two no-no's for instance
- 28:30 one if you suffered from claustrophobia which a lot of people did, if you stuck your head underwater obviously you're no good for a one man submarine and the other one was that if you had false teeth you were no good because you had to hold a breathing apparatus in your mouth and you couldn't do it with with false teeth, so we moved into into Careening Bay which had this special new camp and
- 29:00 the following morning we were to have our introduction to this very, very secret one man submarine so the one man submarine which was to be the next day turned out to be, it was called and we all called it, nearly all these things had a name, these were called Sleeping Beauties because they were undetectable, no-one could detect them. No underwater radar could detect them or anything at all,

- 29:30 Sleeping Beauties. The Sleeping Beauty, it's about twelve feet long, was made of aluminium and light steel and the pilot sat in it, one man pilot sat in it like a canoe type of, not covered in, no periscope, they were not covered in and
- 30:00 the motor was a starter motor out of the Morris car and it was powered by two ordinary car batteries. It had two forward gears and a reverse gear and it could do about, top speed do about three and a half knots, had hydroplanes and ballast tanks so that you could
- 30:30 sink it and took it in the water and the pilot wore a type of rubberised diving suit which covered him except for his hands and on his head he had a special pair of goggles which he could see through and a nose clip and the breathing apparatus was from, it was called a Davis Escape
- 31:00 Apparatus which a conventional submarine carried in those days in case they were grounded on the sea bed somewhere that the crew would have a chance of escaping, that they could get out of a hatch somewhere and use this Davis Escape Apparatus which'd give them something to breath while they shot to the surface. What waited for them on the surface was another story and this breathes pure oxygen,
- 31:30 it'd be pure oxygen, a snorkel scuba diver's use compressed air, you're talking air. This is pure oxygen that you're re-breathing it through a re-breather which had a a protus[?] or canister protus or a chalk like substance, your expelled air would go through it and theoretically be purified then it would come back in and you would re-breathe it and give yourself a shot of fresh oxygen
- 32:00 from the tank. No-one ever told us the dangers of breathing pure oxygen, we weren't told this, there's a lot of dangers of breathing pure oxygen and also particularly if you dive to a certain depth that unbeknown the ocean is made up of atmospheres which is something I didn't know and every fifteen feet's a different atmosphere and everything sort of becomes different, the pressures all become
- 32:30 become different and you shouldn't breath oxygen somewhere below fifty feet but no-one ever told us that and they didn't want to tell us I don't think, so they didn't tell us and so you're not leaving any air bubbles behind because you're re-breathing your same air and they gave us a test where the idea was you get into the Sleeping Beauty and adjust the
- 33:00 hydroplanes, put it in reverse, you'd come straight down backwards, turn the motor off then trim the ballast tanks until you're equal buoyancy under the water and then you put it in forward gear and away you go, up and down with the hydroplanes and to move it had a illuminated compass, an illuminated depth gauge and an illuminated seven
- 33:30 day clock. I don't know why a seven day clock but, cause you wouldn't be in the water for seven days. Maybe they were cheap to buy at the time or something like that and to find your way well you had your compass but you could come up and surface and go on the surface and look where you're going or the most popular way was what we called porpoising, and whether it was day or night you put the bow of the Sleeping Beauty towards the surface
- 34:00 and even at day and night it's reflected on the bottom, underneath of the water, and just as the two were about to meet and image and the thing, you'd put it into dive and you'd adjust it so that just your eyes would come out of the water and you could see which direction you're going and that was called porpoising and they gave us a test apparently to let us know
- 34:30 what it was like sort of when you're drowning, or if you're breathing crook air and i's they'd take you for a walk, they take this protus or canister which purified the bad air, they'd take that off and two escorts would hold each arm, your arm, you'd walk along re-breathing the same air until you finally collapsed because you're breathing poisoned air or the same air and it
- 35:00 was just to give you an idea of what the feeling was like and this feeling absolutely incredible. I know with me when I was just obviously just about to collapse and the guy went to pull the breathing thing out of my mouth and I got a whiff of fresh air and came to and whatever I'd been dreaming it was such a fantastic dream that I tried to drop him, throwing a punch at him you know he was taking something away from me. It's just
- 35:30 sort of amazing what it would be like you know with drowning or something like that, once you finally get to that stage you're that sort of poisoned so I had...

How long was this training?

I was probably there for nearly a month so I wanted a pilot in the air force but a one man submarine pilot so I said to myself at least I'm a pilot anyhow so I became a qualified one man

- 36:00 submarine pilot and I didn't do any jobs on the one man sub but I became qualified on the submarine. I had a few affairs in Perth. I had had a run in, people on the mainland would say where are you from, what are you doing? We used to say, new mobile laundry just across on the mainland there, just special new mobile laundry equipment we're trying out. Oh right
- 36:30 you know, no-one knew what you were doing. I don't know, I had an affair of the heart there with of all cases a private detective. This interest you or not? I met this bird, this girl, Mavis Macker, she was a beautiful girl and this is just while we're still on the one man submarine course and this is in Perth. I

met her when I went into Perth. We had plenty of leave, had no problem getting leave

- 37:00 anyway she took me up to King's Park which is a beautiful park yeah and we had a rug and we had some grog, we had something to eat and beautiful night and we went up there and we're doing what normal people do, you know just having a nice time and I got this feeling that someone's watching me and in the jungle my mind had been so tuned all the
- 37:30 time ,you know had to be on alert a hundred per cent, was only room for the quick or the dead. You had to be in front all the time and I got this feeling and sure enough I looked, I could see something happening just in the vision so I said to Mavis I said, "Look I'm sure I saw someone. You just keep on chatting away and I'll go round and see what is happening." so she's chirping away there and I went round
- 38:00 and came and sure enough there's a guy there, he's got got what turned out to be a camera with a telescopic lens in flat (UNCLEAR) line you see, anyway I jumped him real commando style, jumped him, put a death lock on him and kicked his knees from underneath him and I said, "You bastard, what are what are you doing?" He couldn't talk you know so I let him talk. I said, "If you scream your head off I'll knock you rotten!" so anyhow I let him get his thing off and he said, "What's this?" I said,
- 38:30 "What's your name and what are you looking for?" and he said he's a private detective and I said, "What the hell are you doing here?" See this Mavis wasn't married or anything it wasn't (UNCLEAR), she's still chirping away down there and I said, "Hey Mavis come up here and look what I've got." so she came up and grabbed his torch shone his bloody torch on him and got his thing and it turns out that he's whingeing around, his name's Alfred R. Sleep, he's a private detective
- 39:00 and he'd been in all the papers. Mavis said, "Yeah I know the creep, he's always in the papers giving evidence, divorce evidence about you know Mrs so and so was found with Mr so and so." and I said, "What the bloody hell are you doing here?" "I made a mistake, I made a mistake!" he said. I said, "You made a big mistake!" Thump! So, "Let me go!" he's cringing and I said, "Who are you looking for?" He said well so and so so I have
- 39:30 (UNCLEAR) in my bag, so he showed me who and I said, "We don't look anything like those people." "No I made a mistake." So I said, "Lady looks like quite a nice lady." This is the lady that he was sort of looking for and anyhow I had a look through the papers and it appeared that her husband thought that she was on with Major so and so, some army bloke you see and he thought he could get some evidence. He was just about to take a few photos see and I said, "Well I want you to
- 40:00 offer to give me all these papers." He said, "Why would I do that?" and I said, "Well you do want to do that don't you?" I gave him a thump so he offered them to me and I said, "I'm going to ring the lady up and tell her." he said, "Oh don't do that." I said yeah. So anyhow I gave him I gave him another thump and sent him on his way, told him. I said, "Apologise to the lovely lady." and he said, "What'll I call her?" I said, "Just call her lovely lady."
- 40:30 and he apologised and he said, "What's your name?" I said, "Look all you need to remember about me is that if you see me in the street ,cross over the other side of the road that'd be the best thing for you to do." and then I said to him, "Why aren't you in the army?" and he said, "Oh I'm medically classified B2." and I burst out laughing. I said, Yeah well, we could do something about that if you wanted to."

Tape 4

- 00:31 **Brian tell me how your next overseas posting came about then?**

Well after one man submarines I was sent back to Melbourne again and told that we were going north, you know where you're going or what you're going to do, we were not told because what you don't know you can't tell someone else, and it'd be a secret job.

- 01:00 So we weren't told to the last minute what we were going to do so I left Melbourne and I finished up at Morotai which is up in the islands. There was a huge allied base there. We'd already taken Morotai and from Morotai we were there for a short time and the Japanese still had half the island but that was nothing because there was a huge base there they were just left there to starve themselves to death and
- 01:30 I was told we were going for a trip on board the Tiger Snake. Now Tiger Snake is... several boats the special unit had. They were called snake boats after venomous snakes. There was the Tiger Snake, Black Snake, River Snake, and they were boats especially made, the Tiger Snake was made in Melbourne to resemble Japanese type luggers so they could safely stay
- 02:00 in waters up there and not get any attention. Had the proper sails and all this sort of thing but they did have concealed armament and so forth so I was going aboard Tiger Snake. Six of we operatives were going aboard Tiger Snake and where we didn't know, weren't told where we were going. We had our personal weapons and so forth and so we got on it and we found that

- 02:30 all we were doing, we were joining the invasion fleet that was going to Labuan which was a huge invasion. That was actually invading Labuan, the navy invaded, the American, the whole lot. We were not part of it, we were just joining the fleet, so we sailed with them under motor not under sail and Snake Boat's a very interesting boat, it's a very, I'll show you later on if you want,
- 03:00 and we we stood off Labuan and watched while they shelled the thing out and then the troops went in and landed on Labuan and they occupied Labuan and when it was all safe which was strange for us, we were told to go ashore. We were given Z Special Unit SRD, we were given a camp area near an old cemetery and we found
- 03:30 that we six officers were to be a special detachment for the 9th Australian Division who was the invading fleet, to do any peculiar jobs that they couldn't do themselves, which I'll get round to in a minute, all sorts of odd jobs gathering information and so meantime we fished with grenades in the water and ate fish and what have you. We didn't know what we were doing and then we were told
- 04:00 all of a sudden one day that we were going over to the mainland, to a place called Sippertang[?] in British North Borneo. The whole of Borneo was occupied, it was all Japanese they'd been there for years so they were feeling pretty safe for themselves. We were going over to Sippertang to kidnap a senior Japanese Kempetai officer, that is Kempetai is the secret police, Japs' Gestapo type of thing, I found they were worse than the Gestapo.
- 04:30 So we're going over by what we call a work boat. Once again an SRD boat which is a forty foot launch and the journey over there was to take us, oh probably anything up to six hours because we'd have to go so slowly because we didn't know what would be waiting for us at the other end and the noise travels so far over water at night
- 05:00 time, so the American Navy was in was in power. We went on board the boat and they had plenty of notice that we were going. We went on board the boat and all set to go and the American Navy said, "Look you can't go we haven't notified all our ships in the area that you're going so you can't go." so we get off our boat, go back home to the camp which took the edge off it, defrosted us a bit and the next
- 05:30 day the party leader went onboard the USS Rocky Mount which is their main ship there and with the operations officer in charge thrashed about that we'd be going that night, where we were going, he got recognition signals, passwords, everything. Every ship in the area would know that we were going the following night so we got onboard the work boat and set off again going very slowly and
- 06:00 we expect to hit the shore about four or five in the morning, do our raid and come back the same morning. Just an in and out job that's what it was supposed to be. So we're cruising along, we're just sort of chug chug chug merrily along and we could see the outline of the shore coming up and the bloke in charge of the boat said, "You better all get ready to leave." so we started to get ourselves ready and then we got floodlit with a searchlight,
- 06:30 just lit us up like a Christmas tree and hit with a recognition signal which they straightaway flashed back because we had the recognition signals. It's got to be an American because they wouldn't have the recognition signal. It couldn't be a Japanese so flashed around they kept flashing us the recognition signal which we'd flash back and this was going on for hours and hours and I said to Frank Oldham, there was six of us in the party only I had
- 07:00 my commando experience, this Frank Oldham who was the party leader, he had been an ex-commando, he had had experience. The other four were inexperienced, they hadn't seen operations at all, they were in the armoured division and this makes quite a bit of difference, I'll explain later. I said to Frank, I mean we'd sort of having been there and done that little bit we sort of spoke to each other in a different language to the others, and I said to Frank, "Oh what if we shoot the bloody searchlight out?" Then we decided that'd probably be silly because
- 07:30 they could seek us with a huge gun or something like that and time went on and over an hour passed, we're still just wallowing in the bloody water there just off the coastline. Don't know what's on the coastline, we wouldn't have a clue, and so I said, "Tell him tell him to fuck off!" and they signalled 'fuck off' and the light went off and the boat went away and in the official report, not our official report but the official report that I have, that is word
- 08:00 for word, that shows that if those horrible words show in the official report that that's exactly what happened, so here we are in the darkness again, just off shore, and of course we could abort the operation as our prerogative and we thought, oh might as well give it a chance, so we've we've lost an hour and a half. That's took us an hour and a half to get rid of the boat so we go back on shore, we're a couple of guys, we're creeping up to where we expect to find this Kempetai officer and we're going along and one of these newcomers,
- 08:30 he's stumbling a bit behind me and I could hear him cocking his Owen gun which is something you don't do, and I stopped and I said, I was in front and I turned around and I said, "Don't you cock your gun, I don't want someone walking behind me cocking their gun!" and so he de-cocked it and we went on and another one, trying to be as quiet as possible, he stumbled and fired a burst of his Tommy gun, how it missed my feet I don't know, it churned up around my feet and I swung around automatically and dropped him
- 09:00 with the butt of my gun and (UNCLEAR) came racing up and I mean it was an unforgivable thing for

him to do and I made it clear that I'd never go on an operation with that guy again and I didn't either. so he got relegated to the back of it. That's our first mishap so we went on and on and on and we find out that the Kempetai's supposed to be in that house over there on a hill with the light on, so we go in there and kick the door in and break up a Chinese

- 09:30 Mah-jong game, there's Chinese playing Mah-jong, it was the wrong place, our information was wrong. So anyhow we find out finally where the Japanese Kempetai officer is and we creep up to this place and it's practically broad daylight and I know I was creeping up. Have to tell you the funny side of this operation in Japanese occupied territory. I'm sneaking up one side in
- 10:00 a drainage trench, I was crawling more or less at a very slow pace and Frank Oldham was on the other side in another trench and I saw this Chinese come up to me and came up to me and muttered something and I said, "Go away!" and I threatened him with my gun you see and he raced away and I didn't know what he was doing and I must have crept about another fifteen feet. He came back and he's got a cup of tea on a saucer with him, he's offering me this cup of tea
- 10:30 with a saucer. "Go away!" I threatened him, I thought, 'Oh God!' So anyhow we thought anyone could have seen, we've had it, so we went straight into the house. Anyhow our target wasn't there, we'd missed him, he'd gone. So we hung around, we had to hang around all day and to make a long story short we snared him that night, we caught him, we caught the Kempetai officer that night and we couldn't
- 11:00 leave till the following morning. We left the following morning so the operation was successful and we took the Japanese Kempetai officer back to Labuan to be interrogated by the experts as we know. They don't tell us that, all we're told he had to be taken back for interrogation purposes but what happened they never tell us that sort of thing except that I obtained the official report and the official report which is not written by one of us,
- 11:30 this is the official which mentions word for word what I told you before. Also it says that though our mission was successful if we had of brought him back when we intended to, which was the previous day, if we hadn't been held up by the searchlight his information would have proved to be more valuable than it was, we don't know, that's all we know.

How did you snare him?

Well

- 12:00 we heard he was coming out and we just laid a trap for him along this track and he just walked straight into us and he was... see there was no war going on in Borneo, there was no-one to fight, it was just Japanese occupied and they were as lax as lax could be but there was no-one to fight. It wasn't as though they were expecting but all the local population was subdued. They were all servile to them, they'd been belted around but they'd been servile to them so there was no trouble and he was shackled up
- 12:30 with a girl in a house, he was just the Kempetai officer and all all his troops were just living in houses round about town. There was no nobody, no they weren't expecting any trouble.

What was he like?

A bastard. He didn't get knocked around because we couldn't knock him around, I had to get him back. He was a rotten piece of

- 13:00 horrible bloke. He had this bird, when we went to the house after the tea instance I went into the house, you've got this terrified girl that he'd had. I said, "What's your name?" "Suzy." she said, she was Malay or something, they all seemed to adopt our western names. Suzy you see and I think she thought that the end of the world had come. She burst out crying and very tearful she thought you know we were probably going to belt her around or something like that and told her no we were after the Kempetai.
- 13:30 She told us where to find him and she had, well he'd shackled up with her but he just picked them, I mean they just took whoever they wanted didn't they? Housekeeper cum bed maker, whatever, you name it you know.

So she was happy to help you?

Oh yeah, hated his guts yeah, and she was terrified. Once she realised we weren't going to hurt her she said yeah, well he's gone,

- 14:00 we've missed him but we were too late. Had we not been held up with the boat we probably would have got him and got him and got out but he'd gone out for the day and just as well he wasn't there because probably he would have seen the bloody Chinaman giving me a cup of tea, I mean you've no idea what the (UNCLEAR) was like so we took him back and that's apart from the official report that, which I have a copy of which I got after the war, the official report
- 14:30 as I say repeats word for word those words, that they fucked off, which is funny to see in an official report, it's there anyway but had we got him and I don't know whether this is just sort of to put a nudge against the Americans or not, but it says had we been able to get the Japanese back as we had intended to his information would have been a lot more valuable, so we didn't know what we were doing then, so

we just did some more fishing and

- 15:00 drank and there was an air force crowd there that didn't eat and drink their issued beer, we used to drink that and were waiting around and then we were called up, going to find out that we were going to into Sarawak to wage guerrilla warfare to be part of a guerrilla operation and we were to be inserted by a Catalina flying boat, a Cat Boat which we had three attached to us. They did nothing but
- 15:30 fly for Z Special Unit it's to take us in and drop us onto Sarawak, one of the rivers is the Rajang River, it's a mighty river where it goes out into the sea it's a huge river. Full size ships can go up it but we went in right up the native word for
- 16:00 Ulu, which is up at the headwaters of the river which of course is only a bit of a stream and anyhow the Cat boat took us in and landed on the water up there and the Cat boat landed on the water and inserted us at a place right up near the headwaters of the Rajang River and we joined part of a guerrilla force which
- 16:30 was code named Semut. Semut is the Malay word for ant and this is Operation Semut and (UNCLEAR)I had one of my my unpleasant experiences with a gentleman by the name of Soschen who was one of the people I met on Fraser Island, one of the Poms who had been there before and I found out before that he'd
- 17:00 been a prison officer, screw in other words and none of the locals liked him at all, didn't speak, hardly spoke the language as well as I did and none of the locals liked him anyhow. He used to sort of treat them like dirt and one of the first things that I found which I caught on very quickly was to explain to these people that I wasn't English cause they hated the
- 17:30 English that had been there before the war. Destroyed their... 'boy do this, boy do that' you know and I had to explain as well as I could that I was Australian, it didn't mean anything cause they'd never heard of Australia, they didn't know where, they never heard of England. They wouldn't know where it is but was (UNCLEAR) on the ground just had to explain that I came from a completely different part and they ultimately did understand anyhow and that my name was Brian, my name was Brian, I kept saying
- 18:00 that and with the Dayaks later on, I heard them, they never called me Brian but they used to talk about Brian, I'd heard them, they're talking about Brian and so we joined this Semut party which was a guerrilla operation. The Japanese were in all all these places
- 18:30 from where we were right down to the coast. We were right in the middle of Sarawak and it was occupied by Japanese and we gradually moved our way downstream ambushing them and causing them trouble and fighting guerrilla warfare until we got them away downstream and I had my first meeting with the sea Dayaks and
- 19:00 the sea Dayaks of course are the wild men of Borneo, the original wild men of Borneo which I can remember learning at school about the wild men of Borneo, everyone learned about them and you could see Borneo on the atlas but you never dreamed you'd meet these, they were of course the sea Dayaks who were infamous or famous or infamous whichever way you want to look at, it sea pirates in the old
- 19:30 days and they were very individualistic themselves, they were lovely people and they were fighting their own war against the Japanese. They were very adept with poison darts, sumputs as it was called and they used to go put a poison dart in the Japanese neck, they'd just follow a patrol along and knock a few of them off and they used to half fell a tree through
- 20:00 and as the Japanese boat'd go up they'd drop the tree on the boat, all sorts of primitive things, and anyhow we sort of armed them and I know I did because I finished up nearly all the time I was practically on my own anyway, either on my own or with one other person and refined their tactics a little bit, which they they liked, and they were of course head-hunters and they all had heads, and it was only just before the war that
- 20:30 head hunting had become outlawed so we started to practise head hunting and we offered to pay them, we did pay them one straight settlement dollar which was at that time two and sixpence which translates to twenty-five cents nowadays, per Japanese head and that's good money because the Japanese were circulating their valueless invasion
- 21:00 money which wasn't worth a crumpet, but the straight settlement dollar was the proper currency we used, so it was good money and that was per Japanese head which they took quite a lot and we paid for them, it always used to be an incentive. We had a couple of skirmishes and we were told to take some Dayaks, well I had to meet with these Dayaks and so I went to sort of meet them and have a chat with them to try and
- 21:30 sort out language wise and they came up and I was fully dressed as I put it, well you had to be all the time. In other words I had my own guns slung around my neck, had a knuckle buster knife in my belt, a pistol on my belt and a couple of grenades and they used to come over and they'd stroke the weapons, just all stroke, they were fascinated like they were toys, they'd sort of look at them and I got to know them and I took a couple of
- 22:00 chocolate bars which we had as hard rations, special rations. They'd never tasted chocolate. I said,

"Here have a go at this." and they had a taste of chocolate then they they all started and there was this young guy in particular who I was looking for, we had to take, Dave Kearney and I had to take some Dayaks downstream with us and we were looking for someone and one of these young guys, he

22:30 looked at me and said, "I come with you." he said, "I kill for you, I die for you." just like that and I'd heard it before that they say that you know and I thought, 'Oh yeah, I'd die for you, I'd kill for you, they'd all say it.' but he hit me this young guy, the other Dayaks seemed to defer to him a bit and he hit me, straightaway I remembered back to when I said to George Warfe

23:00 when I first met him and I was at Canungra and I asked him to take me with him in his independent company and I didn't quite tell him that I'd die for him, or kill for him, I didn't say anything like that but I did revert to private for him. Anyhow he sounded like that and I thought, 'Oh I had to take someone anyway.' so I said, "It's alright I'll take you with me."

What was his name?

Bujan. I've got photos of Bujan. We didn't have a camera but I took Bujan

23:30 and more about Bujan, Bujan was fantastic and oh he jumped around like a flea you know, he shook himself, he said, "My friend come too." and I said, "Who's your friend?" Dragged this other bloke forward, Unting. Unting Bujan and Unting came with me and from then on they were with me for the rest of my time in Sarawak and with

24:00 the other sea Dayaks and they used to defer to, absolutely uncanny in their anticipation and because being in the jungle you're never afraid of being caught with a Jap. There's no way in the world a Japanese would surprise them or anything like that, I mean they just... and cause the Japanese were terrified of them as well, all they went for was heads see, heads the name of the game.

Were you the only Australian amongst them?

No oh no no, there were several of us there, there was

24:30 three of the guys had been on the Operation Cult was the name of the kidnapping job, that was Operation Cult, three of them, the one that had fired the shots, you know didn't sight him again, but two of the others who'd hadn't seen any action they were they were with us part of the time, but most of the time I spent with an Australian named Dave Kearney, and he was supposedly the second in charge of the whole party,

25:00 there was letters from him, he joined up I think he said, on the second or third day of the war because he didn't have a job, he'd been unemployed. An intelligent bloke and he went to the Middle East and got promoted and to use his own words, all he'd done ever during the war was to write reports and so forth, he'd never fired a bullet or anything and by devious means he became friendly with someone

25:30 got into Z Special Unit and he was lost, didn't know what to do cause he was a good bloke, he learnt, he wasn't bombastic like the Pom was or anything and I got on quite well with him anyhow. Even though he was theoretically the boss he'd always say, "What'll we do Brian?" We'll do this we'll do that so we went down stream with Bujan and Unting and a team of Dayak down the raging river in

26:00 these perahu which they'd go down in perahu got no practically no freeboard and race around fending off rocks and all this sort of thing and away they'd go and our first trip was to... I'll tell you a couple of operations you might be interested in. This first one with the sea Dayak really took place at a township called

26:30 Sung which was occupied by Japanese, and we went down there and when we get to these places all the locals appear from nowhere, they sort of must have mental telepathy somewhere and they all hated the Japanese you know, they'd just come round, they'd give us some information or something and we were able to call over a plane to to strafe Sung, just to strafe it and

27:00 so we watched and waited. This plane came over and strafed Sung and we watched the Japanese, they had an air raid siren type of thing, it made a peculiar noise and they'd sort of walk out and they'd get some shelter under the bushes till the air raid was over and then away they'd go, and the Dayaks, this Bujan got the bright idea, they'd been talking amongst themselves and he came up he said, look if we could do that again

27:30 we can go down and hide behind where the Japanese are, hide when the air raid come in, then when they get up to go back home we'd attack them you see and grab their heads, so we did just that and six of the Dayaks went down, hid from the Japanese, when the Japanese got up to walk back and the Dayak just attacked them from the back, just with their parangs, their big knives and they got six heads, they were very keen, six

28:00 straight settlement dollars, that was fine, they were all all happy, they wear their heads around their waist like trophies you know, like a trophy, very proud, that's a symbol of manhood and so forth.

Did you learn to use the Dayaks' weapons?

Yeah rifles, we gave them rifles too, just rifles not sub machine guns rifles yeah.

But did you learn how to use their weapons?

Oh their weapons, no no no oh no,

- 28:30 I've seen watched them do it. Simplest was, oh hide outs of bamboo, I've got photos of how they make them about twelve foot long sort of thing and just a small poisoned dart and deadly poisonous dart and phht! sort of just like you've got an itch in the neck or something and after a while the person collapses. They use it for hunting too, hunting birds and pigs sort of thing but the hacking the head off wasn't...
- 29:00 hack hack hack and the head comes off but that was their heritage. head hunting.

What did you do with the heads?

They carry them, they take them with them and the whole thing which I'll get back to later, because later in the piece this Bujan asked me to go back to his long house with him. He said we'll have you help us get these heads, he said help me get them. I didn't physically help them take the heads, I never did that, but I did help them get them, I mean

- 29:30 one of my favourite sayings with Bujan would be, "Oh it's exciting!" I'd say, "More heads soon Bujan!" and at that he used to shiver, shiver like he's got the shakes, like cold shiver, just shiver like that, excited. More heads soon Bujan. I was speaking in sea Dayak and he said oh, and so he wanted me to go back, they take them back to their original long house where they live, this big, long house and have a ceremony and smoke and
- 30:00 the sea Dayaks lived in a long house. A long house was generally right on the river but they're very clean people, they used to bathe regularly in the river and the long house depending on the number of families could be ten, twelve. twenty families living and they've all got their little flat for want of a better word up top, and the long house is built about twelve feet above the ground and the floor is of slats, crossed slats
- 30:30 and they eat, food remnants go down between the slats and all the animals live down below, you hear pigs snorting and dogs barking, they had heaps of dogs, all the animals lived below and feed off this and the entrance to the long house was by way of a tree trunk which you'd have to go up. Just a tree trunk with knots, just dig in it, you'd have to walk up the knots to get into the long house, so they lived in these things and in the long house they had the heads decorated like a mirror
- 31:00 or something, got the heads all around the wall and they would talk about them, like in one long house a chief asked me to give him an opinion of a head. He said, "I'd like to your opinion." I thought, 'I can't give a bloody opinion of a head! I wouldn't have a clue!' you know I said, "All very fine." you know what more can you say and they were there talking about it like you might get probably a big game hunter talking about the lion in the entrance hall saying,
- 31:30 "I got that one in South Africa old boy." the Dayak'd probably say, "I got that one down river such and such down at Sung you know." they talk the same way, that's where I got that one and that one and so forth.

So were the Japanese heads in the long house?

Yeah and others, they'd been there a long time before, but yeah the Japanese head'd finish up yeah.

- 32:00 When I first met Bujan and the sea Dayaks I told them, in those days I tried to explain that I was Australian you see, there's a big difference between Australia... and I told them that, it took me a long while to do it but it was worth it because I was still learning the language. I'd stammer for words and smile and they'd give me the word you know, they'd giggle and give me the word sort of thing and I explained that I came from a long, long way
- 32:30 but I said that we're only here to fight the Japanese, that I had already fought them in another place and I'd killed a lot of Japanese and I've got a lot of Japanese heads I said, I said that and I had I'd never taken a head anyhow but I said that and this Bujan never forgot that. He'd always used to point me out and he'd be telling people he's got heads you know,
- 33:00 Brian's got heads elsewhere before you know and this sort of thing.

Was it hard to learn the language?

Yeah, I mean to me it was a must because in New Guinea I taught myself Pidgin English cause the natives there spoke Pidgin English but that's not as hard but it's essential, it just makes all the difference. Where you get the Pom's say, 'boy do this' and they don't know what you're talking about anyhow, I mean

- 33:30 I treated Bujan like an equal not that he really was, we just got along famously. He'd come to wake me up and I'd already beat him to it but he used to believe that I'd taken quite a few heads you know, one of the boys, and that we're here just to fight the Japanese then we were going home and was right at the end, way to go yet but
- 34:00 we're sort of going home and Bujan said, "You must come back to my long house, you helped us get all

these heads, you must come back.” and sort of watched us all the time and at that time, lying bastard, cause I didn’t have the nerve I said, “Yeah I’ll I’ll be back, don’t you worry.” Had no intentions of going back, so we got these heads and then we’d go and we’d do a few ambushing and we went round the other side of Sung and I had a Bren gun with me, I was

34:30 pretty adapt with a Bren gun, I’d used it in New Guinea and we sank a Japanese launcher was coming up with reinforcements and we we found out later on with captured Japanese documents there was seventy-six on board and we sank the whole bloody boat. No casualties, they just swam to shore, just heaved grenades into it and blew it to pieces in the middle of the water and then we get a few more,

35:00 we’d ambush them and the Dayaks’d take the heads and all they would see would be the headless body and if it was upstream which the Dayaks had been doing beforehand, float the headless body so that it would go back home if possible and they’d be terrified sort of ,they they didn’t know what’s happening. They didn’t necessarily know we were there. They thought there were an awful lot of natives but

35:30 they didn’t know so much about us there.

So that was sort of a demoralising tactic was it?

Yeah.

Send the body?

And we’re killing them too, and the first ambush we’re with Bujan, it was a straight out ambush and we killed six Japanese and the Dayaks welted in straight away, just hack hack hack at the heads and two things I thought at that

36:00 time, it’d be a very brave person to try to stop the Dayaks taking the heads, just like a a hungry Doberman you know, you know they’d do that if you try to stop him, not that I wanted to but you wouldn’t want to, and with all their whooping I gave Bujan a big lecture about that and I said, “This whooping is no good, it’ll have to stop because there might be other Japanese around.” I said, “We don’t want them to know we just want to frighten them.” and they

36:30 never made another whooping noise after that, they just quietly did it and I congratulated them, more heads, and Bujan Bujan yeah yeah.

What’s the Dayak for more heads? Can you remember?

I can’t remember the sea Dayak, I can remember Malay words not Dayak, it’s so long since I’ve spoken it but the lady that I got out

37:00 another place, that was going to get his head chopped off, and she’s Lena, living in Perth, I ring her up every Friday, I speak to her in Malay just to keep in touch, she’s multi lingual and I say, “I can speak Malay if you want me to.” I called I called her the little rose of the batanluger because that’s another story that I’ll get around to. I’ll say ‘salamaat kajulrose’ that means salamaat is good day time, good morning, good

37:30 night whatever, it is salamaat kajulrose. Apakaba that means salamaat kajulrose, her name’s Lena but kajulrose is what I called her. Kajul is little you see and rose is rose, salamaat kajulrose apakaba. Apakaba means what’s happening,what’s new, what’s happening. She’ll say, salamaat Brian kaba bayak which means well, hello Brian everything good, salamaat Brian and we have a few words to say and

38:00 you get out of touch got no-one to speak it to. You know it’s like Mandarin Chinese, I could speak a smattering of it, I couldn’t, not a cent of it now. A bit of sea Dayak’d come back probably if I had someone to speak to it’d come back but I just

That’s OK.

It always surprised them too that’s the other thing that’s sort of, say something, you speak to them in their main language, not just the Dayak even the local indigenous people

38:30 that really upset them they knew they couldn’t get away with anything you see, they don’t didn’t expect you to because most of these locals, the Poms there before the war didn’t speak the language. this is where they were so useless. They all only had servants. They were the British Raj and all that crap you know.

Tape 5

00:43 **Well tell me how long were you living with the Dayaks?**

I was, let me see, June, July, August...

01:00 four and a half months, and I stayed in their long houses, mainly in the long houses, and of course nothing like living in New Guinea, I mean it was gentleman’s to me, the others didn’t realise it, they all

thought it was rugged but to me it was gentleman's stuff, I mean I'd been living in the rain, night time in New Guinea and just sleep under a tree in the pouring rain all the time and go hungry for days on end, I mean

01:30 the danger was still there but it was nothing like.

And how many of you were in the village with Dayaks?

Well it varied from time to time. In the main sometimes there were four of us, sometimes two of us. Mainly with me there were two of us Dave Kearney and I, who was the 2IC he was, and then at one stage, quite some time, when I'd get these hours on my own, just on my own, when I had twenty Dayaks or twenty of the Dayaks with me and I

02:00 was just on my own and all I spoke for about six weeks was just sea Dayak, no-one to speak any other language to, I just spoke sea Dayak. We moved downstream sort of in the same fashion and we did sort of, say three more instances might be interesting to you. There was one we came to this town,

02:30 we get a message and ask the locals, any locals been in the township just down the river and this was a place called Kanout down the river, we were (UNCLEAR) any natives been there? So you get a few of the Dayaks'd come in and we'd ask them what was happening and they say well there's a Japanese got this outpost

03:00 and you get the Dayak is fairly accurate, you get numbers from them on their fingers, just sort of how many hands. Rest of the dangerous work with the Dayak was fairly accurate and as far as to use their words, there were twelve Japanese sentries at this place who laughed and talked all the time that's that was how they put it you see, laughed and talked all the time. I said pity that we couldn't get them, so yes, they thought we could get them so we, this Dave Kearney and I and

03:30 two perahu loads of Dayaks we set off downstream one morning, we left at two o'clock in the morning and very dicey in the river at night time but the Dayaks see they they're born there, no trouble the Dayaks. We beached these things and we walked through the jungle until just stumbling through the jungle and Bujan said soon and we sort of stopped. We came out of the jungle and

04:00 he pointed out a guard box type of thing as they described it, a guard box type of thing, and there was this guard box which was sort of a sentry box perched right on a main track that led into and out of town and I had night time binoculars with me and I could see this Japanese in there, and light on, had

04:30 a little electric light sort of weak power on and I could see a phone on the table, I could see two lots of cable going away like this. I thought, 'Shit, that's not the best.' and then right next door was this house where the rest of the Japanese would have been sleeping and it was about quarter to four in the morning, course they'd all be asleep see, so good time to get them, so

05:00 I thought, 'Shit what'll we do?' so I said to Bujan, "We'll go down see if we get this sentry bloke first." so we sort of got down a bit closer to him and I'm thinking I had a well rod[?] which is a silenced pistol I could get him with that but I didn't have one with me. Then I thought I move pretty well myself, I might get him with my knuckle buster knife, slam him with that. Then I thought no, Bujan, what about, so I said to Bujan, "Do you think you can get this sentry?" and he was practically

05:30 insulted that I hadn't asked him before so I said, "You sort of move into this guard box type of thing I'll be right behind you with my own gun cocked." and I said to Dave Kearney, "Wait till we come back but if you hear a noise go off you'd better go and crash the house because they'll all wake up." so we moved down to this sentry box type of thing and as I explained the only way to explain in the book,

06:00 here's the sentry bloke, he's scratching himself all over his upper body and I'm thinking, 'The dirty bastard.' that's the thought that came into my mind and he was reading a magazine and so as he was looking and I nodded to Bujan and Bujan moved in and any rate he just closed him down that's all he did, and the bloke wouldn't have felt a thing, he could have gone to sleep except he wasn't asleep he was just stone cold dead. Bujan just whacked

06:30 him and he slumped down and I had a look, he'd been reading this girlie magazine which wasn't a very exciting one anyhow and not my idea of a Japanese girlie magazine, and Bujan's closed him down, so we'll leave him there, no time to take his head, we can come back head later so we...

How did Bujan close him down?

Slammed him with his panga right behind the neck.

With his what?

Panga knife, big knife, just

07:00 wielded the thing, just hit him here, just closed him down. I mean the bloke didn't know what hit him, he's still got his head on the neck, takes a few more hacks, but just dead as a doornail, I mean silent killing, just slam. Apparently the blade, and they use it for everything, use it for chopping wood, chop anything, that's all I mean. They're very, very accurate with it. Just like oh someone

- 07:30 that smokes a pipe, they use a cigarette lighter or something you know, you do it all the time sort of thing. Amazing the blokes' dead, dead as a doornail, but the bloke he didn't know what hit him, the Japanese didn't know what hit him. Silent, no noise at all so we threw his (UNCLEAR) off into the jungle and went back to the Dayaks, well let's go down, we'll do this house over you see, and it's still only just after four o'clock in the morning so we went down to this house which was just a house and
- 08:00 I could see there's a door, there's no-one there, and I thought, 'Well why should they worry, they've got old eagle eye up there keeping guard for them, why would they be worried, they don't need another sentry as well, they've got a sentry.' and I was worried they might change guard because that's why I did it quarter to, I thought they'll probably change guard, if they do change guard on the hour or half hour they wouldn't do it on the quarter hour, that's why I sort of slammed him at quarter to four, not four o'clock, but so we went down and huddled up against this door,
- 08:30 this house with the front door and I thought, 'What'll I do?' and I thought, 'I've got to be cheeky.' so I thought, 'I wonder if the light's on? Probably it's got a light on.' so I thought, 'Wonder if the door's opened?' so I opened the door a bit and the door was open, so I opened it a bit further and felt around, I felt a light switch, and I thought, 'This is marvellous.' See, so I pulled the door to and I looked inside and it was just dark see, I couldn't really just see just an open space,
- 09:00 so I thought, and it wasn't a huge house, so I thought best thing I'm goin' to roll a couple of hand grenades in and then go in and put the light on if the light was still working, so I pulled a couple of grenades out and mimed what I was going to do and told everyone to huddle down by the side of the house and I opened the door,, rolled the grenades in as far as I could and crouched down myself. They take five seconds to go off. I counted to five
- 09:30 see, well they went off but there's no other noise, the noise they make, God almighty. So I got up, I went to open the door and the fuse on one of the fucking thing's jammed. I kicked the door and reached for the light and it barely came on. We found out later that the blast of the grenade had broken most of the bulbs. Well we hadn't thought of that sort of thing happening
- 10:00 so we moved in and there were people crawling around the bloody floor, and most of the Dayaks went in and went down to the back and there there two grenades, I mean just sort of paper thin walls, had just gone right through the whole place and they're all squirming around there, anyhow the Dayaks went down the back and they came up and after a short time with a few heads and they got these three birds, these three women with them, young women, screaming
- 10:30 women, and I thought, 'Jesus!' First I had several thoughts, but first thought was I didn't know they were so gentlemanly, they didn't take the girls' heads. They weren't Japanese girls, they were Malay. They'd taken the Japanese heads, they hadn't taken the girls' heads and the second was that obviously the girls have been shackled up with the Japanese there and I thought, I remember my, you know, everyone to their own taste. They weren't sort of,
- 11:00 they weren't my type of bird anyhow you know, the second thought . Anyway they're screaming their bloody heads off and so I said, all the Japanese they were finished now and eleven of them and old eagle eye out the front, twelve of them, the information was spot on so these three birds are screaming and they were cut around, there was a few cuts just from the grenades, they weren't really hurt, and asked them what they'd been doing and they listened to us and we said, we're not going to hurt you and they get surprised you can speak to them you see,
- 11:30 in their language, I said, "We're not going to hurt you, just, what's happening, are you here voluntarily or forced?" They started to scream again, off the bloody planet, couldn't get a word out of them, one of them had a bit of a gash in her arm and I put a field dressing on it for her and I said to Dave, "Let them go and send them back into town and they'll have a hell of a good story to tell everyone down in town and they won't know which way we go, we'll just disappear." and so they were screaming and
- 12:00 I think they probably expected to be killed themselves, so we sent them back into town, just wished them a polite good night and away they went into town and we went on our way and later on we did go on to town, all the locals are telling us about these three girls that came back into town screaming that cause the Japanese, we found out the Japanese after
- 12:30 that raid, we had to leave town and so we went downstream, sort of ambushed them because they were travelling by launch downstream and we ambushed the boat as it went downstream and killed the whole lot of them there as they came down the rest of them.

How many more were there?

How many on board there? Well the launch came down, we circumnavigated the town,

- 13:00 we found out that they were leaving, Dayaks told us they were leaving and we circumnavigated the town, set up this ambush position, cause they only travelled by water, they didn't travel by land, and on one side of the river there's always a rip of water that's very hard, and the other side's very docile so if you're going down you come with the rip. If you're going up you're against the slow current and this the rip was on the side of the river where
- 13:30 we were, so that's the way they'd be coming down, and we set it up, we had this Bren gun set up, this ambush, and I said to Dave, "We'll wait until they come down." and we waited till, this ambush I'm

talking about was just after four in the morning and at ten o'clock that night, that following night, we're on the other side of town. We hadn't had any sleep, they start to come down river and we could hear them, they were as drunk as

- 14:00 skunks, screaming their heads off, singing songs and what have you, was lit up and we hit them with the ambush with the Bren gun and I'd learnt before that you shoot the wheelhouse out and disable the boat and the current puts the boat into the shore which it did in this particular instance, so we called more, we're just shooting and they're screaming their fool heads off and Dave's throwing a few grenades on board and finally his grenades blasted the
- 14:30 boat back into the water and so we watched and gradually, a moonlight night, the boat just gradually sank until a few bubbles came up and it'd gone and everyone was just looking at it like it was just sort of such an amazing sight to see and this huge launch just sort of gone, so I said, "Well it's dark,
- 15:00 when it's brief time ashore." and the explosion, there would have been some of the Japanese on the shore, so the Dayaks went down to have a look and they got thirty-two heads on the shore, thirty-two heads that they collected that'd been blasted ashore, the short time it was ashore, and I said to Dave you know, asked him to pay them so he paid them a dollar head and we ultimately went back into town.
- 15:30 When we got into town the indigenous people there hunt with the hares and hunt with the hounds and they were pleased to see us but they'd been collaborating with the Japanese as well, I mean they all, particularly the Chinese, they couldn't care less. As long as they can do their own thing and make money they couldn't care less, except course the Japanese didn't have the habit of paying them for anything and so they were sort of fighting over us, so they told us about this
- 16:00 Japanese had been killed at the guard box type of thing as they put it, which of course was us, but we didn't let on it was us, and these three young ladies come back and tell 'em all about it and so forth I thought, I s'pose (UNCLEAR) and all the Japanese leave you see all the Japanese leave. They say there's there's eight hundred white soldiers and there's two of us see, and so they leave town. They're coming back? Yes, they're coming back with big reinforcements and said how many were there, how many were there
- 16:30 and as far as we could gather there were over seventy of them but they wouldn't be coming back, we didn't tell 'em, the Dayaks probably finished up telling them but that was the balance on board the boat you know, all gone.

Did the Dayaks come into town with thirty heads?

Yeah as I said to all the locals, look at the heads, cause we walk around town in a show, just show we're here you know, we're here. I remember saying to Dave I said,

- 17:00 "Be funny if one of the birds comes out and sees the heads of one of the lovers on someone's belt you know, the guard box." but oh dear, yeah, they weren't to be stopped yeah.

Did that take a bit of getting used to, just working with blokes that were carrying heads around?

Look I hated the Japanese, I still hate them, you haven't heard part of, I had the story of this bloke with his buttocks carved

- 17:30 off, now I mean that's enough to turn anyone, and I'd seen so many things that they have done that they weren't sort of human, some of the things they done and what they'd done to these local people is, everywhere they went the stupidest thing with the Japanese was that everywhere they went they made enemies with people. Instead of trying to make friends with the people they didn't even try to be friendly. They had this superior
- 18:00 feeling. I mean to me they were shit, excuse the expression, that's all they were to me, and of course there was no doubt about it, the Japanese had this burning desire though, they reckoned they were a superior race, they had this burning desire to possess a white woman. That was the acme, didn't matter how, possess a white woman was the acme of power that sort of thing, but
- 18:30 I mean I was lucky, I didn't I tell you, I didn't get skittles, I admit I'm lucky but you make your own luck up to a point and I was good at what I did. I'm not skiting, not boasting, the fact that I'm here's that and I know that I was good too, because people used to, but I was only good because if you work good you had to be better than the other one or you mightn't be here, put it that way, and I wanted to be here, I didn't want to get myself knocked off ,
- 19:00 so it was good, but the fact that they lived, like the Dayaks were such lovely people, they were sort of strange, they were a gentle people up to a point. Bujan would chase after me, he would do practically anything for me, I'd say, "I want sentries out Bujan." Already done. Got to clean your rifle. Already done.
- 19:30 They'd learnt, such quick learners. Whether they had this, soon, we're almost soon, we're almost somewhere. How the hell they know I don't know and I'd say we'll get up at two o'clock in the morning. Yes and how the hell do you know it's two o'clock in the bloody morning? Haven't got a watch, he'd never seen a watch, but I'll tell you what, at two o'clock in the bloody morning oh shit, he'd sneak up and...

What were they wearing,

20:00 the Dayaks?

Well in the main all we gave them, shirts and a singlet and maybe just loin cloth is what's their normal, because later on I when I went in to find, I'd sent Bujan in after we'd raided this guard box type of thing, I got Bujan to go into town and I told him to put his loin cloth on and I lent him my Browning pistol which he stuck down in here. I showed him how to use it

20:30 and I said, "Don't use it as a last resort till you know you have to but at least you know you've got it." because it was just something, he'd love to own something like that you see, put it in and I said, "Keep it cocked at all times." and I said, "And be careful of the family jewels won't you?" and he realised what I was talking about and he gave me a very embarrassing smile. I don't know whether they thought the same way you know, but just in passing, "Don't shoot your family jewels off." sort of thing

21:00 but he went to town like the normal thing with his loin cloth on, he's just another Dayak you see and he came back out and so the Japanese made enemies of all these people wherever they went, and if they'd gone the other way around about it it would have been different, everywhere they went no-one liked them. There was a few collaborators yeah, but

21:30 Bujan was an Unting, Bujan was twice as smart as Unting, but they they just had so much, no they were such lovely people you know. I never went back there, should have but we moved downstream this one partic... the other thing in the part of the story, when you'd pull into a long house the chief would always come up to you and say,

22:00 "Would you like a maiden to spend the night with, a young maiden to spend the night with?" you know and I thought, I mean I'm no snob as far as a lady's concerned but I'd seen the things the Japanese had done and they're so unpredictable that you wouldn't know. They might have got cheesed off with us being there and sent a large force after us and I thought I want to stay alive, not going to be captured with my pants down. Anyhow on one of the raids that we did, Dave Kearney he slept with one of these birds, he got as drunk as a skunk and

22:30 was with one of these birds which I gave him a big lecture from with two things. One, you don't get drunk on the job and there's more things to do than sleep with a bird you know, and this sort of kind of thing. He was very remiss about it.

He was your senior officer was he?

Yeah well, you see it didn't matter much. He was but he wasn't, to put it that... he used to ask me what to do you know, "How do we do this Brian?" He'd say, "What do we do

23:00 now, what would you do?" Well I'd do such and such you know, didn't work that, not on that sort of business. Even the independent company, it'd be more superior but not in Z Special Unit that didn't matter that much, because such as with the [UNCLEAR] who was in charge, he was overall in charge of this ex-prison warden, he came downstream after we'd taken this Kanout out and this last town,

23:30 I'm talkin' about with the indigenous birds and what have you, the town secured, and he came down in the town when everything's safe you see and Dave's Kearney telling them about this boat that we ambushed and sank the rest of the Japanese and he said, "You shouldn't have done that, you shouldn't have done that, you're only supposed to have a look around." and I said to him, I heard Dave told him what had happened and gave

24:00 me a wrap up, gave the sea Daya's a wrap up, anyhow it was sort of talking about this and he had his entourage with him. I can remember we're having a meal and he had his own personal servant. This is how the Poms go on, he'd say, "Boy, bwing me another dwink." he couldn't pronounce his Rs, "Boy, bwing me another dwink and hwurry up." and I thought, 'Oh Jesus!' it made my mouth'd go like this. Anyhow he said you shouldn't have done this and

24:30 it became too much for me and I said, "Well what the hell would you do? Let the bastards go downstream, come back and fight another day when we can get rid of them?" I said, "Or wait for you to tell someone what to do?" I said, "If we're waiting for you you'd wait till doomsday, you wouldn't know what to bloody well do yourself!" you see and he just looked at me with his mouth open and I sort of stalked off and I said exactly these words and I said, "By the way, you ever killed a Japanese yourself?" and he said no. I said, "You ought

25:00 to try it some time." and I walked out. I'd never spoke to him again after that. Dave said that he was flabbergasted about it but he didn't do anything about it, nothing he could do about it. I just, well I wouldn't want to be with him you know.

Did you continue with with the Dayaks until the the war ended?

I had my last altercation after the war had ended.

Well tell me about that?

Well we moved,

- 25:30 I said Dave had slept with these people. We went downstream a bit further and I had purloined a... what is called an MCR radio. which is a little thing about the size of a book. about that big. and it was very special in those days. It was a receiving set only. radio receiving set. You couldn't send radio those days. you want to send something you use Morse code. it'd be sent in Morse code. but
- 26:00 America had an overseas station and there was the infamous Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda broadcaster] broadcasting too, "Oh you poor, oh you poor darlings, you're up there trying to fight the war while these horrible Americans are back sleeping with your wives and girlfriends even while I'm talking to you now." she'd say. Propaganda you see, anyhow this thing was battery operated and just used to listen to this sort of thing for entertainment just with a set of loudspeakers
- 26:30 and I sort of have it because I found out the war was over. Anyhow Dave and I we went downstream, further down to another another place called Cebo and all of a sudden he got crook, he said, "Oh gees I'm crook Brian, what'll I do?" I said, "What's wrong?" Anyhow he stripped down, he's got this rash all over his groin and he swears
- 27:00 black and blue that it wasn't VD [venereal disease] or anything. Anyhow I put some ointment on it and he got crook and crook and crook, said he wanted to go out and go out mean be extracted completely, would mean he'd have to walk back or go upriver and a Cat boat would have to come in to extract him and take him to some medical treatment, cause we didn't have medical treatment. We had, I'm not diversifying but we had very good medical gear and some of us, I don't know if the others had or not but I
- 27:30 was trained in quite a few medical things and we had been trained how to take your own appendix out if need be. I never had to take mine out but this is well documented, one of our officers did in fact operate on himself and take his own appendix out while he's on operation and proceeded with the operation, that's how it was, but I didn't take mine out but I was shown how to how to do it with mirrors and what have you. We had all those sort of gear
- 28:00 so I treated the stuff as well as I can and he kept telling himself how crook he was so he left and I was on my own for quite some time and with Bujan, just a sea Dayak this is when I was I was just speaking sea Dayak and I had no contact with the outside world at all. I had nothing, none at all, no I didn't have a wireless operating to send anything out or anything so I waited around and we had a couple of ambushes but I had this MCR receiving set and I listened in
- 28:30 and I heard on the news about the atomic bombs being dropped and so forth and then about the fact that the war had finished and so forth or that they were capitulating what have you, but then a lot of the Japanese are still fighting and so forth and I'm getting a lot of passing traffic where I was. I was sort of at a very strategic position at Sarawak, geographically
- 29:00 I was and a lot of these Dayaks are telling us how further down south, bear in mind Japanese in Sarawak are not fighting a war. The only people that are fighting are we who are choosing our time to when to fight and there's no actual battle you see, and the people further down south in Sarawak, the Japanese there are indiscriminately killing people. They don't want anyone left who can tell about all the nasty things they'd done and
- 29:30 I was also flattered that Bujan'd bring 'em over to me. They wanted to know where's the orang puta, that is me, the orang, puta is white man, orang is man, puta is white man, that they'd heard of, not that I touched the head but Bujan that's Bujan boosted me up there reputation you see, and so I thought oh that's great, they've all heard about the orang puta
- 30:00 so I thought shit, somehow we have to go down south, so I'm thinking about what's going to happen and Dave Kearney reappeared. He reappeared with three other blokes, three whites and one with a radio set and some more sea Dayaks and a whole lot of stores and he said, "Brian the war's over." and I said to him, "Well the war's not over." and he said, "What do you mean?" and I said, "Well they're still knocking people off you know,
- 30:30 the Japanese are still fighting." Half of them didn't know the war was over, the Japanese didn't know the war was over anyhow so he said, "What are we supposed to do?" I said, "Look there's a boat that keeps coming up here and down here and I know of another outpost I'd like to go and ambush." and he said, "No, well we can't, our orders are we've got to go down south and we've got to stop any fighting amongst the locals, capture any Japanese that we can and
- 31:00 do a few sort of other things." and I said alright so we moved down town, we came to a place called Penabar just thinking, we moved into Penabar and the Japanese had just left there and said alright, so the next town was a town called Betong and Japanese had
- 31:30 just left there to go further down south and the locals were there but they they're just down south and they were particularly at a place called Semungan which was the second or third largest place in Sarawak, doesn't matter, Kuching was the capital but this Semungan was the second or third largest place and Semungan's quite a big town and they were all heading down towards there you see, so Dave said,
- 32:00 "We better stay here, I don't want to get my bloody head knocked off, it's too late, the war's finished I don't want to get my head knocked off." and I said, "Well I want to go down, I want to have another look

around." He said, "Well why?" and I said, well I told him the reason I just told you, "I don't like them." I told him, I said, "If my brother's still a bloody prisoner, I don't know what happened to him, we haven't heard from him for four years and with these people," I said, "I'd just like to have a crack at them you see."

32:30 So he said, "Oh I'm reluctant to let you go but alright." so he said I could take twenty Dayaks and myself so I I told Bujan I said, "This is our last chance." He gave a shiver and (UNCLEAR) we're allowed to go down to Semungan which is a couple of days walk away and we walked and the next place, we come into a place called Scarang[?]

33:00 only tell you the names because there's a reason for it and we came to Scarang and the last of the Japanese had just left there to go to Semungan, so we found that out and thought right, we'll go down to Semungan, so I said to Bujan, give him a Browning pistol again, put your loin cloth in, race into Semungan cause they moved like lightning. I said, "Have a look around, see what's happening there while we move around Scarang." so he did that came back and he said,

33:30 "Yeah, they're about, oh about thirty Japanese there that he could see and a whole lot of prisoners," he said some of them had been killed and a lot of them crying and the Japanese did horrible things to them, that's all he'd say and sort of shocking and so I said oh...

The prisoners the Japanese had, who were they?

A mixture, white, British, native and so

34:00 I thought I'll be a bit cheeky, I looked around Scarang and I found this switchboard, a phone sort of thing see, and I looked at the bloody thing and I could see connections, it had no power, couldn't see any power lines and I could see Semungan on it so I thought

34:30 I feel a bit cheeky see, I follow the instructions as I could read, made the connections and turned this bloody wheel thing in and the phone at the other end answered you see, and I said in Malay, "I want to speak with the Japanese Commanding Officer." and they get me the Japanese Commanding Officer and lo and behold this voice comes on and, "Hello hello." I said, "Are you the Japanese Commanding Officer?" in Malay. He said

35:00 yes. I said oh. I said right. He said, "Who are you?" in English. I said, "What, you've got some English too?" He said yeah. I said, "Well I'm part of an Australian battalion just out of town." I said. 'Who' he said, 'who what who what?' I said, "Yeah, you better surrender. 'Who what what what' and he hung up on me and I thought, 'Dirty bastard.' and I laughed to myself, I was furious to start with, hung up on me so I didn't bother ringing back

35:30 so I thought what'll I do? So I wrote a surrender note to the Japanese, I wrote a surrender note that he'd have to comply at nine o'clock the following morning, he had to come up and and see me and surrender where I was and they were the only terms, I could guarantee him safe travel otherwise he's surrounded and I told him that the Japanese commander had surrendered too, all this sort of jazz

36:00 and I got Unting to put his loin cloth in and take this surrender note in to the Japanese guards, it's a big town knew there'd be someone there who could read it, I wrote it in English, knew there'd be someone there who could read English, anyhow so I sent him in to read English and I told Unting and Bujan to go and have another look around as well and I told them not to talk to each other in town so away they went and they came back. Unting came back first and he said they

36:30 took the note and they read it and they gave me this to whoever wrote the note, a bloody packet of boiled lollies you see, which I threw it in the river and that was apparently Japanese practise, they sort of send things like this. Then Bujan came back and said things were pretty bloody crook, that people were crying there, they'd moved people around and and he said, what were his words? "I speak to two of them,

37:00 I tell them we are with someone." that's what his words were. I said, "Oh shit!" he shouldn't have spoken to anyone and then I thought, "Shit, I've already spoken to the Japanese commanding officer myself, there's no point going crook on him for speaking to someone.' you know and so I said, "Alright we'll wait till nine o'clock tomorrow morning if he's not there we'll go into town." So I thought the Japanese would come after us you know, just no-one came after us so

37:30 nine o'clock next morning we start to go into town and they knew a secret way in, not on the main track, and we're getting close to Semunga and I said to, Bujan always stopped with his 'soon soon soon' and stop and so I said to him, "Have a look around see if there are any sentries out." you see so sure enough he went out, had a look, yeah there's sentries out alright see,

38:00 he was terribly smart, he was smarter than Unting was and he could tell Unting quicker than I could, I said, "Send Unting and a couple of Dayaks down below where the sentries are waiting then we'll go round behind them and when we get behind them we'll send someone down to tell Unting to fire a couple of shots down there and the Japanese will open up, fire on them you know, think they're being attacked and so Unting

38:30 just duck his head don't don't have to do anything." so we did just that and sure enough they opened fire. They'd been waiting for us. As I say they must have believed all the information I'd (UNCLEAR),

they opened up powerfully where there wasn't anyone anyhow, and we came in behind them and they were loading two boats to go away, the Japanese to leave town must have been shit scared or something anyhow they were loading the boats. We came in behind them and

- 39:00 I still had this (UNCLEAR) I didn't know what to do, I mean there's no-one to tell you what to do. I'm still only a kid anyhow and thought I'd better call on them and surrender or something so I screamed out a couple of times in Malay a form of surrender and they turned around and started to open fire on us so we just opened fire back on them and we killed quite a few of them, we were having quite a fire fight there and we were right in the middle
- 39:30 of quite a torrid fire fight and we had the advantage because we was concealed with the jungle. Right on the top of the hill the fort, out of the corner of my eye I could see this figure and down the hill came this lady, was a lady she came racing down the hill grabbed hold of me and gave me the biggest hug, the biggest kiss of all time, and I pushed, I said, "Down down we're still having a fire fight!" I pushed her down
- 40:00 on the bloody ground and we finished our fire fight and the Japanese dispersed and I just when I said so, Bujan and the Dayaks went to clear out the ones that weren't killed and I found out this bird was Selena Ricketts and she was, you'd never seen anything like the condition she was in, as I say she raced, squally, filthy, oh you honestly,
- 40:30 she's a British nurse, she'd been punched around, I never asked her if they'd done anything to her because I didn't want to embarrass you know, I don't know what else probably not.

Tape 6

- 00:31 **Brian at the end of the last tape we were just talking about the gun fight you were involved in when all of a sudden a British woman came running down the hill?**
- Yes.
- Could you pick up the story there please?**
- Yeah well of course I didn't know what she was at the time. As a matter of fact she would have made the worst scarecrow look reasonable by comparison, she was British or what what she was. Anyhow she came racing down right in the middle of the fire fight and just grabbed
- 01:00 hold of me, wrapped her arms around me and gave me this huge kiss and I pushed her down and I said cause we're still firing bullets in the middle of the gun fight. I think she came racing down the hill, she couldn't have cared less if she caught a stray bullet or not because she's going to be killed that day anyhow so I pushed her down and I said to the Dayak, "We'll round up the the rest of the Japanese." the ones that we hadn't killed,
- 01:30 killed quite a few and of course they just race around the bloody jungle, they sort of belonged to the jungle. I mean they leave anyone for dead, the Japanese or anyone, they rounded them up and I spoke to the lady I just sort of said, "Are you alright now, that's all, let's not worry." and I found out later that, now's the time to tell you that her name was Lena Ricketts and she's a British nurse. Her
- 02:00 grandfather had been the British Consul in Sarawak and her father had been the local resident officer and when the war broke out her two sisters, her brother and herself they tried to escape and their car broke down and they all got taken prisoner of the Japanese and she'd been a prisoner ever since. Her father died in captivity and another sister died in captivity and they were they were still prisoners so I have to leave at that stage there because
- 02:30 the Dayaks had all the Japanese rounded up and they were looking at them, the Dayaks that is, and it took me a while to realise that what they were doing is looking at the Japanese necks. They would be just fascinated, probably making their professional assessment or something and I said to Bujan, "No, no more heads." I said, "We'll still pay you for these as though you did take them but no more heads." and I thought we can't,
- 03:00 I didn't know, I mean I was in a dilemma. I was only a kid anyhow and theoretically the war was over, we'd stopped, our fire fight had finished and there were lots of other people around and I thought might be asking for trouble a bit, let the Dayaks loose on them so I stopped them and very reluctantly they they didn't take their head. Bujan had reluctantly agreed to that so they didn't take their heads.
- Did they not round them up, did they have rifles when you were trying?**
- Yes they did which the Dayaks very quickly
- 03:30 took away from them.
- No no, were the Dayaks carrying rifles?**

Beg your pardon?

Were the Dayaks carrying rifles?

Yes, most of them, not all of them most of them, and they were in part of the fire fight the Dayaks and so they were all rounded up and right in the right in the middle of 'em is obviously a commanding officer, he stood out like no-one's business. He was in immaculately pressed jungle green

- 04:00 trousers and shirt, had black jack boots on. Well black jack boots in the jungle was a dead set no no and he had a white silk scarf wrapped round his neck and he looked at me and I looked at him and I said to him, "Why were you going to kill them?" and he spoke a bit of Malay and English, he had some English. He said, "Oh I was ordered to kill 'em." quite blithely, "I was ordered to kill the prisoners, they were going to be killed today."
- 04:30 just just like that and I told him, I ranted at him and told him what I thought of him and I ranted at him in Malay sea Dayak and Australian, mainly Australian because Australian's well suited for that sort of ranting and I said to Bujan and the Dayaks, "Strip them, make them strip." told the Japanese to strip, make them strip. This was quite customary practise because they could be having concealed weapons and in this particular case five of them did have concealed
- 05:00 weapons, they had knives, concealed weapons, and also to bring them back down to size a little bit and so they can't escape, so they took they took their clothes off and they looked completely different from this dominating bloke with the black jack boots and the white silk scarf, cuts them very much down to size and half the Dayaks who were naked you saw help 'emself to the clothes. I don't know who got what but they they'd sort of help 'emself and the clothes disappeared and I said to Bujan
- 05:30 "Lock them up." these places had what they call a cubu[?], cubu is a Malay word for fort and the forts had been turned into jails and this was at Sumungan, it was called Fort Alice so I said to Bujan, "Take them up and lock them in cubu." and he took them away and locked them up and they don't know how bloody lucky there were not to, oh the Dayaks had taken all the weapons from them, the Japanese
- 06:00 beforehand he said to me "Do you mind if I have my ceremonial sword back?" and I said, "You'd have to be bloody joking!" and he said why? I said to him, my exact words, "You can go and get stuffed!" and I don't know whether he understood what I meant but he got the tone of my voice anyhow. I have his sword in there as a matter of fact, I've got his sword still and his battle flag and his silver topped cane but they were lead anyway, but Lena she just stood there and watched all this. Didn't say a word, she just stood
- 06:30 with an intense look and didn't say anything just listened while I was talking to the Japanese listening like this, poor filthy thing she looked and I didn't know her name right at that time. I mentioned her name but I didn't know her name and seeing that I'd found this, surprisingly found this phone at Scarang where I'd rang the Japanese commander I thought, I wonder if there's a phone back at Beetong where
- 07:00 Dave Kearney is, because we hadn't seen one, we weren't looking for a phone, didn't expect to find a phone in the jungle, so I asked this Lena and she said, "Oh yes." so she took me to the phone and I got through and I rang the phone. I was an expert at acting now and someone answered in Malay I said, "Give me the orang putu." meaning the white man, only one white man and finally Dave Kearney came on and he was very surprised also to the fact we were there, we didn't know there was a phone
- 07:30 and just to explain a point, Sumungan which is a large town is situated on the, what's it called, the Battang Luper. The word Buttang is the Malay word for river so in other words it's situated on the the River Luper. So I said to Dave, he said, "How are you?" I said, "I'm I'm alright I've..." Lena's just watching me like this and I said, "I've taken Sumungan everything's alright here." but I said, "I'll tell you what," I said, "I've found the little rose of the
- 08:00 Battang Luper meaning in other words I found Miss Australia." and she smiled for the first time, she smiled, she picked up what I said and she still talks about that, she's never ever ever forgotten that one, and he said, "Oh we'll be down in a couple of days." so I said yeah alright. I said, "You'll be pretty right, there's no Japanese the." That went over his head, so it was a big town Sumungan by standards of where we'd been. It was the second biggest place
- 08:30 there. It had a big office, government offices, had departments, public works, county, all the normal things, oh typewriters, duplicating machines, staff galore and so forth. So thought I'd better do something, so I moved in there and sort of gave all sorts of talks, told them that there were no more Japanese. Japanese were all kaput, they were all gone, finished by now, and I was still talking
- 09:00 to Lena, I told her that I'd heard the war was supposed to be over cause they didn't know. They didn't know about the bombs or anything like that and no one, funny thing that, Lena just watched, this intense look, she watched while I was talking to the Japanese and while I was talking to Dave Kearney until she smiled and I always wondered what she was thinking about and I found out fifty-three years later
- 09:30 what she was thinking about, that's another story what she was thinking about, it's quite interesting. I didn't know then, I always wondered because such an intense look, she didn't miss a thing, so I thought well I'd better try and get the messages across. I'd never done anything like this before so I thought,

well what they used to do in the old days, they used to, when they wanted something known they used to issue proclamations so I was a smart arse, I thought I'll issue a proclamation, so I got the office staff together and I

10:00 got Lena, most of the people who lived up there were multi lingual they had so many languages they'd speak Malay, Singii, Chinese, Filipino, all the all the local languages that fluently, and so I got her to help me and I made several proclamations as to Japanese invasion money was worthless, it was a criminal offence to keep using it and the laws'd be the same as they were beforehand

10:30 and I set a price list so there'd be no black market and I told them that this Dave Kearney would be in charge of Sumungan when he came down and these I got all these proclamations issued and signed them myself and stuck them, had the list distributed around town so everyone could know them in different languages, they can read them. I've still got those and then

11:00 it's hard to get rid of the locals. They all they were all so surprised and as I say they were all going to get knocked off that day all the ones that were left. Of course they didn't get knocked off that day they're still alive most of them and so I...

Did the local people recognise that you would save them?

Oh can't get rid of them. Oh yes, couldn't, they were all over you everywhere, all over you like a rash. It just sort of...

11:30 it's indescribable. They come in, so good to see you, oh it went on for days they just follow you around. That's why we put the proclamation out, I couldn't speak to them and I used to go out around town with Bujan just to make the presence known you know, and I said there'll be no more trouble here, or I said to all the office staff there I said, "If you

12:00 have any trouble you'll have to deal with my sea Dayaks, they'll soon take care of you." Oh the Japanese Commander he had asked me to question too, which I put him in, I interrogated him. He said, "Are you English?" and I said, "No I'm Australian and these are sea Dayaks in case you don't know." I got that in but he knew who the sea Dayaks were of course.

But it was you and sea Dayaks running the town so the proclamations you put out that was just based on goodwill that you expected them

12:30 **to be followed. It wasn't like you were enforcing as an occupying force in the town?**

Make it quite clear that that was that was what happened so there's no argument. I couldn't talk to too many people, to talk to everyone. Make it quite clear that that was what happened and if you don't obey it you just get locked up. It's simple as that. Wasn't sort of as an occupying... I didn't consider that but I wasn't looking for trouble. Didn't want to go round and expect someone to shoot bullets in your back when you're walking around,

13:00 just wanted to make it quite clear that my sea Dayak will just lock you up and sea Dayaks, I was speaking Malay didn't know what I was saying even, but they looked menacing enough that they- oh shit!

How many sea Dayaks were there?

Twenty would have been.

You had twenty with you and yourself?

Yeah.

How big was the town, you said it was what the second biggest town?

Second biggest in Sarawak.

And approximate number in the hundreds of locals?

Yes oh yes.

Thousands?

Oh probably a couple of two or three thousand yeah.

Two or three thousand?

13:30 Yeah.

And how many Japanese were left there when you?

Thirty-two.

They were the ones who survived the fight?

No no they were the ones when I went in there, I think was fourteen or fifteen left that we didn't kill, were locked up and...

Was the Japanese commander surprised by the force that he met? You kind of called his bluff on the phone the day before...

Yeah.

and said there's this big force. we expect you to surrender. When he came face to face with

14:00 **you was he surprised?**

Oh very surprised, particularly they were all surprised when they only see one white person, just one one person. They expect to see a regiment with... Australian didn't sort of have regiments. we had battalions but they expect to see a regiment. Where's your regiment? That's the way they described it and they get most surprised when there's only, well they say where's the rest of you and they can't understand

14:30 it, such small numbers.

Did the Japanese Army have any sort of equivalent of a special force or independent company?

No not to my knowledge. All they had was the the Kempetai which is their secret police like the Gestapo and they were more brutal animals than the Gestapo and they had even their own people terrorised. In other words they'd do anything, they were real animals and they were

15:00 easily identifiable with their swords, for instance I've got one in there, they've got a brown tassel. They like brown braid and of course why the bloke wanted his sword back you see, with their swords, they're good swords. They're beautifully made of course and there's a plug through the handle, you take the plug out and the hilt comes off and the family history is stuck up in the hilt, maybe going back eons sort of thing. Not eons you know, couple of

15:30 centuries sort of thing and they're very, very valuable. Even now you still see occasionally ads in the paper you know, someone buying Japanese swords, someone come out and wanting to, they're quite valuable. So I thought of course, say we've got a lot of the kow towing people and then everyone'd want to dob in someone as a collaborator and this and I said no, well they'd be more people coming out after us sort of thing and that so I...

Were you fearful for some,

16:00 **you know a bit of wood across the back of the head or a knife in the gut? Were you on edge then trying to control that many people?**

No no, I think, no I wasn't, it didn't enter my head. I don't know the Dayak would have smelled them out I just, it's hard to say isn't it? They'd smell them out same as in the jungle for instance. In New Guinea, like the trips I made in New Guinea we used to put booby traps out each night and even when I was on

16:30 my own, when I went out to Good View Junction at night time, you'd just stood under a tree in the teeming rain and get wetter all the time, used to put out what we call AP switches. An AP switch is a 303 bullet on a device that you just put it out and if someone steps on it the bullet goes off and straight up their leg. It's a good indication if someone's around you know, so you had booby traps.

17:00 Or booby trap a hand grenade somewhere so that as a trip wire it'd go off and announce someone's presence if not kill them, but up in Sarawak didn't worry about it, the Dayaks were better than anyone. No-one came near them. The Dayaks seemed to be uncanny, smell them way off had no such worries such as in New Guinea if there were more than one of you, one of you tried to stay awake all the time in case something happened to us but I didn't so much worry about it up there, see Bujan

17:30 said, "Sentries out." he used to say. Beat me to it. Sentry sentry I'll show you I'll show. I said no that's alright and they'd just, uncanny, the jungle was their home territory. I mean they just moved like ghosts, they were just sort of invisible more than anything in the jungle or brought up it was their their territory.

How much training of them did you have to do, did you rifle training?

Originally this

18:00 idiot Sochan who I had this run in with, there was he and another guy, this Pom who'd been up there before the war. He was with, and don't get me wrong, I don't hate all Poms just there are Poms and Poms. The bombastic ones are the ones that particularly used to up there, the Raj and all this sort of crap they were probably sent out as remittance boys but they, 'boy do this boy do that' and you were boy too and not just them. You know as I said

18:30 about George Warfe, everyone respected him but half these people, you have no respect for them at all but if they're in a position you probably might have to do what they want you to do but the Dayaks sort of wouldn't take to him. There was he and there was another guy Pipuram who had been working for one of the oil companies up there before the war. Borneo rich in oil and he was sort of a similar thing and he was trying to train some of these Dayaks early in the piece but he himself

19:00 had not seen any war and it's like the blind leading the blind. He's trying to tell these jungle people who knew more in their primitive fashion than he knew anyhow but when I got them as I said I just sort of

adopted a different approach. I just sort of said, hey I'm Brian and I explained Australia and they got the idea that I'd taken a lot of heads which as I say, lying bastard, I hadn't taken one head, but I had killed one lot of Japanese that's for sure, that is truthful and

- 19:30 they sort of admired, I was one of them see, I was one of them and they sort of respected me and never any qualms about it. They'd just sort of sort of do it but not with the...

But you had to train them in, you said rifles?

I had to show them how to do it and how to point a rifle and was no rifle drill. Don't think rifle drill, how to slap arms, present arms, and you know ceremonial sort of thing,

- 20:00 you're in the middle of the bloody jungle. What do you want to teach someone that for you know? You talk about killing people you know. Just sort of honed their natural skills that's all I did which wasn't sort of very difficult just to hone their skills you know.

And they were effective shots?

Oh yeah they were effective enough. Probably they weren't top marksman I wouldn't say. They wouldn't win any marksmen competitions but yeah they were they were effective shots, but

- 20:30 it's close range, what they were at, they want their big knives, their parangs, they were after the heads and they were fearless too. I mean the only way to stop them would be a dead dart, that's what I said the first lot that ambush, that knocked off these six heads and started to whoop, it'd be a very brave man that would have tried to stop them taking those heads I'll tell you. Whether you're a friend or not, just to try to stop them, they've got the blood lust you know just

- 21:00 sort of things in the mind that's whoopee, you try to stop them I wouldn't like to anyhow, but when I told them to stop making the noise. They learnt a lesson from that they understood why I told them why. I said it'll attract more people down there why are you doing it? They understood it, they stopped their noise and that was a natural thing for 'em to do but not their heads, but the heads were, I had no compunction about it anyhow, about the head, no compunction. I did not take a head myself

- 21:30 and I probably wouldn't, I wouldn't bring myself to it, wouldn't be my scene to do that. I didn't mind killing a Japanese that wouldn't worry me one iota or bashing one around but I've got no interest. I'd be more uptight to get a bit of the Japanese blood on me or something like that. That would be the, for instance Bujan, I used to touch him, he used to like to be reassured, touch him on the shoulder and sometimes he'd touch me,

- 22:00 the first lot of heads that he got he came up to thank me for it and he went to touch me on the shoulder and he had a rifle in one hand and two heads in the other hand and he realised he had, oh he sort of stopped see, and I said, "Yeah you'd better go and wash yourself up a bit first." which he did. I don't know where, they seemed to find water anywhere, they were very, very clean people.

Where does the headhunting originate?

Hereditary, centuries they head hunted.

- 22:30 I don't know.

Who were they hunting?

I don't know, if it's, say your school but in my school days I can remember the wild men of Borneo I can remember very well, wild men of Borneo.

Was it other tribes though or was it white men whose heads were they after?

Oh other people, not not necessarily white people just other people. It was other tribes and they, well it was a hereditary

- 23:00 thing, they became a man sort of once they took a head and I think initially they weren't fussy whose head they took as long as they got one and it wasn't a friend's head. Sarawak's a funny story, just very quickly, because it's not really part of the story but it's an interesting story. Sarawak used to be part of Brunei which of course the Sultan of Brunei's the richest guy in the world supposedly and just on the one hand and then on the other hand there was this guy Brook who was a...

- 23:30 Brooks I think with an S on it, who was a privateer, Queen Elizabeth had all these privateers, they had full license to plunder any Spanish ships anywhere in the world as long as she got a cut of the plunder that was just all they need for the license and this Brooks was a privateer and he had this top sort of boat and he called in Brunei and the Sultan of Brunei had trouble with these sea

- 24:00 Dayak pirates, the sea Dayaks were raiding and taking all his loot and taking his heads, taking his food, taking all sorts of things and he told Brooks that he would remunerate him if he could sort of get rid of some of the sea Dayaks and pirates and so forth and so Brooks with his cutter which had cannon and all this sort of thing, the poor old sea Dayaks and muskets with bayonets on them and that not much match for them and so he stopped them raiding

- 24:30 the Sultan of Brunei and in return the Sultan of Brunei gave him Sarawak and he became known as the White Rajah, the first white Rajah of Sarawak and he owned Sarawak and whole bloody state and that and he didn't have any children and then I think his brother succeeded him and then someone succeeded him and still when war started the Brooks was still the White Rajah, the Poms had a Consulate there and this sort of thing
- 25:00 had to sort of separate identify, but after the war the Brooks gave it to the Poms because it was too much for them to resettle and you know all the troubles that the war had started, they didn't have the facilities to get it back in and they gave it to the Poms and then this is just a very quick story and then the unfortunate thing is that, which I remember vaguely but didn't interest me at the time, in 1964 all the treaty, all that land
- 25:30 was divided up and Australia was part of the treaty and agreed to one half of all of Borneo and part of the other islands top half was given to Malaysia and the bottom half's given to Indonesia and for instance the Malaysians being non racist as they say, firstly with their half they forbade any any person of British extraction to be able to work there and Lena who of course British extraction
- 26:00 could work, she stayed there she had to leave in 1964 because of the non racist Malaysian that's the story and now and of course the sea Dayaks have been fighting the Malaysians even recently, the Malaysians and the Indonesians. Indonesians are terrified of them cause they tried to reclaim 'em too and throw them out but that's getting away from the story.

Tell me what you learnt from them specifically?

The Dayaks?

Did you try and pick up any of their weapon skills? Did you try the darts?

- 26:30 No didn't try them, didn't try it. It didn't really enter my head. I had more sophisticated things myself you know, more sophisticated. No I didn't sort of, even for instance a couple of things we got and as I say, didn't try the maidens that were offered to me regularly everywhere, nice maidens, didn't try them and I'm not a snob or a slouch or anything like that. Nothing nothing queer about me I've proven that, but in that regard.
- 27:00 They had two drinks. They had rice wine and both very potent drinks too which they made and the other was an arak and the arak tasted like a mixture of petrol benzidine, methylated spirits, it'd lift your head off but I found after a while that they had a a very little lemon, very tart, and I used to crush a lemon up, which I say arak tart wild lemon
- 27:30 and water and I developed quite a taste for it, that's what I used to drink. People'd drink the local drink and I'd drink arak tart wild lemon and water so I used to drink their drink but what did I learn from them? Just a marvellous people that they have they got their own standards. No false Gods anywhere that they worship or anything like that,
- 28:00 they were out on their own, they got alright just everyone tried to take them down, just all the other people thought they were suckers because they lived on their own up in the hills and say compared to the New Guinea natives, they leave the New Guinea natives for dead. They were spotlessly clean people, always bathing in the river, spotlessly clean and always laughing, always happy
- 28:30 fearless. If they liked you they'd do anything for you. If they didn't like you, well I didn't find that out but I'd rather they liked me and they did like me anyhow so I got along well with them. Laugh, enjoyed a joke,, do anything for you you know, good people and you sort of look around for instance at our poor native aboriginal here and sort of makes you think they leave them for dead these people, and if you show them something they
- 29:00 latch onto something so quickly, see what to show them something you know.

What were their main food sources?

They used to have market gardens, their own markets gardens on a hill. I think they they had their own plants. I think they used to recycle the plot every seven years or something they had that worked out. Don't know how they knew what seven years was but it turned out to be seven years you know, to allow it to regenerate, the earth to regenerate so and rice

- 29:30 paddy of course was the main one. Fish, they used to fish, they were mad keen fishermen and pigs,, wild pigs.

So you were eating a lot better at this stage than you had been in New Guinea?

Oh you know no shortage, in New Guinea they had food for three or four days without any food. Then you might just get emergency rations or something.

Was that because you didn't know what bush food you could eat in New Guinea?

Nothing there.

- 30:00 **There just wasn't...?**

See you're talking dense jungle, nothing grew, nothing grew, and you weren't finding native long houses like this, we sort of weren't coming amongst natives. Just never stopped bloody raining, you're wet all the time, it was miserable, it got dark and you're in thick jungle all the time and I mean it didn't get the rain up in Sarawak, not the same sort of rain and used to get a roof over your head up in Sarawak with the... one of my first

30:30 experiences, later I used to comment that someone'd say, 'Oh I wonder what we're having for dinner?' and I used to say, 'I know' 'How do you know?' 'Oh I know everything.' you know just sort of joking but they only had chicken, they get a couple of chickens or whatever they needed, tether them to a tree or something, ringbark their necks and let them flap themselves to death and of course the chickens are screaming their bloody heads off while they're flapping themselves to death

31:00 so that's how you knew you were having chicken for dinner see, and immediately flapped themselves to death they pluck it and cook it and the other one which is quite good I picked one day. I said to someone, I think it's Dave Kearney said to me, "Well you're such a smart arse you haven't any any chickens flapping so what are we having for dinner tonight?" and I said pork. He said, "How do you know?" and I said, "Ever heard of the saying stuck like a wild pig?"

31:30 and he said, "Yeah why." and I said, "I heard a pig screaming, it'd been stuck a little while ago I bet we get pork tonight." and we got pork see.

Was there quite a bit of bush food then when you were out on patrol or roaming with the sea Dyaks?

You generally get to a long house, you very rarely sleep out. Sometimes they like this Kanut where we ratted the place that had this three screaming

32:00 birds and went around and ambushed the launch one night there, we had to sleep rough because there was nowhere else to sleep but generally speaking we could have a long house, have a roof over your head and of course once you're in the long house I used to say to Bujan, "Got sentries out?" Oh yes they're all done but woe betide anyone come near a Dayak or long house, you've got the whole lot of them plus all the animals underneath, they'd start to scream their heads off before anyone got anywhere near us and it was just

32:30 so completely different and I used to chuckle. I mean war's not a piece of cake and where there's any likelihood of getting yourself killed or badly wounded is the worst thing that can happen to you, I would say badly wounded. You know making you incapable, but apart from that it was a piece of cake compared to New Guinea and the other thing up in Sarawak which we all carried, we all had L

33:00 pills which we keep having to check that, we had L pills and a cyanide mixture in a small rubber capsule, the idea being that if you got captured and you're being badly tortured or something you can put it in your mouth, hold it in your mouth as long as you like and if you found that you couldn't handle what they wanted you to handle, you could bite on this and you're gone and you've upset all the people that want to interrogate you, there's not much they can do, you sort of kill yourself but

33:30 that was the two worst things that could happen. One was if you got pinched like that, got captured by the Japanese, and the other of course, if you got badly wounded, of course there's no backup and as a guerrilla you've got no backup, no-one watching your back at all, you've got to sort of watch your own back and no reserves, you're just sort of you know completely on your own sort of, days and days at a time and you've got to,

34:00 just all completely different, but some of the guys who had to say live as a commando left this sort of life, well this is a piece of cake compared to it anyway, the actual life. New Guinea was incomparably horrible and really crook. As I say everyone got crook, I got out as one of the only, thirty-four that were hit, I got hit with, mine was

34:30 death threatening malaria. I finally got hit up with it. I mean some casualties from the thing were so crook because particularly we didn't have anything any medication for it in those days.

Were you taking Atebrin once you were in Borneo?

Yeah in Borneo but we didn't have anything in New Guinea.

So you just carried a large personal supply of Atebrin and once a day?

All sorts of medical, as I said we had first class medical gear even told how to take an appendix out, not that I did, but

35:00 trained in things, to stitch something up, we had special gear and morphine capsules to deaden pain if you had severe pain and in Sarawak was their special, the gear we had was the top gear at that time. In New Guinea even though we were supposedly the top troops everyone had makeshift gear. The gear was just

35:30 completely different you know, we were so unprepared for war there, it was criminal you know, sort of criminal, just goes to show you know, everything that happened to us. We're just so lucky the Japanese didn't come through. They should have, they could have made such a quick sweep of it you know, people didn't, everyone thought of the Japanese, oh those nasty little people, even the Australians, nasty little

- people they have a reputation of copying everyone what they do, manufacturing everything, copying
- 36:00 something you know, but they were quite wrong, they were proven wrong.
- Tell me a bit more about that medical training you received as part of Z Special Unit?**
- Well see the the appendix one which I've forgotten was all sorts of diagrams and we had scalpels and all this scalpels and clamps and mirrors that you could see to do it and this one guy did did in fact, it's been
- 36:30 documented there's no doubt about it, he did it, I think he was the only one that did but I've still got my appendix. I didn't even have them, haven't had them out I didn't have time to use it, but things such as, and we had a mighty ointment in those days that Ungbe or Ungve UNG Ungve or Ungbe I just forget but it was an antiseptic
- 37:00 paste sort of thing, would heal practically anything, was very bloody good stuff, I don't know what it was but by those standards in those times we had and for instance they had morphine capsules was something unknown, morphine wasn't considered so much a drug in those days. I know after the war, well after the war I had these little little capsules, they were glass capsules about the size of a couple of knuckles of your finger, glass cause
- 37:30 there was no plastic in those days and I had them in the shaving cabinet of home when I was living at home with my parents there for ages, I don't know why I kept them and just threw them out one day, they were just sort of there, would be worth a heap on the drug market today if I had time to think about it ,but just a straight out neat morphine you know.
- Did you see any of the healing or health care techniques of the Dayaks, did they have**
- 38:00 **anyone who was principally responsible for health or or healing?**
- With us?
- No within their tribes, did they have, did you see them use you know?**
- No.
- No?**
- Oh they had the head man of course. The head man he was called penghulu that's P-E-N-G-H-U-L-U, penghulu he was the chief and he was
- 38:30 the boss, referred to like anyone else, knock and someone'd say I'll get the boss for you. They'll get the penghulu, I'll go and get the penghulu, and they'd go and get the penghulu and he sort of teaches but he'd be the arbitrator as as it were.
- But do they use herbal medicines or did you see anyone who was ill being treated?**
- No not much, they had a...
- Did they not suffer from malaria?**
- He had an uncanny knack, now this happened when I ambushed
- 39:00 this launch this big launch. With a Bren gun, the Bren gun is a light machine gun and oh it's about that big. It's not like a sub machine gun although you could use it like a sub machine gun. Normally you can lie on the ground and fire it. It's very, very powerful and after a lot of fire the barrel gets red hot and it's so made that the barrel has a wooden clamp on top and there's generally a second person who can
- 39:30 take the barrel off and put a new barrel in so it keeps going and going, and so I wanted to get someone to change the barrel so I explained to Bujan to get him to do it while I was ambushing this this place, and explained it to him and practised with it and anyhow when I went to change the barrel he was so excited and just grabbed the barrel, red hot barrel, which of course stuck to his hand,
- 40:00 was his left hand fortunately and so I changed it myself and after when I'd finished I had a look at his hand and it was very badly blistered and if it'd been me I'd have been in agony you know, and he just sort of shrugged his shoulder wryly like that and I put some of this Ungbe or Ungve whatever it was on, put a bandage round it and I had a look at it the next morning and the bloody thing hasn't completely healed just just you know, so I put some more on
- 40:30 and the next day it's practically healed. It'd take ages for anyone else to heal you know.

Tape 7

- 00:32 **We were just talking about the health of the sea Dayaks. Did you ever see any of the Dayaks with symptoms of malaria or any illnesses like that?**

Oh yes they they would have it but nowhere near as bad as we would have it, just be sort of be a mild, just a little bit off colour, like be off colour and maybe still go to the office today or not sort of thing.

01:00 They get to that degree but say not to the degree that where I got it which is not only just me but a lot of others, we had sort of a big surprise at that. They'd have an inbuilt, well I mean they're local, their inbuilt immunity to these things you know, just sort of complete immunity where we we haven't and they weren't frightened of crocodiles, big, huge crocodiles in the water. The crocodiles used to bark like dogs but

01:30 crocodiles never attacked them in the water and the Dayaks they used to go swimming in the water and it didn't worry them these huge bloody crocodiles you know.

Where there any animals or insects that you were particularly fearful of in the jungle?

Well in New Guinea the little ones were the the leeches, the ticks and and mosquitos, they

02:00 were the ones in New Guinea, but in Sarawak there weren't as many mosquitos there and there were no little animals, no little animals really. At one stage which Bujan pointed out, was we had a family of orang-utans follow us for four days. There was mum, dad and the two kids holding onto mum's hand, they just just followed us round. I gave them a couple of chocolate bars or left them for them, they wouldn't touch it, they're marvellous animals you know,

02:30 sort of in the wild, but no there were, I didn't strike them anyhow, but there was I know from what I've read, there's one story in the 60s I think it was, where they had what they call the Indonesian crisis or problem or something and our SAS [Special Air Services], cause there was no SAS in our days, the SAS was a forerunner

03:00 of, still not the same as Z Special Unit but it was formed after the war. One of their blokes got caught up with a a small elephant (UNCLEAR), got hold of him, I mean there were elephants up there but I didn't see any, oh I saw a few big pythons, big, big pythons; like wasn't, I had another story there it's not that interesting but huge, up in New Guinea there was this huge python the natives were pulling out of a hole

03:30 like a rabbit's burrow. There was about this much of the thing and they're grabbing at it, get a bit more out and another one'd grab it. After measured out it was about thirty feet long this python and they chopped it up into three foot lengths, they reckon it was a delicacy. They offered me a length and I didn't want it.

How was your health in general in Sarawak?

Not too bad.

So the B2 classification proved a bit a bit pre-emptive or

04:00 **did you regain your...?**

I'm convinced it's in the mind a lot you know, that if you want to say you're sick and keep telling yourself you're sick you'll be sick. I didn't want to be sick.

You didn't have recurring symptoms of the malaria?

No, not as bad and they had more drugs then, I had a couple more drugs that they'd given me and nowhere near as bad, nowhere near as bad as when, I mean when I initially had it from New Guinea I had it, well they reckon I had it as bad as anyone,

04:30 worse, it was life threatening, shocking, you know really shocking.

How did you get your fitness back to an adequate level? That was something we didn't talk about before. You decided to leave Ballarat?

Well firstly when this Tony Bluesch approached me I joined the air force. I was still in the army. I didn't apply to join the air force and I was still in the army and he came to see me to get me to go into Special Operations. I said to him then, well I said,

05:00 "I'm B2 in the army anyhow." and he said, "Oh yeah you're not worried about that are you? He said, "You wouldn't be trying to join the air force if you were worried about that." and I think a lot of it is what you know, what you want to do and what you are physically capable of doing, as long as you can do it, and I did it, for instance when I initially went up to Fraser Island we'd do a lot of running up there in sand and sort of in the sand, uphill and down sand.

05:30 You'd take one step and fall back a bit all the time, bit wearing, and on one of the runs there my spleen was so enlarged from malaria that I'd have to run, I used to have to hold it in, it used to trouble me cause it was my own spleen, enlarged spleen from malaria and used to have to hold it in, but it gradually righted itself, but all these things come to come to roost ultimately they they catch up with you in old age for want of a better tale, like I'm talking about. For instance now

06:00 I've copped all these, still cop all these things now. I don't talk about it otherwise I'd go and do something but they still sort of hit you in time you know, see I'm classified as TPI [totally and

permanently incapacitated]. Know what TPI is? Well TPI because of, it goes like this, because of my war caused disabilities and my war caused disabilities only, in other words not old age

06:30 I'm classified as Totally and Permanently Incapacitated which is TPI and I'm not supposed to do anything so I get that and they pay you for it, I must admit it's... and quite a few things to it. I'm a TPI and I get it. I've got some shocking things wrong with me, I look at the war wounds

07:00 and I think, but you you get used to it, you become a realist. You think what point in moaning about all these bloody things. I mean you don't want to listen to how crook [ill] I am, I mean you...

I'm interested in which injuries...

You'd probably listen to me and say, but people come up to me and say it's standard, particularly with the older type of people. I say old, they're probably only my own bloody age, but they say, the conversation goes on like this. "Hello Brian how are you?" and I've got, fine, fine, I say fine,

07:30 just fine, nothing else, not OK, good or anything, fine, and afterwards they say, well they look at you and say, "Aren't you going to ask me how I am?" and I say no, no, and I don't ask, I don't want to listen to it you know, cause they'll go on and on and on. All they want to do is tell someone how crook they are. I say to people sometimes if you keeping talking about how crook you are you're going to be crook, you've talked yourself into it. You've got to be positive realist.

Which illnesses or injuries from the wartime continued

08:00 **to affect you afterwards, are there particular ones that you can identify that occurred at that time?**

Well yes, yes dead set identified yeah. One of the worst ones is is my back for instance. I've got at one stage which I can remember when I was with the Dayaks we got ambushed, we got given away, see a bloke gave us away sort of thing, to the Japanese, got caught in the ambush and I

08:30 fell down this hill and the Dayaks looked after me for a couple of days because I came good, I had to come good but when I was extracted, when I got out and was X-rayed it was found that I had two badly fractured vertebrae which had healed badly, and cause nothing they could do about it, just healed badly and then of course since then everything's happened, my spine goes, I've lost four inches in height, just over four inches in height, from here up my

09:00 spine goes that way and that way and one side, I stand up, this side's down a bit and I get agonising pain and I don't take pain, I've got a heap of pain killers. I don't take 'em cause I'm too perverse to. I reckon that if I take pain killers I could become too used to them, or if the pain gets worse I won't have anything to turn to because I'll be so used to the pain killers,

09:30 and the other thing that I've got a couple of right, there's one thing I get top treatment here, we get top free treatment, I say free treatment, Veterans' Affairs pay for the treatment and the best you can get which is something you don't have to pay for it yourself and the treatment is, they reckon they can operate on it and fix it. While I was writing the book one bloke said, "Well let's do it and then you can finish your book." but since then I have found out on good authority that anyone of my age getting

10:00 a full anaesthetic has got great repercussions, firstly with a major surgery, with full anaesthetic which I didn't realise, they actually take you off your breathing, you stop breathing yourself and they put you onto artificial breathing, then they finish doing whatever they're going to do to you. They try to make you breathe back again, take off the artificial breathin,g make you breathe again but doing this it can affect the brain and get you in the brain, and

10:30 these people, they all know know someone who's been right on the ball with everything and they start to get forgetful and they forget things, forget this and start to go a bit haywire and what have you. I thought, 'Well I've still got all my bloody marbles, I'd rather put up with the pain if I can and and stick with my marbles.' sort of thing, so that's something to look at, so I haven't had it operated and that's the reason I haven't had it operated, but I get physiotherapy

11:00 and you've got to be a realist, you've got it and that's it. I mean I can't do anything about it; you're making me talk about it. I didn't offer to talk, I mean put it this way, I don't talk to people about it for two reasons. One, most people are really not interested in listening to you tell them about it anyhow and if you talk about it yourself you're telling yourself about it. I just say I've got it but I don't want to know about it except that it keeps reminding me you know.

Is that something you

11:30 **learnt though or something that was important in your career both as a commando and in the special unit? Was the ability of the mind to override the body's pain?**

Well yeah, yeah. A lot of that is self taught but that's self taught. I consider myself to be a realist put it that way, in many shapes or forms I think get a problem or something then all of a sudden it'll hit me and I thought, I'm a realist there's no point in saying

12:00 if this happens or that happens that's it for instance. Like my back is there, it's not going to go away, it's never going to go away. It could get worse but it'll never go away so it's there isn't it? I mean what's the

point in keep talking about it?

But once you make that recognition then are you blocking it out?

Oh no.

Do you block out the pain, are you able to override it?

No I'm overriding it, I'm overriding it and I can tell you it got to the stage, I got

- 12:30 everywhere, they sent me to the pain management course. There's a pain management up at the Royal North Shore hospital here, supposed to be one of the best in the world if not the best in the southern hemisphere. All they do is to fix people's pain, that's all they specialise in, pain, and they got to the stage with me, didn't cost me anything. They go right through it and they can for instance, you might say you've got pain and I've got the same pain, but we don't know who's got the worst pain
- 13:00 because we don't know what we're doing, but they have all sorts of methods you see and they reckon that I've got pretty bad pain and they tried everything, they can't fix it, they've given it up, I'm a bad job. Then out of the blue one day they rang me up and sent me all sorts of paraphernalia they said, "Look we can't do anything more for you but we wonder this? We know you've got this great degree of pain and somehow unbeknown to us you seem to be able to cope with it far more than other
- 13:30 people can cope with it. What we would like to do at your understanding, we'll pay for transport for you to do it, big deal, is to go to the hospital have an MRI [Magnetic Resonance Imagery] scan on your brain so that we can find out why you can handle the pain, we'd like to see if we can find out a reason you see." and I said, "Well I've still got my marbles and the MRI scan won't do you any damage at all." but then in five years, this is my way of thinking, in five years time
- 14:00 they might suddenly decide that we've now discovered that MRI scans on the brain can affect the brain you know, all these things happen later on. I said, "Look I'd like to help other people but I don't feel like having someone meddle with my brain." I thought you know, I didn't do it, but I'm just saying, so obviously my way of thinking I can and I think a lot of these people they talk 'emselves into it. They talk about it, all they want to do is talk about it and most elderly people or old people all they want to do is talk about their ailments,
- 14:30 they've got nothing else to talk about.

Let's not even look at it in terms of old age cause to me one of the important themes from your story is the ability to overcome that, to make it into the commando branch initially you have to have a very high pain threshold whether that's in the physical fitness you're doing or if you're injured overriding that. Where did that come from within you? Was that something you did, were you just able to to overcome that from a young age?

Determination I s'pose, yeah determination yeah. You'd set out to do,

- 15:00 if you want to do something the same as I often thought, I thought to myself, I mean I reverted to private and what have you and I was recommended to go to officer training school and I didn't go cause I got crook and what have you, so I sort of didn't finish anywhere here. I thought a couple of times, even wrote to myself in the book, I wrote that I probably should have stayed at Canungra as an instructor. I would have been the more senior rank than any of these people
- 15:30 now and I wouldn't have had people shooting at me trying to kill me, I would have but then I sort of say to myself, well thank Christ I didn't do that cause I've lead a better life than other people. I wouldn't have missed my experiences for anything. My experiences, to me it was well worth it and that might find a few people or a few people that I strike who had anything like the same experiences anyhow. There's a lot,
- 16:00 like the story with Lena Ricketts, the beating what went on there. People used to look sideways, wouldn't believe me about that you know, that sort of thing doesn't happen you know, until finally I met her and we got together and then fate was broadcast, made on the ABC an interview about it which I've got the tape for it there, so I used to say to people here, you want a lend of the tape you go and play the bloody tape and then this Graham Shirley [film maker] got the whole thing in this documentary.
- 16:30 He did that and he got me, he flew me over to Perth and interviewed Lena Ricketts and he got that sort of story and his documentary, but it's, A, it's determination but you got to try to do something you know, you can't just, sort of life just doesn't go on I think you make your own luck up to a point. You've got to work at something to get something done. Somebody's not just going to walk in the door and
- 17:00 do something for you, you've got to, oh no, it's just I'm not making myself very clear but as I say I instead of hanging, I find I haven't got enough time in the day now, this is true. I do something all the time. I hardly watch TV cause I haven't got the time. I had a VCR [video recorder], I've lent it to someone, I haven't got it back, I'm not worried about that I just haven't got time, I'm just doing something all the time you know. It's a... know what's going on in the world
- 17:30 and I find most people of my vintage don't, you know they don't.

So is that one of the keys then to overcoming pain or fear or discomfort is to keep your mind

active with other things?

Well I only remember pain because you keep bringing it up otherwise while I'm sitting here this is just part of it, I can feel theoretically, don't take this to heart, I shouldn't say it but I can't sit down too long and I can't stand up too long. See

18:00 unfortunate things, like the shark never goes to sleep because a shark goes to sleep in the water it'll sink, so it's got to stay awake all the time. I can't do that but I do because I put it I just I put it out of my mind. I say go away, I mentally say piss off you know, because what else is there to do? If I say, oh gees it's sore, you'd probably, oh, oh you poor... we'll stop, we'll stop, we'll do this, we'll do that. I mean everyone feels sorry for you and what have you,

18:30 it's a waste of bloody time. It's there, it's there, be a realist about it. That's me anyway.

Alright let's go back to the story. We were up to...

I put the proclamation out.

You put the proclamations out around town, your mate Dave's still to turn up.

Yeh they were hammered up on trees and everywhere. I said to Lena, "Where'll we stay, where am I going to stay?" and she said, "Oh you'll just have to stay in the residence." see so she took down to the residence, this huge

19:00 mansion, the Po's used to send these, know what a remittance boy is? We used to call them remittance because the Poms and the wealthy families'd all have a black sheep of the family. They'd piss him off to the colonies so he wouldn't cause trouble at home and family name you see. That's all these remittance boys come out to places like this, live in the residency say at Sumungan, all the servants in the world and if they

19:30 moved with any of the locals and then discard them and have children, the British Foreign Office used to pay a pension to the ex, the lady lover sort of think, oh fuck. Anyhow the reason's cause the residency residents gone, the Japanese had occupied it so went to the residence, beautiful mansion, so we had the public works clean the place out and we had parties and the residency found there was grog [alcohol] there, grog and food and I

20:00 requisitioned it, did the whole thing properly and we had parties and parties, I said, "Lena are you alright?" and she said yes and this is when I found out who she was, and she was Lena Ricketts and she said you're right, so I said, "What about coming around for a party tonight?" this is the first night, "Come round for dinner." and when she came round here's this this attractive looking bird [woman]. She's all dressed up, completely different looking person, attractive looking bird with you know, dressed up, all the better,

20:30 you wouldn't recognise the same person that came racing down the hill at me.

You were obviously very confident that the area had been cleared of Japanese then, you were letting your guard down for the first time in a while?

The Dayaks were around, the Dayaks would smell them a mile off.

OK.

They were so used to it the Dayaks, the Dayaks'd just sort of smell them you know and of course the local people would dob them in anyhow. Yeah I was quite sure no more Japanese there or we'd have got fair warning and they wouldn't,

21:00 seeing that theoretically war was over see, to be exact that was the 14th of September, 14 September, and war finished August.

August 15th.

This is 14th of September so I got in all sorts of shit later on about this; there would be people, right from this particular action, all sorts of trouble.

On this particular night though, is this a quite a celebration for you, you're relaxed, cleaned up, good food...?

21:30 Played gramophone records.

And are you loving it, are you appreciating it more so than than any night you've had for quite a while?

Oh crikey yeah. yeah. The place had three bathrooms. I looked at myself in the mirror and said, "Who the fuck's that?" I thought, 'Oh Christ, have a shave!' and oh dear.

And then in comes a princess?

Yeah well, then she brought her brother and her sister and her father had died, her brother and her sister with her but she was sort of a real goer,

- 22:00 I'd say stayed, but she never stopped, she was just went on and on all the time and the Japanese had given her, she'd been in all sorts of trouble, she'd been punched and belted around and she was the one that Bujan had spoken to when he went into town and said that I've spoken to someone and told her that, that we have someone with us, someone she knew, we had someone with us meaning me you see, but yeah so we we partied on and then the next day
- 22:30 I thought we'll go down, and I'd said to Bujan we'd put him into another place and got food for them and I did it all, properly requisitioned it and signed the requisition form, someone could pay for it later. I don't know who. Everything's legitimate you know. I mean the Japanese'd just commandeered, they wouldn't do that and I said we'll go down to the administrative centre just to make sure that everything's alright, so we went down I asked Lena would she come down in case I needed an interpreter,
- 23:00 she said yes, so first thing in the morning Bujan came around and we went up to the cuba, up to the jail. I just wanted to visit the Japanese again and had words with them, and I got this bloke, I ranted at him again and told him what a prick he was what have you in in all the languages I knew but mainly Australian anyhow. Then we went down to the office,
- 23:30 big office set up and do a bit of work, interview people, we did that and then the following day we did the same thing again and and we're in this, we went down and there's no-one there. I picked an office with a big desk and Bujan had his desk over there, don't know what he was going to do, and Lena had a desk there, so we had my big desk, I had my Tommy gun, my Owen gun slung round here, pistol on thing here, knuckle duster knife,
- 24:00 two grenades, Bujan's slouching at his desk, he's got the Bren gun lying on the table, his own rifle on the table and his own parang there just looking and not understanding anything, and he's got two Dayak warriors at the door and Lena came in and she's sort of doing all the things. Well people going, "Who the bloody hell is this?" you see, it just looked like a bloody circus so we transacted business. Yes, what do you want? And yeah, I'd never done anything, I had no administrative experience or anything like that, oh it was a piece of
- 24:30 cake really, but I'd had no administrative experience. It was a joke and then we got the message that, Bujan and one of his men came racing up and, "They come! They come!" It was Dave Kearney and these other people coming, so we went out to greet them and welcome here, took them to the residency. I said, "It's alright, got three bathrooms there, help yourself." and they kept saying everything's safe here, I made everything safe. I had to you know, throw that in as much as I could
- 25:00 and there with sea Dayaks and of course we are, and I said well, so we settled in and we had another party. We held parties every night there for a while and requisitioned the food from public service, oh it was, yeah was just just really huge playing this gramophone and records all the time and then...

Was Dave the only westerner who arrived in that group?

Had two blokes with him, a bloke Fowler, he's a radio operator and another

- 25:30 bloke but they didn't have much to say, they didn't have much to say either.

Were their jaws on the ground at the little set-up you'd created?

Oh yeah yeah, I took them up to the cuba to show them the Japanese that were left there. Oh the Dayak, everyone's telling them stories. The people don't talk, just mental telepathy, everyone tells something, did you see what happened you know, the word just gets around, everyone oh marvellous you know.

Was it a good laugh, were you and Dave having a good laugh about

- 26:00 **it all?**

Oh yeah oh yeah, I did yeah, I thought it was quite good. I was quite proud to show off what happened, even the proclamations, and I said to Dave, "Look I want to have a couple of days off, I've done all the work." I said, "I have a freight around, you can take over everything now, after all you're supposed to be in charge." so I took him down and showed him the office set-up and I said, "You can have that desk which is mine." He said, "Who's that?" and I said, "That's Bujan's." and he said, "What, Bujan got a desk?" I said yeah and he said, "God!" and I said, "That's Lena's." and he said

- 26:30 oh, so he said, "I want to have a look around." so Lena took me to a couple of places and she had one of those, one thing which lived in her mind that this, we were at tidal river, whenever the tide came in it would come in with a real roar, roar is the correct word to use, great big surge and it comes in with a roar, never heard such a roar, just the roar of the tide coming in,
- 27:00 just like, oh like an avalanche you know, and we used to sit down, watch this river roar, come racing in you know, quite quite good. Then they said, I talk about they, they are all the outside people, we don't know who they are because they, all the mysterious people, but they had been forming what was called
- 27:30 BBKAU British Borneo Civil Administration Unit to come in when everything was safe, to take over the administration of these places and these people apparently see no war at all, they're trained in Australia so they're brought upstream to take over Sumungan from us, a gent by the name of Ditmus, WLPS

Ditmus I think his name was, a Pom, and another bombastic, would-be

28:00 bombastic Pom and he used to try to give, I know to me he'd say something, I want you to do this or that and I'd say I beg your pardon, say I beg your pardon cause he couldn't give us orders you know, he had no authority to give us orders except for his rank you know, so he gave it up in the end but he in writing, which I've still got, I've got all the documentation copies of it, so Dave, we were told that we were to be extracted, which is the word we had from the radio operator,

28:30 to be extracted and we were to find a boat, either hire or commandeer a boat to take us up to Seabry where we were being extracted out and we got this old boat called the Merry Jolly, don't ask me why it was called the Merry Jolly, and we got this boat and the vessels that the Japanese were going on were beautiful boats but they'd been shot up, they were useless, they weren't seaworthy but there were a couple of

29:00 armchairs and things on the boats that the Japanese had taken with them so we put them on the boat that we were going, thought we might as well be comfortable and after all proceeds of war and what have you, and then we had a last night's party, a last night's party, and Dave said to me, "I've got to give this Ditmus some sort of report." and I said, "Yeah well you want to." I said, "Tell him a few things that have been going on cause he wouldn't understand quite a lot. Give it to him in writing and then

29:30 when you hand it to him ask him is he happy with it, is it is he satisfied." Anyhow he did all that and yes Ditmus was quite happy with it, yeah that's marvellous, so he didn't come to our party but we had our last party which was in the residence there and it was a real dinger of a party, grog, food, the best of stuff.

Who did you have there, were there many of the local people?

Oh yeah, there were a couple of the launch that brought this Ditmus up, they had a couple of

30:00 crew on board, they came, and a couple of the local, I don't know, a couple of doctors were there, the doctors and their wives. Whoever wanted to come you know, made no blood,y had this party and the main thing was a gramophone and a record belting out that belonged to the Japanese you see, cause this comes into the story later on this gramophone. I loved music, trad [itional] jazz particularly, I love it, and there's a lot of good records there and Japanese probably, so I said, "Oh we'll take that with us, have a bit of music on the way."

30:30 and anyhow that night Lena and I made our our last, we went down to the river roar, and watched the river roar in and we sort of said goodbye and of course the story was earlier in that day I'd said to Dave, "Now look, what I can do is to get rid of Bujan and the Dayaks is tell 'em to go away because they won't know what to do, they're going to get into all sorts of trouble because this Pom's going to order them around

31:00 and they're not going to like it and they won't be able to understand why things are suddenly changed so drastically that everyone's got on so well together and now they're being ordered around, they won't understand." And I don't blame them cause I don't like the Pom anyway, and that it'd be better if they go back home which is a long walk cause we've covered a lot of territory from when we first met them, probably about a week's walk away, a huge this huge distance, week's walk for them. I said

31:30 I'd square that off with them, but I'd like to remunerate him and we of course had quite a bit of money given to us for information and things in good straight settlement dollar money. Dave had most of it but I had quite a bit as well and pay for the heads, pay for anything, and I said, "What I'd like to do is tell 'em to go back home and we'll give them a couple of things." There are a few rifles and things floating round no-one knows how many

32:00 though we'll give them a couple of rifles that they can take with 'em things like that, give 'em all the sea Dayaks stores to take with them and I'll give him the money that I've got cause it's not a great deal, it will you know, give him the money, they can take that with them. Dave said well you fix it, you can do it better than I can, yeah that's right you fix it you see, so I had this sad farewell with Bujan and that's when he said to me, I said, "You go back up to the other side of Song where I

32:30 first met you." "But when do I see you?" he kept saying, and I said, "I'll see you up there, I'll see you up there." "Yeah but when?" I said, "Oh soon." What more could I say? And he said, this is what he told me, he said because we've got all these heads he said that you helped get and we have the special ceremony I'd like you to be there for this ceremony. I said yeah yeah, I'll be there. I thought, 'lying bastard', cause I had no intention of being there. I just tried to, not square him off but not to upset him. I don't know if I'd have said well I'm not

33:00 you know it's the easy way out you see, so poor Bujan was left and that was the last I saw Bujan, not the last I thought of him. I never saw Bujan again. He left more or less happily expecting to see me some time in the future, he left and then Lena said sort of, oh yeah we'll be back soon, sort of back soon and so we left and oh, the whole town

33:30 came out and waved to us and thank you so much, so different to what it was everything's alright you know, and away we went, in the boat to meet up to a place called Seebu where we met some others there in special operatives and then finally we were to be flown back to our camp at Labuan and Dave was flown out before I was, he went back to Labuan

- 34:00 and then I got flown back to Labuan and I enquired where Dave was and no-one could tell me, they said, "Oh he's gone home." and I thought well that's strange, that's straightaway like that, because though we had top priority during the war, war was finished, everything's changed you know, your special services are no longer required you know so much. I thought that's strange, anyhow he'd gone and I said nothing else I could do about it.
- 34:30 So we were waiting to come home and just hanging around and next thing I get called up to the bloke in charge and he said Z Special bloke named Courtney, another Pom but he wasn't so bad and he said, "What'd people do in Sumungan?" and I said, "What do you mean?" He said, well, he said, "I keep getting these complaints." and I said what about and he said well so he showed me this Ditmus
- 35:00 who I was to find out later on was a real trouble maker and of course everything in the town was sorted out. The proclamations I'd said, all the office set-up, Bujan and Lena that was everything's running and I started cause they hadn't been paid while the Japanese were there, I started for them to get paid again, everything. They're all happy, all set up, and he started complaining, so this whatever his complaint was I've got a copy of my reply and I was accused of
- 35:30 taking firstly this gramophone and records, accused of taking the gramophone, records, knives, forks and spoons, glasses and a few other odds and sods, absolutely stupid stuff, stolen them from the residency see and cause the thing, well I said, what a load of garbage! I said, "What do we do with glasses to start with, there's no wine to drink out of the glasses!
- 36:00 Why would you want wine glasses and as to knives forks and spoons and a whole lot of things, the gramophone and record and two lounge chairs." The gramophone and records belonged to one of the Japanese officers. We considered since we'd been deprived of comfort for quite some considerable time that it was fair enough to appropriate it as spoils of war which I still am and he said yeah you're quite right you see, and as to the two armchairs the Japanese had already got them, we took them
- 36:30 off one of the Japanese launches that had been shot up. They took up so much room that we off loaded them to another place on the way. They shouldn't have been returned. So I made this report you know so that was that. About a week later I get called up again, got another one, another complaint, and there's this Japanese invasion money which is completely worthless, this is a joke. I mean we're using
- 37:00 straight settlement dollars and I'd already put a proclamation out that it was a criminal offence to use Japanese invasion money anyway, that I'd stolen somehow a whole lot of this Japanese money which was so much garbage and that there was a white mosquito net missing and something else missing and one of the it's Corporal Bujan who I had done something or other so he wanted me to make a statement not just a reply, a statement
- 37:30 for this one, so I made a statement and that the whole lot was a lot of garbage and then I got another one, he called me up and he said to me, "What'd you do to these people?" and I said they wouldn't want much time with him anyhow and he said well I said, I wouldn't have a bar of him. I said if he was an operative I wouldn't go on an operation with him I said, he's just useless anyhow and all his work had been done, but this one said there was two things
- 38:00 he said, well this is one he's complained to the 9th Australian Division, which is the occupying force. We had nothing more to do with it, we were been extracted and we were theoretically, no-one knew, we just sort of didn't exist and we were just waiting to go home and he said well at first I've got this, that there's a gold and silver ornament missing from the Kuching Museum. I said well I've never been into Kuching
- 38:30 and there's something else missing and I've got the answer to the thing I just forget what the other one was and so I made a statement saying that was a lot of garbage and the second one is he said they want to interview you and he said so we don't want them to interview you. He said we don't like that at all he said so he said we'll send you back to Australia, fly you back to Australia in one of our Cat boats and
- 39:00 maybe it'll blow over for a while after a while and forget about it.

Tape 8

- 00:31 **Before we get into you coming back to Australia I just wanted to clarify, with the proclamation was that a purely random proclamation that you made in order to bring a bit of order to things or did you actually proclaim, was that policy to proclaim it in the name of...?**
- No it was something that I dreamt up myself very quickly and I thought there's so many so many people here I can't speak to all
- 01:00 of them, how do I get my message across, and then I thought as I say, Bright Brian, as I sort of say to myself, remembered my history lessons in the old days where they didn't have means of communication they'd always issue proclamations, so I said that's what I'll do, I'll issue these proclamations, had to put them up everywhere so that everyone can and so many of them that people just have to see them you see.

So in whose name did you write them?

Oh I signed them, well the proclamations, I had the proclamation, 'such

01:30 and such be it known that as from this date...' then whatever it is, 'Japanese money is no longer valid' be a criminal offence and various things, I signed myself Brian Walpole Adjutant, which I wasn't, Adjutant for D Kearney Officer in Charge Second Division Sarawak which is also bullshit but that was impressive, that's what I signed, I had no authority to sign anything at all but it just sounded

02:00 more impressive. After all he's supposed to be in charge anyway so I said to him, "Look, I put your name to it you see it looks impressive doesn't it?"

I can imagine you doing it in the name of King George.

Yeah.

Brian Walpole on behalf of King George.

Yeah, see I could have but that's what I put in it, adjutant, it just sounded impressive, I don't know, people wouldn't know what an adjutant was.

But this was continuing to cause you trouble back at Labuan

02:30 **as you were waiting to get back to Australia?**

Oh well yeah, this Ditmus got all these things, he said he was happy about things he seemed to have a personal hate cause everyone that spoke to me said, "What did you do to this man?" I said he's just a typical mealy mouthed Pom, one of those, which he was. I said everything was done for him, he had it made, he's just got to find fault about it and I did find out cause Lena stayed there

03:00 and she herself told me, and the other thing that happened all the locals are talking about Brian the orang puta, all they'd hear was Brian see, Brian this Brian that, because they'd spread my name around and I was the only one there and they knew me as Brian because I told them my name was Brian, so Brian, didn't know Walpole, I wasn't hiding my surname but just knew Brian and the orang puta and they kept talking about it and this guy's getting sick of hearing what a good guy this Brian

03:30 the orang puta is so he took objection to it according to what Lena told me, sort of I'll put an end to him. Didn't want the people still talking about it, he got sick of it. I mean he hadn't been there, he hadn't done anything, I mean he had done nothing. It was already done for him and he certainly wasn't there in the fighting of Sumungan, he wouldn't know what it was but there was more to it than that.

Were the Japanese troops evacuated while you were?

No they were locked up

04:00 still when I left there, they were locked up. This comes into a little bit more of a story which is quite interesting later on. They were locked up when I left there. They'd been locked up, I was there for seven or eight days and they were locked up while I was there because later on there were numerous complaints which we haven't got round to yet, which some idiot said we did this and the Japanese had no time to to collude and of course I said, well to my knowledge they were locked up for seven or eight

04:30 days because I know to my personal knowledge because I was there and they had no clothes on because we made them strip and to use my actual words in writing, I said they were shit scared wondering what was going to happen to them after the shocking treatment they dished out to the locals and the only thing, they had no girlie magazines or anything to read, was to work out for their own self preservation what lies they could get together and what they were going to say. Don't tell me they didn't have time to collude,

05:00 you know that's a week that I know of that they had time to collude but that's another story.

Were they getting adequate food?

Oh yes.

Who was actually guarding them, did you put local people in charge?

Some of the locals in charge of that came under the government services like public service, there's no constabulary looking after the things so designated them to do it. Only one thing that happened to them which Lena wrote, one thing that all this

05:30 shocking, this is the the first day I was there, the day after I arrived, the first, and if you've seen these people what'd been done to them, I mean it's not possible to credit what one human being would do to another. It's not just a question of bashing or something like that. The filthy stage they were in, what have you. Anyhow Lena said she was speaking like this for over four years

06:00 they have made us bow to the rising sun cause we make them bow to the setting sun. Sure why not, made them bow to the setting sun, they'd do that, yeah, bow you bastards.

How difficult was it to to tone down a vengeful attitude amongst the community? Where there people who wanted to hurt or or to finish off the Japanese?

Yeah there was and everyone's everyone's putting in collaborators

06:30 to start with and then we noted all this. We said look, there'll be someone coming in after us, it's not our business, we're not here to look into collab... we're not the administrators of the place. We've done our job we're we're fighting soldiers, we're guerrillas and we're not administrators. There'll be someone coming in to look after it but we listed all the complaints and what happened to them I don't know, except that we we locked two people up because they were

07:00 suspected and were collaborators as it turned out that the locals were going to tear limb from limb and we locked them up for their own benefit.

How hard was it to control your own feelings about wanting to take vengeance against the Japanese or to control your own hate for them too?

Well I did, I bashed a couple of them, I hit hit a couple of them, I won't say bashed but I hit a couple I'd say here Mark, look I'm going to hit you. You can hit me back if you like and

07:30 I hit a couple of them I must admit but I didn't torture, no torture, I just straight out, cop this, which is allowed which I haven't got to in the story yet. Lena writes about this as a matter of fact. She later on from our story as I say I didn't see Lena. From when I last saw her, said farewell to her at Sumungan

08:00 I heard nothing from her and then various things happened after fifty-three years I did hear from her but in the meantime she wrote an article in the Sarawak Gazette which is the local paper, this is written I understand in 1995 which is the fiftieth anniversary of the freedom of Sarawak. Just people's stories about what happened to various people and she wrote this story about her own experiences in Sarawak,

08:30 about how she got taken what have you and how this this SRD man came and rescued her and then she ran into his arms because she'd sworn that the first orang puta as she puts it, she swore she'd give him a big hug and a big kiss and I happened to be it. She mentioned that and then she mentions that she got a bit jumbled that the one whose brother was a prisoner in New Guinea hit some of the Japanese

09:00 which she was pleased to see or something like that. She mentions that sort of thing which is a lot of, I had no complaints but for instance, I'm talking quite blatantly about the heads and I've written about the heads and I didn't take a head myself and I've got no compunction about it. I've got no compunction about paying the sea Dayaks for it, for the shocking treatment that they received from the Japanese and it was their lifestyle to take heads. The Japanese knew it was their lifestyle to take

09:30 heads and woe betide as I say anyone who would have tried to stop them in the middle of taking a head is a very brave man and I wasn't that brave too, not that I wanted to but I wasn't that brave anyhow but this Sumungan followed me followed me around for years and back in Australia, I got flown non stop back by...

Tell me tell me about your journey back?

Well they didn't want me to be interviewed right, the 9th Div wanted to interview me about my my raid on Sumungan.

10:00 They said no, no because all our operations are top secret, no-one knows about our operations, so flew me back and it'd all blow over, so I came back and flown back to Melbourne, beautiful, everyone else had left up there. I came in one of our Z Special Catalina flying boats and I finished back up at Melbourne and on leave. Go to the mansion, South Yarra Z Special Headquarters

10:30 yes, no we've heard nothing about 9th Division, he gave me an open ended leave pass. You know, wait and see what happens and that was on the, I think it was on something like early in December and so I stayed on leave and I go back and see them. Had a marvellous time, girls, all the girls that I'd had before were either married or engaged or been spoken to which is their word and they'd all gone, "But how are you Brian?"

11:00 So I lost all those but there was plenty of new ones around, anyhow I sort of got my little group of ladies around, had no problem doing that. Having a marvellous time and we were well paid in Z Special Unit. Specialist pay for those type of operations and so I was on leave and then I finally went back and no, haven't heard, on leave, then they said, well it's probably in January they said,

11:30 doesn't look as though anything's going to happen. Must have been, we'll send you on thirty-three days leave cause that was my accrued leave, what I was entitled to and the other was I won it because I was trying to wait for this to blow over. So the thirty-three days leave and had to go out to Royal Park which was a discharge place to be discharged from the army, so I finally arrived out there thinking I was expecting to be discharged today and

12:00 get in there with the papers and "We've been looking for you." I said oh right, so some officer comes out and said, "Oh where have you been?" just like I've been on AWL you know absent without leave. So I showed my leave pass, I've been on leave. "Oh well that's alright we didn't sort of mean that but they've been looking for you." and I said, "Who's they?" He said, "I don't know, they're people down in Victoria

Barracks looking for yo, want to see you." he said

- 12:30 to me. I said alright. "We'll give you another leave pass to go down to Victoria Barracks to see what it is." So anyhow they gave me a leave pass and down I go to Victoria Barracks and I'm told to report here, that someone by the name of someone wants to see me and a major came out, he said, "Where have you been?" and I showed him the leave pass. "Oh we've been waiting to interview you, we've been waiting for ages, we want to interview you." And I thought, 'Oh shit, so yeah what.'
- 13:00 Anyhow he said, "Well we ought to... just a minute, we'll get the file." He got a thick file and he said, "We want to interview you about a raid that you were on in Sumungan on September the 14th." and I said oh yeah. He said, "Well what happened, what about it?" and I said, I quickly thought and I thought, oh gees, I said I didn't know and I said, "I'm afraid I can't talk about it." and he said, "Why not?"
- 13:30 And I said, "I'm covered by the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, I'm not allowed to talk about these things." He said, "Oh well you can we're army." I said, "I don't care if you're army or anything at all," I said "Very stringent conditions the Official Secrets Act." I said, "I'm not getting into into trouble." I said, "You get me absolved from any action under the Official Secrets Act, I'll tell you." I said, "And that'll suit me fine." I said, "Because then I can sell me story to a newspaper cause I've got a good story to sell."
- 14:00 He said, "Oh well, don't do that, I'll check with the others." I don't know who they were at the time. He said, "Can you come back tomorrow, have you got somewhere to stay?" I said yeah I'm alright so he gave me another leave pass so I went back the next day and there's he and two colonels and they started again and I said it's the Official Secrets Act and one of the smart colonels said, "You'll be facing a court martial very, very shortly." He said
- 14:30 that we propose to court martial if you don't straighten the matter out, you'll be court martialled then it'll all come out, and I said, "Well can you get me absolved from the provisions of the Official Secrets Act?" I said I was forced to sign it twice, I said I've signed it and I was told that it's still applicable then it was still applicable too and I said very stringent provisions. I said, "I'm not going to get myself into strife." and no-one had heard about that sort of thing you see and I said, mean about someone being absolved
- 15:00 from the obligations, he said, "That still shouldn't prevent you from saying." and I said, "Well that's what I believe it is anyhow." I said, "If I can talk to you I can talk to anyone." I said I was telling the Major that I could tell my story to the paper. "Oh don't do that." he said and he said, "But in all probability you'll be court martialled." he said, "The papers have already been prepared and are waiting for you." and I said oh thanks. I didn't say thanks, I forget what what I said so he said,
- 15:30 "Well we'll take it up, can you come back tomorrow?" so I got a leave pass to come back the next day and I said to him, "Look excuse me Sir, could I ask your advice?" being very polite this time. See if you're very polite someone always, excuse me sir I'd like to ask your advice. "Yes what is it?" I said, "Well I find that I'm sort of between the devil and the deep blue sea. You want to know what I did and I can't tell you because I'm covered by the Official Secrets Act,
- 16:00 but I don't mind telling you anyhow, except that I can't, and now you're telling me that I'm threatened by a court martial because I can't do what you want me to do. It's all strange, the very fact of that. Would it be alright if I put that as a story to Smith's Weekly?" Smith's Weekly was a scandal paper in Melbourne at the time, it's not in publication any more, they'd lap it up you see. "Is there any point I can't put that that story is a situation that I can't talk because of this, yet you're threatening me with a court martial?"
- 16:30 And he said, "Oh well no, don't do that." they'd sort of leave it for the next day. I had to come back the next day so I came home and I rang Smith's Weekly up, I thought I'd try and get a bit of protection, so I told them, I wasn't telling them what I did, just the situation that I can't talk because I'm I'm covered by the provisions of the Official Secrets Act and I'm being with a court martial because I won't do what I'm told, oh crazy. They said, oh we'd love a story
- 17:00 like that so when can we get it? I said I'll get back to you tomorrow, so I went back there the next day and they came out and this snotty, bloody colonel said, "We have been instructed to inform you that you're to be commended on your raid on Sumungan." He put his hand out and I sort of looked at it, 'be commended on your
- 17:30 raid on Sumungan and that, all complaints lodged against you have now been expunged from the records as though they do not even exist and you're to be congratulated and for any worry you might have suffered we'll give you another thirty days leave...' so anyhow he said, "The major will organise another thirty days leave for you." so I thought, 'Well shit.' Now I said, oh I didn't feel like falling over them so I said, oh
- 18:00 that's that, so away he went but he wasn't happy about it at all, away he went and the young major didn't seem to be a bad sort of a guy and I said to him, "What happened?" He said, "Well they're looking around, they're trying to find the... having someone released from the Provisions of the Official Secrets Act has never happened before and never had this situation arise before and somehow they made all these enquiries about it and somehow it got
- 18:30 to [General] Blamey's ears." Now Blamey was an Australian General, chief of the whole of the armed

forces during the whole of the war. Blamey initially started Special Operations it was his idea, the Special Operations Z Special Unit started, so it's reasonable he would know a little bit about it you see and according to this guy he said Blamey got to hear about it and called for the file and he went off the planet, this is the Major, he went off the planet about it and told

19:00 them straight this is what they had to straight away do. Expunge everything from the records and congratulate the man.

Is that because your file would have included all those complaints that had come through?

Oh it did yeah.

Without any real investigation

Yeah yeah.

Or without any real...?

And plus the fact it was too stupid for words, the whole thing was just stupid see.

And had you actually put down a full report of the attack? Was it known by anyone apart from you?

No, no it was top secret. Which I said, all our operations are classified

19:30 top secret.

So even Blamey could not get a copy of what went on there?

Oh he wasn't interested. He just knew that I shouldn't have been asked. That he didn't know me or whoever I was shouldn't have been put in this situation was no need to be in but these bloody idiots, just because I said well you absolve me from the Official Secrets Act (UNCLEAR) so I went on another thirty days leave

20:00 from, I think it was the 8th of December until the 11th of April I was on leave and then I got out of the army.

What do you do with all that spare time after you've been months and months and are so focussed?

Girls, girls, girls. Girls, girls, girls.

There's got to be more. You've been so focussed and alert and in danger and all the rest in the jungle at on the job for so long what happens what falls into that vacuum?

Well very hard. Just do what...

20:30 enjoy yourself all the time, couldn't expend enough energy. Just go to the beach expending energy, girls, girls, I'm not kidding, there's girls everywhere, absolutely beautiful and they'd all, you know, "Where were you?" and the thing they got was, well you wouldn't sort of talk about it. Well you got parachute wings and you got commando colour patches, what's that on the black beret? That's the Sarawak Rangers, I clipped on it. We knew you were in some special operation. "What are special operations what do they do?" So...

21:00 **So is the prestige of your position did it get you a lot of these girls?**

Oh yeah, I suppose I like girls anyway, I mean I've always got on with girls. I love girls, in the cover note of my book these publishers I sent it to, they all want a cover letter you see, and they say in their words, a few words about your own statistics,

21:30 so in this covering letter I say in short my statistics are, cause they know I was in special services cause that's sort of mentioned in the book you see, apart from after the war I've been self employed in real estate and development profession. I am now eighty years old, I love pretty girls and pretty ladies and I drink vodka and that's in my covering letter so you could take it or

22:00 leave it as far as...that's my attitude. That was written a couple of weeks ago the sort of purpose...

So did the vodka fill in that vacuum as well as that?

I drink vodka, I'm a heavy drinker.

Directly after when you'd returned and you were on four months leave?

Oh I drank, I s'pose I always drunk a lot yeah. Life's for living, you just sort of ,you've just got to enjoy life, if you enjoy life you beat anything, anything at all, didn't matter what, I mean

22:30 it's hard to just... just nice, you're on leave getting paid for it and well I haven't had any real work experience. I'd resigned from the bank, I didn't go back to the bank but that's only sort of temporary. I thought if I go back I might get into a rut and stay there and I don't want to get into a rut so I thanked them and I just resigned straight off so I never went back there but there's this story if you want, this

war story sort of still goes on but the

- 23:00 if I'm not am I interfering with you or not? No, well people'd ask me, have you got any stories to tell, so I'd tell them, I'd say I managed to say some of the life of the sea Dayaks and occasionally something about when I'd had this memorable meeting with Lena you see, and as I'd say people'd look sideways at you so I dropped off it. I thought, oh bugger, it and I don't belong to the RSL [Returned and Services League] or anything like that and I don't
- 23:30 go to reunions. I'm a TPI, I belong to the TPI Association but I don't sort of go around. I haven't really got any wartime great friends that I deal... you know or stick together and all that sort of thing and throw the thing about sort of thing and so time went on, I just got on with my life life in general and in about 1998 or something it's amazing what happened. There'd still been very little told about
- 24:00 Z Special Unit course with the Official Secrets Act, this is quite true and the one man submarine, the Sleeping Beauty that was never mentioned till the late 1970s, no-one ever there, oh these things were still top secret, then things started to come out and I think it was about 1998 I got a letter from, I heard from this guy Jim Truscott, Major Jim Truscott, he was a major in the SAS serving in Western Australia and they'd pulled all sorts of strings and he was
- 24:30 going on an operation at the army's expense to retrace this guerrilla operation for (UNCLEAR), he just wanted to know any details of it so I told him and I wrote him a little place thing about it so that was that and then there's another guy wrote a book, a professor, all part of the story I'm getting at. A professor of history at the Monash University in
- 25:00 Perth, Bob Reece, wrote this book called Mass a Japan which translates to, during the Japanese occupation it was during the Japanese occupation in Sarawak during the war that he wrote this book. He had some connections in Sarawak so he wrote this book and it's about Sarawak itself, the civilian population itself. The Z Special Unit got a bit of a mention. I for instance got a bit of a mention and the mention that I got was I
- 25:30 was extracted from Sumungan because of what I did there, I was sent home sort of type of thing. I forget his words, I've still got his book which I wasn't you see, so I went a bit ballistic about this and I thought oh yeah, so I wrote him all sorts of nasty letters and threatening things which was a stupid thing because it's so easy if he had any brains he would have said well take me to court because I wouldn't have because it's too too costly, too expensive you see, but anyhow he finished up, he did the decent thing and
- 26:00 he told me where he got the information from, he had the wrong information. He said I should have checked it so he sent out an errata to everyone that brought his book correcting this mistake which he couldn't do more than that, so that was alright, though I've still never met him I've spoken to him on the phone, had correspondence with him and cause he comes into things a little bit later. He sent me other stuff and so forth. Then the next happening someone said to me,
- 26:30 someone's telling me they met this very interesting lady that used to live in Sarawak and that she apparently wrote this big article in the Sarawak Gazette. Sounds like you and I said oh. Said yeah I'll send you a copy of it, I've got a copy, so he sent me a copy of this article, an eight page article written by Lena Ricketts which does talk about her life and talked about as I mentioned before, talked about how I got her out and so forth
- 27:00 and this orang puta she raced down the hill and kissed me, it's got all this in it, it's quite quite a big story, and this guy I'm talking to got hold of it and I said oh, he said yeah, she's living in Perth. I said, well how do I get hold of her so I got a Perth directory, rang all the Ricketts, there were nine of them, none was hers, and then someone must have seen it, given her my number, cause one day I got on the answering machine small voice, 'Brian it's Lena here. My
- 27:30 number's such and such would you ring me?' so I rang her, anyway the long and the short of it is we had quite a conversation and I arranged to go over to Perth to see her and I went over to Perth and saw her, she had a daughter, had two granddaughters, and absolutely incredible, they looked at me as though they were going to eat me and they hadn't seen me and they thought she'd been trying to get me through the RSL. I don't belong to the RSL anyhow she didn't know
- 28:00 where I lived or where I came from or anything at all. All these years and of course they wondered about me. Anyhow lovely daughter, daughter was fifty, fifty yeah and granddaughter, lovely people, and they took me out and then I had these three things happen to me which is absolutely incredible. Vivian, who's the daughter, was driving us around and she stopped to get some petrol and I said
- 28:30 "Let me pay for that, I need to pay for something." and she just looked straight through she said, "Oh no, we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you." and I thought, 'Shit, what do you say about that?' I so I said nothing see, God. So then Isabella the granddaughter, they took me to another place, some sort of view and I decided, she was walking behind and talking to me, and I
- 29:00 said, "Oh very, very good of you people to take me out, show me around like this." you know and she looked round the same as her mother, she looked around and sort of stopped almost, oh as much to say, stupid prick, sort of thing, look I'm sorry, I forgot we're on air that time. As much as to say, you idiot you know. She said, "Oh we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you." This is the granddaughter and Lena's told them ever since they were

- 29:30 were little kids what happened you see, and they didn't even know what I looked like. That's why they were all sort of staring at me. So then I still wanted the game back so I said when I first met Lena and I was talking to the rotten Japanese commanding officer, then he and Dave Kearney, she's watching me with this intense look, just such an intense look that you couldn't work it out and of course she's all scrambled and filthy and sort of. I was going to ask her and I thought, 'Oh I don't want to embarrass her.' Wouldn't have embarrassed her
- 30:00 I know that now, but so I said to Vivien the daughter I said, "Did your mother talk much about these things?" "Oh yes, all the time ever since we were little she'd always talked about it." So I told her, I said I always wondered when I first met her and she was in a shocking condition and she just watched and looked so intently at everything that was going on didn't say a word, just looked intently and I always wondered what she was thinking about, and Vivien
- 30:30 looked at me again as much as to say, you bloody idiot, and she said, "Don't you know because everyone else knows?" I must have looked like and she says, "She was hoping you'd kill the rest of the Japanese." I thought, 'Gee what do you say to that?' and I said, oh yeah I said, I'd like to I said, but I couldn't under the circumstances. I said even had to pay the Dayaks for not taking the heads and that's the sort of
- 31:00 thing, what do you say to people that say that.
- Did that experience then of meeting up with them change the way you felt about your war experience or about that part of your experience? Did it give you a fresh perspective on it?**
- Well I sort of thought you see, I mean these people, I left Sarawak, I got on with life right, I got on with life and there were girls, girls, girls, everything, girls, money, make money, loose money from nothing, life's for living that's my... life's for living
- 31:30 and I thought about it as I said, I told the story to these people, the people'd look sideways at me but that didn't worry me. But these people, there's mother, daughter, granddaughter, have lived with this all this time. That's one of the biggest things that they've lived with, they had it all, I hadn't thought of it you see, and not a day's gone as they told me, not a day goes past that they don't think about it, live with it day to day
- 32:00 fifty-three bloody years, which it's longer now, live thinking about that thing, whereas I haven't and that's the difference you know, they sort of thought that, I mean it was a big thing to me too, how am I going to put it? I mean I did, I'd saved her life, I did, but it didn't enter my head like that you know. Don't go around saying, oh but I've never been in that situation myself. I suppose if I had been in that situation I might think the same way you know. They have thought about it
- 32:30 and are still thinking about it. I know cause I speak to Lena every Friday night on the phone. I ring her up, she's in Perth and as I told you the little Malay conversation and she, well, she's still of course, speak to me but they have lived with this all that time you know and that's just just the amazing thing. So anyhow there was this, it was on radio and so I laughed. People'd say would you like a copy of the radio interview or something and then I said oh it's on a documentary,
- 33:00 made a documentary now, so anyhow there's not much more, there's a little bit more. This Bob Reece who I've had the blue with and who put his errata out and become a little bit friendly, he gets all sorts of documents and what have you and he said I've got some documents he said, and sent me these documents that he had dug up and I got home one night and the mail arrived, I've had a few drinks, letter from Bob Reece I opened it
- 33:30 up, it's got these three letters and I read them and firstly I was amazed and I was disgusted and I read them again and was amazed and disgusted and then I read them again I was just disgusted and these were letters that these complaints at the time were made about, it is the correspondence and the first one which I have, these were letters written in 1945
- 34:00 which I didn't know about until probably twelve months ago, I didn't even know they existed till about twelve months but they are copies of the originals dated 1945 and the first one is written I would have still been at Labuan making these reports about the gramophone records and things while this was going on too, and the first one is from this Courtney who was interviewing me, the SRD bloke writing to
- 34:30 the big wheel in the occupation force of 9th Division anyhow. He was the 9th Division, took over the whole of the area, nothing to do with us anymore, 're your complaint number four' or something and so and so and so and so and he goes on. I thought to myself well at least he stuck up for his officers, he said that they should be...
- 35:00 re the letter he's replying to is re complaints made by the Japanese at a Kuching, visit to to Kuching Jail and the Japanese had been sent to Kuching and they complained about the ill treatment you see, so this Courtney writes what bastards they were, that they'd been using their normal things doing the sun and water treatment. Do you know what the sun and water treatment
- 35:30 are? Well these two are their favourites. In the hot noon Malay sun was to strip people naked, didn't matter what age or male or female, tie you down on your back with your eye, make sure your eye, tape your eyes open and keep pouring water down your throat all the time till you can't swallow any more, that's the water treatment and the other was the log treatment, to bend you over and put a log behind

your knees so that you

- 36:00 lose all things, these are just famous you know, anyhow he said the Japanese are practising that you know, the locals are very lucky that some of our people there to to stop them carrying on with their torture but the Japanese'd feel very pleased that that our people stop the local sea Dayaks from beheading them, they're lucky to be alive you know, that sort of thing and left it at that. I thought, 'Well that was quite a good letter.' I was sort of pleased,
- 36:30 so the third letter is signed Brigadier T Easdick and Easdick was, I don't know him of course, commander of the occupation forces there, of 9th Division this is, and this letter bears his signature and the letter goes on which I've still got, the letter goes on re complaint by the Japanese and what have you have and he goes on to say
- 37:00 the Japanese were interviewed individually and they've had no time for collusion. I thought, no time for collusion, I had 'em locked up when I was there. What else are they going to think about about all the lies that they're going to tell? No time for collusion and it's hard to believe the SRD story that so and so and so and so and so and so and as there were somebody as there were something to the effect as there were no
- 37:30 witnesses the matter'd be declared closed. I've got the thing for the exact wording of it anyhow and that was that and I thought I wrote it in my book criticising this and what I've said is how about these people there don't really know what happened. They are investigating complaints that the Japanese have made and they haven't investigated anything of the atrocities that the
- 38:00 Japanese may have committed against any of the local people and I even checked with Lena which I did do, she has never been interviewed to find out the various things that were done to her for instance, none of them not once, but they were listening to what the bloody Japanese had to say so I finished up I said, no doubt Brigadier T Easdick whose signature appears at the bottom of the letter would have his own reasons, only he would know anymore about it sort of thing
- 38:30 yeah.

So is the code of silence that surrounded the work that you were doing do you consider that a blessing or a curse or both?

Personally I'm completely indifferent, I couldn't give a hang, I couldn't care less except that I'm glad that it happened. I'm glad that I was involved, I'm glad that I was involved in what I was involved in and I tell you what, every time I ring Lena

- 39:00 up or something or the daughter and the granddaughter speak to you like that it makes you feel a little bit good you know, sort of after all these years, I mean they've been thinking about it all the time. I sort of hadn't been you know, I've been doing other things. Girls, girls, girls, ladies, ladies, ladies, money, work, I mean vodka. This sort of thing, they've been thinking about that all the time. You know it just sort of, and I know they've been thinking about it all the time
- 39:30 and if it happened to me I probably would be thinking about it myself you know, it gets me so I'm glad that I did it, but if I wasn't there I wouldn't have been able to do it but I'm very glad that that particular day that I went out that at least I was right, that I got my thing, that the bloke had the cheeks of his bum carved off and maybe a bit from my brother and a few of the others for all the atrocities, that I got a little bit back and I saved these people from getting killed because they
- 40:00 would get, either they would have been finished that day, and Dave Kearney who when I went looking for him at Labuan, the reason he'd gone he'd been threatened with a court martial because of what I'd done, that's why they flew him out I found out later ,that though he wasn't involved he was theoretically my commanding... I was under him theoretically and that and they were going to court martial him so he got flown out and he didn't get caught though. He didn't put up with anything,
- 40:30 he didn't hear any more about it. Well they got the culprit for want of a better word. I was the culprit but no I talk about it, I'm quite, I'm not, well I'm not ashamed, word of shame doesn't enter my head. I'm quite pleased with the result. I'm glad I did it yeah. I am glad that I was able to help the sea Dayaks yeah, I think it was a marvellous experience, something, well
- 41:00 I certainly would never experience again and very few people would have had these experiences anyhow you know. The way other people live and I feel sorry for them the way they've been treated shockingly they've lost their habitat and I haven't taken any interest in it. I haven't sort of had anything to do with it but maybe I should be you know.

Tape 9

- 00:31 **Brian, I just wanted to ask what, in your opinion, what the major differences were between the independent company work you did and the special forces, in terms of the way they were run and operated, what were the major differences?**

Well the special forces have to be more individual, individualistic I would say,

- 01:00 in the commando unit I had a couple of jobs on my own only because there's a shortage of people, but generally there'd be sort of several more several people together but quite a lot of it was, in Z Special Unit well more sophisticated training or intentions, intention's probably the word because a commando unit is
- 01:30 basically as I used to say to people, is to kill as many people as... well the people'd say what does the commando do and I would say, kill as many people as possible without getting killed yourself which is basically what it boils down to and do as much damage as long as you don't get killed yourself, by whatever means but you're thinking more brute force, bang, you know that sort of thing where the Z Special Unit it's possibly the majority of Z Special Unit people that I struck
- 02:00 wouldn't have made the commando course, they wouldn't have lasted, they wouldn't physically have made it, wouldn't have been up, they would have been discarded, they wouldn't have made it, but probably more sophistication of organising guerrilla forces, organising people such as what I'd explained to you, just sort of getting other people to do things and try to create mayhem behind the Japanese, spread rumours and propaganda and what have you,
- 02:30 make them believe something that's not true and any dirty trick possible and though we had talk about the one man submarines, Sleeping Beauties, I don't think they ever did a job on operation. They went on one, the second operation to Singapore which didn't get there, they sunk them all so they didn't actually end up going on one and I didn't jump out of

- 03:00 an aeroplane in anger for want of a better word. I never used my capabilities parachuting.

To put it crudely is what you're saying that the commando unit is more reliant on the physical and the Z Special Unit is more reliant on the mental, on their intellect is that it?

Yeah well possibly, possibly, the Z Special Unit would certainly need more intellect yeah, and they could get away without the physical,

- 03:30 as I say so the majority of people I saw in Z Special wouldn't have lasted five minutes in New Guinea and George Warfethe CO would have got rid of them, would have thrown them, would have been useless, they wouldn't have been able to handle it but they had other capabilities that they didn't have to be as I sort of say, it was a piece of cake compared to New Guinea but they had other things and there was many operations, other operations in Z Special Unit some of which I know about only a little,
- 04:00 but I heard about, but a lot I don't know about, but they were all for specific reasons to cause trouble in certain spots and to do certain things which was... yes now for instance the whole as I say. the whole in Sarawak as I finished up after this letter from Easdict I said, and maybe the statistics had something to do with him being sort of a bit upset, it's well known that
- 04:30 in Sarawak the SRD with its few operatives and mainly hand picked and trained sea Dayak guerrillas reclaimed a far greater tract of land than the whole of the 9th Division, and it is a well known fact that the SRD with its small number of ops and so forth, they were killed and were credited with killing far more Japanese
- 05:00 than the whole of the 9th Australian Division without even having one operative casualty and that story's quite true so that's sort of something that speaks for itself you know, in that type of warfare and so a lot of people writing these days they say was the SRD operation certainly worth it? Well it must of, it did some good you know. Well it did, I know what I did only if I saved a few people's lives and if I hadn't of gone out
- 05:30 that day they would have got the chop, but over overall some of the jobs, for instance one of the first jobs our better known, the raid on Singapore Harbour when they went in with the foal boat, they didn't know about that one, well that was such a morale booster at the time to people generally that we were doing something. We struck back at the Japanese right in the heart of the Japanese, it was something that was a surprise them but so it's got to be
- 06:00 good, the fact that it was a huge morale morale booster.

Do you think there's something about the nature of special operations work that kind of matches or sits well with the Australian character, the Australian mentality that you know; I sort of think the Rats of Tobruk?

Well the wording getting back to the commandos, the wording with the commandos goes, the thing that the British had, these commandos keeping the war alive,

- 06:30 it was thought that the Australian character generally was ideal for this type of warfare more so than the Poms and that is why they started the independent companies, the commando units, just because of that particular reason because the Australian they may have been more devil-may-care type of person generally and cause they were so and so getting into into into special forces I think, where they made the
- 07:00 mistake, this is my humble opinion is that like the bloke on this operation Colt where he fired his pistol

and nearly shot my foot off, I mean that was something he should have been banned, just crossed out. He'd have never have made a commando unit and he hadn't had any experience. Someone like that shouldn't have been in it you see, shouldn't be in it. He's only one person and where they picked these they made the mistake and the idea I thought was fantastic about all these people they had up at Fraser Island

07:30 who had lived up in these areas beforehand and their stories, I've lived there for ten, fifteen years, I speak Dyak like a native, I know everyone there and you know this that and the other. You obviously think well they're the ideal people to go back, they know all the local people and look I've got a bit of help with me but it wasn't quite right. They weren't what they claimed to be but the the powers that be wouldn't have known that at the time and you certainly can't fault the idea so that's all something

08:00 that still went on without that anyway.

Did you choose to join the commando unit when you enlisted?

No I didn't know about it. I didn't hear of the commando unit, just messages get around, oh they've got these secret people, they were secret at the time, unknown, this is just the commando units and as I say I went to this intelligence school and I thought what better place and I made a few enquiries

08:30 about it, where are these commandos that are going on and I found out about it, that's how I applied to join them.

Do you think you would have made a good infantry soldier? Would you have been able to cope with that?

No, I think no, I think that one thing that's helped me well with... this may sound awful but made me for want what I am if I was anything is the fact that I didn't have to put up with a lot of discipline. I think that's where I was fortunate and neither in the

09:00 commando unit or in Z Special Unit did I have to put up with discipline such as I would have, some idiot telling me what to do and knowing full well that what he's telling me to do was stupid but you've got to do it because you're told to do it and I was very fortunate that I didn't have anything like that and I didn't have any, very little yes sir, no sir, business that wasn't and saluting.

But you'd obviously had a quite a good, oh very good self discipline.

09:30 **I mean you parents had raised you with very good self discipline.**

Sure as I said, so did George Warfe, he commanded respect, everyone respected him he was that sort of person. He asked you to do something you'd do it cause whether it was right or wrong he'd do it himself anyway so you go and do it because you respected him, but if someone was just telling you to do it and you know damn well they wouldn't do it themselves or something like that that's a different story but he, as I say, people

10:00 like him who just automatically command respect and people do respect him . Everyone in our unit respected him, was sort of different, but when I was in Z Special Unit even though I had problems such as with that bloke one of the Poms, I said my piece with him and that was it, I didn't see him he didn't get in my way, didn't sort of bother him and even with Dave Kearney Dave was a good bloke. We became very good friends but he's pretty useless as I told him

10:30 this one time which I mentioned there when he he took the idea of the maiden up and he got himself absolutely rotten drunk and we were leaving at three o'clock on a raid the next morning and he's so drunk I could hardly take him with me and that's inexcusable, which I told him in no certain terms but I gradually got him sober and he was the first to realise, won't happen again and whether he got it from there or somewhere else, he had this problem, the rash around his groin. Whether he

11:00 got it from the lady or not I don't know.

You've mentioned a couple of times the provision for someone in Special Operations to refuse to go on an operation?

Yeah.

Why is that important and did you ever need to use that provision?

I refused to go on operations with this chap who nearly shot my feet off. I made that quite clear so it was never put to me.

What that a specific one or you just made that a blanket statement that you didn't want to?

I made a blanket statement that I wouldn't so I was never put with him again. If I had been put I'd just refuse to go.

11:30 **Why were you allowed to and why was it so important?**

Oh disharmony on a job could crucify you. I mean you couldn't be in the middle of nowhere with no backup and then having someone with you arguing with you all the time. I mean there's no room for disharmony. Maybe not a hundred percent perfect harmony but when you're away in occupied territory

with no way you can get out you can't do anything if you've got disharmony between the two of you, it disrupts

- 12:00 things completely. Same as this Sochan that I had a had a blue with, the Pommy bloke, but I just walked away from it, I didn't see him again even though he was supposedly in charge, he just sort of kept away but had he been sticking his nose in I probably would have exercised my prerogatives. I'm not going to and he's the sort of person that would tell you to do something stupid you know.

Was that taken up by many people? Did you know many people who refused to go on operations?

Yes there's one, I do know this one

- 12:30 bloke and how I know about him is that well the words were on Graham Shirley's documentary, Stringfeller[?] is his name. I'm just trying to think of his other name. Matter of fact he is the President of the Z Special Unit Association, Keith Stringfeller and he says on the documentary of Graham Shirley's that
- 13:00 at Fraser Island he was approached to go on the second Singapore raid when they they were going, the second time they were going up with these Sleeping Beauties to raid Singapore more or less the same people and they all got lumbered, they all got capped, they all got into trouble and they got killed and he made it quite clear, I mean I heard this, he didn't tell me, but he says in the documentary, he's a little bit pompous also, he said I told them that it was a bad thing to be doing this
- 13:30 again and I refused to go, I refused to go, didn't stop me from doing anything else but I refused to go because in my opinion it wasn't a good idea so he he exercised prerogative and made it quite clear sort of and I know this, I've seen that on Graham's documentary.

Did you lose anyone from your unit whilst working in Special Operations?

In in Z as a unit as a whole? Yeah.

That you were on?

Not me personally?

Yes?

- 14:00 No no. Didn't have any any of my operations no-one wounded or killed.

Was there a ritual or ceremony that was followed in that event in the event that that occurred; was there with the commando unit when you lost ,did you lose sixty-five did you say out of two hundred and ninety?

Two hundred and sixty-five were killed and a hundred and something were injured yes

- 14:30 with the commando unit, never leave a dead per all sorts of stories. Someone gets killed always go back and get the person or you never lost a body put it that way. Always go back and there's some very dicey stories told. Not mine, I wasn't involved in them but people going back to recover someone that they know's been killed and they never abandoned anyone, never left anyone behind but with
- 15:00 Z Special Unit I didn't have any personal experience but I believe on a couple of operations they were such that someone got killed and they've never sighted them again, they assume that they were killed, they never sighted them again. I know there's one bloke called Chaffey and I can remember his brother was a state member of parliament who was in Z Special Unit and his brother was one of these that disappeared
- 15:30 or something and he organised even after the war went looking for him and they didn't find him So there was some yeah.

How did most of those two hundred and sixty-five die, was it in open sort of gun battles?

The sixty-five?

It was sixty-five?

Sixty-five killed yeah.

Yes.

Yeah in gun battles and mortar bombs.

- 16:00 **Unavoidable?**

Yeah and a lot of them were as I said, they were all recovered and some of them were buried and then I think after the war generally they were sort of buried somewhere and the place of their burial was noted and after the war they had war graves committees going back and looking for the bodies I think, as I understand it, but there most of the rest of the casualties were

16:30 wounded who were walking and who otherwise went back, walked back or taken back.

Was religious faith important amongst either the commando unit or Z Special force?

Well a lot of people that go, religion seems to help them. Now me personally I don't get into religious argument, not me personally.

17:00 I was brought up Anglican, an Anglican family I suppose. When I was little my mother used to make me go to church because we lived in the country it was the thing to do that you should go to church. I never went to Sunday School or anything and I never go to church but I would categorise myself for years as not being, what am I talking about, I've been talking too long.

17:30 As an agnostic I leave myself just open, as an agnostic, just in case someone taps me on the shoulder one day and, 'hey I'm here' and I say, yeah well I didn't completely give you away, but I'm not convinced put it that way, so it does nothing for me. Religion does nothing for me but looking at religious people with a lot of people they get great pleasure out of it. I'll give you an example, not so long ago a friend of mine who I used to drink with, I don't anymore,

18:00 and he was a very staunch Roman Catholic and he'd say his mother was very sick, his elderly mother, and one day just to be polite I said, "How's your mother?" "Oh she's a lot better, she spoke to the Virgin Mary the other night." I thought, 'Jesus!' you know it made him happy, what should I say? Anyway his mother duly died and I went to the funeral. The first

18:30 time I'd ever been into a Roman Catholic church and listened to it all, I went cause I sort of knew the family and that and some time after it I said to him, something happened about his mother and he said, "Yeah I feel a lot better," he said, "I spoke to Mum the other night." and I said 'oh' you know. I mean there are millions of things like that, that people got these things and a lot of them they get some sort of satisfaction out of religion but certainly not me and I would say that very

19:00 high percentage of commandos would have no religion.

What brought you comfort then when you're in a particularly uncomfortable or difficult or frightening circumstance out in the jungle, what brought you comfort, what thought?

Too busy trying to stay alive.

Focussing on what you were doing?

Yeah.

Keeping your mind active?

Nothing else to think about, just self preservation, just to do what can I do and all the time you're continually trying to keep

19:30 a point ahead of what someone else might be doing. For instance like with me it stood me in good stead such as when I was going over to see the Americans and I was on the alert all the time and it was pelting down rain, I was just on the alert all the time which is very wearing, being on the alert all the time, and fortunately I was when these two guys came walking towards me not on the alert. Well I came out, just as well I was on the alert and they weren't or they were and I wasn't.

20:00 **How then do you draw a line between being alert and being completely wired or having your nerves become shot; how do you maintain that balance or prevent yourself from becoming exhausted?**

I think a lot of that is maybe, I mean we're all built differently, just how fortunate you may be the way you're built or how how you control yourself. I know we were talking earlier about pain

20:30 thresholds see and you're getting into the same field there. I know with this pain having been to the pain experts and I can't say who's got the greatest pain in our sore toe or something like that cause we both have a sore toe they have a measurement and ways of doing this over a period and all the questions they ask and they reckon that my threshold or the way I handle threshold

21:00 is very high compared to others.

And like your ability to concentrate, to focus?

So you want to know why? Well they ask me and I say well as I said to you I think it's probably because one of the things, that I that I'm a realist I face facts, I don't try to have myself on, you know kid myself about something. A fact's a fact you know, I've got the bloody thing, what's the point in talking about it? It's not going to go away. I've got to make the most of it.

21:30 Why keep talking about it? The more I talk about it the more it's on my mind. I've got other things to think about. I'm talking to you, I'm thinking about talking to you. I work on my book, I'm on the computer, I'm trying to work on the computer you know.

So do you link those two things then in terms of pain or ability to deal with it and your ability to concentrate and focus on something else? You're saying you are very alert, you remain alert all the time. Does maintaining that focus and keeping your mind concentrated

22:00 **on what you're doing take away the fear and discomfort and pain?**

I haven't had time for it put it that way. I won't say it took it away. It didn't have time to come in because I was too busy doing other things I'd have to say that you know. My mind was too busy doing other things. They didn't have time to come into it.

One thing I need to ask in this context as well is how you dealt with having to kill people, having to go through that process?

Well I

22:30 was probably fortunate up to a point ,there's this bloke that befriended me that had both his bloody buttocks carved off, that sort of that set me off a bit after that. I just lost any compassion, I had no compassion. I have no compassion now for the Japanese. I couldn't care, I have no compassion about them at all. To me they're like father, like son, that's that's my opinion you know. I'm probably

23:00 taking it too far but I'm probably too bloody old, but to me like father, like son. I've just got no time for the Japanese whatsoever.

Did you have to kill your first Japanese before or after that incident?

Oh I would have before.

And was there any issue in coping there?

No, no, none at all. I mean self preservation.

Was this part of your personal makeup or is it part of the training you received within the commandos?

Well I think it's once again it's

23:30 being a realist which would be part of the training'd certainly come into it, that it's a situation of kill or be killed and it's better to kill than be killed so that's sort of being a realist but it's also part of the training instilled, I mean somebody instils into you. Look, let's face it, I mean I'm not talking to you but as I say let's face it, wouldn't you rather kill someone than let them kill you yourself? You've got to realise you've got this so would you? That's right

24:00 of course I would, yeah, yeah I would. So that that's your way of thinking and then when you've got someone firing bullets at you and looking around and particularly if you've got a joe you're going to hear them through crackling leaves in your ear and this sort of thing, you don't go what was that, you don't know where they are and missed you by that much or two feet you wouldn't know and think, 'Shit I've got to do something about this.' All I can do as much as I can you know and and the other thing particularly with the commandos they were

24:30 all reliable, all a hundred percent reliable, it was just reliable and you got into trouble they were there, they were all there. A commando was in trouble, everyone was in trouble. I could tell you, there's a couple more stories of a commando in distress, everyone would go to get him out of it you know.

But is there any point at which that does catch up with you? Is there an accumulating

25:00 **trauma in killing people and watching people die around you, does that catch up with you at any point?**

Well there's there's got to be, because it's affected a lot of people.

But for you?

No.

It's never caught up with you?

Not not really the medical people might say it has but not not really. I'm not losing any sleep over it, I don't stay awake at nights or anything like that about it no.

25:30 I have no trouble talking about what's happened to me no, I have no trouble about that at all. I know a lot of people seem to but I have no trouble about it and since I talk about the Japanese heads which probably sounds a horrible subject and I haven't even thought about it, people say, 'Oh gees, what sort of person was he?' But I honestly, I, me personally I didn't take a Japanese head. I didn't cut any off but as Bujan told me I certainly helped them get

26:00 quite a few that I organised, but that was part of it and I'm not sorry that I did either. It doesn't worry me that some bloody Japanese losing his head. I couldn't care less, I'd say good, it doesn't worry me at all. No I haven't lost any sleep about it. I can tell the story with with sort of relish. Once again a lot of people don't believe you. See it's

26:30 common knowledge, people don't know about it and you say we paid them one straight settlement

dollar which was two and sixpence which relates to twenty-five cents today per head and people look sideways at you, there's something strange about you you know.

You said the medical people would disagree with you about?

I said what?

You said the medical people would disagree with you about about the trauma catching up with you... do they?

- 27:00 Well OK I'll tell you one thing that happened to me. One thing that happened to me for instance is part of being a TPI which I told you about. They send you to all sorts of tests and you go to all these tests you see and some of the specialists they send you to are helpful and they all want an opinion which have to go to Veterans' Affairs and all be assessed and so forth and I went to one guy, this guy I've got his name in there. He's a top psychiatrist that I was sent to. He's Jewish, in town somewhere. He had his
- 27:30 [UNCLEAR] on at the time. Very nice little guy and he was interested, he must have been taping the whole conversation because I didn't know, I didn't take any notice, we were just talking and he must have taped it because I've got a copy of his report and it would be more than his memory could have done but I said to him, a thing came up about himself and I said, "Yeah, someone told me you weren't a bad sort of a bloke." He's even put that in his report you know, I said yeah someone, well they said you weren't a bad sort of a bloke, I don't mind talking to you,
- 28:00 but anyhow he asked me about things and I told him about my brother being a prisoner of war and then he said, "Do you think about the war at all, do you think about it?" I said, "Yes sure." "How much do you think about it?" and I said, "Well quite a bit. For instance I've been writing a book for two years, I've been living with it for two bloody years all day to day I've been living with it. It doesn't worry me, don't get me wrong." but
- 28:30 I mean do you think about it, his question was do you think about it, and I said yes, sure, I think about it and "Does it keep you awake at night?" I said no but you know these things, do you think about it, do you talk about it? Oh sometimes when people talk to me I talk about it. He put all this down that I've still got these recurring memories of war. He put me down as having post traumatic stress disorder which I laughed my head off about. I've no more got post traumatic stress disorder than fly to the bloody moon
- 29:00 but because of that, that's what I say medically, because he asked me did I still think about it and I told him yes that's what he put me down as.

Let me take you back to Ballarat. You made a really interesting comment earlier on which was that you were either going to drink or fuck yourself to death?

That's exactly right. I was going to drink myself I was going to put it the other way around. I was going to fuck myself to death or drink myself to death or both and I thought to myself I'm too bloody young to do that.

But that was just after New Guinea after your experience with the commando unit?

That's when I was

- 29:30 told that I was medically categorised B2.

How did your head space get there, was this just the comedown from the battle, from the high of the battle or from having such an important job or such a focus and then the vacuum of...?

Well you see one of the things that I've written about it, as I said we joined up, well most people didn't join up for God, King and country, that's a lot, to my way a whole heap of crap. I mean everyone

- 30:00 was joining up in those days, you had to join up, I mean it was an adventure, you had to join up for the adventure I mean that sort of adds to to keep the war away from Australia. That was another reason so that was that well known then it's a well known fact that our thing in New Guinea, every one of us we came back we were very proud to have been associated with it. Top of the world you know, on top of the world mentally.
- 30:30 We knew that we'd done a good job, a top, outstanding job we'd done, and we were proud of that, proud as buggery and most people that do that the same as infantry battalions, the same people are these people who actually fire the bullets and are actually in touch with the enemy and they used all the time the same people. If they get wounded they go away, they get better, they come back and they do the same thing over again. The same
- 31:00 people all the time and it takes six or seven people to keep every one of these people there and those six or seven people back there do nothing except keep these one people there and sometime the rotten bastards steal from them the supplies that are supposed to get up there and they don't get up to where this poor bastard's going hungry see, so my thought was the commando or the infantry battalion person has the utmost disdain for those people. He considers himself ,
- 31:30 like this march through Melbourne, they were commandos and infantry people. As I wrote the cream of the cream, they were the fighting people you know, the ones that actually did battle with the Japanese

were the top of the top and so my opinion was I would then become one of the six or seven people that keep one person up there. That was one of the worries to me that I was going to become all these people that when they sent me to Victoria Barracks that I was becoming

- 32:00 one of these one of these six or seven people and to my mentality that was a comedown, yeah comedown quite a bit and from being a proud person to come down to something like that so that's why I did my best to get out of it and I wheedled my way out of it, I did it. People say like this private detective said oh I'm not medically fit, I laughed at him you know.

But then surely you faced a very similar head space at the end of of the war

- 32:30 **in its entirety after Z Special Unit time, after your time in Borneo, surely there was a vacuum of fulfilment and responsibility and achievement?**

Yeah in answer to your question I think that I've probably never grown up, put it that way. I've probably never grown up. I relate to young people wherever I go, young people talk to me you know, I'm too bloody old for them unfortunately. I mean I relate to them and they talk to me. I'm Brian, they talk to me,

- 33:00 you'd be amazed at the number of people that come up to me and talk to me and I relate to them. I don't relate so much with people my own age, I don't get on cause they're talking these ways and I don't know, I seem to think differently. When I say I didn't grow up I'm not talking about mentally but I know from talking to other people my mind's still pretty alert that I know what's going on in the world which a lot of people don't. I know what's going on around me.

- 33:30 I've done a few things my time's full. As I said I had to squeeze in to make today available, I had to make do squeeze in, no I'm not complaining I'm just saying I had to squeeze in a few things on other days to make sure I had today available which means I'm not looking for a thank you or anything at all, I'm just explaining something that I've got these things to do and I'm able to keep myself mentally alert and I think that half the thing

- 34:00 is being mentally alert. It's half the battle I think and being able to control yourself. Somebody ask me something I'll give them an answer. Like the Dayaks, the Dayaks said something to you they always appreciated an immediate answer, not someone who had had to think about it, they wanted an immediate answer.

I guess it's easy to understand then in that immediate period after the war when you don't have this charged environment, you don't have the need for responsibility and achievement and all those things that you've been doing,

- 34:30 **that girls, girls, girls and vodka?**

Life's for living.

Would would fill into that void but did that become a trap at any point? Was it girls and vodka?

It was hard to start to work not knowing what I was going to do. I was qualified to do medicine which I was going to do, I could have done it under the very top repatriation medical scheme but it was a six year course. I just didn't see myself studying for six bloody years. Not after what I'd been doing. It wasn't fair

- 35:00 and now I'm so pleased that I didn't do medicine. I go and see my doctor and I see specialists and I think, 'Jesus, fancy finishing up like that.' I mean I'd hate to be...

Was there anything though that you could imagine, was there the opportunity to back into the independent company in the permanent army?

Yeah but may as well be in the police force. I mean you're getting into the discipline parades and ceremonial and...

So what was appealing

- 35:30 **at that point, was there anything that you could see in civilian life that was going to satisfy you?**

Not to start with, it took me quite a while to work out what I was going to do and I finished up initially as I say, I resigned from the bank so I couldn't go back there and when I got out of the army I thought about going around, I'd be in various places drinking with someone or something and I'd hear people talking about business and discussing business and I'd listen in and a lot of them didn't seem to be

- 36:00 decision making type of people, didn't seem to know what they were doing and I got a few clues what I could do. For instance one thing early in the piece was a bit of exporting. You could export anything with a fat mix in it. Fat mix was very short particularly over in the UK after the war. The only way you could export it for instance was in a pastry mix or a cake mix or something and I remember one idea that I got onto,

36:30 whole heap of pastry mix and exported that and then I got a whole lot of fruit cake and didn't know how to package it and got hold of some cellophane, I mean bearing in mind there's no plastic then. Had a whole lot of old ladies they used to seal it, running an iron over the cellophane to make it seal it somehow and I got onto a load of honey from a honey provider all sorts of strange things.

So problem solving and wheeling and dealing?

Yeah just sort of things things I started. That was sort of

37:00 immediate, I probably did that for a couple of years I suppose and that was alright. Didn't work too hard because it was bulk money, you know deal and that was alright. I didn't make a fortune or anything and then quite by accident I started to get into real estate and I liked it and I started my own business from no experience in it whatsoever and no money, I started, I did quite well. Made a lot of money, lost a lot of money, got married, got divorced, oh girls, you know

37:30 had an awful lot of fun.

So did your time in the army give you those skills or you think they enhanced those skills, did it help you for later life?

Yeah oh yeah, attitude yeah.

Did it change?

Well look yeah it changed, it changed the whole of Australia. I mean Australia in 1945 or 1946 as compared with Australia in 1939, there's no comparison with what changes,

38:00 the advances that had been made but yeah as for the individuals I probably would have been just some dreary person you know, which was the normal thing to do. You get married you know. I mean the average person and they just no excitement really to get yourself into. I used to lose myself in sport, I was good at sport, there was supposed to be a future for me in sport except of course the war stopped that but that didn't matter

38:30 but for instance the same difference as even I think nowadays, the different things which is causing a lot of the trouble is communications. For instance you can get on a plane and go anywhere in no time at all. Got a mobile phone you can talk to anywhere and everyone's got a mobile phone, me included, I'm up to date with everything and it's just communication that makes all the difference. I said before the war you're lucky to

39:00 have a radio set, wasn't an ordinary radio set, you didn't have radio sets.

Are there any tangible differences it made to you, do you think it changed you or did it...?

Oh yeah.

What what were they?

Well I suppose up to a point I knew that I could do what I wanted to do in that I'd already done some things. I'd been a commando, I'd

39:30 done that successful, been in Z Special Unit community of things, learnt some languages, done this and done that, I'd accomplished something. At least I'd accomplished something without any I s'pose, I had had some training for it of course but not first hand training put it that way, not experience like a doctor might work out in a hospital and find out you that you know that sort of thing I mean that's first hand sort of information but

40:00 I'd had a bit of training but I set my mind to it and I could do it so that was something and you feel a bit more confident in yourself and how will I put it, not being cocky but someone didn't like you, you couldn't give a stuff for 'em, I couldn't give a you know, don't like you, well that's alright, I couldn't care less that's sort of and it just sort of doesn't worry you know. There's only

40:30 a few of those sort of people around you know.

There's only about ninety seconds, two minutes left, is there anything you wanted to to say?

Yeah, only thing I'm just going to say, I told you about the highlights up in New Guinea that our casualties were, we were credited with killing nine hundred and sixty-nine Japanese, that was not to say how many we wounded or how many we hurt, but how many we actually did kill but that was an awful lot for our puny little unit. That's the only thing

41:00 I missed out on saying.

OK thank you very much. It's been really enjoyable.

INTERVIEW ENDS